

# Professor Sarah Braden Recipient of 2025-2026 Fulbright Scholars Award for STEM Research

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Sarah Braden speaks at a press conference at the Utah Refugee Center announcing a cosmic ray project for InSPIRE students.

Utah State University announced four Fulbright Scholars for the 2025-2026 academic year. Sarah Braden, an associate professor from the School of Teacher Education and Leadership (TEAL) in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, was named in this prestigious group. The scholarships are provided by the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. Established in 1946, the Fulbright Program enables accomplished scholars to study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas, and contribute to mutual understanding in over 160 countries. Fulbright awardees are chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential.

“Dr. Braden’s work in STEM will increase our students’ knowledge of global perspectives and problem-solving approaches,” says Steven Camicia, department head of TEAL. “Her project will also foster a strong international partnership and bring innovative perspectives to educational research, enriching both our campus community and the global scholarly dialogue.”

Braden will travel to the University of Lisbon in Portugal where she will work collaboratively to develop and pilot a model for adapting English engineering curricula in STEM for Portuguese K-12 students. As part of her research, Braden plans to use this experience to expand her scope of work in science learning for dual-language immersion programs in the United States.

“Together, we will co-design and conduct engineering learning activities in K-12 school and afterschool programs with local stakeholders,” says Braden. “The research will produce a case study demonstrating how educators in Portugal can develop and enact engineering education that supports multilingualism.”

Fascinated by languages and science, Braden’s research program combines these two key areas of focus to design educational opportunities for STEM learning. The question that ran continually through her mind while she was preparing the Fulbright application was “How do we support children who are learning in a foreign language to develop interest and literacies in engineering?” She designed a research project to adapt and pilot an existing English language curriculum in engineering for Portuguese speakers.

“This Fulbright award is both professional and personal,” shares Braden. “My children are currently enrolled in a dual-immersion Portuguese language program in our local elementary school, and I have been learning the language alongside them. I reached out to my faculty connections at the University of Lisbon and realized this would be a wonderful opportunity for me to research STEM activities while focusing on a foreign language as a Fulbright Scholar.”

This Fulbright project builds from Braden’s prior experiences designing informal STEM learning experiences for multilingual youth. Braden recently completed a multi-year National Science Foundation grant as a co-Principal Investigator with a professor from the University of Utah’s Department of Physics and Astronomy where they ran InSPIRE, an after-school program for high school refugee students who are interested in STEM.

“We want students with refugee backgrounds to know that they are valued in physics, and in STEM disciplines more broadly,” said Braden. “These students learned physics, computing skills, and filming techniques, and they brought their ingenuity, curiosity, resilience, and playfulness. Knowingly or not, the students are helping to transform the discipline in which they participate, opening new pathways for themselves and for other students to see themselves as valued contributors to STEM disciplines.”

Braden’s experience and research in working with K-12 students in STEM fields with strong cultural heritages will be an asset as she travels to Portugal to research and learn for the four-month award period starting in January 2026.