

SUU SOUTHERN UTAH UNIVERSITY

College of Humanities & Social Sciences



Dean's Corner Message

Dean Jean Boreen

Greetings from all of us in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. We are days away from students coming back to campus and I am so excited to welcome them back; the energy on campus as our students return is always electric. We will be greeting our new freshman class on Monday, August 25 with a rousing convocation led by President Mindy Benson and Interim Provost Shauna Mendini. This will be followed by our wonderful bell tower tradition and then an opportunity in the afternoon for the students to meet the chair of their respective department as well as me and Associate Dean Grant Corser. Thunder U—the official title of those first few days on campus—is a great time for all of us to celebrate why we are all here on campus.

I'm also excited to introduce our newest HSS Board member: Betsy Jefferis. We have a very active College of Humanities and Social Sciences.... Advisory Board which is comprised of SUU alumni as well as friends of our College. We appreciate the work they do in supporting our students and the College as they work with us to

[Read more...](#)



UP(scale) by Dr. Petersen and Zoe Petersen

Father-Daughter Collaboration Brings Post-Apocalyptic Story to Life

SUU Professor Dr. Todd Petersen and his daughter, illustrator Zoë Petersen, recently partnered on a unique project commissioned by the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts in New York City. Their work, part of the UP(scale) series, expands earlier creative ideas into larger, more intricate pieces that blend literature, art, and design.

Together, the Petersens created *The Investigator / The Observer*, a limited-edition artist's book that intertwines two parallel stories set in a post-apocalyptic world. Dr. Petersen's narrative, *The Investigator*, follows a man who discovers an abandoned Latter-day Saint home and begins a spiritual journey that ultimately leads him to the ruins of the St. Louis Temple. Zoë's contribution, *The Observer*, adds a second voice: a young woman traveling east in search of her parents

while documenting her journey for her unborn child.

The collaboration is not only a testament to interdisciplinary creativity but also a deeply personal experience for the father-daughter duo. "Zoë is so good at what she does," Petersen said. "It was cool as a father to have an opportunity like this."

Award-winning illustrator Micah Player praised the project as "a fascinating glimpse into how faith and loss intersect in a fallen world."

Both a collectible artifact and a powerful narrative, *The Investigator / The Observer* reflects the Petersens' shared artistry and vision.

For more information, see their website: [UP\(scale\)](#).

Highlighting HSS's Short Term Study Abroad Programs



Interdisciplinary Studies, Global Leadership in Spain

The focus of the trip was centered on Global Leadership in Spain, exploring it through the lens of Spanish history, culture, and global influence.

Throughout this trip all participants had the opportunity to visit Barcelona, Tarragona, Cordoba, Segovia, Toledo, Madrid, and other surrounding areas.

All of this with the goal in mind of giving students a firsthand experience of how leadership manifests across time and space, while fostering



European Mindscapes in France & Spain

Thank you to all who participated in our European Mindscapes program.

We hope you all had fun visiting Madrid, Barcelona, Paris, and London while exploring the concepts of studying, meaning, and culture.



MPA in Costa Rica

MPA students and leaders recently returned from a successful trip to Costa Rica. There they were able to connect with a myriad of public administrators and government agencies, enjoy national parks, and learn a great deal about conservation and preservation efforts.

They also completed a service project with the Materna Foundation, helping young mothers and their families with infant care, nutrition, and resources.



English in Italy

This May, English faculty member and alumna Joy Sterrantino joined colleague John Belk in leading 11 students on a study abroad trip to Sicily. The group visited six cities across the island while exploring mythology, rhetoric, poetry, and composition. Joy says the experience was a meaningful way to teach students while immersing them in Sicilian culture, even including an adventurous tour through lava tunnels on Mount Etna.



Welcome Betsy Jefferis

The HSS Advisory Council's Newest Member

We are excited to welcome Betsy Jefferis as a new member of the HSS Advisory Council!

Betsy grew up in Henderson, Nevada, where she still lives today with her family. A proud T-Bird alumna, she attended SUU from 2000 to 2004, double majoring in History and Political Science while also earning a certificate in International Relations.

Her time at SUU prepared her for an incredible career path. After teaching in rural Nevada for three years, Betsy pursued law school in 2008. Today, she is a personal injury attorney specializing in premises liability, catastrophic injury, and wrongful death cases.

When reflecting on the value of education, Betsy says, "Education is always worth the investment and has opened so many doors for me." She encourages HSS students and alumni to embrace every opportunity, gain as much experience as possible, and build strong networks. "Enjoy the journey and find your 'tribe' you can lean on for advice. You never know where your next job offer or referral will come from!"

Outside of her career, Betsy enjoys spending time with her husband, children, and their five rescue dogs. She loves cooking, volunteering at local dog rescues, and is always up for a good challenge in her CrossFit class.

We are thrilled to welcome Betsy back to the SUU community through her service on the HSS Advisory Council and look forward to the insight and energy she brings.

Congratulations to Dr. Zhang

2025 Luce/ACLS Early Career Fellow in China Studies

The SUU Department of Languages and Philosophy is proud to announce that Professor Sandy Zhang has been awarded a 2025 Luce/ACLS Early Career Fellowship in China Studies. This prestigious fellowship provides \$15,000 to recent PhDs without tenure to support research and writing toward a scholarly project.

Dr. Zhang is one of only six scholars nationwide selected for this competitive award, which recognizes innovative work on China's societies, histories, cultures, and global influence. Her project examines the post-Mao literary scene, not only focusing on authors and publishers but also highlighting the essential role of editors in shaping reform-era literary culture, especially through magazines and periodicals. This path breaking research will form the basis of her forthcoming book, *On the Brink of Modernity: Chinese Literary Venues in the Reform Era (1978–1989)*.

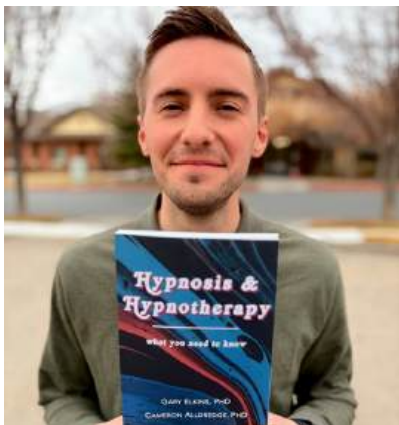


"This year's Early Career Fellows and Travel Grantees reflect the continued dynamism of the China studies field at a critical juncture," said Deena Ragavan, ACLS Director of International Programs. "The innovative approaches of these talented scholars enhance our understanding of China by challenging entrenched assumptions."

As part of the fellowship, Dr. Zhang will participate in a professional development workshop on engaged scholarship, designed to help scholars communicate research through writing, media, and public speaking.

The program is made possible by a major grant from the Henry Luce Foundation and is administered by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the leading representative of American scholarship in the humanities and social sciences.

HSS Alumni Highlights



Cameron Alldredge, PhD

Cameron Alldredge teaches and conducts research at Baylor University, home to one of the world's leading research labs in clinical hypnosis. He recently co-authored a book on hypnosis and hypnotherapy, published just last month. Cameron says the mentorship and example he received from SUU's psychology faculty inspired him to become not only a researcher but also a teacher and clinician dedicated to supporting future students.



Christopher Nelson

Christopher Nelson was awarded the prestigious Amy Lowell Traveling Scholarship, which allows poets to spend a year abroad while pursuing their work. He credits SUU with cultivating his passion for poetry and providing the experiences and skills to imagine a life dedicated to the art as both possible and meaningful.

Brandi Nielsen

In 2021, Brandi Nielsen co-founded a dog training company that has grown into the leading provider in Cedar City. Her business has not only seen consistent growth but also become an active part of the community through animal shelter partnerships, volunteer events, and founding Southern Utah's first GRC Dog Sports Club. Brandi credits SUU for equipping her and her co-owner with the skills needed to succeed in every aspect of the business, from web design and social media to mathematics, philanthropy, and community engagement.

Tyler Anderson

Tyler Anderson launched his construction company in 2024 and had a remarkably successful first year, reaching \$150,000 in revenue within just 12 months. He says SUU taught him to stay organized, think creatively, and work hard—skills that have directly supported his business success.

William Scott Jackson

William Scott Jackson achieved tenure at Snow College, a milestone in his academic career. He says his time at SUU directly prepared him for both of his graduate degrees and helped him secure his position at Snow.

Pengcheng Li

Congratulations to Pengcheng Li, who was accepted into the University of Manchester's postgraduate program. His achievement marks an exciting next step in his academic journey.



Carley Grube

Carley Grube graduated as Valedictorian of the Henderson Police Department's 11th Police Academy. She credits her double major in Criminal Justice and Psychology at SUU for providing a strong academic foundation and practical skills she now uses in law enforcement. Beyond academics, her experiences working in the Writing Center and serving as an International Student Ambassador helped her develop communication, empathy, and adaptability—skills she says were invaluable at the academy and will continue to shape her career.

Aimee Anderson Oravec

Aimee Anderson Oravec was appointed to the Alaska Supreme Court in November 2024 and sworn in this year. A first-generation college student, she attended SUU on a speech and debate scholarship that she says changed the trajectory of her life. Aimee remembers SUU as a place filled with supportive professors, small-town connections, and formative experiences that shaped both her career and her confidence. She credits mentors like Dr. Suzanne Larson for believing in her and opening opportunities that led to her career in law.

Rebecca L. Gaylord

Rebecca Gaylord graduated with distinction from the University of Kent in the United Kingdom, earning her MA in Medieval and Early Modern Studies. She credits SUU's online history program, which offered a variety of courses in her area of interest, for preparing her to excel in a U.K. graduate program.

Alumni Highlights cont.

Paige Jorgensen

Paige Jorgensen was accepted into a Graduate Screenwriting Program last fall and will continue through next spring. She credits SUU's professors for their mentorship and support, especially in writing letters of recommendation that helped her stand out to her graduate program advisors. Paige is grateful for the encouragement she received at SUU as she works toward her dream career.



Sierra Ball

After earning a dual BS in History and Biology, Sierra Ball spent six months planning and leading an educational enrichment program for children of migrant workers in China. She later traveled to Beijing to help run the camp, an opportunity that she says was deeply shaped by her experiences at SUU. The diversity of students, faculty, and staff at SUU helped her form lifelong friendships with people from around the world and gave her a strong foundation in anthropology, history, and science that prepared her to embrace this life-changing experience.

Aubrey Pickett

After discovering her interest in behavioral analysis as a psychology major at SUU, Aubrey Pickett went on to complete her master's degree in Applied Behavioral Analysis. She logged 2,000 clinical hours and graduated in just 18 months, and is now working toward becoming a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst. Aubrey says SUU supported her in exploring classes that piqued her interest, which ultimately led her to a career she finds both exciting and meaningful.

2025 Conference Highlights



Psychology Department Representing in Denver, CO at the RMPA Conference

During April, the HSS Psychology Department was able to take 15 faculty and 57 psychology students, 72 people in total, to attend the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association Conference in Denver, CO. What an amazing way to represent SUU!



Interdisciplinary Studies in Finland

The Department of Interdisciplinary Studies program represented SUU at 47th annual Association for Interdisciplinary Studies Conference: Shaping the future in the era of polycrisis located at the SUU partnership university, Oulu University of Applied Sciences located in Oulu Finland.



HSS Learn on the GO

Paris and Its Environs - Join us Fall 2026!

The SUU College of Humanities and Social Sciences is excited to announce our next HSS Learn on the Go program in fall 2026. Building on the success of our previous programs, our attention turns towards France, the most popular tourist destination in the world. Join us for an unforgettable 8-night journey, starting in Paris, The City of Lights. Throughout our time together, we will be immersed in rich history, stunning architecture, and the vibrant culture that is France.

Planned activities in Paris include exploring the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, The Louvre and other iconic places. Foodies will find an amazing variety of choices within the various neighborhoods of Paris where you can indulge in local cuisine and savor traditional French cheeses and wines in cozy restaurants.

Outside of Paris, plans include exploring some of the many UNESCO sites in the region, like Mont Saint-Michel. We plan to explore The Palace of Versailles, a must for those wanting to experience the absolute decadence of the royals, right down to walking the same gardens Marie Antoinette once graced. We will experience the beauty and majesty of the Cathedral at Chartres. Then we will turn our attention to Omaha and Utah Beach in the Normandy Region and then to return to Paris for a final, intimate look at the city via a Seine River Dinner Cruise. Please consider joining us!

Options for 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.