

Dear Students,

Welcome to the 2025–2026 academic year! As I enter my third year as chair, I somehow feel even more grateful for the chance to work on your behalf and to be part of this community. Choosing to invest in your education right now—when higher education is facing real challenges—is something worth pausing to recognize. I want to unequivocally state that the Department of Psychology stands firm in its commitment to fostering an inclusive environment and advocating for justice. That has not and will not change. Everyone in our department is aligned and ready to continue the work of providing you with the very best liberal arts education.

Indeed, one of the things that makes Loyola and the liberal arts so special is the emphasis on *community with purpose*. That’s not automatic; it requires all of us. For you, that might mean closing your laptop and walking to a professor’s office instead of sending an email or joining classmates in the Fernandez Center rather than working alone online. It might mean saying “yes” to community events and “no” to unnecessary distractions. These small choices build the sense of connection that drew so many of you here in the first place. My hope is that you’ll see Loyola not just as a set of classes, but as a community built by your active participation. That sense of belonging isn’t guaranteed—**it comes from each of us showing up with and for one another.**

Relatedly, this summer I came across an idea that’s been on my mind as we begin a new academic year. In Michael Easter’s *Scarcity Brain*, he shares research from Leidy Klotz, who found that when people try to solve problems, they almost always *add* something—even when removing would lead to a better solution. The story that started it all was when Klotz’s young child fixed a wobbly Lego bridge by *taking pieces away* instead of piling more on. That insight launched a whole body of research that found that **we default to adding, when often subtraction is the more effective path.**

I couldn’t stop thinking about this. How often do we feel burned out because we’re adding commitments, tasks, and stuff, rather than clearing space for what matters? This played out for me recently when I returned from a Zen meditation workshop. I immediately went online to buy fancy cushions like the ones I’d used—until I remembered Loyola’s Fava Chapel. Inside were mats, benches, and everything I needed, already waiting. I didn’t need to add anything new... I just had to **notice what was already there**. Since then, I’ve had about a dozen experiences that have prompted me to stop and slow down. What I have found is this: more often than not, it is all already here. A less complicated solution is available and opens up opportunities in ways I did not anticipate.

That’s my invitation to you this year: notice what’s already here. Without sacrificing quality, subtract the unnecessary. Show up for what matters most—your studies, your clinical work, your classmates, your community, and your own growth.

If this idea resonates with you—or even if you want to push back—I’d love to hear your thoughts. Send me an email or stop by my office (FC 225). The very best part of my job is being in conversation with you and I’d love to hear what you think about all of this (and more!).

What about you? Did you read anything interesting this summer? Is anything rattling around in your mind that you'd like to share? I'd love to hear about it!

Wishing you a year of focus, connection, and discovery,

Dr. Carlucci

Marianna E. Carlucci, Ph.D.

Professor and Chair, Psychology Department

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

PS: A list of my (mostly) summer reads below!

Good Energy – Dr. Casey Means

Let this Radicalize You – Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba

The Day We All Stop Shopping – JB MacKinnon

Lost Connections – Johan Hari

The Second Mountain – David Brooks (I enjoyed How to Know a Person a little more)

Just Keep Buying – Nick Magiuli (*Not* about buying stuff)

Meditations for Mortals – Oliver Burkeman (author of one of my favorite books, 4,000 Weeks)

The 5 Types of Wealth – Sahil Bloom (recommendation from a CPC student!)

Scarcity Brain – Michael Easter

PPS: If you want to hear more about the sense of community at Loyola, go to the 30-minute mark in this [video](#) and get ready to cry and laugh.