Chair’s Report

Budgetary Difficulties in Academe: How We Cope (or don’t)

For nearly two years, we have been inundated by bad financial news. Federal, state, and local governments find themselves unable to fund the services and programs that citizens have come to expect and find necessary. Of course, these governmental problems are only reflective of the private sector economy. Since MSU still gets about 22% of our budget from the state of Michigan, we are also subject to similar concerns about our ability to maintain programs with reduced state funding. In addition, MSU faces projected annual double digit increases in health care and energy costs. The university can increase tuition, but large increases are not a viable option at a time when our students and their parents face the same economic difficulties as do we. In many cases people have lost jobs or funds they have saved to finance their education or that of their children/grandchildren. I have resisted talking about our budget since we have made many significant improvements to our undergraduate and graduate programs and have hired excellent new faculty members and staff over the past several years and that continues.

However, the relatively difficult financial situation appears to be something with which we will need to adapt for several years and it does occupy much of our time. At the local department level, we experienced a 5% reduction in our recurring budget this year and the university trustees approved a 7% cut for 2010-11. The estimates of required cuts for the following year are in the 13% range. Recurring budgets are what we assume we will need and be budgeted for from year to year by the central administration. When a portion of the recurring budget is lost, it means we must make up the difference as well as any impact of inflation in other ways every year after that point or find ways to reduce staffing or operational costs to reduce the difference. Given budget policies over the past two decades, most MSU university departments, ours included, now have no recurring operating budgets or labor budgets. Our remaining budget is entirely staff and faculty salaries or graduate student assistantships. We also now have about half our staff (i.e., technology and secretaries) on nonrecurring or soft money as well. In addition, we are short about $400,000 in graduate student funding. The only remaining areas from which we can take recurring dollars are faculty lines when faculty members leave or retire or from remaining staff lines and graduate assistantship funding. Our recurring shortfall now is about $2.5 million and will certainly grow with new reductions in our recurring budget.
How do we make up this budgetary deficit every year? One significant source of funds is the tuition return we get from offering our large lecture classes online during the summer. For those registered students that are not on campus, we get 75% of their tuition. This summer we will offer 11 different classes online and usually about 70% of the students are not on campus. A second source of revenue is dollars returned to us as a result of faculty members who have administrative assignments. A portion of their salary comes back to the department to hire replacement faculty or for other uses. We also have a small number of faculty members who are supported partly on grant dollars. Even with these sources of “soft” money, we will be about $1.45 million short next year and that is likely to grow. It will cause us to make changes, some of which we should be making anyway, others of which will mean we have to make adjustments to programs, staffing, or resources that we really feel will make us less productive or increase class sizes and reduce programs in other ways.

We are doing what we can to cope with these changes. I mentioned our efforts in generating online revenue. We are evaluating those things we do and hoping to make reductions in expenditures that do not compromise the quality of our graduate and undergraduate programs. Faculty members continue to write an incredible number of grant proposals (69 in 2009, of which about half were funded). We will engage in new entrepreneurial activity when it is consistent with our educational, research, or service/outreach goals. We have “saved” some of our online revenue over the past five years and this will help us downsize more ‘gracefully’ than would otherwise be the case. We are in continued discussion as to how to manage with fewer faculty members and staff as well as ways to generate money to support graduate students.

We do receive some donated funds and appreciate those gifts very much. However, if you appreciated my discussion above, you realize that a one-time gift does not help long term as the need exists each year and will likely increase annually over the next few years. Funds invested in an endowment do realize a return every year, but obviously a small one depending on the size of the endowment and how MSU investments do. As graduate student funding has declined, I have encouraged the establishment of endowments for graduate student funding and at least two accounts are now active. For anyone able and willing, I encourage you to make contributions to these important endowments.

However, my main reason for sharing some of this information is to inform you of our predicament and solicit ideas. We appreciate your support of higher education in the way you vote and the manner in which you exercise influence with our politicians. Of course, we also welcome any effort you can make to encourage friends and relatives to attend MSU. We will have to be more entrepreneurial as well as better stewards of the resources that remain. If any of you have money-saving ideas or ideas that may generate funds, they are welcome. As state funds for higher education diminish, we are increasingly reliant on our alumni and our own innovation with respect to funding our activity and maintaining the quality of our research and teaching.
Developing, Maintaining, and Restoring Team Cohesion

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Since the first manned lunar landing some 40 plus years ago, human spaceflight has largely centered on activities in near-Earth orbit in the form of space shuttle missions and long duration habitation of the International Space Station (ISS). Although perhaps lacking the excitement of earlier Apollo missions, the skills and capabilities acquired in these low orbit activities are an important foundation for next steps. Recently, NASA announced plans to resume human exploration of planetary space and the Obama administration has set its sights on reaching asteroids, Mars, and beyond.

Maintaining crew cohesion during these future missions will be a key challenge for our astronauts. Small teams of probably 6 astronauts will be confined in a small vehicle, with very limited privacy and personal space, in an extreme and unforgiving environment, with limited ability to communicate with Earth (about a 20 minute delay each way), for a very long duration mission of probably about 3 years. This will place considerable pressure on the crew to regulate the psycho-social relations and well being. Hence, NASA’s interest in developing, maintaining, and restoring crew cohesion – the focus of our research project.

Team cohesion is an essential ingredient for the coordinated synchronicity that characterizes effective teams, particularly those “high reliability” action teams that perform critical tasks under the stress of extreme environments. Although there is considerable research on team cohesion and team effectiveness, there is little research that examines cohesion formation, maintenance, or restoration after fracture. Our research, which is funded by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, is designed to accomplish three goals: (1) develop and evaluate training interventions to enhance the development of team cohesion, maintain and regulate it over time, and promote its restoration after fracture; (2) create psychological and physiological measurement systems that monitor team cohesion and can trigger dynamic interventions to maintain it and restore it; and (3) provide recommendations for training on (a) critical knowledge and skills (i.e., teamwork competencies, conflict management, trust repair) and (b) monitoring/ regulating interventions for cohesion maintenance and restoration.

The research approach is multidisciplinary, encompassing psychological research on individual differences (personality, interests, and biodata) and human performance, research on teamwork processes and team effectiveness, and a novel technology of wireless body-mounted sensors to monitor team member cohesion. It utilizes lab research with computer-based team simulations to dynamically model the emergence of team cohesion and its repair. Promising training, monitoring, and team regulation techniques will be evaluated in the field using long duration teams operating in extreme environments. Project goals will be accomplished using a combination of research strategies: (1) Research using computer-based team simulations (Fig. 1) will be used to (a) develop and evaluate training interventions to enhance cohesion formation, maintenance, and repair, (b) develop measurement techniques to monitor psychological states supporting team cohesion. (2) Engineering research will prototype a wireless sensor-based physiological monitoring system (Fig. 2) to assess team cohesion threats and to prompt regulatory processes to restore it. (3) Promising training interventions and monitoring/ regulation techniques will be examined in the field with long duration teams operating in extreme environments (Fig. 3, Antarctica and other “analog” environments that capture the extremes of space).
**Ryan Bowles** was awarded a grant for $25,294 through the MSU Competitive Discretionary Funding Program. His co-PIs are Lori Skibbe (Dept. of Family and Child Ecology) and Gary Troia (Teacher Education), and the title is “The Inventory of Phonological Awareness with Alternative Responses: A feasibility study.”

**Alex Burt** received the Early Career Award from the Society for Research in Psychopathology.

**Brooke Ingersoll** was awarded a three-year grant for $558,546 from the Department of Defense’s Autism Research Program for her project titled, “Development of an Internet-Based Parent Training Intervention for Children with ASD.”

**Norb Kerr** (with Deb Feltz, PI) received a $150,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “Buddy up! Harnessing group dynamics to boost motivation to exercise.”

**Robin Miller** and investigators from the Adolescent Trials Network (Jonathan Ellen, Dennis Fortenberry, and Nancy Willard) received funding from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to evaluate effective strategies to link HIV positive adolescents to care in a 13-site demonstration.

**Robin Miller** and investigators from the Adolescent Trials Network (Cherrie Boyer, Jonathan Ellen, Diane Straub, Lisa Hightow, Ligia Peralta, and Kate Chutuape) received funding from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to conduct a 10-site trial to assess the merits of two field strategies for identifying high-risk Latino youth who are HIV infected and who are unaware of their status and linking these youth to medical care.

**Tim Pleskac** received a $510,000 National Science Foundation CAREER award for the project titled: CAREER: Bringing a dynamic, stochastic, and computational, understanding to subjective probabilities.

**Cris Sullivan** (with PI José Rubén Parra-Cardona and investigator Deb Bybee) was awarded a $650,000 NIMH grant entitled “Testing relevance and efficacy in a culturally adapted parenting program.”
2010 Outstanding Student Multicultural Research Award

Maria Valenti (Ecological-Community Psychology doctoral student) was awarded the second inaugural Outstanding Student Multicultural Research Award from the Center for Multicultural Psychology Research. The award was based on a book chapter written from her master’s thesis project:


The book chapter describes Maria’s research exploring the various roles that Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) advisors play in the public school system. Their role may be increasingly important because sexual minority youth are beginning to self-identify at earlier ages leading to an increase of youth who self-identify as gay or lesbian in the school setting. With the increase of gay and lesbian self-identified students, schools have needed to address these students’ needs. One way has been through the creation of Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs), which are school clubs for LGBT youth and allies. The creation of GSAs has sometimes been met with opposition by both the school system and the surrounding community. This qualitative research project focused on the experiences of 14 Gay Straight Alliance advisors and examined the various roles that they play in a public school system. Inductive and deductive qualitative analyses elucidated themes and sub-themes surrounding advisor roles. Results suggest that the GSA advisor’s role is multi-faceted and somewhat complex. The various roles involve interactions with all the hierarchical levels of the school community, from the students to the superintendent. The five major roles informants discussed were: (1) a role model or caring adult who is a ‘safe’ person for students, (2) a teacher of leadership skills, (3) a monitor who ensures that GSA students comply with appropriate school behavior, (4) a liaison between the GSA, teachers, administration and parents, and (5) a resource for the school and broader community regarding sexual minority issues.

Maria’s chairperson for her thesis research was Dr. Rebecca Campbell, and her other committee members were Drs. Cris Sullivan and Deb Bybee.
Archana Basu received the Student Poster Award at the 25th International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Annual Conference in Atlanta, GA in November, 2009.

Archana Basu, Mercedes Morales, Guihyun Park, and Ruchi Sinha received Dissertation Completion Awards for summer semester.

Jesse Bledsoe received a Fellowship from the University of Chile, Latin American School for Education, Cognitive, and Neural Sciences.

Rodrigo Cárdenas received the Dissertation Completion Fellowship for Spring semester.

Kristen Culbert received an MSU Graduate Student Research Enhancement Award for Prenatal Testosterone and Sensitivity to Gonadal Hormone Effects on Risk for Disordered Eating.

Kimberly McAdams and Melissa McDonald received Student Travel Awards from the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP).

Molly Nikolas received sponsorship from Eunethydis to present a paper, Neuropsychological Performance and the Validity of the DSM-IV ADHD Subtypes, at the Eunethydis Young Researchers, New Ideas symposium in Amsterdam, May 2010.

Nkiru Nnawulezi received a National Institute of Mental Health Diversity Supplement Award, An NSF-Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate Award, and a travel scholarship from the Advancement of Hispanic/Chicano and Native American in Science Conference.

Jennifer Slane received a Research Fellowship in Eating Disorders at the Harris Center at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Kate Thomas was awarded first prize for her poster titled Detecting feigned PTSD with the Personality Assessment Inventory (authors: Katherine M. Thomas, M. J. Orlando, C.J. Hopwood, F.W. Weathers, M. E. McDevitt-Murphy) at the Society for Personality Assessment, March 2010.

Maria Valenti was awarded the 2010 Outstanding Student Multicultural Research Award from the Consortium for Multicultural Psychology Research for her book chapter (based on her thesis), “The role of Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) advisors in public high schools.”
Recent Graduate Student Publications


Neal Schmitt Retires as Department Chair

This summer Neal Schmitt will step down as the Psychology Department chairperson, after 10 years of dedicated and tireless service. We can’t even begin to thank Neal for all he has done for the faculty, staff and students over the past 10 years – securing us financial resources in difficult economic times, supporting faculty in myriad ways to further their scholarship, providing a variety of opportunities for students to obtain an outstanding education, and advocating for the department within and beyond the university.

One of the things that always astounded all of us in the department was how productive and influential Neal continued to be in the field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology while serving so successfully as chair of such a large department as ours. Neal is currently University Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Management at Michigan State University, and is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association’s Divisions 5 and 14. He has coauthored three textbooks and published over 160 articles. His current research centers on the effectiveness of organizations’ selection procedures and the outcomes of these procedures, particularly as they relate to subgroup employment and applicant reactions and behavior. He has also been working on the development and validation of noncognitive measures for college admissions.

In recognition of Neal’s outstanding service to our department, the faculty and staff held a reception in his honor in April. In addition to a number of ‘parting gifts’ to express our appreciation for all that he has done over the years as Chair, the department also raised $1,000 for the Ilgen-Schmitt Endowed Graduate Fellowship. Established in 2008 by graduate students in Industrial/Organizational Psychology in honor of both Neal Schmitt and Dan Ilgen, income from the endowment contributes to a graduate fellowship for a student in the Organizational Psychology program.
The John and Margo Reisman Award

This award is given to a strong applicant for clinical psychology doctoral training to aid in recruitment. Dr. John M. Reisman is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at DePaul University in Chicago. He is a graduate of Rutgers University and Michigan State University (Masters 1955, Ph.D. 1958) and is the author of “A History of Clinical Psychology” and “Principles of Psychotherapy with Children.” Margo Reisman is a graduate of Michigan State University (B.A., 1956). The scholarship award they have endowed helps recruit and retain exceptional students of unusual promise, who in turn have the potential to elevate the clinical psychology program to new levels of excellence. The scholarship is awarded in situations where additional funding, over and above what could otherwise be offered, will make the greatest differences in recruiting top clinical psychology graduate students of the highest caliber. The scholarship provides a distinct honor to the student whose accomplishments merit such recognition.

This year Tim Moran received the John and Margo Reisman Award. Congratulations Tim!
This award, in honor of the late Professor John Hurley, is given to the best dissertation in clinical each year, by a committee of clinical faculty. John Hurley was Professor of Psychology at MSU for forty-five years. He earned his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Iowa in 1953 and later earned a Diplomate in Clinical Psychology. Dr. Hurley was nationally known as a scholar in the area of group psychotherapy through his study of T-groups, group therapy processes, interpersonal theory, leadership in groups, and interpersonal perceptions. He served as the president of the Michigan Group Psychotherapy Society. Dr. Hurley developed a unique three-tiered class format which led students from the recognition of their own group behavior tendencies (and how to research them) to the observation of group dynamics in others and finally to develop and hone group leadership skills themselves. It is in the spirit of this thoroughness that the Fellowship is offered. Award recipients must be current graduate students demonstrating exceptional academic achievement.

Congratulations to Cecilia Martinez-Torteya, who received the 2009 Hurley Award in December.
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2010 UURAF AWARD WINNERS!

The University Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum (UURAF) provides Michigan State undergraduate students with an opportunity to showcase their scholarship and creative activity. Held each spring in the historic MSU Union, UURAF brings together an intellectual community of highly motivated students to share their work with faculty, peers, and external audiences. Approximately 535 students from 14 MSU College and 282 faculty mentors participated in the 2010 forum.

Congratulations to the following Psychology students who received UURAF awards this year:

Krista Bur, Chris Heffner, Meghan Kanya, Prashanth Rajarjan, Courtney Sharp

Also, congratulations to Matthew Strand, for receiving a Board of Trustees Award.
The Department of Psychology would like to congratulate the recipients of the Michigan State University Freshman Psychology Kamerschen-Pearson Scholarship. Three awards of $2000 each were given out for the 2010-2011 academic year. In order to receive the award, students had to be MSU Psychology freshmen earning at least a 3.5 grade point average. Award winners were selected on the basis of academic achievement, leadership skills, and extracurricular activities. This award came about as a result of an endowment established by one of our alumni, Dr. Karen Kamerschen, and her husband, Dr. Robert Pearson. This year’s recipients are Jennifer Thach, Danica Verderbar, and Erika Vevyan. Congratulations!

Jennifer Thach

Erika Vivyan

Danica Verderbar
Graduate Student Appreciation Week, sponsored by the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students, is designed to celebrate and raise awareness of the role of graduate and professional students within America’s colleges and universities. This year we continued our tradition of appreciating our outstanding graduate students with a Graduate Student Appreciation Lunch, this year held April 5th.
Support Your Alma Mater

Higher education faces a fiscal crisis and MSU is no exception. Now, more than ever, we need the financial support of our friends and alumni. If you visit our web page (http://psychology.msu.edu), you will see a link for Direct Giving. When you click this link, you will be on your way to a secure, encrypted, University Development page that will allow you to make a credit card donation to the Psychology Department at MSU. You can give to the department or to one of the six new funds to support a specific interest group.

Thanks for your generosity.