Reflections on the first 50 Years of I-O Psychology at BGSU

By Maggie Brooks — Director, I-O Psychology Program

Greetings from our little slice of flat, swampy paradise. It was great to see many of you for our 50th Anniversary celebration. We’re so lucky to have such a talented, distinguished group of alumni, and we are going to work to stay better connected with all of you. Given our recent focus on celebrating the history of the I-O program, I’m going to include a little program history to set the stage for Mike’s recap of the 50th Anniversary weekend. Please e-mail me (mbrooks@bgsu.edu) with corrections to this summary or additional I-O program history and trivia.

The I-O program at BGSU can be traced back to 1952, when Bob Guion joined the psychology department at BGSU. Although there was no I-O (or even Industrial) psychology program, graduate students then had the opportunity to take industrial psychology courses and pursue research topics in the area.

The year 1965 was momentous for BGSU and I-O psychology. The industrial psychology program was approved by the Ohio Board of Regents, and the industrial psychology program at BGSU was born. You may be thinking that this would make the 50th Anniversary of the birth of the program 2015 – and you are correct. We missed that one, but we really wanted to get everyone together anyway, so we decided to celebrate the anniversary of the first Ph.D. granted. I’ll get to that in a minute.

In 1966, two new faculty members joined industrial psychology, through a National Science Foundation department development grant. Pat Smith and Joe Cranny joined Bob Guion, and they formed a critical mass that laid the foundation for the strong program we have preserved throughout the years.

In 1969, the program welcomed two more faculty – Ken Alvarez and Lowell Schipper. Ken brought a focus on the “O” side, and Lowell brought strong quantitative skills and training.

A decade later in 1981, marked the beginning of what we now call the Institute of Psychological Research and Application (IPRA), an institute focused on providing consulting and research services with an emphasis on graduate student training. Originally named the Institute for Organizational Research and Development (IORD), it was reimagined in 1987 when faculty applied for a State of Ohio Academic Challenge Award and was renamed in 1989 when the IO program received the award.

Also in the ’80s, Bill Balzer (1983), Carla Smith (1985), and Ann Marie Ryan (1987) joined the program. Bill served as chair of the psychology department from 1993-1999 and later moved into multiple administrative roles including Dean of BGSU Firelands and his current position as Vice President for Faculty Affairs and Strategic Initiatives for BGSU. Carla established a program in occupational health psychology (OHP) and was
on the faculty at BGSU until she passed away in 2002. Ann Marie was on the IO faculty at BGSU until 1996, when she left for the IO program at Michigan State University. Ann Marie served as one of the early directors of IPRA. In 1991, the program was awarded an Ohio Board of Regents Eminent Scholar position. The award was designed to enhance outstanding academic programs by helping them recruit nationally recognized scholars. Milt Hakel was the first Ohio Eminent Scholar in I-O psychology at BGSU. Milt retired in 2009 but remains active in I-O as the SIOP Foundation President.

From the foundation of the program to the current faculty

Scott Highhouse and Mike Zickar were hired in 1996. Scott became the second Ohio Eminent Scholar in I-O psychology when Milt retired in 2009. Mike became chair of the psychology department in 2008 and is finishing his third and final term at the end of this academic year. This year he was named Sandman Professor in I-O Psychology. I was hired in the management department at BGSU in 2006 and was officially dual-appointed to the I-O psychology faculty in 2009. In 2014, Clare Barrett joined the I-O program. Recent hires are Sam McAbee (2017) and Melissa Keith (2019) – read more about them later in the newsletter.

The state of the BGSU I-O program is strong. We are working every day to maintain the excellent tradition and reputation of our program, while adapting and improving to continue to develop the best I-O psychologists for roles in academia and industry. We appreciate all the work of those who came before us, who formed the foundation on which we continue to build a world-class program.

In 1969 (the year I was born!), Frank Landy and Shelly Zedeck were awarded the first and second doctoral degrees in industrial-organizational psychology. For many years, they argued who deserved credit for being the first BGSU Ph.D.

On October 25 and 26, the Industrial-Organizational Psychology program hosted a 50th Reunion to celebrate the accomplishments of our Ph.D. program, to plan for the next 50 years, and to get some clarification from Shelly on who exactly was the first BGSU Ph.D.

We held the reunion in the Bowen-Thompson Student Union, which has been much spruced up compared to the Student Union that many of our alumni remembered. Like every other corner of this country, there is now a Starbucks! And sushi. There has been a lot of progress on campus, though the Psychology Building remains largely the same as most alumni remembered it, regardless of whether you graduated in 1972 or 2012!

Our day-and-a-half program had a variety of events including panel discussions led by alumni, communities of interest to spur discussion among people with similar careers or research interests, a keynote address by Shelly, a building tour, plus social events including a final dinner at Milt and Lee Hakel’s house surrounded by their wonderful glass art collection.

Panel discussions included entrepreneurship within I-O psychology, reflections on how the field has changed over the past 50 years, things that you did not learn when you were at BGSU, as well as a final panel on how to plan for the future of the BGSU program. We had robust discussions within each of these topics, gathering good information that will help us grow as well as sharing great ideas with our current group of doctoral students.

Shelly Zedeck’s keynote covered details about his career starting with his undergraduate years at Brooklyn College, leading to his time at BGSU, and his long career at University of California-Berkeley. He shared lots of memories about his time at BGSU, including a funny story about how he passed his foreign language requirement that was part of the doctoral program at the time (in short, he lucked out!). He told stories of his advisor Pat Smith and what it was like to be a student during the early days of the program. He ended with recent research work on developing better predictors for lawyers, motivated by a desire to move beyond the LSAT to help law schools diversify their classes. And he closed with recent work, detailing concerns about using artificial intelligence (AI) to gather data about applicants and use that information in algorithms for hiring. In short, Shelly’s career started off with lots of energy, and 50 years later, he is still inspiring all of us! We are so grateful that he and his wife Marti (also, a BGSU graduate) joined us for the reunion.
Ray Craig, the Dean of the College of Arts and Science, showed up on Friday and Saturday and sat in to observe some sessions on Saturday morning and share some fun stories about the founding of the psychology doctoral programs garnered from 1969 editions of the BG News. BGSU President Rodney Rogers also popped in on Saturday morning to meet alumni during the breakfast.

Some lessons learned from the event. First, this event strengthened a belief that we already had, that our alumni are a huge asset to our current program. Your successes define the program just as much as the reputations of existing faculty. In many ways, you are an underutilized resource for us. We hope to more regularly pick your brains on ways to strengthen our program (we don’t want to wait another 50 years to bring you back!). Second, the rich history of our program is one that we need to continue to celebrate. The foundation created by Pat Smith, Bob Guion, and Joe Cranny (who was at the reunion) is one that we should never forget, even as we adapt our program to contemporary needs and issues. Third, one of our strengths is that our program has always been geared to developing strong researchers who work on problems that are of practical interest to organizations. Over the years, we have had graduates succeed in both academia and practice, and we believe that our balance is a strength that should be continued. Fourth, there are ways that we can improve the curriculum and training. There often wasn’t full consensus among panelists and audience, but more training in big data techniques (something that Sam McAbee has already started) as well as opportunities to learn more business knowledge while in graduate school were two things that were regularly mentioned.

The weekend was intense, fun, and insightful. I would like to thank all of the graduate students who helped with the planning: Melissa Albert, Jordan Dovel, Sarah Melick, Brent Stevenor, and a special thanks to Kate Den Houter who chaired the planning committee! Thank you to all of the alumni who traveled back to campus and shared your time and energy with us. It was great to connect with you all. And to those who could not make it, WE MISSED YOU! We look forward to connecting with you at the SIOP conference, or having you visit campus whenever you want.

One procedural note: Throughout the planning process, we learned that we had so many old emails in our list. Thank you to everybody who helped us find correct e-mail addresses for alumni.

One final note: According to Shelly Zedeck, he was the first BGSU IO psychology Ph.D. It’s complicated. He defended his dissertation first, but during the commencement ceremony, degrees were handed out alphabetically and Frank Landy came before Shelly Zedeck. Operational definitions matter!
SECOND YEAR STUDENTS

Emily Brown
My first year at BGSU has brought many challenges and many joys. I have learned a great deal about I-O psychology and have had the opportunity to experience a lot of new things within and outside the realm of academics. The movie nights, “Bachelor” viewing parties, and fantastic faculty and students make the hours of study well worth it. I look forward to learning and growing even more as a person in the coming years at BGSU.

Marie Childers
So much has happened since I came to BGSU. I’ve made new friends, developed myself as a researcher and an academic, and been challenged in ways I never expected, including spending countless hours defending Ohio from being named the worst state in the U.S. (it’s not that bad). The supportive and collaborative nature of the program have made surviving graduate school a little bit easier. I am very grateful for the experience and relationships I have gained in the past year and a half and I can’t wait to see what the next years bring!

Kate Den Houter
Now in my second year, I truly feel as though Bowling Green has become a home away from home, something which I never thought I would say of a town in Ohio given my Michigan roots. In my short time here, I have completed courses, worked on research, and assisted in applied projects, all of which have resulted in significant personal and academic development. I am unbelievably grateful for the relationships that I have created with my cohort, fellow graduate students, and faculty alike. I look forward to continuing my graduate education and professional development at BGSU!

Lexi Hirvo
Now that I’m well into my second year, I can truly say how grateful I am for the experiences I’ve had at BGSU thus far. The transition to grad school took some time to get comfortable juggling multiple research projects, assistantships, and classes. But looking back on my first year, I can see how much I have learned in a short amount of time! I am grateful for a program that is extremely collaborative and encourages its students to take advantage of all of the available opportunities. I may never get used to the biting BG wind, but I am certainly excited to see what the next few years have in store!

Mike Shea
Whether it’s to the work-load, location, autonomy, or other factors, adjusting to the life of a doctoral student can be difficult for some. Luckily, the collaborative and welcoming nature of the BGSU I-O psychology program, including faculty, students, and staff, has helped me adjust properly over the last year, facilitating a great degree of learning and development. I am looking forward to the remainder of my time here at BG and continuing the program’s culture of collaboration. I am truly grateful to have been given the opportunity to grow within the BGSU I-O doctoral program.

FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

Blake Bennion
My first few months in Bowling Green have been everything I hoped for and more. The students and faculty here are incredible, and I’m already beginning to feel at home. There’s so much to learn and I’ve been able to greatly build on my knowledge and abilities. I’ve made good friends in and outside of the program. I love the feel of the city; it’s easy to fall in love with the downtown area and small-town environment. I’m very excited about the research and applied opportunities here and am confident in the training I am receiving. I’ve bonded well with my cohort and I love being here!

Lindsay Freier
I have only been in Bowling Green for a few months, but it already feels like home. I have never lived in a small town before; the fact that 15 minutes feels like a long drive is hard to beat. Getting to know the faculty and other students has been a pleasure. They are friendly, kind, and happy to share their wealth of knowledge. I am excited to continue to add to my ever-expanding list of research interests through classes, research groups, and applied projects, and to eventually narrow it back down. I am looking forward to the rest of my time as a graduate student here at BGSU.

Ian Hughes
The time I have spent thus far at BGSU has certainly flown by. It’s been fun meeting and spending time with different students and faculty, and I’ve been impressed with just how collaborative the environment of the program is. That environment made the transition from undergraduate to graduate level studies quite seamless, which is a testament to the quality of the individuals within the program. The research autonomy granted to us as students has easily been my favorite aspect of the program – I truly feel that I have the freedom to research the topics I please and work with and learn from multiple faculty. I am very excited for what lies ahead!
Alonzo Johnson
I initially thought moving clear across the country was going to be difficult for me, but the faculty and other students have helped make the transition as smooth as possible. I’m grateful to be surrounded by such productive and knowledgeable people that encourage me to continuously push the boundaries of what I thought I was capable. I’ve just started my graduate studies but I’m looking forward to all the learning opportunities and experiences to come during my time at BGSU!

Andrew Lieman
My first semester at BGSU is going very well so far. The coursework is fantastic for both developing skills and new research ideas. The collaborative environment and friendly people make it really easy to feel welcome and get involved in projects. I’m excited to put into action over the next few years all of the research ideas that the program has helped me generate. In terms of getting used to the town, I don’t have much left to do since my undergraduate degree was also surrounded by corn fields and full of wind!

Brent Stevenor
I am thoroughly enjoying my experience as a graduate student at BGSU. Working on projects alongside faculty and students is something that I have really enjoyed thus far. Knowing that I can work on projects with all the faculty is exciting because it gives me the opportunity to figure out which areas of I-O I like best. I am excited to continue to learn and grow throughout my time at BGSU.

Kristin Horan, Ph.D. (graduated 2018): Assistant Professor of Industrial-Organizational Psychology at University of Central Florida
Haylee Min, Ph.D. (graduated 2018): Assistant Professor of Industrial-Organizational Psychology at University of Central Florida
Stacy Sim, Ph.D. (graduated 2018): Global Performance Development Manager at Procter & Gamble (P&G)
Nick Howald, Ph.D. (graduated 2019): Research Scientist at HumRRO
Sami Nesnidol, Ph.D. (graduated 2019): People Scientist at Ford Motor Company
Tom Ron, Ph.D. (graduated 2019): Behavioral sciences expert in the data science lab at the Israel Defense Forces
Shelby Wise, Ph.D. (graduated 2019): People Scientist at Ford Motor Company
Georgi Yankov, Ph.D. (graduated 2019): Research Scientist at Developmental Dimensions International (DDI)
NEW FACULTY

Melissa Keith
Melissa grew up in Cookeville, Tennessee. She completed her undergraduate education at Saint Louis University where she earned a B.A. in psychology and a certificate in business administration. Melissa went on to complete her M.S. and Ph.D. in I-O psychology at Purdue University. After graduating in May, Melissa joined the faculty as an assistant professor in Fall 2019.

Melissa’s current research falls into two broad areas: research on creativity and the creative process and work in the gig economy. With respect to creativity she is interested in how motivation theory and research can be leveraged to enhance engagement in the creative process and creative performance. She also conducts research on a range of topics related to personal and contextual predictors of creative performance, as well as, creativity measurement. Her research on the gig economy began with a narrower interest in Mechanical Turk workers and their experiences. This work has resulted in a broader interest in gig worker experiences, well-being, and human flourishing.

Melissa is excited to contribute to the storied IO program at BGSU by teaching courses, mentoring students, and collaborating with her new colleagues. She is grateful to the faculty and students at BGSU who have been so welcoming. When not working, Melissa enjoys playing piano, reading, and drinking wine with her husband, Alex.

Sam McAbee
Sam grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. He completed his undergraduate education at the University of California, Irvine (Zot! Zot!), where he earned a bachelor’s degree psychology and a minor in management. Sam went on to complete a master’s in I-O psychology at Long Beach State University, during which time he completed an internship in the personnel selection department at the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). He then completed his Ph.D. in I-O psychology at Rice University. Prior to his appointment to the faculty at BGSU, Sam was an assistant professor of I-O psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Sam’s research interests fall under the areas of personnel selection, individual differences, measurement, and research methodology. In particular, much of his research examines the ways that we measure and statistically model individual differences in personality, and the use of personality measurement for predicting human performance in a variety of applied contexts (e.g., job performance, college student success). Within this area, Sam has published on the use of structural equation modeling as a method for examining relations between personality domains, facets, and various performance criteria, and for examining how the shared and unique information available across self- and informant-ratings of personality relate to key individual and organizational outcomes. His interests also extend to the measurement of cognitive abilities (e.g., working memory capacity) and broader methodological concerns for the field of I-O (e.g., the advent of big data analytics).

Sam is excited to be a part of the program at BGSU, where he plans to teach courses related to research methodology, statistics, selection, and individual differences. He enjoys collaborating with the tremendous faculty and graduate students at BGSU in areas of shared substantive and methodological interest.

BGSU SIOP RECEPTION
Austin, Texas | Friday, April 24 | Time and Location: TBA

Please consider donating to help fund the BGSU SIOP Reception.

Donations provided by alumni and friends of BGSU are the sole means of financing these memorable events.

Your generous donations are tax-deductible as contributions to a tax-exempt organization, and as always, we’ll be sure to cover the first couple rounds. Thank you so much for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you in April!

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By mail
• Make check payable to BGSU Foundation, Inc.
• Write “SIOP” on notes line
• Send the check in an envelope addressed to: Bowling Green State University Development of Psychology 206 Psychology Building Bowling Green, OH 43403
Faculty and Student Accomplishments

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS


Jagacinski, C. M., Kumar, S., & Keith, M. G. (2019). Expanding the nomological network of work avoidance: Antecedents and consequences across contexts. The Journal of Experimental Education


PRESENTATIONS


Keith, M. G. (August, 2019). Reining in the wild west: Ethical considerations for online data collection. Symposium presented at the 79th annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Boston, MA.


McAbee, S. T., & Landsis, R. S. (2018, April). Teaching big data methods in I-O graduate curriculum 2.0 (Chairs). Session presented at the 33rd annual meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Chicago, IL.


Montag-Smit, T., & Keith, M. G. (August, 2019). Creative process engagement as an affective event: The role of convergent and divergent thinking. Paper presented at the 79th annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Boston, MA.


Smith, C.E., Samo, A., & Barratt, C.L. (2020, April). To detach or not to detach? Well, it depends...Poster submitted to the 35th Annual Conference for the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), Austin, TX.


GRANTS


Childers, M., principle investigator, McAbee, S., co-investigator. Investigating the Validity of Brainteaser Interview Questions, SIOP Small Grant Program. ($10,000; submitted June 2019; under review)