

APS Receives \$1 Million Gift

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Noted textbook author David Myers has pledged \$1 million to the American Psychological Society to establish an endowed fund that aims “to enhance the teaching and public understanding of psychological science for students and the lay public, in the United States, Canada, and worldwide.”

This is the first such endowment received by APS and it is seen as a giant step forward for the Society and for the field more generally. The gift is being made by the David and Carol Myers Foundation, which receives and will distribute all author royalties from Myers’ general audience books and his introductory psychology texts. The first \$200,000 is in the fund, and the rest will be made in installments over the next few years. Awards will be made from the income generated by the gift. In the meantime, APS is committing significant start-up funds to get the program going immediately, rather than waiting until the gift begins to generate income. Myers has indicated that he also is considering supplementing the early funds.

A FOUNDING PRINCIPLE

“Since its inception, APS has had a strong commitment to the teaching of psychology,” said President Henry L. Roediger, III, Washington University in St. Louis. “This generous gift will aid us in developing many more activities. It leads us strongly in a direction in which we were hoping to go.”

Roediger cited the ability to reach the emerging generation of psychologists as one of the donation’s most essential aspects. “Outstanding teaching at the high school, junior college, and university levels attracts new students to the field and will lead to a healthy future in all aspects of scientific psychology,” he said. “Students are our lifeblood for the future, and David and Carol Myers’ gift will help insure our teaching more students and getting them excited about scientific psychology.”

“APS is very excited by the chance to advance the teaching of psychology through its mutual efforts with Dave Myers,” said APS Executive Director Alan G. Kraut. “When the public is made more aware of the science of psychology, all aspects of psychology benefit, including teaching.”

A social psychologist at Hope College in Michigan, Myers said he wanted to “give back” to the field in which he strongly believes. “The gift is motivated by my conviction of the importance of psychological science as a source of great insights, as a strategy for restraining unbridled intuition with empirical scrutiny, and as a vehicle for advancing human understanding and compassion,” he said.

Myers is one of the most successful communicators of psychological science in the world. His research and writings have appeared in dozens of widely circulated periodicals, including *Science*, *Scientific American*, and *Psychological Science*. He has also communicated psychological science to the general public through trade books such as *The Pursuit of Happiness*, *A Quiet World: Living with Hearing Loss*, and, most recently, *Intuition: Its Powers and Perils*.

When he is not teaching or conducting research, the Seattle native is an all-weather bicyclist and avid basketball player and fan. However, it is not his jump shot that has earned him his academic celebrity, but rather his textbooks *Psychology*, *Exploring Psychology*, *Social Psychology*, and *Exploring Social Psychology*, which have become classroom staples for students of all levels of study.

“It is hard to imagine a world in which David Myers is not actively involved in advancing the teaching of psychological science,” said Robert Levenson, APS President-elect. “And now, with this gift, his vision and commitment will be carried forth to future generations of students and scientists.”

SUPPORTIVE UMBRELLA

The Myers Family gift underscores APS’s role as an influential leader across all aspects of scientific psychology. “There are a number of teaching-supportive organizations, and APS can be a supportive umbrella to all of them,” Myers said.

Wasting no time, the APS Teaching Fund is already well under way. An advisory committee of leaders in the teaching of psychology met in March in Ft. Myers (no relation), Florida, to plan the Fund’s operations and recommend priorities. While the intention is not to have a one-to-one representation of teaching-related organizations on the committee, the group includes several members who are centrally involved in such organizations as the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP), Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools, and Psychology Teachers in Community Colleges, as well as international groups.

“APS’s support for the Fund’s initial planning activities and projects will enable our pledge to leverage a quicker and bigger teaching impact than we alone could enable,” Myers said.

“There was unanimous sentiment from the APS Board to support the developmental process of the Teaching Fund,” Kraut said. “APS is prepared to undertake whatever direct planning costs are involved, no matter how substantial, and also to provide considerable staff support. We also hope to fund some initial Fund activities.”

The advisory committee is chaired by APS Fellow Doug Bernstein, University of South Florida. Among other things, Bernstein heads NITOP. “The gift will provide vital support for the teaching of psychological science in the United States and abroad for a long time to come,” he said. “I’m looking forward to working with APS and the committee to help translate this incredibly generous donation into the kinds of programs that are consistent with that goal.”

The committee will look at a variety of potential projects across a wide range of areas; everything from research on the teaching and learning of psychological science, to summer teaching institutes geared toward emerging faculty, to international teaching activities, to development of teaching resources, to initiatives aimed at community colleges. In addition to Bernstein, the committee members include: Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr., Texas A&M University; Charles Blair-Broeker, Cedar Falls High School; Jane S. Halonen, University of West Florida; Nick Hammond, University of York; Robert Hendersen, Grand Valley State University; Virginia Andreoli Mathie, James Madison University; and Patricia Puccio, College of DuPage.

A WATERSHED EVENT

“David Myers’ extraordinary gift is a watershed event in our attempts to build APS’s capacity to support psychological science now and in the future,” said Levenson. “Gifts of this nature will help buffer our field from the vicissitudes of changing funding patterns and economic booms and busts, ensuring that APS will continue to have the resources to support the development of psychological science.”

“We understand that this pledge helps jump-start the APS endowment campaign,” Myers said. APS Past-President Susan T. Fiske, Princeton University, said that the gift is a good model of substantial – and substantive – giving. “A gift of this magnitude will lay a solid foundation,” she said. “It is a vote of confidence in APS and all it does and represents for scientific psychology. This takes us into the 21st century with a new image, still lean and nice, but more established as a professional organization and ready to face the long haul.”

In the area of teaching, that long haul might include a number of potentially groundbreaking new initiatives, such as a journal-like, peer-reviewed Web site for teaching resources, an online journal with a distinguished niche in the publishing world.

“Not only would such a Web site become a standard place to search for teaching support, but a publication on it would be a valued CV entry for any faculty member from a more teaching oriented college or university,” Kraut said.

APS Treasurer Roberta Klatzky agrees that the donation is an inspirational exemplar of how vital APS is to increasing public literacy in psychological science.

“The goals of our fund-raising have always placed education and public understanding at the forefront,” Klatzky said. “Even with its very limited current resources, APS has had a major impact in educating the public. I hope that others will be inspired by this example to contribute to APS.”

Myers hopes that the APS Teaching Fund will provide increased accessibility to research on the teaching and learning of psychology. He envisions the development of teaching resources released with unrestricted availability as well as resources created for use in developing countries or underserved populations.

“We hope the Fund’s directors feel empowered to fund, at their discretion, small seed grants, but also to reserve larger blocks of funds for bigger scale or multi-year projects,” he said. Though plans are presently small, Myers’ goal is to aim big, as the sizeable contribution emblematically states. “This might include focusing grants during a given year on some target area, for which they would welcome proposals from applicants worldwide.”

But as plans and potentials bounce with vigor through psychological science’s leading minds, Myers remains confident that it is not merely the contribution itself, but rather the organization to which he is contributing that will secure the investment.

“David Myers has provided us not only with a gift but also with a challenge – a challenge to other psychologists who want to contribute to the future of our field and a challenge to APS to use this and other contributions in ways that will truly make a difference,” Levenson said. “For the generation of

psychological scientists who are now approaching retirement and may be thinking about ways of giving back something of lasting meaning to our field, this gift provides a template for how to invest in those aspects of psychological science that have the greatest personal and professional meaning to us.”

“APS has always sought to advance the broader public understanding of psychological science, which is something I care about,” Myers said. “The organization has the strength and stature to last a long time.”

APS AND TEACHING

A fundamental reason why APS was formed was to disseminate knowledge from psychological science. The APS Fund for Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science will be constructed on a strong foundation of APS’s existing projects and policies in support of teaching.

From the very first issue of *Psychological Science* to the highly acclaimed recent issues of *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, APS policy is to never charge any kind of reprint or copyright fee for the use of any APS journal article for any teaching activity. This is an unconditional policy that few other societies match.

APS has supported the National Institute for the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP) almost since APS was founded, and also created its own Teaching Institute for the APS Annual Convention. APS has since teamed with the Society for the Teaching of Psychology to organize a teaching-related program within the convention as well. The 2004 Annual Convention will mark the 11th Annual APS-STP Teaching Institute, at which David Myers will give a talk, “The Powers and Perils of Intuition,” at the Teaching Institute’s opening plenary session on Thursday, May 27.

APS maintains such a close affiliation with STP that the only non-APS item offered on its membership renewal form is a subscription area for the STP journal, *Teaching of Psychology*.

The popular APS *Observer* column “Teaching Tips” has led to a two-volume series of books, *Lessons Learned: Practical Advice for the Teaching of Psychology*, and APS is embarking on a joint project with NITOP to publish a “best of” series from NITOP’s past presentations.

Recently, APS expanded the boundaries of learning by allowing any high school teacher of psychology free and unlimited access to its most teacher-friendly journal, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. *Current Directions* is in such high demand across all levels of education that APS has partnered with Prentice Hall to create a series of psychology “readers,” consisting of CD articles, to accompany undergraduate texts in social, developmental, and abnormal psychology, with plans for four to seven more.