Faculty and Staff Keep Students Learning

Tasked with maintaining a quality educational experience for students in the midst of a pandemic, Weber State faculty and staff have risen to the challenge to keep students learning and thriving.

Efforts from the WSU community helped maintain steady university enrollment this fall. The total number of students at Weber State currently stands at 29,596. In addition, a record 3,377 first-time students entered the university in 2020.

Providing students with access, engaged learning and community has been a primary goal throughout the process.

“Students need access to technology and internet services, but they also need a balanced level of interaction to stay motivated,” said RC Callahan, executive director of WSU Online. “When designing virtual or online instruction, it’s important to foster a sense of community by providing opportunities for students to interact with each other, their course content and instructors.”

The WSU Online team played a vital role in making the transition to a virtual space easier by providing training and support to help faculty understand tools for teaching remotely. Over the summer, additional resources and training opportunities were created to help faculty further improve and refine course offerings.

(Continued on page 2)
Net-Zero Home Pulls Plug on Power

Following a year of planning, construction and landscaping, Weber State University pulled a ceremonial extension-cord plug to signify the completion of the new net-zero home in central Ogden on Oct. 13.

Students from the Department of Construction & Building Sciences in WSU’s College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology made up the construction team with advisor Jeremy Farner.

The project is also a finalist in a two-year competition called the 2020 Department of Energy Solar Decathlon. Ten teams from around the world are competing to construct a highly efficient and innovative building powered by renewable energy.

The owners were picked in a random drawing of pre-qualified buyers. The Haslams are both Weber State graduates who will soon welcome their first baby in the new home.

Classes Begin in New Building at WSU Davis

Weber State University cut the ribbon on the new Computer & Automotive Engineering Building at WSU Davis, Oct. 9.

At the event, which was streamed live on Facebook, President Brad Mortensen praised the dedication and innovation of those who made it possible.

“When we have great facilities like this, it allows us to expand and serve more students and be leading edge with our equipment,” he said. “But at the end of the day, it’s the heart and soul of our faculty and staff that makes the difference.”

The 51,000 square-foot building, which opened for classes in the fall, will help the College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology (EAST) accommodate growth. For the past five years, Weber State has led state institutions in awarding engineering and computer science degrees.

“We have created a new, much-needed home for automotive and computing at WSU Davis,” said David Ferro, EAST dean. “We now have an innovative, exciting space that will increase our capacity to educate students and support Utah’s workforce.”

Learning, continued from page 1

Twenty-four grants were awarded for “Facilitating Experiential Learning Online,” which helped 63 faculty members develop new approaches to actively engage students in the virtual learning process.

Jessica Greenberg, a theatre design professor, utilized the grant funding for training in a professional lighting design software called “Capture,” which allows users to design realistic stage lighting for a 3D-rendered theatre set.

“When I teach lighting design in person, I frequently use our lighting laboratory classroom for lectures, demonstrations and group assignments,” Greenberg said. “With the Capture software, I can assign similar projects and achieve similar goals with my students in a virtual space.”

The Teaching and Learning Forum facilitated “Tuesday Teaching Tips at Two” featuring various faculty members sharing ideas for virtual teaching. So far, 380 faculty members have participated in the weekly sessions. In addition, the forum created a one-stop-shop webpage called “Redesign for Virtual-Online.”

Training opportunities included an asynchronous course developed by WSU Online called “Intro to e-Learning,” and the Teaching and Learning Forum created a course titled “Teaching in a Digital Classroom,” a series specifically designed to help faculty teaching flex classes.

“I am really proud of our WSU faculty who have embraced the learning curve COVID-19 forced upon them,” said Brenda Marsteller Kowalewski, associate provost for high impact educational experiences and faculty excellence. “Our faculty are developing and employing a whole new set of pedagogical tools to bring WSU students the highest quality education regardless of whether that learning experience is happening in a face-to-face or virtual environment.”
Some of the pre-fall semester work included installing plexiglass shields and signage in buildings; providing hand sanitizer and masks for classrooms; measuring and configuring classrooms to adhere to 6-foot social distancing protocols; and maximizing the in-and-out airflow to buildings to best prevent the spread of COVID-19.

WSU’s staff of 150 custodians also increased cleaning and sanitization practices.

“I’m pretty pleased with where we’re at,” he said. “I’d like to compliment our faculty, staff and student body for really taking it seriously and listening and doing what we need to do to keep safe and stay open.”

WSU’s reported coronavirus cases have been relatively low, due in part due to campus mask-wearing and social-distancing policies, as well as increased sanitation efforts, Halverson said.

“We want to stay open as much as we can,” he said. “Our philosophy has been to treat every space as if someone infected has been in there.”

Halverson, who is a member of the university’s COVID Task Force, also helped review and approve proposals for classroom and activity space – proposals like hosting drive-thru performing arts events or staging a play on a loading dock. Though they couldn’t approve everything, Halverson said he was amazed by the “adaptability and flexibility” of faculty to teach in creative ways.

“I’m really curious to see what post-pandemic class looks like,” he said. “A lot of people have found new and maybe better ways to teach. I don’t know that the campus will ever look like what it did before.”

On behalf of Weber State, President Brad Mortensen joined more than 120 other Utah leaders to sign Utah’s Climate & Clean Air Compact. The nonpartisan declaration is the first of its kind in the country and positions Utah to lead the way, as a conservative state, in climate and clean air solutions.

In 2007, Weber State committed to become carbon neutral (having no net release of carbon dioxide) by 2050. The university has since made major progress in finding more efficient and lower-emission ways for lighting, heating and cooling.

Since the baseline years of 2007-2009, utility costs have decreased by 49% and carbon emissions from electricity and natural gas are down by 32% and 30%, respectively. This is the case even as the university has expanded its square footage by 18% with new buildings.

The university is on track to be carbon neutral by 2040, 10 years ahead of the initial goal. Weber State is showcasing the benefits of a reduced environmental footprint, improved air for the health of our community and positive economic rewards.
The honor of the Brady Presidential Distinguished Professor was established in 2006 to recognize WSU faculty members who have demonstrated the highest quality teaching, scholarship, research and community service. A generous gift from Rodney and Carolyn “Mitzi” Brady made recognition funding possible. The late Rodney Brady served as WSU president from 1978 to 1985.

Chris Hoagstrom

Zoology professor Christopher Hoagstrom has spent a lifetime researching and writing about freshwater fish and the rivers in which they reside. He wants students to understand connections between everyday life and conservation and how both fish and humans depend equally on an adequate, clean water supply.

“People are ultimately in the same puddle as the fish we affect,” Hoagstrom said. “As more and more water is used and polluted, we are remiss to take this resource for granted.”

Hoagstrom has overseen teams of undergraduate students conducting multi-year field research in northern Utah. In 2016, Utah’s Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) enlisted Hoagstrom’s assistance with a problem at their community fisheries. Trout stocked into the ponds are easy targets for fish-eating birds, especially the voracious double-crested cormorant. Hoagstrom and a revolving group of undergraduate research students have made extensive observations of the birds at the ponds and have provided recommendations to assist UDWR in mitigating the problem without harming fish or birds.

Hoagstrom has served in leadership roles for both the Desert Fishes Council and the Ogden Nature Center. In addition to more than 20 peer-reviewed articles, he co-edited a multi-authored volume to be published this year, Standing Between Life and Extinction, Ethics and Ecology of Conserving Aquatic Species in North American Deserts.

Sara Dant

Known for her wit and scholarship, history professor Sara Dant’s lectures give students an understanding of how the past impacts the future.

“My students know my favorite question is, ‘At what cost?’ Who or what pays the price for the decisions we’ve made?” Dant explained. “To me, it’s a terrific shorthand for getting at the essence of history — the study of change over time — and thinking deeply about how we secure a sustainable future in which both humans and nature can thrive and endure.”

Her focus is on U.S. environmental politics with an emphasis on the creation and development of consensus and bipartisanism. Dant’s most recent book, Losing Eden: An Environmental History of the American West, analyzes the interaction between people and nature over time.

Dant also served as an expert witness in two environmental law cases in Utah. One of which involved public access on the Weber River. Dant documented historical evidence of commercial use of the river — research that determined jurisdiction over and access to the waterways. Ultimately, her research and testimony were so compelling the district court decided in favor of public access, a decision later upheld by the Utah Supreme Court.

Dant was selected as WSU’s 2019-20 John S. Hinckley Fellow and has twice received the university’s Faculty Sustainability Research Award.
Since 1970, the WSU Alumni Association has presented the H. Aldous Dixon Award to outstanding faculty and staff. The award is given in memory of former President Dixon who served as the school’s chief administrator in 1919-20 and from 1937 to 1953. Although the traditional luncheon was canceled, you can enjoy the acceptance speeches on the Alumni Association webpage under the events tab.

Assistant Vice President for Diversity and Chief Diversity Officer Adrienne Gillespie Andrews is a social activist by nature and nurture. Her grandfather, James H. Gillespie, was president of the Ogden chapter of the NAACP at the height of the civil rights movement, and her parents taught her to take care of others. Today, these values are reflected in her work at Weber State.

Andrews creates a learning environment that makes students feel safe and respected regardless of their race, gender or sexual orientation. A member of the president’s executive team, she is adroit at facilitating difficult discussions about sensitive issues. She helps organize community events that explore diversity, equity and inclusion.

Andrews began at Weber as the special student population counselor at WSU Davis. She also taught political science and women’s and gender studies courses. Her transformative work began in earnest in 2013 when she became the special assistant to the president for diversity. In 2014, she led the charge to create the LGBT Resource Center. A year later, she was selected as Weber State’s first chief diversity officer. In 2018, she added the title of assistant vice president for diversity.


After 39 years, Brady Presidential Distinguished Professor of Chemistry, Edward “Ed” Walker still gets excited about every lecture and lab he teaches. “I enjoy my one-on-one time with my students — helping them study, conduct experiments and prepare for rewarding careers in science,” he said.

Graduating from Weber in 1976, Walker went on to earn his Ph.D. in chemistry from Texas Tech University and was a postdoctoral scholar in biochemical pharmacology at Stanford University. The Ogden native returned to Weber State in 1981 to be near the professors who were influential in his career.

Soon after his arrival, he helped design and implement the chemical technician associate’s degree program, which he still coordinates. In 1990, he founded the Center of Excellence for Chemical Technology. Over the past three decades, the center has partnered with more than 100 Utah companies to enhance the quality of applied science teaching and research and to stimulate the state’s economic growth.

Walker’s publications, discoveries and participation in national and international scientific organizations have brought prestige to Weber State. Assisted by student research teams in the 1990s, Walker identified the active ingredients in cranberries that help prevent bladder infections.

In recognition of his extensive achievements in research and community service, Walker received the Governor’s Medal for Science and Technology.
PROVOST’S MESSAGE

It has been a little over eight months since I moved to Ogden. I was excited about joining Weber State, but there was also some trepidation. Coming into a new role in a new institution, I was understandably nervous and sought advice from mentors, former colleagues, as well as my predecessor, Provost Madonna Miner. My plan was to continue this learning process and set goals to understand university systems, processes and policies as well as meet our faculty and staff. Needless to say, I never did get a chance to follow through with this plan. Looking back, I don’t think anything could have prepared me for our new reality. We know what happened in March. The country had to go into lockdown mode, and we were all thrust into the world of virtual classrooms, Zoom meetings and town hall discussions.

They say that a crisis often brings out the best in people. Bill Taylor, in a recent article in the March 2020 issue of *Harvard Business Review*, wrote about the “countless moments of light” in every “moment of darkness.” Weber State University came together in a unique way that I have not seen at other institutions. The resilience and grit shown by our faculty, staff and students was truly inspiring to me. Organizational behavior literature is replete with studies of how resilient organizations cope, adapt and innovate in these moments. I have witnessed this first hand at our institution. We had to adjust and change our operations in dramatically different ways. What has impressed me, also, is the laser-focused attention on student success. I hope to feature some of our innovative and impactful initiatives in future columns.

To be clear, transitions are never easy. It was about a year ago, around this time, I made a thoughtful decision to come to Weber State. Quite frankly, it would have given me pause had I known I would be walking into a global-pandemic situation in my first week. Let’s add an earthquake, a social justice revolution and a windstorm for good measure! In my case, it was a lot easier thanks to all of you. I appreciate the notes of support, the patience and everything you have done to make my transition easier.

I am optimistic we will get back to the way things were and cannot wait until it is safe to attend Wildcat athletic events or performances at the Browning Center. We will get through this. Stay safe, and go Wildcats!!

Fulbright Selects Weber State Scholar

After an extensive application and review process, the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board selected communication professor Sarah Steimel as a Fulbright Specialist for late spring/early summer 2020.

Her project, “Technology for Education: Online Education,” was planned at Polotsk State University in Belarus to help expand higher-education opportunities to more citizens through quality online programs.

Steimel spent three months coordinating plane tickets, visas and other details with the State Department before COVID forced a sudden cancellation.

“Of course, I am incredibly disappointed,” Steimel said. “I would have loved the opportunity to collaborate and share my passion for online and international education with Belarusian colleagues. I also wanted to study their teaching practices and bring ideas back to WSU.”

Steimel is hopeful the Fulbright Board will be able to reschedule once it is safe to do so. She is the 12th Weber State Fulbright recipient since 1999.
Faculty and Staff Accomplishments
#LouderandProuder

In a cross-campus collaboration, exercise and nutrition sciences student April Callister, along with WSU faculty Joanna Gautney, sociology and anthropology; Christina Aguilar, health, physical education and recreation (HPER); Julian Chan, mathematics; David Aguilar-Alvarez, exercise and nutrition sciences, published “Effects of Indigenous Diet Iron Content and Location on Hemoglobin Levels of Ghanaians” in the Journal of Nutrients.

Assistant dance professor Jo Blake was elected as advisory board director for student initiatives for the National Dance Education Organization.

Amy Blunck, coordinator of mental health initiatives, presented “Supporting Students in the Mental Health Crisis: Peer-Based Mental Health Support” at the NASPA Strategies 2020 Conference in New Orleans.

Microbiology assistant professor Matthew Crook co-authored “Isolation, Characterization, and Complete Genome Sequence of a Bradyrhizobium Strain Lb8 From Nodules of Peanut Utilizing Crack Entry Infection” in Frontiers in Microbiology.

Brady Presidential Distinguished professor and English Chair Hal Crimmel’s edited collection, Utah’s Air Quality Issues: Problems and Solutions, was published by the University of Utah Press and included chapters from WSU faculty Eric Ewert, geography; Matt Gnagy, economics; Brady Presidential Distinguished professor Therese Grijalva, economics; Will Speigle, automotive technology; and Mark Stevenson, anthropology.

Teacher Education associate professor Shirley Dawson co-published a four-part series for practitioners regarding special education and career technical exploration in the online journal of the Association for Career & Technical Education.


Supply Chain Management professor Stan Fawcett, associate professor Dee Fawcett and assistant professor Francois Giraud-Carrier co-authored “Using Deliberate Practice to Transform Learning Culture: Helping Students Put Real Skills in their OSCM Toolbox. Decision Sciences” for the Journal of Innovative Education.


Assistant professor of psychology Cade Mansfield co-authored the chapter “Narrative Methods in Autobiographical Memory” in the edited volume Autobiographical Memory Development: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches.


Outdoor and Community Recreation Education professor Lisa Meerts-Brandsma co-authored “Considering transformative learning for adolescents enrolled at semester schools” for the Journal of Transformative Education.

Assistant professor of psychological sciences and director of neuroscience Aminda O’Hare was awarded paper of the year from the European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing for her co-authored publication “Meditation interventions among heart failure patients: an integrative review.”


Botany assistant professor Katharina Schramm and zoology professor Michele Skopec, collaborated on “Strategies in herbivory by mammals revisited: the role of liver metabolism in a juniper specialist (Neotoma stephensi) and a generalist (Neotoma albigula)” published in the journal Molecular Ecology.

Mathematics professor T. H. Steele, published “The Dynamics of a Typical Measurable Function are Determined on a Zero Measure Set,” in Real Analysis Exchange.


Ash Soltani Stone, film studies director, co-authored the book Rez Metal: Inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Scene.


Monica Williams, criminal justice associate professor co-authored “The Politics of Symbolic Laws: State Resistance to the Allure of Sex Offender Residence Restrictions” in the journal Law & Policy.

Brady Presidential Distinguished Professor and director of Keyboard Studies Yu-Jane Yang was named the 2020 MTNA Teacher of the Year by the Music Teachers National Association — the first time a Utah teacher has received this national award.