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DURHAM, N.H. – David B. Pillemer has been named the Dr. Samuel E. Paul Chair in Developmental Psychology within the College of Liberal Arts at the University of New Hampshire. He will also work closely with The Carsey Institute, a newly established center for innovative research in the social, behavioral and health sciences at UNH.

The chair is the result of a gift from Troy, N.H., native and UNH alumnus Peter T. Paul, a 1967 graduate in business administration and former president and CEO of Headlands Mortgage Company. It was established in memory of his father, Dr. Samuel E. Paul, a highly regarded physician in Troy for nearly 30 years.

“Professor Pillemer brings a wealth of experience as a highly successful teacher and researcher to UNH at a time when our commitment to even greater excellence in the social, behavioral and health sciences is being significantly enhanced,” says Marilyn Hoskin, dean of the College of Liberal Arts. “He is an exciting academic, very highly respected in his field, and perfectly suited to work with the outstanding people in psychology, family studies, sociology and our institutes focusing on individual and family research.”

Pillemer comes to UNH from Wellesley College, where he was professor of psychology and faculty director of the Pforzheimer Learning and Teaching Center. He also served as psychological director of the Wellesley College Child Study Center, a laboratory preschool.

“I decided to come to UNH for many reasons,” Pillemer says. “I felt there were many opportunities for me to make connections and expand my work in partnership with the different centers and departments on campus relevant to research on children, and I especially like the fact that the UNH psychology department emphasizes teaching excellence at the undergraduate and graduate level.”

Pillemer’s main research specialty is autobiographical memory across the life span, with a focus
on memories of specific life episodes and how memories of momentous events influence the life course. He has studied memory development in children, memories of trauma, memories of educational experiences, and cultural and gender differences in memory performance.

A new area of research for Pillemer examines the psychological meaning of variations in infants’ sleep arrangements. He has identified striking cross-cultural differences in sleep locations. For example, most middle-class infants living in the U.S. sleep apart from their parents, whereas most Chinese infants sleep with a parent. “I’m interested in the impact that sleep location has on the child and the family and how it reflects cultural expectations,” Pillemer explains.

“Having David Pillemer on our faculty will enhance the undergraduate experience for those students fortunate enough to take his classes; it will attract high-quality students to our graduate program; and it will increase UNH’s growing reputation as a first-class institution committed to the study of social, behavioral and health sciences,” says Ken Fuld, chair of UNH’s psychology department.

Pillemer taught at Wellesley since 1978, and held the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professorship from 1999 to 2001. He received a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Chicago and a doctorate in human development from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He is the author or coauthor of several books, including “Summing Up: The Science of Reviewing Research” and “Momentous Events, Vivid Memories,” both published by Harvard University Press.

Photo of David Pillemer: http://unhinfo.unh.edu/news/img/pix_faculty/pillemer_david.jpg