

# IDEA COMMITTEE *newsletter*



MISSISSIPPI STATE  
UNIVERSITY™

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND AWARENESS



## IDEA Committee Mission Statement

The goals of MSU's department of psychology Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Awareness (IDEA) committee are to create, nurture, and sustain a global, inclusive culture, where differences drive innovative solutions to meet the needs of our students, staff, and faculty. The Psychology Department's commitment to diversity aims to advance social equality, empower individuals to explore and appreciate their unique attributes and life experiences, challenge stereotypes, promote critical thinking skills, prepare individuals to practice psychology in a diverse society, and enrich the experiences of those in the academic community. With these goals and aims in mind, and in accord with the vision and values of the code of ethical conduct for the American Psychological Association, the Psychology Department recognizes the inherent value and dignity of each person and actively promotes an awareness of, sensitivity to, and representation of diversity, referring to the range of individual experiences, worldviews, and ideas that stem from different and intersecting cultural and social statuses, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and gender expression, ability/disability, religion, language, nationality, immigration status, socioeconomic status, and age.

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Have an upcoming event or want to give a shout out to someone for an accomplishment? Please email us and we can add it to our newsletter!



### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### THE MONTH OF MAY

Indian Heritage Month, Jewish-American Heritage Month, and National Asian American and South Pacific Islander Heritage Month

#### MAY 17

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia

#### JUNE 1 - JUNE 30

LGBT Pride Month

#### JUNE 19 - JUNETEENTH

Juneteenth is a federal holiday in the United States commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African-Americans. It is also often observed for celebrating African-American culture.

#### JUNE 28

Anniversary of the start of the Stonewall Riots

# Who We Are



## Dr. Ty Stafford

IDEA Committee Chair

Pronouns: He/Him/His

Ty completed his undergraduate work in psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi and received his PhD in Counseling Psychology from Auburn University in 2015, completing his internship at Texas Tech University's Student Counseling Center. Currently, he is a licensed psychologist and Assistant Clinical Professor in the clinical psychology program.

Ty is also the current and founding Program Director

for the Psychology Internship Program at MSU's Student Counseling Services. As someone who values diversity and inclusion in all aspects of his professional and personal life, Ty is thrilled to be part of the IDEA committee. As a south Mississippi-native he is thankful for the opportunity to do this work within the state that has meant so much to him. In his free time, he enjoys traveling (when the pandemic allows), walking through nature, watching horror movies, and trying food that he has never had before.

## Dr. Hilary DeShong

Clinical Faculty Representative

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Hilary is a first-generation college student who grew up in a small town in southcentral Pennsylvania. She attended WVU as an undergraduate and Villanova for an experimental master's degree before moving to Oklahoma for her doctoral training, working under the mentorship of Dr. Stephanie Mullins-Sweatt. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, running, reading nonwork related books, writing fiction, and she has been teaching herself guitar during the pandemic. She is excited to be part of the IDEA committee and believes in the importance of having a strong commitment to diversity across all domains of her career. Part of that commitment has been embracing her own voice and engaging in behaviors that are in line with this value. Throughout her graduate training and as an Assistant Professor at Mississippi State University, she has strived to instill the importance of diversity into her approach regarding teaching, research, service, and mentoring.





## Laura Alvarez Rios

Undergraduate Student Representative

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Laura Alvarez Rios is a Junior Psychology major at Mississippi State University. Laura is the Undergraduate Representative for the Department of Psychology's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) Committee. She transferred to MSU in 2021 to pursue her bachelor's degree. She was born in Venezuela and is currently working as an Undergraduate Research Assistant in Dr. DeShong's Personality, Emotion and Treatment (PET) Lab as well as Dr. Dozier's Hoarding Disorder Lab. Laura speaks three languages (Spanish, English and German) and loves to read fiction and psychology books. Some of her roles include

Executive Board Member of the International Student Advisory Board (ISAB), founding member and Social Media Chair for the Recovery Ally Dawgs (RAD) and Social Media Chair for the Collegiate Recovery Community (CRC). She aims to work alongside the fellow representatives to make sure that this department is an open, judgment-free space where students, faculty and staff can have a direct line of communication with the committee.

## Brittany Oliver

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Brittany Oliver is the Business Manager for the Department of Psychology at Mississippi State University. She serves as the Staff Representative for the Department of Psychology's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) Committee. Brittany joined the Department of Psychology in summer of 2018. Before joining here she was Business Coordinator for the MSU Office of Admissions & Scholarships. Brittany received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Mississippi University for Women and master's degrees in Public Policy and Administration and Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion both from Mississippi State University. As the committee's staff representative, she is dedicated to providing an equal-opportunity climate that encourages respect and communication and creating an environment that is more inviting towards underrepresented minorities, women, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.



## Jessica Weiss Utley

Clinical Psychology Graduate Student, Doctoral Program

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Jessica is a third year graduate student in the Clinical Psychology doctoral program at Mississippi State University. Jessica is a born-and-raised Mississippian and completed her undergraduate degree at Mississippi State. Jessica's training roots are in social psychology, and so much of her research focus is on prejudicial attitudes and intergroup relations. Jessica is honored to be a part of the Psychology Department's IDEA committee at Mississippi State.



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## Dr. Julia Soares

Cognitive Science Faculty Representative  
Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Julia Soares is an Assistant Professor in the Cognitive Science area of the Psychology Department at Mississippi State University. Dr. Soares completed her undergraduate degree at Binghamton University, State University of New York, and her doctorate at University of California, Santa Cruz. She is excited to work with the IDEA committee to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Psychology Department community.



## Oscar Ramirez Perez

Cognitive Science Graduate Student  
Pronouns: He/Him/His

Oscar is a first-year graduate student in the Cognitive Science area of the Psychology Department. He grew up on the central coast of California as a first-generation immigrant. Since issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are near and dear to his heart, he hopes to be able to contribute to the improvement of all of these principles during his time on the IDEA committee.

