

Mind the Gap
Addressing the research gap in
fostering educator and principal well-
being at the organizational level,
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THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
College of Education

Addressing Critical Shortages
Special Education secures a suite
of external grants to avoid critical
shortages in Utah classrooms,
pg. 10

College of Education

Fall 2022 Newsletter

<https://education.utah.edu/>

EDUCATION CHANGES THE WORLD





Message from **the Dean**

Welcome to Fall 2022. Our campus is humming with energy and activity as students, faculty, and staff return to classrooms and offices. It's been invigorating to interact face to face and (re)build those human connections that make our jobs and lives richer and more meaningful. It's early in the semester, but a theme for our work is emerging: Entering new spaces. In a literal sense, our return to campus has us filing into classrooms and offices that feel familiar but made somehow new by time away. Our faculty are conducting research in less examined educational areas like supporting educator and principal well-being (pg. 3) at the organizational level and untangling how educators learn, understand, and teach scientific observation (pg. 5). We're also preparing to enter the spaces of tomorrow. We're leveraging external funding to supply special education teachers in areas with critical shortages (pg. 10) and preparing to roll out our new program, The U-GETS It!, a collaborative teacher preparation program that equips educators with the skills necessary to support all children (pg. 15) through comprehensive, inclusive practices. These forward-thinking efforts will be essential in creating the educator workforce and educational knowledge we need in Utah and across the U.S.

I hope you'll enjoy learning about these new spaces—some literal and some metaphorical—and the work we're doing as a college to advance education, educational practices, and research in Utah and across the country. Here's to a successful semester for everyone.

Warmly,

Dean Nancy Songer

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Mind the Gap: Addressing the Research Gap in Educator and Principal Well-Being and Turnover

Headlines across the media warn that a critical mass of teachers and principals will be fleeing the field of education. Research routinely examines how to cultivate well-being in educators and principals, but all these data may be missing the real key to retaining talent in the classroom and the principal's office.

Contentious school board meetings, heavy workloads, and a global pandemic that required a new approach to almost every facet of education is a recipe for educator and principal burnout. Feeling unsupported, overwhelmed, and burned out can prompt educators and principals to seek positions in other schools or to leave the field of education altogether. In fact, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), 8% of educators leave the field every year, and another 8% move to another school. For principals, a [recent study](#) found that nationally, about 18% of principals move or leave their school each year, and for high-poverty schools, the rate is 21%. Moreover, years of research have shown that when educators and principals leave their schools, [student achievement drops](#).

What, then, can be done to prevent burnout and stop high turnover rates in our schools? A look at the current research shows a focus on educator and principal well-being through resiliency training. But is training educators and principals to be more resilient the antidote to turnover that it appears to be? [Dr. Laura Rogers](#), a researcher and faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, doesn't think so. In fact, Rogers actually sees a significant gap in the research, one she's been addressing in her work. Rogers agrees with previous studies that well-being is a key to understanding and addressing turnover, but rather than focusing on individual resiliency as the means to combatting burnout and preventing turnover, she examines how organizations (i.e., schools and districts) can cultivate and engage in protective factors against burnout, thereby preventing high attrition rates. "It's not enough to say, 'Here, teachers, here are some tools for you to practice resiliency and well-being,'" says Rogers. "If we focus on turnover prevention at the individual level, then we can't address the organizational conditions at the school or district level that are major contributors to well-being, and therefore, also major contributors to turnover."

In order to research well-being at the school and district level, Rogers uses surveys and administrative and interview data to analyze well-being factors at the organizational level, yielding much larger sample sizes compared to prior work, which typically has smaller sample sizes and focuses on individuals. The research gap in educator and principal well-being and turnover that Rogers' work is addressing caught the attention of Utah's First Lady, Abby Cox. In 2021, Rogers was invited to present her early findings from her current study at Cox's *Show Up for Teachers Conference*, a free, half-day virtual symposium for all Utah educators. "The response at the *Show Up Conference* was huge. Teachers were sharing their experiences and need for support in the chat box," says Rogers. "I was glad that the research struck a chord." Clearly, Utah educators and principals want to be heard about what organizational factors support well-being and which do not.

That desire to be heard was reflected in the chat at the *Show Up Conference* and Rogers' most recent study, which had a significant response rate: 10,407 teachers and 474 principals completed the survey. Funded by a generous grant from the Utah State Board of Education, Rogers designed the study to gain a nuanced understanding of which organizational factors support educator and principal well-being, querying areas such as relationships and bonds with key stakeholders (e.g., other teachers, students, administrators, supervisors), workload, sources of information and encouragement, and leaders' use of supportive behaviors (e.g., constructive feedback, recognizing a job well done). Not surprisingly, the study found that higher well-being is associated with an increased chance of staying in their school the following year. Protective factors were perceived levels of support (e.g., helpful feedback, being

recognized for work well done), closer bonds, and closer bonds with a greater number of stakeholders. Greater numbers of sources of information and encouragement were positively associated with less turnover for educators. Principals and educators had less turnover the more years of experience they had, which, of course, has implications for those new to the field of education. The less connected and respected educators and principals felt, the more likely they were to report an intention of leaving their school or the field of education altogether. “One of the big takeaways in this study is that despite the popular perception of a looming crisis, teachers and principals love their jobs. They love their kids. They are committed to their work and take joy from it,” says Rogers. “These people are passionate about their field and about their kids. If we can address the organizational conditions that lower well-being and drive turnover, then we can more effectively support our teachers and principals, which in turn benefits our students.”

Rogers will continue researching how educational organizations can create supportive environments that reduce turnovers. Of course, organizational conditions radically changed during the pandemic. It will be important for future research to understand how the response to Covid-19 altered organizational conditions and to what degree organizational conditions returned to normal, improved, or worsened after the return to school. These data will provide a detailed view of how organizations can foster well-being even in unexpected and unprecedented circumstances. And that’s a good thing for educators, principals, and students.



[Dr. Laura Rogers](#) (left) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy and a Faculty Research Associate at the Utah Education Policy Center. Her latest publication, [Is Role Change Enough? District Organizational Supports for Principal Supervision](#) was published in *Educational Administration Quarterly*.

A New Program Serving Out-of-State Students Addresses a National Need

In 2012, the University of Utah (UofU) Deafblind Program in the Department of Special Education was started in response to the Utah State Board of Education’s newly created Deafblind Endorsement for special educators. Since then, the program has graduated dozens of highly qualified teachers to serve this vulnerable student population throughout Utah. However, Utah is only one of just three states that recognizes the unique needs of these students by having a specialized endorsement for teachers of the deafblind. This put Utah in a unique position to address a critical need throughout the country. With funding from the federal Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs, which provides student scholarships, the UofU Deafblind Program has gone distance - - LONG distance! The program is currently preparing the first distance cohort spanning all four time zones in the U.S.; that includes students from Pennsylvania, Illinois, Washington, Maryland, and Utah. In the future, we hope that the UofU’s Deafblind Program can be available at in-state resident tuition rates and that Utah will continue to play a vital role in transforming education for learners with deafblindness.

Learn more about the program on page 12 and the federal grant that made this program possible [here](#).

From Learning to Teaching: Advancing the Skill of Scientific Observation in Secondary Classrooms

Nothing has such power to broaden the mind as the ability to investigate systematically and truly all that comes under thy observation in life.

--Marcus Aurelius

Scientific observation is critical to both conducting and teaching science, yet how educators attain and teach this skill to their students remains understudied. Perhaps it's the proliferation of advanced scientific tools and methodologies. Or maybe it's that scientific observation is mediated by our existing knowledge and culture and the learning context, making it highly individual. But no matter the reason, understanding how educators learn and teach scientific observation is a significant need. Not only do students need experiences with scientific observation for long-term academic success and growth, but observation is also embedded within the K-12 teaching standards, given the emphasis on observational evidence as foundational to Science and Engineering Practices, such as Engaging in Argument from Evidence.

Thanks to the work of [Dr. Lauren Barth-Cohen](#), Assistant Professor in Educational Psychology and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, our understanding of how educators learn and teach scientific observation is set to advance. Barth-Cohen is Principal Investigator (PI) on a 3-year National Science Foundation (\$599,224) grant entitled Learning to Observe: Unpacking the Development of Science Teacher Observational Expertise in Field Settings. Barth-Cohen, along with Co-Principal Investigators [Lynne Zummo](#) (Educational Psychology, University of Utah), [Holly Godsey](#) (Teach for Utah, University of Utah), and

**Story continued on page 6*

Dr. Lauren Barth-Cohen is Co-PI on three other large National Science Foundation Grants

Project Title: Developing and Implementing Case-Based Scenarios to Support Elementary Pre-service Teachers' Enactment of Equitable Mathematics and Science Instruction.

Investigators: Tracy E. Dobie (PI), Connor K. Warner (Co-PI), Lynne Zummo (Co-PI), Lauren Barth-Cohen (Co-PI)

Funder/ Award Amount: National Science Foundation / \$599,944

Project Period: 1/2023 - 12/2025

Project Title: The Utah Collaborative for Equitable STEM Teaching (UCET)

Investigators: Holly Godsey (PI), Mary Burbank (Co-PI), Jordan Gerton (Co-PI), Anne Cook. (Co-PI), & Lauren Barth-Cohen (Co-PI)

Funder / Award Amount: NSF, Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program / \$1,447,781

Project Period: 7/2021 - 6/2026

Project Title: Exploring Students' Learning of Data Analysis in a Three-Dimensional Lab Environment

Investigators: Lauren Barth-Cohen (PI), Claudia de Grandi (Co-PI), Jordan Gerton (Co-PI), and David Goldenberg (Co-PI)

Funder / Award Amount: National Science Foundation / \$299,191

Project Period: 05/2020 - 04/2023



Dr. Lauren Barth-Cohen (left), also teaches the elementary pre-service science methods course.

[Sarah Braden](#) (School of Teacher Education and Leadership, Utah State University), will conduct a 3-phase study with 2 groups of 20 in-service secondary educators (n=40) to examine how educators learn to make scientific observations and how they then teach that skill in their classrooms.

The study will actively recruit emergent learners of scientific observations, such as new teachers, teachers who are teaching an earth science course outside of their area, or earth science teachers who have not had access to professional development learning. To encourage participation, educators will receive 3 credits for the online course and 3 credits for the field experience, for a total of 6 credits. Barth-Cohen says, “through targeted recruitment aimed at secondary science teachers who have not traditionally had access to long-term professional learning experiences, we aim to provide a unique opportunity for Utah teachers’ professional growth while also building fundamental knowledge about science learning.”

Participating educators begin with Phase I, a semester-long online course teaching educators how to make geologic observations. Geology was identified as the ideal field for training the skill of scientific observation for two reasons: 1) many educators do not have training in earth sciences, and 2) scientific observation is foundational to the field. Throughout the course, educators will receive unique hands-on materials, like rocks and magnifying glasses, and will engage in group discussions to facilitate peer-to-peer learning. Of course, Phase I is not structured like a traditional geology course, and course content is tied directly to state science standards. Educators will also regularly be prompted to share and discuss their observations and reflect on how their students learn.

Phase II is a 1-week trip to Capital Reef National Park. Due to uplift, millions of years of geologic processes are on display—sometimes within a single rock formation or cliff—in the park’s geology. Abandoned Utah settler cabins sit in close proximity to American Indian petroglyphs, making for a unique environment with a history as rich and layered as its geology. Educators and the research team will stay at the Utah Valley Field Station and spend their days making geologic field observations and evenings hearing from guest speakers about the history and culture of the area and how locals connect with the land today.

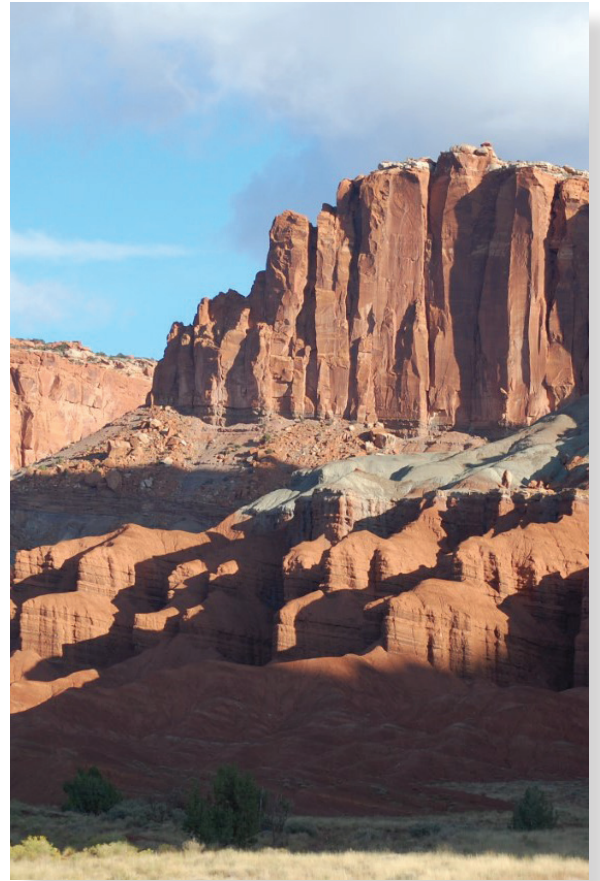


In Phase II, educators will apply their scientific observation skills at Capitol Reef National Park.

In Phase III, educators will create field experiences that their high school students can carry out in their area, whether that setting is urban, rural, or frontier. During this phase, Barth-Cohen and the research team will visit educators in their classrooms to see how they’ve structured field experiences for their students and how they teach the skill of scientific observation. The team will collect qualitative video and audio data from all three phases, along with teachers’ notes and written artifacts. Quantitative analysis will focus on how the teachers develop expertise in observation as related to their knowledge, social interactions, and cultural resources. Additionally, a complementary quantitative analysis will focus on linguistic frequencies (e.g., how many times a word or phrase is used and in what context). Project evaluation will be done in collaboration with Eric Hochberg from TERC, a non-profit located in Boston, MA focused on improving math and science education. Based on the findings, the team will make adjustments to the 3 phases in preparation for the next cohort. The first 20 participating educators will mentor the second group of educators to enrich the learning experience further.

As evidenced in three phases, educators will learn how to make scientific observations through a three-dimensional approach that highlights geologic observation. "This project draws on years of pilot data, including a 2017 publication in which we studied how perceptual and inferential parts are related to one another in developing knowledge," says Barth-Cohen. "Building on our prior research along with significant expertise from the project team members, we are in a solid position to successfully move forward with this research that examines how educators learn to make scientific observations in a field setting."

After the study findings for both groups of educators have been analyzed, the team will disseminate this new knowledge through publications and presentations made to other academic researchers and key policymakers. Additionally, the knowledge generated by this work will provide an explanatory framework for the cultivation of scientific observation that can be used nationwide to assist educators in advancing their skills in scientific observation and helping their students do the same.



A single cliff or rock formation can show millions of years of geology.

". . . we aim to provide a unique opportunity for Utah teachers' professional growth while also building fundamental knowledge about science learning"

Post-Doc Fellowship

[Dr. Alex Hyres](#), Assistant Professor in the Department of Education, Culture & Society, has been awarded a \$70,000 [National Academy of Education / Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship](#) for his project, *Educating in a Burning House: Black Teachers and the Desegregation of Schools, Colleges, and Universities in the South, 1960 - 2001*. As a professor of U.S. education history, Hyres research focuses on the history of Black education, teacher and student activism, curriculum and pedagogy, and the American high school. He is also a research associate with [Teachers in the Movement](#). Hyres was 1 of 25 applicants selected from a highly competitive pool of 258. Fellowship funds will be used for salary support and conducting research.



Dr. Alex Hyres



Dr. William Smith is the Chief Executive JEDI at HMHI.

[Dr. William Smith](#), Profesor in the Department of Education Culture & Society, has accepted a dual appointment with Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI) as the [Chief Executive Administrator of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) (JEDI). Smith will oversee programmatic changes and policy to ensure that JEDI is part of HMHI's foundational work and new initiatives. He will be pivotal in shaping the programming and building of the new [Translational Research Building and Kem and Carolyn Gardner Mental Health Crisis Care Center](#) facilities, as well as playing a key role in HMHI's national mental health anti-stigma campaign. Smith will also lead the JEDI Committee in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Utah. Smith coined the term racial battle fatigue to describe the physical, mental, and emotional toll of racism on people of color nearly two decades ago, and since then, he's been helping to inform the national conversation on race and racism. HMHI CEO Mark Rapport, MD, said, "Smith has been instrumental in deepening

our country's understanding of the mental health toll of racism and will be an incredible asset to the work we do at HMHI." Indeed, Smith will leverage his expertise to create improved mental healthcare and resources in Utah and beyond, especially for traditionally underserved populations.

New Roles for CoE Faculty

[Dr. Chris Linder](#), Director of the [McCluskey Center for Violence Prevention](#), Special Assistant to the University of Utah President for Violence Prevention and Education, and Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy (ELP), has been appointed Editor in Chief of the **Journal of Diversity in Higher Education (JDHE)*.

Linder will begin her 5-year appointment in January 2023 and has served as the Associate Editor of *JDHE* since fall last year. Linder has extensive experience in student activism and sexual violence on campus and has a fierce commitment to educational equity, inclusion, and social justice. For a journal dedicated to bringing educational institutions empirical research that creates pathways to inclusive excellence, Linder's transformative work will help *JDHE* continue to publish research that transforms, inspires, and engages for more inclusive and diverse campuses and improved educational outcomes.



Dr. Chris Linder has been appointed Editor in Chief of the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education.

**JDHE* is a publication of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education and is published in collaboration with the American Psychological Association.

The start of this year saw [Dr. Erin Castro](#) join Undergraduate Studies as [Associate Dean for Student Access and Communities Engagement](#). Castro steps into the role with a wealth of experience and maintains her position in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy. Castro will also continue her involvement with the University of Utah Prison Education Project, which she helped establish, and continue directing the Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison.



Dr. Erin Castro is the new Associate Dean for Student Access and Communities Engagement.

[Dr. Anne Cook](#), Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, has been named [Director of the Martha Bradley Evans Center for Teaching Excellence](#) (MBE-CTE). Cook began this new role on August 1, 2022, and brings to it extensive leadership experience, having been Associate Chair and Chair of EdPsych, Director of EdPsych's Learning Sciences Program, Chair of CoE's MS Statistics Program, and Director of CoE Student and Faculty Affairs.



Dr. Anne Cook was named Director of the Martha Bradley Evans Center for Teaching Excellence.

Professor and former chair of the Department of Educational Psychology [Dr. Jason Burrow-Sanchez](#), will serve as the [NCAA Faculty Athletic Representative](#) (FAR). He will represent the University of Utah and its faculty in relationships with the NCAA and the Pac-12 Conference. Burrow-Sanchez's background in education and psychology makes him ideally suited for the role, as noted by University President Taylor Randall.



Dr. Jason Burrow-Sanchez will serve as the NCAA Faculty Athletics Representative for the University of Utah.

[Dr. Jason Taylor](#) has been officially named the Director of [Transfer Pathways](#) in the Office of Undergraduate Studies. Taylor's research aims to understand how policies can better support traditionally underserved students' access to, transition through, and success in community colleges and higher education institutions. Taylor's work in this area is turning him into a national expert. He was recently interviewed by Utah's NPR station, [KUER](#), and [HomeRoom](#), the U.S. Department of Education's official blog.



Dr. Jason Taylor is the Director of Transfer Pathways in the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

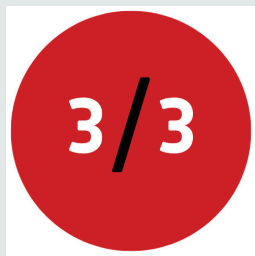
Department of Special Education Secures a Suite of External Grants to Address Critical Shortages in Utah Classrooms

Like many other states, Utah is facing a critical teacher shortage in special education. In fact, according to data from the Utah State Board of Education (USBE), special education has a mean critical shortage of 4.35 on a scale of 4.0 – 4.9 (USBE, 2020-21). With Utah having [12 rural and 12 frontier counties](#), these shortages will likely be more pronounced in less urban areas. In order to address these critical shortages and ensure preK-12 children have high-quality support and education, from 2019 – 2021, [Department of Special Education](#) faculty secured external funding for each of the department's nine programs. This research funding not only ensures every program in the department has scholarship support, but funded projects were specifically designed to 1) address critical shortages in key areas and some will 2) advance interdisciplinary collaboration as well.

Addressing Key Areas Experiencing Pronounced Special Educator Shortages

Severe disabilities (3.93 mean critical shortage, USBE), preschool special education (3.71 critical mean shortage, USBE), and rural and remote areas are among those with the most pronounced special educator shortages. One of the Special Education projects addressing these shortages is project *ACRES-SD (Alleviating Critical Rural Educator Shortages in Severe Disabilities). Specifically, ACRES-SD will address the shortage of highly qualified educators licensed to teach students with **severe disabilities** through a comprehensive state-licensure program delivered to a cohort of 8 paraprofessionals working in 1 of 10 cooperating **urban and rural** local education agencies (LEA). ACRES-SD Principal Investigator (PI) and [Department Chair Matt Jameson](#) says, “ACRES-SD provides tuition support as the cohort works towards becoming licensed special education teachers. Because of this project, while still experiencing persistent and critical shortages of special education teachers, Utah classrooms will have a supply of highly qualified educators trained and licensed to serve children with some of the greatest needs.”

Co-PIs [Susan Johnston](#) and [Sarah Ivy](#) will tackle **preschool special education teacher** shortages with their project, *UU-TOPS-3 (University of Utah – Training Opportunities in Preschool Special Education). UU-TOPS-3 has been designed to align with evidence-based practices in early childhood special education, including the new Initial Practice-Based Standards, the Utah Effective Teaching Standards, and state testing requirements, making it a standout project in preschool special education in Utah and elsewhere. The UU-TOPS-3 cohort of 8 students will receive tuition support and engage in a combination of online, hybrid, in-person classes, and virtual learning—all of which take place in



From 2019 - 2022, the Department of Special Education secured **9** grants, **3** from the Utah State Board of Education and **3** from the U.S. Department of Special Education, Office of Special Education Programs. This funding totaled **\$5,085,273** and is addressing numerous critical shortages, as well as advancing interdisciplinary education and collaboration.

late afternoons and evenings to accommodate working professionals. In addition, contingent upon program area approval, all students are able to complete clinical supervision requirements while employed in preschool special education programs. Supporting students that are employed full-time and providing program access to students who live in **rural and remote** areas of Utah are innovative ways to address the teacher shortage while maintaining high-quality standards. Research has shown that training people already living in rural and remote areas is a successful strategy in bolstering the workforce, as these workers then tend to stay within their communities. This makes UU-TOPS-3 delivery system particularly powerful in addressing the shortage of preschool special educators in rural and remote areas.

The Teacher Recruiting in Mild/Moderate (TRIMM) Licensure Project addresses the special educator shortage in rural and urban areas for students with mild/moderate disabilities across Utah. Co-PIs [Sharlene A. Kiuahara](#) and [Breda O'Keeffe](#) will recruit 12 students seeking initial licensure in Special Education with Mild/Moderate specialization. *TRIMM scholarships are available for undergraduate, graduate, and license-only students seeking initial licensure. Similar to UU-TOPS-3, this 4-5 semester-long program is designed for working professionals by offering a combination of hybrid and distance education and scheduling courses during the late afternoons or evenings to accommodate students' work hours. "The Department of Special Education has been a leader for over three decades in the design and delivery of innovative programs to provide highly qualified educators for urban, rural, and remote areas," says Jameson. "Key to these efforts is our ability to provide financial support directly to students. Each of these grants has the vast majority of the funding earmarked for student support."

Advancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration for Improved Outcomes

Children with special needs often require more than a teacher prepared and licensed in special education; they also require an individualized education program (IEP) team that includes parents, highly qualified educators, and other professionals. The ability to collaborate and work together as part of an IEP team plays a major role in the academic success of kids with disabilities. This is why [Dr. Chris Bischke](#) has secured several grants in which, as PI, she will advance interdisciplinary collaboration while also addressing key shortages. For example, Bischke notes that her project **TVISP (Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments and School Psychologists) brings together a blended cohort of University of Utah students studying within the fields of visual impairments (VI) and school psychology (SP), who will serve students who are severely blind, visually impaired or low vision with or without concomitant disabilities like learning disabilities, such as severe intellectual or physical disabilities or deafness/hard of hearing. By learning together, the TVISP cohort will be knowledgeable in the fields of both VI and SP and have an understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities in serving VI students, thereby ensuring their ability to work as a collaborative team. "TVISP is a direct response to the critical shortage of educators prepared to serve children with disabilities who have high-intensity needs," says Bischke. "Our project ensures unparalleled support for students with VI, and our graduates are also prepared to support children with unique mental health challenges associated with blindness and VI. This cohort will be able to help the students they serve meet their academic goals while creating meaningful and effective collaborations."

Another of Bischke's projects, overseen by [Nicole Pilling](#) and [Dr. Samantha Gustafson](#), project **ASSIST (Advancing Student Success through Interdisciplinary Scholar Training), brings together students studying within the fields of Special Education/DHH and Pediatric Audiology. The 17 special educators prepared in evidence-based instruction and service provisions and the 12 audiologists highly skilled in pediatric fitting and programming of assisted hearing devices are a high-performing cohort that will be prepared in effective interdisciplinary collaboration for improved linguistic,

educational, and social outcomes for DHH children. Graduates of the project will provide deaf/hard of hearing students (DHH) with increased access to high-intensity care while providing additional benefits through greatly improved inter-team collaboration. In addition to ASSIST, Bischke's project **DHH-MSN (Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Meeting Student Needs) will prepare and help license 10 educators prepared to serve dhh students across Utah. "Given the ongoing shortage of teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing within the state of Utah and across the nation, this funding provides us with a significant opportunity to increase the number of teachers who are highly qualified to meet the unique needs of students who are dhh. By reducing the financial burden of higher education, we can recruit and prepare more future educators," says Bischke.

Bischke clearly understands the power of collaboration to increase support and improve outcomes for students with disabilities. But it's also an approach she leverages in other projects, like project **O&M (Orientation and Mobility). O&M brings together faculty members from the University of Utah/ Multi-University Consortium and the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) to address a shortage of nationally certified O&M specialists, as identified by the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind (USDB) and districts across the state. O&M is designed to meet the needs of children (birth through age 22) who are visually impaired, blind, or deafblind by preparing highly qualified and nationally certified O&M specialists.

PI [Wesley Wilson](#) has taken a similar approach with project **ISAACC (Interdisciplinary Scholarship for Advancing APE and CSD Collaboration). Using interdisciplinary education and training to better support K-12 students with disabilities, ISAACC will provide tuition support to a blended cohort of adaptive physical educators (APE) and speech-language pathologists in communication science disorders (CSD). The project recruits highly qualified candidates, especially those from traditionally underrepresented groups, for a collaborative program of study in which APE and CSD students learn side by side and from members in the other program as they pursue their respective master's degrees. The interdisciplinary and peer-to-peer learning embedded in ISAACC prepares scholars to work with children with support needs in language development and APE by educating graduates through cross-learning and training them in effective collaboration.

Project **TSDBOT (Preparing Special Education Teachers with Endorsement in Deafblindness and Occupational Therapists) is yet another interdisciplinary project from the Department of Special Education. PI [Sarah Ivy](#), has stated that TSDBOT was designed with educator quality and number in mind. The project will produce a number of highly qualified personnel prepared to serve school-age learners with deafblindness through interdisciplinary teams. TSDBOT supports 28 master's students at the University of Utah, 16 special education teachers with an endorsement in deafblindness (TSDBs), and 12 occupational therapists (OTs). After completing their respective programs, the TSDBOT cohort will have obtained the national professional competencies in their respective fields, as well as additional competencies in interdisciplinary teaming as part of their TSDBOT training. The cohort will be trained to provide specialized services to Utah's diverse population of students with deafblindness and their families.

Each of these nine grants was designed to address a critical shortage in special education. The Department of Special Education's devotion to supporting and advancing special education in Utah and beyond will ensure children with special needs and their families have the support and highly-qualified educators and interdisciplinary teams they need to be successful.

**These projects are funded by the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds.*

*****These projects are funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.*

Grants & Awards & Appointments

University of Utah College of Education faculty have been awarded numerous external research grants and awards of note over the last year. We are pleased to share just a few of those with you here.

Spencer Foundation Grants

Principal Investigator: Irene H. Yoon (University of Utah (UofU), Department of Educational Leadership & Policy)

Consultant/Collaborator: Mónica Byrne-Jiménez (Michigan State University)

Funder / Amount: Spencer Foundation Racial Equity Grants / \$74,512

Principal Investigator: José Gutiérrez (UofU, Department of Education, Culture & Society)

Co-Investigators: Charles Sepulveda, Kēhaulani Vaughn (UofU, Department of Education, Culture & Society), Cynthia Benally (UofU, Department of Education, Culture & Society)

Project Title: Signs of Power and Dominance: The Role of Mathematics Curricula in U.S. Assimilationist Policies and Practices in Indian Boarding Schools, 1879-1932

Funder / Amount: Spencer Foundation / \$50,000.00

Principal Investigator: Frankie Santos Laanan (UofU Central Administration, Departments of Education, Culture & Society, and Educational Leadership & Policy)

Project Title: Ingram State Technical College: Exploratory Case Study of Incarcerated Adult in Career and Technical Education

Funder / Amount: Spencer Foundation / \$49,998

Principal Investigator: Dara Walker (Penn State University)

Co-Investigators: Alexander Hyres (UofU, Department of Education, Culture & Society) and Jon Hale (University of Illinois)

Project Title: The Voices of Student Activists Who Moved A Nation: Documenting the Lessons of the Past Through Innovative Educational Research

Funder / Amount: Spencer Foundation / \$30,182

Mellon Foundation Grants

Co-Principal Investigators: Dr. Kēhaulani Vaughn (Department of Education, Culture & Society), Dr. Angela Robinson (School of Cultural & Social Transformation), Dr. Maile Arvin (School of Cultural & Social Transformation), and Dr. Kathryn Stockton (School of Cultural & Social Transformation)

Project Title: Expanding Pacific Islander Studies at the University of Utah

Funder / Award Amount: Mellon Foundation / \$1,000,000

Utah State Grants & Funding

Principal Investigator: Paula Smith (Department of Educational Leadership & Policy)

Project Title: Communities that Care Prevention Group

Funder / Award Amount: Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health / \$750,000



Dr. William Smith (left), a Professor and former Chair of the Department of Education, Culture & Society and Chief Executive Administrator of Huntsman Mental Health Institute, has been named one of three 2022 recipients of the Derrick Bell Legacy Award by the Critical Race Studies in Education Association. He joins former Bell Award winner Dr. Laurence Parker (2013), making the University of Utah one of the few universities to have more than one faculty receive this prestigious award.

Organization: University of Utah Reading Clinic (UURC)

Funder / Award Amount: State of Utah / \$1,321,574

Purpose: To support UURC programs that support struggling readers and their parents and train educators in effective reading intervention

Awards

Awardee: Dr. Seung-Hee Claire Son (Department of Educational Psychology)

Awarding Body: International Literacy Association

Award: Dina Feitelson Research Award

*This award was in recognition of their paper, The Influence of Interactive Features in Storybook Apps on Children's Reading Comprehension and Story Enjoyment. *The Elementary School Journal*, 120(3), 422-454, co-authored with Drs. Kirsten Butcher and Lauren Liang (Department of Educational Psychology).

Awardee: Dr. William Smith (Department of Education, Culture & Society),

Awarding Body: Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, 12th District

Award: Distinguished Founders Award

Appointments

Dr. Breda O'Keeffe, Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education, has been elected Treasurer for the Council for Exceptional Children's Division of Learning Disabilities.

Assistant Professor in the Department of Education, Culture & Society, Dr. Cynthia Benally, has been elected to the editorial board of the Journal of American Indian Education.

Dr. Lauren Barth-Cohen has been appointed to the PERLOC group by PERTG, groups of the American Association of Physics Teachers.

Dr. Seung-Hee Claire Son, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, was reappointed to the School Readiness Board by the Utah Speaker of the House.



Dean Nancy Songer has received two prestigious accolades this year. Earlier this summer, Songer was awarded an [International Society of the Learning Sciences \(ISLS\) Fellowship](#). The ISLS Fellowship is only awarded to "those who have made major contributions to the field of the Learning Sciences" and who are "highly accomplished scholars and community members who will continue to serve in critical roles for the society in the future through their continued leadership and mentorship activities." Most recently, Songer was named a [Science Superhero](#) by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). An AAAS Science Superhero is passionate about science and uses their influence to improve science communication and leads the field in "breaking through communication barriers for the greater good of STEM." Songer is joined by an impressive list of other Science Superheroes from across the U.S. This cohort of 26 heroes will serve AAAS as thought leaders and facilitators of virtual events on topic-specific community boards.



Professor Mary D. Burbank, Associate Dean of Teacher Education, Professional Development & Engagement, and Director of the Urban Institute for Teacher Education.

Quality Programming

The Urban Institute for Teacher Education's (UITE) teacher preparation program was named [among the best in the nation](#) for preparing future math educators by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). The UITE undergraduate teacher preparation program at the University of Utah earned an A+ designation for its requirements in elementary math education and was among only 79 programs to earn the distinction of exemplar.

Programs like [Get REAL!](#), [Teach for Utah](#), and The U GETS-It! are helping Utah buck the national trend of declining teacher enrollment numbers, as detailed in a recent article from The 74, America's Education News Source entitled, [Traditional University Teacher Ed Programs Face Enrollment Declines, Staff Cuts](#).

Funding for the Urban Institute for Teacher Education's New Program, The U-GETS-It!

The Williamsen Family Foundation and the Sorenson Legacy Foundation have made a generous gift of \$184,000 to the Urban Institute for Teacher Education (UITE). This new funding will allow Professor, UITE Director, and [Associate Dean Mary D. Burbank](#) to further current work in place as part of partnerships with the Salt Lake City School District and Elizabeth Academy. The work underscores the importance of educator preparation programs focused on inclusive education founded on Montessori principles and will be delivered through a new program, The U-GETS-IT! (University of Utah, Garfield School, Elizabeth Academy, Tanner Dance, Salt Lake Community College).

The U-GETS-It! will build on the successes of its predecessor, Get REAL!, which was also funded by the Sorenson Legacy Foundation. Get REAL! enriches pre-service educator preparation with real-world Montessori learning experiences that include opportunities for learning experiences in early childhood education, teacher professional development, pre-K teaching at Rose Park Elementary, and kindergarten readiness through the early learning center in Salt Lake School District. With this new gift, The U-GETS-It! will expand the efforts of the Get REAL! program, providing future educators and school-based specialists with course and practicum experiences designed to support all children—including those with disabilities through expanded partnerships across a range of professional stakeholders at the University of Utah. “These efforts reflect the first-time collaboration has taken place between the College of Education, Tanner Dance, and programs across the university in support of inclusion and Montessori education,” says Burbank. Interdisciplinary preparation experiences for students in teacher preparation programs will include collaboration in elementary and special education, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and arts integration. Pre-service educators will engage in course and practicum experiences designed to support the unique needs of each learner through partnerships and dedicated commitments to inclusive practices. The U-GETS-It! is part of a longer-term plan for post-high school transitioning for individuals with disabilities as they move from the K-12 settings into the wider community. Burbank notes that linkages between campus partners and Salt Lake Community College will allow for the development of pathways designed to build opportunities for inclusion across the academic continuum.

As with Get REAL!, The U-GETS-It! will be made possible through several key partnerships. The overall program will be conducted

in partnership with Salt Lake Community College, Elizabeth Academy, the anchor of this work, which serves students grades pre-Kindergarten through grade 6, and Garfield School, which serves students grades 7-12. Both Garfield and Elizabeth are inclusive Montessori schools and will collaborate with The-U-GETS-It! program by providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to both observe and learn Montessori principles and educational approaches in local classrooms. The program's designer, Burbank, understands the value of partnering with local schools as opportunities for reciprocal learning.

The College of Education is extremely grateful to the Sorenson Legacy Foundation and the Williamsen Family Foundation for their support. These foundations support projects and organizations that tangibly improve the lives of others and benefit our communities, with a focus on education.

"We are honored that the Sorenson and Williamsen Foundations chose to support The U-GETS-It! program with this generous gift. It is a testament to the success we've had with Get REAL! and a sign of our shared respect and trust between the College of Education and the Sorenson and Williamsen Family Foundations. As a result, The U-GETS-It! is poised to expand on our prior successes and provide an important transitional structure for those with disabilities moving from high school to a post-school world," says Burbank.

Sorenson Legacy Foundation

The Sorenson Legacy Foundation was founded by the late biotechnology pioneer and entrepreneur James LeVoy Sorenson and his wife, education philanthropist, Beverley Taylor Sorenson. The foundation was created to improve the lives of others and the world in which we live. The foundation supports a wide range of endeavors, from community development and education to health care and scientific and artistic pursuits.

Williamsen Family Foundation

The Williamsen Family Foundation was created to support and fulfill the family's charitable endeavors. We value a wide range of charitable causes with a primary focus in the fields of education, health care, humanitarian, and family services.

A Legacy of Education: A Salute to Dr. John Bennion and the Bennion Family



Dr. Bennion tutoring a student at Bryant Middle School, 2012.

What do you do when you inherit a legacy? You continue it. That's what Dr. John Bennion, PhD (BS '61 MA '62) has done. He has devoted a lifetime to helping children get the education they need to succeed, working hard to bridge the inequities between students of varying economic, ethnic, and geographical backgrounds. This lifetime dedication to education runs in the family. Bennion's grandfather, Milton Bennion, was the second dean of the University of Utah's College of Education. His father was the Superintendent of the Salt Lake City School District,

**Story continued on page 19.*

The APEX Project: Innovating a Holistic Approach to Advancing K-12 Multilingual Learners' Educational Success

Utah is experiencing rapid population growth, but what most people don't know is that it's also diversifying. Recent data shows that roughly [15.3% of Utah homes speak a non-English language \(over 120 languages\)](#), [8% of students enter Utah public schools speaking a language other than English](#), and Salt Lake schools [serve large refugee populations reporting over 30 different languages being spoken](#). While growing diversity is a point of pride for the state, research has long established the educational attainment gaps that can occur between native and non-native speakers in U.S. classrooms. "The improvement of academic outcomes and the closing of opportunity gaps for K-12 bi-/multilingual learners [ML] is a Utah priority. Educator expertise is one of the most significant contributors to student gains, which is why we developed the APEX project," says [Dr. Verónica Valdez](#), Professor and Chair of the Department of Education, Culture, and Society (ECS) and Principal Investigator of the newly created APEX (Advancing Pathways toward Equity and eXcellence with Education of Multilingual Learners) Project.

APEX is a 5-year U.S. Department of Education grant-funded project (currently in year 2) notable for being both innovative and holistic. That innovation starts with "conceptualizing the education of bi-/multilingual learners as not only the responsibility of the classroom teacher but of an entire team of educators," says Valdez. APEX offers four pathways that target three major groups of educators integral to the academic success of MLs: 1) future educators, 2) current educators, 3) parent leaders, paraeducators, after-school coordinators, family learning coordinators, and advocates. The first pathway recruits University of Utah pre-service educators that began their training in local *Grow Your Own Educator* teacher programs by offering \$5,000 scholarships for obtaining an English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement. This pathway ensures a consistent pipeline of **future educators** entering Title I schools who have the necessary training to support MLs in their classrooms. The second pathway, designed to accommodate **current educators'** working schedules with a mix of online and hybrid courses, provides 30 educators with full scholarships to obtain an ESL endorsement. Finally, 10 of these 30 educators will be recruited to the third pathway, which provides 90% tuition support to get an M.Ed. with ESL endorsement. With recruits every year, these four pathways support MLs by infusing Utah schools with teams of future and current educators who have the skill sets to support MLs.

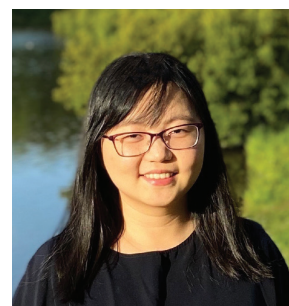
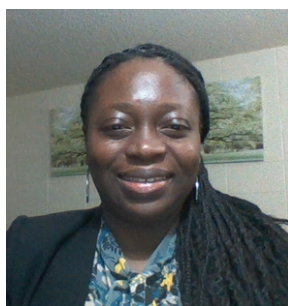
Because what happens at home and outside the classroom is just as important as what happens inside the classroom, the fourth pathway offers two intensives: The first intensive, the APEX Intensive Training Series on Foundations of Educating Multilingual Learners In/Out of School, is designed for **paraeducators, parent leaders, after-school coordinators, advocates, and non-ESL endorsed teachers** to enhance their ability to complement the efforts of ESL endorsed teachers. "The parent piece makes this a strong program. We are catering to what happens inside the classroom, but also to what happens at home and after school for MLs to have a holistic experience," says Dr. Josephine Amoakoh, APEX Associate Director. Indeed, parental support at home has been proven to [accelerate the acquisition of English for earlier and better learning outcomes](#). The second intensive, the APEX Institute, is designed for ESL-endorsed **in-service teachers in search of advanced training on specialized topics** of concern to local educators related to educating bi-/multilingual learners (e.g., newcomers' literacy across content areas; family literacy; secondary dual language approaches to promoting literacy). Each year the fourth pathway recruits up to 120 people and makes available certificates for those completing either of the two intensives. Thus, the fourth APEX pathway incorporates other groups in the support of MLs that tend to be excluded from more traditional endorsement programs. In addition, including educators from public charter schools and private

religious schools allows APEX to expand the educators trained to support MLs.

APEX's innovative and comprehensive approach doesn't stop with the four pathways. As an educational organization, the APEX team thought it was important to **engage College of Education graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in the project, many of whom are current or former educators**. TAs drew on the research literature, including the *What Works Clearinghouse: Educators Practice Guide for Teachers*, to craft creative *APEX Practice Briefs* on evidence-based practices. This allowed TAs to operationalize their training through real-world experience in curriculum development and research application. The *Practice Briefs* are interwoven throughout all four APEX pathways, providing easy, practical, evidence-based tools and methods for supporting MLs for the entire educational team, including pre-service and current educators, paraeducators, parent leaders, after-school coordinators, and advocates.

APEX is clearly innovative and holistic in creating supports for MLs among various stakeholders in a variety of educational settings and at home, but the program is also a standout for its team structure and its innovative and holistic partnerships. The 4-member APEX team includes Principal Investigator Dr. Verónica Valdez, Associate Director Dr. Josephine Amoakoh, and Co-Investigators and ECS faculty Drs. [Leticia Alvarez Gutiérrez](#) and [Wenyang Sun](#). **The program is a standout for its racially diverse, all-female team.** "The APEX team brings not only a vast depth of research and teaching experience working with MLs, their families, and communities, they also bring a diverse set of lived personal and professional experiences that deeply connects them to the diverse ML communities the APEX project seeks to have educators partner with," says Valdez.

Partnerships with two Utah school districts, [Canyons](#) and [Davis](#), provide the ideal settings for early program implementation as well as evaluation and improvement. The [Utah Education Policy Center](#) (UEPC) assists in data collection, analysis, and evaluation of program outcomes. This, in turn, ensures **program improvements and adjustments are customized to each district and rooted in robust data**. APEX can also boast the National Multilingual Learning Coalition (NMLC) as a partner. The APEX team **works with NMLC to support pre- and in-service teachers** by sharing and collaboratively reflecting on the most efficacious research, strategies, tools, and techniques in supporting MLs. The level of cooperation and collaboration this affords APEX is unprecedented. "Our NMLC partnership offers us a powerful opportunity to conduct cutting-edge research with national ML experts that will benefit Utah educators," says Valdez. The APEX Advisory Committee is another important partner, with representation from all key stakeholders. The committee boasts a *Grow-Your-Own* representative, an educator representative, a paraeducator representative, a family/advocate representative, an alumni representative from the M+ program (APEX's predecessor), liaisons from Canyons and Davis School Districts, and, of course, the APEX team. The Advisory Committee structure provides a forum for representatives from all key stakeholders to have a voice through input, direction, and feedback, thereby **including the numerous stakeholders invested in the success of MLs in the decision-making and review process**.



From left to right, Dr. Veronica Valdez, APEX PI and Director, Dr. Josephine Amoakoh, APEX Associate Director, Dr. Leticia Alvarez Gutierrez and Dr. Wenyang Sun, APEX Co-Investigators.

APEX will eventually be rolled out statewide, but even as a young program, it's already having an impact and getting attention. Out of 50 DOE-funded National Professional Development programs, APEX ranked 12th, beating out competition like UT-Austin, Baylor, Purdue, and others. Eventually, APEX will offer micro-credentialing in teaching MLs, as APEX aims to increase Utah educators' ML-related knowledge and skills through high-quality, evidence-based professional learning opportunities. As Amoakoh said, "All Utah educators should have access to this program."

A Legacy of Education: A Salute to Dr. John Bennion (Continued)

and his mother was a College of Education alumna (BA '26) and an elementary school teacher. Following his parent's and grandfather's lead, Bennion worked as a full-time Educational Administration and Urban Education clinical professor in the College of Education at the University of Utah for many years. He served as Superintendent of Salt Lake City (1985-1994) and Provo School Districts in Utah and as Superintendent of Bloomington Public School District in Bloomington, Minnesota, and Brighton Central Schools in Rochester, New York. In 1997, he received the College of Education's Distinguished Service Award. In 2002, he received The American Association of School Administrators Distinguished Service award for his lifetime contributions to education and was also named Utah's Superintendent of the Year. Two years later, in 2004, the Emeritus Alumni Association presented him with its prestigious Merit of Honor Award. On October 21, 2022, the NAACP Utah Chapter will bestow the Albert Fritz award to Bennion for his education, equality, and social justice work.

The Bennion family legacy in education goes beyond notable careers; the family has established four endowed scholarships within the College of Education! They include The Milton Bennion Scholarship—a scholarship established in 1974. The M. Lynn and Katherine S. Bennion Scholarship, which his parents established in 1995, and The Elmo and Frances Bennion (BA'36) Scholarship (2000), established by his uncle and aunt. In 2020, Bennion established The David Snow Bennion Memorial Scholarship to honor his son, who passed away in 2018.

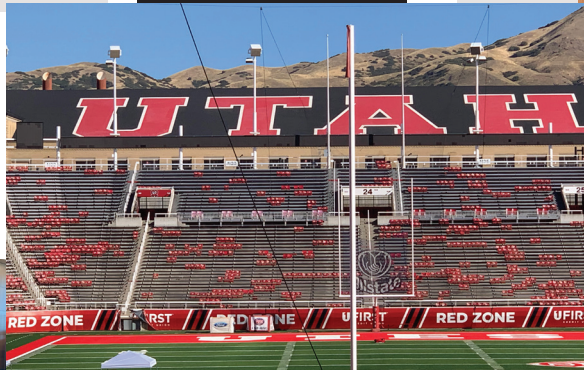
We are deeply grateful to John and the Bennion family for their dedication to education in Utah and their generosity and philanthropy in establishing these endowed scholarships. The Bennion family legacy has positively impacted hundreds of students, and their scholarships will be an enduring benefit to College of Education students for generations.

Need and Merit-Based Scholarship Matching Opportunity

As a college, our goal has always been to reach, recruit, and retain the best and brightest students, and scholarships are a critical part of this goal. When you give to scholarships, you offer a student the support they need to pursue their dream of higher education and the ability to maximize their career opportunities.

Both merit and need-based scholarships are critical components to success as the University of Utah seeks to increase overall student enrollment to 40,000 students while maintain high academic standards, affordability, and access for those who otherwise might not and continue to offer high-quality education. Now is the perfect time to double the impact of your donation by taking advantage of a financial match for undergraduate scholarships. Donors who commit to an annual multiyear scholarship or an endowed scholarship for either merit or need-based recipients can receive 50% matching funds to reach even more students. For more information on creating a scholarship and receiving matching funds, please contact Safia Keller, Development Director at the College of Education, at safia.keller@utah.edu.

Thanks to all the donors, faculty, staff, and students who attended the Scholarship Celebration in September. It was wonderful to see everyone in person. We look forward to seeing you next year!



2022-23 Donor-Funded Scholarships

\$606,434

Scholarship
dollars

102

Students
supported

116

Scholarships
awarded

Average Funding per Student - \$5,945