



NEWS RELEASE

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Palo Alto University Ph.D. Students to Attend Prestigious Neuroscience Training in Functional MRI

April 24, 2018 – Palo Alto University (PAU) is pleased to announce that two of its doctoral students have been accepted to the University of Michigan’s highly competitive summer training course in functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Trisha Karsten and Laura Gramling, both Ph.D. students in PAU’s Clinical Psychology Program with an emphasis in neuropsychology, were invited to attend the intensive two-week August training. They competed with applicants from across the country for 20 coveted spots that are fully funded by a National Institute of Health training grant for intensive research training in neuroimaging.

“This is truly a significant achievement,” said Stacie L. Warren, assistant professor at PAU’s Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program and director of the Emotion, Cognition, and Neuropsychology Laboratory. “Trisha and Laura will learn advanced neuroimaging techniques and analysis strategies from some of the best names in the field. I am so proud of their work and delighted that they – and Palo Alto University – are being recognized on the neuroimaging front.”

Functional MRI has become an important tool in the work of cognitive and affective neuroscientists, but substantial training is required to implement an fMRI experiment. The University of Michigan program will train attendees on the motivation for using fMRI, the physics that underlies the technique, the design of experiments, the acquisition of data, the analysis of those data, and the interpretation of brain activity that results. The course is intended for potential users of the technique, including graduate and postdoctoral students, as well as established biomedical researchers who wish to incorporate this technique into their work.

Karsten, a fifth year Ph.D. student, is a member of Dr. Warren’s Emotion, Cognition, and Neuropsychology Lab. Karsten’s research integrates affective neuroscience, social psychology, developmental psychology, and cognitive psychology to understand mechanisms of emotion regulation and how these become disrupted in psychopathology. Her dissertation research uses fMRI methodology to test the effects of childhood emotional abuse and attachment (in)security on large-scale neural networks that are involved in emotion regulation and cognitive control.

Gramling is currently completing her third year in the Ph.D. Program and is also a member of Dr. Warren’s Emotion, Cognition, and Neuropsychology Lab. Her research utilizes both neuropsychological and neuroimaging approaches to understand the high co-occurrence of anxiety and depression, as well

as the course of these phenomena. Specifically, Gramling targets repetitive negative thought (e.g., worry, rumination) as a potential mechanism of disorder comorbidity and recurrence through its relationship with executive functioning and neural connectivity.

The Emotion, Cognition, and Neuropsychology Laboratory takes a multidisciplinary approach in understanding mechanisms and pathways that contribute to the development and maintenance of anxiety and depression, and related brain function and dysfunction. Specific interests include understanding how cognitive processes (e.g., executive function, attention, and cognitive control), affective factors (e.g., positive and negative affect), and socialization experiences (e.g., attachment, trauma) contribute to emotion dysregulation and psychopathology.

About Palo Alto University

Palo Alto University is dedicated to improving the human condition through excellence in teaching, research and scholarship in the fields of psychology and counseling. With an unwavering commitment to diversity and to the communities it serves, PAU offers doctorate, master's and bachelor's programs, as well as hands-on clinical training. A private non-profit university, PAU is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.