

History of Department of Psychology  
Minnesota State University Moorhead

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Program and Course Development

Psychology, as a separate department, first appeared in the 1956-57 Bulletin. Seven courses were listed, but there were no majors or minors offered. In 1958-59, the number of courses had increased to 16 and in 1959-60 the first major and minor programs were established. The course offerings increased to 17 in 1963-64, 19 in 1956-66, 26 in 1967-68 and 35 by 1969-70.

In 1970-71, the School Psychology graduate program was begun and the first Masters degrees were presented in 1971. The program expanded to Level II certification in 1978. In 1985, further development resulted in permission being granted to offer specialists degrees in School Psychology. The School Psychology program received national accreditation from NCATE in 1988 and it was renewed in 1998.

Location

In the early sixties, the Psychology Department was located wherever the single faculty member had an office, usually somewhere in MacLean Hall. One year, it was located behind the then recently vacated stacks of the old MacLean library, where the MSU Bookstore is now located. In 1965, there were three professors sharing a single office. After that, the department spent a year or two in Hagen Hall.

The big change occurred in the fall of 1968 when the department moved to the third floor of the newly opened Bridges Hall. This space had facilities especially designed for psychology, including a number of observation rooms (with one way mirrors), laboratories, an animal room, a surgery room, and classrooms. The department has been in this Bridges Hall location for over 30 years with minor modification in the use of rooms (including a computer lab) and some increases in the amount of office space. In 2004, a new child developmental lab was built in what formerly was the departmental shop. Also in 2004, the departmental conference room (Bridges 360a) was redesigned and turned into the Psychology Student Center.

#### Faculty/Staff

##### The Early Years

The first psychology faculty member was hired in 1956. He was Dr. John P. Smith. He left after three years and was replaced by Robert Solso, who was the single faculty member until 1962 when Dr. Santakh Singh Anant was added to the department for one year. In 1963, Dr. Barney Morris joined the staff for a two-year stay. So, until the fall of 1965 the psychology department was made up of one or two individuals.

Departmental growth began in 1965 when Robert Solso was joined by Drs. John Koechel and James F. Condell. Dr. Koechel was only here briefly and in 1967 Drs. Dwight Harshbarger, Rudolph Chang-Yit and Abbott Schulman joined Drs. Condell and Solso to constitute a five person department.

##### From 1968 to Present

The fall of 1968 began a period of rapid growth with the department faculty numbering seven. By 1971 it had reached 10. The size of the faculty was relatively

consistent at 10 or 11 for many years. In the late eighties and early nineties a bulge in enrollment lead to a peak of 13 faculty members. As enrollment dropped, faculty size dropped back to its former size of 11, where it remains at this time. At least forty-five instructors have been members of the Psychology Department since it originated.

Table 1 lists all faculty members who have had full time appointments in the department from 1956 through 2000. They are listed in order of their first appointment and the length of their service and area of specialization is noted when the information is available.

Staff members have been an important part of the department. Secretaries include: Claudia Hagen, Linda Manderud, Debra Lien, Clarice Torgerson and Karen Gaard. Technical assistants were Leroy Erickson and Vince Dolva.

Table 1  
Faculty

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Area</u>
John P. Smith	1956-59	unknown
Robert Solso	1959-68	Experimental
Santakh Singh Anant	1961-62	unknown
Barnard Morris	1963-65	unknown
John Koechel	1965-66	Clinical
James F. Condell	1965-92	Generalist
Dwight Harshbarger	1967-68	Social
Rudolph Chang-Yit	1966-84	Comparitive
Abbott Schulman	1966-67	unknown
Bradley Bremer	1968-99	Social
David Gingrich	1968-71	Social
Arnold McDowell	1968-70	Experimental
Mildred Treuman	1968-88	Experimental
Howard Murray	1969-72	School Psychology
Angella Biaggio	1970-71	Developmental
Bruce Bromley	1969-74	Experimental
David Cole	1970-93	Experimental
Richard Reed	1970-76	Counseling

Louis Hodges	1972-74	Social
Georganna Shove	1972-74	School Psychology
Helen Wilson	1972-93	Developmental
Phillip Rice	1974-2003	Experimental
Marcia Kierscht	1977-81	School Psychology
Richard Kolotkin	1977-present	Clinical
Benjamin Judd	1978-80	Quantitative
Chris Downs	1978-79	Developmental
Sandy Bernstein	1980-83	Developmental
Richard Wielkiewicz	1980-81	Experimental
Richard Townsend	1981-86	School Psychology
Elizabeth Bull Danielson	1982-95	School Psychology
Gary Nickell	1982-present	Social
Ernest Hallford	1984-present	Experimental
Margaret Potter	1987-present	School Psychology
Gloria Lawrence	1987-88	Experimental
Derick Dalhouse	1987-present	Physiological
Diane Villwock	1988-90	Developmental
Wendy Merrick	1990-91	Industrial/Org
Judy Tomhave	1990-91, 94-96	General
Magdalene Chalikia	1991-present	Exper: perception
Donald Preussler	1990-95	Clinical
Dasen Luo	1992-94	Quantitative
Debra Seaburg	1990-91, 93-95	Counseling
James Hale	1997-99	School Psychology
Olivia Melroe	1995-present	School Psychology
Elizabeth Nawrot	1997-present	Developmental
Lisa Stewart	1995-97, 99-present	School Psychology
Christine Smith	1999-2004	Social
Peg Racek	1999, 2001- present	School Psychology
Rochelle Bergstrom	2005- present	Social

### Leadership

The first department chair was John Smith. He probably played a role in the development of major and minor programs, but left before these programs were offered.

Robert Solso came to MSU as department chair in 1959. During the first two years of his chairmanship, he was the sole member of the department and offered the entire major by himself.

Dr. James Condell assumed the chair's position in 1967 and held it until 1977. This eleven year chairmanship is the longest in the department's history. During this period the department experienced its most rapid growth. Dr. Condell was responsible for conceiving and establishing a graduate program in school psychology.

In 1977, Dr. Bradley Bremer served the first of two stints as chair. He was replaced in 1979 by Dr. Rudolph Chang-Yit, who served for three years. The following nine years, from 1981-90, Dr. Phillip Rice was departmental chair. Under his leadership the department received a grant from NSF which resulted in the department's first computer laboratory. In the period from 1990 to 1993, the chair of the department was Dr. David Cole. During his chairmanship, the major was significantly revised.

Dr. Bradley Bremer began a second session as chair in 1993 and served until his retirement from the department in 1999. During this period the department, and the entire university, made a transition from a quarter system to a semester system. Dr. Bremer was succeeded by Dr. Gary Nickell. Dr. Nickell has been the chair since 1999 and facilitated another change in the Psychology major that took effect in fall 2005.

In addition to the chair, the position of School Psychology Director has existed since that program was established. The first director was Howard Murray. He was followed by Drs. Georganna Shove in 1972, Dr. Helen Wilson in 1975, Dr. Marcia Kierscht in 1976, Dr. Elizabeth Danielson in 1982, Dr. Margaret Potter in 1989, Dr. Elizabeth Danielson in 1991, Dr. Margaret Potter in 1994, Dr. Olivia Melroe in 1998 and Dr. Margaret Potter again in 1999.

### Orientation or Emphasis

From the early days, the Psychology Department has emphasized psychology as a science, rather than its application. The major rationale for this orientation has been that this kind of undergraduate program best prepares students for graduate education. The faculty has felt that students need a good background in the discipline and its methods whether they prepare for a research career or applied professional training. With this in mind the curriculum has emphasized statistics and design courses and courses involving research projects developed and carried out by students.

In support of this approach, faculty members have accompanied students to national, regional and state conferences since the program existed. Our faculty, together with faculty from NDSU and Concordia College, developed the Red River Undergraduate Psychology Conference to provide regional students an opportunity to present their research. This conference has been an annual event since 1986. Another indication of the research emphasis occurred when one of the majors received the Paterson Award as the outstanding psychology major in the State of Minnesota in 1997.

Many faculty members have also developed productive research programs in their areas of specialization. Frequently students are given the opportunity to participate in these efforts.

The graduate program in School Psychology has always included a research-based thesis. Non-thesis alternatives have been discussed, but not adopted. Thus, the science orientation runs throughout the programs of the MSU Psychology Department.