



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
Owens Institute for
Behavioral Research

The Owens Observer

Newsletter of the
Owens Institute for
Behavioral Research


November 17, 2025

It has been a busy fall semester at OIBR. On October 15th we hosted our **annual meeting**, where I provided information on the Institute's FY 25 activities, recognized faculty achievements, and highlighted some of the important research that our faculty are pursuing. I also announced a new **Faculty Mentoring Program** that will connect early career faculty with seasoned veterans. Full details of the program will be announced in January. At the annual meeting, we also announced **Soroya McFarlane** as the recipient of the **2025 OIBR Rising Star Award** and **Tessa Andrews** as the recipient of the **Eby Mentoring Award**. Also in the newsletter, be sure to check out the article on **Katie Ehrlich's research** investigating stress associated with parenting teens, as well as learn about our recent **GDP graduates**. Finally, reserve your calendar for the **2026 Owens Distinguished Lecture**, which will be held on April 3rd. We are fortunate this year to host **Dr. Bruce Western**, who is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and current Director of the Russell Sage Foundation. We'll provide more details about Dr. Western's visit soon, which will include a presentation on foundation funding. In the meantime, I hope everyone has a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Jody Clay-Warner

Director

Upcoming Events



**2026 Annual
William A. Owens Lecture**
with
Dr. Bruce Western
Russell Sage Foundation

**Save
the
Date**

**April 3, 2026
at 3pm**

Bruce Western is a leading sociologist whose research explores poverty, inequality, and the social impact of incarceration. A Principal Investigator of the Square One Project, he reimagines responses to violence amid poverty and racial inequality. Western is the award-winning author of *Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison* and *Punishment and Inequality in America*, and has advised national panels on reducing racial disparities and addressing COVID-19 in U.S. prisons.

Hosted by Owens Institute for Behavioral Research

Funding News

Congratulations to our Distinguished Scholars, Affiliate and Grant Development Program graduates who have recently received research project funding



Deborah Barany

Title: CTSA Pilot: Eye movements as a window to understand brain network dysfunction after mild traumatic brain injury

Agency: Emory University (NIH flow-through)

Project Dates: 8/1/2025–7/31/2026

Award Amount: \$60,397.91

The expected outcomes of the proposed project are to develop novel experimental and analysis protocols to evaluate potential oculomotor, visuomotor, and neural dysfunction after mTBI. Results from our feasibility and preliminary studies will inform hypotheses for an NIH R01 proposal aimed at (a) developing objective, reliable, and low-cost metrics sensitive to complete neurobiological recovery and (b) predicting individual recovery timeline and response to rehabilitation post-mTBI.



Chao Huang

Title: CTSA BERD Pilot: AI-Driven Multimodal Biomarker Discovery and Interpretation in Alzheimer's Disease

Agency: Emory University (NIH flow-through)

Project Dates: 8/1/2025–7/31/2026

Award Amount: \$30,194.10

The project team will bridge AI with neurobiology to improve early detection of Alzheimer's Disease and provide meaningful insights into the progression of AD. Their work will drive forward precision medicine approaches for AD diagnosis and treatment.



Andrew Kiselica

Title: CTSA Pilot: Cognitive Aging Research and Education: Screening for Cognition and Alzheimer's Network (CARE-SCAN)

Agency: Emory University (NIH flow-through)

Project Dates: 8/1/2025-7/31/2026

Award Amount: \$60,395.47

This project will demonstrate the feasibility of conducting community-based AD screening in rural areas using an evidence-based hub-and-spoke model that leverages AD plasma biomarkers and digital cognitive assessment technology. This work will provide critical pilot data for an NIA R01 submission to conduct a randomized control trial of CARE-SCAN.

Research Spotlight

When Teen Stress Impacts Parents' Hearts:

UGA Research Explores Surprising “Crossover Effects”



[Learn More](#)

Faculty News

OIBR Awards



Rising Star Award

Soroya McFarlane

Assistant Professor, Communication Studies

At OIBR's annual meeting in October, Dr. **Soroya McFarlane** was recognized with the **2025 OIBR Rising Star Award** for her exceptional scholarly achievements and promising trajectory in research.

Dr. McFarlane's work centers on improving maternal health outcomes for Black women. Despite being in the early stages of her academic career, she has made remarkable progress in advancing this critical area of study. She leads an interdisciplinary team developing The THRIVE Project—a scalable, multimedia online learning platform designed to bridge gaps in health communication, advocacy, and education for Black women and their families.

This initiative represents a powerful example of translational research in action, bringing evidence-based, multimedia communication strategies directly to communities historically marginalized by the healthcare system.



OIBR Lillian Eby Mentoring Award

Tessa Andrews

Meigs Professor of Genetics & Director of the SEER Center

Dr. Tessa Andrews was honored with the **2025 OIBR Lillian Eby Mentoring Award** in recognition of her outstanding commitment to science education and mentorship.

Dr. Andrews' research explores the cognitive, affective, social, cultural, and structural factors that shape how college instructors teach, with the ultimate goal of improving learning and promoting diversity in undergraduate STEM education, particularly within the life sciences.

As Director of the SEER Center, she has provided extensive mentorship to early-career faculty—both formally, by serving as a named mentor on grant proposals, and informally, through her day-to-day engagement with SEER Center affiliates. Under her leadership, the Center's seminar series has become a vital platform for advancing faculty development and career growth.

Grant Development Program Graduates



MICHAEL BARGER

Educational Psychology

Associate Professor

GDP Class of 2023-2025

Submitted Grant Title: CAREER

“Elementary Teaching Strategies that Develop Long-Term Creativity, Beliefs about Multiple Solutions, and Interest in Mathematics”

Agency: National Science Foundation



ERIN HAMEL

Educational Psychology

Assistant Professor

GDP Class of 2023-2025

Submitted Grant Title: “Examining the Pathways from Early Head Start Leadership to Child Outcomes”

Agency: Department of Health and Human Services



PABLO LAPEGNA

Sociology

Associate Professor

GDP Class of 2023-2025

Submitted Grant Title: "Prosperity, Plants and Pesticides: The Dangers and Opportunities of Agricultural Biotechnology"

Agency: National Endowment for the Humanities



NIYANTRI RAVINDRAN

Human Development & Family Science

Assistant Professor

GDP Class of 2023-2025

Submitted Grant Title: "Measuring Context-Specific Emotion Socialization Practices in Black American Parents"

Agency: Society for Research in Child Development

Opportunities

Consortium for the Advancement of Research Methods and Analysis



CARMA

This is just a friendly reminder that the [Consortium for the Advancement of Research Methods and Analysis \(CARMA\)](#) is an incredibly valuable resource available to you via OIBR's sponsorship of UGA's institutional membership. As a UGA faculty member, you can set up a profile, sign up for programs and courses, and request to receive their newsletter. Please contact Kim Cherewick at ksilvis@uga.edu with any questions.

OIBR Pivot Funds 2026

The OIBR Pivot Fund 2026 allows researchers to continue to conduct important work, while responding to the current funding climate. Funds can be used to collect data, purchase data sets or equipment, or for other needs, as identified by the investigator. Funds cannot be used for conference travel or personnel funding (faculty or student). The budget cannot exceed \$5,000.

The application should contain: 1) one paragraph describing your current research; 2) one to two sentences explaining how you are pivoting your research; 3) one page describing the project for which you are seeking funding, your qualifications for conducting the proposed research, and intended external grant mechanism(s); 4) budget, budget justification, and timeline; and 5) a current CV.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis by the OIBR Leadership Team. Send applications (as a single PDF in the order listed above) to oibr@uga.edu, with the subject line "Pivot Funds."

Update for Researchers

Research Security Training Now Required for All UGA Researchers

In October, the UGA Office of Research assigned the new **Research Security Training** in PEP to all faculty, staff, and students involved in research activities. This federally mandated course helps research personnel understand the risks and threats facing the global research community and provides practical tools to safeguard their work.

The training, required under the **CHIPS and Science Act of 2022**, is now being implemented by federal agencies for all recipients of federal research funding. The course takes approximately one hour to complete and remains valid for one year after completion. Please contact Kim Cherewick or Chris Thornton if you have any questions.

OIBR News

Online Open Office Hours

Kim Cherewick, Assistant Director, and **Jenny Claire Carey**, Post Award Operations Manager, are hosting weekly office hours. Drop in via Zoom from **10–11am every Monday** to ask any grant-related questions. Contact Kim at ksilvis@uga.edu to receive the meeting link or with any questions.



Have news? Please send kudos, announcements or other items to Andrea Horsman at ahorsman@uga.edu. Distribution occurs monthly on the second Monday of the month. The deadline for submissions is the first Wednesday.