

EMORY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES KUDOS  
JANUARY 2026

**REMEMBER**

**Please send me your accomplishments, program/team activities, and personal updates for the February 2026 Kudos**

**SAVE THE DATES**

**Upcoming Faculty Development Seminar**

The next faculty development seminar will be held on Wednesday February 4, 2026, from 9:00-10:30am. The topic will be “Strategies for Successfully Navigating Power Structures and Social Dynamics within the Department/Health System/Organization” and the panelists will be Peter Ash, Justine Welsh, Michael Treadway, Chanda Graves and Kelly Skelton. [Zoom](#). This session will not be recorded.

**Upcoming Writing Groups**

The Faculty Writing Group is the first Wednesday of every month from 8:00-9:00am. These meetings are on [Zoom](#). This group is for faculty including adjunct faculty.

**SPOTLIGHTS**

**FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Donovan Ellis, PhD**

Donovan Ellis is a clinical psychologist and assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory University School of Medicine. His primary roles span the Adult Outpatient Clinic, OCD and Anxiety Intensive Program and recently developed Clinic for Anxiety Resilience, Education and Support (CARES) within Emory Brain Health. Across these settings, Donovan provides evidence-based assessment and treatment for adults with anxiety, OCD and related disorders, emphasizing team-based, measurement-informed care.

Donovan also serves as implementation lead for initiatives integrating digital mental health tools, mobile technologies, and prescription digital therapeutics into routine clinical care. He is the Principal Investigator of Project ACCESS (Access and Collaborative Care for Equitable Support Solutions), funded through the Emory Innovation Hub FY26 Award, which pioneers the use of digital navigators and prescription digital therapeutics within collaborative and specialty care models.

In addition, Donovan leads the Adult ADHD Skills Group, a highly utilized and much-needed resource for an oft-neglected clinical population. He contributes to education, supervision and mentorship across disciplines and participates in departmental service through the Dialogue, Integrity, Service and Community (DISC) Committee, Resilience, Education and Access for Community Health (REACH) Committee and Perspective Collective Connection Circle.

Outside of Emory, Donovan serves as a clinical science advisor and consultant to digital mental health startups and initiatives, providing guidance on evidence-based practice,

user engagement and equitable implementation. His work focuses on translating clinical science into scalable, real-world applications of digital mental health technologies.

He is an inaugural member of The Equity and Action (TEA) SIG within the International Society for Research in Internet Interventions (ISRII) and contributes to national conversations on culturally responsive innovation, digital health equity and population-level dissemination.

Donovan most enjoys working alongside brilliant, compassionate and mission-driven colleagues within tightly integrated care teams. He describes his professional environment as highly collaborative and generative, offering frequent opportunities to align shared interests, pursue innovation and build new solutions that promote equitable access to care.

A lifelong question-asker — his sixth-grade superlative was “Most Inquisitive” — Donovan values roles that reward curiosity. Through clinical innovation, implementation science and trainee mentorship, he appreciates spaces where inquiry, creativity and empirical rigor are encouraged in service of improving care.

Donovan identifies several formative experiences that shaped his career. Shortly after completing his undergraduate training, he served as an Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) coach at the University of Florida OCD Program, where he observed firsthand the immediate and measurable impact of gold-standard, evidence-based treatments. This experience reinforced that therapy can be effective, meaningful and even fun!

He later completed his doctoral training at Georgia State University under the mentorship of Page Anderson, PhD, where he focused on the etiology and treatment of anxiety and related disorders, particularly among underrepresented communities, while developing a strong interest in digital mental health as a tool for expanding access to care. Donovan went on to complete his predoctoral internship at Duke University Medical Center on the Adult CBT/DBT track, followed by postdoctoral residency training in Health Service Psychology at Emory.

Since joining faculty in 2024, Donovan has played a key role in program development and implementation across OCD, anxiety and ADHD services. Highlights include launching and scaling the Adult ADHD Skills Group, leading digital integration efforts within the OCD and Anxiety IOP and CARES and securing institutional innovation funding as PI for Project ACCESS. Across roles, his work is unified by a population health lens emphasizing early detection, prevention and reduction of mental health inequities.

Looking ahead, Donovan plans to pursue board certification in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology (ABPP) and expand his consultation work in digital mental health. He aims to assume leadership roles within national committees focused on the equitable and clinically sound dissemination of digital mental health technologies and to advocate for

stronger policy and regulatory frameworks in rapidly evolving areas such as artificial intelligence. He remains committed to mentoring future mental health professionals while fostering curiosity, rigor and innovation.

Outside of work, Donovan enjoys spending time with loved ones, traveling and exploring new restaurants and cuisines — especially those on his ever-growing “Things to Try in Atlanta” list. A proud self-described “Blerd,” he enjoys pop culture across mediums including TV and film, video games, anime, comics, podcasts and conventions. If you see him at your local Con, say hello.

### **ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Christopher Mora, MD**

Christopher Mora currently owns and operates a solo [outpatient general adult psychiatry private practice](#) in Poncey Highland, providing both in person and telehealth appointments, as well as medication management and psychotherapy. He has a particular expertise in working with post-partum or peri-partum women, trauma survivors and OCD, but enjoys treating a wide variety of mood, anxiety and psychotic disorders.

Christopher has primarily taken a role as a moonlighting attending at Grady PES, providing evening coverage when needed, and participating in providing training/education/supervision to psychiatry residents and medical students, as well as administering required observed patient interview assessments.

As an adjunct faculty member, Christopher most enjoys the general comradery and collegiate atmosphere of working in an academic setting and getting to interact with and provide mentorship to residents and students. Having such supportive, kind, intelligent and thoughtful colleagues is a blessing and he appreciates continuing to learn and grow with them. Providing career guidance to residents has been incredibly fulfilling and fun!

What people would be surprised to learn about Christopher is he is a mushroom foraging and identification enthusiast (COVID era acquired hobby)! He has also recently begun fermenting his own kombucha at home.

### **STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Erica Williams**

Erica Williams has a degree in Marketing from Auburn University and a diverse professional background that includes store management, finance, fitness training and community proposals for condominium/apartment properties. For nearly eight years, she has worked for Emory University – the best place to work!!! She is an HR Generalist currently supporting the School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. In addition to her role, Erica has participated in the SOM Physician Assistant Graduation Committee, Emory University Senate Athletics and Recreation Committee and a graduate of the Administrative Professional Program.

Emory University is a highly respected institution, and it is meaningful to know the work Erica does and the insights she shares has a positive impact on the department she support, her colleagues and on a broader scale – those who provide teaching and

mentoring, research and patient care within the community. She is deeply intrinsically motivated and take pride in delivering excellent work, providing high quality service and adapting her communication style to effectively support the diverse individuals within psychiatry as well as cross departmental.

Erica is always looking for ways to streamline processes to improve work efficiency and organization. Key highlights include expeditiously managing and simplifying complex data for 400 resident packets and 2000+ ID badges during her time in SOM Graduate Medical Education, as well as improving completion timeliness for the PA Program EPIC onboarding. Most recently, this, being chosen for Staff Spotlight by the department of psychiatry - a fast-paced, high-demand environment that she generally enjoys supporting! One day, Erica received an email from someone in leadership within psychiatry that said, "I really appreciate your responsiveness and organization. I was just telling someone yesterday that when I send you an email, I can delete it immediately because I know you've got it. There is SO much going on, and you are doing a great job."

Looking to the future, Erica's goals are to continue growing as a leader, expand her knowledge and impact and remain open to possibilities as they arise.

Outside of work, Erica's interests include staying actively engaged in her church community, maintaining a consistent fitness routine by working out five days a week, reading and listening to podcasts. She is a lifelong basketball fan and loves watching the WNBA (she would love some Atlanta Dream tickets!), watching her son play basketball and playing basketball herself. She is also passionate about service and community involvement and has served on the board within the Fulton County School System in multiple leadership positions, including President, Director of Volunteer Relations, Vice President of Membership and currently Vice President of Admin and School Support.

**MENTOR SPOTLIGHT: Abby Lott, PhD** *(Written by Barb Duran, PhD, Courtland Hyatt, PhD, Samantha Patton, PhD and Rebecca Schneider, PhD)*

Abby Lott's mentorship style can be described as collaborative, open, warm, thoughtful, encouraging, direct and supportive.

So many things make Abby a good mentor! But here are three specific examples. First, Abby strikes an excellent balance between being a kind, validating, supportive mentor and being a helpful, encouraging and practical mentor. She is unique in her capacity to simultaneously offer warm support and concrete, actionable guidance about key next steps in one's career. Second, Abby's passion for mentoring is obvious to her mentees, and her sincere interest in furthering mentees' careers is inspiring. In fact, her passion and skills in mentorship are so clear that multiple mentees mentioned that we seek out her mentorship about how we ourselves can be effective mentors to junior colleagues! Third, she is very generous with her time and willingness to leverage her

professional connections. Several mentees commented on very helpful professional opportunities that Abby has sent their way (e.g., manuscript review opportunities, grant panels, etc.).

The surveyed mentees were unanimous that Abby's mentorship has gotten us closer to promotion-readiness. Additionally, several mentees mentioned Abby's mentorship was instrumental in helping them feel welcomed to Emory and able to navigate the complexities of a new, large department.

Among many nuggets of wisdom, one that sticks out is "you've gotta protect your time, because no one else will!" Abby maintains a clear focus on guiding mentees to reach their individually-identified professional goals while also encouraging us to attend to our basic, outside-of-work human needs like family, friendship, hobbies, etc.

### **PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Center for Maternal Substance Abuse and Child**

#### **Development** *(written by Claire Coles, PhD)*

In Georgia in 2025, due to parental substance use, 18, 346 babies were exposed prenatally to alcohol and nicotine, 10,00 to marijuana, 1500 to opioids and 3000 to methamphetamine and other stimulants. Many had polydrug exposure. For alcohol alone, there may be 6000 children at risk for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) associated with opioid exposure affected almost 1,000 newborns across the state. Thus, there are approximately 100,000 Georgia children under the age of 21 who may be facing lifelong problems in health, learning and behavior due to prenatal exposure. In addition, the Department of Family and Children's Services notes that 40-50% of children entering foster care do so due to neglect and abuse related to parental substance abuse.

The Center for MSACD, part of the Child, Adolescent and Young Adult Division of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, addresses the problem of prenatal exposure through Prevention, Intervention, Research and Education. Based on our 45 year history of research, including longitudinal studies of alcohol, tobacco, cocaine and opioids, MSACD provides empirically-based educational activities to both professionals and community through its state-wide Prevention program, working with universities, medical school and community and state agencies. In 2013, in order to directly reach pregnant persons and those caring for them, we established MotherToBaby.GA (M2B), part of a national network of teratology information services that provides free anonymous counseling on the risk of medications, substance and environmental exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Through the Emory Neurobehavior and Exposure Clinic (ENEC), families and children affected by prenatal exposure are provided differential diagnosis and treatment for complex medical, behavioral and academic problems associated with prenatal exposures and postnatal trauma. ENEC provides empirically informed, specialized treatment using a multidisciplinary model. Working with this high-risk group, ENEC has found early intervention, supportive caregiving and appropriate education and therapy can be effective in reducing the primary disabilities associated with prenatal exposures

and in preventing some of the secondary disabilities that result from the impact of negative caregiving environment on vulnerable children.

MSACD also serves as a setting for the training of professionals who will work with mothers and children in their later careers, including residents from Emory and Morehouse, practicum students in psychology, genetics counselors and postdoctoral fellows in psychiatry and psychology.

MSACD is widely recognized for its extensive research on substance use during pregnancy and its effects. Current studies include the Healthy Brain and Child Development (HBCD) multisite study which is currently evaluating infants exposed to opioid and other drugs as part of large scale national consortium. In addition, we are following a prospective cohort of adults who are now in their 40s and were originally identified while in utero and are looking for long-term impact on cognitive and health functioning.

Our ENEC clinical sample has also been used to originate and evaluate innovative interventions for children with an FASD. The MILE program has several publications establishing its efficacy and generalizability. The program has a full set of manuals and professional training videos that are available. Trainings in the evidence-based MILE program have been done in the United States and internationally (e.g., Canada, Ukraine, Poland, Germany). It has been recognized as a well-validated intervention in critical reviews of FASD interventions and received national recognition as a well-established treatment (National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII) and the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC)). The companion program, GoFAR, targets building adaptive life skills in children with FASDs. After completing studies establishing the efficacy of this program, it was made publicly available on the do2learn.com website. Continuing with our tradition of being innovators in FASD interventions, ENEC is scheduled to participate in the first multisite randomized clinical trial study for children with FASDs. This study will start in the Summer of 2026 and evaluate the effectiveness of vinpocetine in children with FASDs to address some of their neurodevelopmental deficits.

#### Faculty of MSACD

- Claire D. Coles, PhD, Professor
- Julie A. Kable, PhD, Professor
- Alexandra Perez, PsyD, Assistant Professor
- Molly N. Millians, EdD, Assistant Professor
- Gabrielle Yanez, PhD, Post Doctoral Fellow

#### Professional Staff

- Leslie Rubin, MD, ENEC Pediatric Consultant
- Sharonda Malcome, MS, ENEC Clinic Coordinator
- Leah Sternberg, MPH, BSN, RN, CHES, M2B Program Coordinator
- Taylor Neither, MPH, MSACD Prevention, Health Educator/Coordinator
- Mark Granados, CRA, MSA Project Manager

- Kevin McKnight, HBCD, Project Coordinator
- Melanie Koslosky, MPH, Full Body, Project Coordinator

For more information about the Center, please get in touch with [Claire D. Coles](#). [Julie A. Kable](#) can provide information about the HBCD study. Sharonda Malcome can provide information about the ENEC Clinic via phone at 404 712 9810 or [email](#). You can learn more about MotherToBaby and ask questions about any kind of exposures in pregnancy and breast feeding at [MotherToBaby.org](http://MotherToBaby.org).

### **NEW FACULTY**

**Ariel Hart, PhD** – Ariel Hart is a clinical psychologist and assistant professor in the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences. She completed her predoctoral internship in clinical psychology at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital and completed her postdoctoral residency training in health service psychology at Emory. Ariel specializes in couples therapy as well as the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and related disorders among diverse adults. She provides services through the Emory OCD and Anxiety Intensive Program and the Clinic for Anxiety Resilience, Education and Support (CARES) program, and provides outpatient therapy to individuals and couples through the Adult Outpatient Clinic at Emory Brain Health.

Ariel is passionate about providing culturally responsive care and reducing barriers to high quality evidence-based mental healthcare. She contributes to Emory's Dialogue, Integrity, Service and Community Committee and the Atlanta Behavioral Health Advocates behavioral health advocacy group. Her research interests include examining the impacts of discrimination and socioeconomic disparities on mental and physical health as well as supporting resilience in contexts of chronic contextual stress. She also looks forward to continuing program development and quality improvement efforts within the department, including a project to help patients discontinue or optimize benzodiazepine medications through psychotherapy-assisted taper. Ariel's work is driven by the underlying value that everyone deserves to live well and thrive; she looks forward to continuing to actively engage in the Emory community and provide responsive evidence-based care to patients of all backgrounds.

### **FACULTY KUDOS**

#### **Major Leadership Appointments, Activities and Achievements**

Nadine Kaslow received the Innovator of the Year - Women's Health Category from the Atlanta Business Chronicle. The Health Care Champion Awards honor frontline health care heroes alongside the industry's most innovative and influential leaders.

Negar Fani was recognized as part of the 2025 Faculty Founder Forum cohort, marking the completion of a year-long program supporting faculty innovators. The forum provides mentorship, community and resources to help academic researchers launch or scale their startups.

Ann Schwartz was elevated to Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.

Rachel Waford was named co-chair of the Mental Health Research Accelerator Group at the Rollins School of Public Health.

Martha Ward has been named assistant dean for admissions and student affairs. In this new leadership role, she will partner with the associate dean for admissions and student affairs and the associate dean for student success to ensure consistent, student-centered decision-making and support.

Justine Welsh became Academic Editor of *The American Journal on Addictions*.

### **Research**

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### **Honors, Awards, Rankings**

Rachel Hershenberg was elected secretary of Division 12 of the American Psychological Association, Society of Clinical Psychology.

Erin Jones was awarded faculty development funds to complete formal certification in Family Based Treatment for adolescents with eating disorders through The Training Institute.

Charles Raison won a Washington University School of Medicine 2026 Alumni Achievement Award.

Jeffrey Rakofsky received a Distinguished Reviewer for Academic Psychiatry (2025)

Ann Schwartz received a Distinguished Reviewer for Academic Psychiatry (2025).

Sanne van Rooij was named to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America's Scientific Council.

### **Media**

John Constantino (1) Los Angeles Times | [In Search for Autism's Causes, Look at Genes, Not Vaccines, Researchers Say](#)

Rob Cotes (1) MSN | [Incretin Therapies After Bariatric Surgery Linked to Lower Risk of Alcohol Disorder](#) (2) Medpage Today | [Incretin Therapies After Bariatric Surgery Linked to Lower Risk of Alcohol Disorder](#)

Andrew Miller (1) Knowridge | [Can an arthritis drug help find depression?](#)

Jennifer Stevens (1) Emory News Center | [Hormone Estradiol Shapes Women's Brain Responses to Threat After Trauma, Emory Study Finds](#)

Michael Treadway (1) Knowridge | [Can an arthritis drug help find depression?](#)

Justine Welsh (1) AJC | [Georgia Sees One of the Highest Rises in Life Expectancy in the Nation](#).

### **Presentations**

Jennifer Grant was part of a conversation on "Jim Crow in the Asylum: Psychiatry and Civil Rights in the American South" at Charis Books and More.

Rachel Waford (1) presented with Rob Cotes to the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors on "The Latest on Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders" (2) presented a conference presentation at the International Society for Psychology and Social Approaches to Psychosis: Longitudinal Care for Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder.

**Teaching**

Elizabeth McCord was a finalist for the 2024–25 Outstanding Pre-Clinical Lecturer Award (Human Disease) by the M2 class (CL 2028).