Three Psychology Students Selected for Annual College Awards

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Three students from the Utah State University Department of Psychology were selected for annual awards from the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services (CEHS). Each awardee is also nominated for the university award in their respective categories.

Juan Estrada: CEHS Graduate Teacher of the Year

“Initially, I couldn’t believe that I had won,” said Juan Estrada, a fourth-year doctoral student in the Combined Clinical/Counseling specialization under the mentorship of Dr. Renee Galliher. “There are some incredible candidates and teachers in the college.”

Estrada has taught five semesters of courses for the psychology department, including Introduction to Psychology, Behavioral Assessment and Intervention, and Psychology of Gender. Estrada was nominated by his fellow graduate student, Sallie Mack, for his commitment to teaching excellence and passion for diversity and inclusion. Before arriving at Utah State, Estrada worked as an elementary English teacher for a traveling teaching program in Southeast Asia. Estrada also spent time as a member of Teach for America in North Carolina.

“I truly loved Juan’s class and the knowledge I gained from it,” said Cazlyn Hamilton, a Utah State undergraduate student. “Juan encouraged each student to dig deep and give heartfelt and thoughtful comments. He made me feel heard and valued.”

In the future, Estrada hopes to be a clinical director and combine his passions for therapy and teaching. “Ideally, I’d have a position where I can teach, supervise, and provide mental health services,” said Estrada.

Whitney Livingston: CEHS Doctoral Student Researcher of the Year

Whitney Livingston is a fifth-year doctoral student in the Combined Clinical/Counseling specialization under the mentorship of Dr. Rebecca Blais and Dr. Jamison Fargo. Livingston is also a Presidential Doctoral Research Fellow (PDRF) through the Office of Research. Her research interests revolve around examining how sexual harassment or assault that occurs during military service relates to posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, alcohol- and substance-use disorders, sexual dysfunction, and suicide risk in veterans.

Livingston has participated in many research projects, resulting in 18 peer-reviewed publications (including four first-author publications), four oral presentations, and nine poster presentations. As a PDRF, Livingston is active in the USU research community, serving as a Student Research Symposium undergraduate poster reviewer, Undergraduate Research and Creative Opportunities Grants reviewer, and personal mentor to undergraduate students.

“I am grateful to my advisors, Drs. Becky Blais and Jamison Fargo, for providing me with numerous research opportunities,” said Livingston. “I also appreciate the research support from the Psychology Department, Stat Studio, and USU, as well as those who were willing to consult on statistical methods throughout my graduate education.”

In the future, Livingston hopes to have a career through the Veterans Administration where she can continue her research and engage in clinical work for veterans who have experienced trauma.

Hannah Johnson: CEHS Undergraduate Student Researcher of the Year

“I was really surprised that I was chosen,” said Hannah Johnson, undergraduate researcher of the year. “My second thought was how grateful I am for the opportunities I have been given at USU.”

Johnson was nominated by her research mentor, Dr. Amy Odum, for her work on a project examining the relation between learned behavioral variability and depression. Odum praised Johnson’s work, which is funded by an
Undergraduate Research and Creative Opportunity grant, calling it “one of the most innovative and potentially impactful projects” she has seen.

Johnson is pursuing admission into a behaviorally-focused clinical program where she can continue her research translating behavior analysis to therapeutic techniques. Johnson would like to thank her faculty mentor, Dr. Amy Odum, and her graduate student mentor, Jennifer Krafft.

“Amy gave me a spot in her lab where I was included and valued,” said Johnson. “Jen continually helps me find a clear path to achieve my goals.”