

A History of the Department of Psychology at North Carolina State University: 1915 - 2011

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North Carolina State University, located in Raleigh, the capital city of North Carolina, is designated by the Carnegie foundation as a Doctoral Research University – Extensive. NC State is one of only two public universities in North Carolina to receive this designation, with the other being the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. NC State is also one of our state's two land-grant institutions. North Carolina A & T State University at Greensboro, an historically black institution, is the other. Our current enrollment is approximately 34,000, highest among the sixteen campuses in the Consolidated University of North Carolina.

The Psychology Department is in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. We have two undergraduate programs – the general option and the applied psychology option -- and five graduate programs -- Lifespan Development, Human Factors and Ergonomics, Industrial/Organizational, Psychology in the Public Interest, and an APA-accredited program in School Psychology. We are joint sponsors along with the Department of Philosophy and Religion of an undergraduate minor in Cognitive Science, and we cooperate with the Department of Industrial Engineering in offering our graduate program in Ergonomics, which is accredited by the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society.

President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act in 1862, which provided a way for each state to obtain funds to establish one college. The major goal of these colleges was, in the words of the Section 4 of the Act, "... without excluding other scholarly and classical studies,...to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts ... in order to promote liberal and practical education for the industrial classes." Thus the land-grant idea was given official support.

There were several false starts in North Carolina, including an attempt to use the land-grant funds to create both a College of Agriculture and a College of Engineering at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Finally, however, in 1887, both houses of the North Carolina Legislature passed the bill by wide margins creating North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. And so, North Carolina State University came into being. The first students entered in October 1889, and could major either in agriculture or mechanics. The first undergraduate class (19 of the original 72) graduated 4 years later and students received either a Bachelor of Agriculture or a Bachelor of Engineering degree. Graduate work was authorized in 1893 and the first graduate degree was awarded the following year.

Psychology, as one might expect, was not present at the birth of NC State University, coming as it did just 10 years following the establishment of Wundt's laboratory at Leipzig, and just 4 years after the publication of Ebbinghaus' *Uber das Gedachtnis*. Rather, it was not until 1915 that the first psychology course, Educational Psychology, was taught. It was "... designed primarily for students with intent to teach in the rural high schools," and it was taught by an Assistant

Professor of modern languages. During this twenty-six year period, from 1889-1915, the College's total enrollment grew tenfold, from 72 to 723. Additionally, faculty were hired, new buildings were built, the curriculum became more diversified, entrance requirements were strengthened and the graduate program was extended from one to two years. In 1899 the Trustees voted to admit women. It was twenty-eight years, however, before the first woman received a degree.

During the next 25 years, from 1915-1940, there were other important developments, both for the College and for Psychology. In 1927, the first psychologist, Dr. Karl Garrison, joined the faculty. Prior to this, the psychology courses had been taught by faculty from a variety of departments. There were four such courses by 1927, all at the undergraduate level. In 1931, Mr. Joseph Moore was appointed Instructor in Psychology and during that year he and Garrison taught 13 different psychology courses. Especially important was what happened in 1931, two years after the beginning of the Great Depression. In that year the North Carolina Legislature consolidated and merged NC State, the University of North Carolina and the College for Women into the Consolidated University of North Carolina. This consolidation was accompanied by an allocation of functions to the three institutions. Of particular consequence for the Department of Psychology was that the main psychology function was allocated to the University at Chapel Hill and, though to a much lesser degree, to the College for Women in Greensboro. Although Psychology continued to be taught on the NC State campus, there was no degree program. The Psychology courses were for those majoring in other disciplines. In 1935 Dr. William McGehee

replaced Mr. Moore, and in 1940 Dr. Garrison resigned and was replaced by Dr. Dannie Moffie.

Dr. McGehee became Department Head and remained so until his departure in 1948.

Dr. Moffie then became department head in 1948, and serving in that position until 1956. The School of Education, which had been eliminated due to consolidation was reestablished in 1948, and became the home for the Department of Psychology. The Department now consisted of two full professors, two assistant professors and two part-time instructors. The Graduate School was also reestablished in 1948. Thus, in 1948, the Psychology Department offered its first degree program, leading to a Master's degree in Industrial Psychology. There were five students in the first class, and the first graduates received their degrees in 1949. Also in 1949 a Psychological Clinic was established. In 1953, the first African-American students were admitted to the graduate school, and the first African-American undergraduates were admitted in 1956. In 1956, Dr. Howard Miller, who was then on the faculty at what is now called Carnegie-Mellon University, became Department Head and continued in that role until 1977. During that 21-year period, several new schools were established including, in 1963, a School of Liberal Arts, many of whose departments, including ours, were for the first time permitted to have undergraduate programs of their own. In 1965, State College was renamed North Carolina State University and in 1971 the Consolidated University of North Carolina was reorganized to include all 16 of the state's publicly-supported colleges and universities.

During Howard Miller's tenure as department head, there were several other noteworthy changes within the department. In 1961, Master's degree programs were initiated in experimental

psychology and in school psychology, a bachelor's degree program was begun in 1964 through the newly established College of Liberal Arts, and all of the Psychology Department faculty were then granted joint appointments in Education and in Liberal Arts.

The new Master's programs had their first graduates in 1962 and the new undergraduate programs in 1966. That year, 1966, was an especially important year for the department.

Doctoral programs were authorized in Experimental Psychology and in School Psychology. By then, the faculty had grown to 15, (including several adjunct faculty) who taught 15 undergraduate and 25 graduate courses. Additional events occurring during this period included the following:

1. The establishment of a Psi Chi chapter in 1968.
2. The founding of the North Carolina Cognition Group, in 1972; its first meeting was held on the NC State campus.
3. In 1976, in collaboration with the Department of Psychology at neighboring Meredith College, the first Carolinas Conference for Undergraduate Research in Psychology was held.
4. Finally, a program in Clinical Psychology was begun in the early 70's by the Department jointly with nearby Dorothea Dix Hospital. However, the Department decided to discontinue that program in 1976 because of insufficient support by the state.

In 1971 the School of Education moved to Poe Hall, a newly-constructed seven story building. The Department occupied much of the sixth and all of the seventh floor which provided space

(though not enough, of course) for the departmental and all faculty offices, and for several laboratories, seminar rooms, a shop and a few classrooms. Paul Thayer, Senior Vice-President for the Life Insurance Marketing and Research Association, who was then also completing his term as President of the Division of Industrial Psychology of the American Psychological Association, became Department Head in 1977 and served until 1992. Among the major changes at the University during his 15-year period were the physical expansion of the campus as a result of a gift by the state of a 75 acre tract of land. It is called the Centennial Campus and is being developed to help foster university-industry cooperation. In the long run, it is expected that several of the units on the present campus will move there. This could enable many units that remain on the older campus, including the Psychology Department, to have additional space. In addition, our Library's holdings reached one-million volumes in 1981 and it was soon admitted to membership in the Association of Research Libraries.

Within Psychology there were several important developments during Thayer's tenure as Head. In 1978, a list of department-wide criteria for Ph. D. graduation was developed. Chief among them is that the seven departmental graduate programs jointly developed a set of common goals, including that all graduate students would be trained in the scientist/practitioner model. In addition, a common set of criteria for the Ph. D. was adopted which established minimum standards for all seven program areas. The undergraduate program was also revamped, and for the first time the teaching of research methods was combined with statistics and taught within the department.

Other developments during this period from 1977-1992 included:

1. Enrollment in undergraduate courses, especially Introductory and Educational Psychology increased substantially. This made it possible to increase the number of teaching assistantships from approximately 2 to 25. In other domains, however, the level of support from the state was very limited during all but 1 of these 15 years.
2. Two new graduate programs, Developmental and Industrial were spun off from the graduate program in Human Resource Development.
3. Three new Funds were established with outside support, the Henry Jones Lectureship, the Emeritus Fund, providing support to graduate students for the conduct of their research and the John Oliver Cook Fund to help graduate students during their dissertation year.
4. Finally, from 1977 to 1992 the number of tenure-track faculty increased from 21 to 25, the number of undergraduates majors increased 56% from 203 to 317, and the number of graduate students remained about the same (i.e. 102 to 104).

With Paul Thayer's retirement in 1992, Dr. David Martin, who had been Head of the Department of Psychology at New Mexico State University for 11 years, became the Department Head of the NC State Psychology Department. He remained in that position until 2006 when he returned to the faculty. During his tenure several important developments occurred.

1. The passage of a bond issue of more than \$3,000,000,000 for the Consolidated University. About \$400,000,000 of that was earmarked for NC State to be used in extensive construction on both the Main campus and the Centennial campus.

2. In 2000 the seven graduate programs became five. Ergonomics and Experimental Psychology merged and Social Psychology was dropped.
3. In 2001, the Department moved from the College of Education and Psychology (now the College of Education) to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS), a more usual home for Departments of Psychology.
4. Several new tenure-track positions were added, bringing the total at the end of Dr. Martin's tenure as Head to 31, up from the 25 in 1991.
5. The amount of outside-funded research increased substantially from approximately \$300,000 annually to approximately \$1,200,000.
6. Although the number of teaching assistants remained about the same, during this II-year period, their stipends increased about 60%, and there was a noticeable increase, also, in health benefits.
7. Finally, some additional outside support materialized, leading to the establishment of a scholarship for an entering first-year student, another for a high-achieving second-year student, and a third to provide support for graduate students in the Industrial/Organizational area to attend scientific meetings.

In 2006, Dr. Douglas Gillan was hired to be Department Head. Gillan, like his predecessor, David Martin, had previously served as Department Head at New Mexico State University. During the first two years of Gillan's service as Head, the number of teaching assistantships

increased by about 20% and, in general, faculty salaries were increased to approach national norms. The major recession that began in 2008 has stymied further progress on those fronts. In 2010, with the help of the university and college administrations, the department increased teaching assistants' salaries to be more competitive with the programs at our peer institutions. Two structural changes have come about since 2006 because of the evolution of two of the graduate programs. First, faculty recognized that Ergonomics/Experimental program had been training students only in Ergonomics and that the term "Ergonomics" tended to be used restrictively, so the name of the program was changed to Human Factors and Ergonomics. Second, the faculty in Developmental Psychology, with an increasing emphasis in their discipline on change across the entire human lifespan, revised the program's name to Lifespan Developmental Psychology. A structural change in the undergraduate program occurred in 2011 when the Applied Psychology option was merged into the General Psychology option. This allowed the department to expand internship opportunities for undergraduates. In recent years, Psychology faculty have taken on important administrative roles in CHASS, with Dr. Jeffery P. Braden serving as Associate Dean for Research from 2007 – 2008, Interim Dean from 2008 – 2009, and Dean of the College from 2009 to the present. Dr. Mary Wyer served as the Assistant Dean for Interdisciplinary Studies from 2007 – 2010 and the Interim Associate Dean for Research from 2008 – 2010.

Here, then, is a current snapshot of our department.

1. There are 29.5 tenure-track faculty, distributed fairly equally across the five areas -- Lifespan Developmental Psychology, Human Factors and Ergonomics, Industrial/Organizational

Psychology, Psychology in the Public Interest and School Psychology, through which the Psycho-educational Clinic operates. The School Psychology program is accredited by the American Psychological Association; the Human Factors and Ergonomics is accredited by the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society.

2. There are currently more than 800 undergraduate majors. It is worth noting that the criteria for admission to our undergraduate program is among the University's most stringent. Still the number of our majors continues to grow by 30 – 40 students a year.

3. The department also has numerous minors. There is also an undergraduate minor in Cognitive Science jointly administered with the Department of Philosophy and Religion.

5. In 2010, 177 students received the bachelor's degree from our program.

6. There are currently 125 graduate students. All programs are doctoral programs, and the Master's degree is awarded along the way following completion of a thesis. All students are trained in accordance with the Scientist/Practitioner model. In 2010, we awarded 10 Master's degrees and 11 Ph.D.'s.

7. Approximately 35% of our graduate students receive a teaching assistantship each year, and others receive various other forms of support, including research assistantships. Many of our advanced doctoral students work at companies in the Triangle, including IBM, SAS, RTI, and various research consulting firms.

8. There is a modest amount of other outside support for our students. In addition to the funds mentioned previously there is one available to help undergraduates in their conduct of research.

9. There are four student groups, The Psychology Club, open to all undergraduate majors, GRASP, open to all graduate students in the department, a student chapter of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society and a chapter of Psi Chi, the National Honor Society for Psychology. The Department publishes a newsletter for students, staff and faculty, which appears periodically.

10. We alternate with Duke, UNC-CH, UNC-G and Wake Forest in hosting the annual meeting of the North Carolina Cognition Group.

11. Our department has a fairly simple governance structure. In addition to the Department Head, there is an Associate Department Head, who serves as Director of Graduate Programs and an Assistant Department Head who is also the Director of Undergraduate Programs.

Departmental meetings are held monthly. A representative of the graduate students attends and has full voting privileges. Meetings are open to all faculty and staff from the department.

Committees are appointed to deal with particular issues when required. Each year a committee, broadly representative of area and rank is appointed to participate in evaluation of the faculty.

These are the major items of information about our department. Suffice it to say here, unbiasedly of course, that our department has been and is a splendid place to be, a place of excellence and civility, in which people can realize their potential. Also we are optimistic that over the next several years, each of our department's programs will be among the best that Psychology has to offer.

Psychology at N.C. State University: Some Important Dates

- 1862 Morrill Act signed by President Lincoln
- 1887 NC College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts authorized
- 1889 First students matriculate
- 1915 First Psychology course taught
- 1927 First psychologist on faculty
- 1931 Consolidated University of North Carolina established
- 1948 Psychology Department located in School of Education
- 1948 First degree program offered (MS in Industrial)
- 1949 Establishment of the Psychological Clinic
- 1963 Experimental and School programs added
- 1964 BA degree program begun
- 1966 Ph.D degree program initiated
- 1978 Scientist/practitioner model adopted for graduate programs
- 1987 APA accreditation for School Psychology program
- 1997 Ergonomics program accredited by Human Factors and Ergonomics Society
- 2000 Five graduate programs offered
- 2001 Alignment with College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department Heads

- 1940-1948 Dr. William McGehee
- 1948-1956 Dr. Dannie Moffie
- 1956-1977 Dr. Howard Miller
- 1977-1992 Dr. Paul Thayer
- 1992-2006 Dr. David Martin
- 2006-present Dr. Douglas Gillan

REFERENCES

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