

# PERSPECTIVES

# FALL 2025

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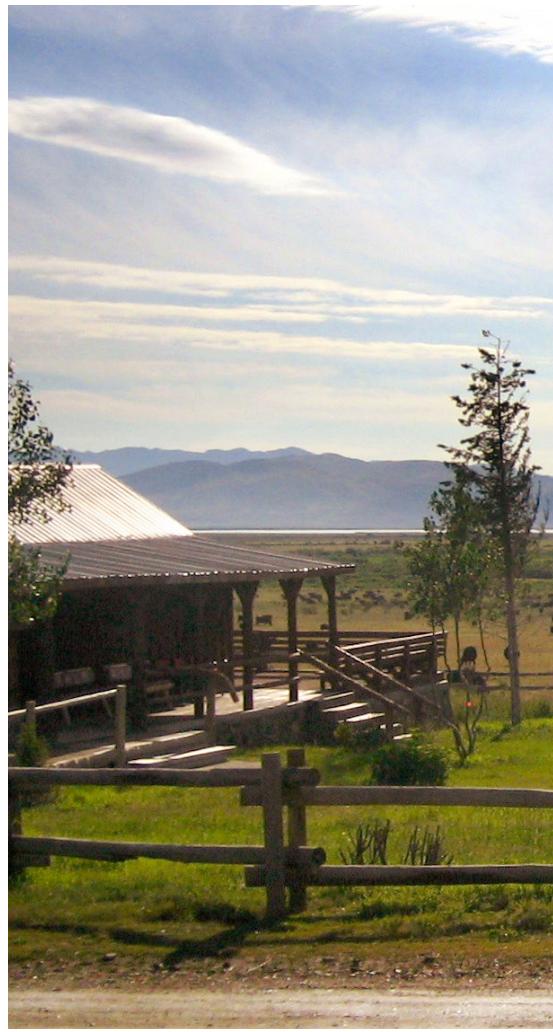
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## **“It Gives Me Back My Identity”: College of Humanities and the Utah Prison Education Project**

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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

# PERSPECTIVES



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# A Message from the Dean

Dear friends,

Welcome to the 2024–2025 issue of *Perspectives*, the College of Humanities annual magazine. The humanities are a driving force in our world, an invisible web connecting us with each other locally, nationally, and globally. The disciplines of the humanities animate every aspect of life, bringing centuries-old knowledge to illuminate the challenges we face today. From the traditional disciplines that many people first think of when they consider the humanities to innovative interdisciplinary collaborations, our work leaves an unmistakable imprint.

The skills that form the basis of humanistic study are the same ones the world most desperately needs right now. Close reading, contextually situating texts within broader contemporary or historical times and geographies, complex and nuanced analysis, oral and written communication skills that support reflection, understanding, and problem solving—these all make us better people, better prepared for careers, and also make us better at being human *together*.

As you explore this issue of *Perspectives*, I hope you recognize the force with which humanities both makes and moves our world. In these pages, we examine innovative research in Linguistics and Writing & Rhetoric Studies, consider the value of internships for humanities students and how our graduates succeed in the job market, and survey the richness of our academic centers within the ecosystems of the university and the community.

We immerse ourselves in the beauty and importance of poetry and contemplate how acts of art ground us in our humanity when we truly need it. We live by the ethos of sharing the power of humanities education with all who want it, and delve into the college's collaboration with the Utah Prison Education Project that offers hope and durable skills to people pursuing a degree while incarcerated. We celebrate the Department of Philosophy's new Medical Humanities major and study connections between medicine and humanistic inquiry.

We learn about the tremendous care and effort that goes into student success in our college, salute our faculty's research accomplishments, and hear from a distinguished alumna and an incredible graduating student about what their time in the College of Humanities has meant to them.

I have seen how this college upholds the essence of the humanities—critical thinking, synthesizing ideas, and bringing that knowledge into the world in meaningful and productive ways. As you explore these pages with us, we hope that you also feel the living, beating heart of the humanities driving us forward into the future together, embracing both the uncertainty and excitement we are guaranteed to find.

Sincerely,

**Wanda Pillow**

Dean, College of Humanities  
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Utah Prison Education Project students and instructors.

# “It Gives Me Back My Identity”

**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND THE UTAH PRISON EDUCATION PROJECT**

**Sumiko Martinez**



It gives me back my identity. In prison you're known by your last name, your number & your crime. In higher ed I'm known by my name, & by what I bring to the classroom.

## ENGAGING WITH THE HUMANITIES RESTORES A SENSE OF **SELF**, OF **IDENTITY**, OF **WORTH**

In a dehumanizing environment like a state correctional facility, chances to engage in the humanities are perhaps even more meaningful and essential. The Utah Prison Education Project (UPEP) has been at the University of Utah since it was co-founded by Erin Castro, associate professor of Educational Leadership & Policy and associate dean of College Access and Community Engagement, and a group of undergraduate students in the 2016-17 academic year. UPEP admitted its first cohort of degree-seeking students through the College of Humanities for the 2024-25 academic year. Says Castro, “I am incredibly proud of the Education Justice team here at the U

of U, our supportive colleagues across campus, and our courageous students. I am especially proud of our director, Dr. Andy Eisen, whose steadfast leadership (and patience!) made all of this come together.”

In the fall of 2024, a panel of faculty from the U and BYU as well as a UPEP alumnus, discussed the experience of teaching and learning in prison. Panelists included Leandra Hernandez, assistant professor of communication; Lindsey Drager, assistant professor of English; Matt Mason, professor of history at BYU; and Lia Olive, alum of both UPEP and the College of Humanities (Communication, 2025).

Olive considers her experience with UPEP to be the first time she had experienced rigorous, collaborative learning. “The instructor and all the TAs were different than my other instructors [from other universities]; UPEP staff and faculty seemed to care more about our learning than taking up seat hours,” she says. “At first, I thought that the

curriculum they taught us was ‘dumbed down’ because we were incarcerated...I learned quickly that the level of rigor that instructors brought into the prison was no different than what was being taught in traditional classes.” This approach was transformative for Olive, who credits UPEP with helping her develop a genuine love for knowledge and a continuous desire to learn.

Panelists discussed what inspired them to become involved with the Utah Prison Education Project. Hernandez, Drager, and Mason reflected on how teaching at the prison has impacted their teaching in traditional campus settings, and Olive shared how participating in the program prepared her for transitioning to life after incarceration. “Coming to a traditional college campus is difficult for anyone, but after doing 18 ½ years in prison with only two years of in-prison college classes under my belt, I was terrified,” remembers Olive. “But UPEP helped me understand that I am a scholar, I can do this, and that’s all that matters.”

Audience members participated in an active Q&A session, asking about ways to become involved in the project, how UPEP has grown and changed over time, and how censorship impacts teaching within prison settings. “Erin [Castro] was my doctoral student,” shares Wanda Pillow, dean of the College of Humanities, smiling. “Ever since her dissertation, she has been committed to opening access for all students. It has been so amazing to see this program that she co-founded become such a nationally-recognized force for good, and I’m so thrilled that our college is playing a role in that development.”

**“It gives me back my identity. In prison you’re known by your last name, your number, and your crime. In higher ed, I’m known by my name and by what I bring to the classroom.”**

—Anonymous Student

and learning. The skills and learning that is inherent in the dehumanization that is inherent in the criminal justice system. This is vital to enabling incarcerated individuals to successfully navigate their reentry.

It means the opportunity to learn while still locked up. Incarcerated;

#### “ALTHOUGH MY FREEDOM IS LIMITED, MY MIND AND THE ABILITY TO GROW IS NOT.”

Pamela Cappas-Toro, operations director for the forthcoming national center on prison education research and leadership and adjunct associate professor of world languages and cultures, elaborates on the structure of the new comprehensive humanities degree. “It’s a BA in University Studies with a concentration in the humanities, so we wanted to make sure students could have an experience across different departments in the college. They take courses in history, philosophy, writing studies, linguistics—the full range of the humanities,” she explains. “It’s not only the degree they are getting, it’s also a certificate in Professional and Technical Writing with courses across different disciplines.”

There are, to be sure, operational challenges to running such a project in the inherently restrictive setting of a prison. The bachelor’s degree program is rolling out slowly, offering first one, then two, and eventually three classes per semester in order to test out all the technology and give students a chance to get familiar with tools like Canvas. The environmental and security constraints mean that UPEP does not simply replicate the campus inside the prison classroom. Reflecting on her 15 years’ experience teaching in prisons in several states, Cappas-Toro says, “There’s a lot of possibility in what can happen inside, and a lot of creativity for instructors. You don’t have the same resources, you don’t have the same learners. You have a lot of adult learners with more lived experience, and that necessarily informs your teaching.”

Mike Middleton, associate dean of academic affairs at the College of Humanities, offers praise for the collaborative efforts to bring this degree program to fruition. “It is exciting to see this program continue to develop,” says Middleton. “UPEP does extraordinary work to make the program accessible and, over the last year, faculty from every department in the humanities have collaborated to help design and support a curriculum that combines the critical, self-reflective thinking that is the trademark of the humanities

UPEP students engage in a class session.



with practical, skills-oriented courses to help further expand futures available to UPEP students.”

Cappas-Toro also reflects on how her experiences teaching in prison classrooms have changed her pedagogical philosophy on campus, offering an example of the ways that standard syllabi can often be very punitive to students, such as automatic grade reductions for missing more than two classes in a semester. In the prison setting, says Cappas-Toro, “If there’s a lockdown and I can’t get inside to teach, I don’t want to penalize students for that. If students are late in the prison, it’s usually because something happened outside their control. If they have to decide between a visit with a family member and

your class, they’re going to choose their family member. The punitive training that we get when we’re in grad school—we start to unlearn that and apply that to our regular campus work.”

Leandra Hernandez, assistant professor of communication, taught a summer session of Intercultural Communication through UPEP, and agrees about the impact that stretches outside of the classroom. “Teaching with UPEP at the Utah Correctional Facility was such a meaningful experience. Given that the course ran for only six weeks, we became acquainted and close very quickly,” Hernandez says. “I also appreciate how well UPEP works to keep faculty members connected with students after the course ends.”

It gives me back my identity. In prison you’re known by your last name, your number & your crime. In higher ed I’m known by my name, & by what I bring to the

It means understanding my environment a little better. Humanities is what it means to be a human, and In my opinion it's a ~~not~~ different meaning. Being in here versus being out there. So if I can learn and gain more knowledge on ~~that~~ being human I am all in. I also think having a better understanding will help the Prison environment overall.

THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX IS AN INSTITUTION WHERE HUMAN BEINGS IN ACTION ARE VIEWED AS A THREAT. THE HUMANITIES HAS GIVEN THOSE IN HIGHER EDUCATION TO NOT BE AFRAID TO BE IN ACTION. IF EVERYTHING WE READ, THINK, CREATE, AND DO ADDS TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE; HAVING THE HUMANITIES IN THE PRISON ENVIRONMENT, REMINDS EACH OF US THAT WE CAN SURVIVE AND THRIVE EVEN IN THE STRUGGLE.

HUMANITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR TO A PLACE CREATED TO DESTROY THE HUMANITY OF INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS. THE DEPRIVATION OF INFORMATION AND THE EXTREME CONSCIOSHIP ASPIRATIONAL INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY, ULTIMATELY RIPPING THE HUMAN SOUL INTO A BLACK HOLE. INCARCERATION IS ANTI-LIVING ANTI-LIFE WHICH KILLS THE HUMAN SPIRIT.

If mean success, it means a future, it means... I love taking a course here because it shows me that I can make a beautiful change in such a dark place

It gives me back my identity. In prison you're known by your last name, your number & your crime. In higher ed I'm known by my name, & by what I bring to the classroom.

through end-of-term dinners at the correctional facility, which ensures continuity and meaningful faculty-student mentorship relationships."

Because of the nature of the program, interviews with current students are difficult to arrange. However, Cappas-Toro agreed to pose the question to her students: *what is it like to study the humanities in a dehumanizing environment?* Several students responded by sending handwritten notes, an implicit acknowledgement of the censorship and analog means with which they are permitted to work. Students wrote of how the humanities gave them hope for their own possible futures, of the inherent value and beauty of understanding the human condition, of the way engaging with the humanities restores a sense of self, of identity, of worth.

"If everything we read, think, create, and do adds to the human experience, having the humanities in the prison environment reminds each of us that we can survive and thrive even in the struggle," writes one anonymous student. "Humanities are essential in a place created to destroy the humanity of incarcerated individuals."

Compared to some of the technical training that is more commonly available in prison education programs, UPEP's humanities degree gives students a highly sought-after opportunity for freedom of expression. Students engage in meaningful work, such as creating a One-Stop-Shop Student Center within the prison, where they will run humanities programming for their peers; co-curating an exhibit with the Utah Museum of Fine Arts that will be on display at the prison in March; helping select a Sundance film to screen in January with Q&A with the filmmakers, and advising on the development of a Venture Course with Utah Humanities (UH).

Josh Wennergren, director of the Center for Educational Access at UH, says of the students in the program, "The first time I walked into that classroom, I had assigned a reading to do a little bit of teaching and give them a preview of what a Venture course experience looked like. I was absolutely blown away by the preparedness and amount of engagement that they brought to that discussion. It immediately showed me that there is such a hunger for this type of experience."

The capstone project for the degree entails a year-long class where students engage in deep study about anything they truly care about through a humanistic lens. Cappas-Toro says this flexibility is one of the reasons UPEP partnered with the College of Humanities; even before UPEP offered a full degree program, students had a high interest in enrolling in humanities courses.

**"It helps develop or strengthen our life skills and positive vision of ourselves that incarceration strips us of. Most importantly is removing the dehumanization that is inherent in the criminal justice system. This is vital to enabling incarcerated individuals to successfully navigate their reentry."**

—Anonymous Student

Students are enthusiastically tackling capstone projects about exercise and fitness programs, nonprofit management, entrepreneurship, and art, among others. It's a stark contrast to much of their daily lives inside the prison, characterized by routines of control and obedience, being told what to do and not having much say on the process.

And perhaps that is an answer to the original question; in a dehumanizing environment, studying the humanities is a means to practice intellectual freedom and choice in a way that is poignantly unavailable—for now—through any other means.

# The Human Condition:

## UTAH'S NEW MEDICAL HUMANITIES MAJOR

Robert Carson

For Jim Tabery, the connection between biology and philosophy wasn't an abstract academic exercise—it was a lived reality. As an undergraduate in the 1990s, Tabery majored in both disciplines. Even then, he sensed "the deep connections between scientific inquiry and

humanistic understanding," though there was little infrastructure for a student to explore these connections in a systematic way.

Today, as a professor in the Department of Philosophy and a member of the university's Center for Health Ethics, Arts, and Humanities,



## THE NEW MAJOR DEMONSTRATES THE NEED FOR THE HUMANITIES IN EVERY PROFESSION

Tabery advances the interdisciplinary vision that will launch the University of Utah's new Medical Humanities major in fall 2025. His own scholarship, examining the ethics of genetic research and DNA's role in criminal justice, demonstrates the deep connections of medical and philosophical questions in modern public life.

### MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND HUMANISTIC MEDICINE

According to Tabery, the concept of the *medical humanities* is less an adaptation of the humanities to pre-professionalism, than a reassertion of the humanities' authority on pivotal questions of life and death. From the ancient Greek theories of the four bodily "humors" and their corresponding temperaments, to contemporary bioethical inquiry into genetic engineering, the humanities have always been central to our understanding of embodied life. What constitutes the good life? How do we reconcile ideals of human autonomy and dependency? In making decisions about suffering and healing, what powers are given to expertise over intuition?

Likewise, the practice of medicine and medical research demand humanistic inquiry. "If you think of health care as humans giving care to humans, you need to think of the humans in that equation," explained Gretchen Case, director of the U's Center for Health Ethics, Arts, and Humanities (CHeEtAH), when presenting the major to the Academic Senate in December 2024. Case has championed this program alongside Tabery.

Medical professionals need the interpretive skills to read complex human situations, the ethical reasoning to navigate difficult decisions, and the capacity for empathy with radically different kinds of human experiences. These are precisely the competencies that humanities education cultivates through close reading, critical analysis, and rigorous scrutiny of meaning and value in human culture.

### HUMANITIES KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ETHOS

The new Medical Humanities major organizes its curriculum around four core areas, each addressing essential dimensions of health care's human dimensions. *Arts and Letters* explores the rich literary and artistic archives that illuminate medical thought and experience. *Culture and Communication* examines human behavior as it relates to medical questions, developing nuanced communication skills essential in both patient care and research. *Ethics and Epistemology* encompasses the philosophical foundations of medical practice and inquiry, while *Gender, Ethnicity, and Disability Studies* tracks the social dimensions of medical issues, examining how identity and inequality shape health outcomes.

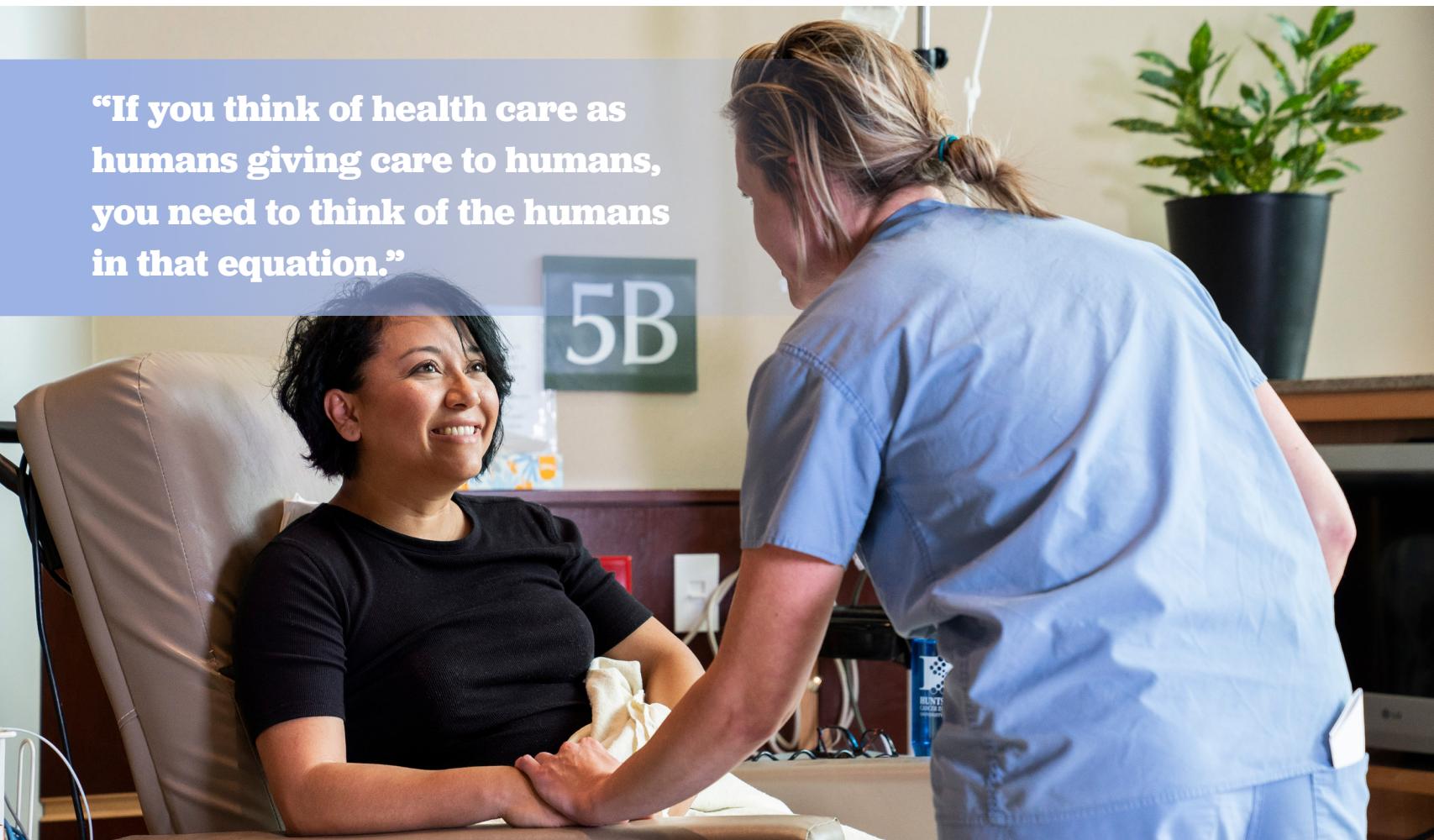
Together, these areas provide what Tabery identifies as the knowledge, skills, and ethos appropriate to the major. The curriculum ensures that no student can earn a degree by sticking closely to one discipline. Instead, students "must engage across multiple humanistic approaches."

### FROM MINOR TO MAJOR

The major emerges from years of groundwork. The medical humanities minor was a collaborative effort including Tabery, Stuart Culver, Kim Kaphingst, and philosophy chairs, Matt Haber and Eric Hutton. At the same time, Case's Center for Health Ethics, Arts, and Humanities has been fostering connections between medicine and the humanities at the U since 1989. With philosophers Natalia Washington, Margaret Battin, and Madison Kilbride, Tabery and Case all together formed the committee to develop the major.

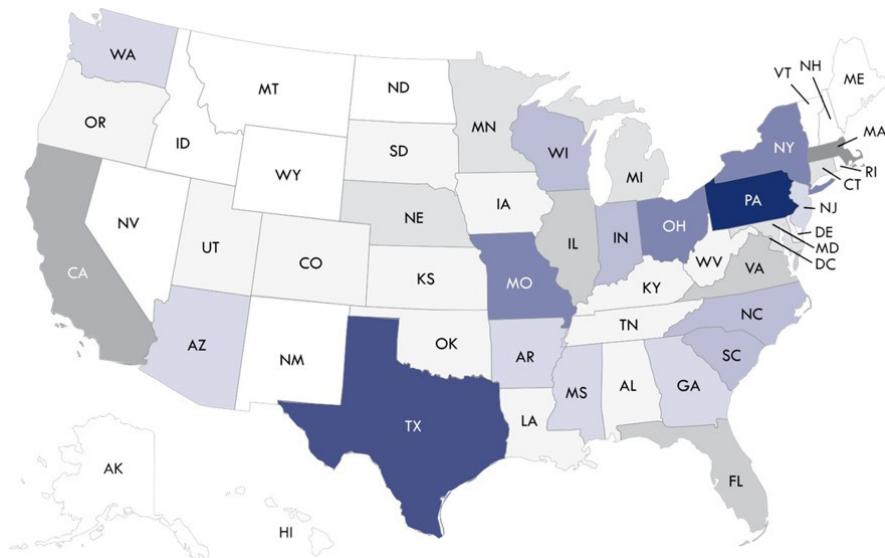
The proposal has earned extraordinary campus support. "If anything, people are asking why we're just now doing this," Tabery notes. "Why didn't we do this 10 years ago?" The College of Social

**“If you think of health care as humans giving care to humans, you need to think of the humans in that equation.”**



Huntsman Cancer Institute infusion nurse comforts female patient.

and Behavioral Sciences' Health, Society & Policy program has provided crucial backing, and dozens of faculty across campus are prepared to teach courses for the major. The Department of Philosophy's expanded advising team, including Connie Corbett and Lex Putnam, are helping students navigate the new major across different U divisions.



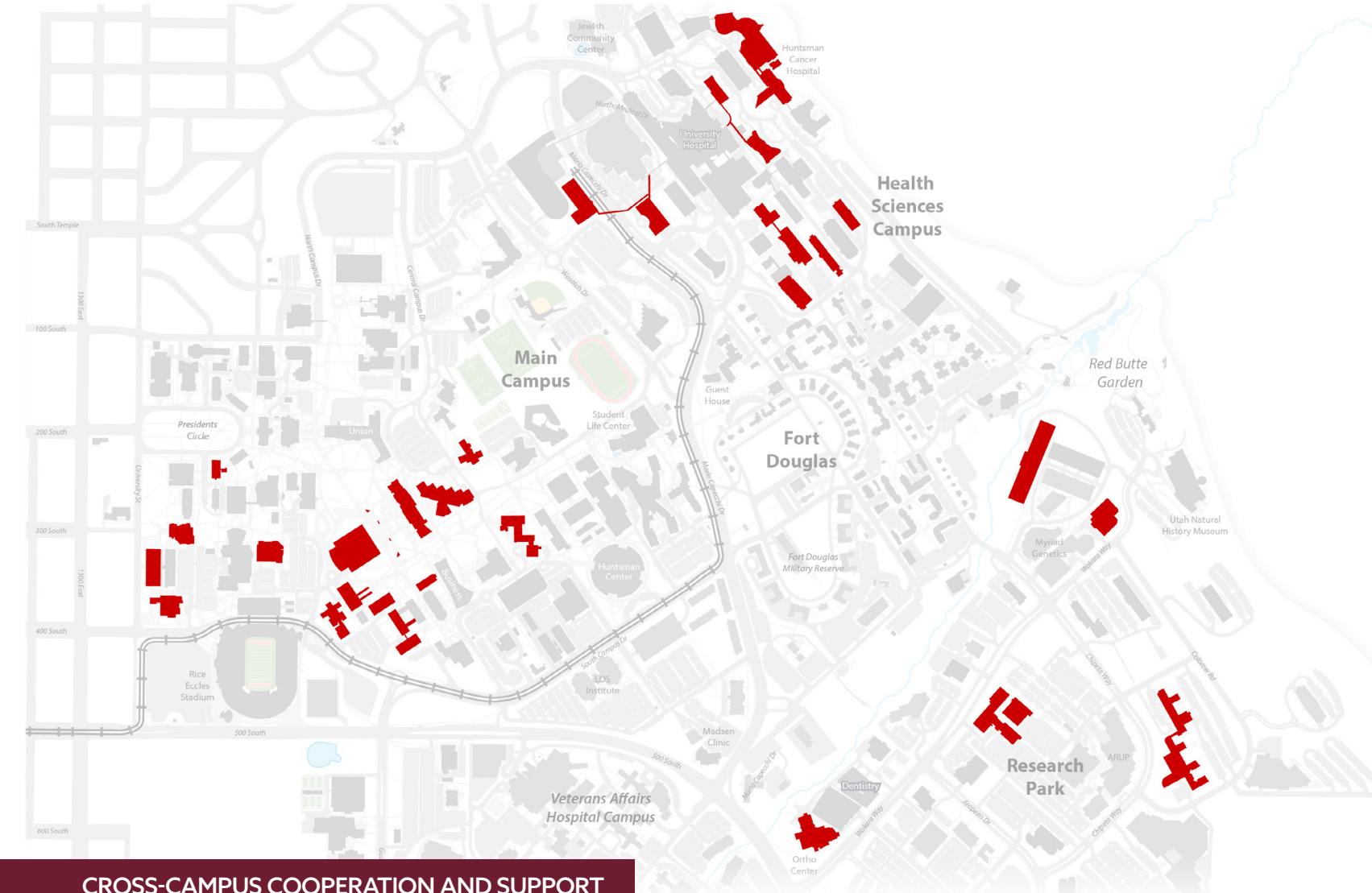
Utah has a unique opportunity in a desert of Medical Humanities programs. Map depicts states with highest (blue) and lowest (white) quantity of existing Medical Humanities programs.

Mike Middleton, associate dean of academic affairs in the College of Humanities, emphasizes the major's natural evolution from the successful interdisciplinary work by the committee and CHeEtAH: "Given student interest and positive collaborations across multiple colleges, it matured to the level that will support a major." The role of the College of Humanities has been to support the "awesome work" of Tabery, Case, and their collaborators.

### A MODEL FOR THE INTERMOUNTAIN WEST

Looking ahead, the program fills a significant regional gap. Currently, medical humanities majors are regionally concentrated at institutions like Harvard, Brown, and the University of Chicago. The Intermountain West has been, in Tabery's words, "a desert" in this field.

In her external review, Sarah Berry, co-president of the Health Humanities Consortium, affirmed Utah's position to make nationally distinctive contributions. The program's unique focus on arts and humanities disciplines—with both BA and BS degree options—would make it only the seventh



# Curiosity and the Love of Learning

## THE TANNER HUMANITIES CENTER'S YEAR-IN-REVIEW



THE **FREEDOM** TO SEARCH  
IS PART AND PARCEL OF THE  
SEARCH FOR FREEDOM



### ATTENDANCE

# 1,605

Tanner Talks &  
Conversation  
Attendees

# 521

National Theatre  
Live Attendees

# 274

Fellows' Work-  
in-Progress Talks  
Attendees

### FELLOWSHIPS

# 10

Fellows

# 7

Disciplines

### THE VIRTUAL JEWEL BOX PODCAST

# 11

Episodes

# 774

Downloads

### TANNER BOOK CLUB

*Mrs. Dalloway*  
*Virginia Woolf*

*A Passage to India*  
*E.M. Forster*

*Middlemarch*  
*George Eliot*

*Anna Karenina*  
*Leo Tolstoy*

### A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Scott Black**  
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH



In his introduction to his mother's autobiography, Obert C. Tanner writes of Annie Clark Tanner's "deep satisfaction in learning; her joy with books and lectures; and her search for knowledge about the world, the causes of events, the motives of people, and scientific explanations. With religious devotion she loved and sought the truth with all her mind and all her soul. And in this quest for truth, her children came to believe with her, that a university was the noblest creation of man."

Though a devout man, Obert Tanner celebrates the formative influence of his mother's devotion not to religion but to her search for truth, for knowledge about causes, motives, and explanations. It is her curiosity, he writes, her search for knowledge and the way her love for truth is bound up with the quest for it, that is her gift to her children. Obert Tanner subtitled his own autobiography, *In Search of Freedom*, and his story shows how the two are intimately connected: the freedom to search is part and parcel of the search for freedom. At the heart of his life project is the love of knowledge, and the place dedicated to that quest for freedom and the freedom to ask questions, the place formed by curiosity, is a university.

In my first year as director of the Tanner Humanities Center, I have found myself thinking often about Obert Tanner's vision of the importance of education and the humanities. With our public programming

and support for innovative scholarship, we've sustained and strengthened his legacy of cultivating the curiosity and love of learning that are at the heart of the university.

Here a few highlights of our year. We introduced a new model of collaborative fellowships, Tanner Labs, which offer spaces for shared, interdisciplinary, and experimental work in the humanities. Each Tanner Lab funds a team of researchers for two years to develop an innovative research project that experiments with newly emerging theoretical questions, research methods, pedagogical practice, and models of public engagement. We renewed our partnership with the U's excellent Mormon Studies program and relaunched the popular Sterling M. McMurrin Lecture on Religion and Culture. We offered a public Evening with Great Books event featuring faculty from the College's exciting interdisciplinary course. We formed a new Tanner Book Club that brings readers from across the community together to discuss classic literature. And last but not least, we developed a podcast, *The Virtual Jewel Box*, which provides broader public access to conversations with our invited guests, fellows, and faculty.

I am proud of what the Tanner has accomplished this year, and look forward to working alongside our friends and colleagues across the university and the community to continue this wonderful legacy.



# Students as Scholars:

## UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH IN LINGUISTICS

**Shavauna Munster**

Students seeking an undergraduate degree in linguistics analyze data sets, scrutinize syntax, and discuss semantics. However, when attending the Department of Linguistics at the University of Utah, students can expect an experience enriched with exposure to a wide range of languages and dialects, participation in cutting-edge faculty research experiments, and consideration as a fellow scholar. Says Aaron Kaplan, professor and chair of linguistics, “If you’re interested in language, the linguistics department has something for you, whether you want to become an ESL instructor, improve how technology uses language, or something else.”

The University of Utah is an R1 institution, a designation of “very high research activity” attributed to only 146 of the nation’s 2,000+ higher education institutions. Though public perception may focus primarily on the research

contributions of faculty and graduate students, the Department of Linguistics demonstrates that undergraduate students are accomplished scholars in their own right. With student engaged research driving key department initiatives, linguistics majors often perform advanced research alongside faculty mentors, present at conferences, and apply for grants—all while completing their undergraduate degrees.

While students at other institutions may receive hands-on training, Rachel Hayes-Harb, professor of linguistics, notes, “Our focus is having our students, especially our undergraduate students, publish with us while developing and celebrating their expertise as actual scholars so that we break down barriers of who is a scholar and who isn’t.” For students hoping for research experience, Aniko Csirmaz, associate professor of linguistics, points to the abundant opportunities available at the U as particularly expansive for students. “Students gain hands-on experience in field methods courses,” explains Csirmaz, “and also have the opportunity for hands-on work that is not restricted to extra credit opportunities.”

The attention to student scholarship and engagement begins in the classroom with the

Shannon Barrios (left) and Rachel Hayes-Harb (right) in the Speech Acquisition Lab.

department’s research engaged faculty. Bolognese, Catalan, Rastafarian, Igbo, Indo-Aryan, Swahili—are just a few languages and dialects studied by the linguistics faculty. Professors who perform research while teaching offer valuable exposure for students to participate in languages they may not have experienced otherwise. For example, in syntax courses, students identify interesting phenomena and patterns across languages—they may be given a sentence from Mandarin and Bulgarian to compare to English to identify patterns. “At the end of the semester students can explain various aspects of that language,” explains Csirmaz. This exposure expands concepts of possibility and feeds into potential research opportunities alongside professors.

Tannen Jones, a linguistics alum (HBA ’24) loved her experience as an undergraduate researcher. Working alongside Kaplan and Edward Rubin, associate professor of linguistics, Jones worked on phonological research investigating Bolognese—an understudied minority Gallo-Italic language in the Bologna region of Italy. Reflecting on the senior year she spent on the project, Jones says, “The research was partly about preservation—documenting languages where there are not a lot of speakers left—but also about what phonological phenomena in minority languages can potentially teach us about how the brain works and how these different things can happen across different contexts.” The research eventually formed the data set for Jones’ honors thesis. Says Jones, “It was really different—most of the papers for regular classes, we would get a data set presented to us and we’d be assigned to figure out something specific. So this was cool—like a sneak preview of what it’s like to be a linguistics scholar.”

The Speech Acquisition Lab is another prime spot for undergrads to research alongside professors. “In our lab, we study speech perception and accentism, language bias in the context of sound features of peoples voices and how that effects the ways people move through the world,” explains Hayes-Harb, co-director of the lab. “We drive the set of questions, but we collaborate to extend to new languages that students may have interest in.”

The goal of the Speech Acquisition Lab is not just student-professor collaboration, but allowing students to make meaningful contributions to research and graduate with the ability to articulate those contributions. Accessibility to these opportunities is at the forefront of student engagement in the

**“We are always looking for ways to make research a part of students’ path to a degree, not an extra activity disconnected from your major.”**

department. Co-directors of the Speech Acquisition Lab, Shannon Barrios and Hayes-Harb, are piloting a credit-based structure to ensure the hands-on experience of the lab counts towards students’ degrees. As Kaplan puts it, “We are always looking for ways to make research a part of students’ path to a degree, not an extra activity disconnected from your major.”

Barrios and Hayes-Harb were recently awarded a Spencer Foundation Racial Equity Grant to expand their research into accentism and continue their extensive collaboration with undergrads. The grant will support ongoing research and provide students with opportunities to present their work at conferences and co-author studies with faculty. Says Barrios, “This is a game-changer for us. It allows us to honor the work of our undergraduate collaborators by providing them with funding and taking them to conferences.”

Through interactions with professors in professional settings such as the Speech Acquisition Lab, and informal meetings with the S-Group, the Department of Linguistics shows how an R1 institution can really engage undergrads. The S-Group, an informal meeting of faculty, graduates, and undergraduates, is an opportunity for students to ask questions outside of class, further explore topics in which they have interest, and find potential mentors and collaborators. “We are a scholarly discipline and the best thing we can offer our students is meaningful engagement with the actual scholarship of a research one institution,” states Hayes-Harb.

Undergraduate student collaboration and dismantling perceptions of who can contribute to leading research is highly valued in the Department of Linguistics. Says Kaplan, “Linguists are lucky. We encounter more data in overheard conversations as we walk across campus than we could ever possibly analyze, and our research doesn’t always require expensive specialized equipment. We want to share the excitement of that research with our students.” For students whose goal is to contribute to innovative research, collaborate with faculty, and articulate scholarship—the department is waiting.

EXPECT AN EXPERIENCE  
ENRICHED WITH  
EXPOSURE



# Careers with Humanities Degrees:

**IMAGINATIVE ASSEMBLY REQUIRED**

**Sumiko Martinez**

Two decades ago as an undergraduate, I switched my major from biology/pre-med to English literature. My family had some...questions. Of course, I really mean The Question: "What are you going to do with an English degree?" I know I'm not alone in this experience. As college education becomes more expensive and economic prospects feel more unstable, the central question sometimes becomes simply, "Can you get a decent job with a degree in the humanities?" (Spoiler alert: yes.)

Underlying The Question are so many worries, so much love. Will you be able to survive? To thrive? Will you be able to make a life that is satisfying and rewarding? Will this choice foreclose options or open the door to more possibilities for your future? What will your job look like? To my mostly blue-collar family, the prospect of a foggy, unclear career path seemed more daunting than a clear path littered with steep obstacles; what is unfamiliar is scary.

Twenty years ago, I did not appreciate the subtext of love, nor did I know how to respond to the sort of care that arises from fear. I merely found the question irritating, and I'm sure I had a flippant canned response: "We all have to speak and write and read. I'll do whatever I want with it!" (I know. I'm also cringing at my 19-year-old self.)

Fortunately for me and so many others, studying the humanities opened many doors to career options. Degrees in the humanities provide an incredibly expansive set of possibilities, and although my English literature degree did not lead directly to an easily-recognizable career path, it has been an incredibly satisfying, challenging, and meaningful journey so far.

When I asked College of Humanities' career coaches, Dan Moseson and Giovanna Percontino, for a smattering of the careers that our recent

## INTERNSHIPS ARE A WAY TO KNOCK ON THE DOOR

graduates have entered, here are a few that they sent me: global compliance analyst, team leader, grants and community engagement specialist, assistant communication director, audio engineer, management training specialist, video production assistant, program manager, and protocol coordinator. Graduates are working at a variety of organizations, ranging from the United Nations General Assembly to Goldman Sachs and from the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition to Sinclair Broadcasting.

Many students are also continuing into graduate education in the U.S. and abroad, moving on to pursue law school, master's degree, and doctoral programs in several fields.

The real challenge, as it turns out, is not simply finding a job when you graduate with a humanities degree; it's narrowing down the vast range of options.

### TEST DRIVING CAREERS WITH INTERNSHIPS

The College of Humanities has invested a lot in helping students to navigate the winnowing process, starting with the way we define student success. Karen Marsh Schaeffer, director of student success in the College of Humanities, says, "Courses across campus, co-curricular experiences, and extra-curricular activities all help students integrate the skills they are learning into a toolkit for their futures. Our student success team supports students as they identify their path through school and possible trajectories after graduation."

The college's creation of a Student Success Hub in 2022, along with the addition of a specialized Associate Director of Internships & Career Success, has played a key role. Educating students about careers and internships through short

**“The real challenge, as it turns out, is not simply finding a job when you graduate with a humanities degree; it’s narrowing down the vast range of options.”**

informational videos, classroom presentations, individual appointments to discuss personalized options, and guidance from advisors and career coaches across departments has also contributed to this growth.

This infrastructure has allowed College of Humanities students to experience the transformative power of internships in greater numbers than ever before. Internships, often a staple of a student's college experience, can be uniquely memorable but inaccessible to some students due to the time commitment and unpaid work that is often expected. The College of Humanities is working to dismantle the barriers to participation in internships. During the 2024–25 academic year, 60% of humanities students participating in internships have a paid position. The college is offering targeted support in finding paid internships, knowing that paid positions make these opportunities available to a broader range of students.

Cameron Vakilian, the associate director of internships and career success in the College of Humanities, credits this increase in part to the StepUp Fund, an innovative financial support that allows the university to fill in the gap for unpaid internships. “We’ve also had stronger partnerships with internship programs like the Hinckley Institute for Politics and the Goff Strategic Leadership Institute,” says Vakilian. “Our dedicated career coaches give students more access to direct coaching, and our partnership with U Career Success helps humanities students land internship placements through a huge network of employer relationships.”

Vakilian emphasizes the value of internships, even when they don’t go as expected. “Internships are a way to knock on the door, and once you’re in, they



*Employer Gray Media visits the College of Humanities to connect with students.*

can really help you move forward in your career,” he says. “They’re also really helpful for students to find out what you don’t like as a new professional, before you have to commit to a full-time job.”

It’s all paying off for students. Approximately half of humanities grads complete an internship during their time at the U, and this year, 272 students completed internships for credit—the most successful year so far. Students interned at a wide range of businesses and nonprofits: the Incheon Free Economic Zone Global Center in South Korea, SLUG Magazine, Broadway Media, the Disney College Program, Salt Lake Magazine, the Natural History Museum, Hill Aerospace Museum, KSL, ABC4, KUER, the Zero Fatalities Campaign, and Interfaith America.

Students are responding well to the experiences. Daphne Garcia, a communication major who interned with Ban Law Office in the fall, says her coursework helped to prepare her for success in her internship: “The soft skills necessary to be an advocate, such as people skills, have been strengthened by the hard skills I’ve learned in Public Speaking, Strategic Communication, Media Writing, Advocacy & Change, and Quantitative Communication Research.” Employers with University of Utah student interns receive guidance to help them structure their internships in a productive and positive way. Likewise, employers overwhelmingly report having positive experiences with humanities interns.

Ultimately, the increase in internships means more undergraduates reaping the career benefits of internships during their educational experiences. “Our students develop skills through humanities courses and programs that make them valuable for employers,” says Marsh Schaeffer. “Internships are a great way for students to apply these skills, experience the workplace environment, and discover the types of careers that they can thrive in. Completing an internship can be vital to transitioning into the professional space and give students the initial boost they need to be successful.”

### LAUNCHING CAREERS

Regardless of whether students complete an internship during their undergraduate years, humanities students take their unique educational backgrounds with them into an impressive variety of fields. “Studies show humanities majors have the kinds of critical thinking skills, writing skills, and ability to make an argument grounded in evidence that match the needs of the 21st century job market,” notes professor and former chair of the history department, Paul Reeve.

Belying the myth of the eternally broke humanities major, data from a variety of sources indicate that students with degrees in these disciplines do quite well economically throughout their careers. Data from the American Academy

of Arts & Sciences shows the median salary for Utahns with undergraduate degrees in the humanities is 62% higher than the median salary for their peers with a high school diploma, and even those in the bottom quartile out-earn their high school educated peers by several thousand dollars per year. Graduates with an advanced degree in the humanities see a further 37% increase, with median earnings of \$84,940.

While salary data are significant, they are far from the only relevant assessments of value. The National Humanities Alliance tracks comparisons of humanities students relative to their peers on a variety of measures such as gains in writing and critical thinking, job satisfaction for post-graduates, and civic engagement. Nearly across the board, humanities grads rank at or near the top.

Humanities graduates spend years dedicating themselves to the practice of seeing the world more deeply, weaving the skills of critical analysis and synthesis into not only their academic work, but their everyday lives. This impact of this immersive, slow transformation ripples out over the course of a lifetime—decisions made more thoughtfully, relationships handled with more care, conflicts approached with more integrity and insight, questions answered with more nuance and context. Immeasurable impacts, simultaneously mundane and profound.

# Charting Student Success in the Humanities

Student Success has been a major focus for the College of Humanities over the last few years. Fundraising efforts for the creation of a Humanities Student Success Hub and the hiring of a Director of Student Success and Engagement have moved the needle for our students. In the past two years the humanities major numbers have grown, especially for students with a second major or with a humanities minor. Students are discovering the skills that set them up for success—critical thinking, effective communication, and global competence—are emphasized in our disciplines.

We have strengthened relationships with campus partners like U Career Success, Student Success Coaches, and the LAS Navigate Advising Hub to give our students a wrap-around approach to support services. Our emergency fund has kept students enrolled and able to focus on their schooling and university resources like the Center for Student Access and Resources, the Center for Disability and Access, and the University Counseling Center have all contributed to our students' ability to thrive on campus. Since 2023, we have seen a relaunch of Humanities Scholars, a revival of the

Humanities Student Council, and the creation of a Humanities Ambassador program. Starting in summer 2024, our social media and web news feed began sharing student stories and experiences leading to an increased sense of belonging and engagement in the college and at the university. Participation in internships, research, leadership, and community engagement have all increased as students see the opportunities and impact they can have through their studies and beyond.



**272** Students completed internships for credit



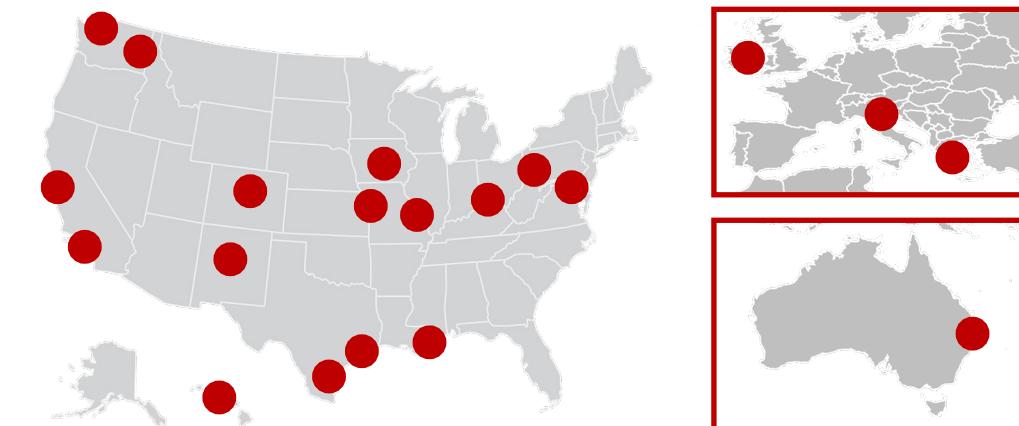
**60%** of internships for the year were paid

## WHERE ARE HUMANITIES STUDENTS INTERNING?

Incheon Free Economic Zone Global Center  
SLUG Magazine  
Broadway Media  
Disney College Program

Salt Lake Magazine  
Natural History Museum  
Hill Aerospace Museum  
KSL

ABC4  
KUER  
Zero Fatalities Campaign  
Interfaith America



## STUDENTS PRESENTED THEIR RESEARCH AT CONFERENCES

American Association for Applied Linguistics  
Conference on College Composition and Communication  
International Communication Association Conference  
International Conference on Agroforestry  
Oral History Association Annual Conference  
Southwest Conference on Latin American Studies  
Uehiro Graduate Student Conference

**101** Students SUMMER 2024  
**28** Students FALL 2024  
**36** Students SPRING 2025

According to the Office of Global Engagement, the College of Humanities had the 2nd highest Learning Abroad participation in 2024.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION



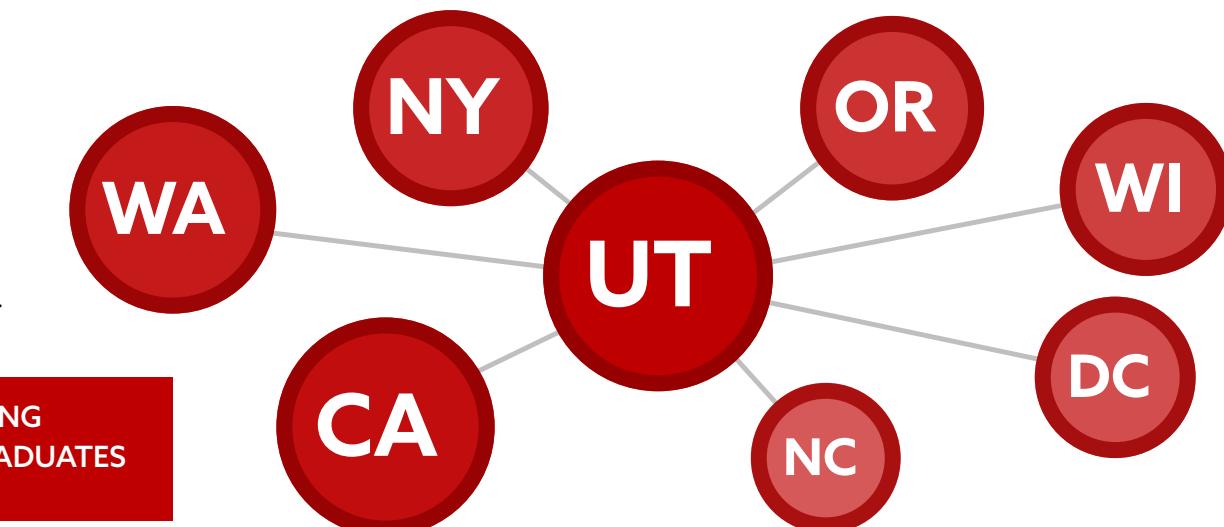
**12.3%**

Graduating undergraduates going directly to graduate programs

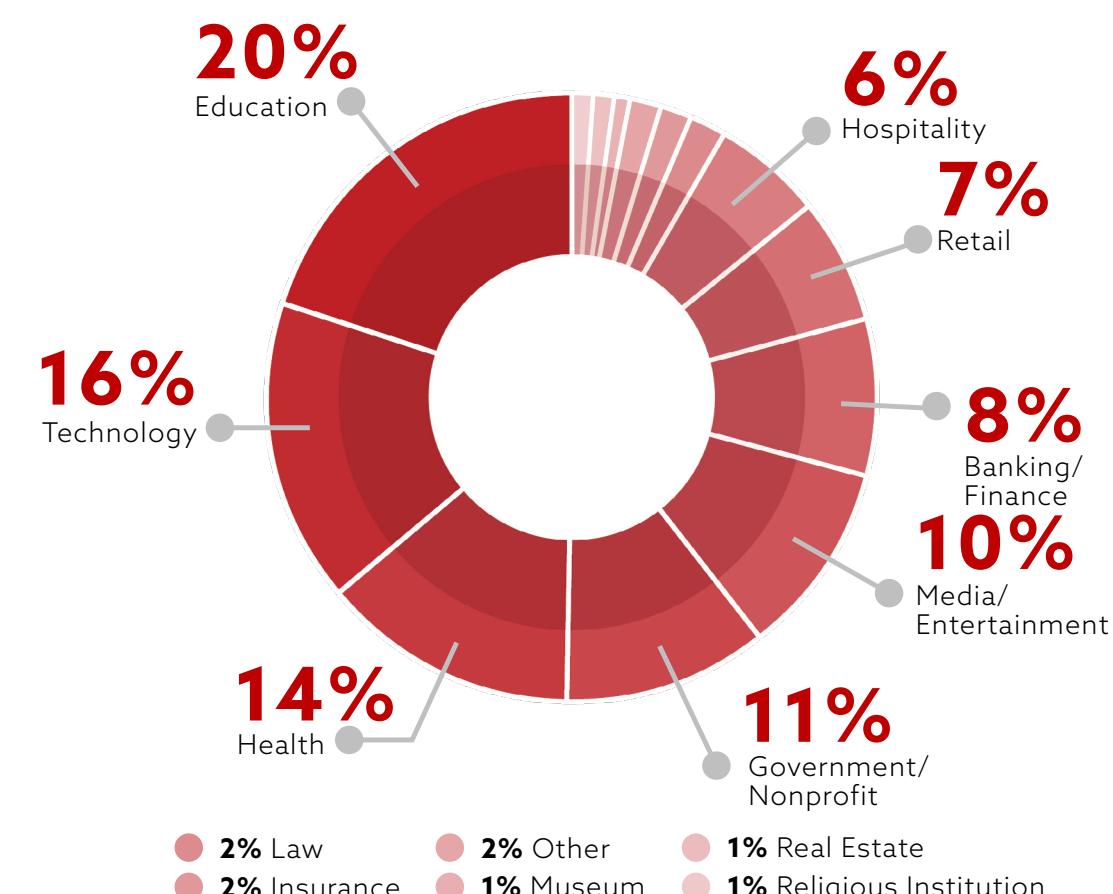


**14.4%**

Graduating master's students going directly to further education



## INDUSTRIES HIRING HUMANITIES GRADUATES



# Writing Revolution

## THE DEPARTMENT OF WRITING & RHETORIC STUDIES RE-DEFINES STUDENT SUCCESS

Sumiko Martinez

Call to mind a “typical” university class, and you may very well imagine rows of students in high-ceilinged lecture halls, absorbing knowledge from professors at the front of the room, and hoping they can remember it long enough for exams. But walk into the Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies at the University of Utah, and you’ll find something radically different: undergrads co-authoring books with professors, presenting research at national conferences, and fundamentally reshaping how academia understands the very communities they come from.

Christie Toth, an associate professor in the department, has spent the last decade building Writing Studies Scholars, a unique program where transfer students from Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) study academic writing and become co-researchers investigating their own experiences with navigating the complicated terrain of four-year universities. Students receive scholarship support to make the leap from SLCC to the U affordable. She has worked alongside more than 65 undergraduate research collaborators since 2015, most of whom bring perspectives that traditional academic research has long overlooked.

“Transfer students are the experts on their own experience,” Toth explains. “I do better research, but also much better program development and teaching, if I’m continuously collaborating with them.”



Rachel Bryson with student co-presenters at CCCC 2025.

## RESHAPE THE WORLD THROUGH WORDS

Toth and her student co-authors have published a book with the National Council of Teachers of English, presented at dozens of regional and national conferences, and produced a special issue of *Teaching English in a Two-Year College* that includes a symposium piece written entirely by students.

The research emerging from these collaborations is changing how the field understands community college and transfer student experiences.

Chloe Summers, a senior minoring in writing and rhetoric studies who aspires to work in publishing, has worked with Toth on research about SLCC students’ perspectives on what knowledge, qualities, and practices make community college literacy professors effective.

Although Summers was first drawn to the research “for the credits and because my class schedule for Fall 2024 fell apart,” she says, “this research became so much more. Now I see the benefit in improving how professors teach by having their teaching better fit the way students are learning, especially post-COVID.”

As part of the research group who presented alongside Toth at the 2025 Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) Conference in Baltimore, Summers feels most proud of that accomplishment: “I felt that I was a part of a bigger movement to improve the educational systems in our country. Higher education is not perfect, but I am proud to fight any way I can for it to become better and stronger.”

### DECONSTRUCTING THE IVORY TOWER

Traditional models of undergraduate research often exclude the very students who might benefit most. As Toth notes, these programs historically catered to students “who were on campus a lot, didn’t have other jobs, could take temporary or unpaid work, didn’t need the academic credit.”

Toth’s approach flips this dynamic. Her collaborators include first-generation college students, parents, neurodivergent learners, and students from historically underrepresented backgrounds—precisely the populations who have been less likely to have been included in rigorous undergraduate research. Rather than asking these students to conform to existing academic structures, Toth has built a program that meets students where they are.

One such student is Henry Knudson, who works full time in the U’s Income Accounting department in addition to pursuing his bachelor’s degree. He was part of the Writing Studies Scholars and is now a key co-researcher with Toth’s speculative fiction project.

Speculative fiction (spec-fic for short), a broad genre that includes all sorts of non-mimetic fiction such as fantasy, sci-fi, and futuristic writing, is particularly interesting to Knudson. He came of age amidst an upswell in dystopian fiction with all its attendant despair, noting that while it was “not unjustifiable...things aren’t going super well... but it has a lethargy effect.” This project engages students to think specifically about barriers they have experienced in their own educational paths, then use spec-fic writing as a tool to imagine positive alternative futures.

Knudson was drawn to writing and rhetoric studies for the way faculty encouraged him to write as far as his imagination would go, unconstrained by genre or convention. He says, “When I am able to write, I’m open to more potential in my life than I would otherwise be able to dream. For me, writing is how I miss people who are gone, and it’s how I imagine a future that I struggle to think I deserve. It’s one of the ways I can really connect with the love for the people around me.”

The impact extends far beyond individual student success stories. When transfer students in Toth’s classes read work produced by other transfer students who became co-researchers, it “opens up possibilities and helps them see that

**“For me, writing is how I miss people who are gone, and it’s how I imagine a future that I struggle to think I deserve.”**

it is a real thing that they can do.” The program creates what Toth calls a “crew,” building social ties between students that support the entire cohort in their academic pursuits in ways that individual mentorship never could.

### THE RIPPLE EFFECT

This collaborative approach is typical in writing and rhetoric studies. According to Jenny Andrus, professor and chair of the department, the faculty regularly involve students in research, particularly in what she calls “the study of student-ness.” Rachel Bryson has co-presented with students at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, one of the field’s premier gatherings. Maureen Mathison is working with an undergraduate and graduate student co-researcher, examining the influence of rhetoric on the transformation of a technical subdiscipline within writing studies. Students aren’t just learning about research; they’re actively participating in the scholarly conversations that shape their field.

The department’s commitment to student-centered pedagogy extends to its massive first-year writing program, which serves thousands of students annually across required composition courses. In Fall 2024 alone, there were 3,498 undergraduate students enrolled in writing and rhetoric studies classes. With class sizes capped at 27 or fewer, the program prioritizes human connection within learning communities. As Andrus puts it, “One of the most important things we do in writing is know our students.”

The small class sizes allow students to “actually make friends and feel like people, feel seen, feel recognized,” which Andrus points out are critical factors consistently linked to retention and academic success. For many first-year students, a writing class may be their only small discussion-based class, making it a crucial site for building the relationships that sustain college success.

In this context, the department’s emphasis on process, collaboration, and human connection takes on new significance as generative AI

transforms how students approach writing. Rather than banning AI tools, some faculty are experimenting with what Andrus calls “AI-defeating pedagogy,” breaking writing assignments into process-based components that require sustained development of their ideas over time.

She says, “What I know from experience is that if you teach students process—how to come up with ideas, how to draft ideas, how to do research, how to revise—if you work on the content, if you work on making the argument, then as they go over and over and over their text (which is best practice), that sentence-level grammatical understanding and paragraph-level technique comes on its own.”

“Many of us use AI to teach invention,” Andrus notes, but the goal is helping students use writing as a tool to develop their own thinking, rather than outsourcing their intellectual engagement to AI. This approach seems to be reducing student anxiety around writing while preserving the cognitive and metacognitive benefits of truly working through the process.

#### REDEFINING ACADEMIC VALUE

What makes this model particularly striking is how it challenges fundamental assumptions about who creates knowledge and whose perspectives matter in academic research. Toth describes her favorite aspect of co-researching with undergraduates: “They are not beholden to the same audiences in the same ways that I am.” While she’s been trained to write for narrow academic audiences, her student collaborators push her toward accessibility and innovation.

“Students often don’t want to be academics,” she explains. “They push me to think about ways to write for a wider audience, push me to do the research in more poly-vocal ways.” Toth aims to create space for writing that “looks like them.”

This collaborative approach is producing genuinely novel scholarship. Toth is currently working on two book projects with undergraduate co-authors: one focusing on graduate education for future community college teachers, and another that uses speculative fiction to imagine “more hopeful futures for lifelong literacy learning.”

#### A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

The department’s approach offers a compelling alternative to the increasingly transactional nature of higher education. By treating students as intellectual partners, writing and rhetoric studies faculty create the conditions for the kind of transformative learning that students are seeking.

The model is particularly important as higher education grapples with questions of access, fairness, and relevance. When transfer students who often face the greatest barriers to academic success become co-researchers investigating their own experiences, the resulting knowledge serves not just academic ends but community needs. From Toth’s perspective, these students often “appreciate the opportunity to speak back to a system that has sometimes caused harms and otherwise is just not built for them.”

As one student wrote to Andrus after taking a challenging discourse analysis course, the class helped her understand “what the effects of language were”—a recognition that writing isn’t just a skill but an exercise of power. Since, as Andrus puts it, “everybody writes, in every single field, all the time,” this kind of critical awareness becomes not just academic knowledge but a tool for navigating and potentially transforming the world. In an extraordinarily student-centered college, Andrus unequivocally states, “We make sure that we are teaching writing for the student. The student always comes first.”

The quiet revolution happening in writing and rhetoric studies isn’t just about better pedagogy or more inclusive research practices. It’s about reimagining what universities can be when they take seriously their commitment to student success, not just as measured by graduation rates or job placement, but as the development of students’ capacity to understand, critique, and reshape the world through words.

*Programs like the Writing Studies Scholars wouldn’t be possible without support from individual donors and partners like the Lawrence T. and Janet T. Dee Foundation. Your donations have a powerful impact on students’ lives.*

# Pleasure and Pulse

## WHY POETRY MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

Sumiko Martinez

Even through the Zoom screen on which we are meeting, Katharine Coles radiates a certain gravitational energy. With an aesthetic somewhere between the serene ascetism of a monk and the understated elegance of an Edwardian noblewoman, listening to her talk about poetry is irresistible. Though it’s been a very long time since I last sat in an English literature class, I feel transported as I listen to her wax—well, poetic—on what matters so much about poetry: pleasure.

To say that pleasure matters sounds almost anathema on a college campus at this moment in time. Much of our daily work is focused on the serious work of teaching, researching and writing, setting our students up for life and career success, maintaining budgets and buildings, organizing lectures and events, or preparing for the next big fundraising cycle. In a place where the life of the mind is paramount, the idea of pleasure seems abstract, an object for discussion and debate rather than an actual felt and lived experience.

But according to Coles, “The only reason for poetry actually to exist right now is pleasure.” A poet and Distinguished Professor of English who has spent decades as both an academic and public practitioner of the art form, Coles speaks with the eloquence of her experience. Poetry does not lend itself to simple, instant gratification, but rather schools us in the depths of pleasure that can only be achieved through sustained engagement with difficulty.

## POETRY OFFERS PERMANENCE

For undergrads who are not quite convinced that poetry is worth the trouble, Coles draws parallels to a newer art form: video games. She asks her students whether they derive pleasure from games because they’re easy or because they’re hard; the answer, of course, is the latter. It isn’t the ease of beating all the levels of a video game that brings satisfaction, but rather the unique pleasure that humans derive from untangling a tricky puzzle. Says Coles, “Poetry keeps rewarding engagement with difficulty and pleasure in the same little knotted space, over and over again. The poem is changing under your hands constantly. The minute you think you know it, then you don’t know it again.”

Poetry’s metamorphic quality stems from its fundamental grounding in the human body. “The rhythm of poetry arises out of and returns to the music of the body,” Coles notes, describing how she has her students dance to Theodore Roethke’s “My Papa’s Waltz” to help them understand meter. As an antidote to increasing digital isolation and disengagement, poetry tethers us to our most basic rhythms. “Put your hand over your heart and feel your pulse,” Coles tells students struggling with iambic meter. “It’s right there.”

This felt rhythm was essential to poetry’s origins, when verses were sung and repeated around communal fires long

before the advent of writing systems. For thousands of years, poetry carried news, history, and culture through a lineage of human voices and memories. Today, when our news feels like a lightning-fast onslaught, poetry offers permanence. As Coles observes, we’re “still getting the news from Homer,” whose epic poems from millennia ago continue to resonate with contemporary readers about war, pride, and human frailty.

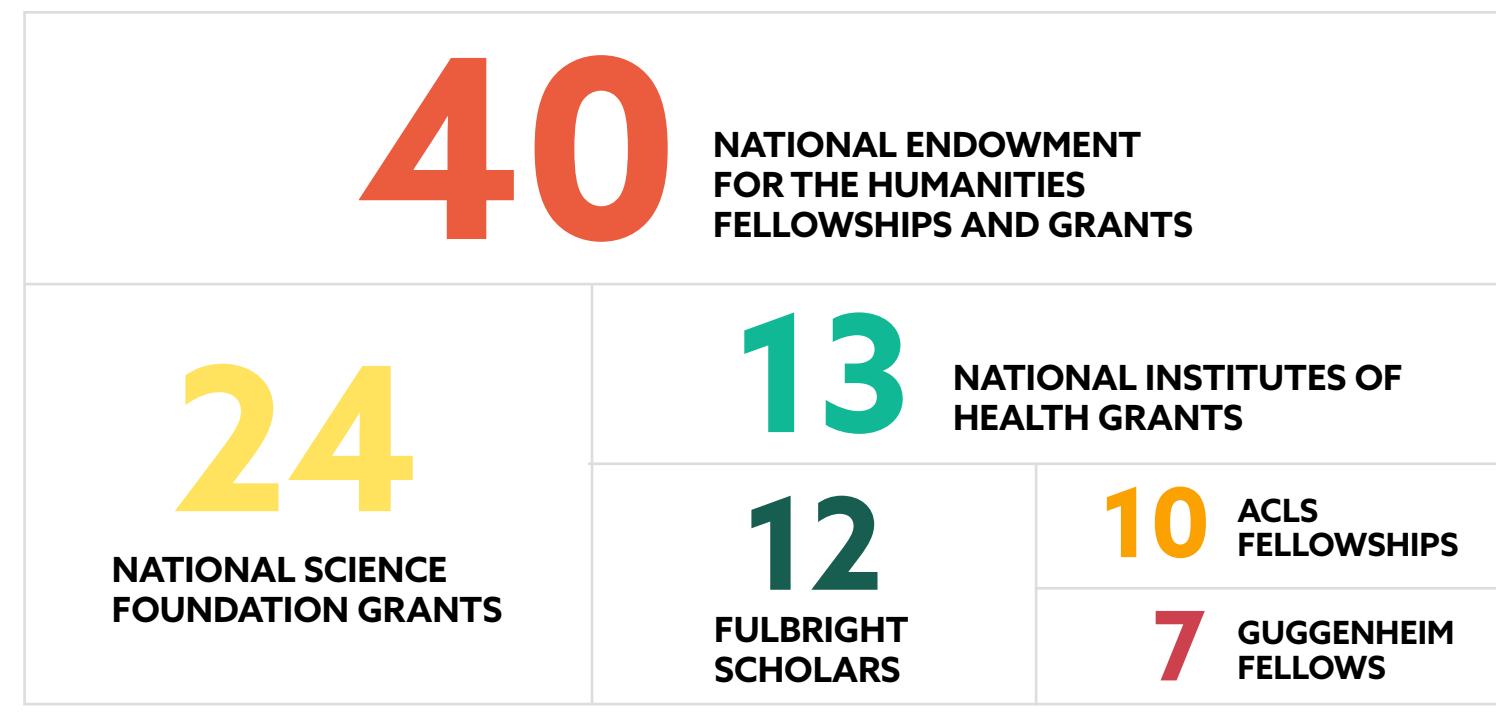
Students are responding, seeking out the challenge and joy of engaging with poetry. Last year, over 650 University of Utah graduate students and undergrads were enrolled in creative writing classes. The program has a particularly strong poetry contingent, boasting two of Utah’s former poet laureates and an award-winning faculty, several of whom recently received accolades from the 2025 Utah Book Awards.

In our current moment, the importance of poetry becomes newly relevant. It doesn’t offer easy answers or immediate comfort, but something more valuable: the assurance that humans have always faced the unknown and found ways to transform it into lasting beauty. As Coles puts it, poetry connects us to “the endurance of human capacity and human making and the human heartbeat.”

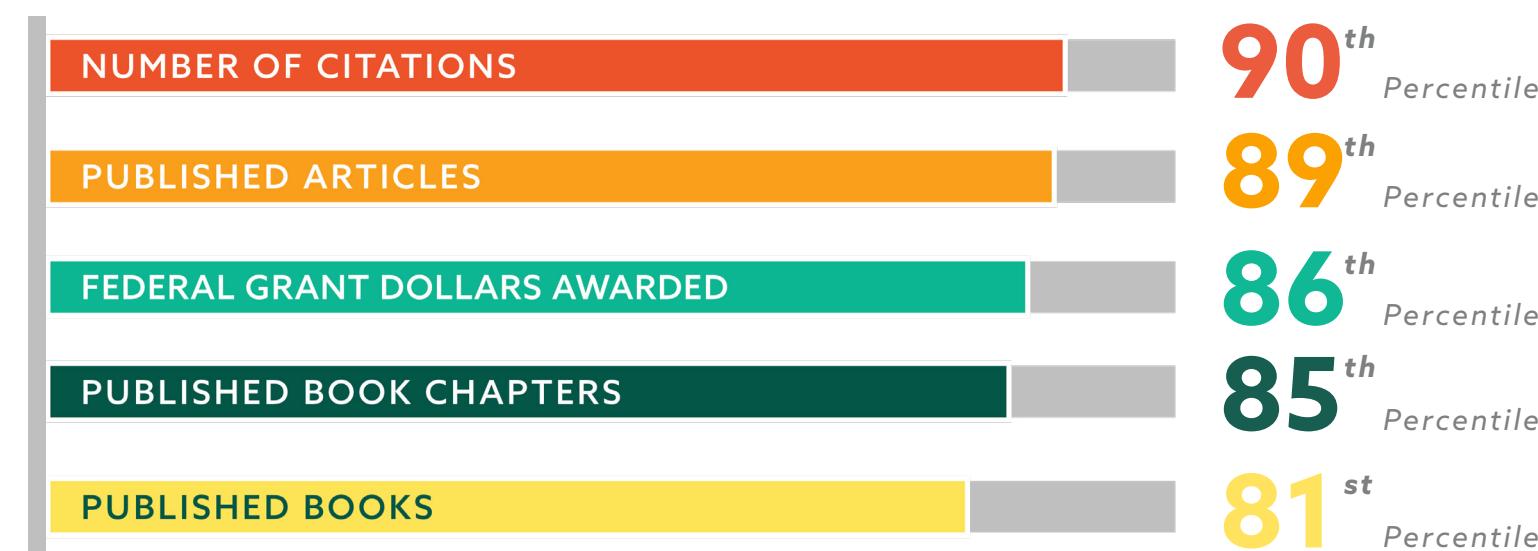
That visceral connection, grounded in pulse and pleasure, may be exactly what we need to navigate an uncertain future.

# Research in the Humanities

## FACULTY GRANT AWARDS 2000-2025



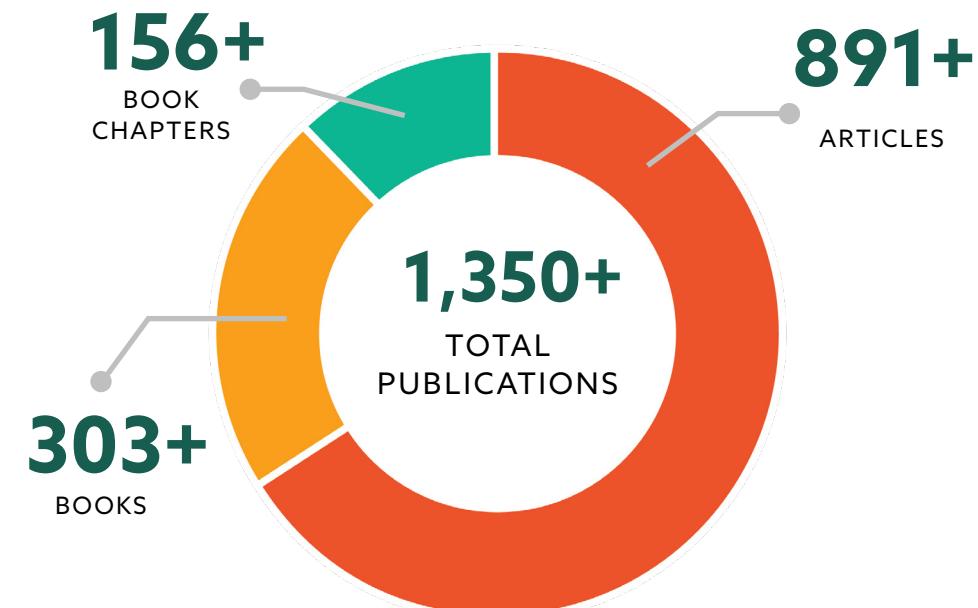
## NATIONAL LEADER IN HUMANITIES RESEARCH



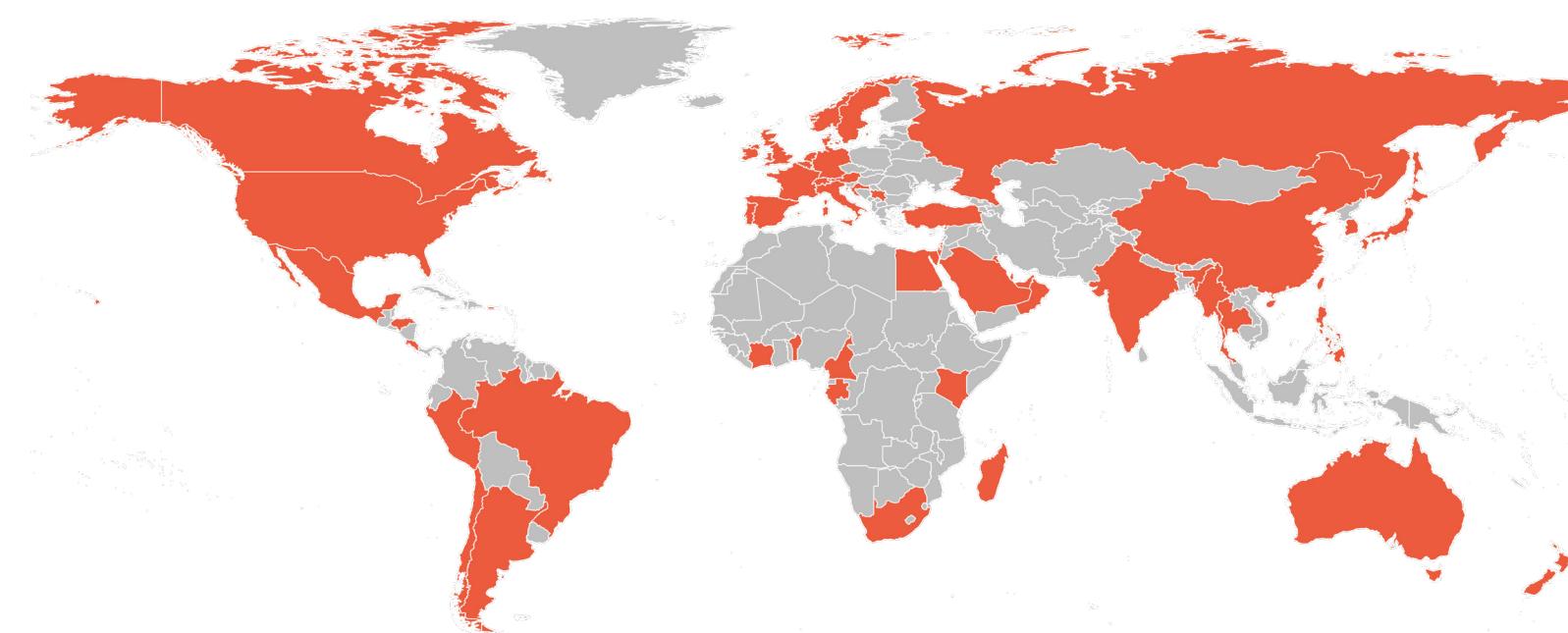
Among our peer institutions, the College of Humanities at the University of Utah ranks in the top quartile for key publication and grant metrics, according to Academic Analytics.

Source: Academic Analytics Scholarly Research Index and College/Field Level Analysis, Data Release Version: AAD2023.03.02725; Release Date: 1/15/2025; Dataset: 17,458 faculty from 175 institutions with a dedicated College/School of Humanities; metric date ranges vary from 2013-2023 to 2019-2023.

## FACULTY PUBLICATIONS 2019-2025

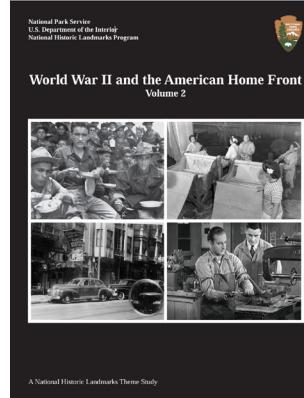


## FACULTY RESEARCH TRAVEL 2019-2025

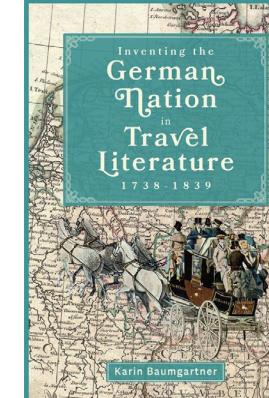


ARGENTINA	CÔTE D'IVOIRE	ISRAEL/PALESTINE	OMAN	SWEDEN
AUSTRALIA	CROATIA	ITALY	PERU	SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA	DENMARK	JAPAN	PHILIPPINES	TAIWAN
BELGIUM	EGYPT	KENYA	PORTUGAL	THAILAND
BENIN	FRANCE	KUWAIT	QATAR	TURKEY
BRAZIL	GABON	MADAGASCAR	RUSSIA	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
CAMEROON	GERMANY	MEXICO	SAUDI ARABIA	UNITED KINGDOM
CANADA	HONDURAS	MYANMAR	SERBIA	
CHILE	HONG KONG	NETHERLANDS	SOUTH AFRICA	
CHINA	INDIA	NEW ZEALAND	SOUTH KOREA	
COSTA RICA	IRELAND	NORWAY	SPAIN	

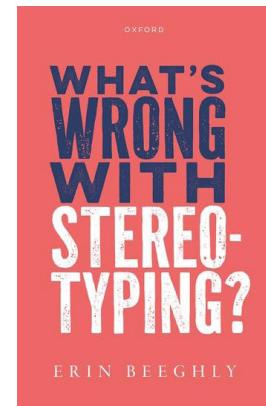
## FACULTY BOOKS AUGUST 1, 2024-JULY 31, 2025



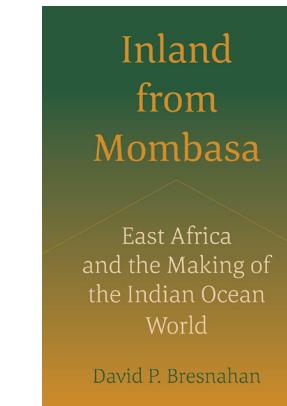
**WORLD WAR II AND THE AMERICAN HOME FRONT, VOLUME 2: A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS THEME STUDY**  
MATTHEW BASSO  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & GENDER STUDIES DIVISION  
December 2024, National Park Service



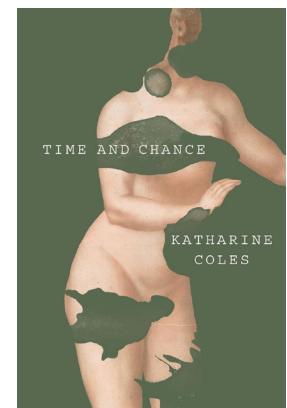
**INVENTING THE GERMAN NATION IN TRAVEL LITERATURE, 1738-1839**  
KARIN BAUMGARTNER  
DEPARTMENT OF WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES  
November 2024, Boydell & Brewer



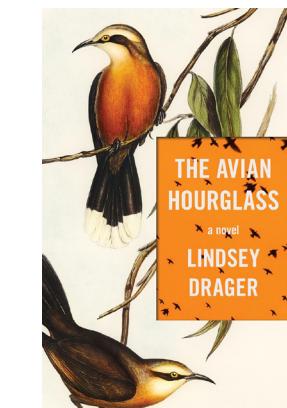
**WHAT'S WRONG WITH STEREOTYPING?**  
ERIN BEEGHLY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
April 2025, Oxford University Press



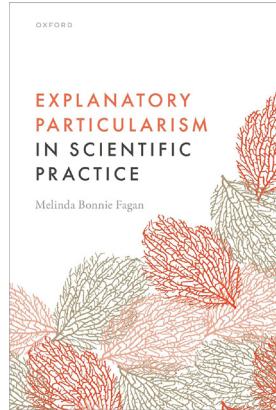
**INLAND FROM MOMBASA: EAST AFRICA AND THE MAKING OF THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD**  
DAVID P. BRESNAHAN  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
December 2024, University of California Press



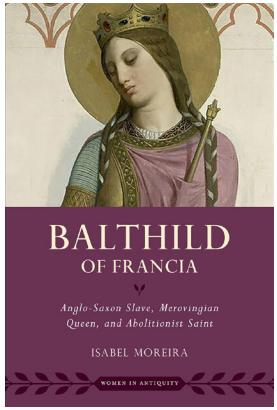
**TIME AND CHANCE**  
KATHARINE COLES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
April 2025, Turle Point Press



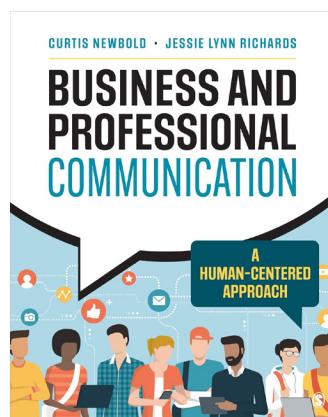
**THE AVIAN HOURGLASS**  
LINDSEY DRAGER  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
August 2024, Dzanc Books



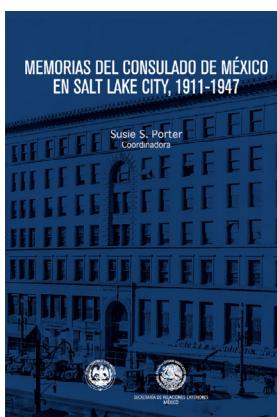
**EXPLANATORY PARTICULARISM IN SCIENTIFIC PRACTICE**  
MELINDA BONNIE FAGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
May 2025, Oxford University Press



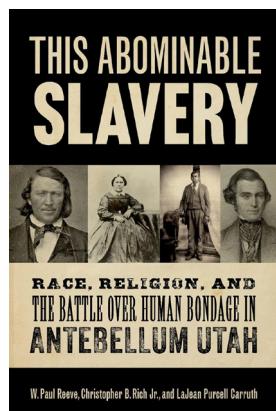
**BALTHILD OF FRANCIA: ANGLO-SAXON SLAVE, MEROVINGIAN QUEEN, AND ABOLITIONIST SAINT**  
ISABEL MOREIRA  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
November 2024, Oxford University Press



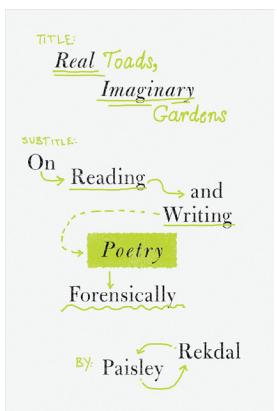
**BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION: A HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH**  
CURTIS NEWBOLD  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION  
November 2024, SAGE Publications, Inc.  
with Jessie Lynn Richards



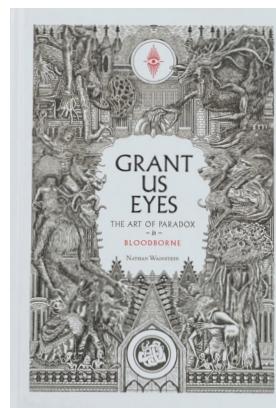
**MEMORIAS DEL CONSULADO DE MÉXICO EN SALT LAKE CITY, 1911-1947**  
SUSIE PORTER  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & GENDER STUDIES DIVISION  
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**THIS ABOMINABLE SLAVERY: RACE, RELIGION, AND THE BATTLE OVER HUMAN BONDAGE IN ANTEBELLUM UTAH**  
W. PAUL REEVE  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
October 2024, Oxford University Press  
with Christopher B. Rich Jr. and LaJean Purcell Carruth



**REAL TOADS, IMAGINARY GARDENS: ON WRITING AND READING POETRY FORENSICALLY**  
PAISLEY REKDAL  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
October 2024, W.W. Norton & Co.



**GRANT US EYES: THE ART OF PARADOX IN BLOODBORNE**  
NATHAN WAINSTEIN  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
April 2025, Tune & Fairweather

# Academic Centers Put Knowledge Into Action

Sumiko Martinez

The College of Humanities houses seven dynamic academic centers that serve as intellectual hubs on campus and beyond. Academic centers are essentially “concentrations of expertise that provide value-added programming to the university and the public,” according to Associate Dean Isabel Moreira. These centers share something remarkable: putting humanities disciplines into action in the world through a focus on world-class research engagement, community partnerships, and hands-on student opportunities.

Attend any of their events, and you’ll find a common thread woven through their unique missions—each one bridges the gap between scholarly research and community need, between university resources and public service, between theoretical understanding and practical application. Whether they’re preserving oral histories, teaching languages critical to national security, or building pipelines between underserved communities and the university, these centers prove that the humanities aren’t

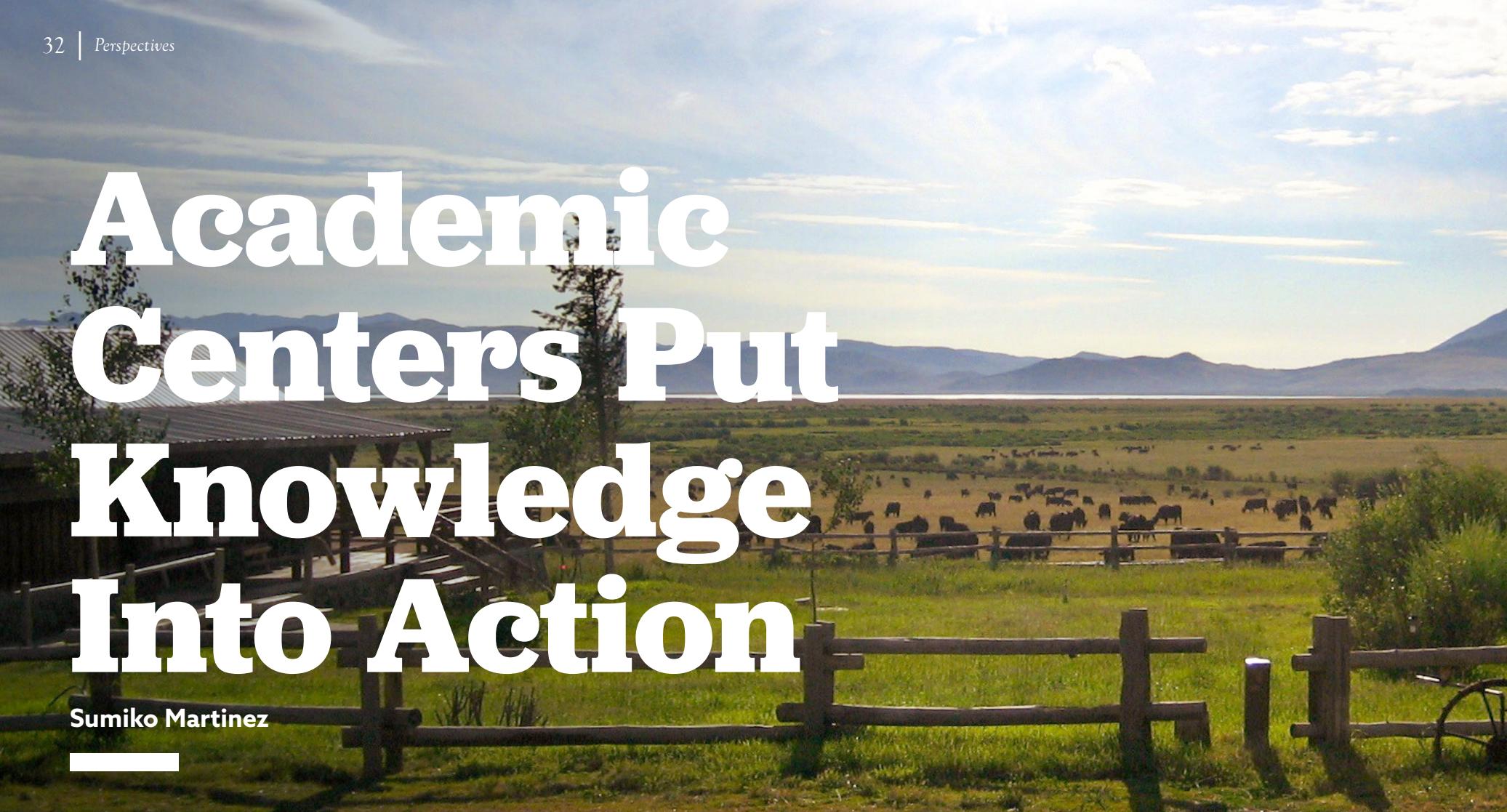
just about understanding the world—they’re about changing it.

## TWO NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER DESIGNATIONS

For over a decade, the Asia Center and Center for Latin American Studies have both held prestigious National Resource Center designations from the U.S. Department of Education—a competitive recognition that acknowledges their excellence in language and area studies serving national interests. This federal recognition underscores how these centers contribute not just to Utah’s educational landscape but to the United States’ capacity for global engagement.

## SHARED IMPACT THROUGH FOCUS

While each center is unique in its own right, with some leaning heavily into scholarly community and research and others emphasizing community partnerships or student engagement, they share several common elements.



## CENTERS SERVE AS INTELLECTUAL HUBS ON CAMPUS AND BEYOND

**Breaking Down Academic Silos:** Centers bring together faculty and students from dozens of departments across multiple colleges. The Asia Center alone engages over 100 faculty from 28 departments, and each center fosters community and collaborations to tackle complex challenges no single department could address alone.

**Extending the University’s Impact:** From elementary schools to far-flung mountain valleys, from tribal communities to military bases, these centers carry university resources far beyond campus boundaries. The Center for Second Language Teaching and Research (L2TReC) works with partners across Utah to support the state’s

*Montana's Centennial Valley viewed from the Taft-Nicholson Center.*

nationally recognized dual language immersion program, while the American West Center has built decades-long partnerships with tribal nations, and the Center for Latin American Studies has international collaborations to pass rare languages on to future generations.

**Transforming Students Into Scholars:** Each center offers hands-on learning opportunities that train students as active researchers and practitioners. Whether conducting oral history interviews, analyzing language corpora, or blazing new trails in environmental humanities, students don’t just learn about their fields; they become participants shaping the future of their disciplines.

## The Seven Centers in Brief

### AMERICAN WEST CENTER

Founded in 1964, what began as a novel idea to study Western history has become the nation’s premier repository of Western voices and public-facing history of the American West. With over 7,000 oral histories including more than 2,000 interviews with Native Americans, the center works in partnership with tribal nations to preserve cultural heritage while training the next generation of public historians. Paisley Rekdal, director of the American West Center, says, “This makes our collection one of the rarest and most notable in the nation, and certainly among higher educational institutions and centers.”

Current projects include major collaborations with mining industry heavyweight Kennecott-Rio Tinto, numerous tribal nations, the Department of Energy, and the National Park Service. Rekdal elaborates on the details: “Of our most current public history projects, I’m most proud of the work that we’re doing on the Kennecott-Rio Tinto’s *Groundbreakers* site, to help them create a dynamic, digital archive about the cultural impact of mining in the West. I’m also excited about the oral history interviews our researchers are conducting with Shoshone-Bannock Tribal elders as part of a collaborative project between the AWC,

the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and the Department of Energy about the land use practices of Shoshone and Bannock peoples and their ancestors in the Snake River Plain. Finally, our researchers are also spearheading the Historic Trails project, sponsored by the NPS National Historic Trails Office in Santa Fe, helping to build a coalition of tribal partners and land managers to improve the interpretation of Indigenous history along the Utah segments of three national historic trails (California, Pony Express, and Mormon Pioneer).”

## ASIA CENTER | National Resource Center

Serving as a hub on campus, this center coordinates Asia-related programming across the university while building Utah's pipeline for expertise in many different Asian languages. Through partnerships with K-16 schools statewide, the center ensures students across Utah can graduate as fully bilingual, culturally competent global citizens ready for international

careers. With funding from private foundations and federal grants, it's creating the multilingual workforce Utah needs for events like the 2034 Olympics and beyond. Cindi Textor, director of the Asia Center, says, "The U's Asia Center is rare among its peers for its broad coverage of Asia. Going beyond strengths in East Asian Studies, our affiliates boast

expertise in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Russia, and the Pacific. This allows our faculty and students to chart previously under-explored interconnections among the diverse nations and cultures of the Asia-Pacific region and our own communities here in Utah."

## CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES | National Resource Center

Connecting 76 faculty across 31 departments, the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) is a designated National Resource Center that turns academic expertise into educational opportunity. The center's partnerships with institutions like Salt Lake Community College and organizations like Artes de México en Utah directly support Utah's dual language immersion program while recruiting underrepresented students into international education. Its interdisciplinary approach tackles everything from tropical biology to Indigenous studies to Latino diaspora research. CLAS is particularly strong in Mexico, the Andean region, and Brazil, as well as the promotion and teaching of *CLAS students studying abroad in Costa Rica.*

indigenous languages and cultures. Alejandro Quin, director of the Center for Latin American Studies, says, "We offer the most comprehensive and nationally-recognized Nahuatl language program in the United States, in addition to the only MA program in Latin American Studies in the state of Utah. CLAS is also deeply engaged with the local community: We partner with K-12 and SLCC educators, sponsor pedagogy workshops, and provide support for the Portuguese and Spanish Bridge Programs for Utah high school students. We also collaborate regularly with local Latin American consular offices and Latiné nonprofit organizations on a variety of community initiatives."

## MIDDLE EAST CENTER

Preparing students for careers in an interconnected world, the center emphasizes both language competency and cultural understanding. Its programs are designed to create global citizens who understand the complex relationships between the Middle East and the United States, combining area studies with professional skills that serve both national interests and personal career goals.

Chris Low, director of the Middle East Center, highlights the ways the center serves the community on campus and beyond: "First and foremost, our affiliated faculty members teach a wide variety of courses touching majors in Middle East Studies, History, Political

*MES students studying abroad.*



## OBERT C. AND GRACE A. TANNER HUMANITIES CENTER

Founded in 1988, the Tanner is a nationally regarded center that supports academic research, public engagement, and educational programming in the humanities. Notable programs include the long-standing Tanner Lecture series for the campus and community, reading groups, fellowships, and professional development programs for educators. New additions to the Tanner's programming include a podcast and an innovative team research fellowship program called Tanner Labs.

Scott Black, director of the center, says, "The Tanner Humanities Center is unique among humanities centers across the country in combining extensive public humanities programming with a

robust fellowship program. Most other centers focus on one or the other, but thanks to Obert C. Tanner's generous sustaining vision, we are able to bring some of the most interesting and important writers, thought leaders, and scholars to Salt Lake City while also supporting a vibrant community of faculty and graduate student fellows pursuing innovative scholarship. I am most excited now about our new model of research support, Tanner Labs, which combine experimental, interdisciplinary team-based scholarship with fresh pedagogical practices and innovative forms of public engagement."

## TAFT-NICHOLSON ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES EDUCATION CENTER

In Montana's ecologically significant Centennial Valley, this unique center bridges arts, humanities, and sciences to tackle environmental challenges. Students, faculty, and community members collaborate in a setting that Montana Natural Heritage Program rates as one of the state's most significant natural landscapes, combining pristine wilderness with cutting-edge environmental education.

As Mark Bergstrom, director of the Taft-Nicholson Center, describes, "A humanities perspective provides a variety of tools that allow us to reflect on and make sense of complex environmental

issues that cross disciplinary boundaries while also providing tools that allow us to work collaboratively with other disciplines. The center provides a space to train ourselves and our students to make sense of the world from a variety of perspectives, to do so in a critical and informed way, recognizing different positions and perspectives, considering the moral and ethical implications and outcomes of not only our actions but our thoughts as well. We train ourselves and our students to clearly communicate our understandings in collaborative and effective means."



**"These centers prove that the humanities aren't just about understanding the world—they're about changing it."**

## SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH CENTER (L2TReC)

This center serves everyone from Utah high schoolers to military intelligence officers. L2TReC coordinates the nation's top Bridge Program for advanced language learning, serving thousands of Utah students annually. The center also maintains one of only 10 prestigious Department of Defense Language Training Centers, providing advanced cultural and language education to military linguists in areas of strategic importance. In addition, L2TReC houses two of the world's largest non-English learner corpora, providing researchers the opportunity to study a high volume of authentic language produced by actual learners of the language, revealing what really happens during the process of learning, and producing valuable insights for K-12 teachers to strengthen their instructional practices.

Devin Jenkins, director of L2TReC, says, "L2TReC makes an impact across the state through our nation-leading Bridge language program, which serves upwards of 5,000 dual-language high school students. We have also had a national impact over the past 12 years with our Department of Defense Language Training Centers, of which we are one of only 10 in the country. We provide research corpora of language learners for linguists who do research on dual immersion. What we teach goes well beyond language mechanics, as our programs enable multicultural insights and skills among researchers and students from a variety of backgrounds. What we teach changes lives, and lasts a lifetime."

Taft-Nicholson Center

# Educating the Future Through Philanthropy

Sumiko Martinez, Christina Lau Billings, & Morgan Stinson

Thanks to hundreds of individual donors who invest in humanities students, the College of Humanities provides a wide range of scholarship opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students throughout our departments, centers, and programs. This support is critical for students; scholarship support significantly reduces the financial burden of higher education, allowing many to pursue their educational dreams. Scholarships allow students to focus wholly on their studies, take full advantage of the many opportunities on campus and in the college, participate in extracurricular activities, and build the professional network that leads to ongoing success. These scholarships are made possible by the support from individuals who, now more than ever, recognize the importance of a humanities degree and value the role humanities plays in our future.

Each person who contributes to humanities scholarships is supporting academic excellence and a robust student experience. But as you'll read in the words of the students below, you are giving more than dollars. For many students, being chosen to receive a scholarship is a much-needed vote of confidence, a pat on the back, or a boost in what feels like a long and daunting climb towards graduating. These scholarships represent much-needed material support, but also an intellectual affirmation and even an emotional bolster. With the generosity of our amazing community, the College

of Humanities awarded \$1.7 million in scholarship funds to 335 students, an average of \$5,200 per student during the 2024-25 academic year.

## DR. ROBERT C. STEENSMA ENDOWED GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP IN LITERARY STUDIES

Laura Scott and Rodney Mena created this scholarship to support graduate students in the Department of English. Honoring Dr. Robert Steensma, professor emeritus of English at the University of Utah and a Navy captain, this scholarship focuses on students pursuing Literary Studies.

Dr. Steensma taught British and American literature at Augustana College, the University of South Dakota, Utah State University, and the University of Utah. He was a Fulbright lecturer in Finland, published five books and over 300 articles, and received numerous honors, including the English Department's Outstanding Professor for Excellence in Teaching. Known as a kind and dynamic professor, he led many Continuing Education courses at the University of Utah and believed excellent teaching impacted generations of students. Recognizing his immense contributions, this fellowship supports students who exemplify his values, research, and tenacity.



ELISSA CRUZ, RECIPIENT

"I am a first gen college student from humble beginnings, but earning a PhD in literature has been my dream since childhood. This goal seemed unlikely, though, since I didn't have the funds to make my dream a reality when I graduated from high school, and then I met my husband and began a family. After raising five wonderful children with him, I finally came back to school in my 40s to earn my bachelor's and master's degrees in English. I took a leap of faith last year and applied to the University of Utah, and I am now in my second year of the English PhD Literary & Cultural Studies program, focusing on early medieval British literature.

The Dr. Robert C. Steensma Endowed Graduate Scholarship in Literary Studies in the Department of English has helped to give me the space I needed to pursue my passion for medieval literature because it has alleviated some of the financial burden. I am now able to focus on my studies and explore the fascinating world of Old English poetry and prose. Being able to study the earliest beginnings of the English language has given me a better understanding of our modern language and a greater appreciation for all English literature that has grown out of this beginning.

Along the way, I have also discovered a love of teaching, so I am also using this time to practice my teaching skills and create great course content for future college courses I want to teach. It is my ultimate goal to pass on my love of literature to a new generation of readers. I am grateful for this endowment and its donors, Laura and Rodney. I would not be here without this support."



LAURA SCOTT '90 BA, ENGLISH AND RODNEY MENA

"We created this endowment to honor my father, who loved teaching literature and believed strongly in the importance of the humanities in fostering critical thinking and a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human experience.

My father also cared deeply about providing everyone with an opportunity for a higher education. His family did not have any financial resources so he worked throughout high school and joined the military in order to pay for college. He also received scholarships that enabled him to continue with his graduate studies and become a respected and adored English professor who positively impacted the lives of thousands of students. It is our hope that this scholarship will provide someone like my father with an opportunity to do the same."

## MARIE CORNWALL GRADUATE RESEARCH GRANT

Established by Marie Cornwall as an annual award, the Marie Cornwall Graduate Research Grant supports students in the College of Humanities who are pursuing research on Women's History. Honoring Dr. Cornwall's ongoing contributions and leadership, this award supports graduate students with costs like travel expenses, manuscript copies, books, or fees to attend national conferences and academic meetings. In addition to her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Utah, Marie

received a master's degree in sociology from BYU, and a PhD in sociology from the University of Minnesota. Dr. Cornwall has worked as both a visiting professor at the U, a professor of sociology and women's studies at BYU, and director of BYU's Women's Research Institute, along with serving as the Editor of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.



#### AMY ELLSWORTH, RECIPIENT

"Thank you for your commitment to support research in women's issues, including my deepest thanks for the scholarship extended to me.

Because of support from the Marie Cornwall Graduate Research Grant, I conducted research from May–June 2024 in Trujillo, Peru. This experience has been highly enlightening on several fronts, including the women's issues related to contraception that are the focus of the research, my learning curve about the approach to research abroad, and research mentorship learning curve to clinicians abroad. This has also supported the completion of my certificate in Global Health field experience with the Division of Public Health at the University of Utah.

It is my sincerest hope that this certificate will qualify me for positions where I could collaborate and offer internship experiences for University of Utah students, following the completion of my PhD in Public Health. In this way, I hope I may transform your gift to me into a 'gift that just keeps on giving,' in the best ways, of course!"



#### MARIE CORNWALL '71 BA, ENGLISH

"I know how much donations from alumni help struggling students. I've seen it over my 30 years of university teaching, and I've experienced it with my friends who have also decided to help set up scholarships. The University of Utah was my first university experience and I know every bit of donated funds plays an important role supplementing taxpayer support. Graduate students are sometimes neglected by donors, but they need support as well. I am grateful that I am able to help graduate students in the humanities."

#### ANDREW F. WAHLQUIST SCHOLARSHIP FOR DEBATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

This scholarship was established in 2017 by Andrew and Myrna Wahlquist for students in the John R. Park Debate Society who engage in community outreach, compete in tournaments, and exhibit high academic achievement. Andrew, a 1963 communication alum, competed on the debate team before going on to a highly successful career in strategic communication and public affairs in both government and private industry. He served as chief of staff to Senator John Warner of Virginia, as well as a five-year term as commissioner of the Virginia Port Authority and chairman of the Finance Committee. By establishing this endowment, Andrew and Myrna provide important and ongoing support for debate students, playing a key role in their success as a top-ranking team.



#### JUAN BOSCAN, RECIPIENT

"My name is Juan Boscan, and I am currently a freshman at the University of Utah majoring in both political science and economics. This scholarship has allowed me to keep pursuing my educational goals at the University of Utah. My current financial situation is far from perfect, and I thank you for helping me continue to study at this incredible institution.

One of the things I love about the University of Utah is that I feel like I belong. I have felt nothing but welcome in all my classes and activities. A big campus with a lot of people can feel overwhelming, but all the staff and all my peers help it to feel like a close family. Everyone in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the College of Humanities has helped me figure out the best way to achieve my academic goals. The university also offers incredible resources for extracurricular activities and career opportunities.

Being part of the John R. Park Debate Society feels like being part of a family. As a new member, I have felt supported every step of the way, and I have seen a lot of improvement in my personal performance thanks to the coaching staff. To say the least, I am delighted by the amount of effort everybody puts into each practice and each tournament. The team is extremely organized, and its structure demonstrates how the team is one of the best at the national level. I love being part of debate, because each day I feel my knowledge increases, that I am growing as a person, and most importantly that I belong. As part of the team, my opinions and ideas are highly valued, and that makes me happy and grateful. The goal of

competing at a national level feels possible because the team's resources can help me be a debater of that level. So thank you for allowing me to be a part of this excellent family."



#### SAMANTHA WATRIN, RECIPIENT

"I want to thank you for the generous scholarship I was awarded through the John R. Park Debate Society. Donations to the team make it possible for students like me to fully engage in the higher education opportunities the U has to offer.

My name is Samantha Watrin, I am a sophomore at the U double majoring in political science and computer science. I am originally from Cache Valley, Utah, and have been competing in speech and debate since my freshman year of high school. After coming to the U, the Debate Society has not only become a passion of mine, but has also helped me develop as a student and person. Participating in multiple speech and debate events, and finding success in them, has given me a diverse array of argumentation, speaking, and persuasive skills that I will continue to utilize even after I graduate. Additionally, as part of the team's outreach events, I use these skills to help teach high school students, participate with the Refugee Debate program, and in our public events. I also use them in my role in ASUU events and meetings.

Outside of the skills this team has given me, this scholarship has also helped me immensely. This financial support allows me to focus on my studies and competitive success within debate without the additional stressor of finances. Being able to focus on school makes me a better student and competitor."



**ANDREW WAHLQUIST '63 BS,  
COMMUNICATION**

"My wife Myrna and I established the Andrew Wahlquist Endowed Scholarship to support students participating in the John R. Park Debate Society forensics team. My own college career was made possible from scholarships in debate at the University of Southern California and at the U of U. I want to be able to offer what benefited me to get a college degree to others who may be in a similar situation. I am proud to honor the students who are competing internationally and nationally and achieving great success and I send my best wishes to the team."

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**BRENT AND LIZ WELCH FAMILY  
ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN THE  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION**

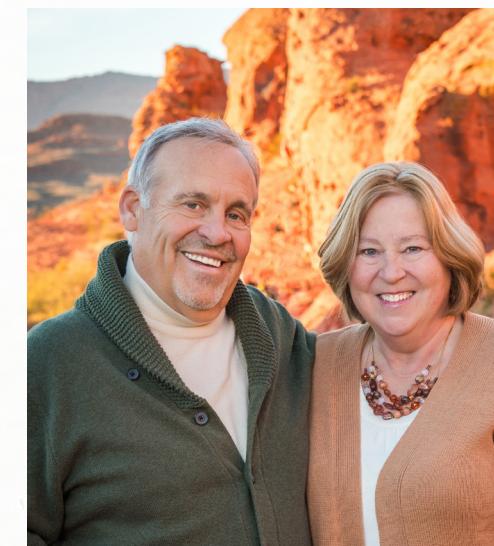
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Established by Brent and Liz Welch, this scholarship supports communication students who transfer from another academic institution to pursue studies at the University of Utah. This scholarship works to reduce the barriers to success that transfer students often face. Brent has put his communication degree to good use across the globe and believes his time in the department prepared him well for a fast-paced career. He counts professors Robert Avery, Parry Sorensen, and Bob Fotheringham among his influential teachers, sharing his first-ever class at the U was from Professor Avery. Professor Fotheringham also played a key role in Brent's vision for his career, providing a foundation in advertising. These professors sparked his interest in communication throughout the rest of his career as a student and beyond.



**MORGAN ANDERSON, RECIPIENT**

"Thank you for your generous support from the Welch Family Scholarship for the 2024-25 academic year. I really appreciate being selected for this scholarship and it will have a large impact on my education at the University of Utah. Your generous scholarship helps me get closer to my goal of graduating and lessens the financial stress that I have faced as a student."



**BRENT '81 BA, COMMUNICATION  
AND LIZ WELCH**

"My wife and I are grateful to be able to establish the Brent and Liz Welch Family Endowed Scholarship in the Department of Communication to help students continue their education at the U. I have benefited throughout my career from the education I received at the U which provided a strong foundation. We are proud that all three of our children attended the U and received a wonderful education. My hope is

to give students the same opportunities that have been afforded to myself and my family."

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**J. WILLIAM GORDON ENDOWED  
SCHOLARSHIP IN THE DEPARTMENT  
OF HISTORY**

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Established by Shannon Gordon in memory of her late husband, Bill, the J. William Gordon Scholarship supports undergraduate students majoring in history.



**GEORGE WEST, RECIPIENT**

"I am a rising junior at the University of Utah, and I was fortunate enough to receive the J. William Gordon Endowed Scholarship. Thank you so much for this opportunity!

I am majoring in history with a plan to minor in classical civilization. I am from Sandy, Utah. After I finish my bachelor's degree, my plan is to continue my history education in graduate school. I have loved the opportunities I have had in my undergraduate education to do research and graduate school will give me the opportunity to take that to the next level.

I could not be more grateful for this scholarship. I have always paid for my own tuition without the help of my parents, which has meant working during the school year. But in the middle of this last spring semester, my brother passed away. My grief made working while continuing to pass my classes impossible. This scholarship gives me the opportunity to get back on track financially after that and it is such a great relief. It is because of this that I am able to continue my education.

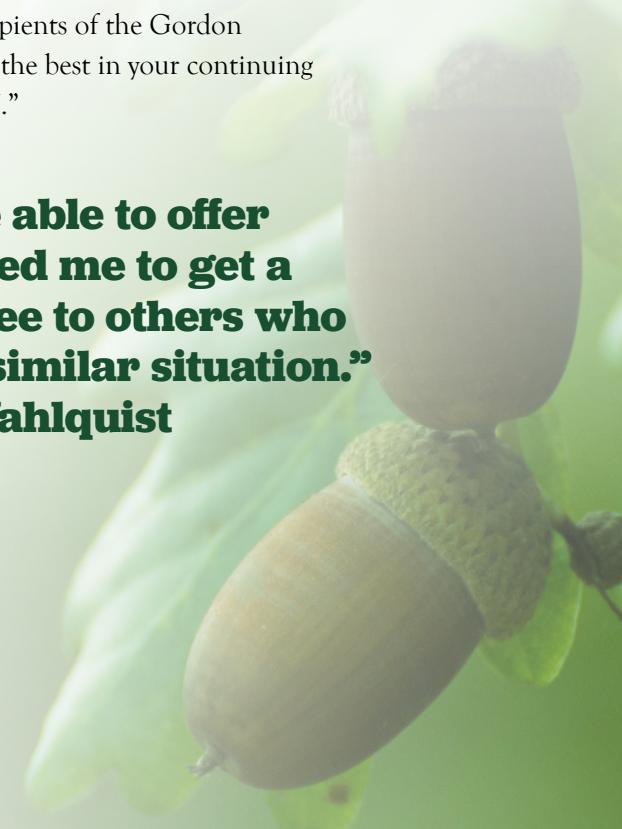
Your generosity has made a tremendous difference in my life, and I will make sure that it doesn't go to waste."



**SHANNON '68 BS, RECREATION  
AND BILL GORDON '68 BS, HISTORY**

"I established this scholarship in honor of my late husband, Bill, to support history students in his memory. I am very happy students benefit from the J. William Gordon Endowed Scholarship, and I am pleased to support students like George as they pursue higher education. I know that Bill would feel the same way. He was passionate about providing opportunities for students to succeed in their education at the U, and he would be proud to see the impact this scholarship has today. To George and all past recipients of the Gordon Scholarship, I wish you the best in your continuing endeavors here at the U."

**"I want to be able to offer what benefited me to get a college degree to others who may be in a similar situation."**  
—Andrew Wahlquist



# Distinguished Alumni

## HOLLY ROWE

*Speech given by the May 2025 recipient of the College of Humanities' Distinguished Alumni Award.*



The 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient is Holly Rowe, Emmy Award-winning ESPN sports reporter and alumna of the Department of Communication. Rowe's "firsts" as a sports journalist include covering the first Utah women's basketball game ever aired on the radio in the early '90s, and making history in 2021 as the first female commentator to cover a Utah Jazz game.

Rowe, who graduated with a BA in Journalism in 1991, has dedicated much of her career to telling the stories of women's sports. She has covered the College Football National Championships, the Women's Final Four, WNBA Championships, the Softball World Series, and much more, including covering every step of Caitlyn Clark's record-breaking basketball career at the University of Iowa and entry into the WNBA. She also hosts, along with her son, the "Call Your Mom" podcast and founded the nonprofit Joy + US to spark joy in the lives of those who need it most.

"I'm really happy to be here! Every time I drive up the hill to come to the U, I'm excited and optimistic. If I could just come back and spend every day of my life going to classes that would be a dream for me. I just saw they've got an intro to Buddhism class that I want to take if I can get that going!"

I had a very clear vision when I got here as a student. I grew up as an absolutely sports-obsessed kid. I started out going to football games here with my dad when I was about five years old. I have lived every moment of every Utah sporting event throughout the course of history, and I really appreciated that as a little kid. I remember writing

a report when I was 12 years old, and the title of my report was, "I love sports." So I just think it's really cool that I've grown up and now I'm getting paid to watch sports. I think that's pretty cool, that that 12-year-old girl followed that dream and has made it a living and a way to have income.

My dad was a really cool guy. He went to the University of Utah, where he got his law degree. My dad was really into sports, and he took me to everything. One of my best memories there used to be this place downtown Salt Lake City called the Deseret Gym. Did anyone ever go to the Deseret Gym? It was the best place.

We went there every Saturday, and my dad would make us play pickup basketball. And you know how pickup works—you have to win to stay on the court. The only problem was my dad was five foot three, and all of his daughters are five three or shorter. We're out there on the court, boxing out against grown men; they're on their noon break from work, but my dad insisted that we compete. I believe that learning how to be competitive at a young age has been an essential part of my life.

This world is competitive—life is competitive. We have to teach our young people how to be competitive, because that's what life is. I'm really grateful that my dad, Del Rowe, taught me how to be competitive at a young age, and my mom, Diane Rowe, she taught me how to work hard. We would get up at six o'clock every morning and weed in the garden or work in the garden. And I mean, I know how to can corn, can peaches, can

tomatoes. My mom really taught me how to work hard, and working hard has helped make me who I am today.

I always wanted to be a reporter, and as a student at the University of Utah, I started writing about hoops. I took a Coaching Basketball class at the University of Utah with basketball coach Rick Majerus, and of course I got an A—I was very good! I impressed Rick enough that he wrote me a letter of recommendation so I could go to CBS Sports in New York City. I was the only intern they had ever brought in outside of the New York area, and part of it was because of Rick Majerus. I proved to him that I wasn't just a student that was like,

"Oh, I want to show up and go to the games." I wanted to do the hard work. I learned how to do scouting reports. I wrote good articles about them, and I was fair. That impressed him.

That internship later helped me get my first job at ESPN. I've been with ESPN

for 30 years now, and I'm really proud of that. It isn't easy. You know, you have to show up for work every week. And now, listen, I'm showing up to do a football game. How hard could that be, right? But I am very, very proud that in 30 years, I have only missed one college football Saturday because I got COVID, and that was not my fault. I have shown up.

Every Saturday for 30 years, I have shown up to do my job because I love it. That's what I hope for you young people, is that you find that job that keeps you showing up every day for the rest of your life because you love what you do. I have been in some really cool, really cool moments. I don't like to name drop, but I'm going to just because I've had this really weird, cool life.

I get to be in these really intimate, cool moments. I tried moonshine and Caymus for the first time in Pat Summitt's kitchen. Had to drive through a blizzard with Bob Knight while I kept my hands on the wheel

so he fed me French fries....Building relationships with and learning from the legends of this game is precious to me.

Some of the greatest icons of sports, Joe Paterno, LaVell Edwards, Ron McBride, Pat Summitt, Dawn Staley, Geno Auriemma, these legendary people—I'm getting to interact with the best of the best, and they are teaching me every single day how to be better, because they are great leaders of young people.

In 2015, I got diagnosed with what I thought was simple melanoma—no big deal. I was just going to get it taken off and everything would be good. I was so cocky about it, thinking, “Yeah, whatever, so what?” This is something that I did not know could kill me, but it continued to spread. It spread to my lymph nodes, and then it spread to my lungs, and the doctors told me that I had inoperable tumors in my lungs and that I needed to start thinking about how I was spending my time, because that will kill you very quickly.

I was super lucky to get into a cutting-edge clinical trial for immunotherapy. I wish I could come to the science graduation today and thank them as well, because all of that research really saved my life. That's why I'm standing here today.

During that time when I wasn't sure if I was going to make it or not, I sat down and tried to envision what I wanted my life to look like, and I realized I really had the life I had always wanted. I was going to games. I was getting paid to watch sports and spending time with my family, and so I kept working.

I remember getting ready for an interview with Diana Taurasi and trying to find a dress that didn't show the PICC line for chemo in my arm. I remember flying after surgery with drain tubes stitched into my side after a surgery, and this little bag of fluid around my neck—because I had to get to the Kansas Texas game. As I was going through TSA, I was thinking to myself, “I can't tell if I

have more than three ounces of lymph drainage around my neck right now!”

Sometimes look back on that like, “Holly girl, you were psycho!” I felt like if I didn't keep working and showing up to these events, that maybe I wasn't going to make it. I kept running and being in survivor mode, because sports have brought me so much joy. Doing what I love every day helped save my life.

I'm telling you this because you are all going to hit some bumps in the road. They might not be as dramatic as stage four cancer that might kill you, but you're going to hit the bumps. What I want to tell you is: just keep going. Life will not be perfect, but you can be persistent. That is all I want you to do—when the hard times hit, keep going. It is your only option. Talk to friends and family. If things get hard, you're never alone, and you can get through any hard time. I mean, I was bald with tubes stitched into my body working on national television!

I just watched this epic ESPYs speech that Jimmy Valvano gave right before he died, and he said, “You have lived a full day if you laugh, if you think, and if you cry.” I've already cried today. We were walking up here with the bagpipes, and I was like, “This is so great, all of these young people going on to their life!”

So I've already cried. I've laughed, and hopefully we can all think today about how special this moment is. But that is great advice that I would love to share.

This is the moment you've all worked so hard for, you've learned so much. Keep learning. I want you to know more tomorrow than you knew today. I want you to keep pushing yourselves forward to grow. I think growing is the most important thing that you can do with a college education. Keep learning. Keep growing. I have learned that growing every day and changing who you are as a person is essential to life.

My greatest area of growth came in 2020 when I spent three months in the WNBA bubble. And if you remember what was going on in our country, it was COVID. People were afraid and frightened, and we had a lot of social unrest and social justice moved to the forefront. I realized at that time I had no idea what Black people were going through in this country. I was uninformed, and I am so grateful for that summer, because it made me a better person, a better ally, someone who believes that diversity is my greatest teacher and our greatest teacher, and it is up to us. It is up to us, not the government, not society, not the outside world, to keep seeking diversity and to include people in your lives, because they will make it richer. They will bring you joy. They will educate you and make you a better human.

As humanities students graduating today, “human” is the biggest title in your in your degree. I ask you to be better humans today than you were when you got here. Be a better human tomorrow than you were today. Keep growing and changing and learning and living with great passion.

Thank you for having me today, and I wish you all the best. Be persistent, not perfect, and keep learning every day of your lives. Thank you all.”



# Student Speaker

## MUSKAN WALIA

*Speech given by the May 2025 College of Humanities' Student Speaker.*

**M**uskan Walia is the 2025 Exemplary Undergraduate and Convocation Speaker in the College of Humanities. Muskan was initially a mathematics major, but she was not comfortable studying “math in a vacuum.” When an academic advisor recommended a philosophy of science class, she found the right fit for the social issues she wanted to work on. She says, “I realized that my math classes grounded me when I grappled with big questions that came up in philosophy, and my philosophy courses gave purpose to the quantitative methodology I learned in my math classes.”

Next fall, Muskan will be starting her PhD in Computational Public Policy at Harvard and NYU, developing mathematical models that investigate dynamics of complex systems to design policy interventions. Her goal is to “be a leader of a multi-disciplinary research team, bridge the academic-practitioner divide, and shift the narrative of mathematics.”

**“T**he boundary between the air and the body disappears with a breath. The inhalation is no different from the atmosphere, the exhalation the same as the sky.

My humanities education has taught me that the lines we draw are, in fact, imagined. It has also asked me: what do I imagine?

I am drawn to disrupt the regularly scheduled programming. Acting outside of the status quo is my form of protest.

I did this in my education by pairing mathematics and philosophy. I am attracted to the linear narrative of mathematics; the charm of logically following sets of assumptions to their mathematical conclusions is enchanting. However, studying philosophy has allowed me to grapple with the idea that nothing is accomplished if you neglect fostering human decency in the face of human suffering. My education, above all, has encouraged me to understand that who I am

## THIS IS A DAY TO CELEBRATE WE... WE WHO PUT WIND IN THE SAILS OF IDEAS

is not prescribed to me by a set of beliefs but sculpted by the way I act at the crux of when truth and goodness are on the line.

My philosophy of science education has anchored my mathematics education. While math has provided me with formal techniques to answer questions, my philosophy of science coursework has strengthened my ability to ask questions and understand how mathematics can frame and address social issues. This has allowed me to explore nontraditional applications of mathematics, collaborate across the imagined lines between disciplines, and inform policy through different lenses.

Noticing the impact of oppressive systems on my own community has implored me to imagine: What does a just community look like? How can we create solutions that retain people's security, stories, and hope? These are questions that force us into action, to give our lives to something greater than ourselves, force us to do things we are scared to do, and to show up in places that we're scared to be. And while it takes the greatest amount of emotional labor to fight against the forces that scare us the most, I organize around issues that impact my community directly because the meaning of advocacy should be made by the people who need it, the "people closest to pain should be the closest to power."

And as I stand here, it is extremely clear to me that my story is not my own. Today is to celebrate our friends, family, professors, champions, and so many others who give up their time and their

energy and their effort to make this work. This is a day to celebrate we, we who don't just act on issues, but activate those around us. We who rally—behind each other, every person, and ideas. We who put wind in the sails of ideas that create space for things that may be completely brand new, ideas that push the needle forward and help us feel justice, foster respect, kindness, and compassion and encourage us to take care of each other.

I stand here on the sturdy shoulders of the many people who have come before me, stood beside me, and challenged me, many who showed me how to be a good steward of relationships and helped me understand the importance of building people up and leaving them better than you found them. My journey involves a whole community. This appreciation and celebration that "I am because we are;" it's what connects you to me.

And as we take our next step, as humanities graduates, we must continue to rally around art, passion, and people to build collective power, the type of power that no one is going to silence or dismantle, power that is passed through stories and acts of resistance. And by allowing the people we meet to touch our hearts and shift our focus from "me" to "we," we will all rise together.

Congratulations, Class of 2025.



Class of 2025

# 2025

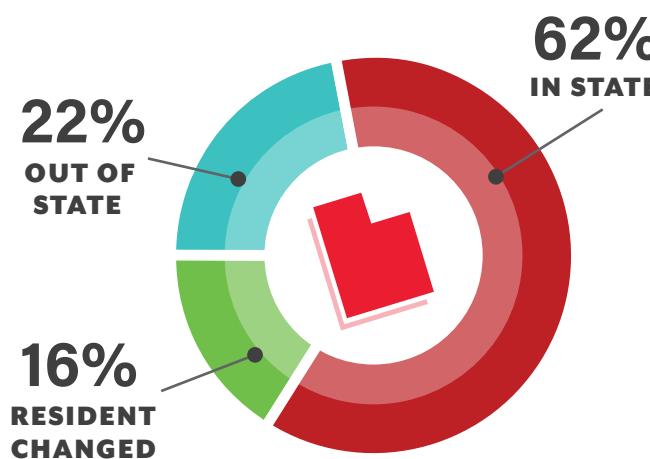
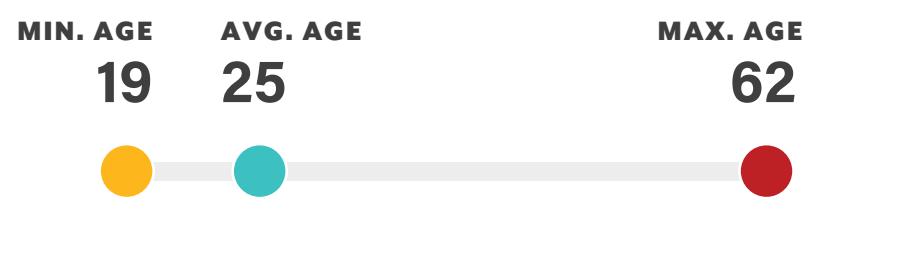
## HUMANITIES GRADUATING CLASS



### 691 GRADUATES



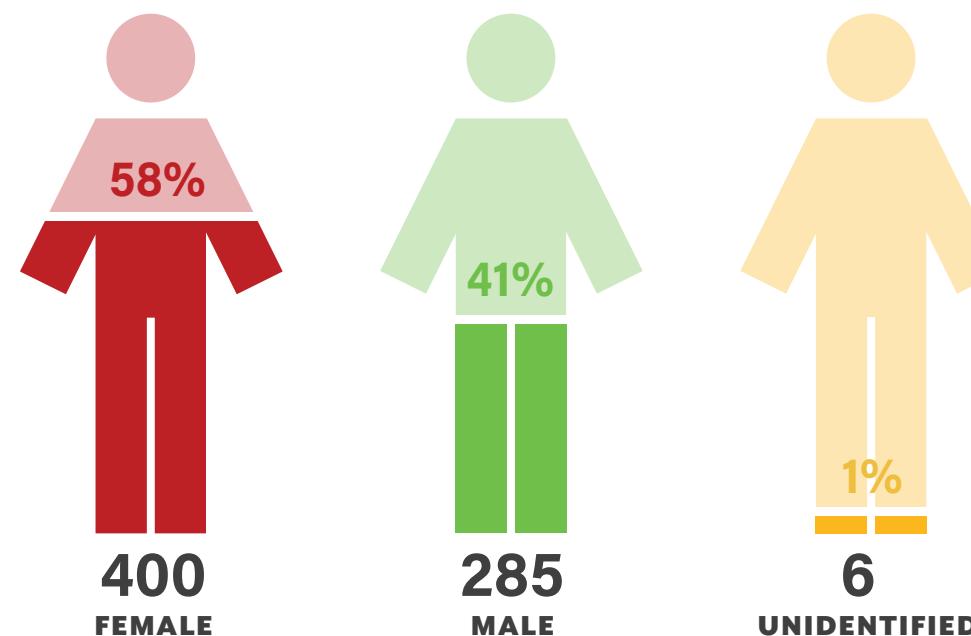
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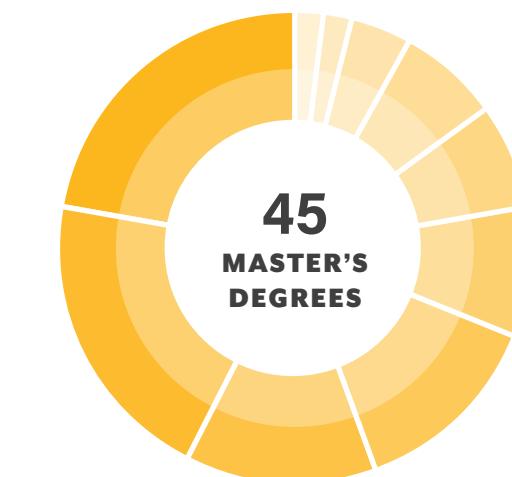
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DOMESTIC



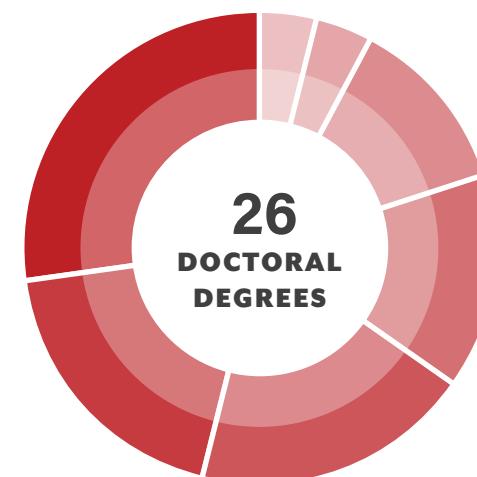
8%  
INTERNATIONAL



- 298 COMMUNICATION
- 84 ENGLISH
- 68 INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
- 60 WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES
- 52 HISTORY
- 32 PHILOSOPHY
- 25 WRITING & RHETORIC STUDIES
- 15 LINGUISTICS
- 5 LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
- 4 MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
- 4 PEACE & CONFLICT STUDIES
- 2 ASIAN STUDIES
- 1 HUMANITIES



- 10 HISTORY
- 9 WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES
- 6 ENGLISH
- 6 ASIAN STUDIES
- 4 ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES
- 3 LINGUISTICS
- 3 LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
- 2 COMMUNICATION
- 1 PHILOSOPHY
- 1 WRITING & RHETORIC STUDIES



- 7 ENGLISH
- 5 LINGUISTICS
- 5 PHILOSOPHY
- 4 HISTORY
- 3 COMMUNICATION
- 1 WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES
- 1 WRITING & RHETORIC STUDIES

### UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED

309	BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
289	BACHELOR OF ARTS
18	HONORS BACHELOR OF ARTS
8	HONORS BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

### GRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED

MASTER OF ARTS	36
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY	26
MASTER OF FINE ARTS	6
MASTER OF SCIENCE	3

250  
MINORS  
AWARDED

#### TOP 10 MINORS

57 SPANISH	18 COGNITIVE SCIENCE	16 HISTORY	11 FRENCH	10 APPLIED ETHICS
32 STRATEGIC COMM.	16 CREATIVE WRITING	11 ENGLISH	11 PHILOSOPHY	9 CHINESE



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## Tanner Humanities Center 2026 Public Events



**Wednesday, January 21**

STERLING M. MCMURRIN LECTURE  
ON RELIGION AND CULTURE

**Fr. Gregory Boyle**

Founder and Executive Director of the gang intervention and rehabilitation program, Homeboy Industries



**Wednesday, February 4**

TANNER CONVERSATION WITH

**C. Thi Nguyen**

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, author of *The Score: How to Stop Playing Somebody Else's Game*



**Wednesday, February 18**

TANNER CONVERSATION WITH

**Cory Doctorow**

Science fiction novelist and technology journalist, author of *The Internet Con: How to Seize the Means of Computation*

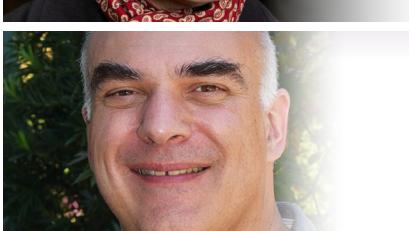


**Tuesday, March 24-Wednesday, March 25**

TANNER LECTURE ON HUMAN VALUES

**“The Elementary Forms of Human Freedom”**  
**David Wengrow**

Archeologist and author with David Graeber of *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*



**Tuesday, March 31**

TANNER CONVERSATION WITH

**Joseph Metz**

Associate Professor, Department of World Languages and Cultures, author of *The Feeling of the Form: Empathy and Aesthetics from Büchner to Rilke*



**Friday, April 10**

TANNER SYMPOSIUM ON

**How We Watch *The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City***