

SUU SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY

College of Humanities & Social Sciences



Dean's Corner Message Dean Jean Boreen

Greetings from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. There is a great deal happening on campus and in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and I encourage you to participate in as many activities on campus as you can. And when you're on campus, please see this as an invitation to come up to the Dean's Office in Braithwaite and introduce yourself.

This newsletter focuses primarily on our HSS Study Abroad trips from Spring/Summer 2024. These trips provide amazing opportunities for our students to travel abroad under the guidance of faculty from our seven departments. As someone who leads one of these trips, I have seen firsthand the transformation in our students that comes from traveling in another country and experiencing art, music, culture and history from a difference perspective....

[Read more...](#)



Africa Adventure Student Study Abroad

Seven students and two trip directors spent almost three weeks in May, 2024, exploring the rich culture, wildlife and amazing people in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) and South Africa.

Dr. Jon Smith, SUU communication department and Anne Smith, SUU ORPT program, taught two courses, totaling six credits during the trip. Three in Communication with travel photography and three in eco-tourism in Outdoor Recreation in Parks and Tourism.

Participants had one-on-one visits with prominent community and business leaders including the U.S. Ambassador and the "Father of Conservation" in Eswatini. They stayed in a variety of lodging, ranging from safari tents, to thatched huts to hostels.

As part of an on-going humanitarian project, the group donated Lego blocks and worked with day-orphans to help increase their visual and spatial skills.

The group went on several walking and driving safaris, including walking with a mother and calf rhinoceros, viewing a pack of hyenas, and photographing many classic African animals like lions, elephants, giraffes, zebras, wildebeests and others.

To learn more about eco-tourism efforts and practice different challenges in photography, the group did physical activities including a canopy tour consisting of 11 ziplines and caving deep underground, viewing an underground river. The also did several game walks.

This was the sixth student trip that the Smiths have led to Africa from SUU. After living in Eswatini for a year serving as a Fulbright Scholar for the US State Department, the Smith's have wanted to share their life-changing experiences, including connections with prominent and influential colleagues and friends, with students and others.



HSS Learn on the Go

You're invited to come with us to explore Prague & Vienna!

October 2025

Join us for an unforgettable 8-night journey through the enchanting cities of Prague and Vienna, led by Dean Jean Boreen and Associate Dean Grant Corser. This immersive experience offers a unique opportunity to explore rich history, breathtaking architecture, and vibrant culture.

In Prague, travelers will explore the cobblestone streets of Old Town, visit the iconic Astronomical Clock, Prague Castle, Charles Bridge, and the Jewish Quarter. A day trip to the UNESCO-listed town of Kutna Hora adds to the adventure. Evenings will be filled with traditional Czech cuisine and lively nightlife.

The journey continues by train to Vienna, where travelers will admire Schönbrunn Palace, stroll along the

historic Ringstrasse, and visit the Sisi Museum, and St. Stephen's Cathedral. Art enthusiasts will enjoy world-class exhibits at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, while evenings offer time to savor Viennese pastries or attend a classical concert. An optional day trip to Salzburg is available.

The trip runs from October 11 to 19, 2025, with a cost of \$3,950 based on double occupancy, including 4 and 5-star accommodations, entrance fees, and some meals. A \$525 deposit is due by April 1, 2025, with an early bird discount of \$200 for deposits made before March 23. Final payment is due by June 15.

Spots are limited, so secure yours today. For more information and to register, visit suu.edu/hss/learn-on-the-go/.



Alumni Highlight

Kate Schmidt

We are thrilled to celebrate our amazing alumna, Kate Schmidt, who has recently been named the Program Outreach Administrator for the Utah Cultural Site Stewardship (UCSS) Program.

Kate, a 2024 graduate of Southern Utah University, earned a B.A. in Anthropology and English with a creative writing emphasis, along with an accidental English Literature minor. Throughout her time at SUU, Kate built an incredible foundation of experience, working as an interpretation intern at Zion National Park, an archaeological technician at Bryce Canyon, and a museum and archives intern with SUU's Special Collections. She also spent two summers leading outdoor recreation opportunities as a "rec ranger" for Yellowstone National Park's Youth Conservation Corps.

Now, Kate is bringing her passion and expertise back to Utah, where she's excited to contribute to the preservation and awareness of the state's cultural resources with UCSS.

Outside of work, Kate enjoys diving into art, music, and writing. When she's not indulging in fantasy and sci-fi novels, you might find her playing video games, watching animated shows, or tending to her giant spider plant, Saoirse, with her girlfriend and their cat, D'Artagnan.

Congratulations, Kate!



MPA Students in South Korea

Short Term Study Abroad Highlight

This last summer, 13 SUU Master of Public Administration students and alumni traveled to Seoul, South Korea, to explore public administration from a Korean perspective. Participants engaged with key institutions, such as the Korean Institute of Public Administration, universities including Dankook, Hanyang, and Seoul National, and local organizations supporting crime victims and North Korean defectors. A visit to the DMZ provided a powerful contrast between democratic and authoritarian governance.

Beyond academics, students immersed themselves in Korean culture by visiting Changdeokgung Palace, in traditional Hanbok attire, taking a cooking class, and experiencing vibrant street markets. The trip left a lasting impact, deepening their understanding of global public administration and strengthening their commitment to service.

The MPA study abroad program offers a unique opportunity to gain international insights and professional connections. We invite students and alumni to join us on future journeys.



Visiting Taiwan

Short Term Study Abroad Highlight

The Taiwan Study Abroad program provided students with an unforgettable opportunity to enhance their Mandarin language skills and immerse themselves in Taiwan's rich cultural heritage. Led by program directors Sandy Zhang and Kaili Brown, students explored vibrant cities like Taipei and smaller towns, engaging in real-life language practice and cultural experiences that deepened their understanding of Taiwanese society.

Highlights of the trip included attending specialized language sessions at the Mandarin Training Center at National Taiwan Normal University, where students gained valuable instruction from local teachers, and daily interactions with native speakers while navigating local transportation systems. One student shared, "Being in a Mandarin-speaking country and interacting with locals was incredibly helpful, and I feel my language skills have grown immensely."

Beyond language learning, students embraced Taiwan's unique traditions by participating in activities such as Chinese pottery workshops, visiting traditional temples, experiencing local teahouses, and exploring historic juancun villages, connecting classroom knowledge to real-world settings.

For many participants, this was their first international experience, and they overcame the challenges of communicating and navigating in a non-English environment with confidence. The trip left a lasting impact, with students expressing a desire to further their Mandarin studies and continue exploring Chinese culture.

We are proud of our students' achievements and look forward to offering this transformative experience again in the future.

Alumni Highlight

Behind the Smile by Diana Ward



Diana Ward, CPD, MS

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is proud to highlight the journey of alumna Diana Ward, CDP, MS, whose personal experiences and education have culminated in a powerful memoir, "Behind the Smile." This touching book chronicles Diana's journey as a mother navigating the challenges of raising a son with mental illness and addiction, tragically losing him to suicide in 2021.

Diana's time at SUU laid the foundation for her career in mental health and her eventual authorship. Earning her Bachelor of Science in Psychology while balancing life as a single mother of three, Diana discovered her passion for learning and helping others. She fondly remembers Dr. Ault, whose compassionate teaching style deeply

influenced her understanding of psychology.

"Attending Southern Utah University was very challenging for me," Diana reflects, "but it was also the most rewarding. I found my passion for psychology and my passion for learning." This passion propelled her to pursue a master's degree and begin doctoral studies in clinical psychology.

Diana's book, "Behind the Smile," aims to raise awareness and break the stigma surrounding mental health. She emphasizes that her education at SUU not only helped her navigate personal struggles but also equipped her to support her son and build a career in inpatient psychiatric care.

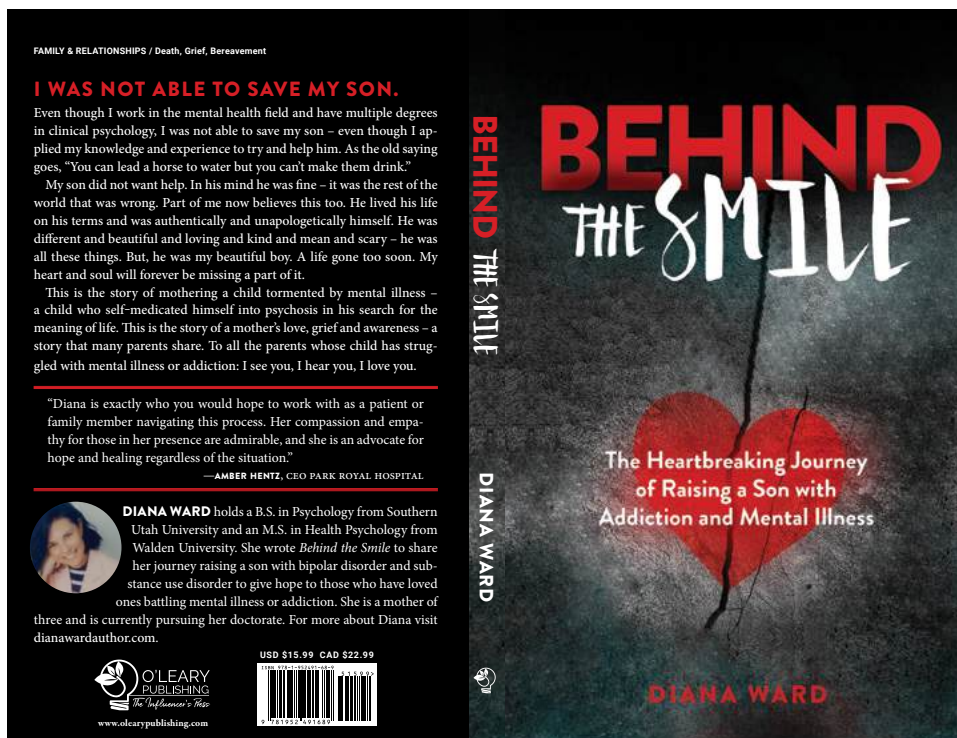
To aspiring authors and mental health professionals, Diana offers sage advice: "You must do it for the right reasons. It's a very difficult career path and not financially rewarding, but if you do it for the love of psychology and helping human beings, then absolutely do it!"

Diana's journey exemplifies the long-lasting impact of education. "Every single little moment at Southern Utah University and in my academic career has led me to where I am now," she says. "It's the compilation of all the little pieces of knowledge that you think don't actually help you. When they all come together in the end, you utilize them, and they become your critical thinking skills in everyday life."

While "Behind the Smile" marks Diana's debut as an author, she hints that another book is definitely in her future. Her story is a testament to the power of education, resilience, and the human spirit.

To learn more about Diana's work and connect with her, visit Dianawardauthor.com.

Diana Ward's journey from SUU student to published author reminds us all of the transformative power of education and the importance of sharing our stories to help others. Her courage in the face of personal tragedy and her commitment to mental health awareness serve as an inspiration to the entire SUU community.





HSS Award of Excellence

Awarded to Dr. Todd Petersen and Dr. Gretchen Ellefson

We are excited to announce the Fall 2024 HSS Awards of Excellence recipients in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, made possible by the generous support of Telton Hall and Kaden Keller from Advance Financial Planning.

This semester, we recognize Dr. Petersen and Dr. Ellefson for their outstanding contributions to research and teaching. Their dedication and expertise continue to inspire students and colleagues alike.

The HSS Awards of Excellence are presented three times a year to celebrate the incredible work within our college. Congratulations to Dr. Petersen and Dr. Ellefson on this well-deserved honor!

Embracing Spanish Culture in Madrid

Short Term Study Abroad Highlight

This summer, 22 Southern Utah University students immersed themselves in Spanish language and culture during a four-week study abroad program in Madrid. From May 19 to June 15, participants lived with host families and attended daily intensive language classes, earning 6-7 credits.

The "Language and Cultural Immersion in Spain" program offered a blend of academic study and cultural exploration. Highlights included excursions to Segovia and Toledo, museum visits featuring works by Picasso, Goya, and Velázquez, and a professional flamenco performance.

Student Dante Vega-López described the experience as life-changing: "My trip to Madrid will go down as one of the most important experiences of my life. It completely opened up my perspective of life and connected me to my Spanish culture."

By living with host families and navigating daily life in Madrid, students gained authentic cultural experiences and improved their language skills. This immersive program not only enhanced students' Spanish proficiency but also broadened their global perspectives, fostering personal growth and cultural understanding.

Giving

[Please consider a gift to the HSS Dean's Fund for Excellence.](#)

Gifts to the Dean's Excellence Fund immediately enhance the educational experience for our students by strengthening the College of Humanities and Social Science's programs, faculty, and facilities. These gifts are among the most important and valuable forms of support to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences because they can be accessed quickly and used where the need is greatest. Gifts to the Dean's Excellence Fund provide some of the following:

- Competitive scholarships for promising undergraduate and graduate students
- Support for the Dean's strategic initiatives
- Student study abroad and internship opportunities

Last year, 42 scholarships provided over \$60,000 in scholarship support to HSS students.

For questions on the giving process, contact the advancement office at giving@suu.edu or call 435-865-8196

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