

STEAL THIS NEWSLETTER

The Word on the Street from the Office of Learning Advancement

Artificial Intelligence and Education

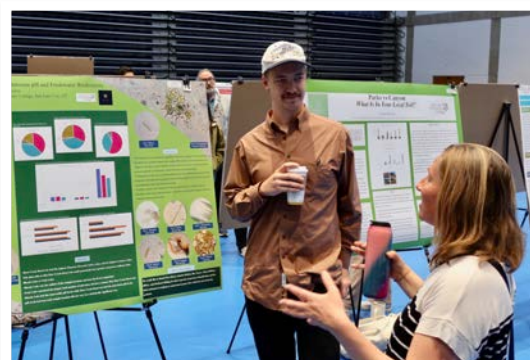
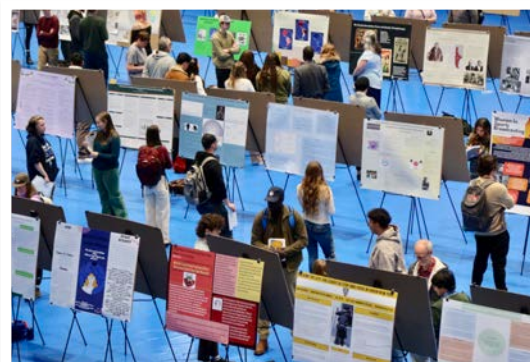


A theme developed in my mind as I took part in SLCC's latest Undergraduate Projects, Presentations, Performances, and Research Celebration (UP3RC). Our own Dr. Lon Schiffbauer gave an excellent keynote speech on the Approaching Human Connection Renaissance, in which he talked to students about how much their world is changing due the rise of artificial intelligence and the idea that in this new age, "human connection will be the new luxury good." Lon stressed that colleges and universities will have to become more adept at preparing students to use artificial intelligence while also instilling in students the high-touch, durable, human skills they will need in the workplace

and in life.

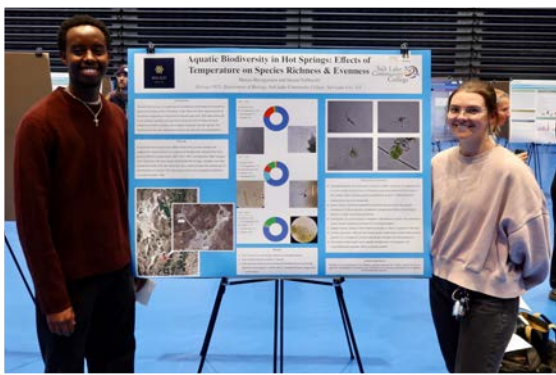
For me, Lon's keynote was sandwiched in between two days of running between UP3RC events ranging from undergraduate research to shark tank competitions, from student presentations on the value of academic travel to demonstrations of software and robotics projects. I saw faculty and staff engaging with students. I saw students engaging with each other. The combination of Lon's keynote and seeing students and faculty in action led me to this conclusion: We need to think very clearly about whether, where, and how to introduce AI into education. There's a world of difference between employing AI in a work setting with already-expert employees in order to improve efficiency or productivity and employing AI with students whose brains and skills are developing.

Education is a social process where faculty put students just outside of their comfort zones to promote learning and growth through feedback and reflection. Everything I saw at UP3RC could probably be done more efficiently by students using AI bots, but that would cheat them of the chance to think critically, work together, gather evidence, create and polish drafts, present their work, and take pride in what they have accomplished.

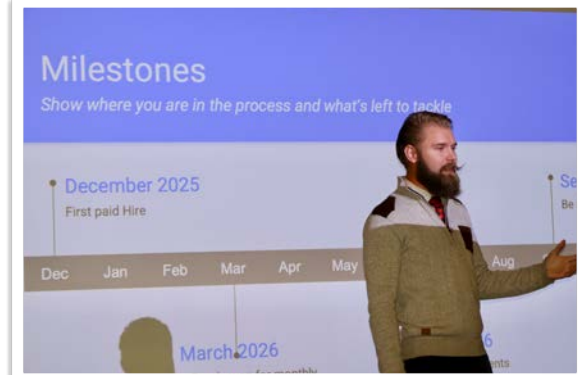


—David Hubert

Fall UP₃RC Photos



Undergraduate Research



Shark Tank Presentations



Tech and Engineering Jamboree



Folio Launch Filled the Oak Room



Center for Latin American Studies Posters



Academic Travel Showcase Presenters

Faculty Spotlight: Emmanuel Santa-Martinez

After teaching at Salt Lake Community College for seven years, Dr. Emmanuel Santa-Martinez is a newly tenured Associate Professor in the Biology Department. He grew up in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico and received a bachelor's in biology from the University of Puerto Rico-Humacao before later receiving a PhD in Entomology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Emmanuel is dedicated to undergraduate research. He says, "Developing and conducting your own research is a great way for students to increase their understanding in biology and improving skills such as teamwork, critical thinking and effective communication. For many students, this was their first exposure to research which provided them an opportunity to learn new lab skills that will help them in their future careers as scientists. Most projects are successful and provide students a rewarding research experience and a glimpse into a future biological career that involves research."



Aside from undergraduate research, Emmanuel has been heavily involved in curricular innovation. He redesigned and taught the Plant Biology lecture and lab (BIOL 1030/1035) in a very applied manner using two adapted OER botany books. He became an affiliated faculty in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences (formerly the Geosciences Department), in order to help re-design the new Environmental Science lecture and lab (ENVS1400/1405), which he then co-taught with Laura Harris. This, too, is an active learning experience for students that features field trips with conservation organizations to see field sites or research labs to learn more about the daily work scientists are doing and how students can get involved in conservation efforts.



Emmanuel developed Dual Language BIOL 1010, the first bilingual such course in the state of Utah. BIOL1010 presents course material in Spanish and gives students the opportunity to ask questions in either language. "Historically," says Emmanuel, "underrepresented students, specifically in the Latinx community, may struggle in STEM courses because the course topics are quite complicated to explain even in English. I wanted to provide the opportunity for students to learn Biology while removing a possible language barrier. I also wanted to create a sense of belonging and a community amongst Spanish speakers."

In his work with students, Emmanuel frequently exposes them to real-world experiences with community organizations such as the Sageland Collaborative, the Salt Lake Mosquito Abatement District, and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

When not at work, Emmanuel likes hiking in Utah's mountains and deserts, biking, kayaking, camping, cooking, gardening, and being involved with the environmental and conservation science community.

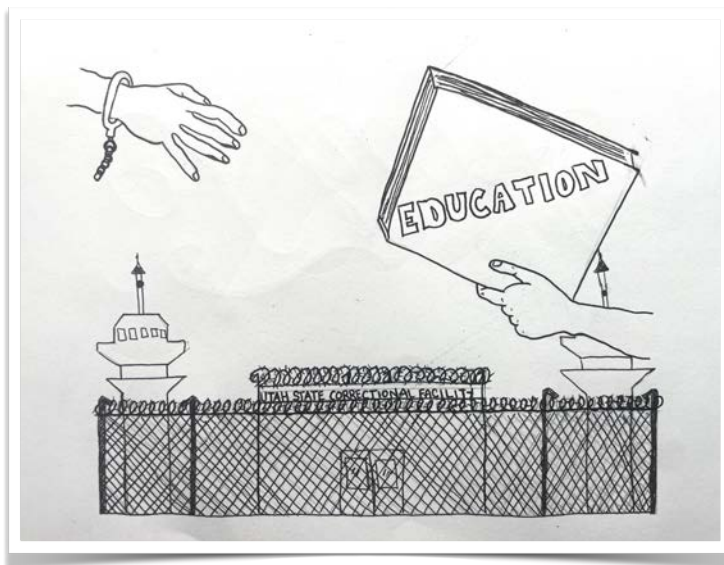
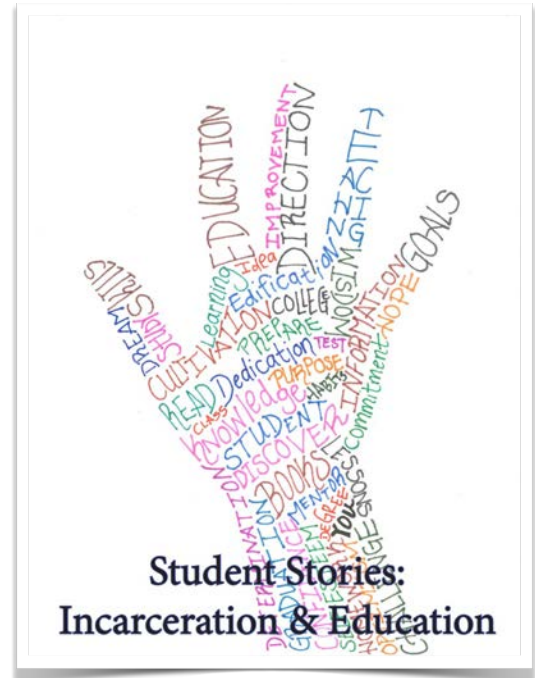
—David Hubert

Student Stories: Incarceration and Education

Student Stories: Incarceration & Education began with a single student who approached David Bokovoy, the Director of the Prison Education Program. They wanted to share their story with anyone who would be willing to listen in an effort to help people avoid mistakes they had made in their life. David loved this idea and introduced this student to me. Through interviews and letters, I was able to collect this student's story and prepare it to be shared on our social media.

While going through the process with this student I realized that this idea could spread much further and do more than originally thought. On campus, and even in my own day to day life, people don't understand the purpose of prison education. Here I was sitting with one of our awesome students who could give an answer. There are so many reasons why we have educational opportunities in prisons. Our focus is on treatment. How do we reduce recidivism? We do it with education. Each student provides their own reason why and how education has helped them on their journey.

Since this discovery I have reached out to all the graduates of our program (those who are still incarcerated), and I've been visiting our classes. Student authors in the publication are all volunteers. Each willing student is given a survey of basic questions centered around their own educational journey. Then I give them a piece of paper and encourage them to trace their hand and write a goal they want to work on in the palm. I want them to realize that their goals are in their own hands, and they will be the ones working to achieve them. They write about their story and share their work. *Student Stories: Incarceration & Education* is our first collection of student work.



Over this last week I have been distributing these books to our students who are in the Green and Bear housing units (men). I will soon hand them out to our students residing in Dell housing (women). Each student who has participated will receive a copy, and each student enrolled last semester will receive a copy. Our students are truly incredible. They work so hard and must stay motivated and diligent to complete assignments as well as staying on top of their other required programs. All the stories were handwritten, then typed up by me, and given final approval by the authors. If you're interested in a copy, just let me know.

—Amanda Rubino

Bringing Learning to Life

Bring learning to life with Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) and take your teaching beyond the classroom! Community-engaged learning is an evidence-based pedagogy that is supported with resources, funding, and professional development. Faculty and students can get engaged in their community, whether that be through direct service, policy and governance, or social entrepreneurship integrated into course work. Address a community's needs while also educating your students!

Here's how to get started:

- Any full-time or adjunct faculty are eligible
- Simply submit your course syllabus, a signature assignment, and a short narrative outlining the community engagement in your course following these guidelines.
- Bonus: Funding is awarded to offset the cost or time that it takes to implement your ideas and projects!



Skyler standing atop her finished BDA in Cotton's Creek.
Photo by Sierra Hastings.

Why CEL? Students in CEL-designated courses report higher engagement in their coursework and a deeper connection to their communities. [Check out some of the data from the Engaged Learning Office.](#)

For example, Skyler Sanders participated in 19 hours of community engagement through her Environmental Science (ENVS) 1400 class, led by Associate Professor Laura Harris. Skyler volunteered with both the Sageland Collaborative and the University of Utah's Chapter of the Wildlife Society.

Through the Sageland Collaborative volunteer days, Skyler helped to restore Utah's wildlands through low tech beaver dam analogs (BDAs), which are simulated beaver dams used to restore environments in which beavers and their influence has been long removed due to human activity. Skyler also assisted by making private ranching land more wildlife friendly through the modification of barbed wire fences which commonly trap and kill wildlife living or passing through areas. With the University of Utah's Chapter of Wildlife Society, Skyler also took part in camera traps, where the data is used for a nationwide biodiversity survey.

"I am so excited to continue to complete my CEL hours with other organizations across Utah, furthering my understanding and education, but also my connection with our community and even our environment. I would love to be one of those people informing the public on these various issues as well. [...] I love learning how I can be sustainable and environmentally conscious, knowing I can inspire others to do the same is incredible." -Skyler Sanders

Unsure where to begin? Contact Lucy Smith in the Engaged Learning Office at Lucy.smith@slcc.edu. Or sign up for the Community-Engaged Learning Faculty Professional Development Series which starts January 20, 2026 (registration open through February). Adjunct faculty get paid for the time spent creating the required content for the CELD proposal. Full time faculty are eligible to receive funding if their proposal is approved. Register via NeoEd!

—Lucy Smith

OPEN SLCC OER STATS



\$37.5 Million

total estimated student cost savings for the program
(Summer 2014 – Fall 2025).

\$4.3 Million

annual average estimated student cost savings
in Academic Years (2022-2025).



Sections offered since 2014:

20,000+

Total number of courses offered to date:

124

unique course offerings

Total enrollments:

449,786

*Note: duplicated student count based on enrollment
not individual student count.

Global reach:

2,581,581

individuals who have accessed SLCC faculty
authored projects globally.

2024-2025 STATS

\$5 million

in estimated student cost savings.

5 grants awarded

with a total of 9 grant projects since 2024.

4

cross institutional open pedagogy projects.

14 X

estimated return on investment based on student cost
savings vs program operational costs.

51.7%

of SLCC concurrent/dual enrollment sections used OER in
the 2024-25 academic year.