

# **New Local Network Connects High School, Community College, and University Instructors of Psychological Science**

May 04, 2011

Central Tennessee is home to 27 colleges, including three historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs) and six community colleges. Among them is Volunteer State Community College — a thriving community college with 70 programs and an extensive distance learning program; Belmont University, a small, private religious school; Tennessee State University (TSU), a HBCU that is Nashville's only public university; and Vanderbilt University, an Association of American Universities (AAU) research-intensive university. In addition, many public and private high schools in the region offer psychology courses. Despite the close physical proximity of these diverse institutions of learning, collective activities have been minimal.

Economic problems make matters worse. Travel budget cuts reduce professional development opportunities (e.g., attending teaching conferences). Insufficient resources limit educational opportunities for colloquia. A surge in community college enrollment strains faculty support for articulation among high schools, two-year, and four-year colleges. There is a great need for local institutions to communicate more easily, exchange ideas, and pool resources.

To help facilitate cross-pollination among educators in the region, a grant from the APS Fund for Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science was awarded to Kiesa Kelly, TSU; Peter Giordano, Belmont; and Holly Yates, Hillsboro High School. With this award, three major tasks were accomplished: The first annual Psychology Educators of Tennessee (PET) Teaching of Psychology Workshop was held; a directory of greater central Tennessee psychology programs was compiled; and a PET Web site was created containing links to area psychology programs from high school through doctoral level as well as an Events Blog with an RSS feed to keep area psychology educators informed about relevant speakers, conferences, and workshops.

The first annual PET Teaching of Psychology Workshop was held on October 30, 2010, on the TSU Avon Williams campus. Approximately 20 attendees participated, representing seven different institutions across the region. Speakers included Jessica Daniel, Associate Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School and Director of Training in Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Children's Hospital; Alysia Baker, a regional technology specialist at i>clicker; and Abigail Baird, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Vassar College and past Secretary of APS. Topics included racial identity development, effective use of student response systems in the psychology classroom, and engaging techniques for making your teaching "stick."

Funding for Baker was provided by i>clicker and Baird's presentation was supported by Pearson Publishing. Participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas over a catered lunch. Online surveys completed after the event were generally positive, especially for a free professional development opportunity during a time when campuses are facing budget crises, and there was enthusiasm about continuing the workshop. The next two events for 2011 and 2012 are in the planning stages and will be

hosted by Belmont University and Middle Tennessee State University.

Workshop attendees received a Regional Psychology Program Directory containing a list of greater central Tennessee psychology programs organized by level including websites and contact information for identified program directors. This information has also been incorporated into a PET website: [web.me.com/kiesakelly/PET\\_Site/PET\\_Welcome.html](http://web.me.com/kiesakelly/PET_Site/PET_Welcome.html). The site is designed to help connect faculty in the region but also to help provide faculty with a tool for educating their advisees about area programs as they advance from high school to community college to four-year institutions and beyond.

Through the support of the APS Teaching Fund, a regional network of psychology educators now exists, bringing together faculty and students from over 27 campuses. The Directory and Events Blog components of the PET website provide a virtual venue for cohesion and cross-pollination to continue to grow, and the PET Teaching of Psychology Workshop will allow faculty an annual face-to-face opportunity to build relationships and intercollegiate collaborations. œ