Cognitive Science is the interdisciplinary attempt to understand the mind, especially the human mind (with the prospect of creating artificial minds as a hopeful next step). Understanding the mind and intelligence has long been a goal that seemed out of reach. The mind, consciousness, intelligence, and the related phenomena have been addressed by researchers in many areas including philosophy, psychology, linguistics, medicine, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence. These disciplines have very different histories and at universities are often separated by distance and academic culture. However, in the past 30 years, there has been a convergence of these disciplines on a few research paradigms: computational models of perception and reasoning, connectionism, and embodied cognition. It is now possible to form a more complete understanding of minds by drawing on contributions from all these disciplines, and a great deal of progress has been made. This has led to the rise at many universities of interdisciplinary programs in Cognitive Science. The programs exploit the insights that come from a variety of disciplinary approaches to understanding a single phenomenon: cognition.

Why UMD

Cognitive Science aims to understand the nature and development of such capacities as consciousness, perception, information processing, language acquisition and processing, planning, reasoning, learning, representation and use of knowledge, and problem-solving, whether these capacities are realized in biological or artificial systems. The major looks to the theoretical foundations, the substantive empirical results, and the methodological tools of contributing disciplines (see Program Requirements). The hope is that by combining the methods and results of all these branches, we will be able to provide a global understanding of the mind, how it works, and why it works that way.

Acquired Skills

Cognitive Science majors develop:

- strong oral and written communication skills
- analytical reasoning and problem-solving skills
- critical thinking skills across disciplines

Career Possibilities

Graduates of the program will be prepared for study in one of the many recently developed graduate Cognitive Science programs (including the Ph.D. offered at the Center for Cognitive Science at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities) as well as graduate study in related programs such as cognition, brain and behavior, cognitive neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and human-computer interaction. Those who choose to study the law will be well suited for legal practice concerned with the variety of legal complexities associated with the development of these new technologies.

Scholarships

CLA is proud to be able to offer over 90 alumni and donor funded scholarships to our students each year. In total over $190,000 is awarded out to CLA majors and
some minors as well. Each department facilitates the process for their specific scholarships and students are also encouraged to apply for CLA-wide scholarships offered to students in any field.