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Welcome back to Spring Semester 2016!

As we brave the winter weather and look forward to longer days in the near future, we would like to welcome Dr. Ray Hoobler to the University of Utah as the new Director of the Professional Master of Science and Technology program. Dr. Hoobler holds a PhD in Chemistry and recently moved to Salt Lake City from a Senior Scientist position at KLA-Tencor (Silicon Valley) to lead the University’s PMST program. The UU’s PMST program, founded in Fall 2002, is a multidisciplinary degree program housed in the Graduate School. The PMST program is designed to provide students with the rigor of a traditional Master of Science degree, combined with the transferable business skills that will enhance business and entrepreneurial success. You can find out more about the PMST program at http://pmst.utah.edu.

The Graduate School provides in-depth support for the growth of knowledge through graduate education across campus; the PMST program is one example of this commitment. The Graduate School also provides graduate fellowship support, tuition benefits, medical insurance subsidies, assistance in dissertation writing and publication, support for visiting scholars and postdoctoral associates, and travel support for students and postdocs to present their work at conferences. All of these programs are in place to help students and the University continue to create and share new discoveries and insights.

As part of the Graduate School’s ongoing support of the University’s mission, this semester’s edition of GradNews focuses on the University’s goal to Develop and Transfer New Knowledge. Graduate education is a key to the development and dissemination of new knowledge at the University. A major element of most master and doctoral programs is the dissertation: a formal essay or treaties undertaken with the guidance of a faculty member that explores new ideas and knowledge and is disseminated broadly to the general community. Likewise, during the past year the Graduate School has been working to develop new avenues for students to more broadly disseminate their work, such as the new GradAttack podcasts and the development and growth of the successful 3-Minute Thesis Competition. This issue of GradNews highlights these and many other initiatives.

You are our most important customer, and we hope you will take advantage of everything the Graduate School can offer. Please visit the Graduate School webpage (http://gradschool.utah.edu) and sign up on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com) and Twitter (@UUGradSchool) to receive updates regarding deadlines, fellowships, training seminars, and other upcoming opportunities. If you need my direct assistance, please feel free to email me at dean@gradschool.utah.edu or drop by to visit me at the Graduate School Dean’s Office (302 Park). I look forward to seeing you soon!

Dave Kieda
Dean, The Graduate School
dean@gradschool.utah.edu
The Graduate School Diversity Office launched a new initiative last fall called Soup(er) Tuesdays. This event was designed to bring underrepresented graduate students, diversity fellowship awardees, and McNair Scholar alumni from across disciplines together to build a sense of community while enjoying a free bowl of soup. A master’s student in Educational Leadership & Policy commented, “It was really great to have a space to take a break from my assistantship and from school. It was also nice to talk to other grad students and learn about their experiences. I was also very hungry, so the soup was incredibly helpful!” A fifth-year doctoral student in Education, Culture & Society added, “It was good to start a conversation on how to help newer students find funding for the later years of the program. The soup was good, too.” Attendance has ranged between 12 to 30 graduate students over the Fall semester. Aside from enjoying a hot meal, graduate students also had an opportunity to share their experiences with Dr. Araceli Frias and recommend resources they would like to see on campus to support their success. Soup(er) Tuesdays will resume in the spring - keep an eye on the Graduate School Diversity Office Facebook page for upcoming dates!
On Friday, September 18, nearly 30 graduate students gathered at Mestizo Coffeehouse for the 3rd Annual Underrepresented Graduate Student Social. After socializing and eating some delicious food, students had an opportunity to learn about the services and resources available from the Marriott Library and Career Services. Linda St. Clair (Graduate Services Coordinator and College of Education Subject Librarian) and Twanna Hodge (Diversity Resident Librarian) discussed the various research and writing workshops scheduled for the fall, including the popular Dissertation Writing Boot Camp. Career coach Dr. Francine Mahak was also present and encouraged graduate students to work with Career Services to explore career possibilities and to prepare for the job market. The evening wrapped up with a raffling of prizes, including Dr. Karen Kelsky’s new book titled *The Professor Is In: The Essential Guide To Turning Your Ph.D. Into a Job*. The Graduate School Diversity Office is grateful for the Marriott Library’s co-sponsorship of the event.

In the fall 2015 competition, three Celebrate Diversity Mini-Grants were awarded. The awardees included the University of Utah SACNAS student chapter, the Department of Educational Psychology Diversity Committee, and the School of Medicine. The Celebrate Diversity Mini-Grants support activities that value the contributions of historically underrepresented students in higher education through a limited number of grant awards. Please note that the criteria for the spring competition have changed: proposals will now have to address a significant or currently unmet need related to the retention and/or professional development of historically underrepresented graduate students. Additional information will be posted on the Diversity Office webpage.
The passion for this study is grounded in my hope for assuring an excellent and equitable education for all students. Under current school conditions, we can have a better chance of achieving this when we focus our attention on transforming school culture by promoting social justice and mindset shifts. Although the scope of the study did not focus on transforming school culture, the practices of an educator with an equity mindset can potentially help set the stage for this institutional transformation. This institutional transformation is driven by the personal transformation of educators’ mindsets that result in a critical racial awareness that I have described as an “equity mindset.” The educators in this study had been engaged in a process of learning to talk about race as it related to educational disparities and the racial achievement gap. The focus of my research was on examining how the educators reflected on the impact as well as the challenges of participating in critical dialogues about race and educational inequity through the Courageous Conversations process. The understanding of institutional racism and the impact on students became clearer for most participants.

The findings indicated that although the process of engaging in these conversations was complex, challenging, and emotional, the respondents described their learning and growth with the metaphor of a journey. They also reflected on their initial and sometimes ongoing fear of participating in the conversations, but they acknowledged the support and relationships that developed throughout the process helped them through this journey. The impact of this knowledge and understanding on their practice went beyond the classroom and into relationship building with students, families, and the community. As a Black feminist facilitator/educator/scholar, my reflections were a component of this process.

“Institutional transformation is driven by the personal transformation of educators' mindsets.”
Three Minute Thesis Competition

Students Summarize Research at Annual 3MT Competition

“I know you are a graduate student, but what exactly do you do?” It’s a question every graduate student will receive at some point during his or her studies, and it’s a difficult one to answer. Whether talking to a new acquaintance or a parent worried that their investment in education is paying off, many graduate students find themselves struggling to adequately explain complex research ideas to an interested audience that has no training.

“After studying a specific topic for six years, I found it difficult to communicate my research with friends and family outside of science,” says Matthew Sdano, a PhD-track graduate student from the Department of Biochemistry. Sdano studies the regulatory function of histone chaperone proteins in human cells, a highly technical field of study that requires extensive training. The gap between Sdano’s specialized knowledge and the average person’s understanding of human cellular development is wide, but nevertheless Sdano felt it was valuable to learn how to bridge the gap when explaining his research to non-experts. “I realized that the ability to clearly communicate my research will be important regardless of what career path I choose,” he says.

Fortunately, the University of Utah Graduate School hosts an annual competition with the goal of helping graduate students learn to quickly and effectively communicate their research to lay audiences. Created in 2008 at the University of Queensland in New Zealand, the 3MT, or Three Minute Thesis, Competition challenges students to find a short and compelling way to describe their research. In this competition, participants are limited to three minutes and a single presentation slide while they present their research to an audience that has no prior knowledge of their field. Contestants are judged on the clarity of their presentation, their stage presence, and their ability to communicate complex ideas in a short period of time.

At the University of Utah, the competition attracts participants like Sdano from a wide range of technical and nontechnical studies. This year, the 3MT Competition saw participants from fields as diverse as Chemical Engineering to English Literature. At the event, audience members were

Matthew Sdano presents his research at the 3MT Competition.
“No matter what career path graduate students take, we will need to communicate our research to someone less familiar with the topic.”

Sdano, who won this year’s competition, says that the value of the 3MT competition is that “[n]o matter what career path graduate students take, we will need to communicate our research to someone less familiar with the topic. Unfortunately, most graduate training programs do not prepare students for this. The value of the 3MT competition is providing this training.”

And how should you answer the great-aunt who asks you about your research? Sdano gives this advice: “Two things: 1. Think simple and big picture, and 2. Find a good analogy…. if you start thinking about experimental methods, you are thinking too specific. An effective way of communicating a concept is through an analogy. Compare your research to something your audience can relate to and keep the comparison going throughout the presentation.”

Before the competition, 3MT participants spend many weeks preparing and polishing their presentations and presentation slides, under the guidance of Career Services staff and with the input of their fellow competitors. “The most rewarding part of 3MT was working with the other competitors to improve everyone’s presentations,” says Sdano. “The acts of giving and receiving feedback are powerful learning tools that were instrumental in creating everyone’s final product.” By the end of the process, each participant has a polished soundbite that captures the essence of their research but is still accessible enough for family members, friends, and future employers.

3MT Competitors, 2015

1st place Matthew Sdano, Biochemistry
2nd place T. Cameron Waller, Biochemistry

Participants
Jessica Alexander, Creative Writing
Sara Apple, Biochemistry
Fatemeh Babazadeh, Chemical Engineering
Matt Converse, Mechanical Engineering
Liz Enrico, Microbiology and Immunology
David Jones, Biomedical Informatics
Anne Martin, Neurobiology and Anatomy

I realized that every member of [the 3MT] audience has a share or interest in science and technology,” says T. Cameron Waller of the Biochemistry Department. “As a scientist, I have a responsibility to promote beneficial projects and to inform the population.” Waller, who studies the development of cancer in human cells, won second place in the competition for the presentation of his research.

treated to a fascinating cross-section of the groundbreaking research being performed by graduate students across the campus.

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In Fall Semester 2015, the Graduate School produced its first ever podcast, called GradAttack. Drawing on the innovative study being done across campus, the podcast interviews University of Utah graduate students about their research projects.

“The idea for the GradAttack podcast was borne out of the fascinating research that comes daily into the Thesis Office at the U.’s Graduate School, which simply cried out for a wider audience,” says Patrick Hadley, Assistant Thesis Editor and originator of the GradAttack podcast. “We wanted to make sure that we represented the full range of the work done here, from science and engineering to the social sciences and humanities, and the episodes we have lined up will serve to showcase the diversity of the research—and the researchers—who help make the U. a world-class research institution.”

With the intensity of graduate studies, students can often be unaware of the work being done in the University that is outside their interests or relevant to their field. The GradAttack podcast seeks to connect graduate students across disciplines, so that all students can be aware of the dynamic and innovative research at the University of Utah. “Simply put, the work being done by graduate and postgraduate researchers at the University of Utah was just too interesting and impressive not to draw people’s attention to it,” says Hadley. “A podcast seemed the ideal way to do that.”

GradAttack is currently scheduled to air once every month, but in the near future the schedule will increase to posting twice monthly. GradAttack episodes can be found at the Graduate School website or on iTunes.
Interested in being in GradAttack?

GradAttack is always looking for new participants to discuss their graduate research. An appearance on GradAttack is a great way to hone thesis presentation skills and looks good on a CV.

To participate in GradAttack, or to nominate a colleague, contact Patrick Hadley or Danny Nelson.

Patrick Hadley
patrick.hadley@gradschool.utah.edu

Danny Nelson
danny.nelson@gradschool.utah.edu

Daniela Chavez  Department of Human Genetics

GradAttack Podcast  01/04/2016

“The Struggles and Successes of Chicanos and Native Americans in the Sciences at the University of Utah”

Graduate School Fellowships

Each year, the Graduate School at the University of Utah provides unique scholarships and fellowships to select graduate students across many different departments. Two of these fellowships, the Graduate Research Fellowship and the University Teaching Assistantship, allow students to further their research while making an important impact on the University.

Graduate Research Fellowship

For full-time graduate students who are conducting research or creative projects and who are pursuing the terminal graduate degree in their departments. All qualifying examinations must be successfully passed prior to the beginning of the academic year of the award; nonrenewable. Award will qualify the student for the University’s tuition benefit program, provided all other tuition benefit program criteria are met (including term limits). 12-15 awards given annually.

University Teaching Assistantship

For full-time graduate teaching assistants (first-year graduate students are not eligible). Departments may use the University Teaching Assistants in a variety of ways to enhance undergraduate teaching and graduate student development. Award will qualify the student for the University’s tuition benefit program, provided all other tuition benefit program criteria are met (including term limits). 12-15 awards given annually.
2015-16 University Teaching Assistants

Jin Bi – Linguistics
Whitney Borup – English
Kristen Cox – Nursing
Emily DiBlasi – Biology
Kacie Egbert – Nursing
Nina McCurdy – Computing
Erika Gustafson – Family & Consumer Studies
Nicholas Harrison – Philosophy
Laura Graham Holmes – Psychology
Amber Whiteley – Psychology
Gavin McBride – Exercise & Sport Science
Binod Paudyal – Ethnic Studies
Anthony Smith – Philosophy
Ashley Stevens – Educational Psychology
Morgan Dorcheus – Human Development & Social Policy
Yasin Fairly – Modern Dance
Stephane Glynn – Film & Media Arts
Katherine Schide – Geology & Geophysics

2015-16 Graduate Research Fellows

Jason Albright – Mathematics
Mohammad Javad Ameli Renani – Civil & Environmental Engineering
Javed Akram – Metallurgical Engineering
Benjamin Bruno – Pharmaceutics
Elizabeth Grace Ivkovich – Modern Dance
Anshul Joshi – Computer Science
Alexandra Keefe – Human Genetics
Patrice Kurnath – Biology
Erica Larson – Pharmacology & Toxicology
Nathan Miller – Mechanical Engineering
Julia Mulhern – Geology
Shashank Pandey – Electrical & Computer Engineering
Gregory Remigio – Neuroscience
John Schell – Chemistry
Graham Slater – Education, Culture & Society
Tammy Stump – Psychology
Jennifer Tabler – Sociology
Guang Tian – City & Metropolitan Planning

Dean David Kieda of the Graduate School gathers with recipients of the GRF/UTA Scholarships at the annual celebratory breakfast.
Give us a little background about yourself and describe your research project.

I’m a musician-entrepreneur with a specialized background in performance and composition. I am a classically trained percussionist, but can also play guitar, piano, and bass. After a long, diverse career in music, I decided to further study concert music composition, which is why I applied for the PhD in music composition here at the University of Utah. My primary focus has been further developing my creative work by applying intense scrutiny to my own compositional process and style with the goal of eventually becoming a college professor of music. Some of the compositions I’ve written here in Utah can be heard on my website: http://devinmaxwell.net/ and my music is published by Good Child Music http://www.goodchildmusic.com/.

As a performer, I’ve worked with a wide range of musicians encompassing a spectrum of diverse musical style. I’ve performed at Lincoln Center in New York City and as part of the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Green Umbrella series, and as a session musician and record producer I’ve worked with a number of recording artists including Anni Rossi http://3syllablesrecords.bigcartel.com/artist/anni-rossi and Bat For Lashes http://www.batforlashes.com/tagged/news.

My research project centered on composing an original concert work for full orchestra and electronics titled 12. This work is also the creative portion of my PhD dissertation. Traditional orchestral composition is well established, but not many composers have had the chance to work in the genre of orchestra and electronics, so I felt with my varied background that I could have a significant impact with this work. I did not define the creative focus of the original work in the proposal; I simply wanted to develop my original voice as a composer through composing for orchestra and electronics. Once I started sketching out the composition, the piece became an exploration of the relationship between the artificial character of the electronics and the very human act of making music together in an orchestra.

What drew you to the University of Utah?

The University of Utah has a number of competitive advantages compared to other graduate programs in music composition, most notably the faculty and the teaching opportunities. The music composition faculty is top-notch and the integrity of my creative work has grown considerably while I’ve been studying with Dr. Morris Rosenzweig and Dr. Steven Roens. Dr. Miguel Chuaqui, currently the Director of the School of Music, is a pioneer in interactive electronic music and I learned a great deal in his electronic music courses. I feel lucky to be able to give back in this area, since this year I am teaching Dr. Chuaqui’s electronic music courses here at the University of Utah with the same vision for the potential of electronic music that he instilled in me.
Before attending this PhD program, I had never taught music classes at any level other than private instruction. Since my goal is to teach at a college level and share my diverse background with as many students as I possibly can, I needed both the opportunity to teach as well as the opportunity to improve my teaching. Working with members of the music faculty as well as CTLE, I’ve been able to study and improve on my teaching using the best research-based pedagogy available.

Additionally, the local arts scene here in Salt Lake and the surrounding area has been growing and I’ve had performance opportunities with programs associated with Utah Opera/Utah Symphony, the UMFA, UMOCA, and Kimball Arts Center. In order to help grow the arts scene, I volunteer my entrepreneurial and business expertise by sitting on the Advisory Council of the Salty Cricket Composers Collective and I sit on the board of The Weilenmann School of Discovery, a charter school that has, in addition to other programs, a music and arts focus. [http://wsdpc.org/](http://wsdpc.org/) I also just helped launch Barbara Scowcroft’s Utah Young Composers Project through her revered Utah Youth Symphony and Ensembles program. In that program, I am teaching composition workshops that will culminate in orchestral readings to between 40 and 50 high school aged students. I also ask guest composers to present or perform their work in the workshops, so this program helps expose students to local and international composers. The guest composers in turn provide role models for the students in terms of both career management and creative inspiration.

Finally, Katie Porter, my wife and a University of Utah alumna, and I have been able to get a music-commissioning project that we have been dreaming about for several years off the ground here in Utah: The Listen/Space commissions. While we were in New York, we were able to run an experimental music venue called Listen/Space and now we commission and record new music that is in the creative spirit of our beloved venue. We are working on distributing these scores through Larry Polansky’s Frog Peak Music. [https://listenspacemusic.wordpress.com/about/](https://listenspacemusic.wordpress.com/about/)

To sum it up, for the last five years, while I’ve been working on my PhD, I’ve been able to develop my teaching career, do creative work, and utilize my entrepreneurial skills while building my local network and balancing my personal life, which may not have been possible at any other institution or in any other place.

**Last year you received the University’s Graduate Research Fellowship and also performed a piece you composed at the Czech Republic. Tell us about those experiences.**

Receiving the Graduate Research Fellowship gave me a luxury that not many composers ever get in the course of their careers. It allowed me to focus on a single composition for nearly a whole year. This singular focus allowed me to intensely scrutinize the smallest level of detail in *Chester, NJ*, which in turn elevated the creative integrity of the work while refining my own creative process. Access to the school orchestra and performance hall were key to successful implementation of the electronics with the orchestra. I was also able to look at composition in terms of the entire life cycle of a work: create, perform, record, release. Once *Chester, NJ* was completed, I conducted the Utah Philharmonia in a reading of the work, which was recorded. I then sent the recording of the reading to the Ostrava Days festival in the Czech Republic [http://www.newmusicostrava.cz/en/ostrava-days/festival-program/45-ostravska-banda-i.html](http://www.newmusicostrava.cz/en/ostrava-days/festival-program/45-ostravska-banda-i.html).

*Chester, NJ* was accepted to the festival and performed by Devin Maxwell conducting at the Ostrava Days Festival in the Czech Republic.

this summer to an international audience that included renowned composers such as Christian Wolff, Alvin Lucier and Phil Niblock, as well as other emerging and established composers. Each of the established composers that attended the festival met with the participants one-on-one and provided criticism and feedback. My individual time with Bernhard Lang was particularly beneficial. Also, the peer responses I received after the public performance of Chester, NJ were very helpful when it came time to defend my dissertation. Finally, I was able to build a network of emerging composers that I'm excited about, and I'm currently looking to commission new works by younger composers of Czech, Polish, Cypriot, and Iranian descent for my percussion and clarinet duo, Red Desert Ensemble. [http://www.reddesertensemble.org/about.html](http://www.reddesertensemble.org/about.html)

What is the impact of your research? How do you plan to share what you’ve learned with others?

The impact of my research is that Chester, NJ directly engages with the creative and practical concerns of composing for orchestra and electronics. Hopefully the work will stand as a template for how to approach some of these issues, as it overtly engages with them. The most immediate contribution that I can make to my field is that if you want to use a multi-speaker setup for the electronics playback, it is more effective to divide the speakers into different frequency zones rather than assigning specific roles to the speakers. I had initially assigned one speaker for low sounds and a separate speaker for high sounds, but this discrete assignment cluttered the sound. It is much better to have each speaker play designated high and low sounds simultaneously, which seems counterintuitive. Being able to use the school facilities to audition the electronics separately allowed for me to figure out the best implementation for the loudspeakers.

I plan on sharing this knowledge, and other aspects of this project, in a case study paper or two that I will present at conferences and possibly publish. One paper may tackle the creative concerns while the other may explore the technical. The work itself, Chester, NJ, will be included on my upcoming CD release through the New York-based record label Infrequent Seams.

What advice would you give to those applying for a Graduate Research Fellowship?

My advice would be to start with an innovative idea that you are extremely passionate about and start talking to everyone you know about it. Discourse usually helps refine ideas, so talking through your idea will also help you to understand how to frame your research, especially to people outside your field. The next step would be to define the scope of the project so that you are able to complete it within the resources available with whatever grant or fellowship you are applying for. While defining the scope of your project, you need to build relationships with students, faculty, and other organizations that can help support your project. In my case, I felt that having the school orchestra, the Utah Philharmonia, perform my piece would be beneficial to the project, so before I wrote the proposal, I spoke with Dr. Robert Baldwin, the conductor of the group, and enlisted his support for the application. With his support, I was able to record the orchestra reading and use that recording to arrange for the premiere of Chester, NJ at Ostrava Days. The reading also helped benefit the students in the orchestra, exposing them to the rewards and challenges of performing new music.

Once you have a clear, focused idea and have lined up all the support you need, writing and revising the application should be much easier. After the grant is rewarded, you need to make sure that you in fact realize the project, but should allow for some flexibility as the project changes. Also, don't forget to hold people who pledged support accountable. Remember that you are not simply a researcher in this project, you are the lead researcher, which places you in a leadership position. If this is not your forte, then look at the project as an opportunity to grow your leadership skills and use any resources here at the U or elsewhere to do so. Finally, constantly search for ways to present your work on a local, national, and international level. In some ways, the hard work begins after your research is completed!
Teaching Highlight: Nina McCurdy

At first glance, Nina McCurdy may not be the typical School of Computing graduate student. Although she is busy researching at the cutting edge of her very complex field, she still finds time for artistic expression and tries to incorporate it into her work. As a trained jazz drummer, she recognizes that technical proficiency can often be enhanced by the application of the creative arts. “I have always been a science + art person,” she says, “and I’ve been determined to cultivate my dual interest because I really believe it is through this interdisciplinary medium that I can make a significant contribution to science, to the arts, and to society as a whole.” For Nina, art and science aren’t contradictory fields, but rather essential tools for understanding and gaining new knowledge.

It’s a perception she is anxious to share. As a recipient of a University Teaching Assistantship (UTA) through the Graduate School, McCurdy is in a unique position to share her ideas with others. “I am dedicated to developing an academic environment that supports interdisciplinary learning and allows science + art undergraduates to explore their full potential,” she says of her teaching philosophy. Her commitment to both science and art was what inspired her to help develop an undergraduate course that offers students hands-on computer engineering practice while simultaneously teaching undergraduates through a combination of creativity and technical training, Nina McCurdy represents an important part of University knowledge transfer.
encouraging creativity and artistic expression.

The course, entitled “Making Noise: Sound Art and Digital Media,” was developed by School of Computing professor Erik Brunvand, under a University professorship, and piloted in Spring 2015. McCurdy worked with Brunvand in Fall 2015 to develop new infrastructure and new lab materials for this course based on the experience gained in the pilot version. As opposed to many entry-level computing classes, the course introduces students to computing concepts through digital media projects rather than through engineering projects. This approach teaches the same levels of technological fluency as more traditional courses, but also encourages students to explore the artistic possibilities made available by evolving technology.

What makes this approach unique? “There seems to be a gap in the general education requirement for undergrads,” says Brunvand. “The general education requirements have fine arts, humanities, physical/life science or applied science (e.g., experimental science), and social/behavioral science. What seems to be left out is engineering and technology.”

Within the course, students are instructed to tackle technology problems both through computer programming and the creation of electronic devices. One of the assignments in the course requires students to create an oscillator sound generator inside a unique medium. As an example, McCurdy has built her own oscillator and put it in a teddy bear. It’s the perfect encapsulation of her approach to the course material: practical science made surprising and new when it is put in a whimsical and artistic context.

To prepare for her UTA nomination, McCurdy worked closely with Professor Brunvand in order to refine and personalize a course development proposal. For a course like this one, with cross-disciplinary and non-traditional content, the balancing of the proposed curriculum between the arts and technology components was critical. Particularly, preparing the personal statement and the UTA proposal required extensive revision and redrafting before McCurdy was satisfied with the result. “I took advantage of the available writing resources to improve the language of my personal statement, check grammar, etc.,” says McCurdy. “This is something that I highly recommend to anyone putting together a UTA proposal (or any proposal for that matter)—and the University of Utah has tremendous writing resources.”

For those interested in a UTA, McCurdy says that enthusiasm is the key to creating a winning proposal. “Find a project that you are truly passionate (or at least very excited) about,” she says, “and let that enthusiasm show in your proposal. For me, the UTA was a wonderful opportunity to branch out and explore a topic that, while not necessarily aligned with my research foci/goals, is something that I hope to make an integral part of my career.”
What is the mission of the Postdoctoral Association?

According to our bylaws, “The mission of the Utah Postdoctoral Association is to enhance the postdoctoral experience at the University of Utah by providing resources to assist postdocs in their professional development and personal needs. We aim to provide information and support around career advancement and financial issues. We are focused on representing postdoctoral causes to the University administration, as well as facilitating social interaction between postdocs, with a goal of building a community that can benefit from the exchange of knowledge and experience.”

In practice, we are currently supporting this mission in two ways. First, to create a postdoctoral community, we host three large social events each year: Postdoc Appreciation Day in September, a Winter Social in January, and a Summer Picnic in June. Second, to provide professional development, we are hosting a monthly Postdoc Lunch & Learn. The Lunch & Learn series is a new initiative by the UPDA, that we just started in October. This initiative aims to provide an informal setting for postdocs to gather and discuss an interesting topic each month (e.g., work-life balance, finding industry jobs, preparing faculty job applications). The Lunch & Learn Series is also an excellent opportunity for postdocs to learn about the resources available at the University during their training. For example, our October Lunch & Learn discussed “Postdoctoral Rights and Benefits,” our November Lunch & Learn discussed “Teaching as a Postdoc,” and in January we’re hosting a panel on “Non-Academic Careers.”

What is the most challenging thing postdocs face, in your opinion?

In my opinion, the most challenging part of being a postdoc is that it is a time of tremendous self-discovery. As a graduate student, you have a clear, defined goal: write a dissertation and graduate. That is a difficult task, but by the end of your graduate studies you have a well-defined list of tasks that you’ve negotiated with your advisor, where if you do everything on the list, you graduate. As a postdoc, the goal is much more nebulous. You’re trying to figure out your life goals. What kind of researcher are you without your PhD advisor? Do you want a job in industry or academia? What is the research niche that you want to spend your career exploring? And how long do you want to be a postdoc? Postdocs can last as little as 1 year and as long as 10 or more years. The largest factor...
affecting that length is an individual’s drive to become independent and initiative to find a career opportunity that aligns with his or her goals.

What is the importance of postdoctoral studies to the University?

Postdoctoral students are a critical part of the academy. We are trained and credentialed professionals. We can independently perform experiments and analysis with little guidance or oversight. We positively contribute to the development of research ideas and grant writing. We mentor graduate and undergraduate researchers. We teach courses. We have PhDs - that means we are incredibly intelligent individuals who have proven we can positively contribute to the creation of knowledge.

How does the Postdoctoral Association help the University continue to develop new knowledge?

The UPDA works closely with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs to ensure the University is aware of issues unique to postdocs. So, in that sense, the UPDA helps the University develop knowledge of the postdoctoral experience. But the real development of knowledge is what individual postdocs throughout campus do every day. They work on research, present at conferences, and publish papers that are revolutionizing their fields.

What advice would you give to postdocs?

Take time to explore. It is easy to get in a routine of spending long hours in the lab, or the archives, or in front of a computer doing work. But postdoctoral training is about more than adding publications to your CV. The University is full of incredible resources on all sorts of topics. Whether you’re interested in professional development, health and wellness, or extracurricular activities there are opportunities on campus and in the greater Salt Lake City area to pursue those interests.

The Graduate School Welcomes...

Ray Hoobler
Director
PMST Program

Dr. Ray Hoobler joined the Professional Master of Science and Technology Program as Director at the beginning of January. He brings 15 years of industry experience to the program, having roles in both science and management. Dr. Hoobler received his PhD in Chemistry from Penn State University and BS in Chemistry from Marshall University. Prior to his industry work, his academic experience included positions as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at JILA, University of Colorado, Boulder and as an Assistant Professor of Chemistry at the University of South Alabama.

Danny Nelson
CIB Coordinator
Administrative Assistant

A native of Ogden, Danny received a BA in English from BYU and an MA in English from the University of Washington. Danny has worked in many positions in higher education for the last 15 years and is excited to use his unique skill set as Coordinator of Centers, Institutes, and Bureaus to help the graduate students at the University of Utah.
Dissertation Boot Camp

Join us for Dissertation Boot Camp at the Marriott Library. The Graduate School and the J. Willard Marriott Library are offering a Dissertation Boot Camp during Spring Break, March 14-18. Dissertation Boot Camps are meant to help students focus on their work, support research and formatting needs, create a supportive environment where students can find and form community, commiserate with classmates facing similar challenges, and gain strength in numbers. Led by librarians Linda St. Clair and Donna Ziegenfuss, Boot Camp supports end-stage PhD students in completing their dissertations. During fall break in 2015, 72 individuals participated. Some attendees have participated several times. From Monday-Friday students come to the library at 8:30 am, where they are greeted by those friendly librarians and a hearty breakfast. After breakfast they are treated to a few words of encouragement and advice, as well as some optional brief workshops on topics from Endnote to NVivo. On Monday, Kelly Harward of the Thesis Office will give a brief presentation about the Thesis Office and the services it provides. Librarian colleagues representing such areas as Government Documents, Patents and Trademarks, and Data Management, as well as professional staff with technical expertise, will then offer information about their services. After that, students disperse throughout the library to write. Participants are expected to commit to writing from 9 am to 1 pm, and are encouraged to stay later. (The library closes at 6 pm during breaks.)

Students speak positively of their experience at Boot Camp. A typical comment is “the time at breakfast was great for interaction with students and librarians.” Another grad student commented, “We talked about nonthesis things as well as thesis things and I enjoyed the company. People shared my frustrations regarding how slowly the work was going and that felt reassuring.” One participant added this statement, “This is one of the most valuable offerings by the Graduate School to support the completion of my dissertation. I truly appreciate that Boot Camp is offered. I have attended multiple times already, and hope that I am finally near the end of a long and difficult (and rewarding) process. Thank you!” Students were very positive about intentions to recommend Boot Camp to others in their department.

We hope to see you there!

Family Reading Room

We have opened a Family Reading Room in the Marriott Library especially for you! The Family Reading Room is intended for use by all University of Utah students, staff, parents, and faculty. Study while you can view your children playing with the toys, videos, and books available in the room. The two study rooms (3400C and 3400D) are created so that you may watch over children while you study quietly, or work with a group, and the study rooms may be reserved by you. A reservation may be made on the Marriott Library’s website under the Services tab. The Family Reading Room also includes a lactation room with comfortable furniture and plenty of outlets! Children under the age of 12 are welcome in the Family Reading Room, and the room is available during the time that the Marriott Library is open. The Family Reading Room is located on the northwest corner of the third floor. Use your Ucard for admittance. Children under the age of 12 should be supervised at all times, so children may not be left alone in the room at any time. Parents or guardians are responsible for their children’s safety and behavior. Library staff cannot be responsible for unescorted or unsupervised children.

Also being offered during the spring semester are story/craft times the first Wednesday of each month from 10-10:30 am. Try it out, and let us know how you like it.

The Graduate School on Social Media

For up-to-date information, scholarship and fellowship announcements, and regular thesis tips, follow the Graduate School on these social media outlets.

@UUGradSchool
https://www.facebook.com/UOfUGraduateSchool/
Events and Deadlines

Workshop: Advanced Canvas Teaching
Friday, January 22, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Faculty Center, Marriott Library

Presentation: Thesis Approval Process
Friday, January 22, 12:00 - 1:30 pm, Lounge 2110, LNCO Building

Workshop: Teaching Dossier: Curriculum Vitae, Teaching Philosophy
Friday, January 29, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Faculty Center, Marriott Library

Workshop: Rubrics & Grading
Friday, February 5, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Faculty Center, Marriott Library

Workshop: How to Survive Teaching Online
Friday, February 19, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Faculty Center, Marriott Library

Workshop: TITLE IX: What You Need to Know
Friday, February 26, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Faculty Center, Marriott Library

Workshop: How to Handle Difficult Conversations and Create Clear Dismissal Policies
Friday, March 25, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Faculty Center, Marriott Library

January 15, 2016
• Steffensen Cannon Fellowship applications due

January 22, 2016
• Graduate Research Fellowship applications due
• Tuition due

January 29, 2016
• University Teaching Assistantship (UTA) applications due
• Graduate Diversity Enhancement Grant applications due
• Last day to change enrollment in subsidized insurance program

February 1
• Graduate Preparation Institute applications due

February 29, 2016
• Last day to change program for Spring Commencement

March 1, 2016
• Excellence through Diversity Fellowship applications due
• Emerging Diversity Scholars Fellowship applications due

March 11, 2016
• Last day department-approved submissions over 200 pages will be accepted by the Thesis Office

March 18, 2016
• Last day submissions will be accepted by the Thesis Office to begin the format approval process

April 25, 2016
• Last day approved manuscripts will be accepted by the Thesis Office to begin the thesis release process

April 26, 2016
• Last day to submit Report of Credit form(s), for change of grade, to the Registrar’s Office for processing

May 20, 2016
• Department deadline to have student files complete for Spring 2016 graduation

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