



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING

Graduate Education

UW Office of Academic Affairs, Graduate Council Name 2022 Graduate Award Recipients

May 24, 2022

The University of Wyoming's office of Academic Affairs and the Graduate Council have selected the 2022 winners of graduate student and mentor awards for outstanding teaching and research.

The Distinguished Faculty Mentor Award recognizes outstanding faculty commitment to graduate student mentoring. The John P. Ellbogen Outstanding Graduate Assistant Teaching Awards go to graduate teaching assistants to honor their excellence in teaching. The Outstanding Master's Thesis Award recognizes a graduate student for an exemplary master's thesis. The Outstanding Dissertation Award is granted to a graduate student for an exemplary doctoral dissertation. Each award carries a stipend.

This year, two additional awards were presented. The Early Career Graduate Faculty Mentor Award and the Mid-Career Graduate Faculty Mentor Award. Both awards are presented to faculty members for their commitment to mentoring graduate students. The Early Career Graduate Faculty Mentor Award is presented to a faculty member with less than six years of academic career at the University. The Mid-Career Graduate Faculty Mentor Award is given to a faculty member with six to 10 years of academic career at the University of Wyoming.

The 2022 award winners are:



Distinguished Graduate Faculty Mentor Award: Professor Ray Fertig III, Department of Mechanical Engineering

"In addition to being an excellent instructor, Prof. Fertig is also dedicated to the development and offering of a variety of courses for our graduate students. As one example, he recently took

it upon himself to develop a graduate course which had not been taught in many years because he recognized the value in that class for our students,” said Dr. Erica Belmont, associate professor of mechanical engineering. “As another example, he recently volunteered to teach an overload of courses so that a course could be offered which he rightly felt was important for graduate students to have the option to take before they graduated. These examples are illustrative of Prof. Fertig’s high standards for the quality and academic rigor of our graduate program.”



John P. Ellbogen Outstanding Graduate Assistant Teaching Awards:

Samuel Choi, of Queen, NY, Department of Psychology

“In reviewing his course evaluations, students consistently give Sam extremely high marks. His courses score well above both department and college benchmarks and reflect some of the most positive evaluations in the entire department. Students compliment Sam on course organization, and on the effectiveness of his lectures. They mention that he is very supportive and attentive to their needs,” said Dr. Sean McCrea, professor and department head in the Department of Psychology. “This is particularly impressive given the asynchronous format of the courses in which it can be difficult to connect with students. Sam completed the pedagogy course offered in our department. He clearly takes these recommendations to heart and incorporates scholarship of learning into his teaching practices. His teaching philosophy emphasizes active learning, application beyond the classroom, and the use of activities that foster critical thinking skills.”



Chase Mahan, Oakdale, CA, Department of Anthropology,

“Chase lives and breathes teaching; he loves research because it informs his teaching. I began working with him on his teaching spring 2021 when he was my student in *Teaching Anthropology* (ANTH 5890). Chase embraced our exploration of pedagogical theory and method as he doggedly pursued development of his own teaching philosophy and designed his own course,” said Dr. James Ahern, vice provost of Graduate Education and professor of Anthropology. “As I learned, Chase was inspired to pursue college teaching because his own

college experience transformed his life. Making it to college was difficult for him, at times seeming unreachable. Once there, the courses he took and the faculty he worked with transformed Chase's understanding of the world and, crucially, how he viewed his own potential."



Solana Quistorff, Castle Rock, CO, Department of English

"As an unusually savvy instructor, Solana engages in ongoing assessment to improve student writing and to continually evolve her own teaching strategies. She provides formative micro-feedback in response to daily scaffolding activities and through student conferences, a time-consuming process that has significant positive effects on helping students apply general lessons to their own composition practices," said Dr. Nancy Small, assistant professor of English and director of First Year Writing



Claudia Richbourg, Monticello, FL, Program in Ecology (Botany)

"As a graduate teaching assistant for Life Sciences labs, Claudia led students through weekly inquiry-based labs. To be truly effective as a teacher in inquiry-based labs, during which students are asked to discover and explore on their own, instructors must have a strong knowledge of the material and encourage students to think critically about the work they are doing. Claudia excels in both of these areas," said Christopher A. North, associate academic professor lecturer. "She has also successfully taught labs both in person and online, and consistently receives very positive evaluations from students. Students describe her as helpful, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and approachable. Several students have described her as the best GTA they have ever had."



Melanie Torres, Westerly, RI, Program in Ecology (Ecosystem Science & Management)

"Ms. Torres has assisted me over five semesters with the teaching of Insect Biology (ENTO - 1000) lectures, and Insect Biology laboratory (ENTO-1001). During fall semester of 2018, and spring semesters of 2019 and 2020, Melanie was set in charge of teaching and overseeing the Insect Biology laboratories (ENTO-1001). This involved all the traditional "lab practical" teaching

aspects of the class, including organization and presentation of preserved specimen teaching collections, presenting lab material, instructing on insect sampling methodologies and assisting students with collections, supervising class field trips, creating and grading lab practical quizzes and exams, keeping and calculation lab grades, assisting students with use of microscopes and other lab equipment, maintaining microscopes and lighting, stocking lab supplies, maintaining lab safety standards and best practices, and ensuring lab security,” said Dr. Scott R. Shaw, professor in the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management. “She also attended most of my lecture sessions to better learn the class material, and assisted with proctoring lecture exams, and occasional guest lectures. Melanie excelled at all her assigned teaching task, and she is consistently admired and appreciated by all her students.”

Outstanding Master’s Thesis



Samantha Nobes, Wall, NJ, Department of Plant Sciences, “Specialty cut flower production and pollinator visitation in protected environments”

“The impact of Samantha’s work is being felt several months after her graduation. Not only did she shed light on how growing specialty cut flowers in Wyoming is possible, but she also recommended species and varieties as well as production strategies for these niche crops,” said Dr. Karen Panter, horticulture specialist. “The insect portion of her work is highly valuable for producers of all sorts of crops, both horticultural and agronomic. Insects are so important for pollination and the work indicates many species are attracted to specialty flowers being grown in high tunnels. Any grower can benefit from this information.”

Outstanding Dissertation



Shaochen Huang, Zhangjiakou, Hebei, China, Biomedical Sciences, Division of Kinesiology and Health, “The roles of visual and kinesthetic information in learning and control of bimanual coordination.”

“Shaochen’s research contributed significantly to the motor control, learning, and applied psychology literature by showing the benefits of early visual information for learning and the

specificity of training frequencies, and the increased learning of training at a higher frequency for movement transfer effects. In addition, Shaochen's work added to the clinical science by suggesting the utilization of bimanual coordination in assessing cognitive functions in patients following concussion, which is a prevalent problem in athletes and military personnel," said Dr. Boyi Dai, associate professor, College of Health Sciences, division of kinesiology and health.

Early-Career Graduate Faculty Mentor Award



Pejman Tahmasebi, associate professor, Department of Petroleum Engineering

"Prof. Tahmasebi has over 100 peer-reviewed publications, with 62 publications since joining UW. There have been 12 publications in 2021, 17 in 2020, 12 in the calendar year 2019, and 14 in 2018. The majority of his publications over the last four years include UW student co-authors, which demonstrates his outstanding mentorship of students. In addition, Prof. Tahmasebi has authored three book chapters since joining UW and co-authored two book chapters before joining UW. Prof. Tahmasebi's publication rate is one of the highest in the College of Engineering and Applied Science," said Dennis N. Coon, professor and interim department head of the Department of Petroleum Engineering.

Mid-Career Graduate Faculty Mentor Award



Boyi Dai, associate professor of biomechanics, Department of Kinesiology & Health

"It is truly a pleasure to nominate Dr. Boyi Dai for the Mid-Career Graduate Faculty Mentor Award. His commitment to and excellence in graduate student mentorship is exceptional and admirable. Striving to compete would be a demoralizing exercise in futility, said Dr. Derek T. Smith, director, Department of Kinesiology and Health. "Over the past 10 years, his record of accomplishment includes advising 17 graduate students as committee chair (M.S. degree); 100% of whom have gone on to secure admission to competitive doctoral programs in academia and the health professions (MD/DO/DPT) or secured employment in the

biomechanics discipline. Currently, Dr. Dai is advising and mentoring three Biomedical Sciences doctoral students and two M.S. students. On average, he mentors and chairs four graduate students each academic year; he has tallied a 100% success rate in graduating his M.S. students within two years. The majority of Dr. Dai's M.S. students complete a thesis (Plan A) and present their graduate research at prestigious regional or national scientific meetings."



Kam Ng, associate professor, Department of Civil & Architectural Engineering

"His research has provided opportunities for graduate students to participate in national conferences, present their research works, and receive national paper competition awards and student scholarships. He also spent tremendous efforts to train graduate students on technical writing, which is evidenced from the journal and conference publications with his graduate students," said Dr. Jennifer Tanner, associate professor in the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering. "His weekly research meetings have provided opportunities for his graduate students to improve their technical presentation and communication skills. Many of his graduate students have presented in national conferences. His past graduate students have successfully secured engineering positions to eventually become professional engineers in both private and government sectors. His strong graduate mentorship along with the advertisement from his past graduate students, Ng's research group has attracted and increased international graduate applications in geotechnical engineering from 2 in 2012 to over 20 in 2021."