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BGU & YOU

NEWSLETTER OF BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV

אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב



Recognizing
Accomplishment on
Ben-Gurion Day



BGU Psychology Prof.
Avishai Henik wins
European Research
Council's Most
Prestigious Grant



E. Scheller, Jr. Family
Foundation Entrance
Plaza to be Named at
Faculty of Business
and Management



Four Questions for
Dr. Iris Tabak

BGU Once Again #1 Choice of Israeli University Students



"BGU has grown into a large, world class university while keeping its original open atmosphere," Prof. Rivka Carmi

BGU students are the most likely of all university students to recommend their institution of higher education to their friends, according to a recent survey commissioned by the National Union of Israeli Students. BGU has consistently placed number one since the start of these surveys. Students from 27 universities and colleges were asked whether they would recommend their university or college to others – BGU was ranked first among public universities by a large margin.

BGU also came in second among universities, excluding the colleges, in the percentage of its students who believed they could find work after graduation. University President Prof. Rivka Carmi expressed her satisfaction with the results: "BGU has grown into a large, world class research university while keeping its original open student-faculty atmosphere and great social experience. This is all part of the special Ben-Gurion spirit that has guided us since the University was founded."

BGU Student Association Head Uri Keidar said that it was a matter of great pride that BGU was the most recommended among the universities. "As the only university in the periphery, it is our duty and privilege to work in cooperation with our many partners to offer a young and attractive alternative to the center of the country. If we can simultaneously bring in the infrastructure that will enable the tens of thousands of graduates to settle the Negev, we can come a step closer to realizing David Ben-Gurion's vision," he said.

Overall, among colleges and universities, doctors, lawyers and teachers were most certain they could find work. This reflects the dearth of doctors and teachers in the workforce. Apparently, law students are very optimistic since there is no shortage of lawyers in Israel. According to all of those polled, humanities, arts and life sciences students were least likely to believe they could find a job after graduation.



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Recognizing Accomplishment on **Ben-Gurion Day**



The honorary doctorate recipients brought great pride to themselves and the University with their moving remarks at the annual ceremony

The University marked Ben-Gurion Day on December 4 with the conferring of honorary doctorates on a diverse group of people who have devoted their lives to enriching Israeli society.

Honorary Doctoral degrees were awarded to comedienne and actress Rivka Michaeli (Sharoni) who performed a monologue of Hanoach Levin's "The Chief of Staff of China." Technion Prof. Daniel Weihs received an honorary doctorate for his work in aerodynamics. Environmental activist and radio personality Azaria Alon, businesswoman and philanthropist Raya Strauss Bendror, writer Yehudit Hendel,

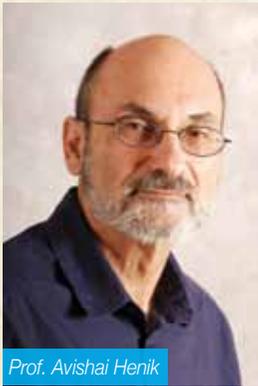
and former Bialik-Rogozin School Principal Karen Tal were also honored. Nissim Alcheh was the recipient of the Ben-Gurion Negev Award for his contributions to music in the Negev.

Speaking at the event, President Prof. Rivka Carmi laid out the vision for a just society: "The purpose of an educational system is to inculcate scientific curiosity and thinking; to instill values, adherence to the law and social responsibility; to engender a recognition and respect for Jewish history and tradition, love of the land and national pride; to educate to bring about a quality culture; to appreciate the global creativity

and promote the local creativity. Those receiving degrees and awards today, all of you have contributed and continue to contribute to this exalted purpose," she told the audience in the packed Joya Claire Sonnenfeldt Auditorium.

"Ben-Gurion University is committed to democratic values and pluralism, to freedom of expression and academic freedom and human rights. Ben-Gurion University is committed to the values of Zionism, love of the homeland, and to its security and national pride," she declared, welcoming the honorees into the Ben-Gurion University family.

BGU Psychology Prof. Avishai Henik wins European Research Council's **Most Prestigious Grant**



Prof. Avishai Henik

Prof. Avishai Henik from the Department of Psychology has won a European Research Council Advanced Grant of over €2 million – the organization's most

prestigious award. It is BGU's first ERC Advanced Grant, although University faculty members have won several starting grants. Henik's proposal, titled "Size Matters in Numerical Cognition," received the highest possible marks from the grant committee.

ERC Advanced Grants allow exceptional established research leaders to pursue ground-breaking, high-risk projects that open new directions in their respective research fields or other domains. The grants are awarded in any research field for five years.

According to Henik, incumbent of the Zlotowski Chair in Cognitive Neuropsychology, a former dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and chairman of the Department of Behavioral Sciences, "the goal of the research is to study how important the ability to perceive and evaluate sizes is to the development of numerical ability. For example, it is possible that comparison of sizes and amounts (e.g., which glass has more water?) and evaluation of continuous magnitudes (e.g., how much water is in the glass?) are core abilities.

"These skills are the basis for the development of numerical cognition. The current research will examine human abilities in this area, the underlying brain system involved, and the possibility that

this system (perception and evaluation of sizes and amounts) is the very first system (i.e., core system) that helps develop the number sense (i.e., basic numerical skills)," he explains.

"One of the most important human skills that predicts personal achievement in life is mathematical ability. The accepted view is that we are born with an innate ability to compare quantities; children learn very early to count, understand the numerical system and acquire what is generally called the number sense," he continued.

"Most researchers agree that the number sense is based on a core system centered on the ability to count and to compare different groups of items. Moreover, it has been suggested that various mathematical difficulties are due to a deficiency in this

core system. Three to six percent of the population suffers from congenital difficulties in this area – what is generally termed developmental dyscalculia (DD) or mathematical learning disability (MLD). Interestingly, the prevalence of DD is similar to that of developmental dyslexia but DD has been much less studied. Only in the last few years have we seen an effort to close the gap in the study of these two learning difficulties," he added.

The current research examines a view different from the currently accepted view, according to Henik. It includes research on children and adults who experience typical development of the numerical concepts and mathematical thinking, and children and adults who suffer from atypical development of numerical cognition.

Your support for Ben-Gurion University of the Negev is an investment in Israel's future – helping attract the best and brightest students and faculty to the Negev region.



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Ben-Gurion University of the Negev 



Flagship of Community Action Unit **Lillian and Larry Goodman** Open Apartments Program Named



Larry Goodman (center) and his extended family visited the Lillian Goodman Garden with University President Prof. Rivka Carmi and Vice President for External Affairs Prof. Amos Drory

The Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program was officially named at a ceremony in the presence of Larry Goodman of Chicago, Illinois and his extended family.

“This program has been so effective it has changed the nature of the city,” Goodman, Chairman of the Beer-Sheva Foundation, said at the event. Goodman recalled how a chance encounter with an official from the Ministry of Housing, Gideon Vitkon – later Director-General of BGU – led to the allocation of the original 65 apartments to the program.

“Thirty years ago I was in Israel working with Project Renewal in the North. I met Gideon and he wanted to set up a meeting,” he explained. It turns out the two of them were going to be in Beer-Sheva the following

day, so they arranged to meet for dinner. That day, Goodman heard from two women at BGU who wanted to launch a program where university students could live in the community in exchange for free housing, but they needed apartments to do it.

“I took them with me to dinner and I turned to Gideon and asked, ‘Does the government have any apartments available in this city?’ Two days later, he called me and said he could get 65 apartments. That’s how it got started,” Goodman recollected.

President Prof. Rivka Carmi pointed out that the second generation of Open Apartment beneficiaries was now living in the apartments.

“Open Apartments is the flagship program of our Community Action Unit. It has been

of enormous benefit to children, adults and the underprivileged communities that live in Beer-Sheva’s harshest neighborhood. We have students in the Open Apartments who themselves were neighborhood children who participated in the program. Not only are they attending the University, but they are participating in the program as a second generation. I don’t know if they would have made it to university at all without this program,” she said.

Turning to Larry Goodman, Carmi warmly thanked him for his generous support over many years. “We are genuinely happy that you are our friend and supporter,” she said.

Vice-President for External Affairs Prof. Amos Drory added, “With your support and inspiration, we will be able to expand the entire project.”

Memorandum of Understanding Signed with University of South Florida to Encourage Academic Cooperation



From l-r: Prof. Zvi HaCohen; Gov. Rick Scott; Prof. Amos Drory and President Judy Genshaft

Florida Governor Rick Scott recently led a delegation to Israel that visited BGU. During the visit, the Governor was witness to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BGU and the University of South Florida. The MOU was signed by BGU Rector Prof. Zvi HaCohen and University of South Florida President Dr. Judy Genshaft.

“Our two universities have much in common,” said Dr. Genshaft at the signing. “They are both young, exhilarating, dynamic and with the motivation to achieve.” She expressed her heartfelt belief that global partnerships are the best way for universities to offer students a truly international education.

In May 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between BGU and the University of Miami on the occasion of their President Prof. Donna E. Shalala receiving an honorary doctorate. During this visit, BGU also signed a supplement to that MOU by Prof. Gabriel Schreiber, Dean of BGU’s Faculty of Health Sciences, and Dr. Pascal Goldschmidt, Dean of the School of Medicine at Miami University.

The delegation was hosted by Prof. HaCohen, Vice-President for External Affairs Prof. Amos Drory and Vice-President and Dean for Research and Development Prof. Moti Herskowitz. The group heard presentations by BGU faculty members stressing areas of future collaboration.

“The people here really care about Israel,” Governor Scott said, referring to the impressive group from Florida that included business leaders, politicians, academics and representatives of Enterprise Florida, the organizers of the mission.



Tea and Talk with the President

A delegation of students from the International MA Program in Israel Studies traveled to Jerusalem to meet with President Shimon Peres (far left) and Former Minister of Education and Vice-Chairman of the University’s Executive Committee Aharon Yadlin.

One student, Maya Raitan, appreciated the convivial meeting with the president and his reminiscences about David Ben-Gurion. “It was an important part of my democratic awareness and an invaluable peek behind the scenes of decision-making,” she said.

Photo: Yosef Avir-Yair Angel



First Prof. Dan Koshland Prize for Outstanding Thesis Awarded to AKIS Student



Prof. Raymond Dwek presents the certificate to Thomas Groenveld

The first Prize for Outstanding Masters Thesis in Agriculture and Water in Memory of Prof. Daniel E. Koshland, Jr. was awarded to Thomas Groenveld in November 2011. Groenveld, a student at the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies (AKIS), wrote his thesis on the effect of salinity on water and nutrient uptake.

The prize was sponsored by Prof. Raymond Dwek and the Oxford Glycobiology Institute

at the University of Oxford, UK, who was present at the ceremony.

President Prof. Rivka Carmi remembered Prof. Koshland and his sudden passing four years ago. "Daniel Koshland was a renowned biochemist who was introduced to the University by Raymond and whose untimely passing saddened us all. He was very interested in desert research and I'm very pleased that Raymond has decided to

sponsor a prize in his memory."

Dwek recalled that Koshland was "an outstanding individual, a brilliant writer and a contributor to scientific policy-making as the editor of *Science* for ten years.

"He quickly realized that BGU played a central role as a disseminator of knowledge about desert research and community health in the Negev. He wanted science to create sustainability in the Negev which would lead to settlement," Dwek said.

Thomas Groenveld was born in Holland but grew up in West Africa. After traveling the world he arrived in Israel, where he ultimately met his future wife. They recently moved to Har Amasa in the Negev next to the Yatir Forest. Groenveld accepted the prize with gratitude. "This is a great honor and it gives me confidence to continue researching this model as part of my doctoral studies," he said, noting that he is continuing his studies at BGU.

Graduating with the Best

The 8th class of the Honors MBA program at the Guilford Glazer Faculty for Business and Management received their degrees last month in the presence of (center, l-r) Director of the International Advisory Board Prof. Ehud Houminer; Dean Prof. Ayala Malach-Pines; Vice-President for External Affairs Prof. Amos Drory and Director of the Program Prof. Dov Dvir.



First UK-Israel Regenerative Medicine Conference Brings Together Scientists to Create Research Bonds

British Ambassador to Israel Matthew Gould declared that Israel and Britain were “scientific superpowers,” and urged academics to work together to realize the full potential of this area of cooperation at the opening session of the first UK-Israel Regenerative Medicine Conference held in Israel in late November.

“As British Ambassador, I am incredibly proud that there are 60 British scientists here from 20 universities. I think it’s something quite remarkable,” he said, thanking BGU for hosting the event. He told the 250 participants at the conference that though he studied philosophy and divinity at university, and would spend the rest of the conference in a state of happy marvelling incomprehension, he believed that a strong partnership between British and Israeli scientists could serve as an overall model for the UK-Israel bilateral relationship.

Regenerative medicine aims to restore the function of tissues and organs using a variety of approaches, including cell therapy, tissue engineering, gene therapy and biomedical engineering. Both Israel and the UK are recognized as world leaders in this cutting-edge area of medicine.

The conference marked the inaugural event of the BIRAX - Regenerative Medicine Initiative, a five-year program established by the British Council in cooperation with the British Embassy and the Pears Foundation. It hopes to raise £10 million to enable it to support some 15 joint high quality UK-Israel research projects.

“Historically, the UK and Israel have been very good at identifying points of disagreement, but we’ve been less good at finding the things that we can do together: the things where Britain and Israel both excel, where we can together be more than we can separately and do something special. And for me, science is preeminent among those,” Ambassador Gould said.

He added that both the UK and Israel have “disproportionate numbers of the world’s top universities; we both have disproportionate numbers of Nobel prize winners, we’ve both got amazing labs doing extraordinary things at the cutting edge of almost every field, but in my eyes, there isn’t the level of collaboration between British and Israeli scientists that there could be. There is a lot of fantastic collaboration going on, but it’s not anywhere near its full potential.”



British Ambassador to Israel Matthew Gould

University President Prof. Rivka Carmi welcomed the participants, saying that “the conference attracted many more participants than we ever anticipated.” She praised the outstanding program, adding, “the only thing I can tell you is that this is one of those instances in which I openly admit that I wish I were much younger as this is definitely a field in which I would love to have been able to take a more active part.”

Join us for the 42nd
Board of Governors Meeting
May 14-16, 2012

www.bgu.ac.il/board





Snapshots

A glance at BGU events



Fourteen new researchers from across the University participated in a new orientation day organized by the Research & Development Authority



NIBN Director Prof. Varda Shoshan-Barmatz pours cement at the cornerstone-laying ceremony of the new building while the Minister of Industry, Trade and Labor Shalom Simhon looks on



Photographers from Google Street View were on the Marcus Family Campus with their special "trike" as part of the imagery collection currently being done in Israel by Google, due to go live on Google Maps sometime soon



Members of Keren Hayesod UIA Melbourne delegation to Israel grant a scholarship to BGU immigrant student (far left)



Israeli students welcome their international counterparts at an Africa Evening, as part of the Student Association's new Buddy Program

Photo: Nir Lev-Ram



Spring for the Negev Sculpture Unveiled at BIDR



Sculptor Phlyp Koshland

Sculptor and benefactor Phlyp Koshland was on hand for the unveiling of her sculpture, "Spring for the Negev," at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research. The three dancing figures represent "youth and energy and embody the spirit of BGU," she explained. "The sculpture looks like it has come home," said Prof. Rivka Carmi. "It is already hard to imagine that it wasn't always here."

Director of the BIDR Prof. Pedro Berliner recalled fondly how Phlyp's father, the late Prof. Daniel Koshland, fell in love with the BIDR and thanked the family for embracing his commitment to BGU. "Now we have the Koshland family here in science and in art," he said.

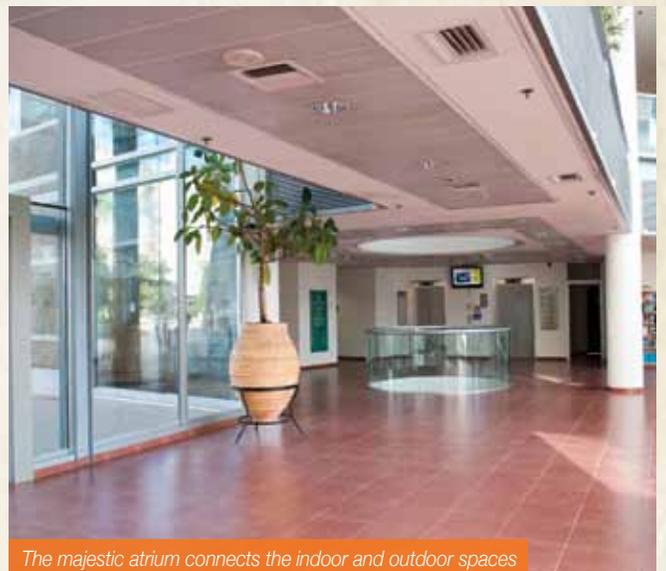
Scheller Family Foundation Entrance Plaza to be Named at Guilford Glazer Faculty

The majestic atrium at the entrance to the Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management will be named by the Roberta and Ernest Scheller, Jr. Family Foundation, in recognition of the Philadelphia Foundation's dedication to the pioneering work being done at BGU.

The Foundation dedicated the Ernest Scheller, Jr. Chair in Innovative Management in 2008. Incumbent of the Chair and Vice-President for External Affairs Prof. Amos Drory praised the Schellers' investment in BGU. "The Schellers know that Israel is a start-up nation in need of qualified professionals if it is going to be competitive in the global economy."

Bathed in natural light, the four-story entranceway is strategically placed at the intersection of the Diane and Guilford Glazer Building and the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management. Its inviting nature connects the indoor and outdoor spaces, while creating a warm public space for impromptu meetings.

The area is also used to house exhibitions and student presentations.



The majestic atrium connects the indoor and outdoor spaces

Excellence recognized



Prof. Ashraf Brik

Prof. Ashraf Brik Receives 2011 Outstanding Young Chemist Award

Prof. Ashraf Brik, a member of the Department of Chemistry, the Edmond J. Safra Center for the Design and Engineering of Functional Biopolymers and the National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev, has won the 2011 Israel Chemical Society Prize for Outstanding Young Chemist.

The award is one of the most prestigious prizes given annually by the Israel Chemical Society and is granted to a researcher under the age of 40. Brik is being recognized for the development of novel chemical methods that allow the synthesis of ubiquitinated peptides and proteins for various structural and functional studies.

Brik's current research focuses mainly on the total chemical synthesis of post-translationally modified proteins for biological studies. His group is also interested in the design and synthesis of peptides and peptidomimetics as anti-infective agents.

He is the recipient of many grants and awards from the Wolfson Foundation, the

Israel Science Foundation, the Edmund J. Safra Foundation, Marie Curie International Re-Integration Grants, Ma'of Fellowship and the Human Frontier of Science Program. He has also been named in BGU's Dean's Honors List of the Faculty of Natural Sciences as Excellent Researcher.

Prof. Yossi Hatzor Appointed Visiting Professor to Chinese Academy of Sciences

Prof. Yossi Hatzor of the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences and the incumbent of the Dr. Sam and Edna Lemkin Chair in Rock Mechanics was recently appointed as a visiting professor to the Chinese Academy of Sciences for 2012-2013.

Hatzor's research group studies environmental effects such as climatic changes and seismic activity on the performance of structures in rock, for example deep underground excavations, rock slopes and historic monuments embedded in rock masses. Hatzor studies the mechanical behavior of intact rock samples as well as rock discontinuities in a state-of-the-art Deichmann Rock Mechanics Laboratory, and models the response of rock masses to environmental changes using advanced numerical modeling techniques, with a special emphasis on earthquake engineering.

Through BGU, Hatzor has served as a geological engineering consultant for a number of national conservation projects in rock, such as stabilization of the rock cliffs of the World Heritage site Masada against the effects of earthquakes; the study of stability of underground archaeological sites such as the Bell Caves at Bet Guvrin and Zedekiah's Cave (Solomon's Quarries) in Jerusalem; and the preservation of

the Ayalon Cave which was discovered underneath the active open pit mine of Neshet Cement Industries in Ramle.

BIDR Researchers win Architecture Prizes

Researchers from the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research have won two architecture prizes. Dr. Aviva Peeters won first prize in the category of research awarded by the Israeli journal *Architecture of Israel* and the EU annual Project of the Year Competition. Her research topic was "Automated Recognition of Urban 3D Morphology."

The international and Israeli panel of judges awarded second place in the same category to members of the University's Department of Man in the Desert at the Swiss Institute for Dryland Environmental and Energy Research for their "Design Manual for Bio-Climatic Construction in Israel." The authors include Prof. David Pearlmuter (head of the department), Prof. Evyatar Erell, Prof. Isaac Meir, Dr. Yodan Rofe and the late Prof. Yair Etzion.

This is the fourth year the *Architecture of Israel* quarterly has held the Project of the Year competition in conjunction with the EU.

Dr. Michele Zaccai wins EU Marie Curie IAPP Grant

Dr. Michele Zaccai of the Department of Life Sciences won an EU Marie Curie Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways research grant totaling €430,000 to study the regulation of flowering in flower bulbs. Zaccai will research the response to the cold (vernalization) of bulb flowers in partnership with the Dutch Company

Genetwister Technologies. The IAPP encourages cooperation between academia and industry.

Zaccai will use the IAPP grant to understand the molecular basis of vernalization – the seasonal blooming of flowers. Her partner, Dr. Douwe de Boer, will provide her with thousands of gene sequences and the bio-informatics expertise to make sense out of them.

Hotel and Tourism Department Ranked Sixth Worldwide

BGU's Department of Hotel and Tourism Management has been ranked 6th out of 50 in tourism research in a recent study in the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, which examined articles published in three hospitality journals and three tourism journals from 2000-2009. According to the authors' findings, the Department, part of the Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management, was ranked 11th worldwide in the combined fields of hospitality and tourism research.

Four researchers made the top 100 list of researchers: Prof. Arie Reichel, Prof. Yaniv Poria, Prof. Natan Uriely and Prof. Aviad Israeli, chair of the Department.

BGU Highly Placed on International GreenMetric Rankings

BGU has ranked 60th out of 178 on Universitas Indonesia's UI GreenMetric World Universities Ranking 2011. The University improved its standing from last year (46 out of 95) even as many more universities joined the ranking. The only

BGU Salutes its Friends!



Beer-Sheva Mayor Ruvik Danilovich and senior members of his administration present Larry Goodman (right) with a Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of the City of Beer-Sheva

- Member of the BGU Board of Governors and the Ben-Gurion Society Larry Goodman from Chicago, USA on the occasion of receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award from the City of Beer-Sheva.
- Prof. Richard J. Deckelbaum, Columbia University Director of BGU's Medical School for International Health, upon receipt of McGill University's Medicine Alumni Global Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Global Health Education Consortium.
- Prof. Emeritus Shaul Ladany from the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management for being elected to the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

other Israeli university to make it into the list, Tel Aviv University, came in at #93.

This is the second year of this system, which allows universities in both the developed and developing world to compare their efforts towards sustainability and environment friendly university management. In the first year, 95 universities took part. This year there were submissions from 178 universities in 42 countries.

The results are computed from information

provided by universities online. The methodology is based on the principle that measuring sustainability involves three things: Environment, Economics and Equity.

BGU has been accredited by the Israeli Ministry of Environmental Protection as a Green Campus, a status which reflects its achievements in the realm of recycling, resource consumption, environmental studies and more. The University also boasts more environmental researchers and courses than any other in Israel.



The Four Questions



Dr. Iris Tabak from the Department of Education



Dr. Iris Tabak

What makes your research different from other research?

I study mediated cognition: the ways in which multiple resources, such as other people, external representations, technological tools or even emotions play a role (for better or for worse) in the way we gather, analyze and synthesize information to solve problems, make decisions or accomplish tasks.

One thing that makes my perspective unique is that I have a background in engineering, psychology and education, and I try to bring all of these lenses to bear in attempting to understand how people think and learn.

Another point of distinction is that I combine *in situ* studies with laboratory studies. That is, I examine what real people do in real life situations, as well as in the lab. Studying real life situations minimizes the gap between research and its applications, but it is difficult to control variables and isolate causal factors. Interweaving the two helps overcome the limitations of each.

What does it illuminate about our world?

This research enables us to develop a better understanding of how people think. Our intuitions might lead us to consider reasoning to be a solitary or purely mental endeavor, so this research helps to uncover all the factors that come into play.

How will it make a difference?

This research can be applied to improve formal and informal learning and for productivity support in the workplace. If we do not fully understand the nuances of reasoning or all of the resources that come into play, then we end up with “blind spots” when we try to apply what we have learned. For example, we might design instruction to focus on one aspect (the focal point of our prior research), while completely ignoring another (in our “blind spot”), and not understand why learners do not gain the level of proficiency that we had expected. Research that uncovers the complexity that underlies reasoning and the full set of resources that come into play can minimize these “blind spots.”

What’s the next step if you had unlimited time and funding?

I want to set up an immersive technologies lab where I would study how professionals solve routine problems using technologies such as surface computing, tablets and projected interfaces. This type of lab can help us study today how doctors or engineers interact with technologies that

will be commonplace tomorrow. This would mean that the design of instruction and productivity support tools could already be in place when these technologies become pervasive, rather than having these supports lagging behind.

There is considerable discussion these days about changing education so that it caters better to the demands of citizenship and the workforce of the 21st century. But, in order to accomplish this in an evidence-based way, we need to create simulations of the projected future circumstances and conduct empirical studies of reasoning in these simulated contexts.

It isn't enough to talk about adding technologies to the classroom. We have to be there to help people interact with them in a way that enhances learning.

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