Students, Faculty, and Staff of CEHS Awarded for Their Outstanding Achievements

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Every year, the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services (CEHS) recognizes students, faculty, and staff who promote the college and university mission and vision. Selected from a highly qualified candidate pool, these exemplary individuals were nominated through their departments, centers, and programs. This year, 18 individuals received recognition. Interim Dean of CEHS Shawn Whiteman said, “It is with great pride and admiration that we recognize this year’s CEHS award winners—our outstanding students, dedicated faculty, and exceptional staff—whose hard work and commitment to excellence reflect the very best of the college. Their contributions to research, teaching, service, and leadership are inspiring. I congratulate them on these well-deserved honors and look forward to seeing their continued impact on CEHS, USU, and beyond.” Following are summaries of the 2025 award recipients that detail their remarkable contributions to the college and university.

Legacy of Utah State
For excellence in representing the heart and soul of the university

Brayden Brown,*Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling*
Brayden Brown faced significant challenges early in life, including a brain tumor and its aftermath, which resulted in a traumatic brain injury, learning disabilities, and hearing impairment. As a first-generation college student, Brown has navigated personal hardships while excelling academically and becoming a role model for others. His coursework reflects his passion for theater and filmmaking, including drafting a 300+ page script for a musical based on his experiences at USU. Beyond the classroom, Brown has contributed to USU’s theater community by participating in set construction, auditions, and performances at PoBev, while also participating in the filmmaking club. Despite the difficulties Brown has faced, he perseveres and does what his family always encourages him to do: “Take on life one step at a time.”

Undergraduate Scholar of the Year
For excellence in scholarship and service to USU by a graduating senior

Abby Julian, *Human Development and Family Studies*

Abby Julian is passionate about mental health advocacy, particularly improving access to care for all individuals. Julian engages in high-quality, applied research that promotes well-being among individuals with developmental disabilities. She has presented at several student and state-level conferences. At USU's Spring Student Research Symposium, Julian's presentation on family caregivers' perspectives of barriers to accessing mental health care in Utah won the Undergraduate Oral Presentation award in the Social Services and Education category. She was also the lead presenter on a poster focused on health care disparity among individuals with disabilities at the Association for University Centers on Disability (AUCD), the leading national conference on disability.

Undergraduate Student Researcher of the Year
For outstanding undergraduate research

Lucy Scribner,*Psychology*

Lucy Scribner is a contributor to cutting edge research led by Amy Odum in a behavior analysis lab, in addition to conducting and leading her own research funded by the Undergraduate Research and Creative Opportunities grant. She will continue her research and discovery in graduate level studies and potentially pursue a research-based career. She has dedicated her efforts to learning everything about the brain and its processes while maintaining a 3.9 major GPA in psychology. Scribner is currently a senior research assistant for Odum, participating in basic research involving nicotine vaping in a pre-clinical model. She also participates in a neuroscience lab led by Erin Bobeck working on a project that focuses on characterizing the neural circuitry of pain via animal behavior and molecular techniques.

Undergraduate Teaching Fellow of the Year
For outstanding teaching fellowship

Rebecca Hansen,*Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences*
Rebecca Hansen, an undergraduate student in Human Experience Design and Interaction program, has worked as an undergraduate teaching fellow assisting the professor, fellow UTFs, and students over two courses in the Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences department. She helped redesign a games class by using her experience to choose and test games for the course and editing the course's formatting. She also helped students in a computational thinking class learn coding, understand how computation impacts our daily lives, and she provided constructive feedback on student projects. In the future, Hansen hopes to apply her knowledge of experience design and programming to work in the user-experience or game design fields.

Doctoral Student Researcher of the Year
For valuable research contributions by a doctoral student

Leila Capel,*Psychology*
Leila Capel is a fifth-year doctoral student in the Combined Clinical/Counseling psychology program at Utah State University. Her research is dedicated to increasing access to evidence-based interventions. She has co-developed an online treatment program for trichotillomania that was then adapted for skin picking disorder, and she is currently co-developing an online treatment program for adults with OCD. Capel's research has direct clinical implications with respect to informing treatment decision making and improving treatment efficacy. With 21 peer reviewed publications and 16 national and international academic presentations, Capel has sought to not only increase access to care but also build community awareness of the need to improve awareness and knowledge of treatment and resources of individuals with OCRDs.

Graduate Student Teacher of the Year
For valuable teaching contributions by a graduate student

Kris Franzmann,*Psychology*

Kris Franzmann, a sixth-year doctoral student in the school psychology program, focuses his research on school mental health and improving youth access to high-quality mental health support. Franzmann has demonstrated teaching versatility across in-person, online, and broadcast formats at USU. His teaching experience includes multiple sections of psychological disorders, general psychology, and social psychology. He also serves as a program instructor in the school counseling program, where he teaches Evidence-Based Practice: School Intervention. Franzmann has also served as a guest lecturer for general psychology and careers in psychology courses. Following graduation, he aspires to pursue an academic career focused on research, teaching psychology, and mentoring future generations of students.

Master's Student Researcher of the Year

For valuable research contributions by a master's student

Daria Fuell, *Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling*

Daria Fuell is a board-certified behavior analyst committed to advancing research and applying evidence-based practices to promote lifelong student success. At the Utah Association for Behavior Analysis Annual Convention, Fuell's poster earned first place for its innovative contributions to the field. She has four years' experience working in Cache Valley schools training teachers on effective behavior management strategies and two years of clinical experience helping clients gain skills to improve their quality of life. As a peer mentor and teaching assistant, Fuell has taught over 900 undergraduate students across two courses.

Teacher of the Year

For outstanding performance in the areas of teaching and learning

Rachel Turner,*Teacher Education and Leadership*
Rachel Turner, assistant professor of elementary education, began her teaching career as an elementary teacher in Texas. Upon completing her doctoral work, Turner began her higher education career at Utah State University Eastern in Price. Since her time at USU Eastern, Turner has taught eight unique courses in both the undergraduate and graduate levels. She was awarded the School of Teacher Education and Leadership Graduate Mentor of the Year in 2023 as well as the Teacher of the Year in 2024. Turner's research agenda focuses on elementary social studies teaching and learning, specifically social studies inquiry, children's literature within social studies, and pre-service social studies teacher education.

Professor Lifetime Achievement
For more than 20 years of excellence in an academic career

Yoon Lee,*Human Development and Family Studies*
Yoon Lee is professor and associate department head in Human Development and Family Studies. She is a consumer and family economist interested in household debt, savings, credit use decisions, and relevant financial education and policy issues. Lee's research is also focused on family-owned businesses. She has published 91 peer-reviewed journal articles, 152 peer-reviewed conference proceedings, and 10 invited research articles. Across her scholarly work, Lee is the lead author on 63 percent of these research outcomes and has demonstrated a strong ability to foster collaboration, working with over 30 researchers from 17 land-grant universities. She has mentored 32 graduate students and 24 undergraduates who have presented at prestigious conferences.

Faculty Researcher of the Year
For outstanding research and scholarly contributions within the last five years

Timothy Shahan,*Psychology*

Timothy Shahan is the recipient of the 2006 B. F. Skinner Young Researcher Award and the 2023 Distinguished Contribution to Basic Behavior Analysis Award from the American Psychological Association. His research focuses on fundamental processes in learning, adaptation, and behavioral regulation. For more than 20 years, his research has been supported by various institutes at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Ten years ago, Shahan started collaborating with clinical scientists to directly translate his research to the clinic to reduce the severe problem behavior of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Shahan is a fellow of the Association for Behavior Analysis International. He has served as president of the Society for the Quantitative Analyses of Behavior and as chair of the Biobehavioral Regulation, Learning, and Ethology study section at NIH.

Faculty University Service

For outstanding leadership and excellent service to the university

Beth Fauth,*Human Development and Family Studies*

Elizabeth (Beth) Fauth is professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. She was appointed director of Utah's state-funded Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Research Center in 2022 and is active in many state organizations supporting aging and dementia. Fauth's primary research focus is on reducing stress for dementia caregivers, quality of life for people living with dementia, and the interface between physical function and cognitive function in later life. She has over 60 publications in scientific journals and currently has funding from the National Institute of Health to support her research.

Outstanding Graduate Faculty Mentor of the Year

For excellence in preparing graduate students for productive careers

Michael Twohig,*Psychology*

Michael Twohig, a licensed psychologist and psychology professor, co-runs the ACT Research Group with Michael Levin in psychology and a research team with Karen Muñoz in audiology. His research focuses on the use of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) across a variety of clinical presentations with an emphasis on obsessive compulsive and related disorders. He has published over 300 peer-reviewed papers, book chapters, and books. In 2022 and 2024, he was rated the most productive author on ACT in the world, and USU was recognized the most productive institution for ACT research. He has been the primary mentor for 17 PhD students and has co-mentored another seven PhD students and 24 MEd students with collaborators at USU. He is also past president of the Association of Contextual Behavioral Science.

Strong Human Services Award

For significant and sustained leadership in human services and applied research

Lisa Boyce,*Human Development and Family Studies*

Lisa Boyce, professor of child development and executive director for the Dolores Doré Eccles Center for Early Care and Education, focuses on indigenous populations and building capacity within communities. Her recent work in San Juan and Maui counties has resulted in the implementation of evidence-based practices that are culturally relevant in early care and education, preschool, and home visiting programs. Boyce has worked with Latino, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities to promote children's language development and emergent literacy. She is currently leading a team to improve the neurodevelopmental outcomes of children living in the Amazon region of Ecuador.

Undergraduate Faculty Mentor of the Year

For faculty excellence in academic advising

Ramy Shaaban,*Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences*
Ramy Shaaban is the HEDI BS program coordinator and a professional practice assistant professor. A medical doctor with a PhD in communications media and instructional technology, he transitioned to academia to improve clinical education through technological innovation. Shaaban is deeply involved in undergraduate mentorship, guiding students through internships and capstone projects. His mentorship extends beyond ITLS through his collaboration with departments such as Nursing, Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling, and USU's office of Digital Learning and Innovation to create interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Shaaban also serves as a design lab advisor, where he has established student leadership roles, including a student manager position.

Undergraduate Research Mentor of the Year
For outstanding undergraduate research mentorship

Jennifer Grewe, *Psychology*
Jennifer Grewe, associate professor of psychology and co-director of the undergraduate psychology program, is also the director of USU Connections, the university's first-year student program, which serves approximately 75 percent of the incoming students every year with over 100 faculty instructors. Grewe teaches online and in-person courses in introductory psychology courses, health psychology, and teaching psychology. She enjoys engaging undergraduate students in independent research projects, with many students receiving awards and grants and presenting at conferences. She advises the local chapter of Psi Chi and Psychology Club and is a consulting editor for the *Journal of the Teaching of Psychology.* Grewe has received several awards, including the Teacher of the Year for CEHS and the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association Mentor of the Year.

Applied Educator of the Year
For excellence in the education and training of students in an applied manner

Jamie Mecham,*Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education*
Jamie Mecham, associate clinical professor in COMD and director of the Speech and Language Clinic, provides clinical instruction through individual and small-group mentorship to undergraduate and graduate students in the USU Speech and Language Clinic. She also leads a team of six speech language pathology clinical instructors and two support staff and coordinates the training and mentoring of new clinical instructors. Mecham has participated in research and publications in the field of speech language pathology. With COMD research faculty, she has collaborated and published peer reviewed articles and book chapters and presented on topics related to childhood language disorders.

Distinguished Staff of the Year
For carrying out responsibilities in an exceptional manner

Cara Brewer,*Psychology*
Cara Brewer began her career at USU in 1993 in the Contracts and Grant Office. In 1994, she because the senior staff assistant over the Cache County Memory Study grant and several other grants that evolved from the study, which lasted 15 years. In 2009, Brewer transferred to the Psychology department as the business assistant. With the help of other staff, she helped convert the department away from paper files and move toward digital processes. She later became the business manager of the Psychology department, where she helped the department head develop tools to help predict funding for different programs. Brewer has been with USU for 31 years and has loved being involved in the change, research, and innovation at the university. She will retire in September 2025.

Outstanding Service to Students
For exceptional dedication to student growth and success

Laura Holley,*Human Development and Family Studies*
Laura Holley has served as an academic advisor in the Human Development and Family Studies department for 13 years, providing guidance and support to students navigating their academic studies and university life. In this role, she serves 650 students in the HDFS major and minor. Laura's commitment to students extends beyond individual advising sessions. She participates in initiatives that enhance the student experience and has served on various department committees for curriculum, scholarships, course scheduling, and the undergraduate program. Prior to advising, Laura worked in the Registrar's Office and School of Graduate Studies, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the academic landscape from application to graduation.