

Graduate Fellowships - Megan Hamilton and Lili Yan

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The Center for Intersectional Gender Studies and Research recently awarded Megan Hamilton and Lili Yan the graduate fellowships with the center.

Hamilton and Yan will help the center in research, outreach efforts, planning events, and—most importantly—connecting students and faculty to create a more inclusive campus.

"I am pleased to see Megan and Lili named in the inaugural cohort of 2020-2021 Graduate Fellows for the

Center for Intersectional Gender Studies and Research," said Dr. Breanne Litts, ITLS assistant professor and a mentor to both Hamilton and Yan. "This accomplishment is a deserved recognition of their individual and collective leadership and service in cultivating a more inclusive climate in our USU community. Their contributions to our LED lab, our department, our college, our university, and our community provoke us to humanize our research and teaching toward the goals of equity, inclusion, and justice," said Litts.

Megan Hamilton is a PhD candidate, a scholar-activist of Anishinaabe and European ancestry, and citizen of the White Earth Nation. Her scholarly work is at the intersection of social justice, education, and cultural competence.

For the past decade, Hamilton has worked as a STEM educator in public schools and informal learning settings. Throughout her career, she has actively sought academic spaces where Indigenous perspectives and histories can be embraced in K-12 and post-secondary educational settings. She also served as the president of the Instructional Technology Student Association (ITSA) in the 2018-2019 school year.

"For me, engaging in solidarity includes making lasting improvements to the school programs Indigenous children participate in, both locally and beyond," said Hamilton.

Hamilton is passionate about the work she does and feels it's her responsibility to spread awareness.

"Remembrance and solidarity with Indigenous communities, as well as disrupting settler colonial educational practices, begins with increasing public awareness of Indigenous perspectives and histories," Hamilton said. "I feel it is my scholarly duty to generate such awareness as part of my research."

"Megan's scholarship encourages us to rethink how we teach and engage different perspectives, especially Indigenous perspectives, in K-12 classrooms," said Litts.

Lili Yan is Han Chinese from southeastern China. She has a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in English Language Literature. She was an English teacher in Shanghai for three years before joining the ITLS PhD program. She is currently a PhD candidate and a doctoral scholar fellow along with Hamilton and was the president of the ITSA for the 2020-2021 school year.

Yan is interested in research at the intersection of culture, technology, and learning. Her dissertation examines how

youth develop culture awareness through creating multiple representations of culture. She says her work as a graduate assistant on previous projects focused on centering culture in learning has influenced her current research.

Yan is passionate about the work she does. "I look forward to getting more community-building experiences, including how to develop collaboration and partnerships and how to be a great conversation facilitator," she said.

"Lili's scholarship invites us to examine what it means to bring our cultural identities into spaces of learning and represent those identities through technology," said Litts.

Hamilton and Yan's advice for getting a fellowship is to apply for many opportunities and ask for feedback.

"Apply, apply, apply! You can't get something you don't apply for," Hamilton said. "And don't sell yourself short during the application process. You are more qualified and deserving than you might think."

"In terms of preparing the application materials for fellowship, my advice is don't be afraid to ask for feedback," Yan said. "For me as an international student, writing those application documents can be daunting at first. It means a lot when I reach out to people for feedback, and this process also helps me know myself better," said Yan.