Hello!

Congratulations on your admission to Carleton! As the chair of psychology at Carleton, I am excited to share some information about our department with you. Whether you major in psychology or some other field, you are likely to treasure your time at the College.

More than anything else, what makes teaching and learning at Carleton so special is the quality of our students. Carleton students are thoughtful and inquisitive – engaging fully when they are preparing for class, discussing challenging topics, or conducting research. The best part of my daily work is interacting with such capable, curious, and creative individuals. Our students are able to pursue their passion for learning not just in the classroom, but also through collaborating on faculty research projects, experiencing other cultures (e.g., through our cross-cultural psychology study-abroad program in Prague), and volunteering in the community.

The Psychology Department encourages students to think like scientists and to apply empirically-based research findings to everyday life. After taking our introductory psychology course, students can select from an array of mid-level courses from Psychopathology (which I teach) to Behavioral Neuroscience to Cross-Cultural Psychology to Health Psychology. Psychology majors also complete a comprehensive senior project (“comps”) in which they engage in an in-depth investigation of a focused psychological topic. Our classes also help students develop a range of skills, such as writing and speaking, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, scientific literacy, and critical thinking. Reflecting these aspirations, our psychology major requirements include an introductory course, psychological statistics, several broad mid-level courses, laboratory-based courses, and discussion-based seminars.

Psychology majors at Carleton have been successful both during and after their time at the College. They are active in and hold leadership roles in a wide variety of campus activities. They win research awards and apply their skills to summer jobs, internships, and careers related to psychology. In addition, each year a number of students co-author conference presentations and professional publications with faculty. Many of our students go on to outstanding psychology Ph.D./Psy.D. and professional programs, including law, medical, and business schools. We’re proud of our record placing students in top-notch graduate programs, and a significant number of Carleton graduates are among the most prominent psychologists in our field today. For example, Dr. Daniel Simons (’91, currently at U of IL) developed the “Invisible Gorilla” video (if you haven’t seen it, I recommend you search for it online!) and subsequent book. Dr. Kate Leger (’10, currently at U of KY), has achieved prominence researching pathways linking daily stressors and long-term health. And Dr. Barbara Fredrickson (’86, currently at U of NC) has been an integral to the new positive psychology movement, publishing her popular book on “Positivity.”
The psychology faculty at Carleton consists of dedicated and innovative teachers and groundbreaking researchers, several of whom have received nationally-recognized teaching awards and/or been awarded research grants from federal and private organizations. Our faculty and courses are roughly divided into three different subareas: (1) biological and behavioral psychology, (2) cognitive psychology, and (3) social, personality, clinical and developmental psychology. The department supports a wide range of faculty research. We have excellent facilities and equipment available to support education in psychological science, and will be moving this September into our brand new teaching and research facilities in the new Anderson Hall science complex.

Our biological and behavioral psychology faculty (Drs. Flores-Montoya, Meerts, Neiworth, and Wichlinski) teach courses that range from Primate Cognition to Sleep and Dreaming to Hormones and Behavior. They conduct research on topics such as primate cognition, the neuroscience and hormones of female sexual behavior in rats, the effects of early lead exposure on memory, and sleep behavior. The department has several animal colonies – including endangered cotton-top tamarin monkeys, rats, and pigeons – that faculty and students can use in theory-driven research, as well as facilities for both human and animal research.

The cognitive psychology area has several faculty members: Drs. Galotti, Strand, and Van der Wege. They teach a wide variety of courses, including Sensation and Perception, Memory Processes, and Language and Deception. Their research interests range from speech perception to conversational processes to applying memory research to education. The department has research facilities, equipment (including eye trackers), and software to study different kinds of cognition.

The last area of psychology covers a diverse set of faculty interests: personality, social psychology, health psychology, clinical psychology, and developmental psychology. Our faculty (Drs. Akimoto, Kozberg, Lutsky, and me) offer courses across these areas, with research interests in quantitative reasoning, stereotypes and prejudice, and anxiety disorders, among other topics.

I encourage you to visit Carleton and to talk with faculty and students about your interests and goals. Additional information about the psychology department and major can be found on our website https://www.carleton.edu/psychology/. I would be happy to answer any questions you have. My office is in Old Music Hall (room 104) and my phone number is 507-222-5024. Also, you may contact me via email at kabrams@carleton.edu.

Sincerely,

Ken Abrams, Ph.D., LP
Chair and Associate Professor of Psychology