2012 Faculty Career Celebration

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON EDUCATION
Honorees

Mary Armsworth
27 Years of Service

Joel Bloom
42 Years of Service

Ronald Frankiewicz
42 Years of Service

John Gaa
37 Years of Service
Phyllis Gingiss
32 Years of Service

Robert Houston
42 Years of Service

David (Dov) Liberman
36 Years of Service

Doris Prater
33 Years of Service

Dennis Smith
22 Years of Service
Mary Armsworth
Long before her career as a counseling psychologist, Dr. Mary Armsworth wanted to be a photographer, to capture the complexity of the world for an instant. At three years old, Armsworth was fascinated by her brother’s brownie camera, a device that eventually became her own. “I always had this idea that you could fill in the story of a photo with your own colors and interpretations,” Armsworth said.

By college, she decided she needed a practical degree and earned a Bachelor’s degree from Ohio University in Vocational Education. However, her career did not take her away from the work of interpreting ordinary life. She pursued master’s and doctoral degrees in counseling from the University of Cincinnati, where her focus became trauma and grief. No longer was she concerned only with capturing the reality around her; Armsworth devoted her career to alleviating suffering.

In 1985, Armsworth began her work as faculty at the University of Houston’s Counseling Psychology Program. She served in many roles: Director of Training for the doctoral program; internship and practicum coordinator; and Master’s Program Coordinator. In recent years, she supported the Master’s Program in Counseling at the West Houston Institute at Cinco Ranch.

In addition, Armsworth has maintained a private practice serving post-trauma functioning adults and has served as a forensic consultant in a murder case. In 2004, she spoke before the US congress about the topics of aging and trauma.

Despite her career in academia and psychology, Armsworth has not forgotten the early joy she took in photography. These days, her digital camera empowers her to take photos she could never have caught with her hand-me-down brownie. She will photograph her new life in Georgia, her family, and nature. With her keen eye and compassion, they will be something worth seeing.
“One day I picked up a tennis racquet, and that changed my life. This led me to be more interested in academics, especially the biomedical movements of the body.” The experience launched a career filled with honors and publications, but at each step, Dr. Bloom’s intent has been clear – to change the world into a healthier place.

Originally recruited to be UH’s first Aquatic Director, Bloom has created an unmatched legacy at UH and beyond. Though 42 years of teaching, teacher preparation and research, he earned the Magner Award for Academic Advising, UH Outstanding Faculty Award, UH- COE Senior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award, and Recognition of Excellence in Teaching Award from Spring Branch ISD. Most recently, he has inspired the College of Education with a health initiative aimed specifically at his family of cougars.

In addition to serving at UH, Bloom has contributed to the wider community in diverse ways. He has authored five books in addition to impressive editorial, service and publication credentials. He created the W.E. T. [Water Exercise Therapy] protocol used by the Houston’s YMCAs and Koala Wellness Inc. He trained American Red Cross Water Safety Instructors for the Special Olympics and served as the Chair of Senior Fitness for the Mayor of Houston’s Wellness council. Bloom co-owns Cyclistics, a company that specializes in Indoor Cycling Certification Programs and continuing education for fitness professionals.

His inexhaustible enthusiasm for promoting health among the College’s staff, across generations of students and through his research shows that Bloom knows that the whole world is his family. And we are all better off as a result.
Ronald Frankiewicz
Educational research methodology and statistics are a mysterious and intimidating topic for many people, even those who believe strongly in the scientific underpinnings of Education.

Frankiewicz earned three degrees from Kent State University: a bachelor’s degree in Mathematics, and a masters and doctorate in Evaluation and Measurement.

Margaret Watson, who took a master’s course with him in 1971, remembers his first year as a faculty member at UH. He impressed her not only with his expertise, but also because of his integrity and commitment to students. When her class requested a change in the date of the final exam, Frankiewicz hesitated. He had planned to observe and respect the anniversary of the infamous Kent State University shootings, the national tragedy which occurred while he was a student there. However, his commitment to the students in his class caused him to compromise. He held the final on the anniversary of the massacre and wore an armband of mourning. “It made a big impact on me,” said Watson, who went on to earn her doctorate and a measurement specialist currently serving as Senior Institutional Research Analyst at UH. Her memory and her very success are, in part, his legacy.

His dedication to teaching was recognized with the Enron Distinguished Teacher Award and the Senior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. In addition, a significant portion of Frankiewicz’s life-long work has focused on advising and supporting various university bodies and other entities on matters related to statistical support infrastructure and program or project evaluation.
The gifts and talents of some young people are harnessed while others languish. It is a problem that John Gaa has worked to correct his entire career. Gaa cultivated his interest in human development and education. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Social Science from Michigan State University and then masters and doctoral degrees from the University of Wisconsin. He began his career as faculty at the University of North Carolina. He joined the UH Department of Educational Psychology in 1975.

Once he became a cougar, Gaa became an energetic contributor to the college. He founded the Urban Talent Research Institute (U-TRI) with colleague, Rick Olenchak. U-TRI works to identify and develop the individual gifts and talents of urban youth. His passion for helping youth achieve their potentials is reflected in his commitment to mentoring students.

He embraced the role of mentor to generations of masters and doctoral students in Educational Psychology. Many of his students graduated to become respected faculty and colleagues. His tireless mentorship of students at every level earned him awards like the Peabody Excellence in Teaching Award and the UH Award for Outstanding Support of Students With Disabilities. His diligent service activities at the UH College of Education resulted in an Alumni Faculty Service Award.

Most recently, he has been energizing introductory sections of undergraduate and master’s degree students with his introductory courses. His teaching and mentorship have touched the lives of countless students across the fields of education, psychology, medicine, social work and beyond.
John Gaa
COE has more than one reason to be proud of Phyllis Gingiss. Not only is she a very accomplished faculty member, she is an alumna as well. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Education at UH and began her career as an HISD teacher.

Serving as a community volunteer for March of Dimes and the American Cancer inspired her to pursue a career in Public Health. Since then, Gingiss has devoted herself to the creation and implementation of new models for public health education, and changing the lives of youth and families for the better.

She pursued masters and doctoral degrees from the University of Texas School of Public Health. Later, she completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Preventive Oncology at the Center for Health Promotion Research and Development at the University of Texas School of Public Health. She is a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) and has earned numerous honors and fellowships, including the opportunity in 1999 to be a Healthway Visiting Research Fellow in Perth Australia.

Gingiss has conducted research, evaluation and field-based activities for over 20 years in health promotion and practice. As author of over 175 manuscripts, abstracts and reports, much of her research has focused on the design, implementation and evaluation of child and youth prevention and treatment programs and ways to strengthen initiatives through technology applications. “I love doing research to examine what is known, identify existing ‘holes’ in knowledge and practice, and explore new ways to respond,” she said.

Upon her appointment as Associate Dean of Research by Allen Warner, he promised that she “would never be bored with her work”. Not only has she never been bored, Gingiss has always strived to make opportunities out of every challenge. Her advice to those who follow her into the field of health is equally optimistic: “social changes and funding challenges are forcing us to adapt to new ways to accomplish our goals... Go for it!”
Trailblazer

Pioneer. Game-changer. Innovator. It’s difficult to overstate the impact W. Robert Houston has had on the field of education.

Houston has consulted with institutions in 18 countries. He has been invited to deliver major addresses in 42 states. Among the 40 books he wrote or edited, two were recognized as the best education books in their respective years. He has authored or co-authored dozens of research reports and more than 100 chapters and articles.

Her was one of the creators in Competency Based Teacher Education—a major national model adopted by nearly 400 universities in the United States by 1980 and still is the basis for state standards for teacher education.

He served as president of Association of Teacher Educators (ATE). He received numerous honors, including being the first recipient of ATE’s Distinguished Teacher Educator of the year award and the Edward C. Pomeroy Award for Distinguished Contributions to Teacher Education, presented by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education - the most prestigious awards from the two major teacher education organizations. He is the only recipient to ever receive both awards.

At UH, he has served as Associate Dean, Executive Director of the Texas Center for University School Partnerships, and Executive Director of the Institute for Urban Education.

Long before he became a legend, Houston had a different path in mind. “I wanted to be a teacher when I was in college... a shop teacher. I wanted to teach woodwork,” he said.

After a phone interview with a New Mexico school in 1949, Houston drove to his new job. “I thought it was a high school position, but it was an elementary school position,” he remembered. “I went to introduce myself to the principal... and she said, ‘hello, coach!’”

Undaunted but knowing nothing of football, Houston studied, taught himself two plays and led the team to many citywide championships.
W. Robert Houston
David (Dov) Liberman
David (Dov) Liberman often enters conversations with a knock-knock joke, but his colleagues and students know that his humor is not an indication the Liberman takes his field lightly. He has demonstrated a passion for education throughout his career – about students, educational discourse, and community engagement.

He began in New York, pursuing a bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Buffalo. He became a teacher, serving in a variety of private and public schools in New York city and then in Israel. He continued his education with a masters degree in Curriculum Development from Tel-Aviv University and finally a doctorate in Human Development from Harvard.

He has served as faculty in the College of Education for 36 year long career. He taught Educational Psychology at every level, from introductory undergraduate courses to doctoral dissertation courses. While the impact of this instruction is incalculable for the education and human services community, he was memorable for his humor and creativity as well. For many years, Liberman and his colleague, John Gaa, wrote and performed songs to entertain the Department of Educational Psychology holiday parties.

His areas of research interest include cognitive, moral, and social development; evaluation using multi-attribute utility analysis; risk taking behavior in adolescent youth; and the development of masculinity in the West. However, he brought a development perspective to all his diverse work and interests.

To complement this work at UH, he served the community through his work at Education and Curriculum Development Consultant, Congregation or Ami and Middle School Supervisor at Temple Beth Israel. He was prayer and discussion leader at I. Weiner Secondary School for fifteen years as well.
Better school administrators make all the difference, but training individuals for our rapidly changing, diverse and complex American school systems is far easier said than done. Luckily, Doris Prater was willing to take on the task of preparing a new generation of school leaders.

Prater began as an English major and earned a bachelor’s degree at Southwest Texas State University. This emphasis informed her interest in writing and reading, but unlike many English students, she was intensely interested in how to measure the writing process in order to determine achievement. She completed a masters degree in Research and Reading at Southern Methodist University and finally an education doctorate in Educational Evaluation from the University of California, Los Angeles.

She began her academic career at the University of Houston – Clear Lake’s School of Education. Among other positions, she served as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs before crossing the city to UH. Here, she joined the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies as the chair and then later as the chair of the Department of Educational Psychology.

Prater taught and mentored students in the UH Administration & Supervision -Higher Education program. Students benefited from her ever deepening and varied leadership experience. Most recently, she participated in the program’s implementation of an online track, which will allow more students than ever to access the program.

In addition to academic positions, Prater demonstrated her leadership in the area of writing. As director of the Greater Houston Area Writing Project, she helped focus Greater Houston Area educators on sustained efforts to improve writing and learning for all learners. She furthered this goal as the coordinator of the Urban Sites Writing Network and as a Cite Research Liaison at the Center for the Study of Writing at the University of California-Berkeley.
Doris Prater
Advocacy

Dennis Smith’s parents smoked, and he wanted them to stop. Many young people experience a similar frustration. Most of them might nag or flush cigarettes down the toilet, but Smith was inspired to do much more; he built a career to research smoking cessation and cancer prevention. His powerful health advocacy on this topic and others has changed the lives of his students and the public.

Smith earned bachelor’s and masters degrees from Bowling Green State University in Health and Physical Education. At Ohio State University, he pursued a doctorate in Health Education. He began as a volunteer for the American Cancer Society (ACS), an activity he continues over thirty years later.

His long relationship with the ACS and National Cancer Institute inspired the Texas Cancer Council (TCC) to ask Smith to develop a youth tobacco cessation program for the State of Texas. With TCC funding and collaborator Brian Colwell, the Texas Youth Tobacco Awareness Program was born. The program has helped youth to resist tobacco for over ten years.

Other health crises drew Smith’s attention as well, and his prolific research in areas like childhood obesity and school health programs contributed to the health of youth and the awareness of the risks young people face. He was awarded both the College of Education Research Excellence Award for Junior Faculty and later the same award for Senior Faculty.

His work touched the lives of students through his research and service, but as an instructor and advisor, Smith drew more esteem. He earned the George Magner Award for Outstanding Faculty Advisor in recognition of this work with students.

He cited Ralph Waldo Emerson’s advice as his inspiration. Smith would like to “earn the respect of intelligent people... leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.” By this measure, it is clear that Smith has already succeeded beautifully.
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