

Special  
points of  
interest:

- Gift funds new neuro assessment and research center
- Psychology department welcomes new trauma faculty member
- Inaugural PhD Trauma Psychology class set to arrive
- Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic rapidly growing

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# Trauma, Health & Hazards Center

## Gift to fund New Assessment Center

The Lyda Hill Foundation has awarded a \$3.16 million grant to support a new neuropsychological specialty center at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs.

The Mind-1 Assessment and Treatment Center will offer state-of-the-art traumatic stress brain care that integrates evidence-based trauma therapy, functionally relevant neuropsychological assessment, and evaluation of High Performance Brain Training. The Center establishes a

collaborative between the UCCS Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic, the UCCS Aging Center, UCCS faculty



The Mind-1 Assessment Center will initially be housed in the UCCS Lane Center for Academic Health Sciences.

members and the University of Texas-Dallas Center for BrainHealth

Brain Performance Institute.

“I am extremely excited about the potential to create a world class trauma and neuropsychological clinic and research program that will assist the community and the training of our students,” THHC Director Charles C. “Chip” Benight said. “This is a watershed moment for our capacity to serve Veterans and their families as well as other constituents with head injury and traumatic stress challenges.”

## Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic expands capacity with new clinicians

By Lori Bryan, PhD and Valerie Anderson, PsyD

The UCCS HealthCircle Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic (VHTC) opened its doors in February, 2014. Since then, more than 300 clients have benefited from specialized trauma mental health services. The

VHTC partners with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a referral source to help meet the demand for veteran mental health services. After quickly reaching capacity, the VHTC responded to this ongoing

need by hiring 3 additional part time licensed clinicians. The VHTC works with the entire family and coordinates health care with other Lane Center clinics to maximize recovery and improve well-being.

## New Psychology faculty member brings trauma expertise

By Lori Bryan, PhD



Dr. Kristin Samuelson, PhD

Dr. Kristin Samuelson will join the UCCS faculty in August 2015 as an Assistant Professor of Psychology.

Dr. Samuelson received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Virginia in 1998. She comes to UCCS from Alliant International University California School of Professional Psychology.

Dr. Samuelson's research interests include post-traumatic stress disorder and trauma related to intimate

partner violence, maltreatment, and combat. Dr. Samuelson is also interested in neuropsychological functioning in PTSD, the impact of trauma on families and the parent-child relationship, PTSD treatment, and web-based PTSD training.

Dr. Samuelson's expertise enriches the rapidly growing UCCS focus on trauma in the Psychology Department and clinical training programs and in the new Mind-1 Assessment Center.

**70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives.**

**Mobile apps can be useful tools to reduce stress and improve coping skills. Mindfulness Coach was developed by the VA's National Center for PTSD for those wanting to maintain healthy coping practices or who may be experiencing emotional distress.**



Free Mindfulness Coach download (CTRL-click): [iTunes \(iOS\)](#)

## Supporting our first responders

By Judith Bock, PsyD, Nicole Streeb, and Lori Bryan, PhD

Firefighters face numerous daily stressors in their work in one of the most hazardous civilian professions. Since 2004, the THHC has developed and provided oversight for a Peer Support Program at the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD).

Dr. Judith Bock, PsyD, leads this program that trains first responders in basic counseling skills and gives them the knowledge they need to identify colleagues with posttraumatic difficulties and assist them with help-seeking. The

THHC also provides programs on topics such as stress mitigation, sleep education and suicide prevention.

UCCS Clinical Psychology Master's student, Nicole Streeb (*left*), is focusing her thesis on the crucial issue of firefighter suicide. Her work examines relationships between firefighter exposure to critical incidents and suicidal thoughts and the impact of social support and coping self-efficacy. She is also working with firefighters to learn what type of prevention programs would most likely be used at their stations.



Nicole Streeb, Psychology Master's Student

## Inaugural Trauma Psychology track set to launch

By Lori Bryan, PhD



Millions of Americans are affected by trauma every year. The combination of being at war for over a decade, increased incidence of natural disasters, and continuing challenges of interpersonal violence

highlight the need for mental health professionals trained in trauma.

In 2014, UCCS approved the addition of a Trauma Psychology track to the Clinical Psychology program.

This emphasis is designed to train students who have a particular interest in conducting research and working clinically with trauma survivors.

From a pool of more than 125 applicants, 12 candidates were invited to campus for all-day interviewing in February, 2015. The top three students were offered and accepted the first positions in the Trauma Psychology PhD track.

Alisa Bartel, Amanda Devane, and Carrie Yeager (*below*) comprise the inaugural Trauma Psychology PhD class and join UCCS in August 2015.



Alisa Bartel



Amanda Devane



Carrie Yeager

***The Trauma Psychology PhD program track received 129 applications—more than twice the number of all other UCCS graduate programs.***

## \$1.9 M EASE project gains momentum

By Kotaro Shoji, PhD and Lori Bryan, PhD

In 2014, UCCS was awarded a Smart Connected Health 4-year, \$1.9 million grant from the National Science Foundation that joins the THHC, the UCCS Computer Science Department, Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh.

The EASE (Engagement, Arousal, and Self-Efficacy) project develops an innovative, smart web-system that adjusts to a trauma survivor's needs based on physiological and facial responses while they are using the My Trauma Recovery website. This website was developed to empower trauma survivors. It consists of a self-assessment and six modules targeting skills related to recovery.

An effective website must be capable of adapting to trauma survivors based on their mental and physical state. This project's novel approach builds a "smart system" in the My Trauma Recovery website to empower survivors and improve treatment.

This is the first study in the new Human Computer Interaction laboratory in the UCCS Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic. Participants for this study are being actively recruited and data collection is well underway. To see if you qualify to be a paid research participant, contact Kotaro Shoji, PhD (kshoji@uccs.edu).

# Director's Corner

By Charles C. "Chip" Benight, PhD

Almost 15 years ago I envisioned a center at UCCS that would encapsulate my belief that we need to reduce the impact of trauma in our community and around the world. In starting the Trauma, Health, & Hazards Center, I wanted to bring together a team of scholars, clinicians, educators, and students to work collaboratively and make a difference. Today my dream is becoming reality. At the THHC we have important research projects focusing on a range of trauma related topics including our recent 1.9 million dollar National Science Foundation study to develop the next generation web-interventions for trauma survivors that actually gets "smarter" with each new user. In fall of 2014 we re-established an MOU with the Warsaw School for Social Psychology and the Humanities where joint research projects will

continue in addition to new educational opportunities for graduate students from each country. In February 2014 we opened the Veteran Health and Trauma Clinic and have already helped close to 400 clients. This fall we will launch our new trauma track in our Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program with three outstanding students and a new faculty member. Our latest breaking news is a 3.1 million dollar gift to expand our clinical services to traumatic brain injury including collaborative work with the Brain Performance Institute in Dallas. Collectively, the outstanding THHC team IS making a difference for trauma survivors both in our community and around the world.

Your support, both previous and enduring, is much appreciated and incredibly important. Thank you.



Dr. Benight founded and is the Director of the CU Trauma, Health & Hazards Center. He is Chair Veteran Health & Trauma, Professor of Psychology, and Director of Clinical Training.

## Join the Trauma Research Participant Registry!

Follow this link and join our list of community members willing to participate in research projects:

Ctrl-click: [Trauma Research Registry](#) or go to

<http://www.uccs.edu/Documents/thhc/VHTC%20Website/2015%20THHC%20consent%20form.pdf>



CU Trauma, Health, &  
Hazards Center

1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway  
Colorado Springs, CO 80918

Phone: 719-255-3315

Fax: 719-255-3767

<http://www.uccs.edu/thhc/index.html>

The University of Colorado Trauma, Health, & Hazards Center (THHC) is a multi-disciplinary center established at UCCS in 1999. The THHC work includes cross-disciplinary scholarship, scientifically informed policy, clinical interventions, and educational and community programs aimed at reducing the effects of traumatic stress exposure and improving health.

**Our mission is to reduce the impact of extreme human events through scholarship, policy, education, and services.**