

## Anderson named Aeschleman Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Appalachian

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A focus on excellence in teaching and providing students a high-quality education are among the factors that interested Dr. Cynthia M. Anderson in a new position in Appalachian State University's Department of Psychology. Anderson holds the Stanley R. Aeschleman

Distinguished Professorship in Psychology, the first person named to the position that honors a former provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs and chair of the psychology department.

"I didn't know a lot about the university until I started investigating it. It is really impressive," she said. "I like Appalachian's focus on excellence in teaching and providing students a high-quality education through classroom instruction and other opportunities through out-of-classroom events."

A colleague at another university alerted Anderson to the position at Appalachian. Anderson said she also was impressed by what she learned about the Department of Psychology prior to her on-campus interview. "The department shares the university's emphasis on excellence in instruction. That is evident in the passion of the faculty for teaching. Faculty also are interested in doing high-quality research that is beneficial for the field of psychology and for individuals. For example, a number of faculty are studying how we can enhance access to high quality services in rural settings." Anderson most recently was a professor and chair of the Department of Special Education and Clinical Services at the University of Oregon. She holds a doctorate and master's degree in clinical child psychology from West Virginia University and is a Board Licensed Psychologist and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. She is considered one of the top young scholars in the fields of applied behavior analysis and positive behavior support in schools. Anderson's research interests focus on behavior analysis and better understanding what interventions are effective and why they are effective. "I have a real interest in research to practice – taking things that have been studied in clinical, tightly controlled settings and figuring out how to make them work in real-world settings," she said. "In particular, my research to practice has focused on schools and families in community settings. I'm also very interested in figuring out how to integrate those two. All too often psychologists work in schools or with families. I think we need to be able to train researchers or practitioners to work effectively in both settings."

Anderson's research also looks at childhood behavior problems, including typically developing children and individuals with severe disabilities such as autism and intellectual disability who might engage in behaviors such as self-injury or aggression.

"With both of those populations, problem behaviors are a predictor of a very poor outcome," Anderson said. "Individuals with disabilities who engage in behaviors such as self-injury or aggression are at much higher risk of being institutionalized, at risk for being placed on lots of medication, and ultimately for abuse and neglect." Typically developing children who engage in behavior problems at a young age are often rejected by adults and peers, Anderson said. "As a result, they are more likely to join deviant sorts of peer groups and are more likely to drop out of school and become at risk of being involved with the justice system. Psychology interventions can help prevent the development and exacerbation of these behaviors," she said. Anderson's research has been published in the *Journal of School Psychology*, *Journal of Applied Behavior*

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Analysis, Focus on Exceptional Children, Behavior Analysis in Practice and Preventing School Failure, among other publications. She also is the author or co-author of more than a dozen books and book chapters related to behavioral intervention.

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