

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

Awards of  
**EXCELLENCE**  
2024



BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
& PRESIDENTIAL  
**AWARDS OF  
EXCELLENCE**

---

The Utah Valley University (UVU) Awards of Excellence program recognizes faculty and staff who dedicate their time and talents to students, scholarship, and the advancement of higher education.

This year, UVU's Board of Trustees elected to honor five awardees for their contributions to the university's mission of student success. An additional five faculty and staff members were recognized as this year's Presidential Awards of Excellence recipients for their efforts related to UVU's values of exceptional care, exceptional accountability, and exceptional results.



*Rick Nielsen*

BOARD OF TRUSTEES' MESSAGE

---

Congratulations to each of our 2024 Board of Trustees and Presidential Awards of Excellence honorees! These are the highest honors Utah Valley University bestows. The trustees join President Tuminez and the entire UVU Cabinet in sincerely thanking you for your commitment to student success.

Each of you embodies our UVU core values — exceptional care, exceptional accountability, and exceptional results — with a student-centered focus that elevates the significance and impact of the university in our community.

Your dedication to our mission, service to our students, outstanding work ethic, and collaborative engagement set a standard of excellence to which each student and peer should aspire. Thank you for making UVU a wonderful place for students, faculty, and staff to learn, explore, discover, develop, and shine!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Nielsen". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "N" and a flourish at the end.

**Rick Nielsen**

Chair, Board of Trustees  
Utah Valley University



*Astrid S. Tuminez*

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

---

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to a night of celebration as we recognize recipients of the 2024 UVU Awards of Excellence.

The Awards of Excellence honor those who live the core values of UVU: exceptional care, exceptional accountability, and exceptional results. They support our mission of student success and do it with discipline and love. To the awardees, I say: "You truly represent the best of UVU!"

What makes the best of UVU? I believe these are faculty and staff who bring their best selves to work every day. They are clear about their goals. They work effectively alone or in teams. They are ambitious and gritty. They use resources wisely. They model behaviors that we want our own students to have when they leave the halls of UVU.

To the awardees, thank you for your dedication, passion, skills, and leadership. Because of you, our students thrive, and our university moves from strength to strength. I am proud and grateful to work alongside all of you.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Astrid S. Tuminez". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

**Dr. Astrid S. Tuminez**

President

Utah Valley University



BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
**AWARDS OF  
EXCELLENCE**



*Spencer Childs*

SENIOR DIRECTOR,  
CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

---

Hailing from Mapleton, Utah, Spencer Childs came to UVU in the 90s as a student employee and transitioned to a full-time role in 2004. With degrees in business management and American studies, Childs oversees the department that represents 34% of UVU's total headcount and has saved students over \$35 million in annual tuition. His favorite parts of working at UVU are the opportunities for professional development and student success. When not enjoying the views of the scenic Orem Campus, Childs finds joy in family time, outdoor exploration, reading, and collecting minerals.

BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE



*Christie Denniston*

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGIC  
ENGAGEMENT, INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

---

Christie Denniston calls Longmont, Colorado, home and has worked at UVU for almost four years. Her higher education journey is marked with milestones such as receiving bachelor's degrees in public relations, political science, and gerontology, as well as a Master of Public Administration and a doctorate in higher education leadership with an emphasis in data analytics. A member of multiple boards, Denniston is also the winner of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Circle of Excellence Award for the EverGREEN Ambassador Program and CASE's Best of CASE Director VII award for targeted constituency engagement. Her favorite parts of working at UVU are having the chance to help all students succeed, working in an authentic environment, and contributing to the university's goal of "punching above our weight." Denniston loves spending time outside UVU coaching youth sports and trying new tea blends. She and her husband, Mark, have a son named Anders.

BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE



*John Curl*

**DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL AID  
AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

---

John Curl is from Edgemont, South Dakota, and has worked for UVU since 2016. He holds a bachelor's degree in business management from Brigham Young University and an MBA from the University of Utah. Winner of the Rocky Mountain Association of Student Financial Aid Administrator's (RMASFAA) Distinguished Service Award (2010-2011) and the RMASFAA's Ron Smout Award for Teaching and Mentoring (2023), Curl has had a successful tenure helping students succeed. When asked about his favorite part of working at UVU, he said, "The people of UVU are the difference." Curl and his wife, Karalee, have a vibrant family consisting of two sons (Johnny and Jake), one daughter (Haylee), two daughters-in-law (Kendall and Lucy), and three granddaughters (Adeline, Karsyn, and Jordyn).

BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE





*Claudia Jorgensen*

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,  
BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE**

---

From Salt Lake City, Utah, Claudia Jorgensen joined the Wolverine family in 2013 as an assistant professor and is presently an associate professor in the behavioral science department. Jorgensen holds an associate degree in early childhood development from Oakland Community College, two bachelor's degrees in biology and psychology from the University of Michigan-Flint, and a Ph.D. in neuroscience from Florida State University. With an extensive collection of published academic work and multiple awards under her belt, including the 2023 UVU Single Academic Innovation Award, Jorgensen is dedicated to further studying her craft and providing students with a high-quality educational experience. The driving force behind her dedication is also her favorite aspect of working at UVU: the university's mission to create a welcoming environment for students, staff, and faculty. In her free time, Jorgensen loves to spend time outdoors or coloring and doing puzzles with her husband, Hans Jorgensen, and their two children, Aiden and Amelia.

BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE



*Amy L. Smith*

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR,  
PEOPLE AND CULTURE

---

Amy L. Smith is from the nearby city of American Fork. Her first interaction with UVU was as a student in 2012, and in 2019, she achieved her goal of being hired at UVU as a benefits specialist. Her UVU path continued later that year when she was hired as an employee relations business partner, a compensation analyst in fall 2021, and the assistant director of compensation in fall 2022. Smith holds a bachelor's degree in integrated studies, where she combined business management and psychology. She graduated Magna Cum Laude. Voted "Most Likely to Succeed" in junior high, Smith sees the best part of her steady climb at UVU as the family that she's created. "People are engaged in their work, take pride in their results, and believe in the university's mission. We're all in it together, especially when it's difficult." She has four children with whom she shares "a love of arguing and jovial debate." When Smith and her kids aren't challenging each other's philosophical constructs, she loves studying the earth, painting "really terrible" watercolor pieces, watching movies, and working on her golf swing.

BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE

The background features a complex, organic pattern of wavy, layered lines in various shades of green, from light emerald to deep forest green. Interspersed within these layers are thin, shimmering lines of gold or yellow, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of marbled paper or a topographical map with a metallic sheen.

PRESIDENTIAL  
**AWARDS OF  
EXCELLENCE**



*Jon Anderson*

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, MATHEMATICAL/  
QUANTITATIVE REASONING

---

Jonathan Anderson, from Provo, Utah, began his career as a teaching and research assistant at Brigham Young University, followed by roles as an adjunct professor and lecturer of developmental mathematics at UVU before beginning his current position. He holds a Ph.D. in engineering education from Utah State University, a master's degree in electrical engineering, a bachelor's degree in electrical and computer engineering from BYU, and an associate degree in science from Utah Valley State College (UVU). He has received accolades such as the Alan E. Hall Innovation Award and multiple Outstanding Teaching Awards and has published research on topics like engineering simulations and mathematical education. Anderson and his wife, Trenna, have been married for 22 years and have two children, DJ and Hailey. He enjoys listening to podcasts, reading fantasy and science fiction novels, and playing games with friends and family. He said the highlight of his career is witnessing the a-ha moment when a student grasps a challenging mathematical concept.

PRESIDENTIAL  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE



*Jon Barclay*

**SENIOR  
CYBERSECURITY ANALYST**

---

Jon Barclay, a native of Highland, Utah, holds a bachelor's degree in information technology from UVU and an MBA from Utah State University. Barclay joined UVU in 2001 as a part-time IT technician in the School of Business. He returned to UVU's security team in 2010 and, since then, has held various roles on the team, including Banner and data security, credit card and PCI compliance, and his current role. Barclay also serves as an adjunct faculty member, sharing his expertise with students in cybersecurity courses. Outside of work, Barclay treasures time with his wife and three sons and enjoys camping and visiting National Parks. An accomplished bagpiper with the Utah Pipe Band, Barclay is preparing to perform at the services commemorating D-Day's 80th anniversary in France this June. For Barclay, the most rewarding aspect of working at UVU is the camaraderie among colleagues and being part of UVU's mission to help students excel and "foster a lifelong love of learning."

PRESIDENTIAL  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE



*Weihong Wang*

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,  
EARTH SCIENCE

---

Dr. Weihong Wang, from Provo, Utah, holds a bachelor's degree in geophysics from Jiangnan Petroleum University, a master's degree in geology from Iowa State University, and a doctorate in marine science from the University of South Carolina. She embarked on a postdoctoral research fellowship at Yale University before teaching in New Jersey for two years. Since 2012, Wang has been an integral part of UVU, earning tenure in 2018 and currently serving as the Department of Earth Science chair. Her dedication has been recognized with the Faculty Senate Excellence Award and the College of Science Dean's Award of Teaching Excellence. Wang's research, funded by prestigious National Science Foundation grants, focuses on crucial environmental issues from responsible research conduct to Utah Lake water quality. Wang's husband is her best friend and also a colleague at UVU. She enjoys spending time with her two children, running, skiing, traveling, cooking, and rock climbing. She loves collaborating with colleagues to "advance student learning and achievement, making UVU a supportive and enriching environment for the entire campus community!"

PRESIDENTIAL  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE



*Josh Berndt*

**DIRECTOR OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS,  
UNIVERSITY MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

---

Originally from Mesa, Arizona, Joshua Berndt holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Arizona State University and a master's degree in communication and media studies from Southern New Hampshire University. He began his career as a broadcast journalist and radio station sports director in Cody, Wyoming. After working as director of broadcasting for the Casper Rockies, Berndt transitioned to public relations, spending 10 years working for the Utah Jazz, the Salt Lake Bees, Thanksgiving Point, and other Utah companies. Berndt began his career at UVU as an adjunct professor of public relations and communications and later was the director of marketing and communications for the Smith College of Engineering and Technology and Academic Affairs. Berndt is now the director of internal communications in University Marketing and Communications. Berndt and his wife, Heather, have been married for 26 years and have four children, three of whom have already started their UVU journeys. Berndt's favorite part of working at UVU is being "a part of something bigger than myself."

PRESIDENTIAL  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE



*Chris Lemay*

HEAD COACH,  
UVU WOMEN'S SOCCER

---

Hailing from Troy, Michigan, Chris Lemay has led the UVU women's soccer team for seven seasons. During his tenure, the Wolverines have made three NCAA tournament appearances, earned an NCAA tournament win, and won two WAC regular season championships and two WAC tournament titles. Lemay holds a bachelor's degree in communication with a minor in business management from Eastern Michigan University. The only coach in UVU history to win an NCAA tournament game, Lemay received the WAC Coach of the Year award in 2022 and held the UVU Coach of the Year award from the '19/'20, '20/'21, and '21/'22 school years. Of his time as a UVU head coach, he shared that "without a doubt, the best part of working at UVU is the opportunity to develop and work with the student-athletes on our team." Lemay and his wife, Tami, have a 14-year-old son named Van.

PRESIDENTIAL  
AWARD OF  
EXCELLENCE



The background features a complex, organic pattern of wavy, layered lines in various shades of green, from light emerald to deep forest green. Interspersed within these layers are thin, shimmering lines of gold or yellow, which appear to be made of fine particles or dust, giving the overall effect a sense of depth and movement, similar to marbled paper or a liquid surface.

ADDITIONAL  
**AWARDS IN  
SUMMARY**

FACULTY

# AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

---

## COLLEGE OF HEALTH & PUBLIC SERVICE

**Melinda Barber**

*Assistant Professor, Community Health*

**Tina Homolik**

*Adjunct Instructor, Community Health*

## COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

**Jordan Allen**

*Assistant Professor,  
Applied Communications*

**Trevor Morris**

*Program Manager, Faculty Development*

## COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

**Ashley Egan**

*Associate Professor, Biology*

**Kirsten Thornhill**

*Adjunct Instructor, Biology*

## SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

**Christa St. John**

*Assistant Professor, Ballet*

## SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**Kalani Eggington**

*Associate Professor, Elementary Education*

## SMITH COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

**Khaled Shaaban**

*Professor, Civil Engineering*

## WOODBURY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

**Kelly Hall**

*Assistant Professor,  
Organizational Leadership*

**Richard (RJ) Mattei**

*Adjunct Instructor, Accounting*

# DEANS' AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

---

## COLLEGE OF HEALTH & PUBLIC SERVICE

### *Faculty*

**Noelle Taylor**

*Assistant Professor, Nursing*

**Karen Preston**

*Associate Professor, Dental Hygiene*

**Heather Thiesset**

*Assistant Professor, Community Health*

**Andy Brynes**

*Professor, Emergency Services*

**Robert Brown**

*Adjunct Instructor, Criminal Justice*

### *Staff*

**Jamie Winn**

*Project Manager, Healthcare Expansion*

**Patrice Bolen**

*Admin Support, Police Academy*

## SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

### *Staff*

**Laurie Bowen**

*Associate Director, Center for Autism*

## COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

### *Faculty*

**Christa Albrecht-Crane**

*Professor, English and Literature*

**Steven Sylvester**

*Associate Professor, Political Science*

**Rachel Arocho**

*Assistant Professor, Family Science*

### *Staff*

**Jolene Arnoff**

*Assistant to the Dean*

## SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

### *Faculty*

**Jamie Johnson**

*Associate Professor, Ballet*

### *Staff*

**Amy Whipple**

*Production and Costume Manager, The Noorda Center for the Performing Arts*

**Jessica Rosewinter**

*Assistant Box Office Supervisor, The Noorda Center for the Performing Arts*

## COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

### *Faculty*

#### **Mike Stearns**

*Associate Professor, Earth Sciences*

#### **Tyler Standifird**

*Associate Professor, Exercise Science*

#### **Bonnie Anderson**

*Professor, Physics*

#### **Adam Frederickson**

*Adjunct Instructor, Mathematics*

### *Staff*

#### **Boston Swan**

*Teaching Lab Manager, Biology*

#### **Jared Nusink**

*Lab Manager, Biology*

#### **Melissa Braithwaite**

*Academic Advisor*

## SMITH COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

### *Faculty*

#### **Zachery Taylor**

*Associate Professor,  
Automotive Technology*

#### **Armen Ilikchyan**

*Associate Professor,  
Technology Management*

#### **Mohammad Sherkaramiz**

*Associate Professor, Electrical and  
Computer Engineering*

#### **Rodayne Esmay**

*Professor, Digital Media*

#### **Khaled Shaaban**

*Professor, Civil Engineering*

### *Staff*

#### **Todd Palmer**

*Assistant to the Dean, Finance*

#### **Brendon Ball**

*Student Employee*

## WOODBURY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

### *Faculty*

#### **Michelle McPherson**

*Lecturer, Business Communication*

#### **Noah Myers**

*Assistant Professor, Accounting*

#### **Jaron Harvey**

*Assistant Professor,  
Organizational Leadership*

#### **Jeff Williams**

*Assistant Professor, Accounting*

#### **Kevin Smith**

*Professor, Accounting*

#### **Phil Witt**

*Assistant Professor, Strategic Management  
and Operations*

#### **Justine Gamble**

*Adjunct Instructor*

#### **Darin Perry**

*Adjunct Instructor, Marketing*

### *Staff*

#### **Celestia Frei**

*Admin Support, Organizational Leadership*

#### **Shayne Curley**

*Technician, Computer Support*

# DIVISIONAL AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

---

## **ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

### **Bobby Hughes**

*Academic Advisor, College of Science*

### **Wesley Thomas**

*Coordinator, CTE Program*

### **Tammy Jensen**

*Director, Graduate Programs*

### **Lauren Tolman**

*Communication Specialist, Library*

## **ADMINISTRATION & STRATEGIC RELATIONS**

### **Chad Bellon**

*Project Manager – Architectural Design,  
Space Management*

### **Richard Bogdan**

*Assistant Athletic Director, Athletics*

### **Jason Girot**

*Manager – Campus Residential  
Properties, Grounds*

### **Adam Sanft**

*Officer – Deputy AD of  
Internal Affairs, Athletics*

### **Greg Williams**

*Head Coach – Wrestling, Athletics*

### **Glenda Lopez**

*Custodian, Custodial Services*

## **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

### **Darel Hawkins**

*System Administrator, Dx Operations*

### **Mallory Snyder**

*Assistant Director, Digital Experience and  
Accessible Technology*

### **Sean Bandlely**

*System Administrator, Audio Visual  
Systems Engineering*

### **Kari Gary**

*Manager – BI Reporting/Operational  
Development, Business Intelligence and  
Research Services*

### **Spencer Holt**

*System Administrator, Dx Operations*

## **FINANCE**

### **Chris Farr**

*Assistant Director, Internal Audit*

### **John Richards**

*Director – Purchasing and Travel,  
Procurement Services*

## **INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT**

### **Erin Fleming**

*Executive Assistant, VP  
Institutional Advancement*

### **Sidney Ballard**

*Director, IA Reporting and Analytics*

## **PEOPLE & CULTURE**

### **Maddie Bagley**

*Specialist, Learning and Development*

## **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Jody Birch**

*Senior Director, Integrated Marketing*

### **Jenna Heaton**

*Graphic Designer, Creative Services*

### **Nick Estrada**

*Manager, Integrated Marketing*

## **STUDENT AFFAIRS**

### **Elizabeth Bowen**

*Assistant Director – UVU Ambassador  
Program, Admissions*

### **Kerri Scott**

*Program Director, Wellness Programs*

### **Melisa Hunt**

*Manager, Wee Care Childcare Center*

### **Jennie Hall**

*Director – TRIO Undergraduate Program,  
Grants and Outreach*

### **Fernando Duran**

*Student Services Assistant,  
Registrar's Office*

### **Nicasio Waite Nango**

*Program Manager – Housing Access,  
CARE Hub*

### **Tonya Hunter**

*Counselor, SCUP*

### **Zebulon Wixson**

*Coordinator – Veterans Services,  
Veteran Success Center*

PACE

# AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

---

**Lisa Price**

*Manager – Academic Scheduling, Academic Programs and Assessment*

**Stephanie Vasquez**

*Admin Support, Languages and Cultures*

**Julie Harps**

*Director – Academic Advising, Smith College of Engineering and Technology*

**Clark Slater**

*Academic Advisor, School of the Arts*

**Angela Pearson**

*Assistant Registrar, Registrar's Office*

**Austin Dopp**

*Lead Custodian, Custodial Services*

**Alex Hartvigsen**

*Director – Sponsored Programs Post Award, Office of Sponsored Programs*

**Rachel Armstrong**

*Coordinator – Circulation Services, Library*

**Traci Day**

*Program Coordinator – Stronger Families Project, Behavioral Science*

**Emma Mecham**

*Admin Support, UVU Community Mental Health Clinic*

**Johana Lindford**

*Intermediate Research Analyst, Center for Constitutional Studies*