APS Teaching Fund to Provide Grants

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The APS Fund for Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science has established a program of small grants for activities relating to the teaching of psychology.

Robert Hendersen, Grand Valley State University, is the new chair of the steering committee that oversees the APS Teaching Fund. “When someone first begins to teach psychology, it is difficult to know what resources are available. Psychology is constantly evolving, and teachers of psychology must continually face the challenge of handling new ideas and data they were never trained to understand, much less teach. Both beginning and experienced teachers need support and resources,” says Hendersen, who succeeds Doug Bernstein, University of South Florida, as chair.

In addition to Hendersen and Bernstein, other members of the committee include: Ludy Benjamin, Texas A&M University; Charles Blair-Broeker, Cedar Falls High School; Jane Halonen, University of West Florida; Virginia Andreoli Mathie, Psi Chi; and Patricia Puccio, College of DuPage. In consideration of their work, Bernstein recalls that the committee and “the APS Board helped us to shape proposals into a set of initiatives that will support excellence in the teaching of psychology among faculty here and abroad.”

The Fund came into being through the generous support of the David and Carol Myers Foundation. Long at the forefront of making psychological science accessible to academia and the general public, Myers says his $1 million gift was “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.” The small grants program will provide nonrenewable grants of up to $5,000. “Proposed projects,” says Hendersen, “will be judged according to their creativity, their focus on psychological science, the benefits and resources they make available to teachers of psychology, their potential effectiveness, and their appropriateness for wide dissemination.” The proposals should advance the development of effective psychology teachers, facilitate communication and advising among teachers of psychology, and publicize the availability of psychology teaching resources and opportunities to psychology teachers. Details on the small grants program, including criteria and deadlines, are available in the Call for Applications opposite this page.

To focus on the public understanding aspect of the initiative, the Fund will sponsor a graduate student fellowship in psychology and media affairs. “The media needs translators,” says Alan Kraut, APS Executive Director. “We need more voices to make our research relevant and intelligible to the public, in a regular and visible way.”

On another front, the Fund will support a listserv, managed by Bill Hill at Kennesaw State University, to connect experienced psychology teaching conference organizers with people interested in organizing such conferences, especially in areas that are more remote to larger, national conferences. Lending organizational and managerial expertise to promote the sharing of academic expertise has already been

successful: in October 2005, about 60 participants benefited from the first Mountain States Conference on the Teaching of Psychology, organized by Richard Gorman and jointly sponsored by the University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, and Albuquerque TVI Community College.

To give teaching "pride of place," the APS Board has announced an annual "David Myers Address on the Craft and Science of Teaching" to occur each year at the APS Annual Convention. The committee named the lecture for David Myers, not only for his foundational support of the Fund, but also for his many contributions to the teaching of psychological science. The first of these addresses will be given by Myers himself at the New York meeting this May. (For more about the 18th APS Annual Convention, visit www.psychologicalscience.org/convention.)

The collection of initiatives has been met wish resounding confidence by Board members. Says Morton Ann Gernsbacher, APS President-elect, "The APS Teaching Fund is an innovative vehicle for enhancing public education about psychological science. I view our commitment to advance innovative teaching as a crucial counter-part to our long-running commitment to advance innovative research."

Kraut agrees. "We've only begun to shift the way the public sees psychological science," he says. "Teachers and students are our greatest resources, and thanks to the Fund for Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science, we're helping them do what they do best."

Watch for updates on the APS Teaching Fund in future issues of the *Observer*.