

Paul McGhee Division

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Harriet Oster



Clinical Professor, NYU School of Professional Studies Paul McGhee Division

McGhee Clinical Professor of [Psychology](#) Harriet Oster describes her students as nothing short of incredible. The diversity of the life and work experience they bring to the classroom intrigues and challenges her continuously.

After a long tenure of research appointments in the School of Medicine; the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development; and the College of Arts & Science, Oster, a renowned researcher in the development of facial expressions and their role in social and emotional development, joined the faculty at the NYU School of Professional Studies in 1998. "I love it here!" she exclaims. "There's a strong sense of community among the professors. It's very much a cooperative rather than a competitive environment." That collaborative feeling has allowed Oster to play an influential role in shaping student education through her positions as research mentor, professor, coordinator of the psychology program, and faculty advisor of the McGhee Psychology Club.

"McGhee faculty members truly think across disciplines and this leads to wonderful exchanges of ideas among them," she notes. One such conversation led to a research project with Donatella Delfino, McGhee clinical associate professor of

mathematical studies. Funded by a dean's research grant, Oster and Delfino launched a study on math avoidance, aversion, and anxiety in adult undergraduate students. "There had never been an in-depth, comprehensive study of math anxiety among adult learners," explains Oster. "This was a unique opportunity for us to examine the issues that adult learners face. The study resulted in the development of curricula that transformed the negative attitudes students had about math, in turn, boosting their self-confidence and improving their performance."

Oster's passion for research fuels her enthusiasm for teaching McGhee students. "A graduate from last spring won the Best Senior Thesis award for her research on temper tantrums in toddlers, which she worked on in my lab," Oster relates. "She gave a talk at a symposium this year and we plan to write up the results for publication." Yet another standout graduate juggled raising twins, interning at Long Island Jewish Hospital, and serving as president of the Psychology Club, all while being deeply immersed in her undergraduate studies. "She was interested in clinical work when she first started, but then was turned on by research. She's now pursuing a Ph.D.," Oster notes. "Students have the chance to shine like this because of the unique nature of McGhee, which allows us to work with them whatever their goals and objectives."




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