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Celebrating Psi Chi at Yale University

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Abstract. Psi Chi was founded at Yale University on 4 September 1929, during the historic Ninth International Congress of Psychology – the first congress on U.S. soil. This report recounts how Yale University has been partnering with leaders of Psi Chi to host four joyous Anniversary Convocations to date, to salute international psychology, Psi Chi and student excellence in psychology – in 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2019.

Key words: Psi Chi; Yale University; international psychology

Since Yale University was founded in 1701 – over 30 years before the birth of George Washington (1732–1799) – Yale surely has become a global center for excellence in research and teaching across many fields. In the case of psychology, Yale stands out for at least two reasons, both occurring back in 1929:

1) Yale hosted what has been called “the most impressive gathering in the history of psychology” – the Ninth International Congress of Psychology on 1–7 September 1929 – with a 535-page program book that listed 1,050 participants from 21 nations (Boring, 1930);

2) during this same week, Yale was the birthplace of Psi Chi, the “international honor society in psychology,” which has now (by most measures) grown into “the world’s largest honor society,” with over 700,000 life members at 1,130 campuses world-wide as of 2019.

To celebrate Psi Chi’s 70th anniversary in 1999, a dozen Past-Presidents of Psi Chi gathered at the APA meeting in Boston (Figure 1). At their request, Yale University kindly agreed to host a 70th Anniversary Convocation in its stately Presidents Room – a majestic rotunda lined with portraits of Yale’s Presidents over the past 300 years.

Meanwhile, the erudite Psi Chi Director of Publications Daniel P. Bockert found a long-lost photo of several hundred participants in the 1929 meeting, and Psi Chi paid \$400 to restore this remarkable “Yard of Psychologists” photo in time to display at APA (Figure 2).

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Figure 1. Psi Chi's 70th anniversary at the APA meeting in Boston, 1999



Figure 2. "Yard of Psychologists" photo at the Ninth International Congress of Psychology at Yale University, 1929

1999. On Friday, September 3, over 30 professors and students gathered for a joyous Convocation featuring many speakers, including a keynote address by John D. Hogan of St. John's University (Hogan, 2000). A highlight of this Convocation was the "return" of the restored "Yard of Psychologists" photo to Yale University President Richard C. Levin (Takooshian, 2000) (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The "return" of the restored "Yard of Psychologists" photo to Yale University, September 3, 1999

2004. On Friday, September 3, over 75 people gathered for a joyous Convocation marking 75 years of Psi Chi (Greer, 2004). The 14 inspiring presentations included two keynote messages by Professor John D. Hogan of St. John’s, and Daniel P. Bockert, the Psi Chi Director of Publications from 1989 till 2003. Psi Beta Past-President Anne Garrett Robinson presented Yale Dean Peter Salovey with a public proclamation from New Haven Mayor John DeStefano proclaiming “Psi Chi Day” in New Haven. “The same electricity that charged the air in the 1929 Congress seemed apparent to participants in the 2004 Convocation” (Takooshian & Salovey, 2004. P. 24) (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Celebrating 70th anniversary of Psi Chi at Yale, September 3, 2004

2009. On Friday, September 4, over 50 people gathered for a Yale Convocation celebrating “80 years of excellence.” Historian John D. Hogan of St. John’s offered the keynote address comparing the 1889 and 1929 Congresses of Psychology (Figure 5). This was hosted by incoming Yale President Peter Salovey, and the 15 presenters included five Past-Presidents of Psi Chi or Psi Beta (Takooshian, Young, & Prohaska, 2009). In April of 2009, the 1,050 Psi Chi chapters in the USA voted to go beyond the USA into the “International Honor Society in Psychology” (Davis, 2019) – in time to celebrate at Yale that August, as Psi Chi returned to its international roots.

2019. On Wednesday, September 4, while many people could not visit Yale during their first week of classes, over 20 people gathered in Sterling Library for a Yale Convocation marking 90 years, chaired by Distinguished Professor Florence L. Denmark of Pace University. In two keynote addresses, Professors Harold Takooshian of Fordham focused on the growth of Psi Chi, and Scott Plous of Wesleyan focused on the bright future of international psychology. Several inspiring presentations celebrated international psychology, Psi Chi, Psi Beta, Psi Alpha, and psychology at Yale (Figure 6).

A highlight of the Convocation was the presentation to Yale of the *RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogics* special issue on Psi Chi, signed by Editor Irina Novikova (2019), and accepted by Yale University Professors Tyrone D. Cannon (Chair of the Psychology Department) and Yarrow Dunham (Faculty Advisor of Psi Chi) (Figure 7).



Figure 5. Celebrating 80th anniversary of Psi Chi at Yale, September 4, 2009



Figure 6. Celebrating 90th anniversary of Psi Chi at Yale, September 4, 2019



Figure 7. *RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogics* at 90th anniversary of Psi Chi, Yale University, September 4, 2019

With luck, the centenary of Psi Chi will be celebrated at Yale the week of September 4, 2029.

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Научный репортаж

Чествование Psi Chi в Йельском университете

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Психологическое общество почета Psi Chi было основано в Йельском университете 4 сентября 1929 года во время исторического Девятого Международного конгресса психологов – первого психологического конгресса на территории США. В репортаже рассказывается о том, как Йельский университет в сотрудничестве с руководством Psi Chi организовал празднование четырех юбилеев общества, чтобы приветствовать международную психологию, Psi Chi и лучших студентов в области психологии, в 1999, 2004, 2009 и 2019 годах.

Ключевые слова: Psi Chi; Йельский университет; международная психология

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