

W&J AWARDED RESEARCH GRANT TO STUDY HOW BABIES LEARN

How do babies learn about the world around them? Psychologists, who have been puzzled by this phenomenon, are now one step closer to answering this long-standing question thanks to the breakthrough research conducted in W&J's Psychology Department.

Funded by a new, three-year, \$238,000 National Science Foundation (NSF) Grant, the research of W&J Psychology Professor Dr. Paul Quinn examines how babies use perceptual attributes, such as shape and surface texture, to organize objects into categories that develop a structure for long-term memory and higher-level cognition.

"There is evidence to suggest that even preverbal infants, well before the emergence of language, can recognize that dogs are alike in ways that cats are not, and can store that information into separate categories," said Quinn. "Verbal labels and more abstract conceptual information, learned later in life, can then be used to enrich the early representations that are initially constructed through perceptual information," he said.

In the NSF-funded study, Quinn presents infants with a series of same category pictures and examines their responses to novel category stimulation. He has presented his research findings on infant cognition at the American Psychological Association Conference, and he recently co-authored an article in *Developmental Psychology*, titled "A Connectionist Account of Asymmetric Category Learning in Early Infancy."



Dr. Alice Lee, Associate Professor of Biology at W&J, works with senior J. Paul Pepper (left) and sophomore Gina Bernardo (right) during a biology-related project.

NEW HHMI GRANT TO ADVANCE BIOLOGY PROGRAM

From a new program in neuroscience to new biology-related experiments in physics, W&J's Biology Department is expanding its offerings with more in-depth science education programs, made possible through a new, four-year, \$700,000 Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Grant. "The HHMI grant will provide students with hands-on experiences in science," said Dr. Alice G. Lee, Associate Professor of Biology and Program Director for HHMI grants at W&J.

Among the HHMI-funded programs expected to provide hands-on experiences are courses in bio-organic chemistry; a new interdisciplinary non-science majors' laboratory course; a visiting scientist program; biology-related experiments in physics; summer science workshops with local school districts; workshop follow-up efforts; research support for highly motivated high school students; a new program in neuroscience; and visits to campus laboratories for students in grades six through 12.

The grant, one of 53 HHMI grants awarded nationally, is the second of its kind awarded to W&J. In 1996, W&J received a \$600,000, four-year HHMI grant. Since then, the College has used HHMI funds to further science education opportunities.