



KINGFISHER

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A publication of the University of Utah College of Humanities



HUMANITIES GIVES  THE EDGE

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Thank You

Dean's Message

Dianne Harris, Ph.D.



At the College of Humanities Convocation on the morning of May 5th, I was fortunate to share the front row of the podium with Board of Trustees member Steven Price, who graciously helped officiate at the ceremony. During the degree-granting portion of the convocation, Trustee Price and I watched as each student stepped forward to claim the degree for which they had worked so hard. What an amazing experience it was to watch faces light up with joy as students stepped forward to claim their degree, and to listen to the cheers of support and excitement from their family and friends in the audience. We watched students who arrived in our community as refugees from afar, and from countries where personal safety is a daily concern; students who are parents to small children; students who work several jobs in order to make ends meet and stay in school; students who have overcome daunting life challenges; students whose families live on other continents, in other worlds, in circumstances that we can only imagine. We watched students graduate who were the first in their families to ever attend a university; students of all faiths, backgrounds, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender orientations, and of varying physical abilities.

In short, we watched a wonderfully diverse, hard-working, and supremely talented group of students—undergraduates and graduates alike—receive degrees that will help them become the thought leaders and scholars of the future. The students with which we celebrated on May 5th are the future guardians and stewards of our planet and of our democracy; they will also preserve and give shape and life to our culture. Knowing that they are receiving degrees from the College of Humanities gives me tremendous hope. They hold our future in their very well-educated, creative, and capable hands.

"Our diversity enhances our excellence, and we will never stop seeking to improve our efforts to be the most welcoming and inclusive environment possible for all our students, faculty, and staff."

- Dianne Harris, Dean

Convocation is a spectacular occasion that marks the culmination of many years of hard work, sacrifice, discipline, and intellectual illumination for roughly 1,000 graduating students every year. It's hard to describe those moments of elation we are so privileged to observe, though many of you, as our College of Humanities alumni, know what I'm describing because you've experienced those moments yourselves. You know that your lives have been incalculably enriched by all you experienced as a College of Humanities student; you know how your degree has enriched your life every minute since your own graduation day.

In this year's issue of the Kingfisher, we hope to help you recapture some of those memories by sharing some of our own from the past academic year. It's always a challenge for us to distill the accomplishments of our outstanding faculty and students into these few pages because there are so many incredible highlights we could share from just the past twelve months. Doing so reminds me what a privilege it is to work as the dean of an institution that shares my commitment to fostering high-quality humanities research, and to fulfilling the democratic promise of offering an outstanding, affordable, accessible, research-informed education for all those prepared to accept the intellectual challenges we present. Undergraduate students today may face a dizzying array of higher education choices, but there is simply no other peer institution that offers the value, quality, and experience provided by the University of Utah. There is no other institution in our state that every day makes good on the promise offered by a research-intensive institution that teaches students how to turn curiosity-driven questions into answers that change lives and transform the world. And I am convinced that no other College of Humanities in the nation has a heart and soul that is the equal of our own at the University of Utah.

The departments in our College of Humanities continue to shine, as do our more specialized areas of focus in Environmental Humanities, Health Communication, Bioethics and Medical Ethics/Philosophy of Science, Creative Writing, documentary filmmaking in our Humanities in Focus program, and in one of the most rapidly growing Writing and Rhetoric Studies programs in the nation. Faculty in our college led the organization and establishment of the new Digital Matters Lab

in the Marriott Library, just as they are also forging new scholarly pathways in digital humanities, medical humanities, and in public history. Our faculty are leading participants in the administration and study of the state of Utah's Dual Language Immersion program, in a wide range of community engagement initiatives, and in research partnerships across the main and the medical campuses. From our Taft-Nicholson Center for Environmental Humanities Education in Montana's Centennial Valley, to the University of Utah's Asia Campus in Korea; from Salt Lake City to nearly every part of the planet, our students and faculty are making a difference. I'm also proud to say that the College of Humanities is among the most diverse in terms of its faculty and student population at the University of Utah. Our diversity enhances our excellence, and we will never stop seeking to improve our efforts to be the most welcoming and inclusive environment possible for all our students, faculty, and staff. We have more work to do. We will never be complacent as we reach to be the very best at all we do.

Thank you for reaching with us. Your support means so much.

Wishing you peace,

Dianne Harris, Dean





Paisley Rekdal

Professor, Department of English
Utah Poet Laureate



Paisley Rekdal, professor of English, was named Utah Poet Laureate by the Utah Division of Arts & Museums in May 2017. A prestigious appointment made by Governor Herbert, the state's Poet Laureate serves as an advocate for literature and the arts, and engages with communities, schools, libraries, and public events across the state.

Having been honored with a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, two Pushcart Prizes, a Village Voice Writers on the Verge Award, and a Fulbright Fellowship to South Korea, Rekdal is no stranger to the spotlight. Her work grapples with issues of race, sexuality, myth, and identity while referencing contemporary culture, and has been published in dozens of books, collections, and other media outlets. The poet Major Jackson noted: "With all of their rhetorical pleasures and illustrative rhythms, Rekdal's poems are deeply marked by a sensate, near terrestrial, relationship to language such that she refreshes and renews debates about beauty, suffering, and art for the twenty-first century reader."

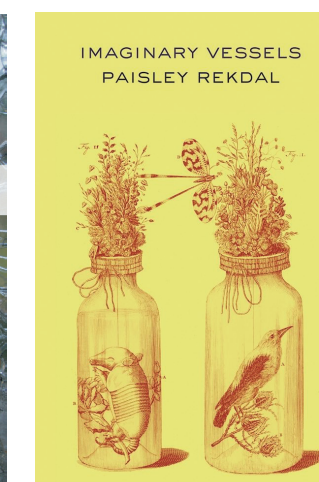
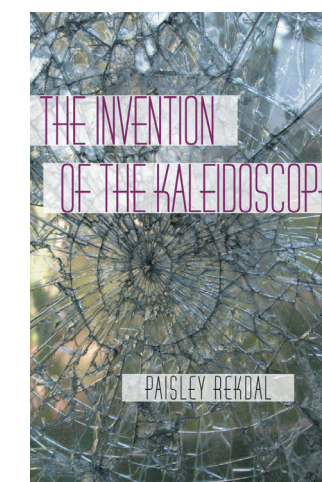
Rekdal will give a number of readings per year in Utah, as well as run a literary project called Mapping Literary Utah, which is a spin-off of her Mapping Salt Lake City project – a website history archive, but one that maps the writers and poets (past and present) of Utah, along with all of the various past and present literary presses and journals in the

state. Rekdal plans to conduct audio interviews with as many Utah poets, writers, and publishers as possible. Those interviews will be on the website alongside the writers' work and audio and/or video clips.

"Being chosen Poet Laureate is a real honor and, frankly, a surprise: I'm not from Utah originally, I'm not LDS, and I'm mixed race—all things that don't make me the most obviously 'representative' choice for this position," said Rekdal. "But of course, Utah is itself neither monolithic nor homogenous, regardless of how others outside our state perceive us. The state is composed of communities that are constantly changing, and for me the role of Poet Laureate is to respect and reflect those changes, however I can."

Rekdal's work as Poet Laureate will be research- and travel- intensive, and the valuable connections she plans to form will expand the reach and vision of the position in meaningful ways.

"Ultimately, what I'm hoping to do is make Mapping Literary Utah as inclusive as possible. I want to get poets and writers whose first language isn't English on this site, and I want to reach out to the indigenous communities here as well, and make sure that their contemporary poets and writers, as well as their literary forebears from Utah, are represented," she said. "I want to include conceptual poets as well as performance poets of all stripes, too." 🐦



Kimberly A. Kaphingst

Professor, Department of Communication



Kimberly Kaphingst is a standout professor in the Department of Communication whose work bridges traditional medical and scientific research with communication and literacy studies. She is a prolific researcher and publisher in the areas of health literacy, cancer communication, family history, and the communication of genetic and genomic information to patients and the general public. She is particularly invested in developing methods for improving family communication about genetic information, as well as delivering genome sequencing results that meet the information needs of both patients and health care providers.

"Communication of whole genome sequencing results to patients is a key ethical issue, but more work has focused on *whether* to communicate results than *how*," she emphasized. Dr. Kaphingst

has worked to address the *how* of communicating this genetic information to patients by investigating patients' preferences for receiving their test results and the factors that affect those preferences.

Dr. Kaphingst's work connects the Communication Department with other important institutions, including the Huntsman Cancer Institute, where she works as an investigator in the Cancer Control and Population Sciences program. She is also a member of the Utah Center for Excellence in ELSI (Ethical, Legal and Social Implications) Research and the U's Consortium for Families and Health Research.

Her path to health communication started with earning an M.A. from Harvard University in Molecular and Cellular Biology. She then went on to earn Master of Science (Sc.M.) and Doctor of Science (Sc.D.) degrees in Health and Social Behavior from the Harvard School of Public Health. She became a tenure-track investigator and head of the Communication Research Section in the Social and Behavioral Research Branch of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI). She then went on to work as an associate professor in the Division of Public Health Sciences at Washington University School of Medicine and was co-leader of the Prevention and Control program at the Alvin J. Siteman Cancer Center. She joined the Department of Communication at the U in 2014.

"Genomic advances have the potential to revolutionize health care, but reaching the potential of this information to improve patients' health means that we have to be able to communicate it to patients and the public in ways that are understandable and useful."

- Kim Kaphingst



"This research allows me to draw together my training in molecular and cellular biology and my training in health communication," she said. "Health communication scholars have much more to contribute to this area and I'm hoping to engage students and trainees in building the new generation of researchers in genetic communication."

Dr. Kaphingst has developed a research program focused on improving health literacy and addressing health and communication disparities among diverse and underserved populations. One study she co-led analyzed both white and black women's preferences for consenting to have their biospecimens used in secondary research. By working to understand their preferences for allowing consent, Dr. Kaphingst hopes to increase the inclusion of research samples from underrepresented populations in crucial medical research.

Along with Communication doctoral students Ashley Elrick and Manu Pokharel, Dr. Kaphingst is currently focusing on the understanding of shared

health risk among families of Caucasian, Latino, and Pacific Islander descent, and how they communicate that risk together. One of her recently completed studies as principal investigator examined young breast cancer patients (age 40 or younger) and their preferences for how to receive their genome sequencing results. Those results include the absence or presence of a known BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation, which is hereditary and predicts an increased risk of breast or ovarian cancer.

"Genomic advances have the potential to revolutionize health care, but reaching the potential of this information to improve patients' health means that we have to be able to communicate it to patients and the public in ways that are understandable and useful," she emphasized.

As genetic and genomic testing capabilities continue to advance and patients are given greater access to difficult and complex information, cutting-edge health communication research like Dr. Kaphingst's becomes more and more crucial for both providers and patients. 🦋



Matt Haber

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy
Chair, Department of Philosophy



Matt Haber, associate professor of Philosophy, is chair of one of the top Philosophy departments in the country. His work, and one of the key specialties of his department, lies at the intersections of philosophy and science.

"In much the same way that a good film critic can help directors make better movies, a good philosopher of science can help scientists do better science. In that regard, we are science critics," he said. "We explain why a particular study, experiment, or paper is an example of good science, or, more critically, why it falls short. The better we can understand why something is good or bad science, the better we can hope to do good science moving forward."

Haber describes himself as a philosopher of biology first and foremost, and said he can pinpoint

the exact day he determined that would be his expertise. "My first class on this day was 'Early Modern Philosophy,' where we were studying Descartes. We were discussing a famous passage where he identifies the pineal gland as the location of the soul. I was doubtful, and questioned this, in part because of the biology of the brain. My instructor responded that my question was 'more biological than philosophical.' My very next class was 'Population Biology,' where I remarked to my professor that her approach appeared to rely on a lot of assumptions about evolution I wasn't sure we should be making. She replied that my comment was 'more philosophical than biological.' I couldn't believe it!" Haber recalled. "She asked me to stick around after class, and proceeded to put me in touch with a very famous philosopher of biology on campus. As soon as I told him what happened, he just smiled and told me that I'd found my field."

As a philosopher of biology, Haber engages in conceptual debates in biology, draws on biology for insight into philosophy, identifies and assesses the conceptual commitments of biology, and acts as a science critic to help biologists. As an expert in two disciplines, he believes he can draw on biological examples in a sophisticated way, and in the best cases, gain new insight into problems in philosophy – some of which have been entrenched for hundreds or thousands of years.

"In much the same way that a good film critic can help directors make better movies, a good philosopher of science can help scientists do better science."

- Matt Haber

His recent work in paleontology illuminates the intersection between biology and philosophy in a profound way. Paleontologists study how much

species can change over time by asking the central question, "How much can something change before it becomes a new kind of thing?" Haber's philosophical approach to paleontology offers the idea that this is the wrong type of question to be asking. Instead, he explained it like this:

"If you want to know when something has become a new kind of thing in biology, it's not about how much it's changed, but how that change came about. Evolutionary systems can transform, often radically, without becoming a new thing. One might even say that this is just what it means to evolve. Organisms, similarly, can radically change as they go through stages of development. Think about caterpillars changing into butterflies, as one example. We don't count a new thing as having been produced just because it looks really different; we count a new thing when it is the product of a biological process that generates a new thing. Organisms generate new things when they reproduce; species generate new things when they speciate," he said.

More than anything, Haber believes the importance of the philosophy of science can be summarized in one big, driving question: what is good science?

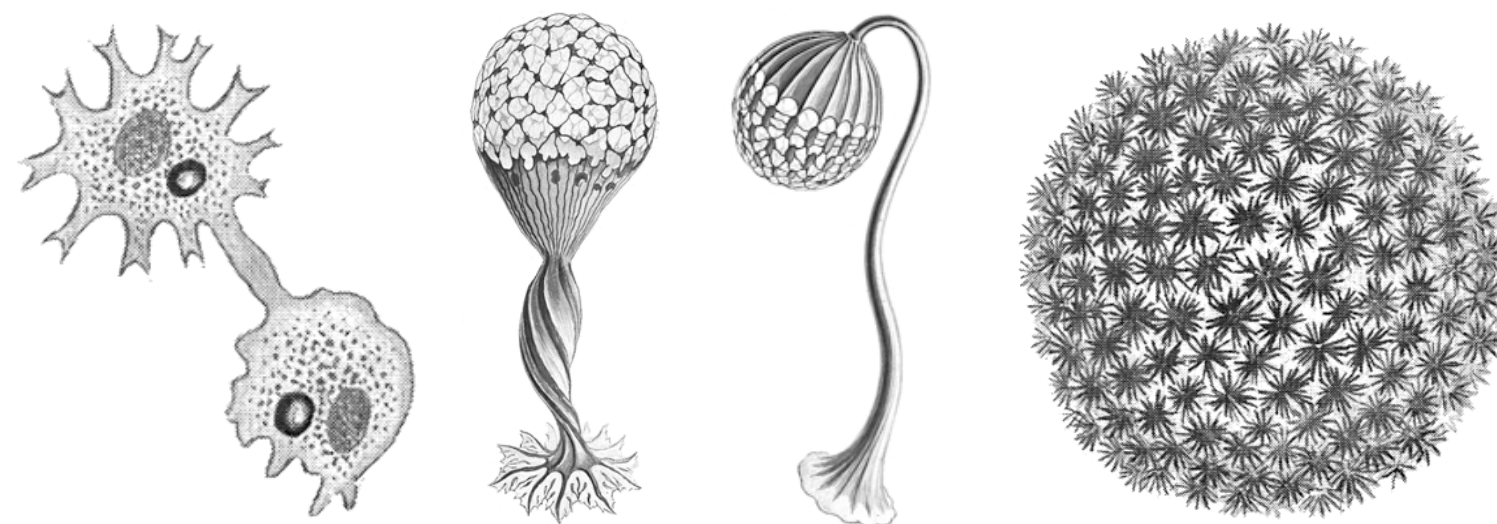
"Doing 'good science' is really important, and a big part of what philosophers of science do is to try and articulate precisely what good science entails. In the 20th century, this often meant trying to identify the scientific method," he said. "Recently, a lot of us

who are philosophers of science have argued that there isn't a single scientific method, but a number of different ways that scientists investigate the world. I argue that, in many cases, scientists need to use multiple methodologies to explore the same problem in order to do good science. Philosophers of science describe the strengths and weaknesses of different methods of investigation, often in conjunction with scientists, and help identify the conditions in which those various methods might be most fruitful. The end result is a sort of toolbox approach, where scientists can identify which method will be best suited for the problem at hand. That is what a philosopher of science does best."

In true philosophical form, Haber described this work as "the science of science." 🐦

"Doing 'good science' is really important, and a big part of what philosophers of science do is to try and articulate precisely what good science entails."

- Matt Haber



Matt Basso

Associate Professor, Department of History



Photo by Jeff Hanson

Matt Basso, associate professor of History and Gender Studies, has been named the State Scholar for the Smithsonian Institution's *The Way We Worked*, a traveling Museum on Main Street exhibition that is in the middle of a year-long Utah tour. Ending in March 2018, the exhibition presented by Utah Humanities was created by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Archives and examines the strength and spirit of American workers through archival images and compelling videos and interviews. As the tour makes its way through the state, Utahns will come to understand how work is a key component of Utah's identity as the "Beehive State."

Basso's expertise in and passion for labor history and the history of the West serves the exhibition and the state of Utah well. He has committed his time to helping train local community historians in telling their communities' stories of labor while they prepare to host the exhibition.

"I've absolutely loved getting to know public historians all around Utah as I've worked on this project. It's been inspiring to see their commitment to telling the stories of their local communities and incredibly heartening to see their desire to grapple with the complexities of our past," Basso said.

"The history of work is a perfect example of how knowledge of each other's experiences and that of our ancestors can help us find commonality and

also address changes that would make our society stronger and more just. Virtually every Utahn has worked not just one, but many jobs. And certainly we know friends, family members, and ancestors that have done many other types of work," he explained. "I believe the more we read, think, and talk about those experiences, we will find joy in similar accomplishments, humor in related foibles, and a shared desire to address inequalities in the workplace."

The traveling exhibit, hosted in cities and towns throughout Utah, examines changes in the workplace between the mid-19th century, when 60 percent of Americans made their living as farmers, and the late 20th century. It features photographs, oral history, audio clips, flip books and stories that focus on the history of work in America and in Utah and document work clothing, locales, conditions and conflicts. The photographs and historic workplace moments will show how Americans have overcome challenges in the workplace.

"I've absolutely loved getting to know public historians all around Utah as I've worked on this project. It's been inspiring to see their commitment to telling the stories of their local communities and incredibly heartening to see their desire to grapple with the complexities of our past."

- Matt Basso

Megan van Frank, director of the Center for Community Heritage at Utah Humanities, believes free access to public humanities education strengthens individuals and communities in the state in powerful ways. "We work closely with the host

"It is essential that we know as much about our past as possible because the complexities, contradictions, triumphs, and tragedies that comprise that history profoundly shape who we are as individuals and as a society."

- Matt Basso

museums, helping to build their expertise in hosting a national exhibition. The entire experience directly strengthens Utah museums and helps to preserve and share Utah history." She said she has hope that "visitors to the exhibition will come away with a panoramic and personal view of how work has shaped the state of Utah as well as their personal lives. The exhibition is a unique opportunity for Utahns to tell their own work stories as part of local, state, and national conversations."


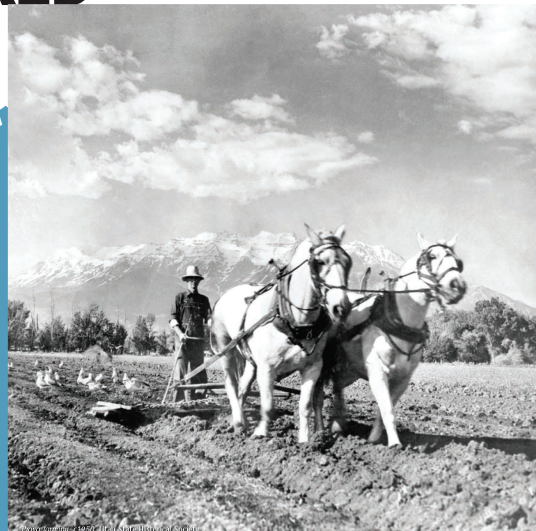
Basso's research and work in the history of the American West is centered upon his deeply held beliefs that historical understanding and knowledge are vital to our nation. "It is essential that we know as much about our past as possible because the complexities, contradictions, triumphs, and tragedies that comprise that history profoundly shape who we are as individuals and as a society," he said. "I strongly believe that only by understanding, acknowledging, and acting on this history can we build a better future for all of us."

In addition to spending the last year helping train local community historians, Basso also wrote a long interpretative essay about the history of work in Utah. The essay was co-authored with History Ph.D. student John Christensen, who is also penning a large number of "Beehive Archive" radio stories about Utah's work history. Five thousand copies of the essay have been printed by Utah Humanities and will be available at all of the six Utah museums hosting the tour, as well as online at utahhumanities.org.




Basso and the exhibit staff at the Ogden, Utah opening



The Way Utah Worked

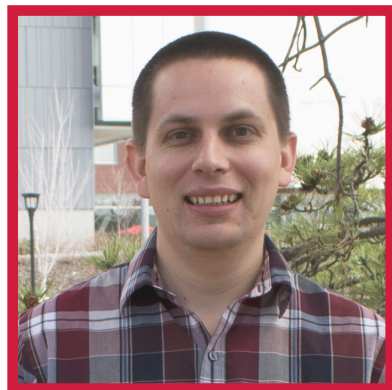
AN ESSAY BY MATTHEW BASSO AND JOHN PERRY CHRISTENSEN

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  **UTAH HUMANITIES**
Museum in Action

NEW FACULTY

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This year, the college was pleased to welcome
11 outstanding faculty members to our team.



Carlos Santana
Philosophy



Kya Mangrum
English



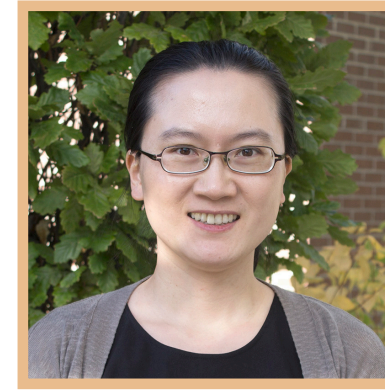
Diana Leong
English and
Environmental Humanities



Rachel Griffin
Communication



Talia Dajes
World Languages & Cultures



Tae Kyoung Lee
Communication



Julia Moore
Communication



Lisa Swanstrom
English



Noel Voltz
History



Leona Yi-Fan Su
Communication



Joshua Ewalt
Communication

Alumni

Our thousands of alumni tell us repeatedly that their Humanities degree made the decisive difference, giving them that extra edge that helped them succeed because they are excellent writers; critical, ethical, creative, and logical thinkers; multi-lingual and culturally sophisticated global citizens; empathetic and carefully trained listeners; skilled collaborators; and outstanding creative partners.



Sim Gill

B.A., Philosophy & History, 1987

Sim Gill has been the Salt Lake County District Attorney since his election in 2010 and has served as a public prosecutor for the past 23 years. He earned his bachelor's degree in Philosophy and History from the U in 1987 and went on to earn his law degree and certificate of specialization in Environmental and Natural Resources Law from Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark College. Some of the most high-profile work his office has handled, which Sim inherited, has been in the prosecution of Brian David Mitchell, Elizabeth Smart's kidnapper, as well as pursuing former Utah Attorneys General Mark Shurtleff and John Swallow, filing felony corruption and bribery charges against them in 2014.

As a veteran prosecutor, Sim has been a champion on issues of therapeutic justice, criminal prosecution, and alternatives to prosecution. He has long been an advocate of taking a "systems approach" to the issues of criminal and social justice by focusing on collaborative and community-oriented approaches to solving these problems. He credits much of that approach to his education in History and Philosophy, naming professors like the late Sterling McMurrin and Bill Whisner, as well as current History Professor Bob Goldberg. "Everything I have pursued in my professional life goes back to those individuals. Everything goes back to the College of Humanities," he said. "From the humanities, I learned how to live in my community, and I learned how to interact and affect the change I want to make in my community."

"I am a lawyer because I went to law school, but I am a public servant because I have a humanities background," he said.

"Critical thinking, abstract thinking, the ability to connect issues and ideas and blend them together and solve those intellectual puzzles – those are the gifts of education in the humanities."



Sim cites the ability to think critically as a key benefit of his undergraduate education. "Critical thinking, abstract thinking, the ability to connect issues and ideas and blend them together and solve those intellectual puzzles – those are the gifts of education in the humanities," he emphasized. "What you learn is how to think. That is something you carry with you for the totality of your existence. That really is the gift. Critical thinking and the analysis and creativity it fosters is something that can't be extracted out of you once you are exposed to it and practice it."

By first studying in the History Department and then heeding the advice of Professor McMurrin to earn a Philosophy degree as well, Sim said he "went from studying facts to studying the history of ideas, and then to applied philosophy – how do we take ideas and translate them in a meaningful, substantive way that impacts our lives? The natural application of that was law."

From this perspective of applied philosophy also came his interest in criminal justice reform, which he has been advocating for almost 20 years. "My hypothesis has been that when public policy makers fail to address the issues of social justice, economic justice, political access, education, poverty, or health issues, those public policy failures manifest themselves as deficits and crises in our community," he explained. "And historically, we have relied on the criminal justice system to respond to those crises in our community."

He says certain groups have been disproportionately impacted by that criminal justice response, including communities of color, minority populations, those that are often on the margins of economic poverty, generational poverty, and communities that often

- Sim Gill



do not have access to political power. As a result of that, he said the U.S. jails more human beings than any other country in the world.

To alleviate these pressing issues, Sim has collaborated on the creation and implementation of various therapeutic justice programs, including Mental Health Court, Salt Lake City Domestic Violence Court, Misdemeanor Drug Court, the Salt Lake Area Family Justice Center, and the Early Case Resolution program. "These alternatives seek to transition those offenders out of the criminal justice system who can most benefit from other programs, giving them a much greater chance to not re-offend," he explained.

Sim said this dependence on incarceration has been a poor investment, noting that two-thirds of all individuals who were locked up will be back behind bars within 36 months of release. "That is our stark reality," he said. "We are a culture of mass incarceration, where the criminalization of mental illness, drug addiction, poverty, and homelessness has become a norm response for our criminal justice system."

According to a 2015 report from the Urban Institute, more than half of all inmates in jails and state prisons suffer from mental illness, including depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, anxiety, PTSD and schizophrenia. "The single worst call that I ever took – and I've taken a lot of bad calls as a public prosecutor over the last 23 years – was a mother who called me up one day and said, 'Mr. Gill, what felonies does my son have to commit so I can get him into a mental health board? Because that is the only way we can get access to medical care.'"

Sim passionately argues that the criminalization of poverty and the criminalization of mental illness requires a different response than what has previously been administered. "Thankfully, we are starting to make that difference," he said. In 2001, Sim collaborated on a project to reform the way mental health is treated in the criminal justice system by launching the Mental Health Court. "We've been able to reduce recidivism rates from about 72% to about 19-22%," he said. "We have reduced costs. We have increased continuity of care. But we really have to recognize what a public policy challenge this is."

"That is the reality that we've had to deal with, but it is something we all have a role to play in," he emphasized. "I've done my part as a public prosecutor, and all of you have to do your role as people in this community and ask yourself if this is the system that we want."

The Department of Communication honored Sim with the 2017 Distinguished Service Award at its annual Awards Banquet in April. 🐦

"I am a lawyer because I went to law school, but I am a public servant because I have a humanities background."

- Sim Gill

Jennifer Napier-Pearce

B.A., English, 1991

Jennifer Napier-Pearce is the editor of *The Salt Lake Tribune*, which was awarded a 2017 Pulitzer Prize for local reporting for its series about campus sexual assault. Her career in journalism has taken many forms, including working as the *Tribune's* multimedia specialist, hosting its award-winning daily online video program, *Trib Talk*, and hosting the weekly radio news show *Behind the Headlines* on KCPW and Utah Public Radio. Prior to that, she served as news director, anchor, host and reporter at both KUER and KCPW.

Before embarking on her impressive journalism career, Jennifer considered becoming a teacher and earned her bachelor's degree in English from the U in 1991. Though teaching didn't feel like the right fit, she took a newswriting class, where she said she fell in love with reporting. She went on to earn her master's degree in journalism from Stanford University.

Always an avid reader and writer, Jennifer has been reminded of the power of journalistic reporting throughout her career. As a podcaster in 2004, "way before it was fashionable," Jennifer said a woman approached her and said she wanted to tell the story of her son who needed a cochlear implant, but her insurance wouldn't pay for it. "I decided to do a story on insurance coverage," she said. "I called up the insurance company and I was asking some questions about their rejection rates, about how many cochlear implants they've paid for, what were the criteria, etc. Hours later, the woman called me back and said 'the insurance company changed its mind.'"

"This was a solitary, little podcaster out there. That really showed me the power of what journalism can do. If one insignificant journalist can do that, think about what an entire news organization can do. And we've been able to witness that with *The Salt Lake Tribune*."

"...journalism can hold power accountable and can empower the powerless."

- Jennifer Napier-Pearce



Jennifer is proud of her staff for their hard work that led to the highly coveted Pulitzer Prize, which was awarded in April 2017. "They certainly didn't become journalists for the money! I'm telling you that!" she said. "They did it because they believe that stories change hearts and minds – that the pen truly is mightier than the sword; that journalism can hold power accountable and can empower the powerless."

In April 2016, the *Tribune* told stories of women on Utah college campuses who had the courage to come forward with their sexual abuse stories. Jennifer said, "That led to interviews with college administrators and with law enforcement. We did deep document dives, statistical analyses, and, as our reporters continued, more people trusted us with our research. In the end, I think it was 60 or 70 people who came forward with their stories."

She said the victories of this careful reporting became apparent over the next several months. "By October, BYU had changed their honor code to better protect sexual assault victims. Prosecutors had filed rape charges against a former Utah State University football player. Campuses across the state started a conversation about consent and how they can better prepare people who encounter sexual violence to come forward. And we're still not done. There are a lot of blanks to be filled in on this story. We're still litigating for more documents to fill in those blanks," she said. "This is the power of great journalism. This is why we need reporters out there asking these hard questions and digging for answers."

The Department of Communication awarded Jennifer its Service to Journalism Award at its annual Awards Banquet in April 2017. 🐦

Marlene von Friederichs-Fitzwater

Ph.D., Communication, 1987

Marlene von Friederichs-Fitzwater has a long list of credits to her name. In 2016, she retired as an associate professor at the University of California, Davis, School of Medicine, where she had also been the director of outreach research and patient education for its Comprehensive Cancer Center. In 2005, she retired as a professor from California State University, Sacramento after 20 years, which included six years as chair of its Communication Studies Department. In 1989, she founded the Health Communication Research Institute, and through that nonprofit, she is now embarking on a new career to address homelessness and health disparities by creating Joshua's House, a hospice house for the terminally ill homeless in Sacramento.

Marlene's path to these incredible accomplishments was not an easy one. She had her first child at age 18 and went on to raise four sons, largely as a single mother. In her late 30s, she became the first in her family to earn a bachelor's degree and did it all while battling advanced cervical cancer. She then earned her doctorate in the U's Communication Department in her early 40s. Needless to say, she faced plenty of barriers to furthering her education and finding career success.

"I want to give women in similar situations – those who are struggling or who didn't start college at a young age – the encouragement that you can do it."

- Marlene von Friederichs-Fitzwater

"I want to give women in similar situations – those who are struggling or who didn't start college at a young age – the encouragement that you can do it," she said, noting that many people questioned her desire to earn graduate degrees in her 30s and 40s. "So many people said, 'What are you doing that for? You'll work 10-15 years, so why waste your money and time?'" she said. "I have taught now for



35 years since then! I'm so grateful for my education at the U. Every member of the faculty was very supportive, even at my older age, and very encouraging."

Though she originally intended to specialize in journalism during her master's degree at the University of Nebraska, Marlene's focus was turned to health communication due to her own diagnosis with advanced cervical cancer and the reactions from those around her. "What I found interesting was that the worse my prognosis got, the less even health care professionals wanted to be around me. I sort of understood my friends withdrawing because it was a difficult time, but why nurses and doctors? I made a pact with myself that if I survived, I wanted to learn more about that."

Health communication was a new field in the '80s, and Marlene learned there was a woman with a degree in Communication who was teaching at the U of U Medical School. "That's what I wanted to do," she said. Marlene applied and was accepted to the U's Communication graduate program, where the woman whose path she hoped to follow, Elaine Litton, became her mentor in doctor-patient communication. "I did my doctoral work on doctor-patient communication when the patient is dying," Marlene said. "It all came together so beautifully. I value that experience so much."

While finishing her doctorate, she taught at the University of Southern Colorado and was recruited by CSU Sacramento in 1985 to help create their health communication minor. Shortly after, UC Davis School of Medicine asked her to join their volunteer clinical faculty, where she taught medical students doctor-patient communication skills and the ability to gather patient medical history. When she joined the UC Davis School of Medicine in 2005, she led the outreach research for its NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. "Because I was a cancer survivor, that was very near and dear to my heart," she said. "That's also where I first became aware of what happens when you have cancer and you're homeless."


Marlene was working with newly diagnosed cancer patients when she found out some of her patients were homeless. "There were no 24-hour shelters and not enough medical beds. I listened to the discharge planners and doctors and nurses who were so upset about that," she said. "Here's someone who has gone through chemo, so their immune system is compromised, and they have to be discharged back to the streets."

In 2014, this problem became much more personal. Marlene was heartbroken to learn that her 34-year-old grandson had died while homeless in Omaha, Nebraska, after struggling with drug/alcohol addiction. "When he was clean and sober, he'd talk to me about wanting to do something with his life to help other people, especially those on the streets with serious illnesses," Marlene said. "I felt like I wanted to do something to address this issue in his honor. Every day, I feel like he's guiding me."

Marlene has since dedicated herself to the creation of a hospice for the terminally ill homeless in Sacramento, which she named in her grandson's honor: Joshua's House. The facility is modeled after The Inn Between in Salt Lake City. Joshua's House will hold 10 private rooms with the possibility to expand for another 15-20 beds. It is being created as a group home with a manager, staff and nurses, and local hospitals and hospices have signed on to provide hospice care to the residents. With the help of a congresswoman, the city mayor, a city council member, private donors, churches and a long list of volunteer doctors, nurses and medical students, Marlene is thrilled Joshua's House is becoming a reality.

She integrates the humanities into her work with terminally ill homeless people, including emphasizing literature, art, music, and writing therapy. "This is important so people can not only experience healing for their souls, but also so they can leave something behind, like art or poetry. Those experiencing homelessness say they feel like they're invisible, like no one will notice if they die. We will give them a chance through the arts to heal themselves and to let others know their lives mattered."

Marlene says her new, post-retirement career in creating this hospice has reinvigorated her. "One of the things I kept thinking about is that I was terrified to retire. I need a reason to get up, a purpose. Joshua's House gave me that purpose. Now, I say I am not retired, I am rewired."

Learn more about Joshua's House at thehcrci.org. 



Student Profiles

Every year, thousands of outstanding students select a major or minor in the College of Humanities at the University of Utah. The very foundations of this great University reside in the humanities, such that the study of literature, languages, history, philosophy, writing, linguistics, and communication have provided the core curriculum for every student for generations. Thus, we are a path well-traveled, but one that is constantly adapting to a rapidly shifting world.

After graduation, our students not only lead lives of extraordinary fulfillment, but they also truly excel at whatever they choose to do.



Mayan Jasim Mallah

Senior, International Studies

Nothing can stop **Mayan Jasim Mallah**, an Iraqi refugee who came to Utah in 1996, from getting an education – not even war. She proved it in May 2017 when she became one of the first female Kurdish refugees in Salt Lake City to earn a bachelor's degree. She graduated with a degree in International Studies from the U, which she says is the culmination of all her dreams and goals.

"Education is life. It brings you from dark to light; from sickness to health. I've had to quit school due to war. I've had to escape my school and my city more than once. And I am so grateful to say I have now graduated with a bachelor's degree," she reflected with pride.

Mayan, her husband, and her three daughters live and work in Salt Lake City. In addition to her schooling, she has been interning at the English Skills Learning Center and working at Utah Refugee Connection. Two of her daughters attend Salt Lake Community College and are planning to transfer to the U, and her youngest daughter is a junior in high school. Her husband works in catering at a downtown hotel.

Looking into Mayan's eyes as she speaks about the atrocities she experienced in Iraq and the unforeseen trials of leaving her homeland to never return, it is easy to see that education has given her hope and opportunities she never could have imagined. She came to Salt Lake City in 1996 as a refugee with a one-year-old baby girl, and in May 2017, that same daughter graduated from Salt Lake Community College as her mother graduated from the U.

"If we have no knowledge of our history, we'll relive it. We can move forward with education. With education is victory. With education is life."

- Mayan Jasim Mallah



Mayan, who was the first recipient of a Barbara Tanner Scholarship in Humanities at the U, knew she wanted to pursue a degree in International Studies from the moment she stepped on campus after transferring from Salt Lake Community College. "I went through the struggles of being an immigrant, and I want to help others to not have to experience some of the pain I had to," she explained. "Being able to study about different cultures and ethnicities, histories, and cultural problems like racism and economic inequality is so important. If you understand people and their backgrounds, you won't be afraid of them. You'll know how to best help them."

Studying the humanities is vital, she said. "Being a student in the College of Humanities has helped me learn and be able to help others learn that we are all human. We are all born and we all pass away. If you understand people and their cultures, you learn that people aren't evil. Their situations and their environment create violence, but people

are good. In my major, I've learned so much about politics, economics, inequality, and how to help people out of their suffering."

Her dream job falls perfectly in line with her education and her personal experiences: serving and educating refugees. She would love to teach English to adult students and work with organizations that serve refugees in the US and abroad. Going overseas to work with the UN or a partnering organization would be ideal, she said.

For Mayan, gaining an education from the U has been a dream come true. She truly believes education is the key to freedom. "If we have no knowledge of our history, we'll relive it," she said. "We can move forward with education. With education is victory. With education is life." 🕊



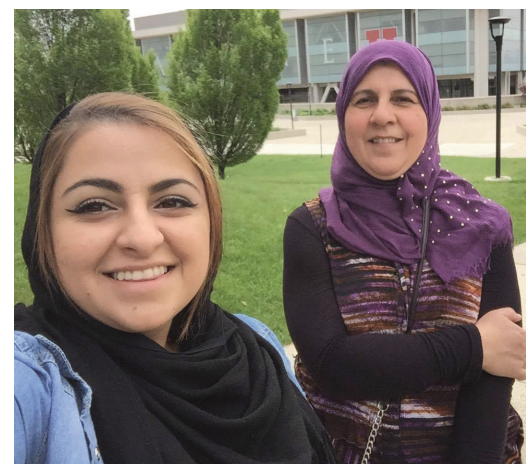
Barbara Tanner and Mayan

"Being a student in the College of Humanities has helped me learn and be able to help others learn that we are all human. We are all born and we all pass away. If you understand people and their cultures, you learn that people aren't evil. Their situations and their environment create violence, but people are good. In my major, I've learned so much about politics, economics, inequality, and how to help people out of their suffering."

- Mayan Jasim Mallah



Mayan and her three daughters



Daniel Ybarra

Senior, Communication, Middle East Studies, and Writing & Rhetoric Studies

Daniel Ybarra is quickly becoming an expert on all things humanities. He is triple majoring in three Humanities majors (Communication, Middle East Studies, and Writing & Rhetoric Studies), lives in the Humanities House on campus, and is among the star competitors of the top debate team in the country housed right here at the U, the John R. Park Debate Society. He is also the winner of the U's prestigious Steffensen-Cannon Scholarship for the 2017-'18 school year.

Daniel was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, and first discovered his love of debate while attending Rio Hondo Community College in LA county. "Forensics challenges me to communicate critical theories, develop techniques in communicating my arguments, and allows me to advocate for diversity – of voices, people, and ideas – within my community," he explained.

"I chose the University of Utah because of the John R. Park Debate Society. When I first attended the U's college tournament in 2014, I was both charmed by the campus and enamored with the presence of the competitors from across the nation," he reflected. "I was certain that I wanted to be involved with this university – it attracted me instantly."

"Forensics challenges me to communicate critical theories, develop techniques in communicating my arguments, and allows me to advocate for diversity – of voices, people, and ideas – within my community."

- Daniel Ybarra

The Debate Society hosts a number of forensics tournaments that serve Utah high schools and universities, as well as out-of-state institutions. In addition, the team regularly competes against



collegiate forensics programs from across the nation, and is in the national spotlight as a top competitor every year. In 2017, they became national champions for the first time in history. For Daniel, the Debate Society offers an unmatched opportunity to hone his communicative skills, form clear and concise arguments on both sides of issues, and compete with teammates he'll cherish for a lifetime.

Daniel said he has gained much from immersing himself in so many humanities fields. His triple majors in Communication, Middle East Studies, and Writing and Rhetoric Studies contribute to a worldview and self-confidence he could not have fathomed before setting foot on campus.

"I believe a background in the humanities bridges every gap in society. I have sharpened my skills as a leader by learning from excellent models of pedagogy. My professors' criticisms are well received and without question I know they are critical for my development as a member of a global community," he explained. "The course work is an interactive experience for me. I have

gained a definite respect for all walks of life and I am always seeking out new experiences to diversify my thinking."

In an effort to expand his worldview, he will travel to Tajikistan for a study abroad program in summer 2017 to immerse himself in another language and culture. Funded by a Foreign Language and Area Studies scholarship he received from the College of Humanities, he will study Farsi and earn eight college credits for this immersive course. "I plan to integrate everything I have learned as a student of the humanities and absorb as much information as I can of the Tajik culture. It is an experience of a lifetime and reinforces the fact that studying the humanities is the path to discovery and understanding. I learn how to relate to others. I learn from the experiences of my professors and colleagues. The humanities is overflowing with rich experiences that satisfy my soul."

"I believe a background in the humanities bridges every gap in society. I have sharpened my skills as a leader by learning from excellent models of pedagogy."

- Daniel Ybarra



Daniel speaking at the 2017 Distinguished Alumni Luncheon

Daniel will apply for the Conflict Resolution Graduate Certificate Program in the College of Humanities, where he said he will learn to better facilitate how to discover shared interests between opposing parties. In fall 2017, he will apply to become a Fulbright Scholar and attend the University of Amsterdam to earn a master's degree in Conflict Resolution and Governance. He said he has a dream of facilitating conversations of understanding between atheists, Christians, and Muslims within the United States that would be centered on culture and community. "I hope to practice the traditions of storytelling to spark better understanding of others' lifestyles. I want to moderate open discussions to find common links between our differing interests and backgrounds," he explained. "I believe shared interests of all sorts will be essential tools, uniting ourselves in this country, and creating friendships with people across the world."

"I am not a theologian by discipline; I am a budding communication scholar who hopes to practice these methods I've learned to create dialogue between groups that will subvert tensions and bring much-needed perspectives to different situations. I want to see people be less afraid of one another, and I believe the College of Humanities has given me the tools to facilitate these types of uniting conversations," he said. 🐦



Daniel in front of the Humanities House

Alice Havrilla

Junior, World Languages & Cultures

Alice Havrilla has high hopes of becoming a polyglot, and by the time she graduates from the College's Department of World Languages & Cultures, she'll achieve her dream. Originally from Bologna, Italy, Alice has added English to her native tongue, Italian. She is double majoring in Spanish and French, the two romance languages she loves the most, and is well on her way to being fluent in four languages – officially a polyglot.

Before moving to the US three years ago, Alice said she wasn't exactly the best student. "In high school and at my Italian university, school just wasn't my priority. When I moved to be with my husband as he worked on his doctorate at the University of Virginia, I decided not to go to school and just work instead," she said. "However, when my husband's lab was transferred to the U and we came here, I decided it was time to change. I don't know exactly where the inspiration came from – maybe it was the amazing, modern campus or the mountainous scenery all around it – but I had matured and finally decided to make excelling in school my highest priority."



"...learning a second language allows you to learn more about various foreign cultures and puts you in other peoples' shoes. I think speaking multiple languages has made me a better speaker and writer in my own native language."

- Alice Havrilla

Alice believes choosing the right major in a field in which the student feels passionate is key to her success and that of her classmates. "At my old university, I was studying economics and finance because I thought I would have more career opportunity in doing so," she reflected.

"But my heart had always been with languages, especially ones that derive from Latin, like the romance languages. When I arrived at the U, I knew immediately that I wanted to study in the humanities and double major in French and Spanish."

She can also attest to the fact that her life and career perspectives are not limited by studying language – they are multiplied. "Knowing at least one additional language is really important because it opens your mind and gives you a different way to look at things. It is particularly interesting if the two languages have common roots – one can see how each language evolved in a different way," she explained. "Moreover, learning a second language allows you to learn more about various foreign cultures and puts you in other peoples' shoes. I think speaking multiple languages has made me a better speaker and writer in my own native language. Being a better speaker has also given me confidence in myself, which is useful during group activities in which I tend to be the leader."

The benefits of studying language abound, she said. "Studying the humanities gives me a particular 'edge' in so many useful ways. Because of my language expertise, I am able to understand and communicate with foreigners who speak a language I don't know as their first language and some English as their second language better than native English speakers. The reason why I am able to do this is because learning languages has made me a more patient listener, and more able to understand the struggles of people who are learning a foreign language. Thus, knowing multiple languages allows me to make connections that otherwise I wouldn't be able to see."

Alice plans to become an interpreter to make it possible for people who don't speak the same language to be able to connect with one another, as well as a teacher or professor of a second language to teach future generations the importance of expanding their horizons. With four languages under her belt, she should have plenty of career prospects from which to choose. 🦋



Digital Matters Lab



The University of Utah has a long and distinguished history as a leader in computer science and in the development of advanced digital technologies, with famous alumna including Ed Catmull, John Warnock, and Alan Kay. But few may know that the University is fast building its strength and a distinctive reputation as a leader in an area that has become known as the Digital Humanities.

In October 2016, the College of Humanities partnered on the launch of the Digital Matters Lab, a joint venture with the Marriott Library, the College of Fine Arts, and the College of Architecture and Planning. The Digital Matters Lab, currently located on the second floor of the Marriott Library as a “pop-up” space, provides the setting for teaching, research, creative work, tool development, and critical examination of work in the humanities, arts, and design that is enhanced by the use of computational tools.

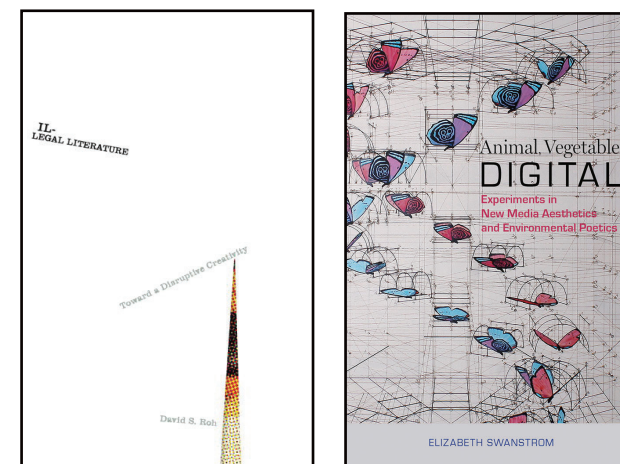
The concept for the Digital Matters Lab developed as the College of Humanities began hiring faculty with expertise in the burgeoning field of digital humanities. Simply put, digital humanities can be

defined as any kind of work in the humanities that is computationally enhanced, or that engages in critical inquiry of the digital world. Thus, this work may include the use of mapping software, the creation and use/manipulation of digital archives and data sets, the creation of sophisticated visualizations to analyze historical or textual patterns, and the analysis of very large corpora of digitized texts to search for patterns that can shape new ways



of understanding literary genres or periods. These are just a few examples in what has become a rapidly growing, exciting, and very broad field of inquiry.

Recent faculty hires in the English Department brought two digital humanities specialists to the College of Humanities: David Roh (hired in 2015) and Lisa Swanstrom (hired in 2016). Professors Roh and Swanstrom are central to the creation and planning of this new lab space. Professor Roh created and led a faculty steering committee that generated a vision and mission statement for the Digital Matters Lab, as well as overseeing the realization of the lab space. Roh's current initiatives include development of a digital humanities software project, and an online critical platform centered on e-books. Both Roh and Swanstrom have recently published books that are advancing new ways of understanding the digital humanities.



Roh's Book *Illegal Literature: Toward a Disruptive Creativity*

Swanstrom's Book *Animal, Vegetable, Digital: Experiments in New Media Aesthetics and Environmental Poetics*

Swanstrom is also part of the Digital Humanities Research Interest Group that meets regularly to discuss contemporary research and share works in progress. The group members employ different methodologies, ranging from text analysis to the use of GIS (Geographic Information System) to the cultural critique of digital objects, but they are all interested in thinking critically about new media technology. The group has also been using the Digital Matters space to plan future events,



Lisa Swanstrom



David Roh

symposia, curricular developments, and to help plan its permanent headquarters once funding is secured to build out the larger space that will ultimately be required for the kinds of projects envisioned for this multi-college collaborative effort. “The lab has been a fantastic space for collaboration, interdisciplinary conversations about digital culture, and an absolute gift in terms of pedagogy,” noted Swanstrom. “I have now taken three classes to visit the lab to explore virtual reality environments, which is a wonderful way to access works of film and literature that imagine virtual spaces.”

The newly established lab also brings a cohesive research identity in digital humanities, digital arts, and digital design to the University of Utah campus, and to the greater region. Future plans include convening workshops and symposia, organizing exhibits, and creating lecture series related to the capacious mission of the Lab. The Digital Humanities Lab Steering Committee already hosted a Digital Humanities Symposium, “DHU2,” this past February which brought many scholars from across the Mountain West region to our campus.

The Marriott Library recently completed a feasibility study that assessed the long-term space needs of the Digital Matters Lab. Our goal is to create a space that will facilitate cutting edge, innovative, distinctive work that will advance scholarship and teaching across the arts, humanities, and design, becoming a leader in this still emerging and rapidly changing realm. 🦋

COLLEGE HIGHLIGHTS

2016-2017



New College Leadership As of July 2017

Danielle Endres, *Chair of Communication*
Scott Black, *Chair of English*
Scott Jarvis, *Chair of Linguistics*
Nathan Devir, *Director of Religious Studies and Middle East Center*
Hugh Cagle, *Director of International Studies*



39

Books Published
and in Progress



104

Awards



19

Grants and
Fellowships

In October 2016, President Obama announced his intent to nominate 5 individuals to key administration posts. Dean Dianne Harris was nominated to serve as a member of the National Council on the Humanities.



The University of Utah has been invited to join the ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) Research University Consortium. This select group of prominent institutions plays a vital leadership role in helping to sustain and enhance the national infrastructure of humanities research.



John R. Park Debate Society Earns National Championship



The Debate Society with their
National Championship trophy

The University of Utah's John R. Park Debate Society won the season-long national championship awarded by the National Parliamentary Debate Association and also finished in sixth place (first in Pac-12) at the NPDA National Championship Tournament held in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

"This year's success in the season-long rankings marks a historic level of success for the John R. Park Debate Society and cements the U as the most successful collegiate debate program in the state," said Michael Middleton, director of the Debate Society. "The staff and students of the Debate Society could not be more thrilled to have helped achieve this accomplishment on behalf of the U."

The overall rankings, which determine the season-long championship, are based on points earned from tournaments throughout the year. This year, the U broke the record for most points earned in a single season by a public institution and established the second-highest point total in the NPDA's history, solidifying the number one position. Importantly, these rankings are a squad-wide honor reflecting the overall strength of the U's 18 active debaters.

"I am very proud of my team," said Alex Cadena, a senior on the team. "We are a young and large squad compared to other schools. For the team to come together, work together and encourage

each other to achieve the top ranking is a tremendous success. My experience on this team has been life-changing. I transferred from a small community college with the intention of competing on the John R. Park Debate Society. The two years I've spent on the team have been one of the steepest learning curves I have ever experienced. This team has the greatest coaching staff in the nation. My coaches invested countless hours into my education. They cared about my success as a person, not just as a competitor," added Cadena.

"For the team to come together, work together and encourage each other to achieve the top ranking is a tremendous success."

- Alex Cadena

Founded in 1869, the John R. Park Debate Society has hosted biannual forums for the past several years in an effort to educate the public and to facilitate civil dialogue about contentious political and social issues, as well as high school clinics for area schools and a summer forensics institute that includes more than 100 participants from more than a dozen states. 🌱

Skiing for Scholarships

On March 1, 2017, the College of Humanities hosted its inaugural Skiing for Scholarships event to raise funds for underrepresented students to receive scholarships. The fundraiser was held at Brighton Ski Resort, where attendees got to ski alongside Dean Dianne Harris, the national championship winning Utah Ski Team, and the U's mascot, Swoop. With a portion of proceeds from ticket sales, donations, and an auction for ski swag, Humanities raised nearly \$10,000 to support deserving students.

The first Humanities Skiing for Scholarships award winner is Jose Soto, a Communication student and member of the Park Debate Society who immigrated from Venezuela. He received a \$2,500 scholarship, a free annual ski pass to Brighton, and a free season of ski lessons for the upcoming year. "Thanks to this scholarship, I can complete my degree. I can also embrace a part of Utah's culture



Skiing for Scholarships recipient Jose Soto
Photo by Whitney Meecham



Dean Harris with members of the U Ski Team



I have been unable to participate in before. Being able to learn to ski is exciting and gives me the opportunity to finally participate in a cornerstone of Utah's culture," Soto said.

Soto, who has personally won a debate tournament and is part of the top debate team in the country, maintains a high GPA and is described by his professors as "thoughtful, self-reflexive, and a natural leader." He has also distinguished himself as a poet and is preparing for the National Poetry Slam, where he will represent the U on the SLC Slam Poetry Team.

Many congratulations to Jose Soto for winning the first annual College of Humanities Skiing for Scholarships Award!



Dean Harris with the U of U mascot Swoop

MAY 2017 GRADUATING CLASS

985

Graduates

3.41

Average
Undergraduate GPA

999

Degrees Awarded

230

Minors Awarded

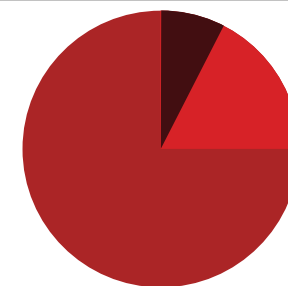
20
YOUNGEST
GRADUATE



Age Range



68
OLDEST
GRADUATE



10.05%
Out of State
17.16%
Resident
Changed
72.79%
In State

43.65%

MEN

56.14%

WOMEN

0.2%

UNDISCLOSED

43 GRADUATES
ACCEPTED TO
GRAD SCHOOL

34

International
Students

1

Graduate from
University Asia
Campus

2

Humanities
House
Graduates

167

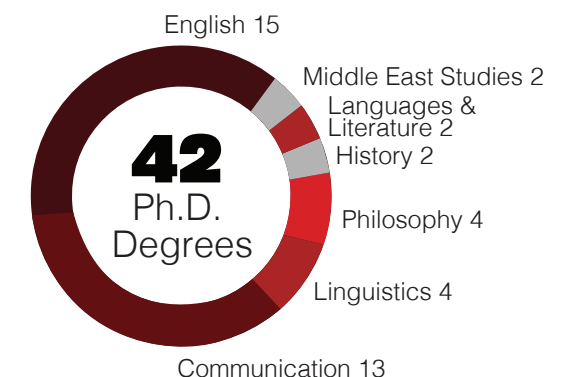
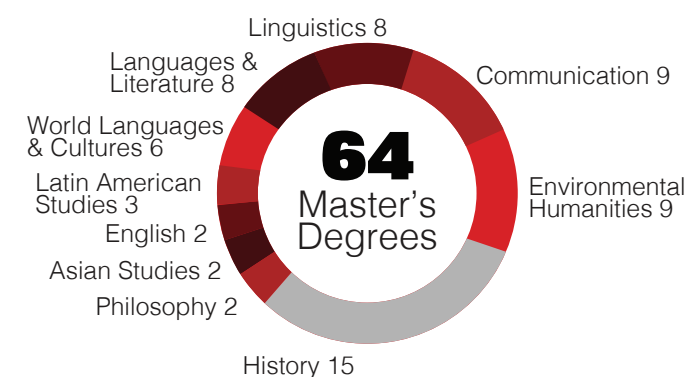
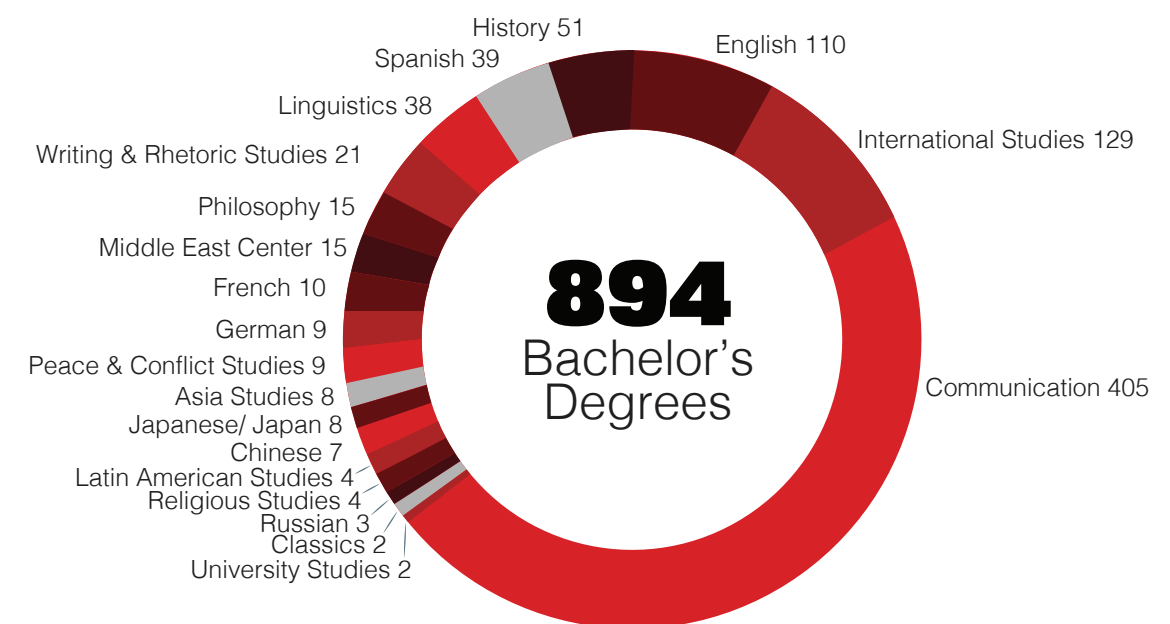
Scholarships
Awarded
This Year

58

Students
Graduating
with Honors

28

Honors
Students



Distinguished Alumni

2017

Tracy McMillan

B.A., Communication, 1989

On May 4, 2017, the College of Humanities presented a Distinguished Alumna award to Tracy McMillan, who graduated with a Communication degree from the U in 1989 and has spent the years since establishing her career as a TV writer, news producer, best-selling author, TV personality, and relationship expert.

McMillan's studies in the Department of Communication helped her secure an internship at KSL News before moving on to NBC Nightly News, for a total of 15 years writing and producing TV news. She followed that with a career transition to writing film, books, and TV, including the hit shows *Mad Men* and *Good Girls Revolt*, and three best-selling books.

Her revealing insight on love and self-worth earned her a guest spot on Oprah's couch in early 2014, where the Utah alum spoke candidly with Oprah about relationships and spirituality. Her 2014 viral TED talk, "The Person You Really Need to Marry," has attracted more than 6 million views. As an advocate of so many things the humanities represents – eloquent writing, critical thinking, masterful communication – McMillan has used her humanities degree to empower, uplift, and educate millions.

During her acceptance speech at the annual Humanities Distinguished Alumni & Scholars event held at the Rice-Eccles Stadium Tower, McMillan said the University of Utah holds a special place in her heart and life story. "Some of the most



Tracy McMillan, Dianne Harris, and Humanities Partnership Board Chair Kathryn Lindquist

interesting and free-thinking people I've ever met were right here on this campus. And I tell them that's because a strong culture creates an equally strong counter-culture, which made for a truly rich working, living and learning environment," she said. "I tell people about how I, a former foster child with no family and no safety net, was able to get a Pell Grant and pay my way through school in a safe, clean, and beautiful city. And if none of that communicates just how awesome the U of U is, I tell them about fry sauce, and that usually does it." She also discussed how her education impacted her future decisions and career: "It's actually a testament to what humanities education can do that I'm even standing here. To put it simply, a humanities degree can do anything for you, and you can do anything with it. If you were to ask me what a humanities education is about, I would say that at its essence

it's about being human. What makes us human, how we express being human, the history of being human, the whole human situation. When you study the humanities, you start to examine life, and when you examine life, you start living in a deeper alignment, and then this influences every decision that you make," she reflected.

"You don't study the humanities because in the end you get a job; you study the humanities because it gives you something much bigger than that. What it gives you is a self. A self that continues to unfold throughout your life and can take you places you never even dreamed of going."

- Tracy McMillan



"Studying the humanities gives you guts. It also allows you to live in nuance and complexity. I would end up discovering that this university completely prepared me to get a job in my field – TV news. I moved to Portland, started working as a producer in television news, and within four years I was in New York City writing for Tom Brokaw," she added. "But my humanities education was about way more than a job. It gave me tools, knowledge, critical thinking, reasoning, and language skills that I can deploy any number of ways, and I have."

McMillan concluded her speech with inspiring remarks about the value of her degree. "The way my life and career has unfolded is a pretty perfect example of the value of studying humanities. You don't study the humanities because in the end you get a job; you study the humanities because it gives you something much bigger than that. What it gives you is a self. A self that continues to unfold throughout your life and can take you places you never even dreamed of going," she said. "You get to develop who you are, what you think, and what you offer that no one else can, and you get to live according to your own values, and let others live according to theirs. You get to be yourself. And when you know who you are, there are truly no limits on what you can do." 🌱



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