2024 ITLS Awards

04/05/2024

ITLS Announces 2024 Student, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Community Awards

Undergraduate Awards

Audrey Flood, *Scholar of the Year*

Audrey Flood has not only excelled at academics with her GPA, Dean's List appearances, and A-pin awards, she has contributed to USU in many other ways. During the pandemic, she helped convert much Canvas content across USU to promote accessibility, especially for students with visual disabilities. She has published multiple articles in the USU Statesman, including her award-winning article about educational design and accessibility. She served ITSA Undergraduate Vice President, rebuilding connections between students and faculty after pandemic disruptions. For two years she has been a research assistant in the Department of Computer Science, again focusing on inclusivity in design. And for two years Audrey has been Aggie Radio Station Director, helping Aggie Radio twice win the Spirit of College Radio Award and putting USU on the map nationally.

Jake Hayward, *Undergraduate Student Researcher of the Year Award*

Jake Hayward has shown an exceptional drive for independent scholarship, thoughtful incorporation of human-centered perspectives in cutting-edge design and research using AI. Drawing on insights from his research projects with Ha Nguyen, Jake is *leading the design work* of a web-based interface that positions AI as a collaborative ideator, facilitating equitable learning experiences in AI-integrated environments, in ways that consider the values and perspectives of different user groups.

Tiandra Taylor, *Undergraduate Teaching Fellow Award*

Tiandra Taylor went above and beyond in contributing to ITLS 3350 - Introduction to Computational Thinking. Many students in this class feel intimadated by coding, and Tianrd led weekly coding help sessions, went out of her way to encourage students, emailed students every week who were missing assignments just to check in with them, and —in a contribution to future students—did a user analysis of the coding quests and redesigned those pages to streamline communication and support.

Graduate Awards

Nate Justis, *Doctoral Student Researcher of the Year Award*

Nate Justis brings his passion for supporting teachers into both his role as principal of Edith Bowen Laboratory School and in his doctoral studies. Not only does he have multiple first-authored peer review publications and a Fulbright award already as a doctoral student, but he also has served as broker for research and practice by inviting his peers and colleagues in K-12 to join him in his research endeavors. Nate's passion for collaborative, participatory learning and supporting the whole teacher is beginning to have statewide reach through his doctoral research - set to complete at the end of this semester.

Prasina Parameswaran, *Graduate Student Teacher of the Year Award*

Prasina Parameswaran is an excellent instructor. She truly wants students to succeed, supporting them through kind feedback, remediation, support on course content and course improvements. She thinks about how to adapt our ITLS courses to students' feedback and needs. She also actively supports our diverse student body through cultural events held at the university and the department level and as our ITSA president.

Man Zhang, *Master's Student Researcher of the Year Award*

Man Zhang research journey started with Dr. Lisa Lundgren in January 2022, with a focus on science learning in informal settings, particularly on social media platforms. Through Dr. Lundgren's USU Research Catalyst seed grant, Man has taken an active role in data collection, analysis, and writing and is completing her own master's thesis. At the 2023 Utah State University Student Research Symposium (SRS), Man received the SRS Graduate Oral Award. In addition, Man has presented at regional and national conferences. She has also been honored at the CEHS Master's Student Researcher of the Year!

Tylan Dee, *Master's Scholar of the Year*

Tylan Dee has worked hard and diligently in the ITLS program. His care for students at the USU Blanding campus is evident in the way he has used his creative project to create an inclusive course for the first-year students. Drawing on his own indigenous background, his kindness, empathy, and passion for inclusiveness is evident in his work as an instructional designer, and represents the best of our ITLS masters students.

Becca Pond, *Master's Scholar of the Year*

In the ITLS masters program, Becca Pond has reached the next level of proficiency and professionalism. She is a great team member on any project, always willing to take the lead and working hard to include every team member. She obtained an internship with Southwest Airlines and knocked it out of the park. During her internship, she was given several very high-profile projects and—unusual for an intern—presented her ideas to upper management. Her work was so outstanding that she was offered several jobs with Southwest, one of which she accepted. Becca is truly a credit to our program.

AlLisia Dawkins, *Legacy of Utah State Award*

AlLisia Dawkins contributes so much to our department and our university. While a doctoral student, she has served as the President of the Graduate Student of Color Student Council and is Vice President for ITSA this year. Her leadership within our department and across the university is exceptional.

Roxie Christensen, *Student Community Engagement Award*

Roxie Christenson currently works as a learning developer and has a strong interest in youth agricultural education through experiential learning.She engages in many areas of our surrounding communities, from working with USU faculty and USU extension, obtaining a grant for a community garden, orchestrating volunteers from across USU for the garden, providing several hundred pounds of food to the community through community gardens, working with 4-H, and organizing community events.

Faculty

Kelli Munns, *Eldon J. Gardner Teacher of the Year*

Kelli Munns is well known amongst students and faculty for developing dynamic ITLS classes, supporting other instructors (including graduate instructors) throughout the department, and being an outstanding advisor. In all of her work she goes above and beyond in mentorship. As one student wrote, "She has always been in my corner!"

David Feldon, *Faculty Researcher of the Year Award*

David Feldon is simply an outstanding researcher. In terms of numbers, throughout his 18-year career, he has authored 64 peer-reviewed journal articles, 24 book chapters, and 1 sole-authored book. He has brought in over $15.4 million in grants. More importantly, his work is at the cutting edge of mixed methodologies and everyone who gets to work with him—faculty and students alike—speak about how much they valued the experience and how nuanced and sophisticated his work is, whether he is looking for trends across large samples, meaningful changes in an individual, or, more likely, all of the above.

Jody Clark-Midura, *Faculty University Service Award*

Jody Clarke-Midura continually goes above and beyond in department and university service. She is helming efforts to get our new ITLS doctoral curriculum up and running. She collaborates with colleagues, mentors junior faculty in research (including spending countless hours reading drafts of grant proposals), leads many promotion and tenure committees, and even serves on IRB which is crucial to all of our research.

Kristy Bloxham, *Graduate Faculty Mentor of the Year Award*

Kristy Bloxham makes sure that the ITLS Masters' programs is aligned with professional pathways, and that our students are

prepared for courses through meticulous mentoring and planning. She goes above and beyond in helping students develop their job materials and portfolios; connects students to the industry leaders; and supports them in getting the jobs they deserve. Many students nominated her with gratitude because she is always willing to advise and help—whether through last minute zoom meetings or personal calls. Students call her “positive and wise” with “gold” advice!

Breanne Litts, *Strong Human Services Award*

Breanne Litts centers her work around community needs, including both cross-cultural and cross-community interactions. Her research and teaching make practical contributions that directly serve the needs and goals of the communities with whom she partners, including among others, the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation and Edith Bowen Laboratory School. Her partners themselves have highlighted the ways that she takes time to build trust, value their cultural knowledge and experience, and give them a greater voice through research and opportunities to participate in publications.

Ramy Shabaan, *Undergraduate Faculty Mentor of the Year Award*

Not only is Ramy Shabaan director of the HEDI program—a program that has grown 22% under his leadership, he masterfully customizes the program for students’ goals and market needs, designing new courses to give students skills that will launch them into their careers, fitting students in the best internship opportunities, and supporting their growth throughout the program. Not only this, Ramy actually creates new internship possibilities by partnering with places like the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, writing grants to create USU’s VR Nursing Simulation Program, and identifying other community partners who need, for instance, marketing campaigns or user experience analysis that our students can perform

Ha Nguyen, *Undergraduate Faculty Research Mentor of the Year Award*

A relatively new faculty member, Ha Nguyen started mentoring undergraduate researchers from the moment she stepped on campus. Faculty and students have commented on her thoughtful mentorship, detailed feedback, and the opportunities she gives students. One of her students wrote, “Ha has genuinely changed the trajectory of my life. She has tailored my research experience to so much that is needed for me, and she continues to astound me in the thought and effort she puts forward towards my role.”

Lu Lawrence, *Faculty Community Engagement Award*

Lu Lawrence’s scholarship and teaching both align with care, support, and understanding. Drawing on these values, Lu has conducted outstanding community-engaged research dedicated to bridging academia and the community. Her tireless efforts have made a profound impact on many lives, through innovative projects and collaborative initiatives, building relationships that are supporting student participation in research and demonstrating the power of scholarship in creating positive change.

Staff

Brigham Haroldsen, *Outstanding Staff of the Year Award*

As a relatively new staff member, Brigham Haroldson has stepped in and done a great job with… well with *everything*, from the day-to-day events of the department to scheduling (which would make anyone's eyes bleed!) to the numerous odd and unusual requests that come in. From testing, to research, to purchasing and installation Brigham handles it all. He's known to perform magic. If Andy says something like 'it would be great if these chairs could roll' then voila, soon after we have rolling chairs. Things happen with Brigham! He's a fabulous team player and we are so grateful he's on our team!

Alumni

Ryan Hobbs, *Alumni of the Year Award*

Ryan Hobbs is a higher education administrator with 20+ years of strategic planning, organization design, digital learning, competency-based, micro-learning, learning design, student success, and instructional technology experience. Ryan believes that learning is best facilitated by doing, is lifelong, and should be accessible from anywhere, at any time. New delivery models, communities, spaces, and formats are needed to effectively connect people with an array of learning options. Ryan has held high-profile administrative positions at several Universities, and we are grateful that he has now returned to do the same at USU!

Community Partner

Village Book Builders (Director: Rachel McCracken), *Community Partner Community Engagement Award*

Village Book Builders allowed USU students and faculty to engage with a refugee camp and provide women with skills to enter the workforce and provide literacy skills for the children. This nonprofit is doing the good work and we cannot be prouder to have worked and continue our partnership with them!

Linda Hall, Canyons School District, *Community Partner Community Engagement Award*

Linda Hall is the main contact in a research practice partnership with Dr. Lu Lawrence and Canyons School District. As part of this project, the district supports two ITLS masters students, two ITLS undergraduates, and two undergraduates from other departments to support research, work together, and give our students the opportunity to learn about how to work with communities and authentically value and acknowledge community needs and voices.