

ANNUAL REPORT 2014



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QUALITY OF LIFE

AS THE OVERARCHING FOCUS OF THE EVOLUTION INSTITUTE

The Evolution Institute is different from other non-profits. Where others are counseled to have a single focus, the EI is capable of applying a single theoretical framework – evolution – to all major policy issues at all scales, from urban neighborhoods to world history.

The ability of evolutionary theory to transcend disciplinary boundaries is one of its strongest assets, especially in the public policy arena, where isolated communities tend to form around every policy issue.

The concept of Quality of Life (QoL) focuses the efforts of the EI across topic areas. The term became prominent in the 1970s in reaction to economic indicators that were being used to inform public policy. The argument was that driving up the economic indicators was not increasing the quality of life for the average citizen, calling for a new set of numbers. The concept had great resonance, resulting in an entire field of inquiry.

Guided by EI co-founder Jerry Lieberman, the EI has considered QoL from an evolutionary perspective with two workshops focused on urban revitalization and a major project on Norway as a case study of cultural evolution leading to a high quality of life at the national scale. A special issue exploring what it means to approach QoL from an evolutionary perspective will be published in *Applied Research in Quality of Life* in 2015. One point made in the special issue is that although aggregate indices of QoL play an important role, they are like the mouths of rivers fed by many smaller rivers (such as health, education, and security), which themselves are fed by many tributaries. Actually increasing QoL in real-world populations requires research, policy formulation, and policy implementation at the tributary level.

El projects contribute to increasing QoL by focusing on the many contributing factors from a unified theoretical perspective. Along with our Norway project, the focus on economics and El Vice President Peter Turchin's SESHAT project, which creates a database of world history, help to establish a new paradigm for the study of large-scale human social organizations. A major review article titled "Evolving the Future: Toward a Science of Intentional Change" integrates these basic and applied human and behavioral sciences from an evolutionary perspective (Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 2014). Our PROSOCIAL project will improve QoL by improving the efficacy of groups. Our online magazine This View of Life and "science-to-narrative chain" communication strategy will spread awareness of the theoretical framework that guides all of our projects.

Thanks to the many people who made 2014 such a banner year for the EI!

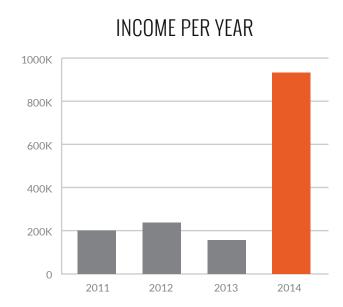
-David Sloan Wilson, President

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

This year was an emotional ride for me. It began quite sadly when one of our earliest and most important pioneer investors, Bernard Winograd, passed away. Bernard's contributions were quite important to the development of the Institute and his vision and guidance helped in our achievements during this otherwise remarkable year. His voice will be missed.

I ask your indulgence for a moment while I talk about our growth this year. In 2013, we had 2 staff members; this year, 13 people are directly associated with the EI. Our budget increased nearly 5-fold. We have in place a system that lets us scale up to manage this growth. The remarkable individuals who have joined us will bring new energy and perspectives to our work. We have formal collaborations around the world, including with Oxford, RPI, Exeter, and other prestigious universities. We are poised to make an impact.



But our purpose is not simply sustaining ourselves. At our

strategic retreat, the Board of Directors decided to focus our strategic efforts on the acquisition and application of knowledge that addresses social problems in order to improve the quality of life for all. This effort examines intragroup and intergroup (multi-level) social units at all levels of organization from the small group to the neighborhood to nation-states. This year's report will provide some background on our projects that address these issues. Internally, we describe this approach as think (research), say (translate research to policy), and do (apply the work).

On a practical level, this means working with community partners in East Tampa to develop resources and institutions that can lead to improved conditions in a low income area. It means working with organizations that are developing regional strategies for early literacy for its youth; it means working with colleagues in Norway to determine why that country has consistently been ranked the top nation on a number of well-being measures. It means an international effort to develop an historical database that allows for testing of assumptions and theories that are used to make policy decisions. It also means an international effort in a group efficacy process and continued work on economics.

In the coming year, you will see new ways to engage with us through our updated website that will be both a forum and a repository of information. We are exploring webinars and virtual meetings to provide better ways to engage in conversation with you.

We encourage your input and suggestions as we move to the next phase. It is an exciting time and to be able to work with such passionate thoughtful people around the globe is quite an honor. Thank you for your interest in this work.

Many of you who are reading this are also contributors – our life blood, if you will. For your donations, on behalf of the entire network of the Evolution Institute, much thanks.

Sincerely,

Jerry Miller

Executive Director





QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVES

Providing science-based solutions for today's most pressing social problems.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Building capacity within local groups to understand and improve social and economic conditions.

NATIONS

Understanding and improving how nations approach social and economic problems.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND EI'S URBAN INITIATIVE

Goal: In three years, we will have established and documented a model that facilitates the creation of a viable approach to resident-driven community improvement.

Industrialization, farming, and technology have created the opportunity for humans to live in highly populated, densely packed communities in diverse environments. These communities vary considerably in terms of socio-economic metrics and qualities of life. Humans have adapted to the available diversity, but where disparities in income have been greatest and opportunities for self-sufficiency least, adaptation has been more difficult, and a lower quality of life has resulted – especially in low-income communities.

Almost all countries have blighted neighborhoods, and efforts to create sustainable change have been inconsistently effective. Frequently, efforts to revise local or national policy without consulting research and its theoretical underpinnings result in a mismatch between what scientists have learned about the human social environment and how resources are allocated. This results in a process that is erratic in its implementation and results. Although the "best practices" framework that has emerged as a result of this hit-or-miss approach provides a solid base for theoretical development, best practices alone are insufficient to assure effective models.

Consequently, the Urban Initiative assists in the development and application of models that are theoretically driven and that can be applied effectively. Our Annual Report addressed the Cooperative Workshop held in Tampa: representatives from the National Cooperative Business Association, which is the US trade association for cooperatives, and the Cooperative College UK, which is the leading training organization in the world for co-ops, led the training. The workshop demonstrated how, with knowledge and guidance, grassroots organizations could collaborate across race, ethnicity, class, or culture, without regard to political party or ideology.

As a result of this workshop, several of the organizations represented are now planning different forms of cooperative structures for their communities in East Tampa and South St. Petersburg.

El has broadly expanded its partnership with East Tampa's community-based Project NOW in 2014. This year has



been marked by the City of Tampa's approval to transfer its 34th Street property to Project NOW because of the organization's extensive and successful experience in construction of multi-purpose facilities and affordable housing. Project NOW is building a facility that will house an early childhood development center, which will serve as a regional model and incorporate the educational expertise available through El. It is scheduled to open in early 2016.

In order to provide technical assistance and capacity building for its community-based partners, EI retained the services of Askia Muhammad Aquil, a well-respected community organizer and facilitator who grew up in East Tampa and now lives in South St. Petersburg. His experience turning around and administering affordable housing non-profit organizations as well as his experience serving as a top official in the city's public housing authority makes Askia a key facilitator in these efforts.

Further, EI has forged a strong relationship with the Cooperative Development Institute (CDI), a New England-based group that provides technical assistance to organizations interested in cooperative enterprises, such as employee-owned businesses and co-ops in food and housing. Specifically, EI is working with CDI to plan a follow-up cooperative workshop in 2015, which will result in the planning and inclusion of a regional cooperative development center in the new facility being built by Project NOW. BCH also plans to participate in this workshop and is considering the co-op approach as it moves forward with its affordable housing projects in south St. Petersburg.

The EI's engagement in community-based partnerships has drawn considerable interest from organizations in the Tampa Bay area, which plan to support and participate in the cooperative workshop planned for 2015. The Florida chapter of the Service Employees International Union – the most viable and influential union in the United States – is also supporting the workshop.



East Tampa and South St. Petersburg provide vivid examples of the most economically distressed communities in Florida's second- and fourth-largest cities, located in the soon-to-be third-most populous state. However, working toward a common goal with heterogeneous groups requires a level of trust and respect that transcends verbalizing good intentions. Agents of change must acquire an ability to engender respect and demonstrate competency with concrete actions. There has to be agreement on goals and how they can be measured and validated. Further, there has to be a deep understanding of what each group can realistically contribute and how collaboration can bring about the desired community improvements. This deliberate, methodical approach is the approach EI takes when collaborating with its partners.

An evolutionary perspective recognizes the inherent basis for inter-group cooperation in humans and understands the basis and conditions conducive to cooperation and empathy. Scientists utilizing this perspective seek to share their knowledge to improve socioeconomic conditions where the need for improvement is paramount. Elinor Ostrom received a Nobel Prize for identifying some of the critical elements in achieving and sustaining group cooperation. The EI has similarly identified how these and other elements can be adopted to achieve and sustain inter-group cooperation. In doing so, EI has overcome the challenge of being perceived as evolutionists and secular outsiders in these highly religious, community-based organizations and is welcome in East Tampa and South St. Petersburg. Our continued engagement in both communities offers an unprecedented opportunity for employing an evolutionary perspective to achieve tangible, positive outcomes in improving quality of life.



EI'S NORWAY INITIATIVE

Norway provides a potentially valuable case study of cultural adaptation and fitness. What accounts for its profound transition from an unjust, unequal, and elitist state to the highest-ranking country in the world based upon the UN Human Development Index? What has enabled this small country to serve as an international model for social justice, equality, and concern for the well-being and quality of life for its entire population and the world?



OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS, WE WILL FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) The development of a scientific, theoretical framework that allows for empirical testing;
- 2) An applied approach that provides guidance on the following issues related to quality of life: (a) engaging key stakeholders, (b) promoting efficacious policies, and (c) maintaining quality of life in the face of forces that undermine its attainment:
- 3) Identification of cultural issues that limit or enhance the portability of the model and how it can be adaptable across settings.

Using an evolutionary perspective to identify theories and practices that improve the human condition is the primary mission of the Evolution Institute. Due to Norway's consistently high rankings on quality of life indices, both over time and across rating agencies, the EI Board of Directors has identified the Norway Initiative as one of its three Strategic Core Priorities. We seek to understand what can be learned from an evolutionary perspective and to determine whether and under what conditions Norway's achievements can be sustained and adopted elsewhere. The profound knowledge that can be gained from this initiative and its policy implications are highly consistent with the EI's mission and goals.



Photo: 2009. Aircraft carrier flight-deck workers at dusk.

EI President David Sloan Wilson provides a theoretical evolutionary lens when viewing Norway from a cultural perspective. He regards human history as a process of multilevel cultural evolution. Modern societies – corporate units – emerged as social organizations and evolutionary forces that led to our current social organizations still operate today. Modern nations vary in their social organization in ways that affect their function as corporate units and are heavily influenced by historical contingencies and local circumstances. However, their differences can also be based on the presence or absence of fundamental principles that are required for any social group to function well as a unit. These principles can be evaluated for a given nation and deficiencies remedied. Viewed this way, Norway is exemplary in achieving expansive within- and between-group cooperation.

Political scientist and EI cofounder Jerry Lieberman is vested in the application of these principles of cultural evolution. Because politics is a means to influence policy, the application of this research must be well-developed and accompanied by good science. Presently, the United States is headed in the direction of greater and greater inequality, and its citizens' trust in government is low. Conversely, Norway provides a good example of an advanced democracy where a great deal of trust in government remains, and inequality is low relative to most other economically and technologically developed nations.

Representatives from EI first traveled to Norway in October 2013 and made two follow-up visits in 2014 as collaboration grew from academia to include think tanks across the political spectrum and labor unions. The first visit in 2013 was academically oriented: carefully planned and structured, university-based, faculty engaged, and small in size. It examined why and how Norway had achieved the highest QoL ratings from the United Nations Human Development Index (UNHDI) over the past decade, as well as some of the risks it faces in terms of globalization and the relationship to the European Union.

Plans for the March 2014 trip began after one the Norwegian think tanks, Manifest Analyse, asked David Sloan Wilson to present before union representatives, politicians, and media personnel throughout Norway. Conversations focused on the international crises - in Norway and elsewhere - resulting from globalization and how some governmental and non-governmental organizations are addressing these. The March trip had a broader base of engagement, and it was designed to establish long-term relationships with people who would be interested in learning what EI has to offer and what we could accomplish together.

During the course of the September 2014 trip, which UiO financed in order to submit joint proposals as partners to the Norway Research Council and the European Union, we also examined the role and the importance of strong and independent unions that are characteristic of functional democratic societies. Norway is representative of this case, in contrast to the United States, where unions have declined significantly over the last 60 years – although the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) a significant exception. The EI brought an SEIU representative to Norway who shared information and materials about how they gain public support and respect for their work in the community and their strategies for achieving cooperation across diverse socio-economic groups – building trust and increasing overall participation in civic and political affairs. As a result of SEIU's presence at the most recent Norway meeting, overtures to cooperate turned into consideration of exchange programs between union members from Norway and the United States, which we anticipate will be established in the next three years.

Photo: 2012. Young Buddhist monks meditating.

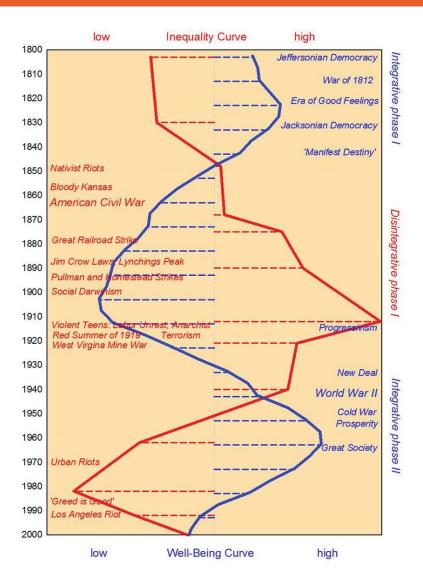




SESHAT: GLOBAL HISTORY DATABANK

There is a huge corpus of collectively-possessed knowledge about past societies held by academic historians and archaeologists. Unfortunately, it is almost entirely in a form that is inaccessible to scientific analysis—stored in historians' brains or scattered over isolated notes and publications. This knowledge has enormous potential to explain aspects of cultural evolution and historical social dynamics, but it has been largely untapped. The SESHAT: Global History Databank is building an historical/archaeological database to answer questions about the human condition. Ultimately, how do social, political, and economic processes interact to promote (or hinder) well-being and equality, political stability, and economic productivity?

PROJECTS: AXIAL AGE RELIGIONS AND THE Z-CURVE OF HUMAN EGALITARIANISM



The evolution of social and economic inequality in human societies has not been a simple U-turn over the millennia, from the dominance hierarchies of our ape-like ancestors to egalitarianism and back to hierarchy. Instead, there was a 'zig' (a move to large-scale hierarchical and unequal societies), followed by a 'zag' (a move towards greater egalitarianism associated with the Axial Age, c.800–200 BCE). What led to the emergence of hierarchical organization in modern humans—and then, why did egalitarianism re-emerge? Axial Age religions may have played an extremely important, yet little-appreciated, role in these processes. Our framework for addressing these issues is modern evolutionary theory, in particular, cultural evolution.

Using data on religion, norms and institutions, and other cultural characteristics of historical societies, we seek to address the following questions:

- What caused these two trend reversals in the evolution of human inequality?
- What steps did societies take to overcome the tensions between the need for hierarchy and the desire for fair treatment by the majority of the population?
- What were the cultural mechanisms involved in the first and second reversals?

In July, the Axial Age project received a three-year, \$920,000 grant from the John Templeton Foundation. It is a deeply collaborative project, including the Co-PIs, Peter Turchin, Tom Currie, and Harvey Whitehouse, four research assistants, two post-doctoral researchers, and a project coordinator, plus numerous expert collaborators.

The Deep Roots of the Modern World: Investigating the Cultural Evolution of Economic Growth and Political Stability

Today, we see a staggering degree of inequality in economic performance and effectiveness of governance among nations. Understanding the causes of these disparities is one of the greatest intellectual puzzles in the social sciences, and one of the most pressing policy problems. What, then, are the long-term causes of economic growth and political stability? Our focus on historic economic performance investigates resources (e.g., agricultural productivity) and political and economic institutions (e.g., constraints on executive power), as well as economically productive cultural traits and technologies. We are currently concentrating on northern China, central Italy, and Egypt because these regions have produced some of the oldest and most sophisticated societies in human history.

The Deep Roots project is led by co-PIs Peter Turchin and Tom Currie. Thanks to a two-year, \$200,000 grant from the Tricoastal Foundation, a post-doctoral researcher and three research assistants have coded and compiled data in 2014.

COLLABORATORS

ALIGNED: Quality-Centric Software and Data Engineering

An EC Horizon 2020 program-funded project, ALIGNED is a research consortium that includes several members of the SESHAT team, led by the computer scientist Rob Brennan at Trinity College Dublin. Early 2015 will see the SESHAT project used as a rich, real-world case study for testing the tools developed by the ALIGNED consortium for collecting and curating high-quality historical and archaeological data.

New People

SESHAT: Global History Databank is governed by the Board of Editors (Peter Turchin, Harvey Whitehouse, Pieter François, Thomas Currie, and Kevin Feeney). The Board is advised by a number of consultants. Data collection for a specific NGA is coordinated by a Regional Editor, and data entered for a specific polity is vetted by expert historians and archaeologists. Below, I detail some of the personnel changes that took place during 2014.

- **Dr. Pieter François**, who has been a Postdoctoral Research Associate supported by the Ritual, Community, and Conflict grant, has started a tenured position at the University of Hertfordshire. In September 2014 he also took up the role of Research Coordinator of the Cultural Evolution Lab at Oxford University.
- Dr. Daniel Hoyer has been appointed as the Postdoctoral Research Associate supported by the Deep Roots grant.
- **Dr. Daniel Mullins** has been appointed as the Postdoctoral Research Associate, supported by the Axial Age grant. His appointment at the University of Oxford will start in January 2015.
- **Dr. Brittany Sears** has been appointed as Operations Manager. She is supported by the Axial Age grant and the Evolution Institute.
- Mr. Edward A. L. Turner, who has been associated with the Seshat project since its inception, has been appointed as Principal Research Assistant.
- Ms. Rosalind Purcell has been appointed as Research Assistant for the SESHAT project.
- Mr. Odhran Gavin has been appointed as a Research Assistant on the Axial Age grant and will transition to a position in the Horizon 2020 ALIGNED project at Trinity College Dublin.
- Two of the former RAs in the Seshat project, **Rudolf Cesaretti and Alice Williams**, entered Ph.D. programs at the Arizona State University and the University of Exeter, respectively. They will both continue to contribute to SESHAT by collecting data and participating in workshops relevant to their Ph.D. projects.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The SESHAT team gratefully acknowledges the generous support from the ESRC, the EC Horizon 2020 program, Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, the Tricoastal Foundation, and the John Templeton Foundation. Additionally, we are very grateful to individual donations from Bernard Winograd and James Bennett that sustained various aspects of our work.



DISCOVERY PROJECTS

THIS VIEW OF LIFE AND THE SCIENCE TO NARRATIVE CHAIN

This View of Life is an online magazine that reports on evolution the way that Darwin imagined it--as a theory that applies to all aspects of humanity in addition to the rest of life. TVOL makes modern evolutionary science accessible to the public on topics that are vital to our personal and social wellbeing, including health, education, environment, economics, politics, culture and the arts. It shows what Darwin meant when he wrote "There is grandeur in this view of life..."

We are delighted to have received a planning grant from the John Templeton Foundation in 2014 to help develop our online magazine This View of Life (http://www.thisviewoflife.com) and a communication strategy that we call the science-to-narrative chain.

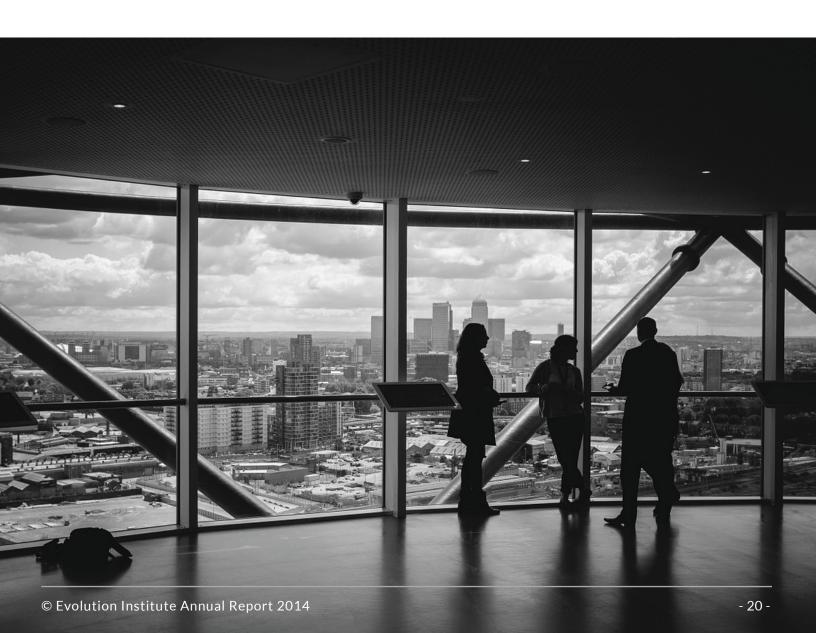
The idea of creating an online magazine that reports "anything and everything from an evolutionary perspective" originated with Robert Kadar in 2001, who was then a graduate student working with David Sloan Wilson and an early associate of the El. Robert was a history major at Binghamton University and was "turned on" to evolution through EvoS (http://evolution.binghamton.edu/evos/), the campus-wide evolutionary studies program that Wilson started and continues to direct. The idea for the magazine was to do for the general public what EvoS strives to do for higher education and the El strives to do the world of public policy.

The concept of a science-to-narrative chain notes that science is necessary but not sufficient to solve the problems of our age. There must also be narratives that can be easily communicated to mass audiences. Moreover, the narratives must be connected to the science through intermediate links of material providing more detail, so that those who become engaged at the narrative end can easily reach the science end of the chain.

TVOL occupies a link close to the science end of the chain by reporting on the latest developments in evolutionary science to a broader audience. Its editorial staff is composed mostly of practicing evolutionary scientists representing all disciplines, making the magazine a science media outlet controlled by scientists. Articles published in TVOL in turn

can lead to shorter content that reaches still larger audiences.

The JTF grant has enabled us to hire two superb editors: Luba Ostashevsky, who serves as Managing Editor, and Eric Michael Johnson, who serves as Content Development Editor. Robert, who is currently employed full-time as a web producer in the Office of Marketing and Communications at St. John's University, remains centrally involved as a consultant. Luba also received an EvoS education at Binghamton University and went on to a successful career in the publishing industry. Eric is a graduate student at the University of British Columbia researching the early history of Social Darwinism. He has already become a well-known science journalist through his "Primate Diaries" blog at Scientific American and his column on the online magazine *Slate*. The JTF grant will also enable us to develop a business plan for the magazine and produce material targeted for specific policy audiences. Finally, content on TVOL will be thoroughly integrated with the EI and Social Evolution Forum websites.



EI BOARD OF DIRECTORS



David Sloan Wilson, Ph.D.

President and co-founder, Evolution Institute SUNY Distinguished Professor, Departments of Biology and Anthropology, Binghamton University

David Sloan Wilson is an evolutionist who studies all aspects of humanity in addition to the biological world. He manages a number of programs designed to expand the influence of evolutionary theory in higher education (EvoS), public policy (The Evolution Institute), community-based research (The Binghamton Neighborhood Project), and religion (Evolutionary Religious Studies). He communicates to the general public through his blog, This View of Life, and his trade books, including Evolution for Everyone: How Darwin's Theory Can Change the Way We Think About Our Lives and Does Altruism Exist?

Peter Turchin, Ph.D.

Vice President, Evolution Institute
Professor, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Connecticut

Peter Turchin was trained as a theoretical biologist, but during the last fifteen years, he has been working in the field of historical social science that he and his colleagues call cliodynamics, which applies an analytical, scientific approach to historical research. He manages the blog Social Evolution Forum with David Sloan Wilson and is Editor-In-Chief of Cliodynamics: the Journal of Quantitative History and Cultural Evolution.





Jerry Lieberman, Ph.D.

Secretary/Treasurer and co-founder, Evolution Institute

Jerry Lieberman has served on numerous government and corporate boards and has raised over 100 million dollars from public and private resources to support activities he is engaged with. Earlier in his career, he was a university-level professor and administrator. It was Jerry's original vision to create an evolutionary think tank, which he directs with his management in addition to his intellectual skills. His focal topic is the science-to-narrative chain.



Julie Seaman, J.D.

Director, Evolution Institute

Associate Professor of Law, Emory University School of Law

Julie Seaman teaches evidence and a seminar on the First Amendment. Professor Seaman received her BA from the University of Pennsylvania (summa cum laude) and her JD from Harvard (magna cum laude), where she was an editor of the Harvard Law Review and a teaching assistant for the federal litigation course. She clerked with federal district court Judge Robert J. Ward and she has taught legal writing as an adjunct professor at Stetson University School of Law.

Joseph Graves, Jr., Ph.D.

Director, Evolution Institute
Professor and Associate Dean for Research, Joint School for Nanoscience and Nanoengineering,
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and UNC Greensboro.

Joseph Graves researches the evolutionary genetics of postponed aging and biological concepts of race in humans. He has published over seventy papers and book chapters and appeared in six documentary films and numerous television interviews on these general topics. His current research involves the genomics of adaptation, specifically relevant to aging, the impact of nanoparticles on bacteria, and the theory and methods of computational evolutionary phylogenetics and molecular evolution.





Jerry Miller, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Evolution Institute

Jerry Miller is an industrial-organizational psychologist. He spent 18 years at the University of South Florida where he created, directed, researched, and managed organizations and projects that served communities and youth in economic development and job creation activities, as well as school-based and out of school intervention programs. He has been awarded over 25 grants and contracts from federal, state, and local agencies and foundations and has presented his work domestically and internationally.



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