

From: [Dalhousie University Announcements](#) on behalf of [Dalhousie Notice](#)
To: DAL-ANNOUNCEMENT@LISTS.DAL.CA
Subject: In Memoriam - Dr. Sean Barrett
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In Memoriam - Dr. Sean Barrett



The Department of Psychology and Neuroscience and Faculty of Science are deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Sean P. Barrett on June 13, 2024, at the age of 50. Sean will be dearly missed by his wife Christine, son Thomas, family, friends, colleagues, and students.

Sean was born in 1973 and grew up in Belleville, Ontario. He completed his undergraduate degree at St. Francis Xavier University in 1998, then went on to earn his PhD in Clinical Psychology from McGill University in 2006. He began his career at Dalhousie in 2005, where he established the Dalhousie Substance Use & Addictions Lab, notable for having the only room on campus where smoking was permitted (by research participants only!). He became a full Professor in 2016, held a cross-appointment in Psychiatry, an Affiliated Scientist appointment with the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and was a Registered Psychologist.

Sean was a dedicated and valued member of the department, and the larger university community, in every way. He served on numerous departmental committees, notably as Director of Clinical Training for the PhD in Clinical Psychology from 2014-18. The significant improvements he made to the program during that time were recognized with his receiving Dalhousie's Rosemary Gill award in 2018 for "outstanding service to students." He also represented the Faculty of Science at Dalhousie's Senate for many years. He was featured on the Faculty of Sciences *Sciographies* podcast in 2018.

Sean was an active and productive scientist whose work on substance use, and in particular expectancy effects, was innovative and impactful. He published over 100 papers, which were cited nearly 4000 times, and engaged a large number of trainees and colleagues as collaborators. Over his career at Dalhousie, Sean supervised 50 honours students as well as 20 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. He was a dedicated mentor and a strong advocate for students in faculty meetings. Sean was known for insisting on looking beyond conventional metrics like GPA, and giving students opportunities based on enthusiasm, dedication, curiosity, and promise. He was passionate about supporting neurodiverse students to better meet their needs and ensure they thrived.

A dedicated mentor and instructor, Sean was devoted to ensuring the success of his students and was deeply committed to advancing our understanding of the factors that contribute to addictive behaviours. His students and colleagues remember his vibrant presence and keen sense of humour, his ingenuity and intellect, his unwavering commitment to his work, and his investment in and advocacy for his students. The legacy he leaves is immeasurable, and he will be missed dearly.

The department will be holding a celebration of Sean's life at a later date. His obituary can be viewed at <https://intelligencer.remembering.ca/obituary/sean-barrett-1089975279>