Texas Psychological Association Recognizes Outstanding Contributors to the Psychological Profession

AUSTIN, TEXAS—The Texas Psychological Association (TPA) recognized exemplary contributors to the psychological profession on November 11 at its Annual Convention in Austin. TPA President Frances Douglas, Psy.D., led the presentation, naming recipients of the following awards: Outstanding Contribution to Education; Outstanding Contribution to Science; Outstanding Legislative Contribution; Robert McPherson, Ph.D., Legislative Action Award; Outstanding Media Coverage; and State Advocacy Award. TPA also recognized one of its members who received the American Psychological Association (APA) Award for Outstanding Lifetime Contributions to Psychology by presenting her with a House Resolution from State Representative Donna Howard.

Outstanding Contribution to Education
Betsy Kennard, Psy.D., ABPP, won the Outstanding Contribution to Education Award. This award recognizes a truly distinguished contribution by a psychologist in the area of education. Dr. Kennard is the Chair of the UT Southwestern Medical Center (UTSW) Clinical Psychology Doctoral Program and is responsible for the training of approximately 40 graduate students a year in two APA-accredited programs: the doctoral program and an affiliated doctoral internship program. She has directed numerous accreditation site visits for the two programs, all of which resulted in receiving full accreditation. On the most recent accreditation visit of the graduate program, site visitors noted: “Dr. Kennard, who has served as the program director since 2009, is extremely qualified on the basis of her skills, credentials, and experience to lead this program.” She has developed and spearheaded training initiatives in developing competency-based training programs in both the doctoral program and the internship.

Dr. Kennard has served on more than 40 doctoral dissertation committees in clinical psychology since joining UTSW faculty. She serves on nine committees related to education and training in the psychology division/psychology graduate program along with other committees within the university system.

She is an expert in pediatric depression and suicide prevention and has authored more than 120 peer-reviewed publications. She has served as a site co-investigator in four National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)-funded multi-site treatment studies of adolescent depression and suicide. She has developed a treatment intervention to prevent relapse in youth with depression and was a principal investigator on two NIMH-funded treatment studies to test relapse prevention strategies in depressed youth. She is the co-lead of the Youth Depression and Research Network (Dallas site), funded by Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium, and she serves as a co-investigator on “A Multi-Site Study to Compare the Outcomes of Psychiatric Treatment of Suicidal Adolescents in Different Treatment Settings,” funded by the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute. Dr. Kennard is also the program director of an intensive outpatient program for suicidal youth at Children’s Health in Dallas.
**Outstanding Contribution to Science**

Luz Garcini, Ph.D., received the Outstanding Contribution to Science Award. This award recognizes a psychologist who has made a significant contribution in the discovery and development of new information, empirical or otherwise, to the body of psychological knowledge.

Dr. Garcini is the co-founder of the Latinx Immigrant Health Alliance and an Assistant Professor at the Department of Medicine and Psychiatry University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. She has more than 15 years of research experience in health disparities research and more than 55 peer-reviewed publications in high impact journals. Her research with underserved immigrant communities has been presented at more than 125 national and international conferences and has been recognized by numerous awards and prestigious fellowships, including three Ford Foundation Fellowships; the American Psychological Foundation Barlow Award; and a National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Supplement to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research.

Most recently, Dr. Garcini was interviewed by Oprah for her research on health and immigration. In 2019, she completed the National Institute of Health Future Research Leaders Conference and the Leadership Development Institute with the Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests.

**Outstanding Legislative Contribution**

State Representative Vikki Goodwin received the Outstanding Legislative Contribution Award. This award is given to a legislator, legislative employee, or other individual who has had a major role in initiating advocacy in favor of passing legislation that has a major impact on psychology in Texas.

Rep. Goodwin is serving her second term representing Texas House District 47 in Western and far South Travis County. Representative Goodwin’s priorities include education, child welfare, human rights, and health care. She earned the TPA Outstanding Legislative Contribution Award for sponsoring TPA’s Prescription Authority Bill during the 87th Regular Session and for supporting legislative efforts to expand telehealth.

During the 86th Legislative Session, Rep. Goodwin voted to adopt the TPA-supported amendment to its Sunset Bill that would have allowed the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP) to remain a stand-alone board. Rep. Goodwin is a passionate advocate for mental health access and human rights and has proven herself to be a strong advocate for psychology in Texas.

**Outstanding Media Coverage**

Bonnie Petrie with Texas Public Radio received the Outstanding Media Coverage Award. This award is presented to an individual or organization that has benefited psychology through a media event. Ms. Petrie covers bioscience and medicine for Texas Public Radio and is the host of the Petrie Dish podcast, which explores science, medicine, and life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bonnie grew up on the Canadian border in northern New York but has happily called Texas home for nearly 20 years. She is a 2017 Texas Radio Hall of Fame nominee in recognition of her work in Houston and Dallas before moving to San Antonio, and she has received several Edward R. Murrow, Associated Press, and other journalism awards throughout her career.
**Robert McPherson, Ph.D., Legislative Action Award**
Robin Burks, Ph.D., received the Robert McPherson, Ph.D., Legislative Action Award. Dr. Burks has been a TPA member for 34 years. Through her work on political campaigns and grassroots advocacy, Dr. Burks models how to best build relationships with legislators.

Dr. Burks served on the TPA Grassroots Committee for four years before becoming co-chair. In this capacity, she also served on TPA’s Legislative Committee for the 2021 Legislative Session. Dr. Burks has consistently attended TPA Legislative Days and responds to TPA calls for actions during session and for federal advocacy.

In the past, Dr. Burks was a tireless member of the PSY-PAC Board. “She exemplifies the legislative involvement we need at TPA and is a deserving recipient of this award,” said Dr. Douglas.

**State Advocacy Award**
Ronald Palomares, Ph.D., received the State Advocacy Award. This award is given to a TPA member who passionately and tirelessly demonstrates commitment to the advancement of the profession of psychology at the state regulatory level.

Dr. Palomares was appointed to TSBEP, where he served for the past six years. He most recently served as vice-chair, a critically important role given that the present chair is a public member. Dr. Palomares helps others understand the tenets of psychologists’ training, the importance of being a scientist-practitioner, and the need to maintain appropriate competency measures for licensure. His history of work with APA, National Association of School Psychologists, and the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards has enabled him to ensure that Texas maintains the national standards of the profession. Throughout his tenure on the Board, Dr. Palomares has worked tirelessly to defend the standards of the profession and to bolster the ability of TSBEP to honor the expertise of its licensees and fulfill its mission to protect the public.

**American Psychological Association 2020 Award for Outstanding Lifetime Contributions to Psychology**
In 2020, Melba J. T. Vasquez, Ph.D., received the APA Award for Outstanding Lifetime Contributions to Psychology. This year, TPA honored her with House Resolution 639 from State Representative Donna Howard. APA and the broader field of psychology have benefited significantly from the leadership and vision of Dr. Vasquez as she has worked toward advancing equity and opportunity. Dr. Vasquez became the first Latina president of APA in 2011. During her time, she addressed issues like immigration and educational disparities and focused on eliminating discrimination and promoting diversity. She also served on the APA Board of Directors and the APA Council of Representatives and held several roles on APA governance boards, committees, and task forces. Her other leadership experience includes serving as president of TPA and APA Divisions 17 and 35.

Dr. Vasquez is a cofounder of both APA Division 45: the Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race and the National Multicultural Conference and Summit through which she has worked to elevate and highlight the achievements of other psychologists of color and spent her career mentoring and supporting psychologists from marginalized communities to take on leadership roles in associations.

She has published significantly on professional ethics, social justice, ethnic minority psychology, women’s psychology, among other topics; she is coauthor of Ethics in Psychotherapy and Counseling and How to
Survive and Thrive as a Therapist and has written more than 100 journal articles and book chapters. In addition, she has served on the editorial boards of 10 journals and has been invited to be the keynote speaker at many events.