Outstanding Scholars and Researchers Join CEHS Faculty for 2024–25 Academic Year

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The Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University is pleased to welcome its new faculty members for the 2024-25 academic year. Each of these individuals brings expertise, innovation, and new perspective to the college and their individual departments or centers. “We are excited to add these innovative, committed colleagues to our team,” says Al Smith, Emma Eccles Jones endowed dean. “They will meaningfully advance our research and programming at Utah State.”

Brooke Hall,Clinical Assistant Professor, Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education. As a clinically certified speech-language pathologist, Hall’s professional background spans the full spectrum of speech-language pathology, from early intervention strategies for toddlers and their parents to successful management of K-12 school-aged caseloads and specialized programs for older adults facing neurological deficits. Her commitment to evidence-based practice and interdisciplinary collaboration in the field enriches the educational experience for her students, preparing them to meet the diverse needs of their future clients. Since returning to Cache Valley, where she completed her own studies, Hall is looking forward to contributing professionally to the community that shaped her early career. In addition to her professional roles, she enjoys exploring the valley with her husband and three children.

Jennifer Hunsaker,Professional Practice Assistant Professor, Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling. After earning a BS in communicative disorders and an MSS in human resource management from Utah State University, Hunsaker began a career in small business consulting, primarily in the healthcare space. She returned to USU for a Master’s in Rehabilitation Counseling and discovered her passion for disability advocacy and clinical mental health counseling. Today, Hunsaker is a professional practice assistant professor and an associate clinical mental health counselor for Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling Services in the Sorenson Legacy Foundation Center for Clinical Excellence. Hunsaker also serves on the board of the Utah Mental Health Counselors Association. She and her husband co-own a private mental healthcare practice in Utah and Idaho, which is focused on providing exceptional care to chronically underserved populations.

Bobbie Liechty, Clinical Assistant Professor, Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education. Liechty has extensive experience in both school and private practice settings. She specializes in working with children who have speech and language disorders and has expertise in complex communication needs, autism, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Liechty is passionate about helping children find their voice and navigating their communication challenges, and she brings a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience to her role as an educator. A third-generation Aggie, Liechty has deep roots in Cache Valley, where she has lived for most of her life. She enjoys giving back to the community that shaped her while continuing to learn and grow in her field. Outside of her professional life, Liechty loves to travel, spend time in the outdoors, and create lasting memories with her family.

David Longhurst, Clinical Assistant Professor, Integrated Assessment (IA) in the Behavioral Health Clinic. Longhurst earned his PhD in school psychology from Utah State University and recently completed his psychology doctoral internship at Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District in Health Service Psychology in Houston, Texas. His expertise is in assessment and identification of autism and related neurodevelopmental disabilities, school-medical collaboration, and parent trainings. Longhurst also supervises graduate psychology students in IA who are seeking to gain more experience in assessment of developmental disorders and report writing. His personal interests include hiking and fishing in the summer months and skiing in the winter months. He also enjoys supporting USU athletics, especially football, soccer, gymnastics, and basketball.

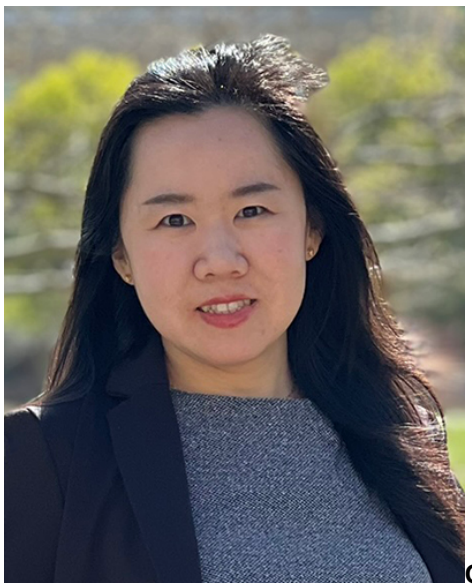
Naima Bhana Lopez, Assistant Professor, Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling. Lopezreceived a doctorate in special education from Penn State University and bachelor's and master's degrees from Florida State University. Before joining USU, she was an assistant professor at Niagara University in the Buffalo, New York, area for three years. At USU, she teaches courses in special education and applied behavior analysis. Her area of focus is developing methods to increase the social-communication opportunities for young children with developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorders by training natural communication partners, such as family members, teachers, and paraprofessionals. Her research seeks to improve the quality of life for ethnically and racially diverse students, teachers, and families and to expand services for children with disabilities in Spanish-speaking communities. In her free time, she enjoys reading fiction, baking, traveling, watching TV, and exploring the state and national parks in Utah.

Christine Rains,Professional Practice Assistant Professor, School of Nursing. Rains came to USU from Northeast Alabama, where she taught PN and ADN students for seven years at Northeast Alabama Community College. Prior to becoming a nursing instructor, she worked for eight years at a local community hospital as a registered nurse specializing in oncology and pediatric nursing care. Rains earned a BSN and MSN from Kaplan University and taught a team-based teaching program at the community college level. She also served as an on-site clinical instructor, providing hands-on individualized learning experiences for her students. Rains came to the Tooele area, where she now works at the USU statewide campus, to be closer to her family. She strives to teach both her students and her family—two children, a daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren—by example.

Erik Reinbergs, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology. Reinbergs is a licensed psychologist and nationally certified school psychologist. He received his PhD at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in School Psychology. Prior to joining USU, he was assistant professor in the combined school/clinical psychology program at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. His primary research focus in on suicide, self-harm, and related topics using quantitative methods. He aims to help youth, young adults, families, and school communities build lives perceived as worth living. Through a variety of efforts such as prevention, assessment, treatment, and postvention, he believes there are important opportunities at the individual and systems levels to reduce suffering related to emotional/behavioral challenges. Reinbergs is also interested in clinical behavior therapies, such as dialectical behavior therapy, and problems of applied measurement.

Cherish Sarmiento, Assistant Professor, School of Teacher Education and Leadership. Sarmiento recently received a PhD from the Special Education Department at Michigan State University, an accomplishment she is quite proud of as a first-generation college student. Having specialized in language and literacy, Cherish explores how features of academic texts affect student performance on content-area reading and writing tasks, with a particular interest in designing instructional routines and strategies that can support students with language or learning difficulties. With a background in biology, she is particularly passionate about supporting all student language use in the science classroom. Originally from California, Cherish is excited to live near the mountains again and is looking forward to backpacking in as many national parks as she can visit. When not outdoors, Cherish enjoys reading, gardening, and crocheting—surrounded by too many pets.

Ronen Sebag, Lecturer,School of Teacher Education and Leadership. Before coming to USU, Sebag (pronounced *sah-baugh*) was a high school teacher for 17 years. His instructional approach emphasized self-advocacy—a student-centered method in which the student identifies areas of struggle and develops the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions. Ronen now brings his practical experience with designing instruction for students' self-advocacy and self-awareness to the courses he teaches to pre-service teachers. Sebag enjoys hiking, camping, mountain biking, and dual-sport motorcycle touring. He feels very fortunate that there are so many opportunities to enjoy these activities in Cache Valley and throughout Utah.



Qi Si, Assistant Professor,School of Teacher Education and Leadership. Si holds a PhD in elementary education from the University of Alabama, where her research focused on elementary literacy education, multimodal literacies, and bilingual education. Her academic journey explores how these areas intersect with various content disciplines, fostering a holistic approach to educational practices. Beyond academia, Si is passionate about travel, seeking new destinations to experience diverse cultures and cuisines to enrich her global perspective and cultural competence in teaching. Whether delving into the nuances of language acquisition in young learners or savoring the flavors of international cuisines, Si brings a zest for discovery and a commitment to educational excellence to both research and everyday life.

Lindsay Sundloff,Professional Practice Assistant Professor, School of Nursing. Sundloff received a bachelor's degree in mass communication with a minor in mathematics from Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction, Colorado. She later enrolled in the Tooele Tech nursing program and went on to attend the USU nursing ADN and BSN programs. Sundloff completed her master's degree in nursing education from Western Governors' University. She has been working as both a nurse and a USU clinical instructor. She is excited to advance her career at USU as a professional practice assistant professor on the Tooele USU Statewide campus.

Anjanette Todd, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology. Todd earned a PhD in counselor education from the University of South Florida and received her M.Ed in school counseling from the University of Florida. She served as a school counselor for 13 years at the elementary, middle, and high school levels supporting all students in the areas of academic, career and social/emotional development. Prior to starting at USU, she worked as an assistant professor of school counseling at the University of Texas at El Paso. Her research interests include school counselor self-care, the practice of self-compassion, and mindfulness. On weekends, she enjoys spending quality time with her family, hiking new trails, and embracing the serenity that the outdoors provides.