



CLINICAL//TRANSLATIONAL

## CAN WE TEACH CREATIVITY?

Creativity is an increasingly important skill for navigating the 21st century. But how do human beings acquire that skill? Can it be taught? **Richard W. Hass, PhD**, assistant professor of psychology, believes it can. “I want to understand the processes through which we solve problems creatively,” he says, “and then use those processes as the basis for curricula that prepare students to hone creativity as a tool for managing life in a swiftly changing economy, society and environment.”

Toward that ambitious goal, Dr. Hass is pursuing a broad range of interdisciplinary studies on the cognitive and social processes underlying creative thinking, conceptual combination and motivation. His collaborators include experts in philosophy, neuroscientists, anthropologists, statisticians and experts in educational assessment—from institutions around the globe, including University of Alberta, Canada, and The Free University of Berlin, Germany. Their projects include:

- studies on how memory search processes enable people to generate novel ideas;
- an investigation of the interplay of cognitive and motivational variables in predicting real-world creative achievement;
- the identification of common facets of human idea-generation and problem-solving processes—and comparison of those facets with artificial intelligence strategies;
- development of creativity measurement tools and assessments of how feedback affects the problem-solving process.

### Applying Research to Curriculum Development

As the research produces concrete findings, Dr. Hass is applying them to curriculum development and to assessments of the classroom experience. With Jefferson colleagues, he is:

- helping to develop and pilot a creativity core curriculum for use across the university studying the correlation between teachers’ beliefs about creativity generally and about teaching for creativity;
- working with the **Jefferson Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education** to perform statistical analysis on—and create outcomes-based assessments of—team-focused education.

“The curriculum we are developing will, we believe, help our graduates to creatively—and successfully—address challenges and tasks for which there is no single ‘right’ answer,” Dr. Hass explains, “and to use what they know to confront situations involving outcomes that may be inherently unknowable.” ■