

2025-26 Faculty, Students, and Staff Award Recipients Recognized for Excellence

Students, faculty, and staff in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services were recently recognized for their excellence in teaching, mentorship, academics, and service for the 2025-26 academic year. "We are incredibly fortunate to have such student, staff, and faculty talent in the College," said Al Smith, Emma Eccles Jones Endowed Dean of CEHS. "Our team is doing meaningful work that pushes the boundaries of knowledge, advances cutting-edge learning opportunities, and enables communities in Utah and beyond to flourish. Congratulations to this year's award recipients!"

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



Eloise Ribeiro,

Human Development and Family Studies

Eloise Ribeiro was born and raised in Brazil and is a first-generation college graduate. She is a doctoral student in human development and family studies at Utah State University, specializing in marriage and family therapy. Her research centers on attachment-focused and developmentally appropriate therapeutic practices,

culturally sensitive family therapy, and clinical approaches that address the needs of low-income and underserved families. In both her clinical and scholarly work, she is dedicated to expanding access to mental health care and promoting practices that honor cultural context and lived experience. Ribeiro has served families across the United States and Brazil and has contributed to international presentations, publications, and professional collaborations. Guided by the belief that healing at the family level can transform communities, she strives to be a restorative and empowering force in the lives of children, caregivers, and the systems that support them.

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



Eva Jones,

Psychology

Eva Jones is a senior majoring in psychology with minors in intersectional gender studies, sociology, and mental health advocacy and awareness. A self-proclaimed nerd, she is passionate about her research interests, which include exploring how structural systems reinforce social hierarchies and disparities. As a member of Jennifer Grewe's Factotum Lab and Lu Lawrence's lab, Jones has designed and conducted multiple original research projects. Her studies have received grant funding and have been selected for presentation at many professional conferences, including the National Conference on Undergraduate Research. She loves to write and currently

has a manuscript under review for publication in the *International Journal of Sexual Health*. Jones has assisted in the Introduction to Behavioral Analysis Lab (PSY 1410) as an undergraduate teaching fellow for over three years, receiving several award nominations for teaching excellence and service in this role. Jones recently applied to social psychology PhD programs and is eagerly looking forward to continuing her education.

Undergraduate Student Researcher of the Year

For outstanding undergraduate research



Jared

Vance, Psychology

Jared Vance is a senior majoring in psychology, with minors in Spanish and chemistry and has a 4.0 GPA. His strong commitment to psychology and research has led to involvement in five research laboratories at USU. His work has focused on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Alzheimer's disease and cognitive disorders, and mental and cognitive health among Latino and other diverse populations. Vance received a URCO grant to support his honors thesis, a meta-analysis and systematic review of the effectiveness of ACT for diverse populations. He presented this work at Research on Capitol Hill, the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association (RMPA), and the USU Student Research Symposium, and the thesis is being prepared for submission in two peer-reviewed publications. Vance was awarded a SUPER grant from the American Psychological Association to conduct an

independent project on Alzheimer's prevention research among Latino populations. He plans to pursue doctoral training in clinical psychology.

Undergraduate Teaching Fellow of the Year

For outstanding teaching fellowship



Tyler Springer,

Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences

Tyler Springer is an undergraduate student in human experience design and interaction, with an emphasis in multimedia and marketing. He worked as an undergraduate teaching fellow for Professor Debbie Fields, Ph.D., and her ITLS 3350 Computational Thinking course. In that role, Springer helped to make an impact on students by tutoring them in coding programs and providing detailed solutions to the questions they had. He also developed, tested, and revised step-by-step visual tutorials for new coders. Other responsibilities he took on included updating course information in Canvas, hosting office hours, creating new assignments, and grading students' work while also providing constructive feedback.

Doctoral Student Researcher of the Year

For valuable research contributions by a doctoral student



Emily Bowers,

Psychology

Emily Bowers is a fourth-year doctoral student in the combined clinical/counseling psychology program. She received her B.S. in biopsychology from Tufts University in 2019 and worked as a clinical research coordinator at McLean Hospital before beginning graduate school. Her primary research focuses on acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) to treat obsessive-compulsive and anxiety disorders, including perfectionism, misophonia, and body-focused repetitive behaviors. Across her doctoral training, Bowers has contributed to and led seven randomized controlled trials examining both in-person and digital ACT interventions, with an emphasis on translating rigorous research into scalable, real-world resources. Further, she is the principal investigator on a randomized controlled trial evaluating an online ACT program for misophonia, supported by a \$75,000 award from the Misophonia Research Fund. To date, Bowers's contributions to the field are reflected in 28 peer-reviewed publications with 116 cumulative citations, alongside four book chapters and two additional manuscripts currently under peer review.

Graduate Student Teacher of the Year

For valuable teaching contributions by a graduate student



Katherine

Garland, Psychology

Katherine Garland is a doctoral student in the behavior analysis specialization in the Psychology Department, studying impulsive choice behavior. She earned a bachelor's degree from Reed College in Oregon. Between Fall 2024 and Spring 2026, she has served as the instructor of record for Analysis of Behavior: Basic Principles (PSY 1400). In her role as an instructor, she emphasizes taking complex, theoretical concepts and applying them to her students' everyday life to not only help them understand the material but to use it to improve their lives. Garland's commitment to teaching was recognized by the 2025-2026 Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services Graduate Student Teacher of the Year Award. She has also served as a mentor in the Madden laboratory, supervising students who have taken an interest in psychological research fostered by PSY 1400 to the lab space. In this role, she teaches undergraduate research assistants in research skills, laboratory techniques, data preparation, and analysis.

Master's Student Researcher of the Year

For valuable research contributions by a master's student



Gavin Green,

Human Development and Family Studies

Gavin Green is a master's student in human development and family studies where he examines how families adapt to dementia and long-term caregiving. His research focuses on the ways emotional skills, close relationships, and values help individuals with dementia and their caregivers stay connected and resilient over time. He works with the Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Research under the mentorship of Elizabeth Fauth, studying psychological flexibility and its role in caregiver well-being and intervention development. Green's master's thesis evaluates Compassion Compass, an online program that supports dementia caregivers through self-compassion, emotional awareness, and values-based coping. He also contributes to brain imaging research on cognitive and motor functioning in adults. Green has presented at national conferences, including the Gerontological Society of America, and has manuscripts accepted and under review for peer-reviewed journals. He is preparing for doctoral training and a career focused on improving mental health and caregiving support for individuals with dementia and their families.

Teacher of the Year

For outstanding performance in the areas of teaching and learning



Stephen Kwiatek,

Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling

Stephen Kwiatek, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of special education in the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling. He earned his doctoral degree in special education from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and was a postdoctoral research associate at the Illinois Center for Transition and Work at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Kwiatek's experience as a high school special education teacher fostered his commitment to high-quality instruction and removing barriers to learning. It also shaped his approach to college teaching, research, and service, which focus on preparing youth with disabilities for meaningful and independent adult lives. His teaching, mentorship, and scholarship emphasize shared learning, practical problem-solving, and community-based knowledge, recognizing that meaningful and lasting educational change grows from authentic relationships. Kwiatek has taught eight unique undergraduate courses at USU, primarily required for special education licensure. He recently started teaching a doctoral-level course to support students from six disciplines in developing effective and reflective teaching practices for undergraduate and graduate education.

Professor Lifetime Achievement

For more than 20 years of excellence in an academic career



Ronald Gillam,

Speech and Hearing Sciences

Ronald Gillam, Ph.D., holds the Raymond and Eloise Lillywhite Endowed Chair in speech-language pathology at USU. His research, which has been funded by the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Education, primarily concerns information processing, the neurobiology of language, language assessment, and language intervention effectiveness for school-age children with developmental language disorders. Gillam has published eight books, four norm-referenced tests, 121 peer-reviewed articles, and 51 book chapters. He is currently an academic editor for *PLOS One*, and he has been an associate editor of the *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, the *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, and *Topics in Language Disorders*. Gillam has received numerous teaching and research awards including Honors of the American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association (ASHA), Distinguished Alumnus at Indiana University, ASHA Fellow, the Haydn Williams Fellow at Curtin University in Western Australia, the Dads' Association Centennial Teaching Fellowship at the University of Texas at Austin, the Editor's Award for the article of highest merit in the *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research* (twice) and the Robins Award for the outstanding researcher at Utah State University.

Faculty Researcher of the Year

For outstanding research and scholarly contributions within the last five years



Aryn

Dotterer, Human Development and Family Studies

Aryn M. Dotterer is an internationally recognized scholar ranked among the top two percent of global researchers in 2024. A first-generation college graduate from a multi-ethnic family of Mexican, Indigenous, and European ancestry, she has dedicated her scholarly and service endeavors to advancing educational access, equity, and success for marginalized youth and their families. Dotterer's strengths-based research has made significant contributions to developmental and educational psychology, particularly through her work on protective factors that foster positive development in the context of adversity. A complementary line of inquiry focuses on broadening participation in STEM, examining family socialization processes and contextual influences such as school type and adversity among underrepresented students. Dotterer's research has been supported by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education, with total funding exceeding \$33M. Beyond its scholarly impact, her work has substantial translational and community significance, including preparing Utah's future workforce by equipping students with high-demand STEM and leadership skills. Under Dotterer's leadership, USU STARS GEAR UP currently serves 6,036 students across 14 middle schools throughout the state of Utah. In their first year of programming, they achieved their goal of increasing the number of students who attended a career/college awareness event.

Faculty University Service
For outstanding leadership and excellent service to the university



Melanie

Domenech Rodríguez, Psychology

Melanie M. Domenech Rodríguez, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology whose work addresses health disparities through scholarship, teaching/training, and mentorship. Her scholarship addresses health disparities in access, acceptability, and effectiveness of treatment for culturally diverse people. Domenech Rodríguez's graduate and undergraduate courses prepare psychologists entering the workforce to attend to diversity and equity in their professional roles. Her approach to teaching/training is systematic and evidence based. In addition to teaching in the classroom, she has mentored 10 undergraduate, 17 master's students, and 29 doctoral students to completion of their degrees at USU, significantly adding to the psychology workforce. Domenech Rodríguez has a steady history of service to the profession and the university. Specific to USU, she served as faculty advisor of Psi Chi, the psychology honor society local chapter from 2002 to 2015, chair of the Institutional Review Board from 2012 to 2023 and is currently faculty senator (2025-present). Domenech Rodríguez was born and raised in Puerto Rico and is the proud parent of two adults.

Outstanding Graduate Faculty
Mentor of the Year

For excellence in preparing graduate students for productive careers



Sarah Braden,

School of Teacher Education and Leadership

Sarah Braden holds a PhD in linguistics, an MS in education, and a BA in biology and environmental studies. Braden is an associate professor in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership where she helps to train future teachers and education researchers. In her research, Braden uses applied linguistic and linguistic anthropological methods to identify instructional design principles that leverage the assets of multilingual youth in STEM learning environments. She has been a PI or Co-PI on several projects funded by the National Science Foundation in which she collaborated with scientists and education researchers to design and deliver informal STEM learning opportunities on cosmic ray physics and engineering to middle and high school students.

Strong Human Services Award

For significant and sustained leadership in human services and applied research



Kay Bradford,

Human Development and Family Studies

Kay Bradford is a licensed marriage and family therapist, and professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. He is founder and director of *Adolescent and Community Empowerment (ACE)*, which was awarded \$8 million in federal funding to delivered evidence-based relationship education to Utah teens. Bradford has evaluated relationship education for thousands of Utah residents, including smart relationships for high school students and single adults, stability and well-being among stepfamilies, healthy parenting, and father involvement for incarcerated fathers.

Undergraduate Faculty Mentor of the Year

For faculty excellence in academic advising



Jennifer Grewe,

Psychology

Jennifer Grewe is an associate professor in the Department of Psychology and serves as director of Connections, USU's first-year experience program, and co-director of the undergraduate psychology program. Her work focuses on creating inclusive, evidence-based mentoring structures that support students from their transition into college through preparation for research, leadership, and professional careers. Grewe mentors undergraduate students in research and leadership development, and her students regularly present their work at local, regional, and national venues. She is also a long-time advisor of the USU Psi Chi chapter and an active member of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology. Grewe is known for building strong learning communities and for helping students develop confidence, belonging, and professional identity throughout their university experience.

Undergraduate Research Mentor of the Year

For outstanding undergraduate research mentorship



LuEttaMae

Lawrence, Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences

Lu Lawrence is an assistant professor in Instructional Technologies and Learning Sciences. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and held postdoctoral positions at the University of California Irvine and Carnegie Mellon University. As a learning scientist and design researcher, Lawrence partners with communities to design educational environments that address to their unique learning needs. She uses community engaged research approaches to investigate how collaborative research can enact sustainable and meaningful change.

Applied Educator of the Year

For excellence in educating and training students in an applied manner



Kendra Schofield,

Speech and Hearing Sciences

Kendra Schofield has dedicated her career to preparing the next generation of speech-language pathologists through innovative, evidence-based practice. Serving at Utah State University since 2010, she currently works as a clinical educator in the Sorenson Center for Clinical Excellence, is the Lead SLP Outreach Supervisor, and is dedicated to mentoring students from their first days on campus as a Connections instructor, through graduate training in clinical experiences. With over two decades of clinical expertise, Schofield is known for her high standards, thoughtful mentorship, and commitment to interprofessional collaboration. Her work extends beyond the university into communities across Utah, expanding access to critical speech and language services while advancing student learning.

Distinguished Staff of the Year

For creating lasting impact through excellence in service and support



Zoyee Thomas,

Kinesiology and Health Science

Zoyee Thomas has worked in the Kinesiology and Health Science Department for nearly four years, including three years as a staff assistant supporting the front office and the Lifetime Activities program. In this position, Thomas enjoyed interacting with students by answering general questions, helping students check in for their advising appointments, even distributing ski passes. She also assisted with department scheduling, helping her to gain a deeper understanding of the programs and courses offered. These experiences fostered strong skills in student engagement and administrative support. As an academic advisor for KHS, Thomas now interacts with students daily and foster connections to USU for a lifetime.

Outstanding Service to Students

For exceptional dedication to student growth and success



Brynne

Davies, Speech and Hearing Sciences

Brynne Davies began her career at USU in the Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education (now Speech and Hearing Sciences) in 1998 and has been serving as the academic advisor for the online 2nd bachelor's degree program since it began in 2006. She specializes in working with nontraditional learners, offering proactive, student-centered support that promotes confidence and persistence. She also advises non-degree seeking students and those seeking an SLPA certificate. Davies strives to help students feel connected to USU and a valued part of the department through her personal outreach efforts. Through clear communication and resource connection, she helps students navigate the online learning environment and persist toward graduation. Davies supports student growth, well-being, and success by providing personalized advising while helping students create degree plans that balance their studies with work and personal commitments.