

SUU 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 back from our holiday break and ready to begin the Spring 2024 semester. A new year brings new opportunities and, often, resolutions. Mine is to get out and meet as many of our alumni as I can in the upcoming year. That said, if 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 has a definite focus on our faculty and their many accomplishments. Please take a minute to read about three of our faculty (Nicole Dib, Kevin Stein, and Mark Miller) who have won awards for excellence in teaching and scholarship. You may also be interested in the book by our MPA (Masters of Professional Administration) Director Donna Handley. Having the opportunity to share the fantastic work of our...

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The HSS Award of Excellence

Awarded to Dr. Kevin Stein and Dr. Nicole Dib

Thanks to the wonderful support of Telton Hall and Kaden Keller from [Advance Financial Planning](#), we have launched the HSS Awards of Excellence for Outstanding Professors in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Our inaugural awards went to Dr. Kevin Stein and Dr. Nicole Dib. These awards will be given 3 times a year.

Dr. Kevin Stein teaches various graduate and undergraduate communication classes, such as Qualitative Research Methods, Pop Culture Messages, Political/Corporate Speechwriting, and Critical Thinking & Message Analysis, just to name a few. The primary focus of his research is the rhetoric of attack, public apology, and his own theory of responses to apology. He has an attack rhetoric book in press (co-authored with William Benoit and Matt Barton), a project developing a quantitative scale for measuring the effectiveness of image repair (co-authored

with Braden Bagley and Matt Barton), an [educational website](#) that archives videos, transcripts, and analyses of public apologies. This spring he will complete a Fulbright Specialist opportunity with the University of Murcia (Spain).

Dr. Nicole Dib is an Assistant Professor in the English Department at SUU. She has taught courses on multiethnic American literature, critical theory, contemporary Native American novels, speculative fiction, graphic novels, and African American storytelling, among other topics. She is currently working on a book that traces how multiethnic American novelists have deployed road-trip narratives to critique state-sanctioned marginalization in the 20th and 21st centuries. Her scholarly work appears in venues including MELUS, Studies in the Novel, Intersectional Feminist Readings of Comics, and The Routledge Companion to Critical Masculinity Studies.

Research Symposium

Psychology Department

Congratulations to the SUU Psychology Department who had a successful undergraduate research symposium on December 6, 2023 in the SUU Hunter Conference Center. The department had psychology major students present 17 talks and 21 posters. A great turn out!



Get to know our HSS Student Senator...

Hanna Lu Muzquiz, English Major

Hanna Lu Muzquiz, an English major with an emphasis in Creative Writing at Southern Utah University (SUU), is not only a student with a global vision but also a dynamic leader on campus. As she looks forward to teaching English abroad, preferably in a Spanish-speaking country, Muzquiz is simultaneously making a significant impact at SUU.

Her favorite part of the SUU experience has been engaging with fellow students to enhance the school and campus. Holding the position of Vice President of Dance and Arts for the Latine Student Alliance, Muzquiz has demonstrated her leadership skills and commitment to her community.

Driven by a desire to act on her opinions and address campus issues, Muzquiz was inspired by a club member of the Latine Student Alliance to run for the position of HSS Senator. In this role, her goals are clear: to actively listen to students, address their specific needs, and champion

the causes of international students, online learners, and campus diversity.

The Student Advisory Board, which Muzquiz is a part of, serves as a vital link between the students, the student senator, and the Dean, focusing on informing and advising on various campus matters. Under her guidance, the board has addressed student concerns with the administration, organized events for student engagement, and initiated bills and resolutions catering to student needs and success.

Muzquiz encourages students to reach out via email at SUUSA HSS Senator, through MySUU Voice, or by speaking to their professors and department heads. Emphasizing the advisory board's dedication to student welfare, she invites students to share their thoughts and ideas, ensuring their voices are heard and acted upon. Her leadership exemplifies a commitment to not only her academic pursuits but also to fostering a sense of belonging and success among her peers at SUU.

Welcome our New HSS Advisory Board Members!

Bret Nelson



Bret Nelson, a Southern Utah University (SUU) graduate from the class of 2006, embodies a life shaped by diverse experiences. Growing up as a military kid, he has lived all over the world, but considers Texas his home. Now residing in Centerville, Utah, Nelson's journey is marked by a passion for effective communication and teamwork, skills he deems essential in both personal and professional realms.

He advises incoming SUU freshmen to focus on interpersonal communications and speech classes, highlighting these skills as crucial for success beyond academic boundaries. For recent graduates, Nelson suggests exploring a wide range of career opportunities, emphasizing the versatility of a humanities degree.

Professionally, as an organizational leadership and sales consultant, he focuses on enhancing team performance and sales results. Outside work, Nelson is a dedicated father to four children, a wake surfer, and an off-roading enthusiast. His approach to life is characterized by a zest for adventure and a commitment to continuous learning and personal growth.

Jessie McFall



Jessie McFall, an SUU alumna from Cottonwood Heights, Utah, now living in Lehi, cherishes her educational journey. Graduating in 2013 with a History degree and German minor, she credits Dr. Harrison's classes for her inspiration. Her sister, also an SUU alumna, introduced her to the university.

McFall encourages SUU freshmen not to worry about choosing a major, assuring that all learning is beneficial. She reminds recent graduates that education is a continuous journey, offering new opportunities.

Currently, McFall is the Content Data Production Manager at Ancestry, overseeing teams in Lehi, France, and India, preparing family history collections for the website. This role aligns with her childhood aspiration, though she initially aimed for a genealogical position.

Outside work, McFall enjoys outdoor activities, baking, traveling, and passionately supports the Red Sox. Her diverse interests mirror her belief in lifelong learning and exploration.

Jean Claude Mbaki



Jean Claude Mbaki, hailing from Cape Town, South Africa, now resides in Cedar City, Utah with his family. An alumnus of Southern Utah University (SUU), Mbaki graduated with a master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. Passionate about adult learning and leadership, he is now pursuing a Ph.D. program, furthering his commitment to education.

Mbaki advises incoming HSS freshmen at SUU to cherish their decision to join HSS, promising a rewarding experience. To SUU alumni, he emphasizes the importance of staying connected to their alma mater, embodying the spirit of "Once a T-Bird, Always a T-Bird."

Professionally, Mbaki leads as the President and Director of Sunrise Educational Forum, a U.S.-based educational non-profit organization. In his leisure time, he relishes moments with his family, enjoys watching soccer, travels, and indulges in his passion for meeting new people and learning about diverse cultures. His journey reflects a blend of educational pursuit, professional leadership, and cultural exploration.



Research Symposium

Dr. Lynn White

In April 2023, an unexpected encounter at the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association's annual regional conference marked the beginning of a fruitful collaboration between Weber State University (WSU) and Southern Utah University (SUU). While attending the conference, I met a group of enthusiastic undergraduate students from WSU's Neuroscience Program, presenting a captivating project on the Gene Expression of Ethanol Tolerance in Honey Bees. Their research, delving into the effects of alcohol on bees' behavior, piqued my interest, and we soon found ourselves discussing the possibility of a weekend exchange program between our universities. This conversation, initially casual, sowed the seeds for a future collaborative effort.

Several months later, in early September, I received an invitation from Dr. Timothy Black, the interim director of WSU's Neuroscience Program. He asked if I would present some of my research to their students and faculty. I was delighted to accept, as sharing knowledge and insights is a core aspect of academic growth and collaboration.

My presentation to WSU encompassed three diverse yet interconnected studies conducted at SUU, each exploring different aspects of physiological and psychological interactions with our environment. The first study I shared focused on human participants and their physiological responses to food stimuli.

We presented subjects with either a warm, creole-seasoned chicken breast or a warm chocolate brownie, measuring their blood glucose levels before and after exposure to these foods. Remarkably, we found that simply seeing and smelling the food could cause a spike in blood glucose levels, with a more pronounced effect in the brownie group. This response highlighted the powerful impact of sensory cues on physiological processes, providing valuable insights into our complex relationship with food.

The second study, still ongoing, examines the behavioral and physiological effects of a Western Diet in mice. This diet, high in saturated fats, sugars, and processed foods, contrasts sharply with diets rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. We are investigating how this diet affects social interactions, pain thresholds, and glucose responses to moderate stressors. Importantly, our pain threshold tests are conducted humanely, ensuring the welfare of the animals. We use a specialized rodent food that mimics the nutritional composition of the Western Diet, allowing us to closely replicate human dietary patterns in our animal models.

Our third study, perhaps the most groundbreaking, explores the effects of analog versus digital music on brain activity. This research is pioneering in its approach, comparing the neural responses elicited by these two forms of music. The implications of this study are vast, particularly if we find that digital sound correlates with neural activity in brain regions associated with aggression, empathy, and social responses.

Following my presentation, the WSU team reciprocated by inviting me on a tour of their lab facilities. This visit provided a hands-on experience in dissecting a bee brain and observing the behavior of ethanol-intoxicated bees, drawing parallels with human intoxication.

This exchange between SUU and WSU not only fostered academic collaboration but also highlighted the innovative and impactful research being conducted in Utah's academic institutions. It culminated in SUU's Psychology Department hosting a successful undergraduate research symposium on December 6, 2023. The event showcased the extensive research endeavors of our psychology majors, with 17 talks and 21 posters presented. This symposium was a testament to the vibrant academic culture at SUU, celebrating the spirit of inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge that characterizes our university.

Theodore C. Blegen Award



Dr. Mark Miller

Congratulations to Dr. Mark Miller on being awarded the Theodore C. Blegen Award for his article “A River Again: Fossil Creek, Desert Fishes, and Dam Removal in the American Southwest,” published in the *Pacific Historical Review*. This prestigious recognition by the Forest History Society acknowledges the best scholarship in forest and conservation history. Miller’s article provides an insightful case study on the pioneering campaign to remove the Childs-Irving dam and hydroelectric plants from Fossil Creek, Arizona, highlighting the complexities of coalition-building and consensus in environmental restoration efforts. This accolade is a testament to Dr. Miller’s significant contribution to environmental history scholarship.

For more detailed information about the award and Dr. Miller’s article, please visit the Forest History Society’s Blegen Award page.

HSS Alumni Highlight

Morrigan Devito, SUU 2020 English Graduate

Morrigan Devito, an alumnus of Southern Utah University (SUU), epitomizes the essence of finding one’s passion and pursuing it with dedication. Devito, who graduated with an English degree, has crafted a unique career path that seamlessly blends her love for writing and birds. Today, she holds a prominent position with the Audubon Society in Las Vegas, where her responsibilities include writing extensively about avian species, a task that aligns perfectly with her interests.

Devito’s journey to this fulfilling role wasn’t straightforward. Initially uncertain about her career trajectory after graduation, her experiences and

education at SUU provided the foundation she needed to explore and eventually identify her niche. A significant influence in her academic and professional development was Jim Aton, a faculty member at SUU, who guided her towards nature-writing. This mentorship was pivotal in steering Devito towards a field where she could thrive.

Morrigan Devito’s progression from an English graduate to a prominent role in the Audubon Society underscores the transformative power of education and mentorship. Her journey is a beacon for all students pursuing Liberal Arts degrees, proving that with perseverance and passion, one can carve out a unique and impactful career.

MPA Book Publication this Semester

“Local Government Administration in Small Town America”

Congratulations to Dr. Donna Handley, and her colleagues James Clinger and Wendy Eaton, on the publication of “Local Government Administration in Small Town America.” This insightful work is a significant contribution to the field, offering valuable knowledge and case studies for those involved in rural city and county governance. Handley, along with co-editors Jim and Wendy, has crafted a comprehensive resource that delves into the structures of rural governments, departmental functions, and collaborative efforts with various sectors. Their collective expertise shines through in a book that’s not prescriptive, but rather a guide to making informed decisions for small-town communities.

This publication reflects Handley’s deep commitment to understanding and supporting the unique challenges of small towns, which comprise a substantial portion of America’s landscape. The collaborative effort, spanning different states and coordinated over Zoom and email, showcases the power of collective wisdom and shared experiences.

Handley’s continued research in rural government and women in public administration, coupled with her active involvement in connecting students with small-town projects, marks her as a pivotal figure in shaping the future of rural communities. Her work is not only a scholarly achievement but also a practical toolkit for those seeking to enrich the lives of residents in small towns across America.



Learn on the Go

This year, The College of Humanities and Social Sciences is pleased to announce two Learn on the Go travel programs designed specifically for our SUU Community, Neighbors, Alumni, and Friends of the College. The first (May, 2024) is to Eswatini and South Africa, co-lead by professors Jon and Anne Smith. The second (September, 2024) is to Ireland, co-lead by Dean Jean Boreen and Associate Dean Grant Corser.

Please visit this link to learn more about our programs: <https://www.suu.edu/hss/learn-on-the-go/>

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 Michael Bailey at jmichaelbailey@suu.edu or 435-865-8195.