

STEAL THIS NEWSLETTER

The Word on the Street from the Office of Learning Advancement

Laptops at the Prison!

Imagine being a college student and having to write every essay by hand. Now, imagine yourself writing a 20-page research paper and citing all your sources in the correct citation format by hand as well. This is how you are earning your college degree. These thoughts are distressing for me to think about, and I doubt they are fun for anyone reading this to think about. However, this is the reality for many of our Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) students who are earning their college degree while incarcerated at the Utah State Correctional Facility (USCF) since the SLCC Prison Education Program (PEP) began in 2017.

With the purchase of 200 laptops by SLCC that are specifically built to be used safely in a carceral environment, this will no longer be the case for many of them. Beginning the Fall 2024 semester, a laptop will be provided to every SLCC student in the women's facility to use in their SLCC classes. These machines will have Windows 11 and the latest Microsoft Office software. SLCC students will be able to use modern technology and software, many for the first time in years, to write their essays, complete their homework, and learn the skills needed for the modern workplace. Students will even be able to create an offline ePortfolio to document their educational experience at SLCC. This will provide an educational experience more equivalent to the education SLCC students receive on our mainstream campuses and will better prepare our system-impacted students for reentry into society and the workforce.

Laptops will also be made available to SLCC students housed in the general population, and those taking Anthropology, Computer Science, and English courses will soon no longer have to complete their essays and research papers by hand. Higher education opportunities in carceral settings are difficult, but providing modern technology to our system-impacted students at SLCC will pay out dividends for our institution and for our students in the years ahead. Providing our students with the tools they need to succeed in their educational goals is just one of many ways SLCC has shown its commitment to both student success and its mission to provide education to our community.



Dr. Chris Bradbury with the new laptops.

—Chris Bradbury

Faculty Spotlight: John Christensen

Born in Provo and raised in Springville, Professor John Christensen's forty-two years on this planet have been anchored to Utah Valley. John has never lived more than thirty minutes from the trailer park his parents called home when he was born. John grew up in a family that teetered on the edge of poverty. There were many months when they only got by through the generosity of their church's welfare system. His experiences growing up deeply inform how he shows up as a professor, community member, and scholar.

John has an interdisciplinary lens that he has carried throughout his education. When he first enrolled at Utah Valley University, he was so hungry for knowledge that he couldn't declare a major. An introductory course in philosophy helped him solve this problem. There are no questions that are off limits to philosophers through their interdisciplinary approach to the study of the world. He was hooked the moment a professor asked him to read *Discipline and Punish* by Michel Foucault.



As John continued to devote himself to his scholarship, he noticed a gap in his knowledge of the past. He found that he loved reading history, and by the time he finished his undergraduate degree in philosophy, he knew that he was going to study history in graduate school. To successfully complete his degrees, he always had to hold down either a full-time job or several part-time jobs.

The intersections between philosophy, history, and his own lived experience of poverty influence his academic focus: "People may be able to escape poverty, but they are rarely able to escape its effects. It took me a long time to work my way through school. (I'm still a dissertation away from my PhD.) So I suppose it was inevitable that I would end up studying American Labor and Working Class History." He will finish his dissertation this fall, meaning his summer will be spent feverishly working on his last chapter – the introduction.

John recognizes that his successes are tied to the support he received and shared, "I owe a debt to my community for not only nurturing me but also giving me space to heal. Working for the Prison Education Program provided me with an opportunity to give back to my community."

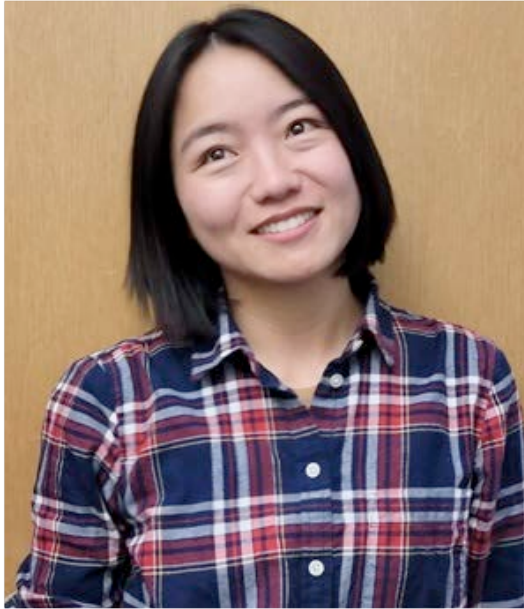
He has been working for SLCC's Prison Education Program since January 2022. He teaches introductory US history survey courses, economic history, and philosophical ethics – juggling his teaching efforts between SLCC, UVU, and the Utah County Academy of Sciences. This summer, he will be teaching a class on Indigenous American History at the prison.

John's favorite part of teaching is that moment when he connects with a student and sees them experience what he experienced in his first and formative college classes: a realization that the world is much bigger and more complex than they previously thought. To support "high-impact practices" inside the prison, John emphasizes moments in the American past that might be directly relevant to incarcerated individuals. For example, they talk a lot about the historical development of the War on Drugs and mass incarceration. They also examine the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States, except for people who are "duly convicted of a crime."

History and history education are John's life. He loves what he does and has devoted his whole self to it.

—Emily Thompson

Staff Spotlight: Yana Yan



Jiaxian Yan is one of the latest members of the Office of Learning Advancement team and the Administrative Assistant of Academic Operations/ General Education. You may know her as Yana Yang. Yana is fluent in Mandarin and is originally from China. She moved to the United States in August 2022. Yana has a Master's degree in Creative Industries and Cultural Assets from Hong Kong Metropolitan University and a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from Qiqihar University. Yana comes packed with 12 years of leadership experience as a former director who worked in a fast paced, high stress environment in Shanghai, China, where she oversaw a team of 20 - 30 people all while managing her boss's schedule. Yana's decade in China's cultural industry brought over 50 films, documentaries, and TV shows to Shanghai audiences. Her passion for the arts fuels her work. Yana has been with the college for five months now and loves every bit of it! She is deeply passionate about her cultural roots and would love to continue growing at SLCC by doing a cultural exchange in which she can share and teach folks about China, its history and heritage.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an extreme time for everyone around the world. China locked down the whole country in ways that were far more strict than in the United States. Yana relived that experience during the interview. It was very emotional. She had to be strong for herself and her two-year-old child. Yana remembers when her son would cry because of the mask and not being able to breathe. In Shanghai where she lived, she was stuck at home for 3 months and had to get tested every day. Yana opened up about being depressed during that time; of seeing so many people, young and old, struggling with isolation. She even saw people jumping from buildings. Yana saw so many losses in her country that when it was finally over, she was happy to have human interaction.

Yana shared what it was like working in China. She described never working at all before graduating college in 2012 and how it blew her mind because of how hard it was. Yana had to adapt because of extreme working conditions in her country. She would overwork herself every day, sometimes on the weekends, to keep up with the demands of the company she worked for. She said the work environment is competitive there, so you must push yourself forward to keep up with the speed of development. She said that each day was different, with new things to learn and few people available to show you the ropes. This made many workers frustrated. Yana calls her earlier job wonderful, high pressure, and frustrating compared to her new role. She is grateful to be in a kind and supportive space here at SLCC.

—Kemone Feleti

Distinguished Faculty Lecturers!



Dr. Melissa Hardy will be Salt Lake Community College's Distinguished Faculty Lecturer for 2025. Her lecture, "Biocurious: The Power of Curiosity in an Age of Assessment," will be an antidote to the recent trend in higher education to standardize curriculum, which often prioritizes the needs of institutions over the needs of students. Her lecture will focus on reigniting the natural curiosity of students.

"We are here to help students earn their degree or certificate or credits, but we are also here to show them what makes our disciplines worthy of study and empower them to exercise their curiosity and agency," says Melissa.

The topics covered in her lecture will span from discussions on parasitic worms to insights regarding the student experience at SLCC. Melissa will also discuss the need to integrate meaningful and transformative experiences—such as hands-on research projects—into curricula so students can see their learning come to life outside the classroom.

With a Master of Arts in Biology from San Francisco State University and a Doctorate in Neurobiology and Anatomy from the University of Utah, Melissa joined SLCC's faculty in 2011 and has created and taught courses in general biology, ecology, animal biology, and marine biology. Additionally, she is deeply committed to developing and disseminating open educational resources so that students can save money on textbooks and have an improved educational experience.



On April 18th, Dr. Kristi Green gave a fascinating presentation ([video here](#)) for the 2024 Distinguished Faculty Lecture. In her lecture, "Counterstories of Latinas Working at Community Colleges," she recounted the experiences of Latinas in a way different from the "master narrative," which identifies white, heterosexual, male, and middle-class culture as neutral or the norm. This approach gives voice to a different perspective, encouraging institutions such as SLCC to better support and retain our Latina colleagues.

Kristi revealed the narratives of eleven Latinas who work at community colleges, including her own story, and wove them in interesting ways throughout her presentation. Six of them were born in the United States, two immigrated as children, and three immigrated as adults. Using quotes from the women, she developed themes in the presentation such as allyship, anti-essentialism, and anti-subordination.

In addition to her qualitative approach to the subject, Kristi presented a schematic representation of and quantitative data on Latinx in the educational pipeline, which reinforced ideas of allyship, cultivating talent, and retaining people at SLCC.

—David Hubert

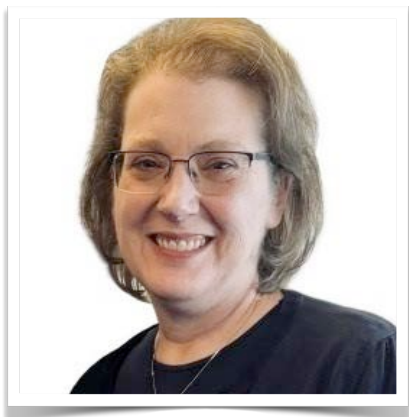
Open Champions

An Open Champion is an individual who has made a significant contribution in supporting OER work at SLCC and often in the broader open community. Open SLCC would like to congratulate all our faculty, administration, and staff champions. Here we highlight the efforts of our current Open Champions. We also recognize and thank our [Past Open Champions](#).



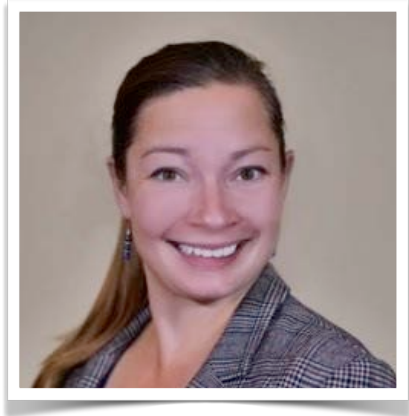
“Open Educational Resources (OER) makes college more affordable for our students and allows us to tailor material to topics specific to our classes, compared to general textbooks which often include more tangential information. This is especially important in online classes where my faculty manipulate the OER materials to clarify or highlight certain topics, replicating what we might typically do in our in-person lectures.”

Melissa Schaefer Seaboch, Professor/Department Chair, Anthropology and Political Science
Staff/Administration Open Champion



“I was first drawn to OER because of my desire to make a college education more affordable and, therefore, more accessible to all students. As I began using OER, I loved the flexibility it gave me. I was able to create course materials tailored to the learning objectives of my courses rather than having to design my curriculum around available textbooks.”

Deena Bain, Associate Professor Mathematics
Full Time Faculty Open Champion



“I use OER in my courses and advocate for their use across campus. These resources minimize financial barriers and offer enhanced accessibility for diverse learners. OER fosters interactive learning environments by integrating multimedia content, enhancing engagement, and enriching the educational experience for modern students. By embracing OER, I empower students to explore diverse perspectives and immerse themselves in the dynamic world of Earth science without constraints.”

Laura Harris, Assistant Professor Geoscience
Full Time Faculty Open Champion

Open Champions



"Open Education Resources is so easy to get behind as a president. It immediately increases access to learning materials for all students, and importantly for those who are financially vulnerable. I was proud to be the President of SLCC when OER was in its infancy and watch it grow into a national model saving students more than \$28M in textbook costs. Our students win with affordable resources and our faculty win by publishing creative, relevant texts with international reach!"

Denece Huftalin, SLCC President
Honorary Open Champion



"I use OER in my classroom to provide dynamic, up-to-date instructional resources to SLCC students. I am proud to work with OER at SLCC to increase access to higher education, reduce financial barriers, and develop equitable content that highlights the many diverse perspectives in the Geosciences."

Stella Mosher, Division of Natural Sciences
Adjunct Faculty Open Champion



"The Low-Cost / No-Cost program is a lifeline for students. SLCC offers such an incredible number of these courses, that some students don't even realize they are taking them. They are just ecstatic to not have to buy a textbook. With inflation at record highs, students are looking for ways to make every dollar they spend at school go further. The OER program allows students to take classes, without worrying about hidden textbook costs"

Emily Orton, SLCCSA Vice President of Academic Pathways
Student Open Champion

Honors Students Present at WRHC in Long Beach

From March 28-30, 2024, fourteen SLCC Honors students showcased their research projects at the Western Regional Honors Conference (WRHC) at California State University in Long Beach. Their participation not only highlighted their individual achievements but also significantly contributed to SLCC's mission of promoting academic excellence and fostering an environment of critical thinking, inquiry, and collaboration. Over the past few months, the students have dedicated themselves to rigorous research, working closely with mentors, collecting data, and analyzing their findings on topics they are deeply passionate about.

The presentations at the conference covered a diverse range of interests. For instance, Jack Bohun delved into biology research focusing on sharks and the ecological impacts of feed training on shark behavior. Natalie Cabrera Mansilla explored the intricacies and benefits of mentorship support for kindergarten students, while Camille Thompson examined various perspectives on ADHD and potential medical or therapeutic approaches.



Patrick Lane shared research on simulation theory, drawing on interdisciplinary knowledge of mathematics and technology. Tawana Dzenga engaged in historical inquiries and philosophical explorations through analyses of various musical genres and artists.

Through their research endeavors, the students pursued evidence-based solutions to real-world problems. Some of their research directly draws from our own community and campus. Zach Johnson investigated accessible,

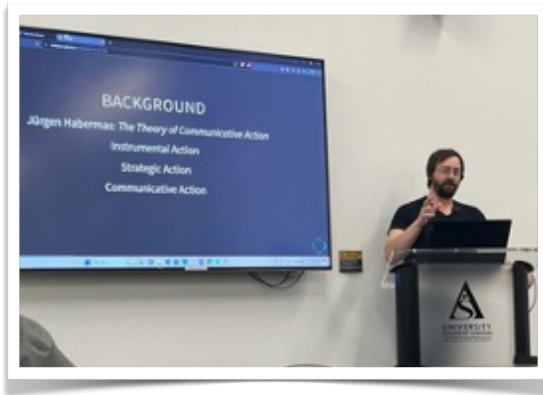
affordable, and cultural food options for SLCC students, Marjorie Wilson collected data and stories of students facing internet connection and technology access issues across campus to identify potential solutions, and Mateo Ruelas explored personality traits to better understand students and support them in navigating higher education.

Throughout the entire conference, SLCC honors students, staff, and faculty demonstrated remarkable community and collaboration by providing each other with valuable feedback, guidance, and support. It was an incredibly rewarding experience and the students have been truly inspirational.

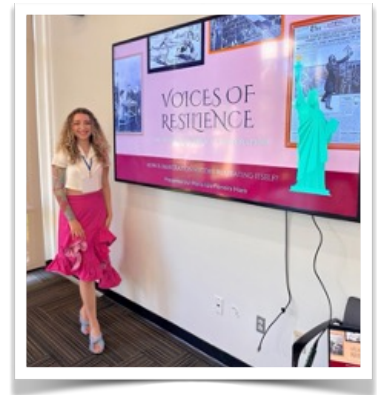
We want to express our gratitude for the continued support of the Honors Program and the HIPs funding that helped make the WRHC experiences possible. We also want to thank 2023-24 Honors Faculty: Sahar Al-Shoubaki, Cindy Fierros, Lynn Kilpatrick, Honors Faculty Mentors: David Hubert, Kati Lewis, Michael Young, and Honors Program Team: Kathy Tran-Peters, Zach Johnson, Jevahjire France, Jack Bohun, and Aylin Gutierrez.

—Kathy Tran-Peters

Selected Photos from WRHC in Long Beach



Austin Karn – Anti You: Institutional Legitimacy, the Semiotics of Action, and the Vulgar Discourse



Maria Julia Ramos Ferreira – Voices of Resilience: The Untold History of Immigration



Tawananyasha Dzenga – What is American Identity?



Adriano Demartin Martinez – Navigating the Green Card Backlog: Challenges and Solutions



Patrick Lane – Transcendental Properties of Simulated and Simulation-Hosting Universes



Camille Thompson – Exploring Diverse Perspectives on ADHD: A Comparative Study Across College Majors