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UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

Owens Institute for
Behavioral Research

The Owens Observer

Newsletter of the
Owens Institute for
Behavioral Research

May 2026

This month, we are excited to welcome several new **Distinguished Scholars** to OIBR, as well to spotlight last month's Owens Lecture, which featured **Dr. Bruce Western**. In addition to his lecture, Bruce also presented information about Russell Sage Foundation funding opportunities, and that session was attended by many OIBR faculty. Now that you all have more unstructured time over the summer, this would be a good time to check out the **Highlighted Topics** feature on the NIH website, which will help you find relevant funding opportunities. Also, take note of the new **Open Access Publishing Agreement** that UGA has signed with Taylor & Francis, who publishes many journals where OIBR faculty routinely publish. Finally, and most importantly, I hope everyone has scheduled plenty of time this summer for rest and rejuvenation. The *Owens Observer* is also taking some time off this summer, with our next issue scheduled for August. See you all then!

Jody Clay-Warner
Director

Spotlight



2026 William A. Owens Lecture

The Owens Institute for Behavioral Research hosted its 2026 William A. Owens Lecture on April 3, featuring Dr. Bruce Western, President of the Russell Sage Foundation. The event brought together UGA undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty for an engaging and thought-provoking discussion on inequality and the U.S. justice system.

In his lecture, “Poor Justice: Case Studies in Punishment & Inequality,” Western examined how mass incarceration in the United States extends beyond crime control to reflect broader patterns of poverty, racial inequality, and social disadvantage. Drawing on national data and longitudinal research, he highlighted how incarceration has reached historically high levels and disproportionately impacts marginalized populations, often reinforcing cycles of hardship rather than alleviating them.

Western also explored the hidden dimensions of the justice system, including the burden of fines and fees, repeated short-term jail stays, and the challenges individuals face upon reentry into society. His research emphasized how early-life trauma, poor health, and economic instability are deeply intertwined with justice system involvement, underscoring the need for more holistic policy approaches.

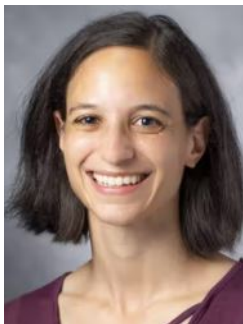
The lecture sparked meaningful conversation among attendees and offered valuable insights into the social consequences of punishment and inequality. Guests continued the discussion during a well-attended reception, making the event both intellectually enriching and highly engaging for the campus community.

Faculty News

Welcome New Affiliate

Shijun Yan, Assistant Professor, Kinesiology

Congratulations New OIBR Distinguished Scholars



Deborah Barany
Assistant Professor
Kinesiology

Sierra Carter,
Associate Professor, Psychology
Associate Director of the Center for Family Research



Pablo Lapegna
Associate Professor
Sociology



Karlo Lei
Associate Professor
Sociology



Allen Tate
Associate Professor
Epidemiology and Biostatistics

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

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."

Open Access Publishing Opportunities

UGA Libraries' open access publishing program continues to expand, now offering faculty and graduate students access to more than 9,000 journal titles across 14 publishers through new and existing "read-and-publish" agreements. These agreements cover article processing charges, enabling researchers to publish open access at no cost while increasing the visibility and reach of their work. Building on more than \$2 million in savings for UGA authors in 2025, the addition of a new agreement with Taylor & Francis further broadens opportunities for accessible, high-impact scholarship. Open access publishing not only removes paywall barriers but also supports greater dissemination, collaboration, and citation of research. [Read more about how open access publishing can benefit your research.](#)

OIBR News

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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