



WSU NEWS

Weber State University News & Events

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THIS ISSUE!

ARGENTINA EXPEDITION	3
PROVOST MESSAGE	4
ACCOMPLISHMENTS	5
WELCOME TO WEBER	8



WEBER STATE HOSTS INAUGURAL WHITE COAT CEREMONY FOR FUTURE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

Marking a significant step toward becoming physician assistants, 20 students at Weber State University received traditional white coats during a ceremony Dec. 14, 2023.

The white coat ceremony was hosted by the Department of Physician Assistant Medicine to recognize the first cohort of PA students who started in January 2023. During their first year, the students engaged mostly in classroom and laboratory work.

"This ceremony marks the transition from classroom to clinic," said **Sandra Stennett**, department chair. "It's a reminder of the task they're about to take on as they step into the world of patient care."

CONT. ON PAGE 2



HISTORY PROFESSOR LENDS EXPERTISE TO PBS DOCUMENTARY

Sara Dant, Brady Presidential Distinguished Professor and longstanding History Department Chair at Weber State, offered her expertise in a new film by Academy Award and Emmy Award-winning documentarian Ken Burns.

Dant, who teaches history with specialization in the American West and environment, served as a historical advisor and interviewee for *The American Buffalo*, a two-part PBS documentary that focuses on the iconic national mammal and its history with peoples in America.

"History is ultimately a great story," Dant said, "and Ken Burns is a master story-teller. This film is an astonishing biography of an animal that provides a unique window into the past 10,000 years of our continent's history – the good, bad, and ugly – to reveal how the bison story was simultaneously unique and tragically typical."

Dant is the author of *Losing Eden: An Environmental History of the American West*, which traces the interaction of people and nature across time, a theme woven throughout the Burns documentary. A screenwriter for several of Burns' projects, Dayton Duncan, was familiar with Dant's work and called upon her expertise for the film.

Dant and three other historical advisors met several times with writers, producers and sometimes Burns himself to review drafts of the script and film, offering their insights. She also appears in both episodes to offer historical commentary.

CONT. ON PAGE 2

Ceremony, continued from page 1

Starting in January 2024, the cohort began rotations at clinics and hospitals throughout Utah and into Colorado. Stennett said the second year of the program is “immersive training” where students provide full-time, real-world patient care alongside healthcare professionals.

“It’s a big deal for these students, and also for our community,” Stennett said. “They’re going to fill a critical need in healthcare.”

Weber State’s PA program focuses on primary care and adult hospital medicine, aiming to fill shortages in the healthcare workforce by placing qualified medical providers in the community.



PBS, continued from page 1

She said the final product is “beautiful and powerful” with an ultimate message of hope, focusing on a species that humans nearly drove to extinction but saved in the nick of time.

“That’s the whole point of history: understanding the consequences of the choices we’ve made in the past so that we can make better and more informed choices moving forward,” she said.

Now that the film is wrapped, Dant said she looks forward to engaging in more public-facing writing and podcasts on topics including environmental politics, sustainability and the importance of public lands. Spring 2024 will be her final semester at Weber State, where she has served for 23 years, before she retires.



ZOOLOGY FACULTY, STUDENTS HELP MONITOR RIVER OTTER POPULATION

Weber State University zoology professor **Michele Skopec** is leading a team of student researchers who spend every other week setting up cameras and lures along the Weber River to learn more about North American river otters.

The otters are native to Utah and were classified as a rare species in the 1890s due to unregulated trapping and habitat destruction. Now they’re protected from hunting, but their elusive nature makes it difficult to track their numbers.

The team’s goal is to capture footage of the otters. Sightings provide important information about the location and distribution of the species, which is vital for creating management plans.

“There’s a lot to learn about river otters’ culture and behavior,” said Rossetta Chen, WSU zoology major and student research organizer. “We can’t have conservation laws without knowing more about the population.”

The WSU team shares its findings with Britnee Cheney, an animal keeper at the Loveland Living Planet Aquarium in Draper, Utah. Cheney works closely with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources to share details that can be used to help manage the species and the health of the ecosystem.

Expedition to Argentina **RESULTS IN NEW INSIGHTS, OPPORTUNITIES**

Two professors from Weber State University's Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences spent their winter break on an expedition to Aconcagua, the tallest mountain in South America with a summit elevation of 22,837 feet.

Elizabeth Balgord and **Nicolás Pérez-Consuegra** traveled with a group through Aconcagua's 360 route to collect samples of sedimentary rocks and snow from glaciers for research on geological history and glacier pollution.

Traveling through Aconcagua was no easy task. Each day, they'd hike for hours to higher elevations and in harsh weather until they arrived at the next camp, where local guides would help them secure food and water.

"This was a completely new environment for me, so seeing the landscapes and active earth processes was very rewarding," Pérez-Consuegra said. "It was also an interesting balance between surviving every day and doing the fieldwork."

The rock samples they collected will provide new insight into the history and formation of the Andes mountain belt. Students at WSU also have the opportunity to help with these discoveries by processing and dating the samples collected.

"There are really direct comparisons between what's happening today in South America and what was



happening here in the geological past because the Rocky Mountains formed in the same way as the Andes," Balgord said. "Comparing the areas allows us to better understand how these types of mountain belts evolve, which can provide more information on geologic hazards and where to find resources."

The samples collected from Aconcagua's glaciers will allow them to identify pollutants and determine how they affect melting rates.

Both research projects are part of a larger collaboration between other universities and groups around the world, and the professors hope to arrange future study abroad trips for WSU students.

WEBER STATE ANNOUNCES NEW LEADER FOR DREAM CENTER



Weber State University is excited to welcome **Pam Allcott** as the inaugural Dream Center program manager. Open to all students, the Dream Center focuses on the support and success of students who identify as undocumented, mixed-status and DACA students, known on campus as Dreamers.

Allcott was selected as the center's first program manager for her experience creating and leading a student support center. Before coming to Weber, she was the associate director for Utah State University's Latinx Cultural Center and a member of the Educational Excellence for Latino Students committee for the Logan City School District. There, she also served as a member of the board of directors for the William A. Burnard Warming Center, which provides temporary housing for unhoused individuals and families.

Allcott will provide support to students on campus by fostering an environment of belonging. She will collaborate and build partnerships with the campus community to incorporate best practices for supporting Weber State's Dreamer students.

PROVOST Message



I ♥ DATA



RAVI KROVI

It has been about nine months since the creation of the new Office of Student Success Analytics. This came about after a recommendation by the National Institute of Student Success to establish a “ground truth” for

data reporting. Getting the right data was deemed essential to:

- Track and support students by their completion goals
- Implement guided student pathways for undecided students
- Collaborate across all student facing units to provide a more proactive and agile response to student issues.

I thought I would check in with our chief data officer, **Ivana Fredotovic**, about her initial assessment and the strategic priorities of her team.

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR INITIAL IMPRESSIONS?

So far, getting to know the campus and community has been inspirational. Weber State faculty and staff are truly interested in collaborating and using data to improve the overall experience and success of our students. To achieve the *Amplify* strategic goals, we will have to continue to support an environment of data-informed retention and completion efforts. Fostering a data culture through robust literacy and governance initiatives is essential. Democratizing access to real-time data and promoting data literacy will allow us to understand, interpret and act upon data effectively. By evaluating our analytics maturity, we can adapt to diverse readiness levels and foster continuous development of data literacy on campus.

HOW DOES VIEWING DATA AS AN ASSET CONTRIBUTE TO INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS?

Treating data as an asset means recognizing its intrinsic value in informing decision-making. By leveraging data strategically, we can develop innovative approaches for student recruitment, enhance outcomes and improve overall efficiency. For example, understanding student behavior patterns can help us tailor recruitment strategies, leading to more successful outcomes for both students and the institution. Another example would be how we can use labor market data to inform new program development and increase transparency for our students. By harnessing data effectively, we can proactively address challenges and tailor support mechanisms, ultimately enhancing student success. It allows us to analyze trends, identify students who may need extra help, and implement targeted interventions for improved retention. A well-executed data strategy is the backbone of data-informed decision-making. This ensures that decision-making is not only informed but also student-centric.

WHAT IS OUR LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR ESTABLISHING A GROUND TRUTH FOR DATA?

Collaborations across the university are paramount in establishing a robust data infrastructure, common definitions and integration of data sources. Analytics has a real impact on real people and as such, ensuring data security, protection and responsible sharing are institutional responsibilities. In essence, data governance involves coordinated management of people, processes and technology to oversee and manage institutional data effectively. Aligning data governance efforts with strategic priorities enhances outcomes, improves decision-making and contributes to the overall success of our institution and our students.

Thank you, Ivana. We are looking forward to learning more about these initiatives and upcoming data workshops.

Well, there you have it. Let's love and treat WSU data as an asset!

Ravi

FACULTY & STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Jadelyn Abbott, assistant professor of teacher education, co-authored “Literacy instructional coaching practices in writing and writing instruction: An exploration of K–6 teachers’ perspectives” in *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*.

Assistant Professor of Art **Kellie Bornhoft’s** “Tremors,” a recent sound installation, and writing were published in *The New Geologic Epoch*.

Julian Chan, mathematics professor, and **Heather Root**, botany and plant ecology professor, published “Long-term biocrust responses to wildfires in Washington, USA” in the *American Journal of Botany*.

Sheldon Cheshire, leadership programs coordinator, was appointed to serve as President of Utah Professionals in Student Involvement and Leadership for the 2023–24 academic year.

Rex Christensen, radiologic sciences associate professor, presented “Reducing the Risk of Adverse Effects of Contrast Enhancing Agents used in MRI” for the International Society of Radiographers and Radiological Technologists.

Mary Foss, assistant professor in Manufacturing & Systems Engineering, co-authored “An Evaluation of Mathematical Models and Stability Analysis of Learning Based on Reaction Kinetics” in the *International Journal on Engineering, Science and Technology*.

Sara Gailey, assistant professor of teacher education, co-authored “‘I didn’t quit. The system quit me.’ Examining why teachers of color leave teaching” in the *International Journal of Leadership in Education*.

Sarah Herrmann, associate professor of psychological science, and student Taylor Evans received a Nature and Human Health Utah Pilot Grant for the purchase of plants for their research project, “Examining the Effect of Plants in the Classroom on College Student Mental Health and Academic Performance.”

Christopher Hoagstrom, zoology professor, collaboratively published “Biogeography of Greater Antillean freshwater fishes, with a review of competing hypotheses” in *Biological Reviews* and co-authored “Revised New World bioregions and environmental correlates for vectors of Chagas disease (Hemiptera, Triatominae)” in *Science Direct*.

Jim Hutchins, health sciences professor, presented “Creation of an Open, Free, Adaptable Neuroscience Textbook” with co-authors **Misty Allen** (Stewart Library), **Justin Burr** (Health Sciences) and **Aminda O’Hare** (Psychology) at the Society for Neuroscience meeting in Washington, D.C.

Alicia Ingersoll, assistant professor of business administration, published “Institutional Isomorphic Pressures: The Impact for Women on Boards” in *Corporate Governance*.

Qi Jin, assistant professor of nutrition, co-authored “The metabolic potential of inflammatory and insulinaemic dietary patterns and risk of type 2 diabetes” in *Diabetologia* and “Associations of dietary patterns with kidney cancer risk, kidney cancer-specific mortality and all-cause mortality among postmenopausal women” in the *British Journal of Cancer*.

Sheree Josephson, communication professor, virtually presented her experience in Tunis, Tunisia, as part of the U.S. State Department’s ongoing effort to engage with aspiring Fulbright Specialists and provide them with insight into the experience of serving as a cultural ambassador and scholar.

Joscha Klueppel, German instructor, published “Saša Stanišić’s Novels: Making Sense of Heimat and Migration?” in *Heimat and Migration: Reimagining the Regional and the Global in the Twenty-First Century*.

Heeuk Dennis Lee, associate professor of criminal justice, **Bradford Reyns**, professor of criminal justice, and student Matthew Armoncica published “The Relationship between Media Engagement and Procedural Justice” in *Deviant Behavior*.

Visual arts professor **Jason Manley’s** sculpture, “Cavern,” was installed at the new library in Logan, Utah.

John Mukum Mbaku published “The Emerging Jurisprudence of the African Human Rights Court and the Protection of Human Rights in Africa” in *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*; “African Courts and International Human Rights Law” in *Brooklyn Journal of International Law*; “International Human Rights Law and Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa” in *Michigan State Journal of International Law*; “Copyright Law and the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Case Law from Africa” in *UIC Review of Intellectual Property Law*; and “Women, International Human Rights Law, and the Right to Adequate Housing in Africa” in *Emory International Law Review*.

Scott Moore, assistant professor of medical laboratory sciences, co-authored “Intrinsic Predictors of Injury on a Multi-day Wilderness Event for Adolescents and Adult Leaders” and “The Interleaving Trails of Lifestyle and Wilderness Medicine” in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*. He also co-authored “Effects of chronic vapor inhalation on mouse body weight, lung morphology, and

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FACULTY & STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS (CONT.)

inflammatory cytokines using a low vapor exposure design” in *Neuroscience and Behavioral Physiology* alongside **Matthew Nicholaou**, MLS chair.

Casey Neville, associate professor of radiologic sciences, published “Quality of Life after Obstetric Fistula among Women in Developed Countries” in the *International Journal of Endocrinology Research and Reviews*.

Tanya Nolan, radiologic sciences chair, published the textbook *Abdomen and Superficial Structures*.

Robert Okazaki, zoology professor emeritus, co-authored “First Biocharacterization of Artemia Populations From Western and Northwestern Algeria” in *Zoomorphology*, co-authored “Ray Gibson (1938-2023): in memoriam” in *Zootaxa*, and presented “Proseritan turbellarians in the egg mass of the commercially important horsehair crab, *Erimacrus isenbeckii*, from Hokkaido, Japan” at the XV International Symposium on Flatworm Biology in São Sebastião, Brazil.

Demetrios Pagonis, assistant professor of chemistry and biochemistry, published “Impact of Biomass Burning Organic Aerosol Volatility on Smoke Concentrations Downwind of Fires” in *Environmental Science & Technology*.

Leslie Park, Student Pathways and Success, and **Tammy Nguyen**, Dual Enrollment and Outreach, published a chapter in *Supervising Professionals in Academic Areas*: “Identity in supervision: Understanding who works for you and who you work for in higher education.”

Kim Parkinson, assistant professor of radiologic sciences, co-authored “Female-To-Male Transgender Patients’ Perceived Disparities in Cancer Screening Adherence: A Phenomenological Study” in *International Journal of Endocrinology Research and Reviews*.

Richard Price, professor of political science, published “Contesting Obscenity: Book Challengers and Criminalizing Literature” in the *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*.

Sandeep Kumar Rangaraju, associate professor of economics, co-authored “The Confidence Channel of U.S. Financial Uncertainty: Evidence from Industry-level Data” in *Economic Modelling* and “Oil News Shocks and the U.S. Stock Market” in *Energy Economics*.

Justin Rhees, assistant professor of medical laboratory sciences, and **Matthew Nicholaou**, MLS chair, co-authored “Variations in Low Titer Group O Whole Blood Practices in the United States” in the *International Journal of Blood Transfusion and Immunohematology*.

Gavin Roberts, economics chair, received the Gordon Tullock Prize from the Public Choice Society for his paper “How

price-gouging regulation undermined COVID-19 mitigation: county-level evidence of unintended consequences” written with Rik Chakraborti. He was also named Senior Fellow at the Pelican Institute for Public Policy.

Matthew Romaniello, associate professor of history, presented “‘A little too partial to the ceremonies of their own church’: John Glen King’s Investigation of the Russian Orthodox Liturgy in the 1760s” at the Association for the Study of Eastern Christian History conference, and “Dr. Matthew Guthrie and the Pursuit of Cures for ‘Cold’ Diseases in the Eighteenth Century” at Ohio State University.

Valentinas Rudys, assistant professor of economics, published “Investing in cryptocurrencies with information costs” in *Applied Economics Letters* and “Adjustable-band moving average learning strategies for technical analysis: evidence from the Dow Jones Industrial Average” in *Applied Economics*.

Jeff Steagall, economics professor, co-authored “Integrating Explicit Political Costs into a World Trade Organization Negotiation Simulation” in the *Journal of Teaching in International Business*.

Christopher Steelman, assistant professor of radiologic sciences, presented research at conferences in India, Sri Lanka, Italy, Nepal and throughout the U.S.

Janicke Stramer-Smith, assistant professor of political science, presented “Follow the Money: Linking the Military’s economic interests and its political behavior in the Middle East” at the International Security Section’s annual conference.

Ed Walker, chemistry professor, was awarded the 2023 Chemistry Professional Utah Award by the Utah Award American Chemical Society committee.

WeiWei Wang, associate professor in the School of Economics & Taxation, co-authored “It is complicated, Tax Havens, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Corporate Social Irresponsibility” presented at the Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility and the 129th Accounting Faculty and Graduate Students Seminar in Xiamen, China.

Taylor Ward, radiologic sciences professor, co-authored “Virtual technology in radiologic technology classrooms: Educational effect of the COVID-19 pandemic” in *Radiologic Technology* and “Using a combined model of the theory of planned behavior and the technology acceptance model to assess radiologic technology educator’s intentions toward virtual technology use as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic” in *Radiologic Science & Education*.



WSU PARAMEDIC PROFESSOR CONTRIBUTES TO NEW EMS TREATMENT RESEARCH

Results of a recent study conducted by a team of researchers, including Weber State University's paramedic program director, could improve outcomes for people suffering uncontrolled atrial fibrillation.

Published in the journal *Prehospital Emergency Care*, the study found that patients who are treated for atrial fibrillation, or AFib, with rapid ventricular response in the field resulted in better heart rate control (41.0% vs. 18.2%), higher likelihood of being discharged from the emergency department rather than being admitted (37.9% vs. 34.0%), and a decrease in overall death (4.3% vs. 6.7%).

WSU assistant professor **Christine O'Neil** was one of seven researchers who examined data from electronic patient reports across the country for the study. Paramedics have often been encouraged not to treat patients with rapid AFib before they arrive at the hospital due to the increased risks for strokes and blood clots, she said.

"We were able to pull data from agencies that do treat AFib in the field and say this is actually beneficial for these patients that have had their heart rate lowered by paramedics," O'Neil said. "It reduces the amount of time they stay in the hospital and it actually reduces the mortality rate."

With more access to electronic records and patient outcome data, there are more opportunities for research in the emergency medical services realm, O'Neil said.

"It's a really cool time to be in EMS research because there's so much more information available to us," she said. "We can look at some of the things we're doing and see where we can make adjustments to improve patient care and patient outcomes. Because that's really why we do what we do."

GET TO KNOW THE OFFICE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY



Alex Babilis has taken the reins as executive director for the Office of Equal Opportunity. Babilis started at Weber State University in July 2022 as investigator and deputy Title IX coordinator. Before that, she served in the civil rights office for Salt Lake Community College and worked as an investigator of civil rights matters with the Utah Antidiscrimination and Labor Division.

Babilis said she is strongly committed to helping Weber State University provide an environment free from harassment and other forms of discrimination, "including creating awareness, increasing prevention initiatives and helping the campus community understand their options and provide supportive measures when an incident occurs."

She also wants to remind the WSU community that resources are available if they experience discrimination, and welcomes phone calls to discuss options (ex. 6239). People can also make a report with the OEO [online](#), by [email](#) or in person at the Miller Administration Building, Room 102.

"I understand working with the OEO can be intimidating – we will help you understand what options are available through our processes," Babilis said. "The OEO can address academic or safety concerns related to OEO matters through supportive measures and resolve issues through informal and formal processes. You do not need to participate in a formal process to receive supportive measures."

Weber State holds drive TO INCREASE COMMUNITY ACCESS TO BOOKS

Weber State University and the United Way of Northern Utah partnered for a book drive to improve literacy and access to books in the Ogden community.

Throughout December, the WSU community donated books written in both English and Spanish for the Little Neighborhood Libraries around Ogden. These mini libraries, small wooden boxes, are placed in neighborhoods where anyone can leave or take a book for free at any time.

The United Way of Northern Utah reported that nearly two-thirds of low-income families have no books, and more than half of Ogden School District third graders read below grade level.

"To know that so many children in our community don't have access to books is heartbreaking," said **Teresa Martinez**, student engagement coordinator for WSU's Center for Community Engaged Learning. "It's even more heartbreaking to know that some children don't have books in their native language. Our goal is to increase the community's access to books by getting our campus and community involved."



WELCOME TO WEBER STATE

Pam Allcott,
Dream Center

Christie Anderson,
Financial Aid & Scholarships

Kristi Bailey,
Nursing

Joel Berrien Jr.,
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Shawn Berry,
Institutional Effectiveness

Amber Bischoff,
Athletics Admin and Support

Makenzie Boatright,
Marketing & Communications

Patricia Borges,
Nursing

John Busby,
Facilities Management

Sari Byerly,
Associate Provost
Enrollment Services

Caitlin Campbell,
Nursing

Berta Cariman Olivares,
Facilities Management

Patrick Carr,
Marketing & Communications

Blake Dycus,
Facilities Management

Jonathan Gardner,
Facilities Management

Lane Goddard,
Facilities Management

Chris Jorgensen,
Purchasing

Craig Jorgensen,
University Police

Allison Lambert,
Center for Community
Engaged Learning

Hillaury McShane-Saravia,
Davis Campus

Carter Pasma,
Visual Arts

Hannah Perry,
IT Academic Support

Jeffrey Peterson,
Academic Technology Services

Bethany Powell,
Online & Continuing Education

Vanessa Randall,
Dumke College of Health
Professions

Rylin Roberts,
Athletics Admin and Support

Craig Salmond,
Academic Technology Services

Maryann Shale,
Center for Belonging &
Cultural Engagement

Avery Stuart,
University Police

Kaitlyn Trips,
Dumke College of Health
Professions

Madison Wall,
Dual Enrollment and Outreach

Clarissa White,
Financial Aid & Scholarships

Deborah Widmark,
Financial Aid & Scholarships

PROMOTED

Gavin Jensen,
Wildcat Stores

RETIRED

Heidi Munk,
Vice Pres for Info Tech

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