

Meeting the Challenge: Mealiianolani Enos | CEHS

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Mealiianolani Enos, this year's CEHS valedictorian and Scholar of the Year, started her academic career as a recruit for the USU women's soccer team. As a student athlete, Mealii has truly learned what it means to "meet the challenge," balancing her athletic schedule with her academic pursuits and excelling at both. She served as team captain for two years and is a three-time Utah State Defender of the Year and four-time Mountain West Scholar Athlete. She was also a nominee for USU Woman Athlete of the Year.

Mealii began her time at USU in the Special Education program with an emphasis in severe disabilities. During her sophomore year, she added a second major in Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education. She has enjoyed her classes in both majors and expressed her appreciation for her professors and their dedication to their students. Mealii worked for Kimberly Snow as an undergraduate teaching fellow in three junior-level classes, helping her peers to succeed in their coursework.

Her enthusiasm for learning and her academic prowess led Mealii to an opportunity to work as a research assistant in the Language and Aphasia Neuro-Rehabilitation Lab at

USU. As a member of this research team, she facilitated group therapy sessions for adults with aphasia, a language disorder caused by brain damage. She also created alternative communication materials for the participants to help them communicate more effectively with their spouses and others.

Dr. Lisa Milman, with whom Mealii worked closely in the lab, describes Mealii as exceptionally bright, solution-focused, reliable, and caring. "She is passionate about gaining more training in the field of Speech Language Pathology and about helping others, particularly those with severe communication challenges," said Milman. "I expect she will enrich the lives of many individuals."

Because she enjoys working with students on an individual basis, Mealii's favorite classes have been her practicum and student teaching experiences. Helping students overcome challenges and meet their own goals is vital to their individual growth and independence. Over the course of almost an entire semester, Mealii patiently and gradually taught a 12-year-old student to tie her shoes by herself. Mealii describes the day the student walked in and proudly showed off her laced-up shoes as one of her favorite moments. "My work as a student teacher made small but important victories possible for the students I worked with," she said.

Now that she has completed her undergraduate degrees, Mealii is planning to attend graduate school to become a speech-language pathologist. She hopes to provide speech therapy to individuals with disabilities in early intervention and school settings. She has made invaluable contributions to the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services and will continue that pattern of care, service, and leadership wherever she goes.