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Stained glass artwork in the Atrium of the Emma Eccles Jones Education Building, which houses the Psychology Department on the 4th floor.

PSYCH News—The Alumni Newsletter of the USU Psychology Department—Fall 2011

Holiday Greetings

Greetings to all alumni and friends. I hope this holiday season finds you healthy and well. In the Psychology Department we have much for which we are fortunate—our talented faculty, students, alumni, and friends. In this issue of our newsletter we highlight some of the people who make our department such a wonderful place to work and learn. We are always looking for more stories about our alumni—both for our newsletter and our website. Please send us your ideas! One of our feature stories in this newsletter is about Ken Merrell, a former faculty member in the department



will live on in all of us whose lives were touched by our association with him.

Gretchen Peacock
Department Head

who passed away at an all-too-young age of 53. Ken was a fantastic researcher, teacher, and mentor—but even more importantly, a wonderful person who touched the lives of so many people. Although Ken spent only six years at Utah State, his impact was profound and long-lasting. I know my life has been enriched, as have the lives of so many others, because of Ken. Ken is missed but his legacy

Colloquium Series

Three distinguished speakers round out the second half of the Department's Colloquium Series. All are welcome to attend. Meet with us in HPER room 114 at 9:00 am.

January 10: Akihiko Masuda, PhD, Georgia State University, speaking on "Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Account of Disordered Eating"

February 14: Michael Dougher, PhD, University of New Mexico speaking on "Clinical Behavior Analysis and the Study of

Emotions Learned Through Stimulus-stimulus Relations"

April 10: Leslie Sim, PhD, Mayo Clinic, speaking on "Eating Disorders: Translating Research into Clinical Practice"

Alumni News— Short Bites

Bonnie Barlow (MS, 2006), named Utah School Counselor of the Year

Alan Gettis (PhD, 1974), guest speaker on "Last Call", author

Rodney Hammer (PhD, 2011), Cache County Fire District Chief completes long-term goal of obtaining graduate degree

Richard Rogers (PhD, 1976), APA Distinguished Contribution to Research in Public Policy award

Check out our website at • psychology.usu.edu • We'd love to hear from you!



**In Memoriam
Kenneth W. Merrell**

Colleagues and students in the Psychology Department at Utah State University are saddened by the untimely loss of former faculty member Kenneth W. Merrell, who left this life on August 19, 2011 after a courageous battle with cancer. Dr. Merrell, most recently a professor at the University of

Oregon, served as the director of the School Psychology program at Utah State University from 1991-1997.

In May of this year Ken's influence on the field of school psychology over the past two and a half decades was recognized with APA's 2011 Division 16 Senior Scientist Award. This award recognizes a career-long program of scholarship reflecting outstanding contributions to the science base of the profession. Ken's numerous academic accomplishments include 12 books, 17 book chapters, nine assessment instruments, seven intervention curricula, and over 90 peer reviewed journal articles.

He is nationally and internationally recognized for the establishment of the Oregon Resiliency Project, a research, training, and outreach ef-

fort focused on social and emotional assessment and intervention for school-age children.

In recent years Ken wrote and published an award-winning volume of his personal heritage. Titled *The Scottish Shepherd*, the book chronicles the life of his great-great grandfather. Fittingly, Ken himself, was a shepherd of sorts. Beyond his academic achievements, his mentorship of students was exceptional. He contributed significantly to the research efforts and clinical training of future generations of school psychologists. Ken's acceptance speech, presented for him by one of his students, when awarded the Outstanding Contributions to Training award at the 2011 NASP convention, tells us much about his mentoring philosophy.

"And, most of all, to the

many graduate students in school psychology with whom I have had the honor of serving as advisor, mentor, teacher, and supervisor: thank you for your commitment to promoting the education and mental health of all children, even when it was a stretch to reach the expectations I set for you. Your struggles became my struggles, and your triumphs have been a source of great inspiration to me."

Paul Caldarella (MS 1996; PhD 1998) reflects that Ken continued to be a mentor and personal resource, even after graduate school.

"Every time I called Ken," relates Paul, "it was like we just picked up where we had left off, like you would with a good friend or family member. Ken had a way of

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"One person can make a difference, and everyone should try." ~John F. Kennedy

**Making a Difference:
Ray Alvord Scholarship**

Ray W. Alvord first enrolled in the Utah State Agricultural College in the war year of 1942. After war interrupted his stay he returned to the College in 1947. Eventually he graduated with a BS in December 1949. He then entered the United States Air Force through the AF ROTC program on campus and served 22 years, retiring with the rank of Colonel and earning Master's and PhD degrees from Stanford University.

His professional experiences have included human factors research, job performance evaluation research, university level teaching, a



Ray Alvord

consulting assignment in Iran, and Dean of a Management Master's Degree program for the Air Force.

In the civilian world he was in charge of academic standards at a major university.

He also worked for nine years as a manager of employee development for Shell Oil Company, Houston, TX. In 1989, Dr. Alvord retired to "the more passive life of Provo, Utah."

Dr. Alvord "feels fortunate to have had great experiences and challenges in the fields of applied and educational Psychology. To those seeking a career," he continues, "the challenges remain."

For the past several years Ray Alvord has quietly supported the Ray Alvord Scholarship for PhD students in the Experimental and Applied Psychological Science program. Meredith Berry and Kati Rodzon are two grateful recipients of that scholarship.

Meredith explains that "the Ray Alvord Scholarship helped me pay for a new line of research that will begin soon. The remaining money will go towards tuition, as well as required student fees for the fall and spring semesters. Needless to say I am very grateful to Dr. Alvord for this scholarship. Thank you, Dr. Alvord!" she says.

Kati relates that the Ray Alvord Scholarship has enabled her to travel to a few conferences. She says, "graduate school is extremely hectic, so the concept of having to spend hundreds of dollars to go to a conference is usually something you have to plan

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Scotts Bates Zeroes in on Student Research

Scott Bates, associate professor, has been named interim associate vice-president in the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, where he will be directing efforts to support graduate and undergraduate research.

The undergraduate research program at Utah State University is the second oldest in the country.

It provides support for student researchers, including opportunities for dissemination of research at on-campus, state, and national-level meetings as well as support for the student-run undergraduate research journal, *Discover*.

One of Dr. Bates' first tasks will be to expand the role of his office to include support for graduate student research, since graduate research is especially critical to the research and training missions of the University.

Students Benefit from Research Involvement

All graduate students in the two doctoral program specialty areas in the Psychology Department are heavily involved in research during their years on campus. Research activity at the graduate level helps students integrate didactic course work, theory, and scientific inquiry.

Graduate student Michelle Woidneck has worked with Mike Twohig, assistant professor, on a number of projects. She is currently completing her dissertation project, a treatment study examining the effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) in treating posttraumatic stress among adolescents.

She completed her thesis project under the direction of Donna Gilbertson, associate professor. This project investigated School-wide Positive Behavior Support programs across Utah. When asked why graduate research is important to her, Michelle reflects that she views her "dual roles of researcher and clinician as integrated, empirical practice,

guided by similar principles. Improving your competence in one area," explains Michelle, "enhances your abilities in the other."

Kendra Homan, graduate student, is currently involved in eight research projects. Most of those projects are eating disorders related projects with her advisor, David Stein, professor. She is also working with Mike Twohig on a project incorporating ACT as a treatment modality for Trichotillomania, a type of impulse control disorder. Two research projects with the Mayo Clinic complete her current research efforts.

Kendra has found the Psychology Department to be strongly supportive of graduate student research. In particular, she says her advisor "goes out of his way to ensure that I have every opportunity



In Memoriam cont.

listening, remembering, and reflecting back what we had spoken about that made for a very positive and helpful experience. I will miss him greatly."

Kurt Michael (MS 1997; PhD 1999), another former student, says that he and Ken stayed in contact after graduate school. He treasures the advice given to him through those years.

"I think of him often," says Kurt, "still laugh (sometimes audibly) at his comments and remarks, and otherwise view even knowing him as a personal gift from God."

"The remarkable thing about Ken," relates Melissa Holland (MS 1997; PhD

1999), is that "he always knew the right thing to say. He had a way of making even the most challenging situation seem surmountable, framing it as an opportunity for growth and wisdom. Ken said, several months before his death: "The most difficult of life's circumstances, our greatest perceived tragedies, often times become our best teachers and afford us the most freedoms."

The best "thank-you" we can give Ken Merrell is to take inspiration from his life and live our lives accordingly. Thus, Ken will continue to mentor in death, as he did in life. -Melanie R. Scott Stein



Make a Difference

In honor of Dr. Merrell, the Kenneth W. Merrell scholarship has been established. Department scholarships provide students with vital financial support. To contribute contact Gretchen Peacock: gretchen.peacock@usu.edu or (435) 797-0721.

Alvord Scholarship cont.

for well in advance. This scholarship has given me the ability to attend conferences this year without the stress of scrimping, saving, and borrowing."



Meredith Berry and Kati Rodzon



Kendra Homan, Maggie Sweeney, Michelle Woidneck

to conduct the research that I am interested in.”

Like Michelle, Kendra believes that conducting research helps her gain a scientific understanding of behavior which informs her clinical work. She explains, “I am pursuing a degree in clinical psychology and hope to work in an academic medical center as a researcher and clinician. Hav-

ing the ability to conduct and interpret research will ensure that I am providing the best empirically supported care to my patients.”

Maggie Sweeney currently serves as a graduate research assistant on two grants with Timothy Shahan, professor. This research is a multi-university endeavor in collaboration with three other universities.

Maggie received the APA Graduate Student Basic Psychological Science Grant for her master’s thesis. For Maggie, graduate research is an important foundation for her future career. She believes that gaining experience with all phases of research will be key to enabling her to be an independent researcher.



Stephanie Alberico, In the Spotlight

Stephanie Alberico graduated with a BS in Psychology in 1998 from Utah State University. The next year she enrolled as a graduate student in the School Psychology Master’s Program. She graduated from that program in 2001 and was hired immediately by Granite School District (GSD) in Utah. She

has been there ever since.

Stephanie greatly appreciates the training she received at Utah State. She explains that those experiences “prepared me not only for my role as a school psychologist but also for special assignments in GSD. One assignment that helped me grow as a psychologist was serving as a family therapist for the GSD Family Counseling program.”

In addition to the outstanding training she received, Stephanie appreciates the supportive professors in the Psychology Department who, she says, “really shaped who I am as a psychologist.” Stephanie enjoys the opportunity to reconnect with those professors each year when she speaks to the Introduction to School Psychology graduate class at Utah State University.



MENTOR Award Presented to Melanie Domenech Rodriguez

Melanie Domenech Rodriguez, associate professor, was awarded the 2011 Samuel M. Turner MENTOR Award by the APA. MENTOR stands for Minority Education,

Nurturing, Training, Organizational advocacy, and Research. The award honors a psychology faculty member who has demonstrated a commitment to teaching and training clinical psychologists to work more effectively with minority clinical populations.

Of Melanie, Dr. Igancio David Acevedo stated “I believe that you are unlikely to find a professional as consistently and genuinely committed to the advancement of people of color within clinical psychology as Melanie Domenech.”

Melanie has been a faculty member at Utah State since 2000. Her research focuses on family processes in Spanish-speaking Latino families.

Welcome New Faculty

Christian Geiser and Ginger Lockhart join the Psychology Department in January, both as assistant professors. Dr. Geiser received his PhD from Free University Berlin (2008). His teaching interests include psychometrics and statistics, particularly latent variable methodology, statistical models for measuring variability and change, models for multi-trait, multi-method, and multi-rater data.

Dr. Lockhart received her PhD from Arizona State University in human development. Her primary research interests include adolescent health behavior, prevention science, and statistics.

