



FELLOW PROFILE

James P. Bliss



Degrees:

- PhD, Human Factors Psychology, University of Central Florida
- MS, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, University of Central Florida
- BA, Psychology, University of Central Florida
- BM, Music Performance, Old Dominion University

Current status: Professor, Psychology, Old Dominion University;
Fellow, Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

Biography: As an undergraduate student in Psychology at the University of Central Florida, I was one of many who had never heard of human factors. I was accepted to UCF's master's program in Industrial/Organizational Psychology in 1987; it seemed an appropriate outlet for my psychology major and business minor. After my first year in the I/O program, UCF began its doctoral program in human factors by hiring three accomplished faculty members: Richard Gilson (later to be my advisor), Ben Morgan, and Edward Rinalducci. I took a Sensation and Perception class from Dr. Gilson and began doing federally funded simulation work

with Janet Turnage and Bob Kennedy. In 1988, I joined UCF's Human Factors inaugural PhD class and began working as one of the Army Research Institute's first Consortium Fellows in its new Orlando Field Unit. There I was introduced to military simulation and training and virtual reality while working alongside a team of talented professionals.

I was to interact with other pioneers in the field throughout my career. While working on my doctoral dissertation, I was privileged to meet and discuss signal trust with Earl Wiener, Bob Sorkin, Alvah Bittner, Richard Pew, Victor Riley, Robert North, Chris Miller, and others. They instilled in me a love of science, an appreciation for experimental rigor, and a desire to influence others. As a result, I chose academia for my career and took a faculty position at The University of Alabama in Huntsville after graduating.

Like most academics, I feel lucky to have interacted with many students who exude passion and promise. As a result, the last 24 years have flown by. In 1996, I took a leave of absence and became the Behavioral Science Director for the Virtual Environments Technology Lab at the University of Houston. There we performed more research using virtual environments for training a variety of skills, from spatial navigation to military checkpoint operations to interpretation of gestural communications.

I returned to UAH in 1997, earning tenure and promotion in 1999. I became the chair of the Psychology Department in 2000, my first administrative role in higher education. Soon afterwards, the opportunity to regularly advise doctoral students came from Old Dominion University; I joined the Psychology Department there as an untenured associate professor in 2001.

One month into my position, 9/11 happened. Aside from the shock and dismay associated with that terrible event, it seemed that military research had changed overnight. The next three years were spent working toward tenure and adjusting to a plethora of new human factors challenges. With the support of faculty colleagues, family, and friends, I earned tenure in 2004.

In 2005, I began my journey to another life goal: Over 10 years I slowly worked toward an undergraduate music performance degree, graduating in 2015. Aside from personal fulfillment, the degree offered me a new appreciation of occupational ergonomics and biomechanics. While working on the degree, I continued my teaching, research, and service. I was promoted to full professor in 2012 and served one term as the department chair (2013–2016).

Looking back, I have few regrets. As an academician, I have been continually challenged and rewarded. HFES has offered a welcoming, nurturing community of professionals and a venue for dissemination of my research findings; I encourage all members to stay involved in the Society.

Employment History

- 4/2012 – Present Full Professor, Psychology Department, ODU, Norfolk, Virginia
- 8/2013 – 6/2016 Chair, Psychology Department, ODU, Norfolk, Virginia
- 9/2000 – 8/2001 Chair, Psychology Department, UAH, Huntsville, Alabama
- 9/1999 – 8/2001 Associate Professor (with Tenure), Psychology Department, UAH, Huntsville, Alabama
- 1/1996 – 12/1996 Assistant Director, VETL, Computer Science Department, and Adjunct Instructor, Psychology Department, University of Houston, Houston, Texas

What were your significant contributions to the field?

The following seem most noteworthy to me. It's important to emphasize that (as with the majority of human factors research), I cannot take full credit for any of this; I am the beneficiary of excellent mentors and students.

I believe my doctoral dissertation was one of the first efforts to demonstrate the behavioral consequences of low alarm signal reliability (the "cry-wolf" effect). Following the lead of Shlomo Breznitz, I investigated how individuals reacted to low reliability in the context of a dual-task paradigm. Since publishing the work in 1994, my students and I have continued to investigate matters of automation and autonomy trust.

Another contribution occurred as an outgrowth of work at the Army Research Institute in Orlando, Florida. The research team there created one of the first task batteries in a virtual environment (the Virtual Environment Performance Assessment Battery, or VEPAB). That battery successfully discriminated between experts and novices and among control devices. It spawned an entire program of research at ARI beginning in 1992. Since that time, my students and I have continued to conduct research using virtual environment technology.

As a faculty member and administrator, perhaps my most significant contributions take the form of successful faculty members and students whom I have advised. I am grateful for their dedication and am humbled to think I had some role in their successes.

Which articles in the journal *Human Factors* would you say were the most influential to you and your research or practice?

Automation Trust:

Lee, J., & Sees, M. (2004). Trust in automation: Designing for appropriate reliance. *Human Factors*, 46(1), 50–80.

Parasuraman, R., & Riley, V. (1997). Humans and automation: Use, misuse, disuse, abuse. *Human Factors*, 39(2), 230–253.

Simulation and Training:

Vruels, D., & Obermayer, R.W. (1985). Human-system performance measurement in training simulators. *Human Factors*, 27, 241–250.

Please provide any links to your online articles, essays, blogs, Wikipedia pages, etc., that pertain to your research, publications or practice.

<https://www.odu.edu/directory/people/j/jbliss#profiletab=1>

What advice would you give someone considering HF/E as a profession?

Human factors, like life, is a buffet...not a one-course dinner. Sample from a variety of activities and opportunities and don't be afraid to experience the diversity the field has to offer. You will ultimately be well rounded. Never stop learning.