

USU Awards for Mentorship, Research go to Psychology Department | CEHS

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USU Graduate Mentor of the Year: Dr. Melanie Domenech Rodríguez

Dr. Melanie Domenech Rodríguez of the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services Psychology Department has been named USU Graduate Mentor of the Year. This annual award recognizes outstanding faculty for their work as mentors and role models to graduate students.

"Graduate student mentorship is among the most important work that a faculty member can do," said Scott Bates, Psychology department head. "Preparing the next generation of excellent scholars, particularly those who come from unrepresented groups, improves the world."

Domenech Rodríguez says that her mentorship method is informed by best parenting practices for raising healthy adults. High expectations and high levels of warmth and

support yield positive outcomes in both parenting and mentorship. Domenech Rodríguez provides this type of safe space for her students, both for support in times of distress and as a secure base from which they can reach out and explore.

Autonomy and self-determination are other important facets of Domenech Rodríguez's mentoring style. Her students set their own goals and take steps to achieve those goals while learning to support their peers. By focusing on strengths before giving feedback, Domenech Rodríguez creates a mindset that empowers students to seek intentional, deliberate growth and self-efficacy.

Through she is careful to set strong boundaries with those she mentors, developing meaningful, life-long relationships with current and former students is highly valuable to Domenech Rodríguez. She sees her students as her future colleagues. As stated in her mentoring philosophy, "I have met my mentoring goals most completely when my students surpass my achievements and competencies."

Domenech Rodríguez has been a professor in the Psychology department since 2000. Her research focuses on parenting in Spanish-speaking Latinx families, as well as broad cultural issues. One of her most successful projects has been to adapt the parenting model [GenerationPMTO for Latinx families](#) with school-age children. This program has been implemented in Utah, Michigan, and Mexico City. Domenech Rodríguez has also worked to develop ways to deliver such interventions via distance education technology. She is currently collaborating on an HRSA-funded project to increase the number of culturally and linguistically diverse physician assistants in Idaho.

In addition to this honor, Domenech Rodríguez is also a recipient of the [26th annual Utah State University Diversity Awards](#).



USU Doctoral Student Researcher of the Year: Jennifer Krafft

Jennifer Krafft, a doctoral student in the Combined Clinical/Counseling Psychology Ph.D. Program, was recently named the USU Doctoral Student Researcher of the Year.

Krafft has a [strong record of research excellence](#), having published 14 peer-reviewed articles, one edited book, and three book chapters during her time at USU. She also has nine articles currently under review and several other articles and studies in preparation or data collection stages. Her highly relevant work has been published in leading journals in her field, including *Behavior Therapy* and the *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*.

A member of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) Research Group led by Drs. Michael Levin and Michael Twohig, Krafft's research focuses on the "active ingredients" of change in acceptance and mindfulness-based psychology. Her work tests how these treatments can be applied to anxiety, OCD, and hoarding, and how the innovative use of technology can improve access to treatment.

"Jen is incredibly hard working, bright, and talented," said Michael Levin, who has worked with Krafft in his lab for over four years. "The work that she does in studying ways to improve mental health and the effectiveness of self-help programs not only has a high scholarly impact, but also provides a direct service to our community."

In addition to her participation in advanced research, Krafft has coordinated clinical trials evaluating mental health apps and websites and has worked with many individuals as a student therapist, both within and beyond the USU community.

"I am deeply grateful for the support and training I have received from professors and colleagues in the Department of Psychology, as well as the university more broadly," said Krafft. "I feel very lucky to work with a group of researchers who focus not only on being productive, but on research that is genuinely meaningful and that has a positive impact in the world."

The Combined Clinical/Counseling Psychology Ph.D. program is offered by the Psychology Department of the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at USU. To learn more about the program or the ACT research group, visit the [program homepage](#).