FED-CEPECE Seminar: "Unpacking Gene–Environment Interplay in Substance Use and Mental Health: A Developmentally and Culturally Informed Approach"

Centre for Educational Psychology and Early Childhood Education (CEPECE), Faculty of Education

Date & Time: 27 January 2026 (Tuesday); 11:00-12:30

Venue: E33-2036, Faculty of Education

Language: English

Registration: Online Registration (https://umac.questionpro.com.au/t/ARtQyZR9mR or)

Enquiries: Mr. Brendan LEI (Email: fed_event@um.edu.mo / Tel: 8822-4210)

Speakers:

Prof. Jinni SU is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Arizona State University. She received her Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies (with a minor in Educational Research Methodology) from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Virginia Commonwealth University before joining Arizona State University.

Prof. Su's research focuses on developmental psychopathology, gene–environment interplay, and substance use and mental health among children and adolescents, particularly in racially and ethnically diverse populations. Her works have been published in journals, including Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Development and Psychopathology, Translational Psychiatry, and European Neuropsychopharmacology. She is the principal investigator of an NIH/NIAAA R01 project examining genetic and environmental mechanisms underlying alcohol use and related psychopathology among diverse youth, and she has received multiple early-career awards recognizing her contributions to developmental psychopathology and behavior genetics.

Abstract:

In this talk, Prof. Jinni SU will present recent work on how genetic risk for substance use and mental health problems unfolds over the course of development and in interaction with key social contexts. Drawing on longitudinal and genetically informed studies of racially and ethnically diverse adolescents and college students, she will illustrate how family processes, peer and school environments, and broader sociocultural experiences (e.g., racial discrimination, familism values, social support) shape the expression of genetic risk for externalizing behaviors, alcohol and substance use, and internalizing symptoms.

The talk will highlight a developmentally and culturally informed framework for understanding gene–environment interplay, emphasizing both risks and resilience. Dr. Su will discuss the implications of polygenic scores, family and cultural resources, and diverse contextual influences for advancing theory, improving representation in genetic research, and informing prevention and intervention efforts aimed at promoting youth mental health and reducing substance-related harms.