

APS Grant Supports International Conference on Teaching

February 08, 2009

The financial support provided by the APS Fund for the Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science made the July 2008 Third International Conference on the Teaching of Psychology (ICTP) viable. In keeping with the Teaching Fund goal to “facilitate communication among teachers of psychology who share common challenges and who would benefit from sharing ideas and resources,” the conference was designed for teachers of psychology in all educational settings, including high schools, undergraduate colleges, universities, and graduate programs. About 120 participants from 24 countries took part in the meeting held in St. Petersburg, where they shared information and research in the areas of teaching and learning psychology. Participants shared innovative teaching techniques, course content updates from an international perspective, and new ideas to enhance and broaden their teaching skills.

As chair of the conference, I presented an introductory talk on the history of international endeavors in the field of teaching psychology and a current overview of the problems with internationalizing curriculum around the world.

Presentations during the conference covered a broad range of issues facing psychology teachers. Several speakers presented information about how psychology is taught in their countries, including Charles Brewer from the United States, Houcan Zhang from China, Jean Retschitzki from Switzerland, Annie Trapp from the United Kingdom, Remo Job from Italy, Benoît Schneider from France, Nicholas Skinner from Canada, and Peter Wilson from Australia. Michael Stevens, Uwe Gielen, Sherri McCarthy, and Mercedes McCormick of the United States, along with Ype Poortinga of the Netherlands, described their experience in the internationalization of psychology curriculum and teaching.

Participants also heard several interesting presentations on basic skills and pedagogy of psychology given by Richard L. Miller, Bernard Beins, Neil Lutsky, and Thomas Ludwig of the United States; Joerg Zumbach of Austria; and Michel Sabourin of Canada.

Among other paper sessions were:

- Teaching Psychology Online
- Using Technology to Teach Psychology
- Introductory and General Psychology
- Psychology Curriculum Innovations
- Teaching Clinical, Health, and Sport Psychology
- Teaching, Testing, and Assessment
- New Topics and Approaches in the Teaching of Psychology

We had several topical symposia:

- Teaching Abnormal Psychology: Challenges and Strategies for Successful Courses (Convener: James Hansell, USA)
- Preparing Students and Faculty to Become Effective Teachers of Psychology: Symposium Sponsored by NITOP (Conveners: William Buskist, Douglas J. Bernstein, Robert W. Hendersen, USA).
- Internationalizing the History of Psychology (Organizers: Adrian C. Brock, Ireland & Uwe Gielen, USA).
- “Culture” in Introductory Psychology Texts: A 20-Year Follow-up (Convener: Walter J. Lonner, USA)
- Internationalizing the Undergraduate Psychology Curriculum: Lessons Learned and New Opportunities (Convener: Kenneth Elliott, USA)
- Student Engagement: Opportunities, Techniques, and Consequences (Convener: Richard L. Miller, USA)
- Teaching Psychology in South Africa (Convener: Saths Cooper, Psychological Society of South Africa)

In addition, posters and round table sessions gave an excellent opportunity for interaction and discussion.

The conference provided an atmosphere that supported individual involvement and group interaction. Presentation formats were diverse and provided many opportunities for informal exchange, networking, and professional development. As a result, the conference:

- Helped to increase understanding of the goals of psychology teaching;
- Led to a greater understanding of why psychology teaching is widely relevant and not just concerned with the training of psychologists;
- Helped to improve the teaching of psychology from international perspectives;
- Provided many new ideas and demonstrations for teaching of psychology, explaining principles and enhancing learning;
- Fostered professional development in the teaching of psychology;
- Promoted the application of psychological principles to improve the learning and teaching of psychology;
- Broadened the worldwide knowledge base for teaching and learning psychology;
- Provided opportunities to access different resources available throughout the world for learning and teaching psychology.

After the meeting, we posted all materials at the conference web site. We believe this will make it possible for many more teachers of psychology, scholars, and administrators from around the world to benefit from this conference. Based on the materials of the conference, the publication of the second volume of the book *Teaching Psychology around the World* is now in progress. We also made the materials of the first conference available at the Internet.

We hope that international conferences on the teaching of psychology will now be held on the regular basis and become self-sustainable. The 4th conference in the series is planned for July 2010 in Sydney, Australia. The 5th conference will be held in South Africa. The organizational committee has recently decided to return back to the initial conference title: International Conference on Psychology Education

(ICOPE). To better achieve our growth goals, we are creating an umbrella organization to oversee this conference series as it continues, the International Teaching of Psychology Network (InterTOP). This organization will host a website and discussion listserv, and it will be overseen by a Board of Trustees and long-range planning committee. We appreciate the “jumpstart” that the support from APS gave us as we continue moving toward this goal.