



# OBSERVER

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## Federal Support for Psych Research Climbing

### *Multidisciplinary Trend Emerges*

For psychologists at the nation's colleges and universities, a steady increase in federal monies has produced valuable research and interesting trends. At the University of Wisconsin, Madison, the high level of funding has enabled the school to establish a first-rate psychology department in which investigators are motivated to undertake research.

According to Charles Snowdon, chair of the department, the boost in funding is a direct result of APS efforts in the nation's capital.

See **A Closer Look at the Trend** on Page 11

"APS has been pushing federal funding for years," said Snowdon. "I think the work Alan Kraut has been doing has paid off."

Ranked as the second-highest recipient of federal support for R&D expenditures in 2000, UW-Madison also received the largest amount of R&D support among the nation's psychology departments. In that year, federal agencies gave the psychology department \$17.7 million of the \$278 million federal support package for the school.

According to Snowdon, faculty members use federal funds for research in five main areas: biological, clinical, cognitive and perceptual, developmental,

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### Top Funded in Psychology



THE UNIVERSITY  
of WISCONSIN  
MADISON



University of  
Washington



New York University



University of California,  
Los Angeles



Indiana University

See Page 11 for more information.

### Observer Is Monthly

Beginning with this issue, the *Observer* will increase publication from 10 to 12 times a year. Now every month the *Observer* will bring you the most up-to-date information on psychological research news, government advocacy and testimony, and grant information.

The *Observer's* regular features will continue, but look for more "Teaching Tips" columns in 2003.

Send questions or comments to [apsoobserver@aps.washington.dc.us](mailto:apsoobserver@aps.washington.dc.us)

## APS Journals Have Synergy

The journals of the American Psychological Society will soon become part of the wider world of online journal services. In January 2003, *Psychological Science*, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, and *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* will be available through Blackwell Synergy, the online journal service of Blackwell Publishing.

In addition to the "printer-friendly" PDF format already found on the APS Web site, Synergy delivers articles as full-text HTML with embedded links to figures, tables, and references. One click will take you to referenced journals in Crossref and the Institute for Scientific Information. Synergy offers a free, automatic e-mail alert that delivers the latest table of contents of your favorite APS journals.

You will also be able to access other databases, such as PubMed and ADS, through reference, keyword, and author links. Synergy also provides the ability to quickly search for citations among the thousands of articles.

Accessing the latest issues of APS journals will remain the same. Log on to the APS Web site with your name and member number (found on the mailing label of your *Observer*). Visit the APS journals online at [www.psychologicalscience.org/journals](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/journals) for the latest issues. ♦

expand on our collection in some subtle way. For all of us collectors, growth comes from diversity.

5) *The search for the perfect object.* Most collectors have an idea of some “perfect” member of their collection: the vintage of a particular year, the first edition book, the unblemished doll still in its original package. Such perfect objects are usually among the most highly prized members of the collection, the ones displayed with most prominence, and the ones first pointed out to visitors. Similarly, we data collectors often have images of our “perfect” data collection, which of course varies according to our methodological proclivities. For some, it is an unconfounded experiment with all hypotheses (including the four-way interactions) supported at  $p$  values less than .001. For others, it is a well-preserved, largely intact fossil. For yet others, it is an undocumented comet spinning through the heavens. Regardless, the search for these perfect data keeps us active for many years. If we do find what we are looking for, we tell everyone about it, and are happy to reap the attention of our colleagues (as well as perhaps the occasional newspaper reporter).

## CONCLUSION

Of course the fact that similarities exist between

“object” collectors and “data” collectors does not imply that all aspects of the endeavors are exactly the same. Collectors of “objects” seem to do so for a variety of reasons, including curiosity, challenge, and even psychopathology. We data collectors typically have the additional purposes of collecting data so that we may ameliorate some unfortunate condition or so we may find “the truth” (or at least that truth supportive of our favorite theory). Additionally, we data collectors often have two other motivations which must not be forgotten: Our collections pay the bills and provide the strokes that bolster many of our egos (i.e., we rarely publish anonymously).

Despite these differences, I find the similarities between object collectors and data collectors provocative, for they show once again that many of the same dynamics behind our behavior as scientists and academicians are, at base, shaped by more general psychological tendencies.

We can not escape the facts that we data collectors are people first, and that ours is a culture that operates by the same types of rules that govern other cultures. Even when those other people and cultures are trying to amass large numbers of Beanie Babies. ♦

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## FUNDING FROM PAGE 1

and social and personality. Within those areas, the researchers conduct studies on a range of issues, including brain imaging and human psychophysiology, auditory sensation and perception, memory and vision, language, longitudinal studies on children, infant development, developmental psychopathology, depression, and emotion.

Snowden attributes his department’s success in securing more federal support each year to two factors: the high level of mentoring by senior researchers, who guide novice investigators in learning how to write federal grants; and the skill of the faculty members.

“We have no deadwood on our staff,” he added. “Everyone is engaged in scholarly research.”

University-wide, federal support and gifts account for 50 percent of the UW-Madison budget, while state funding and tuition represent the remainder.

But the university has also developed a backup plan in case investigators don’t win a grant. If their applications are rejected, they are eligible to apply to the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF). This \$20 million-a-year trust was established with royalties the University receives from

its patent on Vitamin A, which a UW-Madison biochemist discovered in the 1920s.

The foundation issues grants to new investigators or backup funding to established researchers for ongoing projects. Snowden said the only condition is that investigators must also have applied for outside funds in order to qualify for a WARF grant.

## BIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY UNITE

Despite the steady growth in federal support, some say that securing a federal grant for traditional psychology research is becoming less common. To obtain funding, many investigators are taking a cross-disciplinary approach to their research.

Snowdon believes increased collaboration with applied disciplines is on the rise in general. At UW-Madison, biology is a common element in many federally funded studies such as research on hormones and behavior, or the effect of social behavior and the environment on the immune system and psychoneuroimmunology. Half of the psychology department staffers at UW-Madison conduct some type of biological-related study. ♦