



# **A History of The Psychology Department At The University of Vermont**

Victoria Baptiste, Lead Author in consultation with Meghan Schreck

November 2013

A History of The Psychology Department at the University of Vermont as compiled by the  
Graduate Students in Psychology 380, Spring 2013 Seminar on the History of Psychology

## **A History of the University of Vermont's (UVM) Department of Psychology**

The study and practice of psychology at the University of Vermont has, in its 179 year-long history, been marked by evolution, expansion, and innovation. Always true to its roots in scientific inquiry, much of the work that has come from the Department of Psychology focuses on real-world applications that elucidate and improve the human condition. The Department, itself, exudes a spirit of unity, collaboration, and commitment to educating undergraduate and graduate students in Psychology.

### **The Beginnings and Early Years**

The early years of the Department of Psychology at UVM bore witness to and operated under the auspices of an emerging new school of psychology: Functional Psychology. Burlington-born John Dewey (1859-1952, UVM class of 1879) and another Vermont son, James Rowland Angell (1869-1949)—a student of Dewey's, were the co-founders of the American School of Functional Psychology. They described Functionalism as grounded in systematic research applied to enhance individuals' adaptive capacities. More than 100 years later, this tenet remains a core feature of the Department of Psychology at UVM.

The first psychology course at UVM was offered in the mornings of September and October 1834 through the Department of Philosophy. The University charged a yearly tuition of \$79, with incidentals (e.g., textbooks) amounting to an additional \$25 per year. Although housing was provided free of charge, the fee to board was \$50 a year. In 1921, Dr. John T. Metcalf was appointed the first professor of psychology at UVM. As a member of the Department of Philosophy, he administered intelligence tests to all incoming undergraduate students and was involved in the infamous Vermont Eugenics Survey. In 1937, Metcalf was promoted to the rank of Full Professor of Psychology and named the first chairperson of the newly independent Department of Psychology. In 1947, Drs. Heinz Ansbacher and James Chaplin joined the Department; Dr. Chaplin later served as Chair of the Department from 1951 to 1964.

### **Forgays' Era and Legacy & John Dewey Hall**

Dr. Donald Forgays (1926-1993) was hired as Chair of the Department of Psychology in 1964. In addition to his duties as department chair, Dr. Forgays led an active research program studying the effects of sensory deprivation. He also taught the introductory psychology course and, with his multi-disciplinary team, applied the research findings of the Department to problems with inmates at Dannemora State Hospital in New York. As Chair, Dr. Forgays was also tasked with developing two doctoral programs in general/experimental psychology and clinical psychology. The first Ph.D. in psychology at UVM was awarded to Robert Lavalee in 1967; the next year, Patricia Stone became the first female awarded a doctorate in psychology.

The doctoral program in clinical psychology was established in 1969, with Dr. Harold Leitenberg serving as its first director. Six new clinical faculty joined the Department between 1969 and 1972 to implement the doctoral degree program and to develop state wide services and policies. Drs. Bruce Compas (UVM 1982-2005) and Esther Rothblum (UVM 1981-2002) were important for the early scholarly development of the clinical psychology program. The department also implemented a medical psychology unit in the then main hospital in Burlington and offered health psychology courses in the mid-1970s. The clinical program was quickly awarded a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Training Grant and the State of Vermont provided yearly stipends for trainees working 20 hours a week at various practicum sites. In 1972, the Department established the Behavior Therapy and Psychotherapy Center (BTPC) in order to offer an on-campus practicum site. The BTPC currently funds six to nine trainees each year from income generated by the pre-doctoral clinicians practicing at the BTPC. The program earned full accreditation by the American

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Psychological Association in 1973, a status it has maintained ever since, most recently receiving a 10-year accreditation under the current Director of Clinical Training, Dr. Rex Forehand. Dr. Karen Fondacaro presently directs the BTPC, which has recently developed an internship program for advanced level doctoral candidates, as well as an innovative multi-disciplinary team serving the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in New England. Dr. Rex Forehand was awarded the Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher Green and Gold Professorship in 2006 and the University Distinguished Professorship in 2009.

Among his many successes was Forgays' acquisition of funds to renovate the former College of Medicine building to house the UVM Department of Psychology. Upon completion of renovations in 1969, the building—which the Department still calls home today—was christened John Dewey Hall in homage to the influential Vermont psychologist.

### **The Modern Era**

The 1990s incited a burgeoning of the faculty, as the Department welcomed five new members, including Dr. Susan Crockenberg (1990) in the developmental program; Drs. John Hughes (1991) and Stephen Higgins (1992) in the pharmacology cluster; and Dr. Sondra Solomon (1995) in the clinical program. After the turn of the century, the Department underwent several faculty/staff and leadership changes, acquiring a new Chair of the Department (Dr. William Falls: 2006) as well as several new directors: Director of Clinical Training (Dr. Forehand: 2003), Director of the BTPC (Dr. Fondacaro: 2006), and Director of the General/Experimental (G/E) Graduate Program (Dr. Mark Bouton: 2004; Dr. John Green: 2011). In 2012, Dr. Mark Bouton was awarded the Robert B. Lawson Green & Gold Professorship named for the emeritus professor and former Chair of the Department.

The Department also hired 21 new psychologists, including, in the clinical program, Drs. Michael Zvolensky (UVM 2002-11), Timothy Stickle (2003), Kelly Rohan (2005), Betsy Hoza (2005), Alessandra Rellini (2007), Keith Burt (2008), Antonio Cepeda-Benito (2012; also Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences), and Matthew Price (2013); in the bio-behavioral cluster of the G/E program, Drs. John Green (2003), Sayamwong (Jom) Hammack (2006); and Donna Toufexis (2008); in the developmental cluster of the G/E program, Drs. Dianna Murray-Close (2007), Jamie Abaied (2010), and Alice Schermerhorn (2012); in the social cluster of the G/E program, Dr. Elizabeth Pinel (2007); and in the pharmacology cluster, Drs. Stacey Sigmon (2004) and Sarah Heil (2006).

In an effort to promote a multi-disciplinary approach to psychology, the Department also hired faculty with joint appointments: Drs. Robert Althoff (2001), Hugh Garavan (2006), Alexandra Potter (2008), and Diann Gaalema (2012) in psychology and psychiatry, Drs. Eugene Delay (2005) and Barry Guitar (1976) also hold joint appointments, the former in psychology and biology, the latter in psychology and communication sciences and disorders.

As new faculty members joined the ranks of the psychology department, many professors retired after decades of service to the Department, including Drs. George Albee (1971-95); Joseph Hasazi (UVM 1970-2001); Leitenberg (UVM 1965-2001); Bruce Kapp (UVM 1971-2001); David Howell (UVM 1967-2002); Lawrence Gordon (UVM 1970-2003); Herbert Leff (UVM 1971-2003); James Rosen (UVM 1976-2003); Phyllis Bronstein (UVM 1981-2004); Richard Musty (UVM 1968-2006); Marc Kessler (UVM 1969-2006); Sara Burchard (UVM 1977-2007); Justin Joffe (UVM 1969-2009); Stephanie McConaughy (UVM 1981-2009); Robert Lawson (UVM 1966-2010); and Susan Crockenberg (UVM 1990-2011). Additionally, several professors passed away while still in

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service to UVM, including, Dr. Forgays (1993); Dr. John Burchard (1936-2004, UVM 1970-2004); and Dr. Dharam Yadov (1939-2013, UVM 1970-2012), after an impressive 42 years of teaching at UVM. Long-standing faculty who remain active in the Department today include Drs. Lawson (1966); Bond (1976); Thomas Achenbach (1980), who presently directs the Research Center for Children, Youth, and Families, and who developed a comprehensive and empirically-based multi-informant system for assessing problems, adaptive functioning, and competencies across the lifespan; Bouton (1980), Carol Miller (1982), and Fondacaro (1988).

### **Emeriti Faculty, Departmental Chairs, and Program Directors**

#### Emeriti Faculty

Over the course of the Department's history, 20 retired faculty members have held the status of emeriti faculty. Emeriti faculty members describe the atmosphere of the Department as exciting, changing, expanding, and collegial. The late 1960s and early 1970s, specifically, were noted as times of exhilaration, growth, and development due to the increase in the faculty. Moving forward, the Department emphasized both teaching and research among faculty and graduate students.

#### Departmental Chairs

Dr. Richard E. Musty joined the Department in 1967 and served as Chair from 1975 to 1987. Earning the title of longest-serving Chair in the Modern Era, he guided and represented the Department expertly through periods of robust growth. Dr. Bruce Kapp, a colleague of Musty, stated that the overall atmosphere of the Department was one of cooperation and camaraderie as the faculty worked extremely well together and the students, both undergraduate and graduate, were of the highest quality, particularly during the time when the University was recognized as a "public ivy" school. However, Dr. Kapp remembered times during his 30 years of service to UVM when the atmosphere became "cloudy," primarily because funds at both local and federal levels were difficult to come by and due to rapid turnover of leadership in the President's office. Nevertheless, Kapp suggested that the murkiness did not distract from the agreeable spirit of the Department.

Prior to Dr. Falls, (2006-present), the successive Chairs of the Department include Dr. Metcalf, who led the Department for 14 years; Drs. Chaplin (1951-64); Forgays (1964-73); Lawson (1970-71, & 2002-2006); and Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College (1978-1986) (John Burchard (1973-74); Musty (1974-81 & 1982-87); Gordon (1981-82 & 1988-90); Howell (1987-88, 1990-92, & 2000-02), who also served as President of the Faculty Senate (1993-95) and Acting Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (1988-90); and Joffe (1992-2000), also President of the Faculty Senate (2005-07).

#### Program Directors

Currently, Drs. Forehand, Green, and Fondacaro head the Clinical Training Program, General/Experimental Program, and BTPC, respectively. In describing the Department as collegial and extremely supportive of a broad array of research interests, they echo the words of Dr. Falls and their predecessors. Both new and existing faculty members have built and sustained active and systematic research programs. Since 2001, the Department has continuously held the largest percentage of University Scholars of any department at UVM, with many faculty members holding additional titles of distinction. For students, the course offerings at both the undergraduate and graduate level have been revised and improved over the last several years, allowing the Department's programs to remain in high standing across the University. However, graduate student funding and space concerns continue to be challenges for the Department.

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The success of the Department is due in no small part to the overwhelming support and dedication of our staff, who together represent more than 152 years of service to the Department (and 185 years to the University at large). Students and faculty alike owe a debt of gratitude in particular to Ms. Kelly Allen (34 years), Mr. Michael George (33 years), Ms. Mary Gauvin (Psychology 19 years, UVM 21 years), Ms. Diana St. Louis (18 years), Ms. Gail Kirby (Psychology 14 years, UVM 33 years), Ms. Holly Olmstead (Psychology 13 years, UVM 26 years), Ms. Sue Martel (11 years), and Ms. Irene Knight (10 years).

### **Faculty Firsts**

Dr. Albee, who joined the UVM Department of Psychology in 1972, was the first member of the Department to serve as President of the American Psychological Association (APA). He also served as President of APA Division 12, Clinical Psychology; Dr. Ansbacher, one of the earliest faculty members of the UVM Department of Psychology, served as President of APA Division 24, Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology.

In 1981 and 1988, respectively, Dr. Lynne Bond became the first female professor of psychology to earn tenure and to be promoted to Full Professor status; Dr. Bond also served as Dean of the Graduate College (1988-94), Director of the G/E program (2000-04), Director of Undergraduate Programs in Psychology (2005-12), Director of UVM's Faculty Mentoring Program (2007-12), and uniquely, Interim Chair of the Departments of Anthropology and Art and Art History (2011-12). Today the psychology faculty represents a near-even split between males and females, with a total of 15 women having achieved tenure status over the course of the Department's history. In 1995, Dr. Sondra Solomon, a graduate of the Ph.D. program in clinical psychology, was the first woman of color hired as a faculty member in the Department; she became tenured in 2006 and holds a joint appointment in psychology and psychiatry.

### **UVM Psychology Students: 1937 to 2012**

In addition to the growth and change of the psychology department faculty, the student body also thrived. At present, the UVM Psychology programs rank among the top three undergraduate and graduate programs across the entire university in terms of both enrolled students and graduates. It is estimated that the Department has awarded well over 6,000 undergraduate degrees, with the number of bachelor's of arts degrees having increased from 108 (81 females, 27 males; 98% Caucasian, 2% people of color) to 162 (111 females, 51 males; 91% Caucasian, 7% people of color) between 1990 and 2012. During the 2011-12 academic year, the Department boasted a total of 561 undergraduate Psychology majors (157 males, 404 females; 83% Caucasian, 12% people of color, 1% international students). Since 1990, the graduate programs have admitted an average of 12 students per year (4 women per cohort) and a total of 268 students have passed their dissertation defenses (average of 11 defenses per year). Over time, the Department of Psychology has granted a total of 187 master's degrees and 456 doctoral degrees.

### **Memorable Moments**

On Saturday, December 15, 2001, Administrative Assistant Diana St. Louis arrived at John Dewey Hall to find the second floor of the building covered in two feet of water. A water purification system that had been incorrectly installed on the fourth floor leaked 16,000 gallons of water throughout the building overnight, causing \$470,000 in damage. Although described as a "horrendous" experience that "threw off" the Department for three years, the incident demonstrated the resiliency of the Department and the unity of the faculty/staff and students.

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### Future of the Psychology Department

The future climate of the Department looks to be highly collaborative and multi-disciplinary, with emphasis on research, teaching, and neuropsychological substrates. Funding and space are anticipated as ongoing challenges. Looking ahead, the Department hopes to achieve more tenured faculty, increase collaboration between the clinical and general/experimental programs and across departments within the University system, and strike a balance between teaching, research, clinical practice, and service.

Lastly, Dr. Barry S. Anton, a graduate of the University of Vermont in 1969, has been elected 2015 President of the American Psychological Association (APA). Dr. Anton joins with Dr. John Dewey (1859-1952, UVM class of 1879), who was elected President of the American Psychological Association in 1899. Dr. George Albee, who served on the UVM faculty from 1979 to 1991, was president of the American Psychological Association in 1970.

*November, 2013 --- This document was prepared by the twelve clinical psychology doctoral students (see adjacent photograph) enrolled in Professor Emeritus Robert B. Lawson's Seminar on the History of Psychology (Spring 2013). The lead author of the text was Victoria Baptiste in collaboration with Meghan Schreck.*

*Please send comments or questions to Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Robert B. Lawson – [Robert.Lawson@uvm.edu](mailto:Robert.Lawson@uvm.edu)*



#### History of Psychology Class – Spring 2013

First Row: Victoria Baptiste, Justin Parent, Maggie Evans, Wesley Sanders, Melissa Paiva-Salisbury;  
Back Row: Sheau-Yan Ho, Tim LaVigne, Amy Paysnick, Eileen Crehan, Meghan Schreck, Professor Emeritus Robert Lawson, Carolyn Dundon, Jessica Clifton