

## **The Department of Psychology at the University of Kentucky**

This two-page document is intended to provide you a thumbnail sketch of information about our Department and local Lexington community. This list is *not* exhaustive so if you have questions, please feel free to contact Gregory Parks (gspark7@uky.edu), a third-year graduate student in the Clinical Psychology program, Dr. Tamara Brown (tbrow2@uky.edu, 859.257.9612), an Assistant Professor in the Clinical area, or Dr. Chana Akins (ckakin1@uky.edu, 859.257.1103), an Assistant Professor in the Behavioral Neuroscience and Psychopharmacology area, for more information.

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### **Black Student Life at UK**

Black student life is as full at UK as at any majority university. There are approximately 800 Black undergraduate students and roughly 200 Black graduate and professional students at UK. There are a wide variety of Black student organizations at UK representing both undergraduates (Black Student Union, Summit Newspaper, National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Black Accountants, National Society of Black Engineers, Minorities in Agriculture natural resources and Relates Sciences, AΦA, AKA, KAΨ, ΔΣΘ, ΣΓΡ, ΦΒΣ, and ZΦB) and graduate/professional students (Black Graduate and Professional Students Association, Black Law Students Association, and the Black Dental Students Association). In fact, Gregory Parks, a clinical psychology graduate student, served as President of the Black Graduate and Professional Students Association last year. Each year there is a jazz concert series sponsored by African American Student Affairs and the Student Activities Board. In addition, there is a lecture series sponsored by African American Studies, which has helped to bring such luminaries as Maya Angelo and Angela Davis to UK.

### **Black Student Life in Lexington**

Lexington and the surrounding area have a little something to offer everybody. Religiously, there are quite a few of houses of worship catering to different religious perspectives (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) and denominations (A.M.E., Baptist, Orthodox Islam, etc.). Civically, there is a wide array of organizations active in the community from numerous fraternity/sorority alumni chapters (AΦA, AKA, KAΨ, ΩΨΦ, ΔΣΘ, ΣΓΡ, ΦΒΣ, and ZΦB) to the Masons and Shriners, to the NAACP and National Urban League. Socially, UK's Black Graduate and Professional Students' Association has frequent get-togethers. DeShae's, in downtown Lexington, has an open mike/poetry night on Wednesdays and on the first Friday of each month there is a First

Fridays event, which is a 21 and over affair, featuring a jazz band, food and a cash bar—frequented by Black professionals. This event takes place in Lexington as well as Louisville and Cincinnati—both an hour away from Lexington. There are also a number of night-clubs in Louisville and Cincinnati. Also, Kentucky State University, a historically Black University, is approximately 20 minutes from Lexington and often has a number of social events. Lastly, each September, as part of Lexington's Roots and Heritage Festival, there are many activities for the Black community such as a step show, concerts, a street festival, plays, art exhibits, and a formal affair.

### **Lexington**

Lexington is located in the center of the Kentucky Bluegrass region, and has been ranked as one of the nation's 20 safest cities. Lexington supports a variety of cultural attractions such as an opera, a ballet, and a philharmonic orchestra. The Singletary Center for the Arts, on the UK campus, serves as a bridge between the University and the Lexington community and hosts recitals by faculty members, students, and guest artists and plays and concerts throughout the year. In addition, Lexington's Opera House is nationally recognized as the most intimate theater in the country to host Broadway touring companies. And sports fans can enjoy either cheering on Lexington's new minor league baseball team (the Legends) or the UK Wildcats. Horses are synonymous with Kentucky, and Lexington proudly boasts the title of "Thoroughbred Capital of the World." Surrounded by rolling hills and horse farms, Lexington is known for its natural beauty and offers a wide variety of activities for outdoor enthusiasts. Students enjoy activities ranging from spending a day at Keeneland Race Track to hiking at the Red River Gorge. The website for the Lexington Visitor's Center is <http://www.visitlex.com/>, and a website that provides various facts about Lexington that might be of interest to you is <http://www.visitlex.com/quick/facts.html>.

## **The Department**

The Department is divided into two broad areas: Clinical Psychology and Experimental Psychology. The Clinical program is APA-approved and trains its students to be competent researchers, critical consumers of the scientific literature, and practitioners who depend on empirical findings to guide their applied activities. The Experimental program houses five areas of Psychology: Cognitive Psychology, Social Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Behavioral Neuroscience and Psychopharmacology, and Animal Learning, Cognition, and Behavior. Our Department boasts a very strong faculty and rigorous training programs, and it has been favorably reviewed in national rankings. As one example, each year the National Institutes of Health (NIH) publishes a report ranking public and private universities in terms of the amount of grant money it has awarded for research. NIH grants are highly competitive so the amount of grant funding faculty are awarded from NIH is one indication of the quality of research going on in that department. Currently, our Department ranks 11 in the nation by NIH. The fact that our Department has fewer faculty members than most of the universities on the NIH list speaks highly of the quality of our faculty and the level of research productivity in our Department. For more specific information on the Department and the areas of specialty that are available, logon to <http://www.uky.edu/AS/Psychology/graduate/>.

## **Funding Opportunities**

There are a variety of funding sources available to assist graduate students in paying for their graduate education at the University of Kentucky! For example, students get paid to teach (Teaching Assistantships), to do research (Research Assistantship), and there are a plethora of fellowships available. One example is the Lyman T. Johnson Fellowship. When Lyman T. Johnson tried to attend the University of Kentucky in the 1940's he was not permitted to enroll because the state's Day Law prohibited blacks and whites from attending the same schools. Johnson fought vigorously and when he filed a federal lawsuit against the University of Kentucky in 1948, Lyman T. Johnson effectively opened a door that thousands of African American students have walked through. A fellowship in his name now provides funds for minority students to attend graduate

school. Information about this and other fellowships can be found at <http://www.rgs.uky.edu/gs/fellowship/fellopps.html>

## **The Faculty**

For specific information on the research interests and pursuits of the faculty, log onto <http://www.uky.edu/AS/Psychology/graduate/> and then click on the "People" button on the left of this page. Here you will find a list of all faculty members, their pictures, e-mail addresses, and research statements. In addition to the information you can obtain at this website, let me highlight the research areas of the two African American faculty members in our Department, namely Dr. Tamara Brown (in the Clinical area) and Dr. Chana Akins (in the Behavioral Neuroscience and Psychopharmacology area).

Dr. Brown's research falls at the interface of clinical psychology and social psychology and, broadly defined, pertains to minority mental health issues (e.g., help-seeking behavior, premature termination from treatment, and cultural competence) and to the application of ecological models and approaches in working with adolescents and young adults. Currently, Dr. Brown is working on several projects: (1) developing a grant examining the patterns and predictors of drinking among African American college students at the University of Kentucky, (2) supervising a graduate student thesis project on the relationship between collectivism and ethnicity, particularly as it relates to help-seeking behavior, and (3) a review of the literature on what we know (and don't know) about how to treat minorities with mental health problems.

Dr. Akins' research covers two areas of psychology, animal learning and psychopharmacology. One of her goals is to understand how visual cues come to control and modify drug-taking behavior. For example, a detoxified drug addict may encounter visual cues, such as drug paraphernalia, that became associated with the "high" from the drug. These visual cues might then elicit "craving" and ultimately lead to drug relapse. To study the role of visual cues in sexual behavior and drug-taking behavior, she uses Japanese quail, an animal model that has a well-developed visual system.