

Careers in Neuroscience: So You Want to Be a... Graduate Student?

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Jessica R. Barson, PhD: Associate Professor, Co-Chair of PhD Admissions Committee

Jessica Barson is an American neuroscientist and associate professor at Drexel University College of Medicine. Barson investigates neuropeptide signaling in the paraventricular nucleus of the thalamus as well as the nucleus accumbens to understand the neurobiological basis of addiction and elucidate targets for therapy. Barson pursued her master's degree and graduate research in neuroscience and psychology at Princeton University in 2004. She trained under the mentorship of Bart G. Hoebel studying the regulation of alcohol intake by dietary fat and fat-stimulated neuropeptides. In 2006, Barson obtained her Master of Arts in

Psychology and Neuroscience, and then in 2009, Barson obtained her PhD in Psychology and Neuroscience. Following her graduate training, Barson moved to New York City to complete her postdoctoral research training at The Rockefeller University in Behavioral Neurobiology in 2009 and completed her postdoctoral studies in 2014.



Tracy Riggins, PhD: Associate Professor

Tracy Riggins is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Maryland in the United States of America. She received her Ph.D. from the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota; and postdoc training from University of California, Davis and the University of Maryland, School of Medicine. The goal of her research program is to provide better understanding of the neural bases of cognitive development, particularly in the domain of memory. The empirical research conducted in her laboratory involves both typically developing children and children at-risk for cognitive impairments and uses a combination of behavioral, electrophysiological, and neuroimaging

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methodologies. She is currently serving as Secretary for the Cognitive Development Society and on the Editorial Board for Cognitive Development.



Deena Shariq: PhD Student

Deena (she/hers) is a first year PhD student in the Neuroscience and Cognitive Science program at the University of Maryland. In the Growth and Resilience Across Development Laboratory (PI: Dr. Arianna Gard), she studies community-level factors that promote healthy brain and socio-emotional development in socioeconomically disadvantaged youth. Deena hopes to pursue a career in research or policy following graduation so that she may influence policies that foster well-being in historically marginalized communities.



D'Alizza Mercedes: Professor & PhD Candidate

Originally from the Dominican Republic, Ms. Mercedes was raised in Queens, NY, before settling in the DC metropolitan area. As a seasoned Equity & Inclusion strategist, Ms. Mercedes has partnered with Discovery Communications, Inc., The American Red Cross – National Headquarters, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Ms. Mercedes is a data-driven visionary who successfully develops and implements strategies that engage, unite, and align the workforce with the organizational mission. Ms. Mercedes prides herself on being a dynamic team builder and consultant on employee enrichment and organizational development.

Ms. Mercedes holds a BA in Political Science from the University of Colorado at Boulder, an MA from Northwestern University, an MS in Human Resources Management from the University of Maryland, and is a licensed educator for grades 6 – 12 in the subjects of Social Studies and Spanish. Currently, Ms. Mercedes is a third-year Ph.D. Candidate in Organizational Psychology at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. Her research investigates the Impostor Phenomenon in women of color. Currently, Ms. Mercedes serves as Adjunct Faculty at the University of Maryland Global Campus and teaches human resources and change management

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courses. Additionally, Ms. Mercedes serves as the Doctoral Assistant for Research Methodology and International Change Management.



Daphne Soares, PhD: Associate Professor

Daphne Soares is an associate professor at New Jersey Institute of Technology. She got her PhD in Neuroscience at the University of Maryland in 2002. Soares' research was in the neural basis of auditory computations in the brainstem of Archosaurs (Birds and crocodilians). She also described a new sensory organ in alligators that detect water ripples. She continued her work in Harvard as postdoctoral fellow at the Bauer Center for Genomics Research. There is where she started working on fishes.

Previously, Soares was an assistant professor at the University of Maryland where she studied neural adaptations of cavefishes to extreme environments.



Arcadia Ewell: PhD Student

Arcadia is a second year PhD Student at Boston University where she studies Developmental Science. She is interested in the impacts of early adversity and stress on neurocognitive development, specifically the development of memory and emotion regulation. Prior to joining the Developmental Science program at BU, she received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland where she also completed her post-baccalaureate research assistantship in Dr. Riggins' lab. She currently also serves as the President of the Graduate Student Organization at BU.