

Professors Honored at USU's Faculty Awards Ceremony



Ron Gillam, Ph.D., and Melanie Domenech Rodríguez, Ph.D.

Two faculty members in Utah State University's Emma Eccles Jones College of Education of Human Services were recognized for their exceptional contributions and service at the 2025-2026 University Faculty Awards. Ronald Gillam, Ph.D., professor of speech-language pathology in the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, received the Cazier Lifetime Achievement Award, and Melanie M. Domenech Rodríguez, Ph.D., professor in the combined clinical/counseling specialization in the Department of Psychology, was honored with the Faculty University Service Award.

"Drs. Gillam and Domenech Rodríguez are models of excellence in their scientific, student-focused, and broader professional work," said Emma Eccles Jones Endowed Dean Al Smith. "We are incredibly fortunate to have benefited from their talents over the years, and we are proud to see them recognized with these university-wide awards."

Ronald Gillam: Recipient of the Cazier Lifetime Achievement Award

As the recipient of the Cazier Lifetime Achievement Award, Gillman was recognized for his outstanding teaching, leadership, and long-lasting impact at USU. The award honors faculty members who have demonstrated excellence in their academic career at USU for more than 20 years.

Gillam is the Raymond and Eloise Lilywhite Endowed Chair in Speech-Language Pathology and was recently

recognized by Elsevier as being among the top two percent of global scholars. His research focuses on how children develop language, including the assessment and treatment of developmental language disorders in school-aged children.

"Dr. Gillam's pioneering work in narrative language has transformed how we understand and support children's communication and literacy development," shared Karen Munoz, head of the Speech and Hearing Sciences Department. "His research and widely used tools have shaped clinical practice and education worldwide, leaving a lasting legacy of impact on children, families, and professionals alike."

He has been a professor in speech and hearing sciences at USU for two decades years and has mentored five post-doctoral candidates and 15 doctoral students. He has also worked directly with 19 additional doctoral students across five departments in his Language, Education, and Auditory Processing Brain Imaging Lab.

"Receiving this award is incredibly humbling," Gillam said. "On a personal level, it validates a career spent trying to understand and support people with communication challenges. Professionally, this recognition highlights the progress we've made in better understanding developmental and language disorders and stuttering."

Gillam added that the award reflects his commitment to advancing research while ensuring that scholarly work translates into real-world impact. "It encourages me to keep asking important questions, to mentor the next generation of clinicians and researchers, and to advocate for people whose communication needs deserve greater awareness and care."

Gillam has been the recipient of several other awards throughout his career, including the Editor's Award from the Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research in 1999 and 2009; the Bill E. Robins Researcher of the Year Award in 2009; and the USU Outstanding Graduate Mentor of the Year in 2019.

Melanie M. Domenech Rodríguez: Recipient of the Faculty University Service Award

Domenech Rodríguez received the Faculty University Service Award, which recognizes excellence in service to university operations and governance.

At USU, Domenech Rodríguez served as chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for more than 10 years,

helping to advance and strengthen the university's Human Protections Program.

"Shaping the direction of this work for over a decade is one of the most meaningful chapters of my career," she said. "This recognition reaffirms that service and scholarship are not in tension. Investing deeply in the infrastructure of ethical research is itself a contribution worth honoring."

Domenech Rodríguez currently serves as a senator in the USU Faculty Senate, where she advocates for policy development as well as faculty and student support. "Professor Melanie Domenech Rodríguez's selection for the university-wide Faculty Service Award is richly deserved," said Psychology Department Head Scott Bates. "She embodies the very best of faculty service—leading with generosity, integrity, and a deep commitment to others. Her impact reaches from our department to the university and across the broader field of psychology. We are proud to celebrate this honor and grateful that USU benefits from her extraordinary contributions."

In addition to her university service, Domenech Rodríguez is a dedicated teacher and researcher. Her work addresses health disparities through her research, teaching, training, and mentorship. She has mentored 29 doctoral students to completion and is widely known for her collaborative approach and commitment to student success.

Reflecting on her career, Domenech Rodríguez shared that her research, teaching, and service have continually informed and strengthened one another.

"Looking forward, I hope to keep growing in the way I always have—gradually, with each role informing the others," she said. "My service has deepened my scholarship. My mentorship has sharpened my research. My research has made me a better mentor. I hope this award sends a message to colleagues and students that service is not a detour from a meaningful career. It's part of one."

Domenech Rodríguez was also named USU Graduate Faculty Mentor of the Year in 2020 and was the 2022 recipient of the D. Wynne Thorne Career Research Award.

In addition to the annual Faculty Awards ceremony, USU also held its annual Robins Awards in early April, which recognizes students and faculty for their hard work and dedication to both personal and university goals.

This year, Emma Eccles Jones Endowed Dean Alan Smith was awarded the Gerald R. Sherratt Award in recognition of his service to USU students. Emily Bowers, a doctoral student in the Combined Clinical/Counseling Program in the Department of Psychology, was also honored as Doctoral Student Researcher of the Year for her research and academic achievements.

Information about the Robin Awards can be found at usu.edu/today/story/utah-state-university-honors-excellence-at-2026-robins-awards/.

A complete list of recipients for the 2025-2026 Faculty Awards is available at usu.edu/awards/faculty/ceremony/.