

Fund Making a Big Splash: Myers Donation Will See Immediate Results

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As reported in the April 2004 *Observer*, APS has received a \$1 million gift to support initiatives relating to education. Wasting no time, the planning committee for the APS Fund for Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science has already held its first meeting and several promising ideas have emerged from the group's initial deliberations.

The Teaching Fund was established with an endowment from APS Fellow and Charter Member David G. Myers. Rather than waiting for the endowment to produce income to support the Fund's activities, APS is underwriting the planning process now so that the endowment will have a more immediate impact. Myers also is considering supplementing his gift to increase the amount of money available for projects in these early years. The Fund is expected to attract additional contributions.

APS Fellow and Charter Member Douglas Bernstein of the University of South Florida chairs the committee. Widely recognized as a distinguished leader in the area of teaching, Bernstein also is chair of the Board of Directors of the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP). Members of the Teaching Fund committee include: Ludy T. Benjamin, 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.

Bernstein offered the following overview of the meeting:

Our initial meeting was incredibly productive. We identified goals for Fund activity in the following three domains:

- **Teaching Resources:** Goals here include promoting projects to survey existing resources, and helping to develop additional resources.
- **Psychology Teaching Skills:** In this area, goals include promoting projects to create more graduate courses on teaching psychology, and more teaching conferences and other continuing education opportunities for psychology faculty.
- **Public Understanding of Psychological Science:** A major goal in this domain is to support efforts at presenting the results of psychological science research in formats that have maximum impact on public attitudes and behaviors.

The committee also is exploring ways to support improving the exchange of international information through enhanced networks, formal and informal faculty exchanges, and teaching conference development.

The committee agreed that all of these goals can best be pursued through collaboration with the

people and programs of other teaching-oriented groups such as the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges, Teaching of Psychology in the Secondary Schools, NITOP, Psi Chi, and the APA Education Directorate, to name a few. It was also agreed that our efforts should be informed and shaped by input from the broadest possible representation of our teaching colleagues in North America and elsewhere. We will be requesting that input in the near future.

Perhaps inspired by the waterside setting of the meeting in Ft. Myers, Florida, the group agreed to implement several what they termed “splash” projects, that is, initiatives that will have an immediate and visible impact. “There’s so much to be done, that it makes sense to focus on some priorities that will make a big difference in the short term and also serve as a foundation for future activities,” said APS Executive Director Alan Kraut. “I’m very pleased at the committee’s progress and the commitment and energy of the group is extremely gratifying.”

The splash projects being actively pursued include development of a graduate course for teaching psychology; cataloging existing teaching resources; and convening a media advisory panel to develop strategies to increase media literacy in psychological science.

David Myers was also present for the committee’s first meeting, and was favorably impressed. “I was delighted – thrilled, really – with everything I saw happening: with APS so obviously taking its commitment to the teaching of psychology to a new level, with the willingness of a terrific team of distinguished colleagues to think creatively and work energetically, and with Doug Bernstein’s vision and leadership,” Myers said.