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Professor Katie Witkiewitz, Ph.D.
President-elect, American Psychological Association Division 50, Society of Addiction
Department of Psychology
The University of New Mexico
Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Addictions
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RE: Planned Demolition of Marlatt's Original BARLAB

Dear Dr. Witkiewitz:

We are writing to pass on information to the community of addiction science psychologists about the pending fate of the original Behavioral Alcohol Research Laboratory (BARLAB), established by the late Dr. G. Alan Marlatt at the University of Washington's Department of Psychology in the early 1980's. Having spoken informally with various colleagues at the recent Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA) meetings, it became very apparent that news of the BARLAB's pending demolition would be of interest to this community and perhaps to alcohol researchers generally.

On May 18th 2016, we received notification that a decision had been made to demolish the BARLAB as we know it and convert the space for an undergraduate study center; and that this work would begin approximately eight weeks later (mid-July 2016). Despite repeated e-mail exchanges protesting this decision and suggesting alternative solutions, no changes have been made to the original decision and the demolition plan is now imminent. It is important to note that this decision by the department chair – Dr. Sheri Mizumori – was presented to us *a fait accompli* and without any pre-decision input from addictions faculty (Mary and I), clinical psychology faculty, nor leadership faculty (e.g., strategic planning committee).

The historical and scientific significance of the BARLAB are striking. The BARLAB was developed as a methodologically innovative instrumentation paradigm, which derived from Marlatt's then revolutionary theorizing about the role of psychological constructs in alcoholism. Because alcoholism had been seen as the province of solely biological determinants, his assertion that behavioral and psychological constructs played significant roles bordered on heresy. Through use of the BARLAB and another innovation – the Balanced Placebo Design, Marlatt established the existence and power of the alcohol expectancy set (belief that one has consumed alcohol), its capacity to function independently of actual alcohol consumption, and the overall importance of social and emotional factors in shaping and modifying alcohol consumption. By ushering in this cognitive-behavioral perspective, these pioneering developments were foundational in creating a permanent seat for psychology at the table of alcohol research and addiction research and treatment generally. The BARLAB and its attendant psychological constructs were visually demonstrated in a 2005 episode of Bill Nye's *Eyes of Nye* depicting an

“Expectancy Challenge.” The BARLAB’s significance lives on today in how many such simulated bar environments dedicated to research purposes have been created around the country.

It is a cruel irony that this demolition is being done prior to the department’s 100th anniversary. The BARLAB is perhaps the single most significant instrumentation paradigm our department has contributed to the history of addiction science and to clinical psychology; and perhaps to psychology in general.

We are writing in the hopes that our colleagues will take note of this dire development and feel inspired to do any of the following:

- Contact our Department Chair, Dr. Sheri Mizumori (mizumori@u.washington.edu), to:
 - Express their reactions to the planned demolition of the BARLAB.
 - Comment on the significance of the BARLAB to psychology and the impact of BARLAB research on the addictions and alcohol research fields.
 - For UW alumni (undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral): Express their opinions about the timing of the BARLAB demolition, on the eve of the department’s 100th anniversary – a time when the department should celebrating its historical contributions to psychological science, particularly those that have stood the test of time.
- Offer ideas on how best to preserve the legacy of the BARLAB.
- Offer a donation to the department, in Alan Marlatt's name, to support upkeep of the BARLAB and foster continued research on cognitive and environmental influences on alcohol use to be conducted in that space.

Thank you for your attention to this historically important matter.

Sincerely,

William H. George, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Psychology

Jason R. Kilmer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
Assistant Director of Health & Wellness for Alcohol & Other Drug Education
Division of Student Life

Mary Larimer, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
Director, Center for the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors

CC: Professor Ken Sher, Ph.D.; Department of Psychology, University of Missouri
President, Research Society on Alcoholism