



WSUNEWS

Weber State University News & Events

VOL. 26 | NO. 4 | APRIL 2023

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PRESIDENTIAL TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Following a five-year tradition, Weber State University awarded the 2023 Presidential Teaching Excellence Award to 12 top teachers.

The award is based on nominations from students, faculty and staff who recognize the outstanding efforts of WSU professors from diverse fields of study—from the arts to the sciences.

Weber State President **Brad Mortensen** lent a personal touch to the recognition by surprising professors in their classrooms with news of the award. Their reactions were captured in [this video](#).

“For so many of our faculty, teaching is more than a profession, it’s a lifelong passion,” Mortensen said. “These incredible professors are proving every day how committed they are to students, and this award is just one way to thank them for everything they do to make Weber State great.”

WINNERS:

- Daniel Clark, Microbiology
- Brian Cottle, Health Administrative Services
- Andrea Garavito Martinez, Teacher Education
- Jessica Greenberg, Performing Arts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



A NEW APPROACH TO STUDENT SUCCESS AND RETENTION

Weber State is taking a unique approach to student success and retention with the creation of a new position: chief data officer.

Ivana Fredotovic, who served for three years as director of research and data analytics at Miami Dade College, is filling the role. As CDO, she will be charged with developing a comprehensive strategy for student data and analytics with the goal of ensuring more students are retained and complete their degrees.

WSU Provost **Ravi Krovi** said hiring Fredotovic is a defining moment since the university is among the first to hire a CDO.

“Chief data officers are common in industry, but not as common in universities,” Krovi said. “Most of us are familiar with how companies use insights about customers for their purposes. We can bring similar methods to the university to help get our students to graduation.”

Fredotovic said she will focus on three things: data strategy, data governance and data literacy university-wide.

STRATEGY

“Universities are becoming more focused on building a data ecosystem, and the work of the CDO impacts all members of the campus community — students, faculty, administrators and staff,” Fredotovic said.

A dedicated CDO is expected to give Weber State a “360-degree view” of its students, Krovi said.

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A New Approach, continued from page 1

“We’re on the cutting edge of exploring how we use data for the success of our students,” Krovi said. “We already have data, but now we’re looking to create a strategy behind the data: How can we leverage this data and build predictive models that tell us why our students are graduating or not?”

Krovi understands there are various pressure points for different students and said WSU already has some insight on those factors. For example, students are 40% more likely to graduate if they complete math and English within their first year.

GOVERNANCE

Krovi said there are already multiple entities across campus that deal with student data, with analysts working in each area. In the coming months, WSU will integrate these “data islands” as data analysts report to or collaborate with the CDO.

Areas currently analyzing student data include Student Affairs; Institutional Research; Information Technology; Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Advancement; academic deans; and student success teams.

LITERACY

Fredotovic said she’s excited to educate the campus on how to interpret and implement data to provide a more personalized experience at every step of the student lifecycle.

Wider and more effective use of data will help develop a “data-informed culture” across campus and will “leverage advanced analytics and data intelligence to enhance institutional outcomes and promote continuous success,” she said.

AN EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION LENS

The CDO will support and complement Weber State’s EDI initiatives, along with the university’s goal to become a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

WSU has already begun disaggregating data to paint a clearer picture of the uniqueness of each student: “If there are anomalies based on first-generation status, income level, race, ethnicity and other factors, we need to ask why,” Krovi said.

Ultimately, the goal is to think differently about data. “Data helps us ask questions about the barriers faced by our students,” Krovi said. “This ultimately should drive our student success efforts and strategies.”

Weber State professor FINDS POSITIVE USES FOR ChatGPT IN EDUCATION

Professional sales associate professor **Alex Lawrence** isn’t afraid of artificial intelligence in the classroom. In fact, he introduced ChatGPT and other new AI tools in three of his classes this semester.

ChatGPT is an advanced language model that generates human-like responses to a wide range of topics. Since launching in November 2022, ChatGPT has caused a stir in educational circles and spurred worries about academic honesty and cheating.

The first time he used ChatGPT, Lawrence said he was struck with two thoughts: “One, this is going to change everything, and two, this is the greatest cheating tool I’ve ever seen.”

But after consulting with his peers in professional sales, Lawrence received full support to integrate AI into his spring curriculum.

“I want to prepare students to use the tech that I know they’re going to see in the workforce,” he said. “We’re not only embracing it in my classes, we are working hard to help them become early experts in how to leverage the latest technologies available. I think it’s my duty to do that as a teacher.”

For their assignments, Lawrence’s students create a slide presentation showing which AI tools they used, what prompts and other information they submit to get their results, and then narrate bullet points to show the knowledge they’ve gained.

In the business realm, Lawrence foresees his students using AI to write emails, generate presentations, come up with marketing plans or proposal outlines, and to save time while on deadlines or when they lack inspiration.

Lawrence told his students, “You’ve got a once-in-a-lifetime chance to be first with a world-changing business technology. Become experts in it and leave college with advantages no students before you had.”



Weber State premieres 'MATCHSTICK GIRL'

A new musical created by former and current Weber State University faculty had its world premiere at WSU on Feb. 24.

Matchstick Girl: A New Musical is a collaboration between **Jennifer Kokai**, former professor of theatre history and education, and **Kenneth Plain**, visiting assistant professor of performing arts.

“Ken has always wanted to create a musical from this story,” said playwright Kokai. “He has loved this story since he was young.”

Kokai was primarily interested in the ethical question of what we owe each other in society, transforming a simple religious story into a play that would appeal to a broad audience.

She put together lyrics, working closely with Plain to turn them into completed songs. Much of their work was supported by the Lindquist Creative Fund, administered by the Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities.

Andrew Barratt Lewis, co-director of Weber State’s theatre program, loved the idea so much that he added the musical to the season roster. The show ran Feb. 24 and 25 and March 1–4 and received positive reviews.



WSU PROFESSOR CURATES EXHIBIT FEATURING LATINA ARTISTS

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With a passion for working with diverse student populations, an art history professor at Weber State University is amplifying voices that are often forgotten within the art world.

María del Mar González-González curated “Beyond the Margins: An Exploration of Latina Art and Identity,” which was on display through March 4 at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art in Salt Lake City.

“Beyond the Margins” highlighted Latina artists whose history, culture or work has frequently been minimized. Art descriptions and other show materials for the exhibit were bilingual, prioritizing Spanish.

“I’m always thinking about omissions within history,” González-González said. “That’s something that guides the way I teach and the way I approach all my work. Oftentimes, artists who don’t fit a specific mold will be excluded, and I feel like it’s important to create a space where they can speak for themselves.”

Brady Distinguished Professors

The Brady Presidential Distinguished Professors honor 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.



For over a decade at WSU, **Leigh Shaw** has actively engaged students by eliciting and promoting their natural curiosity and desire to learn. She's at her best when explaining to students the deeper conceptual issues in what appear to be everyday phenomena. Shaw is skilled in helping students recognize and appreciate the value of psychology in life and gets

them excited about the discipline. She fosters students' understanding of psychological theories, concepts and research, along with their ability to think like scientific psychologists. Her teaching style is so infectious that students hurry to register for her classes before they fill up.

Shaw's scholarship continues to be in demand as publishers, conferences and journals seek her review. Alone, she produced 75 papers, presentations and successful grant applications with students.

Shaw has a passion for ensuring her students excel in general education coursework. Under her leadership as director of general education, the interdisciplinary WSU Course Program was developed, piloted and approved as a permanent addition at the university. She helped make Utah System of Higher Education history when collaborating with department chairs, college advisors and the Office of the Registrar to create a review process for transfer students' general education petitions — the first of its kind at a USHE institution. She personally reviewed hundreds of petitions, enabling transfer students to earn attributes for courses that did not transfer as general education, making their road to completion less rocky.

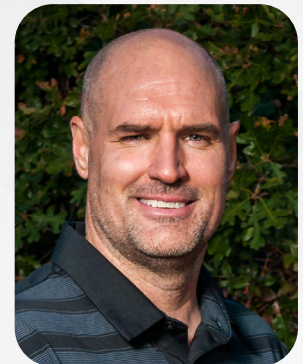
Justin Jackson is lauded by students for his vast knowledge base, effective communication of course concepts, flexibility in course delivery and a willingness to help students succeed. He has supervised 29 senior projects, advised four graduate student projects and served on three graduate students' committees.

Jackson was instrumental in developing the Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering and helped design the four-year plan for the degree, along with required and elective course options. In collaboration with his colleagues, he developed and designed the two-year plan for the Master of Science in Computer Engineering and Master of Science in Electrical Engineering, and designed the four-year plan for the Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering. He also developed two new graduate courses to support the Master of Science in Computer Engineering and helped advance an innovation center at Hill Air Force Base in collaboration with Lockheed Martin, Weber State and Hill.

One of the highlights of Jackson's 16-year tenure at

WSU was working with the legislature to create the electronic engineering program. His current research includes software-defined radio, printed semiconductor materials, and very-large scale integrated circuit design. He currently works with undergraduate and graduate students on projects in these areas, including the development of networking protocol discrimination techniques in software-defined radio for antenna characterization and 3D printed solar cells.

Beyond academia, Jackson serves as a technical advisor for an elementary school's vex robotics team and as a recruiter for engineering programs at several area high schools, Salt Lake Community College and Hill AFB.



This year's third Brady Distinguished Professor is radiologic sciences professor Robert J. "Bob" Walker, who is also a Dixon Award recipient. See his story on page 10.



Weber State female DEANS HOPE TO INSPIRE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

At Weber State University, seven out of eight college deans are women. For International Women’s Day on March 8, three of those deans shared their thoughts on the importance of women in leadership

Kristin Hadley, dean of Jerry & Vickie Moyes College of Education, said it’s important for aspiring teachers to see women in leadership roles. A 2022 Utah State University study found that 48.6% of Utah school principals are women—lower than the national average of 54.6%. Women also made up only 12.2% of superintendents across the state.

“At our orientation each semester, I tell incoming teacher candidates that there are many opportunities for them in the field of education,” Hadley said. “I didn’t envision my current career path, but opportunities arose and I prepared myself to be able to accept those challenges.”

College of Science dean **Andrea Easter-Pilcher** has had a multifaceted career in biology and higher education, and said there’s still much to be done to improve the number of women in STEM fields. But having female leadership can help pave the way for others.

“A female dean at the head of any college or university is a game-changer in terms of what is brought to the table for discussion, how those discussions evolve, and who becomes inspired to take on these leadership roles,” she said. “I love this about my current position.”

Both Hadley and Easter-Pilcher said they didn’t enter academia looking to be part of leadership, but the support of colleagues helped convince them to take on the challenge.

“At each juncture along my career, I had people who tapped me on the shoulder and encouraged me to pursue these roles,” said Hadley, who began teaching at WSU in 2005. “I also felt the need for strong, effective women leaders in the field of education as a role model for others.”

Yasmen Simonian has been the dean of the Dr. Ezekiel R. Dumke College of Health Professions since 2008 and said it’s “wonderful” to have six other women at the dean level at Weber State.

“It used to be that I was the only female dean for a while. I’m grateful for having female colleagues now,” she said. “We share information, solve problems, help one another, bounce ideas and much more. We celebrate and honor each other in leadership positions.”

For aspiring female leaders, Simonian encourages creating a support group and being an active participant, as well as learning from people whom they admire.

Women pursuing leadership roles should also “take courage and step out of your comfort zone,” Easter-Pilcher added. “Believe that your words, thoughts, ideas and dreams have value. Once you are in a leadership role, work actively to elevate others.”

Weber State’s other deans include the following:

- **Deborah Uman**, Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities
- **Julie Rich**, College of Social & Behavioral Sciences
- **Wendy Holliday**, Stewart Library
- **Doris Geide-Stevenson** (interim), John B. Goddard School of Business & Economics
- **David Ferro**, College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology

LINDQUIST AWARD



Physical education professor **James Zagrodnik** was recognized for his commitment to the community via his landmark work on behalf of children with disabilities.

Zagrodnik has been a part of Weber State’s physical education faculty since 2011. In 2013, he co-founded Children’s Adaptive Physical Education Society!, better known as **CAPES!**, which

pairs children who have developmental disabilities with WSU students who are studying education. The pairings last 10 weeks each fall and spring semester, giving students the opportunity to teach critical skills in a safe and fun environment.

Since its launch, CAPES! has delivered on its goal to not only increase the independence of each child in the program, but also enhance WSU students’ knowledge and application of various teaching and learning theories for individuals with disabilities. So far, over 800 students have accumulated more than 18,000 hours of one-on-one interaction with local children and their families.

Aside from CAPES!, Zagrodnik created and ran a summer camp for Ogden’s at-risk youth and also co-created a

podcast, **Wildcat Conversations: Racism**, where he interviews faculty, staff, students and community members on racial issues. He also works with community groups, such as Youth Impact and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, helping students develop after-school programs for gifted students.

His scholarly work focuses on the impact of CCEL-based pedagogies on pre-service teachers among individuals with disabilities, and he’s presented these methods at eight national conferences.

“I am convinced that my ultimate job is to enhance the lives of others. I am equally convinced that I cannot do that without performing community engaged-based practices,” Zagrodnik said. “I often find myself asking this to my students and myself: If we are not making a difference in ourselves, others and our community, what then are we doing it for?”

Zagrodnik’s upcoming projects include creating an immersive study abroad program with the University of Otago in New Zealand to learn more about health, physical education and recreation for the Māori people and how these beliefs relate to the beliefs of the five indigenous tribes of Utah. He also chairs a WSU coalition to create a Multi-Sensory Environment for the campus and community to utilize.

WSU PROFESSOR BOLSTERS LIFE-SAVING EFFORTS VIA PULSEPOINT

Bill Robertson, associate professor of emergency healthcare, teamed up with Deputy Chief Michael Slater of the Ogden City Fire Department to improve the out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rates in Weber and Morgan counties via the mobile app, PulsePoint.

“Since our department provides all of the paramedic training for the Ogden City Fire Department, it was just a natural partnership,” Robertson said.

PulsePoint works by routing 911 calls that go through dispatch and notifying responders who are within one-fourth of a mile of the victim’s location and the nearest automated external defibrillator.

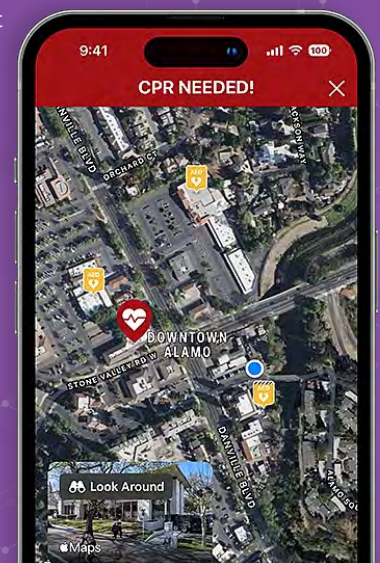
“The sooner CPR is started, even by a bystander, the better the victim’s chance of survival,” Robertson said.

Robertson helped secure funding for PulsePoint access and training efforts for the public and first responders. Others

from the Dr. Ezekiel R. Dumke College of Health Professions realized the importance of the program and chipped in, alongside donations from private and public contributors.

“Going forward, the Department of Emergency Healthcare will play a bigger role in providing the necessary training to active emergency medical services providers in the area, as well as hosting community CPR training,” Robertson said.

Through Robertson’s work and dedication, Weber State is even more connected to the larger initiative to improve the community’s health – and possibly save lives.



FACULTY & STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

#LouderandProuder

Jadelyn Abbott, assistant professor of teacher education, co-authored “Interventions to improve teacher self-efficacy beliefs about writing and writing instruction: Lessons learned and areas for exploration” in *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*.

Campus Recreation director **Teri Bladen** was honored with the 2023 Distinguished Service Award from the Utah Women in Higher Education Network state Board of Directors, awarded for sustained exemplary leadership, scholarship and/or creative work, philanthropy, or service which has advanced the mission of UWHEN.

Li Chen, assistant professor of social media and data analytics, co-authored “#MeToo on Twitter: The migration of celebrity capital and social capital in online celebrity advocacy” in *New Media and Society*.

Zoology professor **Jonathan Clark**, co-authored “DNA Barcodes for Great Salt Lake Brine Flies Establish a Baseline for Monitoring Biodiversity” with his former zoology students, Sabrina Haney and Oscar Bedolla. This paper represents the first genetic study of animals inhabiting the Great Salt Lake ecosystem. Clark and his current student Madeleine Sorbonne also presented their research, “DNA Barcoding of Parasites Associated with Great Salt Lake Brine Shrimp,” at the International Forum on Research Excellence in Alexandria, Virginia.

Nicola Corbin and **Anne Bialowas**, Department of Communication professors, published the chapter “When fandom stains your team: Evaluating the effectiveness of the Utah Jazz’s organizational responses to racist incidents” in *Social Issues in Sport Communication: You Make the Call*.

Don Davies, chemistry professor, published “Reaction Webs: An Interleaved Approach to Reviewing Reactions in Organic Chemistry” in the *Journal of Chemical Education*.

Shirley Dawson, **Shernavaz Vakil** and **Melina Alexander**, professors in the teacher education department, were awarded two state grants, StepUp and the Teacher Assistant Pathway to Teaching, to support the training of paraeducators and special education teachers.

Matt Donahue, athletic training associate professor, spent time in Saudi Arabia with WMI Global, providing athletic training services for the Union Cycliste Internationale Bicycle Freestyle World Cup.

Jeremy Farner, Construction & Building Sciences associate professor, **Julie Rich**, College of Social & Behavioral Sciences dean, and **Diana Meiser**, College of EAST assistant professor and librarian, published “High-Impact Experiential Learning Opportunities through Global Community Engaged

Learning” in *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Global Studies*.

Nicholas Ferre, academic advisor in the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences, was awarded a Career Champion staff award.

Becky Jo Gesteland, English professor, had a personal essay, “a retreat to advance,” accepted for publication in the *Home Lifespan* Vol. 7, edited by Pure Slush.

Economics assistant professor **Jenny Gnagey** published a letter to the editor in the *Standard-Examiner* related to meritocracy in education.

Economics associate professor **Matt Gnagey** and **Cass Morgan**, associate dean of the Jerry & Vickie Moyes College of Education, published the chapter “Small Events Snowballing into Large Effects – Using Economics Impact Analysis with a Winter Sports Non-Profit Organization” in *Teaching Cases in Tourism, Hospitality and Events*.

Jessica Greenberg, performing arts associate professor, was selected as one of the “40 Under 40” Lighting Designers for 2022 in an international competition run by the Light Collective.

Automotive technology professor **Scott Hadzik** and assistant professor **Brandon Stevenson** received the Intermountain Sustainability Summit’s Sustainability Collaboration Award.

Jan Hamer, English instructor, published her collection of essays and poems, *A Storytelling of Ravens*.

Tracy Hicks, administrative associate in the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences Dean’s Office, received the Super Staff Award.

Eddie Hill, Outdoor & Community Recreation Education associate professor, co-authored “Assessing high-impact practices: The role of triple loop learning in fostering future conservation leaders” in the *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education and Leadership*.

Lisa Hopkins, accounting instructor, was appointed Chairperson of the CPA Education Advisory Committee, which serves an advisory role to the Utah Board of Accountancy and Utah Division of Professional Licensing.

Cynthia Jones, visiting assistant French professor, published a book chapter “La vengeance du Petit chaperon rouge: le rôle de la cruauté dans quelques réécritures du Petit chaperon rouge” in *Cruautés et violences dans le conte et dans le récit bref / Crueldades y violencias en el cuento en la narración breve*. Published by Unité de Recherche sur l’Histoire, les Langues, les Littératures et l’Interculturel.

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FACULTY & STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS (CONT.)

#LouderandProuder

Communication professor **Sheree Josephson** was selected to present from nearly 100 candidates as a Fulbright alum in the 2023 Fulbright Specialist Program.

Marina Kenner, University Archives staff, is graduating with her Master's of Library and Information Science from San Jose State University.

Outdoor Program coordinator **Amy Knight** acquired Climbing Wall Instructor Certification Provider status, allowing her to conduct certifying courses for instructors in the growing climbing wall industry.

Economics professor **Brandon Koford** published "The Impact of Parental Resources on Student Outcomes using High School Data" in *Empirical Economics Letters*.

Christopher Merritt, adjunct professor of anthropology, was awarded a Career Champion faculty award.

Aminda O'Hare, director of the neuroscience program and assistant professor of psychology, published an article in *PLoS ONE*: "The effects of short interventions of focused-attention vs. self-compassion mindfulness meditation on undergraduate students: Evidence from self-report, classroom performance, and ERPs," which was then highlighted in the February 2023 issue of *Mindfulness Research Monthly*.

Carrie Ota, Child & Family Studies professor, presented "Ecobehavioral analysis of social behavior across learning contexts in kindergarten" at the Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting.

Travis Price, health sciences department chair, created teaching materials to replace textbooks in an effort to save students money as they advance in health professions.

Jonathan Rivera, Campus Recreation fitness coordinator, co-presented "TexFit Info Session" at the 2023 TexFit conference in Lubbock, Texas.

Economics professor **Gavin Roberts** co-authored "How price-gouging regulation undermined COVID-19 mitigation: Evidence of unintended consequences" for publication in *Public Choice*. He also co-edited *Social Coordination and Public Policy*, published by Rowman & Littlefield.

Matthew Romaniello, associate professor of history, presented "When Russia Became 'Cold': Observations and Experiments in Early-Modern Eurasia" for the History Department of University of Toronto; and "The 'Russian Catarrh' of 1782" at the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies annual conference.

Abraham Smith, English associate professor, published his poetry collection *Insomniac Sentinel*.

John Sohl, physics professor, collaboratively published "Investigating Errors Observed during UAV-Based Vertical Measurements Using Computational Fluid Dynamics," which was selected as the editor's choice in the journal *Drones*.

Michael Thompson, University Archives processor, participated in the Ghana Make a Difference project, which was awarded the Gwen Williams Prize from the Hemingway Foundation.

Nancy Tomon, Interim Manager of the Center for Supply Chain Excellence, was awarded the 2023 Career Champion award.

Formosan Violin-Piano Duo, **Shi-Hwa Wang** and **Yu-Jane Yang**, performing arts professors, were selected nationally and featured as two of the only four National Conference Concert Artists to perform at the Opening Session Recital of the 2023 National Conference of the Music Teachers National Association.

The **College of Science** and **Career Services** faculty and staff co-hosted a Science Employer Showcase to highlight career, internship and volunteer opportunities for all science majors.

The **Dumke College of Health Professions** collaborated with the **Department of Foreign Languages** for the Institutional Certificate of Proficiency in Spanish. This certificate will allow students to have their Spanish language skills formally recognized, affording them an advantage in employment and enriching their cultural and social understanding of diverse communities.

Excellence Awards, continued from page 1

- **Andrew Keinsley**, Economics
- **John Kelly**, Automotive
- **Diane Leggett-Fife**, Nursing
- **Louise Moulding**, Teacher Education
- **Melissa Neville Norton**, Nursing
- **Kristin Rabosky**, Physics
- **Kathryn Sperry**, Psychological Sciences
- **Sarah Vause**, English

Thanks to support from generous donors to WSU, each winner receives a \$5,000 award, either as a cash stipend or to enhance their teaching through professional development, curriculum development, research or acquiring equipment and technology for their classroom.

DIXON AWARDS

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.

RONALD L. "RON" SMITH

CONTROLLER AND DIRECTOR OF ACCOUNTING SERVICES



Smith performs most of his duties behind the scenes, yet the impact of his labor is palpable campuswide. Throughout his 41-year career at Weber State, he has been tasked with overseeing demanding projects, administrative committees and special assignments. During the COVID-19 crisis, Smith managed the distribution of Weber

State's nearly \$82 million allocation of Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund funding from the U.S. Department of Education.

Faced with restricted performance periods for various components of the fund and a complex evaluation and auditing process, Smith went to extraordinary lengths to ensure students received emergency funds to address multiple pandemic-related problems, including unemployment, food shortages, shelter issues, emotional duress, child care, tuition, course supplies, student fees and more. Smith also set aside funds to support WSU faculty in implementing new and engaging remote learning opportunities for their students.

Remarkably, Smith was able to accomplish all this while simultaneously performing his regular duties as the university's chief accounting officer. In fact, he is widely recognized as the most competent controller throughout the Utah System of Higher Education. His vast experience and unmatched dedication and commitment has helped establish WSU as the best financially managed institution in the USHE system.

Smith, a Weber State graduate, has devoted his lengthy career to serving the institution that gave him a tremendous start. He began working at Weber as an entry-level accountant and steadily progressed to his current position. Smith has chaired numerous university committees, including the Personnel Relations Committee where his keen sense of fairness and impeccable judgment often allowed sensitive issues to be resolved without formal hearings. Working with students is among his career highlights. "I feel that associating with them helps keep me young," he said recently.

THOMAS "TOM" MATHEWS

SPANISH PROFESSOR AND DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING ARTS CHAIR



Mathews is a Weber State alum with over 40 years of teaching experience — 27 of which have been dedicated to students at his alma mater. Mathews, a nationally recognized leader in providing second language acquisition and pedagogy instruction, inspires fellow foreign language teachers in Utah and beyond. His legacy as

a "teacher of teachers" is particularly evident at statewide professional gatherings where audiences are usually packed with former students who now teach Spanish in northern Utah school districts.

As a Weber State graduate, Mathews feels a special bond with his students and takes extraordinary measures to meet their needs. He is remarkably generous with his time and provides a safe space in his office for students to converse freely about a variety of topics. He dedicates many office hours to helping Spanish-teaching majors improve their language skills by giving them mock oral proficiency interviews. His method of rating these mock interviews mirrors the framework the state of Utah uses to hire language teachers in K-12 public and charter schools.

Mathews served a three-year term as chair of the Department of Foreign Languages. During his tenure, he led the department in creating its current mission statement and learning outcomes. He oversaw the design and implementation of the department's senior assessment and was instrumental in creating other strategic policies and procedures. In 2016, Mathews' exceptional teaching was recognized with an AHA! Faculty Award from the Telitha E. Lindquist College of Arts & Humanities Advisory Council.

In addition to teaching, Mathews has been involved with the WSU Faculty/Staff Gay-Straight Alliance and has served as an advisor to the Student Gay-Straight Alliance. He is a stalwart advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion at Weber State.

Mathews coordinated concurrent enrollment for 15 years and has maintained stellar scholarship with dozens of professional publications and presentations. He has announced plans to retire after spring semester.

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DIXON AWARDS (CONTINUED)

ROBERT J. "BOB" WALKER

RADIOLOGIC SCIENCES PROFESSOR



After earning undergraduate degrees from Weber State, Walker joined the Dr. Ezekiel R. Dumke College of Health Professions in 1982. His strong belief that higher education has a responsibility to make students better citizens of the world is embedded in the School of Radiologic Sciences' mantra: "Learn with passion and then lead with purpose."

Walker's 41-year career is marked by his determination to build a nationally ranked radiologic sciences program. Under his tenure as department chair, the program has become one of the university's top three in number of graduates, and students have a 95% pass rate on all certification exams. Walker has helped forge affiliations with more than 500 clinics and hospitals throughout the country, including every hospital in Utah.

Walker's ingenious idea to combine department software and computer technology to create 3D models of joints for dental-implant planning and facial reconstruction led to his selection as the college's inaugural Dr. Ezekiel R. and Edna Wattis Dumke Endowed Chair. He worked doggedly to raise funds to obtain the software, hardware and physical space required to create a 3D innovation lab.

Also at Weber, Walker helped develop a radiologist assistant program to train students to provide mid-level care in imaging and radiation oncology. He led the effort to provide a unique master's program that helps students acquire the high-level skills needed to assist cardiologists with all heart-related surgical procedures.

To augment their classroom and clinical experiences, Walker encourages students to co-present lectures with faculty mentors at local and national professional meetings. For 20 years, he has organized and supervised the Healthcare and Culture of China Study Abroad program.

Walker has served or is currently serving on many important WSU committees, including the university's planning, graduation and legislative committees. He is a life member of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists and was the youngest person elected president. His active involvement in numerous professional organizations and extensive list of scholarly publications and presentations reveal the breadth of his knowledge.



EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH WILDCAT MICROFUND

Weber State's Wildcat MicroFund has received a \$1.2 million gift from America First Credit Union to expand its services throughout Utah.

The Wildcat MicroFund focuses on serving socially and economically disadvantaged communities throughout northern Utah, offering cash grants of up to \$3,000 and additional networking opportunities to Weber State students and area entrepreneurs.

"We serve the next generation of entrepreneurs by giving them a platform to test their ideas in a real-world setting and bring brand awareness to their local communities," said **Catherine Holbrook Clark**, manager of the Wildcat MicroFund. "The opportunities that this funding provides not only make a profound impact on the entrepreneurs themselves, but on their families and the community as well."

Since 2018, the microfund has awarded over 300 grants to businesses in a variety of industries, including construction, education, outdoor reaction and tourism. See how [one Ogden business owner](#) took advantage of the microfund.

AFCU "could not be happier to partner with the Wildcat MicroFund," said Tammy Gallegos, AFCU's chief strategic engagement officer.

"The Wildcat MicroFund is an incredible opportunity for entrepreneurs to launch, build and grow their venture," she said. "We're thrilled that through this program we get to be part of the journey for individuals furthering innovation here in Utah."

PRESIDENTIAL OUTSTANDING STAFF AWARDS

JENNA DANIELS

As the Administrative Specialist III in the Department of History, Jenna Daniels is “wonderfully kind to faculty, students and staff alike,” and willingly takes on difficult projects. Shortly after starting at WSU in 2016, she eliminated wasteful inefficiencies in the department, saving thousands of dollars. Known to stay late and come in early to help a colleague, Jenna has pinch-hit for other departments when they lost admins, and helps onboard new employees in the college. Her knowledge of policies and procedures makes her a “go-to” colleague for people across campus. Jenna produces posters, flyers and other marketing materials to promote Department of History events. She is devoted to helping students and fiercely determined to solve problems and find solutions to help them succeed.

TERESA MARTINEZ

As interim co-director of the Center for Community Engaged Learning, Teresa Martinez never loses sight of the student perspective. Drawing on her experience as a former student-athlete and two-time graduate of WSU, her inclusion efforts are a major reason why students feel welcome. Thanks to her mentoring and recruitment, the CCEL teams now have full demographic representation. Teresa is an amazing advisor, co-worker and supervisor who balances professionalism with being approachable and caring. Hailed as an innovative thinker with problem-solving abilities, she excels at managing projects and completing tasks. From supporting political engagement through Wildcat Counts, to mentoring students’ senior projects, to keeping the Engaged Learning Series running during a pandemic, Teresa has a passion for seeing and helping others succeed.

TISH LANGSTON

Tish Langston’s colleagues appreciate the way she supervises and supports them in her role as Custodial Area Supervisor. Tish thinks outside the box to find solutions that save the university time and money. She relies on a great sense of humor to relate to colleagues and customers alike. Her direct reports appreciate how she supports and nurtures their professional growth, while also having their back. She offers instruction and solutions in a clear and concise manner that her peers appreciate. Known for her open-door policy, Tish is reachable via radio, text or phone. When one of her direct reports had to run home to attend to his children, Tish responded immediately and completed the rest of his shift so he could focus on his family. Her philosophy is “I work for my employees, not the other way around.”

BRAD NAISBITT

As the IT and Project Manager for the College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology, Brad Naisbitt’s full time job can be demanding. Over the past two years, in addition to his regular duties, Brad served as the right-hand person in supporting the college as it planned and constructed two buildings, while renovating a third and taking down the Technical Education Building. Throughout the process, he worked closely with faculty and staff to represent their IT needs in each project. Brad worked over winter break of 2021 to ensure classrooms in the Engineering Technology Building were ready for spring semester 2022, despite renovation disruptions. In the summer of 2022, Brad worked seven days a week for three weeks to ensure the Noorda Engineering Building was ready for fall semester. That included hanging maps in Noorda the Sunday night before the first day of classes.

Notable Moments

NULC

Literature students across the nation presented their work at the National Undergraduate Literature Conference hosted by Weber State from March 30 to April 1. Originally founded in 1985 by WSU professors **Mikel Vause** and **Michael Meyer**, NULC is the longest-running national undergraduate conference in the U.S. This year's keynote speaker was Louise Glück, winner of the 2020 Nobel Prize in literature.

DIGITAL FLUENCY

WSU is officially an Adobe Creative Campus due to its strong commitment to digital fluency and its goal for all students to be digitally fluent by 2025. By partnering with Adobe, WSU puts Adobe Creative Cloud apps in the hands of all students, faculty and staff, helping them develop digital fluency by learning to create, consume and collaborate on digital content.

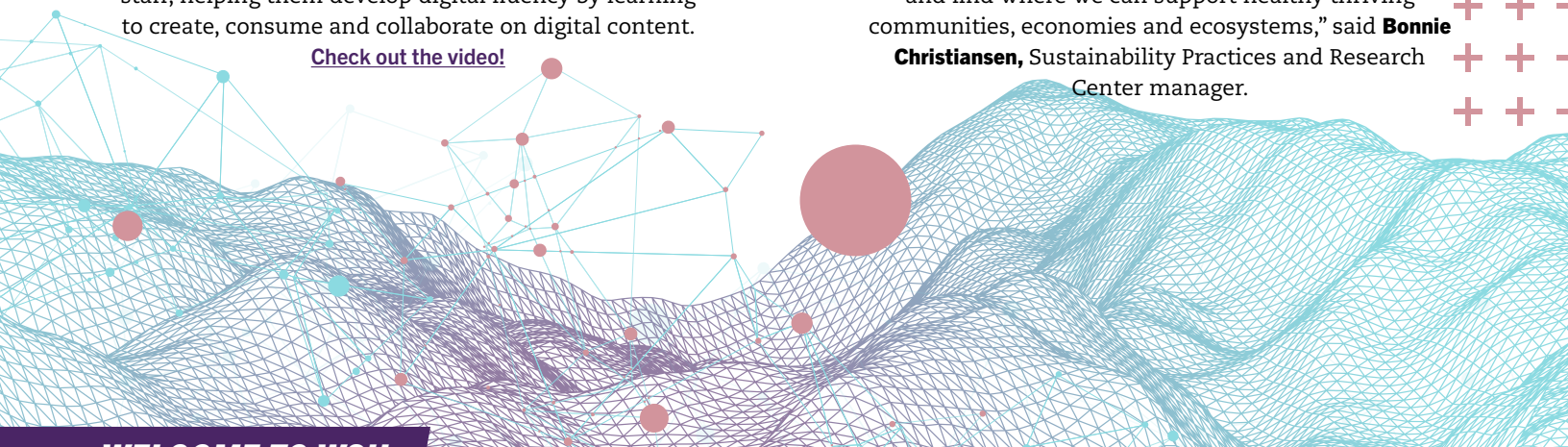
[Check out the video!](#)

STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

Local and internationally acclaimed storytellers expressed their art during Weber State's 27th annual Storytelling Festival, chaired by **David Byrd**, teacher education professor. The festival featured a variety of community events across Weber and Davis counties Feb. 27 through March 1.

SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT

Weber State hosted its 14th annual Intermountain Sustainability Summit March 23–24. This year's theme, "Connect & Amplify Impact," highlighted the importance of working together as businesses, non-profits, higher education and government sectors collaborate to solve climate challenges. "The heart of the summit is inviting people to come together and find where we can support healthy thriving communities, economies and ecosystems," said **Bonnie Christiansen**, Sustainability Practices and Research Center manager.



WELCOME TO WSU

Vanessa Ambriz-Ruiz
Community Development

Debbie Begay
Human Resources

Jeri Best
Facilities Management

Hannah Burke
Admissions Office

Peter Eck
Bursar and Collection Services

David Fink
Infrastructure Services

Christopher Hunter
Facilities Management

Lisa Jensen
Alumni Relations

Connor Johnson
University Police

Jaylen Johnson
Athletics Admin & Support

Zachary Larson
Athletics Admin & Support

Wyatt Leiseth
Facilities Management

Mariano Martinez Martinez
School of Computing

Conley McCabe
University Housing

Beth Pessetto
Affirmative Action

Marlena Ruhling
Facilities Management

Marian Sosa Castillo
Child & Family Studies

Robert Strong
Foreign Language

Sarah Taylor
Academic Support Centers

Kimberly Tene
Science Education Center

Genesis Vasquez
College of Social Science

Christopher Verburg
Online & Continuing Education

Jeffery Wall
Facilities Management

Retired

Ann Gessel
Dumke College of Health Professions

Claude Payne
Bursar & Collection Services

Sheila Simko
Veterans Services



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