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Owens Institute for
Behavioral Research

The Owens Observer

Newsletter of the
Owens Institute for
Behavioral Research

April 15, 2026

In this edition of the newsletter, we highlight the many OIBR faculty members who were recognized during **Honors Week**. Congratulations to these faculty! We also want to congratulate **Sierra Carter** on her receipt of the prestigious **Storymakers Fellowship**. Our Research Spotlight this month features **Karlo Lei**, whose work on the biological embedding of social experiences is transforming our understanding of the stress process. Below you'll find details about these faculty accomplishments, along with information about the May 1st **Tea Time** session, where **Steve Beach** will share tips for funding success. Finally, spring is in the air, which means it must be time for OIBR's annual **Gathering in the Garden**. This year's event will be held **April 30th** in Founders Garden. Hope to see you there!

Jody Clay-Warner
Director

Upcoming Events



Owens Institute for Behavioral Research
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Join us for an informal, year-end get together

A Gathering at the Garden

APRIL 30 | 4:30 - 6PM

**UGA Founders Memorial Garden
325 S. Lumpkin St., Athens**

Drop in as your schedule allows for some yummy food,
drinks & time with old and new friends.



We are pleased to announce **Tea Time**, a new OIBR offering for early career faculty for learning, sharing, and camaraderie. Each month, an OIBR Distinguished Scholar will present information on a professional development topic, allowing time for discussion and Q&A.

The last session will be held on Friday, **May 1** from 10:00am – 11:00am in the OIBR conference room (249A Brooks Hall). Tea, coffee, sparkling water, and cookies will be available.

Dr. **Steve Beach**, Regents' Professor of Psychology, and Director of the Center for Family Research will be hosting the session, "Let's talk: A few lasting lessons from 40 years of funding." **RSVP [HERE](#)** to secure your spot. This session is limited to 12 participants.

Research Spotlight

How Social Experiences Shape Health Across the Life Course



[Learn More](#)

Faculty News

2026 UGA Honors & Awards



[Creative Research Medal](#)

Sun Joo (Grace) Ahn, OIBR Distinguished Scholar, Professor, Advertising & Public Relations

[Innovation in AI Teaching Award](#)

Bree Bang-Jensen, OIBR Affiliate, Assistant Professor, International Affairs

[Engaged Scholar](#)

Jon Calabria, OIBR Affiliate, Professor, College of Environment + Design

[Walter Barnard Hill Award](#)

Karen DeMeester, OIBR Affiliate, Public Service Associate, Survey Research & Evaluation Support Division

[Distinguished Research Professor](#)

Amy Ellis, OIBR Affiliate, Professor, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies Education

Postdoctoral Research Award

Trevor Tuma, OIBR Affiliate, Post Doctoral Research Associate, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

Creative Teaching Award

Andrew Owsiak, OIBR Affiliate, Meigs Professor, International Affairs

Congratulations to these Affiliates and Distinguished Scholar!



Sierra Carter Selected for Prestigious Storymakers Fellowship

Sierra Carter, OIBR Affiliate and Associate Director for the Center for Family Research, has been selected for the highly competitive Storymakers Fellowship through the USC Wrigley Institute for Environment and Sustainability.

The Storymakers program brings together accomplished researchers for a weeklong immersive experience focused on the art of environmental storytelling. This summer, Dr. Carter will participate in the residency at the Wrigley Marine Science Center on Catalina Island.

The intensive program includes lectures, hands-on workshops, and dedicated studio time for developing original content, along with cohort-based activities designed to foster collaboration and creative exchange. Through this experience, fellows refine their ability to communicate research in compelling and accessible ways, broadening the reach and impact of their work.

Dr. Carter's selection reflects both her leadership in family research and her commitment to advancing innovative approaches to research communication.

Policy Updates



NIH Highlighted Topics

NIH now offers a centralized, searchable list of *Highlighted Topics* designed to help investigators explore scientific areas of current interest across NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices. These topics aren't formal funding announcements, but they spotlight priority research areas where NIH encourages submissions under broad, investigator-initiated funding opportunities. Researchers can use this resource early in project planning to align their ideas with NIH interests, contact relevant scientific staff, and stay up to date on emerging NIH focus areas. More information can be found on their [website](#).

Opportunities

Call for GDP Class of 2027

The Owens Institute for Behavioral Research (OIBR) invites applications for the 2026–2028 Grant Development Program (GDP). This two-year program is designed to support University of Georgia faculty in the social and behavioral

sciences who have not yet secured major extramural funding and have been in their current UGA position for at least one year.

Participants are selected based on their potential to develop competitive external grant proposals during the program period. The GDP provides structured guidance, peer support, and dedicated time to advance research toward successful extramural funding submissions. Program participants are expected to submit at least one external research proposal through OIBR during the two-year period.

The program includes approximately two in-person sessions per month, held on Tuesdays from 12:00–2:00 PM. Attendance at all sessions is expected.

Application Requirements

Applicants must submit a single PDF that includes:

- A Department Head approval form
- Curriculum vitae
- Overview of the applicant's research agenda, including:
 - Research interest keywords
 - A brief summary of research focus (1/2 page)
 - A description of the proposed research project and qualifications to conduct it (1 page)
 - Potential external funding sources (if known)

Additional program details and the Department Head approval form are available on the OIBR [website](#).

Application Deadline: May 1, 2026

Submission Instructions: Email a complete application packet (as one PDF) to oibr@uga.edu

OIBR Pivot Funds

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, to facilitate submission of an external grant proposal. 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."

OIBR News



OIBR has an opening for a **Senior Accountant**. Please share this opportunity with anyone you think may be interested in joining our fantastic team! Anyone interested can apply [here](#). Any questions about the position can be sent to **Jenny Claire Carey** at jccarey@uga.edu.

Online Open Office Hours

Kim Cherewick, Assistant Director, and **Jenny Claire Carey**, Post Award Operations Manager, will be 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 with any questions.



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