

Behavioral Research and Assessment in Neuropsychology (BRAIN) Lab

Dr. Rayna Hirst

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Openings: 3 new members to join the lab in April 2017.

How to Apply:

Admission to the lab is dependent upon goodness of fit of the applicant's research interests with the lab's ongoing research, academic merit of the applicant, and professionalism of the applicant. Interested PAU students are asked to submit the following items to Dr. Hirst by the PAU Research Group Application due date:

- One or two page cover letter describing past research experience, how and why the student became interested in neuropsychology/assessment, a list of specific current ongoing projects he/she would like to contribute to, and a description of additional specific research or clinical interests in neuropsychology and assessment.
- Curriculum vitae
- Unofficial transcript
- A writing sample (e.g., a paper submitted for a graduate-level course)

Notification: Students accepted into the group will be notified by email at the PAU Research Group Notification date and time.

Research Programs: [PAU Sport Concussion Study](#)

Topics: This group focuses on research in neuropsychology and clinical assessment. Current research topics include the influence of chronic marijuana use on cognition, the neuropsychological effects of sport-related concussion, and factors that influence the valid and reliable neuropsychological assessment of patients. Dr. Hirst's research has focused on factors that can impact the legitimacy of clinical neuropsychological assessment, such as the examinee's motivation to perform well; she has identified motivational statements that can enhance cognitive performance in chronic marijuana users. Her research also identified that most people can guess, at levels significantly greater than chance, whether a photograph is of a cannabis user or a non-user, simply based on appearance – a phenomenon she refers to as the "jay-dar". As Dr. Hirst is interested in all topics related to neuropsychological performance (e.g., memory impairment, executive dysfunction), as well as the clinical process of neuropsychological assessment (e.g., standards of practice in using effort testing during assessment), she is also open to exploring diverse research ideas with students in her research lab.

These research projects allow students to gain a significant amount of neuropsychological assessment experience and training hours, as well as develop research skills in writing literature reviews, design a study, recruit subjects and administer tests, enter data, conduct statistical analyses, present at professional conferences, and write manuscripts. Students

will be encouraged to conduct their own research projects and compete for student awards and grants. Co- and first-authorship on manuscripts is encouraged. This training is aimed to help the student become a more independent researcher, with the goal of conducting original research and data collection for his/her dissertation project.