

CONNECTIONS

2025

THE COLLEGE OF FAMILY, HOME, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

#15



**PERSONAL PEACE
AND THE POWER
TO BECOME, p. 16**

DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

We have been going through a period of change at BYU in recent years—the demands of COVID-19, new hiring standards, a new approach to belonging, new branding, a new way to assess experiential learning, a new university president, a new strategic plan, new finance and HR software, the sudden ubiquity of AI, a new freshman course, a new medical school, and a new vision for general education.

As I reflected on what might help us adapt to such change, I was drawn to the idea of finding peace. Our cover story is from thoughts on personal peace I shared with faculty and staff at the beginning of the academic year. In this issue we also share a variety of examples of how our college community is contributing to our understanding of relationships, families, communities, and cultures—all of which inform how we create peace in the world around us, as our prophet has counseled us to do.

One effort we've undertaken to bring peace is through the Initiative for Peacemaking, launched through the Political Science Department with a President's Innovation Grant. The initiative hosted an inaugural peacemaking conference this May and is supporting a new student association, The Peacemaker Project. We believe these efforts are helping us share our unique light. We look forward to sharing more about the impact of these efforts and other beacons of light during BYU's sesquicentennial anniversary celebration in the 2025–26 academic year. We are blessed to be part of a university that encourages each person to seek intelligence not only by study but also by faith. We are deeply committed to our dual heritage and to the call to courageously lead out as disciple-scholars.

We thank you, our dear friends, for your continued support in this great work. We've enjoyed seeing you on your visits to campus as well as across Big 12 territory as we participate in tailgates. Our students are blessed by the ways you reach out to serve, and we are consistently impressed with your faithful representation of the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences.

Sincerely,



Dean Laura Padilla-Walker



BRADLEY SLADE

BYU College of Family, Home, & Social Sciences

OUR VISION

Together, we build the beloved community of Zion by empowering individuals to strengthen hearts, families, relationships, and societies.

OUR MISSION

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we in the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences work to foster a deep and broad understanding of humankind. We are committed to equipping students with tools and methods to pursue truth and to solve complicated global issues from a foundation of faith. We educate students to recognize and value both diversity and unity, with the purpose of promoting the dignity and divine nature of all of God's children. We do

this by expanding knowledge and understanding; modeling curiosity and a love of learning; providing challenging and faith-building experiences both inside and outside the classroom; applying careful analysis and rigorous methods to hard questions; and encouraging students, faculty, and staff to be engaged and compassionate citizens. We acknowledge that God will yet reveal many great and important things, and we faithfully seek after these truths.

CONNECTIONS

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Change can make it hard to find personal peace—but both are essential to growth. Dean Laura Padilla-Walker offers three ways we can "cheerfully embrace our own transformation along this path of becoming."

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SOUND BITES

HIGHLIGHTS FROM COLLEGE LECTURES



"When I look at my whole career and see how several things fell into place that I myself could never have designed . . . [I know] it can only be because of the Lord's hand."

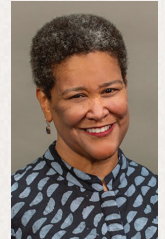
"Picture an Immigrant Social Scientist"

ADRIANE CAVALLINI, BYU

"Higher education has been a unique driver of change in our society. It is a unique place for our hopes of a more equitable society."

Darius Gray Black History Month Lecture: "Slavery and Universities"

LESLIE HARRIS, NORTHWESTERN



"The painting of Christianity and its spread throughout the world is comprised of thousands and millions of individual events and hearts that convert. . . . They all come together . . . to tell this story."

Martin B. Hickman Outstanding Scholar Lecture: "Performing the Descent from the Cross in Yucatán"

MARK CHRISTENSEN, BYU



"My vision of what BYU can become is interwoven with the experiences that led me here. I'm not here to change BYU. I'm here to help it achieve its mission."

Martin B. Hickman Belonging and Diversity Lecture: "Placing Belonging at the Center of 'Becoming BYU'"

DAVID-JAMES GONZALES, BYU



"One of the great things about the gospel is that we have the opportunity to seek revelation and to follow it. Sometimes that revelation is going to look really different from person to person. . . . Sometimes we'll doubt it or push it down because it's not what others expect of us. God has lots of plans for us."

"Picture a Social Scientist in a Two-Career Household"

JENNIE SANDERS, WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY



"As a new member of the Church, I got worried every time doubts entered my mind. But through the years, I've learned that questions are a natural part of our spiritual journey and have tried to use these opportunities to turn to the Lord and rely on His guidance."

"God's Tender Mercies"

OLGA STODDARD, BYU

"Where is that space where you want to have an impact? What do you care for and care enough about to want to devote your time to it? Having an education gives you a platform to choose to make an impact."

Marjorie Pay Hinckley Lecture: "Lives Split in Two: DACA and the Limits of Semi-Citizenship"

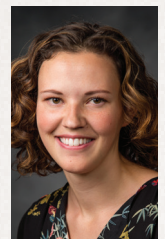
ROBERTO GONZALEZ, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



"As there is light and dark, night and day, there is also a sunset and a sunrise. There is dusk and dawn. . . . The beauty of a sunset exists because there is not constantly a sunset. It is the diversity that makes each experience within the spectrum of light worthwhile."

Disciple-Scholar Lecture: "Holy Wholly Holey Boxes"

HAYLEY PIERCE, BYU





Casting Scholarly Research as Practical Advice

BY

JENNIFER FLETCHER

Imagine a world where the latest academic research is not just confined to scholarly journals but is readily available in an engaging, understandable format. Thanks to professors turned podcasters, that world is already here. Lifelong learning can be as convenient as tuning in while commuting, exercising, or even tackling a honey-do list.

“Raising awareness about the implications of your work from your niche academic world to the broader public can be challenging,” explains Brenden Rensink, history professor and associate director of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at BYU. “But even more difficult is trying to find venues in which you can explain to nonexperts why your work matters—and why it matters for them.” Podcasting offers just such a venue.

Not only is podcasting accessible to a wide variety of audiences, but it’s also a great platform for in-depth conversations. Since 2018,

Rensink has hosted the *Writing Westward* podcast, where he converses with authors of books on a variety of topics related to the North American West—politics, geography, people, culture, ecology, art, and more.

“The idea of the podcast was to highlight work that’s being done in any discipline that’s relevant to the American West,” Rensink says.

Exploring the nuances of the West isn’t the only purpose of the podcast. Rensink also wants to get people involved in their own area and local community. That’s a habit Rensink hopes listeners will apply wherever they settle—the West or otherwise.

Turning research into applicable skills is an underlying purpose of another podcast from the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences. Courtney Evans-Stout, associate professor in the School of Family Life, oversees a team of students working on monthly episodes of *Family Perspectives: School of Family Life*. The podcast gives professors an outlet to translate family life

research into tools listeners can use in everyday situations, but the students select the topics and lead the conversations.

“I think that students bring a unique understanding and real-world perspective to how family life professors are able to translate their research,” says Evans-Stout. “Students are just starting to grasp family life concepts, so they remember a time when they didn’t know the subject matter, and that helps them ask the professors questions that will translate to real-world needs.”

The theme students chose for the podcast in 2024 was “Family Life Fact Check: Uncovering Reality in a World of Misinformation.” To identify topics for each episode, students collected questions from everyday people outside academia by sharing a survey on their social media accounts. They then matched those questions with in-house experts.

“This process makes the podcast feel really grounded in what people are asking, what people need, and how we can use what we know in the School of Family Life to meet those needs,” says Evans-Stout. 

► Tune in to see whether some of the latest research can boost your ability to better serve your family and community.

WRITING WESTWARD



FAMILY PERSPECTIVES



Above: Students Anna Lemke and Kylie Howes interview professors Jeremy Yorgason and Larry Nelson about transitions to emerging adulthood.



The Humane Sciences in a world of

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

BY JUSTIN COLLINGS
BYU ACADEMIC VICE PRESIDENT

This article is adapted from remarks delivered to the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences National Advisory Council on September 27, 2024.

I have been asked to share some thoughts about the enduring relevance of the social sciences and the humanities in a world increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence. I hope you will forgive me if I confess at the outset that I don't love the term *social sciences*. I prefer the ring of the German phrase *die humanistische Wissenschaften*, or *the humane sciences*. Since *humane sciences* can encompass both the social sciences and the humanities, that is the moniker I will mostly use today.

Humane sciences obviously suggests a focus on humans—how we think, love, create, connect, worship, gather, contest, unite, divide, struggle, suffer, exult, rejoice, and overcome. At their best, the humane sciences constitute the careful, penetrating, exuberant study of God’s children across the full gamut of their mortal experience. Such study, I contend, remains indispensable, no matter how fast technology advances or how diffusely it permeates our society.

Not having any special (or *unspecial*) qualifications to address this topic, I naturally began my preparations by posing to ChatGPT the following query: “Please provide 500 words on why the social sciences and humanities still matter in a world of AI.” The response was (predictably, by now) not bad. The first paragraph reads as follows:

In a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence (AI) and technology, the social sciences and humanities remain essential for addressing the human, ethical, and societal dimensions of these advancements. While AI offers immense potential for automating tasks, processing vast datasets, and even simulating certain human behaviors, it cannot replicate the nuanced understanding, creativity, and moral judgment that are central to the social sciences and humanities. These fields provide crucial insights into human behavior, culture, ethics, and social systems—areas that are necessary to ensure that AI serves society responsibly and equitably.¹

Not, as I say, bad—though I note the self-referential nature of the concluding sentence. We need the humane sciences, the argument goes, to optimize AI’s functionality or, more ominously, to shield us from its dangers. I certainly agree, but I also maintain that the humane sciences serve values entirely independent of AI and that part of their enduring vitality will consist in pointing us to a world outside of and beyond AI.

The AI essay highlights as “one of the primary reasons the humanities and social sciences matter . . . their role in fostering critical thinking and ethical reasoning.” Moreover, the machine continues, “the social sciences are indispensable for understanding the societal impact of AI.” Social scientists, we are told, provide “insights . . . critical for developing policies that mitigate the negative impacts of AI-driven automation.”

The humanities, for their part,

cultivate creativity and empathy, qualities that are becoming more important as AI takes over routine tasks. While AI excels at performing repetitive or data-driven work, it struggles with tasks that require empathy, artistic creativity, or complex human interaction. . . . As automation reduces the need for certain technical skills, there is an increasing demand for professionals who can think creatively, work in teams, and engage with diverse viewpoints.

The humanities and social sciences both “offer essential contributions to questions of human identity in the age of AI,” an age that will “raise profound questions about what it means to be human.” Those questions will require



insights from “philosophy, anthropology, and psychology,” among other disciplines.

In its summary and concluding paragraph, the AI essay notes that although “transforming many aspects of life, it cannot replace the critical, ethical, and creative functions that the humanities and social sciences provide. These fields remain essential for guiding the responsible development of AI technologies, understanding their societal impacts, and preserving the human qualities that distinguish us from machines.”

There’s some good stuff here—though I confess that I find that final *us* more than a little chilling—all neatly digested in a model five-paragraph essay: an introduction with a thesis, three substantive paragraphs substantiating discrete elements of that thesis, and a concluding paragraph restating and summarizing the thesis.

If I were to quibble with this essay, it wouldn’t be with its substance so much as with its feel. This machine-produced prose feels, well, mechanical. With justified astonishment



“We cannot, I submit, discharge our Christian duty to love our neighbor as ourselves by means of artificial intelligence—still less can we thus discharge our duty to love God with all our heart, might, and mind.”

that a machine could complete my impromptu task so swiftly and so well, I still have a hard time imagining that a human being could have written it—or rather, I have a hard time imagining the human being that could have written it—and for the very good reason that no human being *did* write it.

Now I want to invite you to engage in a thought experiment. Think of a favorite writer—someone whose prose prances, whose imagery leaps, whose narratives inspire, whose arguments convince, whose language stirs or sings or slashes or soars.

Now think about the voice you hear in your head when you read this writer’s work.

Now think about the image you form in your mind of the speaker whose voice you hear.

My guess is simply that there is a voice, and there is a speaker. And my thesis is that the reason this writer produces that effect on you is that behind his or her writing, there burns a human soul.

Let me give you an example. This comes from the end of George Orwell’s long essay about Charles Dickens. (Orwell, of course, is someone who warned about the dangers of untrammelled technology and who insisted on the irreducible sanctity and freedom of the human soul.) Orwell’s essay on Dickens was written in 1940, a year into the Second World War:

*When one reads any strongly individual piece of writing, [Orwell concludes,] one has the impression of seeing a face somewhere behind the page. It is not necessarily the actual face of the writer. I feel this very strongly with Swift, with Defoe, with Fielding, Stendhal, Thackeray, Flaubert, though in several cases I do not know what these people looked like and do not want to know. What one sees is the face that the writer **ought** to have. Well, in the case of Dickens I see a face that is not quite the face of Dickens’s photographs, though it resembles it. It is the face of a man of about forty, with a small beard and a high colour. He is laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity. It is the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is **generously angry**—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls.²*

This paragraph's impact on me is physical. It sets my spine a-tingling. Here, clearly, is another strongly individual writer. I cannot escape inferring that there is a touch of aspirational autobiography in Orwell's description. In any event, these are words that could never be written by a machine about others whose works could never be replicated by a machine. They are words that could only be produced by a striving, defiant, generously angry soul. I know something about the soul that wrote these words because the soul itself is inscribed in them.

This is true, I submit, of all superior writing. It was Buffon, the French naturalist of the 18th century, who famously wrote that "Le style c'est l'homme même"³—style is the man himself. I might amend this to say that style is the soul transcribed in words. For this reason, AI will never have style, however efficient or competent the text it produces. It will always operate at least one remove from the human soul. It will never provide more than an imitation of the real thing, however sophisticated or refined the imitation.

Well, fair enough, you might respond, but who cares about style? And why on earth would you talk about style to a group of social scientists—a group whose sometimes jargon-laden prose has, in some instances, been censured as rebarbative and inscrutable? And who are you, a lawyer and a bureaucrat—two groups whose guilds have been even worse offenders on all these fronts—to pontificate about style?

On the latter charge, I have no defense. On the former, I note for one thing that many seminal thinkers across the social sciences, including in law, have been masters of language. Think of Alexis de Tocqueville, a founder of modern political thought, whose French prose scintillates with epigrammatic elegance and with brilliant aperçus. Think of Max Weber, a founder of modern sociology, whose forceful German prose is often difficult but who could, when the occasion required, rise to impressive rhetorical heights. Think of Sigmund Freud, a founder of modern psychology, whose German is so supple and so strong that every year the German Academy for Language and Literature awards a Sigmund Freud Prize for Academic Prose.

When I was a graduate student, I read on a Berlin bus Freud's introduction to his lectures on psychoanalysis. Freud wrote of "die Zauberkraft der Worte"⁴—the sorcerous

"Aristotle famously asserted that man is by nature a social animal, a *zoon politikon*. . . . Thanks to the restored gospel, we know that human beings are spirit children of heavenly parents, endowed with . . . a purpose centered in sacred sociality, in ties of affection and covenant bonds."



power of words. He recognized that power, and he practiced such sorcery. Think further of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., a legal titan whose judicial opinions exhibit a trenchant, lapidary beauty and whom Joseph Epstein has designated the best letter writer in American history.⁵

But again, who cares about style? I rejoin, whoever cares about souls. To defend that rejoinder, I need to say something about the restored gospel's doctrine of the soul and to offer a brief Restoration basis for the humane sciences.

In the end, I hope to highlight what the humane sciences can provide and what AI can never replace.

John Tanner, one of my predecessors as BYU's academic vice president, once argued that the two great commandments—to love God and to love our neighbor⁶—both point toward study of the humane disciplines.

With respect to the first great commandment, he said this:

Since humans are part of the created order, indeed creation's capstone, and since we are fashioned in the image of God, anthropology (i.e., the knowledge of the human) certainly holds a place along

with cosmology and theology as proper objects of study for [a Latter-day Saint] scholar seeking to love God with one's mind.

With respect to the second great commandment, he said this:

Surely the imperative to love our neighbors as ourselves implies an obligation to understand our neighbors—their culture, history, language, science, and so forth. For how can I love another “as myself” whom I do not understand, or at least desire to understand, well? Neighbor-love implies an obligation to engage in humanistic learning.

Likewise, [Dr. Tanner continues,] the second commandment implies a responsibility to care about our neighborhoods, including the cultural conditions that shape us and our neighbors for good and ill. . . .

Neighbor-love thus requires thoughtful engagement with culture.⁷

“Thoughtful engagement with culture” is, of course, a nice summary phrase for the humane sciences at their best. We cannot, I submit, discharge our Christian duty to love our neighbor as ourselves by means of artificial intelligence—still less can we thus discharge our duty to love God with all our heart, might, and mind.⁸

May I suggest that the humane sciences remain indispensable even in a world of artificial intelligence—especially in a world of artificial intelligence—because of what they can do for humanity and to humanity. Understanding why requires pondering revealed truths about God's eternal plan of salvation. In the restored gospel, we find stirring and definitive answers to the questions of what we as humans are and what we are meant to become.

We are intended, in short, “to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize [our] divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”⁹ To become what God wants us to become. To forge an eternal character and to foster eternal relationships—for “that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory.”¹⁰

Aristotle famously asserted that man is by nature a social animal, a *zoon politikon*.¹¹ Aristotle didn't know the half of it. Thanks to the restored gospel, we know that human beings are spirit children of heavenly parents, endowed with premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose—a purpose centered in sacred sociality, in ties of affection and covenant bonds.

Our capacity to cultivate such connections is immensely enhanced by understanding them, and our understanding is enormously enriched by the humane sciences, properly undertaken—especially when such study is illuminated by the glorious light of the Restoration.

President Russell M. Nelson has written of his time as a young researcher in the pioneering days of cardiovascular surgery:

During those early days of research on the heart, [he recalls,] I came across some verses in the Doctrine and Covenants





that resulted in a major epiphany for me, opening my mind to new possibilities for my heart research.¹²

The verses that caught young Dr. Nelson's attention came from sections 88 and 130 in the Doctrine and Covenants. Section 88 declares that "all kingdoms have a law given; And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, . . . And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions."¹³ And section 130 builds upon these principles by noting that "when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."¹⁴

When I read these verses in tandem, [President Nelson explains,] my young research-focused mind exploded with possibilities. "Surely," I thought, "there must be laws, or truths, that govern the beating heart." If we could discover those laws and then "obey" them, the results would be positive. It was the very idea that

absolute truths, or divine laws, exist—and that following them would produce desirable results—that gave me new hope about discovering ways to repair a defective heart.¹⁵

I do not believe that these principles are limited to the natural sciences. President Nelson promises: "If you adhere to the laws or truths that govern any particular behavior, discipline, or activity, you will achieve the outcomes you desire."¹⁶

I believe that there are divine laws that govern human aspirations and attachments of every kind—familial and friendly, social and societal, political and poetic, religious and romantic, artistic and aesthetic—and that it will be surpassingly difficult in this fallen sphere to uncover them without the assistance of humane studies, aided and illuminated by the light of Christ. I submit that the deep truths about the human condition can be discovered and articulated only by humans—and only, in the end, through the rigorous combination of perspiration and inspiration, toil and prayer, study and faith to which Brigham Young University is unalterably committed. Artificial intelligence might regurgitate or imitate such truths, but it will never unveil or express them. The humane sciences thus remain indispensable to exploring and expounding the laws that govern human souls and the ties between and among them.

“The deep truths about the human condition can be discovered and articulated only by humans—and only, in the end, through the rigorous combination of perspiration and inspiration, toil and prayer.”

Alexander Pope spoke only a half truth when he wrote:

*Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.*¹⁷

This, to repeat, is only half the truth. But I insist with dogmatic insistence that the proper *students* of humankind are humans.

I want to close with an illustrative anecdote. A year ago, BYU hosted Mr. Itzhak Perlman, who at age 79 remains the world’s most celebrated living violinist. Having contracted polio in early childhood, Mr. Perlman’s life has been a constant struggle and triumph over physical limitations. Still, as I watched him mount the stage of BYU’s new concert hall, maneuvering his motorized wheelchair with his left hand and cradling his precious Stradivarius with his right, I thought he looked physically broken. Age and ill health seemed to have taken their toll.

The music he produced that night was breathtakingly beautiful—haunting, majestic, transcendent, sublime. My wife, Lia, wrote in her diary, “I learned tonight what *worship* means.” We heard through Mr. Perlman’s Stradivarius the singing of a splendid soul. I reflected later that, by his own stratospheric standards, the performance was likely imperfect. At 78, perhaps his fingers could not do what they did at 68 or 48 or 28. And yet this was his gift—God’s gift to him and through him to us—and he would worship with that gift so long as his fingers could command that remarkable instrument to give voice to his marvelous soul.

It was a profoundly human moment. Perhaps someday AI will evolve to produce perfected music—fluent, fervent, without flaw. But

it will never, through music or any other medium, give us the spirit of Itzhak Perlman, or indeed of any other soul. Most of us, of course, have nothing like Mr. Perlman’s gifts. But the revelations affirm that “to every [soul] is given a gift by the Spirit of God.”¹⁸ Those gifts are precious, not because they are peerless but because they are ours—because they represent our unique and consecrated offerings before the throne of grace—a sacred medium by which we express our love to God and enact our love for neighbor.

To come full circle: I contend that the AI’s 500-word essay on the indispensability of humane studies affirms, by its own limitations, the indispensability of humane studies. Perhaps that essay was better than this talk. Certainly, it has the virtue of being shorter. But this talk—flawed, meandering, long-winded, and dull—has been the work of a fellow human, a compatriot soul, a comrade in the fellowship of the human condition. We need humane studies to ennoble the human condition and to enrich the human conversation. **C**

Notes

1. Text generated by ChatGPT-4.0, OpenAI, 2025.
2. George Orwell, “Charles Dickens,” *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (Victor Gollancz, 1940), 85.
3. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, “Discours sur le style,” discourse on his admission to the French Academy (1753).
4. Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke: Chronologisch Geordnet* (Imago Publishing, 1946), 140.
5. See Joseph Epstein, *Familiarity Breeds Content: New and Selected Essays* (Simon and Schuster, 2024), 26.
6. See Matthew 22:36–40.
7. John S. Tanner, “A Gospel Ground for the Humanities,” *Learning in the Light: Selected Talks at BYU* (BYU Studies, 2017), 163; originally presented as a speech at the Mormon Scholars in the Humanities symposium, 23 March 2007.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:5.
9. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (23 September 1995).
10. Doctrine and Covenants 130:2.
11. See Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Clarendon Press, 1905), 28–29.
12. Russell M. Nelson, *Heart of the Matter: What 100 Years of Living Have Taught Me* (Deseret Book, 2023), 28.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:36–38.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 130:21.
15. Nelson, *Heart of the Matter*, 28–29.
16. Nelson, *Heart of the Matter*, 31.
17. Alexander Pope, “Epistle II,” *An Essay on Man: In Epistles to a Friend* (London, 1733), 23, capitalization modernized.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 46:11.

Strengthening Relationships Beyond Belief

What Every Couple Can Learn About Love and Respect from Interfaith Marriages



BY

LISA ANN THOMSON

Through a string of social media posts, my nephew's wife recently announced she was officially disaffiliating from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Concerned, I texted my nephew. No doubt he and his wife were navigating a difficult situation. I told him I had seen his wife's posts, asked if everything was okay, and offered our family's love and support.

His response was quick and upbeat. "Thank you for reaching out," he texted. "We are doing great!" He said it had definitely

been an adjustment, but he and his wife had turned the situation into an opportunity to become closer.

I was pleased with his hopeful response because the extraordinary challenges of being in an interfaith marriage are well documented by social scientists.¹ Additionally, divorce rates for interfaith Latter-day Saint couples are a dramatic three times higher than for shared-faith Latter-day Saint couples at the five-year mark (40 percent and 13 percent, respectively), according to data from a 2009 study on religion and marital stability.² Researchers note, "As scholars of marriage and parenting, a single factor that yields considerable increases in divorce is of profound concern."³

To explore how happily married interfaith couples have navigated religious differences, then-BYU students Hannah Shoaf (BA '20, MS '22) and Justin Hendricks (BS '21, MS '23) joined research assistant Sandra Gomez Ward (BS '18); David Dollahite and Loren Marks, BYU professors and codirectors of the American Families of Faith Project; and Heather Kelley (BS '16, MS '18), a researcher at Utah State University. Their findings from qualitative research with 32 couples were subsequently published in *Marriage and Family Review*.⁴

"Even when interfaith marriages endure, they face pronounced challenges," says Marks. "The purpose of our related work on interfaith marriage is not to champion difficult unions



ADOBE STOCK

but to learn important lessons from exemplary interfaith couples who have successfully navigated this difficult terrain.”

The researchers also recognize that the strategies identified are good advice for any marriage. “In some ways, every marriage is an interfaith marriage,” notes Dollahite. “Every marriage involves people with, to some degree, different religious backgrounds, experiences, expectations, ideas, hopes, and dreams. Thus, every marriage involves the importance of couples working together to build shared understanding as well as some degree of negotiation, compromise, and humility around religious issues.”

Here are four key themes that emerged from the research.

SUPPORT EACH OTHER

Researchers cite the significance of spouses supporting each other in their faith. As one Jewish husband put it, having his agnostic wife actively participate in his faith was “a really important sign” for him. Another husband, whose wife had abandoned religion, recognized the importance of giving her the same emotional support he sought for himself. “Who was I to sit there and criticize my wife for following her heart when all I was doing was trying to follow mine?” he said.

FOCUS ON COMMON GROUND

The researchers’ findings highlight the benefit of focusing on shared beliefs and values. A formerly Latter-day Saint husband shared,

“Even though the dynamic of the relationship has changed, none of the base values have.” Another study participant offered, “It makes the world a wonderful place if we can all work together and find common ground and accept each other for who we are.”

SEEK UNDERSTANDING

A Muslim man who married a Catholic woman felt they had avoided many potential obstacles because they so thoroughly discussed the nature of their interfaith relationship. “We talked a lot about it,” he said. “We probably left no stone unturned when we were going into this.” As couples seek to understand one another and their expectations, they not only grow in love and respect but are more prepared to work through challenges.

PRIORITIZE YOUR MARRIAGE

The research team found that particularly among Latter-day Saint couples who began with shared faith and then diverged, prioritizing their marriage became critical. “Yes, there are certain difficulties,” acknowledged a spouse in one such marriage. “But I think as long as you can . . . still put your family first [rather than yourself], you can still have a good and healthy family.”

Dollahite points out that prioritizing your marriage does not necessitate subordinating God or personal faith. “If each spouse allows God to soften their heart, open their mind, and humble their spirit, then that can facilitate marital peace, harmony, and unity despite religious differences.” **C**

Notes

1. See Tim B. Heaton and Edith L. Pratt, “The Effects of Religious Homogamy on Marital Satisfaction and Stability,” *Journal of Family Issues* 11, no. 2 (1990): 191–207, <https://doi.org/dwpcm9>. See also Evelyn L. Lehrer, *Religion, Economics, and Demography: The Effects of Religion on Education, Work, and the Family* (Routledge, 2009); and Evelyn L. Lehrer and Carmel U. Chiswick, “Religion as a Determinate of Marital Stability,” *Demography* 30, no. 3 (August 1993): 385–404, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2061647>.
2. See Lehrer, *Religion, Economics, and Demography*, 20.
3. Hannah K. Shoaf, et al., “Strengths and Strategies in Interfaith Marriages,” *Marriage and Family Review* 58, no. 8 (2022): 679, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2022.2093311>.
4. See Shoaf, et al., “Strengths and Strategies.”



AROUND THE WORLD

Students Use Experiential Learning to Build Lifelong Skills

BY

BROOKLYN VAN ORMAN

There is no substitute for real-world experience, but learning doesn't come from experience alone. Familiarity with the experiential learning cycle—intention, implementation, and reflection—sets students up for success.

"That cycle helps students embrace the learning process in ways that just going, showing up, and doing exactly what they're told doesn't," says Danny Damron, assistant dean of experiential learning and professional development.

As the students repeat the cycle, reflection helps them learn to ask better questions, use their skills in new ways, and get outside of their comfort zone.

"It requires students to ask, in the moment, certain questions about how they are doing," says Damron. "If something needs to change, students will recognize it only as they reflect."

Read as students from across the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences reflect on experiences they had around the world.

► INTERNSHIPS

Anna Young, Economics
WASHINGTON, DC

Washington Seminar, American Enterprise Institute
During my internship I worked hands-on with data, doing trend analysis, coding results, creating graphics, and editing papers that used the data I helped to collect. My biggest takeaway was the importance of being intentional and getting involved.

Rebekah Kaylor, Social Work
SALT LAKE CITY

Church Disability Services

I've always believed that when people understand their life framework and have access to needed resources, they can live happy and fulfilled lives. What a gift to find out that I can build a career advocating for and empowering disadvantaged individuals and families!

► FIELD SCHOOL

Abigail McEuen, Political Science
MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE, BORNEO
Identity and Gender in Southeast Asia

This research experience not only helped me to learn more about the process of running an experiment, but it also helped me to learn R program coding, improved my writing abilities, and gave me greater cultural understanding and appreciation.

Camille Brown, Sociocultural Anthropology
ECUADOR

Ecuador Kichwa-Waoroni Project

Two main lessons stand out from my trip abroad: First, I learned how challenging situations can lead us to develop deeper connections. Second, I developed a greater appreciation for diverse ways of seeing the world.

Olivia Osguthorpe, Sociology
BOLIVIA

Program Assessment and Evaluation Team (PEAT)

Pairing my ability for compassion toward marginalized and vulnerable populations with my spiritual ability to see things as they really are and as they really will be—that's one of the special things that a BYU student can do in the world.

► STUDY ABROAD

Hannah Johnston, Environmental Studies
UTAH, ENGLAND, ICELAND, NORWAY
Expedition Planet Earth

On my study abroad we hiked six miles to watch a volcanic fissure erupt in real time. We trekked through a barren volcanic landscape, saw primary succession firsthand, and watched Earth's youngest rocks form right in front of us.

Lauren Jacob, Social Science Teaching
UNITED KINGDOM
BYU London Centre

I love history and was excited to learn about it in the center of Western civilization. Studying in the UK made history come alive for me in ways it never had before, making it more memorable and impactful. I hope to implement things I learned in London in classes I teach in the future.

Makaylee Moore, Psychology
GERMANY, SWITZERLAND, ITALY, GREECE, JORDAN, TURKEY, INDIA, NEPAL, JAPAN
Around the World: Seeking the Sacred from Europe to Asia

Something that helped strengthen my testimony on this study abroad was the people I met at each of the sites and within each of the countries. If my testimony were a plant, they helped water it in ways that they probably didn't even realize.

Elizabeth Bybee, Marriage and Family Therapy
ITALY
Italy Immersion Program in Family Therapy and Italian Culture

I was inspired by the way family is such an integral part of Italian culture and society. Being immersed in the culture allowed me to see the things I've learned in the MFT graduate program from a different perspective.



Discovering Strengths Through Service and Scholarship

BY

BROOKLYN VAN ORMAN

"It's nearly impossible not to feel the Spirit of the Lord as you sit with someone in their deepest pains, sorrows, and confusion [and] try to offer help, comfort, and hope," says Elizabeth Nga Byers (MSW '24).

Byers worked as a clinical therapist intern for 10 months at Family Services in Provo, where she had opportunities to treat individuals and couples, give presentations, and facilitate group therapy. She especially loved group therapy sessions because they allowed her to help several people at once and watch them help each other.

As a therapist intern, Byers directly applied skills and concepts from her classes into her practice. "It was not uncommon at all for me to learn a new skill or a new idea and immediately use it the next day or even the same day with a client," Byers recalls.

She worked with adolescents, adults, and couples from all backgrounds and with diverse strengths. She recounts a particularly meaningful session with a client who was working on setting boundaries and taking care of herself. From the beginning, the client requested a gospel focus for her sessions.

"In one moment of discussion," says Byers, "it came to my mind to bring up how the Savior set boundaries and to use the Savior as an example, which is not a thought I had before. We broke down [an] example together and it resonated with her so much."

The internship wasn't Byers's only experience with inspiring learning. Under the mentorship of Steven Hoffman, a BYU professor of social work, Byers explored the complexities that surround suicide stigma for Latino children and caregivers. She hoped the research would help her and others to provide the most effective mental health support possible.

Byers presented her research at the Mary Lou Fulton Mentored Student Research Conference and received funding to travel to Washington, DC, to present at the Society of Social Work Research Annual Conference. She reports, "As scary and intimidating as the idea of presenting academic research was to me, I loved every moment of it and discovered strengths and interests I never knew I had."

Byers's experiences gave her competitive advantages that were invaluable during her post-graduation job search: She now enjoys a fulfilling role as a development counselor at Development Counseling Services for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, working with individuals across Oregon. **C**

"It came to my mind to bring up how the Savior set boundaries and to use the Savior as an example, which is not a thought I had before."

PERSONAL Peace *and the* POWER TO BECOME

BY LAURA PADILLA-WALKER
DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF FAMILY, HOME, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

This article is adapted from remarks Dean Laura Padilla-Walker delivered to the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences at the annual university conference on August 28, 2024.



It feels like we have been going through a period of change in recent years—both as a society and with the changes and challenges you might be experiencing in your personal life. If you feel tired, it seems you may be justified!

Sometimes change can be exciting and is desperately needed. Change can lead to innovation and creativity and can open possibilities not previously imagined. Other times (or at the same time) change can feel scary or daunting, especially when we didn't choose it. Calls for change can also lead to defensiveness and insecurities as we wonder what is so faulty in us that we require change. These are all valid emotional responses to change, and I acknowledge them, having felt them myself at one point or another.

In the face of change, a question I feel the Lord has repeatedly asked me is whether I want to remain comfortable or I want to grow. If I am totally honest, much of the time I'd prefer to remain comfortable. However, President Henry B. Eyring reminds us, "Our Father in Heaven is concerned not just about our comfort but even more about our upward progress."¹ Change is the Lord's process of helping us become who He would have us become. Whether we choose the change or not, whether we agree with it or not, if we allow Him to, the Lord can consecrate all change for our good and make it part of the process of becoming.

In his book *Power to Become*, Elder David A. Bednar highlights that becoming is only

possible "by and through and because of the Savior's Atonement," and he defines becoming as "growing, developing, changing, transforming, and converting."² The need to grow does not always mean that we are doing something wrong or that our great efforts are not seen and acknowledged.

Elder Bednar stresses, "I am not sure . . . we know and understand that the Atonement [of Jesus Christ] is [not only for sinners but] also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient, worthy, and conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully."³ Becoming is not just about improving where we lack, but it is also about making that which is already good in us even better. This happens through our own



SEE CHANGE AS POSITIVE

efforts and especially through and because of the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, which is what can transform the process of change into a process of becoming.

What can we do to cheerfully embrace our own transformation along this path of becoming? Elder Bednar suggests that “the spiritual gift of personal peace is the foundation upon which the power to become is established.”⁴ So what I hear him saying is that we can’t become all the Lord would have us be until we first establish personal peace.

This is a hard time in the world and in our nation to feel peace, but finding personal peace, “the peace which passeth all understanding,” is essential to our progress, and it is attainable under any circumstance.⁵ President Russell M.

Nelson has pled with us “to do all [we] can to end *personal* conflicts that are currently raging in [our] hearts and in [our] lives.”⁶ Today I would like to share three suggestions that I believe can increase our personal peace and subsequently provide the foundation for becoming.

SEEK TO SEE CHANGE IN A POSITIVE LIGHT

First, I believe we can increase personal peace by striving to see change in a positive light rather than focusing on the negative. I’m not saying that we can’t mourn our losses, disagree, or process the inconveniences of change, but if we stay in that place, it leads to bitterness and stagnation.

In a talk entitled “Progress Through Change,” Elder Marvin J. Ashton said:

We need not feel that we must forever be what we presently are. There is a tendency to think of change as the enemy. Many of us are suspect of change and will often fight and resist it before we have even discovered what the actual effects will be. When change is thought through carefully, it can produce the most rewarding and profound experiences in life.⁷

I saw an example of this recently. The new Orem Utah Temple is in my stake, and a few weeks into the summer of 2024, some members of my ward were invited to go help plant flowers on the grounds. When we arrived, we learned that we actually would not be planting flowers but would be tearing the spring flowers out to make way for the summer flowers. This was a somewhat disturbing change because the spring flowers were still perfectly beautiful. They weren’t yet wilted or dying, and they seemed to our untrained eyes to be adequately contributing to the beauty of the grounds. I heard several folks lament our efforts and the waste we were creating as we tore out the old flowers to make way for the new.

The following week when I drove by the temple, all the new summer plants were in the ground, and they didn’t look as radiant as the spring flowers had. It caused me to reflect again on why the change was necessary and whether it was premature. But as the weeks went by, the summer flowers fulfilled the measure of their creation and stunningly added to the beauty of the temple in a way that far surpassed the spring flowers that were late in their season. It struck me that this is how the Lord engages us in change: identifying what may need to be fortified in us before we do and clearly seeing our future potential. If we can see change in this hopeful light, even when at first sight the changes don’t meet our expectations or seem inferior to what we experienced in the past, I believe we will be led together to see what the Lord can make of us.

In a recent conference talk, Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf said:

If we draw near unto God and reach out to touch Him, we can indeed find healing, peace, and joy. . . .

If we seek reasons to be angry, to doubt, to be bitter or alone, we will find them. . . .

However, if we seek joy—if we look for reasons to rejoice and to happily follow the Savior, we will find them.

We rarely find something we are not looking for.⁸

“In the face of change, a question I feel the Lord has repeatedly asked me is whether I want to remain comfortable or I want to grow. . . . Change is the Lord’s process of helping us become who He would have us become.”

STRIVE FOR FAITH OVER FEAR

Second, I believe personal peace comes as we are faithful and not fearful. Fear is a natural response to change and often leads to catastrophizing as well as accepting and spreading misinformation. The tendency toward a fear response can be especially likely when you've been taken by surprise or when trust has been broken previously.

Several years ago, I was called as a Young Women camp cook for our stake at Heber Valley Camp. After the first day of cooking for hundreds of girls—which is so far from being one of my strengths that I can't even adequately articulate it—I cleaned up with a heavy heart. I put all the sundry pots and utensils away in the outdoor pavilion, set the oven mitts on the counter near the sink, and stumbled back to the cabin for the first of what I was certain would be a week of sleepless nights on a wooden mattress.

The following morning as I blearily prepared to help make breakfast, determined that the second day would be a happier one, I grabbed the oven mitts from where I'd left them on the counter and thrust my hand inside with vigor. To my great surprise, at some point during the night, a small rodent deduced that my oven mitt—carelessly left exposed to the elements—looked like a comfortable place to slumber, and when I disturbed him, he responded by scampering across my hand, up my arm, and down my body at breakneck speed, squeaking at me the entire time.

Now for those of you who know me, I'm not one for grand outbursts of emotion. But as the story goes, I apparently jumped several feet in the air and screamed in uncharacteristic and extended fashion. To this day, I am still wary every time I stick my hand in an oven mitt, even when I am fairly certain that no mouse is residing there. Because of my past experience, if I'm not careful, I can quickly convince myself—even several years later—that the innocuous oven mitt in the bottom drawer of my house just might also have a small beast waiting inside to startle me, so I probably should just avoid cooking altogether.

If not somewhat understandable, clearly my reaction is unhelpful and does not promote peace, engagement, or growth. Because of past experience, we all have to actively work to move away from fear and toward faith.

This should be easier when we remember that ultimately the Lord is directing His work, and we know He is unchanging, dependable, and completely trustworthy. Elder Holland has provided wise counsel:

Brothers and sisters, this is a divine work in process, with the manifestations and blessings of it abounding in every direction, so please don't hyperventilate if from time to time issues arise that need to be examined, understood, and resolved. They do and they will. In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know. And remember, in this world, everyone is to walk by faith.

So be kind regarding human frailty—your own as well as that of those who serve with you. . . . Except in the case of His only perfect Begotten Son, imperfect people are all God has ever had to work with. That must be terribly frustrating to Him, but He deals with it. So should we. And when you see imperfection,

*remember that the limitation is **not** in the divinity of the work.⁹*

I urge us all, as we face change, to challenge our fears, our assumptions, our judgments, and even what we hear from others when it does not come directly from the source. Please seek accurate information and recognize when you're responding with fear instead of faith. Seek comfort in trusted friends, family, and others who may be able to answer questions and provide an expanded perspective.

Remember that the Lord is guiding this work, despite our imperfections, with His steadying and enabling hand. Sister Lisa L. Harkness reminds us, "Even in turbulent

"I urge us all, as we face change, to challenge our fears, our assumptions, our judgments, and even what we hear from others."

STRIVE FOR FAITH



times, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is gritty and resilient.”¹⁰

REORIENT YOURSELF TOWARD MECKNESS

My final suggestion to obtain personal peace is that we each strive for increased meekness in the face of change. Elder Bednar has instructed us that “meekness is a defining attribute of the Redeemer and is distinguished by righteous responsiveness, willing submissiveness, and strong self-restraint.”¹¹ He also taught:

Meekness is not weak, timid, or passive. Meekness is the quality of being God-fearing, righteous, teachable, patient in suffering, and willing to follow gospel teachings. A meek person

is not easily provoked or irritated, pretentious, arrogant, or overbearing. . . . A distinguishing characteristic of meekness is a particular willingness to learn both from the Holy Ghost and from other people who may seem less experienced or capable, may not hold prominent positions, or otherwise may not appear to have much to contribute.”¹²

As we foster meekness, we combat pride. At its core, pride is about comparison and self-elevation.¹³ For some of us, comparison leads to envy and bitterness, while for others comparison may lead us to think we are superior to another in terms of knowledge or righteousness.

Elder Dale G. Renlund has said:

Comparing ourselves to others can lead us to make pernicious errors, especially if we conclude that we are more righteous than those who are struggling. Such a comparison is like drowning hopelessly in three meters of water, seeing someone else drowning in four meters of water, judging him a greater sinner, and feeling good about yourself. After all, we are all struggling in our own way.”¹⁴

Elder Patrick Kearon reminded us recently that “God wants for us a radical reorientation of our selfish and prideful impulses.”¹⁵

Pride is considered the universal sin,¹⁶ so I want to be clear that one reason this has been

“There are no menial tasks in a temple of learning. I left with an assurance that no matter what I was doing in the temple, the Lord would consecrate it for His good and for mine.”



REORIENT YOURSELF

on my mind so much is that the Lord has spent the last few years showing me the many ways that I should be striving to root pridefulness from my own heart.

A few years ago, I dashed over to the Provo City Center Temple hoping to squeeze in an initiatory session before a meeting. When I arrived, the temple workers said the wait was over an hour but that if I wanted, I could go down into the basement and fold laundry. I had never been given that option before, and I never have since, so it's been an interesting opportunity for reflection over the years.

I went to the temple with an expectation that I would be doing the work for my family members, that I would be directly involved in an ordinance. As I sat in the basement

surrounded by noisy washing machines and dryers, folding temple clothes and feeling fairly certain I was doing it incorrectly, the Lord was teaching me an important lesson. I wasn't able to contribute that day in the ways that I had hoped, I didn't have a voice, and some might even say that I was instead relegated to a menial task. However, there are no menial tasks in a temple of learning. I left with an assurance that no matter what I was doing in the temple, the Lord would consecrate it for His good and for mine. I needn't worry so much whether I was upstairs or down, just that the Lord wanted me to find joy in whatever contribution He had for me at that time.

I am consistently amazed at the meekness that I observe among so many in this

college who are leaders in their disciplines and fields. It really is miraculous. Elder Bednar counseled:

It is the unique combination of meekness and academic excellence that will set Brigham Young University apart from all other institutions of higher education. . . .

As you [walk in the meekness of the Lord's Spirit], you will find rest unto your souls and you will have peace in Him.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

I love this college community that we have, and I can't think of a group with whom I'd rather grow in the face of continuous change. I acknowledge that change is not always easy,



Notes

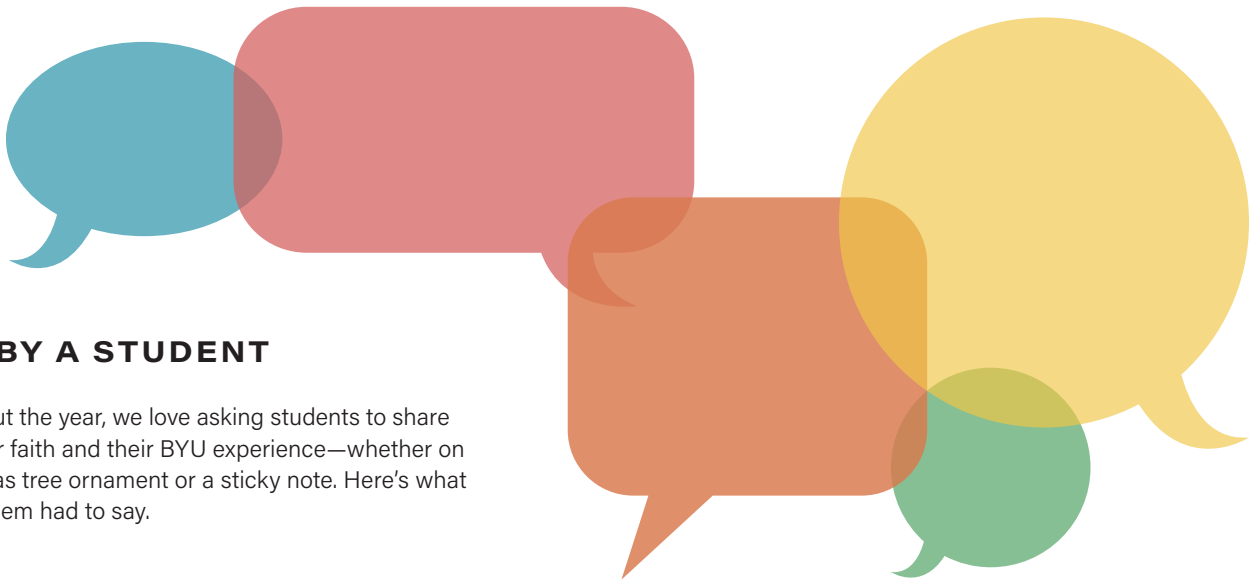
1. Henry B. Eyring, "My Peace I Leave with You," *Ensign*, May 2017.
2. David A. Bednar, *Power to Become: Spiritual Patterns for Pressing Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ* (Deseret Book, 2014), 4.
3. David A. Bednar, *Power to Become*, 15. See also David A. Bednar, "In the Strength of the Lord," BYU devotional address, October 23, 2001.
4. David A. Bednar, *Power to Become*, 38.
5. Philippians 4:7.
6. Russell M. Nelson, "The Power of Spiritual Momentum," *Liahona*, May 2022.
7. Marvin J. Ashton, "Progress Through Change," *Ensign*, November 1979.
8. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "A Higher Joy," *Liahona*, May 2024.
9. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Lord, I Believe," *Ensign*, May 2013, emphasis in original.
10. Lisa L. Harkness, "Peace, Be Still," *Ensign*, November 2020.
11. David A. Bednar, "Meek and Lowly of Heart," *Ensign*, May 2018.
12. David A. Bednar, "Walk in the Meekness of My Spirit," BYU university conference address, August 28, 2017. See Guide to the Scriptures, s.v. "meek, meekness," scriptures.churchofjesuschrist.org.
13. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Pride and the Priesthood," *Ensign*, November 2010.
14. Dale G. Renlund, "The Powerful, Virtuous Cycle of the Doctrine of Christ," *Liahona*, May 2024.
15. Patrick Kearon, "God's Intent Is to Bring You Home," *Liahona*, May 2024.
16. Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride," *Ensign*, May 1989.
17. Bednar, "Walk in the Meekness of My Spirit."
18. Neil L. Andersen, "Educating Our Righteous Desires," BYU Education Week address, August 20, 2024.
19. See Mosiah 4:27.
20. John Taylor as quoted in Zina P. Young Williams Card, "Short Reminiscent Sketches of Karl G. Maeser," unpublished typescript, undated; also in *Foundations and Dreams*, ed. John S. Tanner, vol. 1, *Envisioning BYU* (Brigham Young University, 2022), 156.
21. Andrea Muñoz Spannaus, "Faithful to the End," *Liahona*, May 2024.

and I know many of you are also dealing with personal struggles that deeply impact your bandwidth. Elder Neil L. Andersen has said that "our road to becoming is more than a marathon; it is the journey of a lifetime—and well beyond."¹⁸ While we all appropriately feel urgency to become, I hope we will also acknowledge that we cannot run faster than we have strength.¹⁹ I testify that Christ is directing His work. He "is directing and [has] a care over this school."²⁰ I am tremendously grateful for His chosen prophets, seers, and revelators and the ways in which they guide and direct us. I am daily thankful that I work at a university where I can so seamlessly integrate my faith and my academic training.

Sister Andrea Muñoz Spannaus has said, "God is our Father. He knows your heart's desires

and your possibilities, and He trusts you."²¹ My friends, I trust you and I love you. I truly believe that this college and the people in it have an essential role to play in the prophetically directed future of this institution.

I believe that if we seek to see change in a positive light, if we strive for faith over fear, and if we pursue a radical reorientation away from pride and toward meekness, we will experience an increased measure of personal peace. On this foundation of personal peace and with the Savior by our side, I have no doubt that we will become what He needs us to become, both individually and collectively. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. 



SAID BY A STUDENT

Throughout the year, we love asking students to share about their faith and their BYU experience—whether on a Christmas tree ornament or a sticky note. Here's what some of them had to say.

CHRISTMAS: TESTIMONIES OF THE SAVIOR

Jesus is my refuge from life's storms.

He is my best friend! He can get me through anything.

Christ is the Healer. When you're hurting, find His mercy and He will fix every piece of your heart.



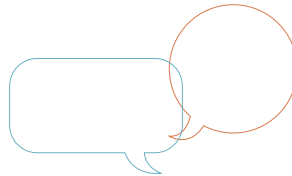
"Christ sees me for who I am and who I can become, and He helps me get there too."



Jesus is my constant during the unknown.

He was born for us, lived for us, and died for us. He continues to save me every day.

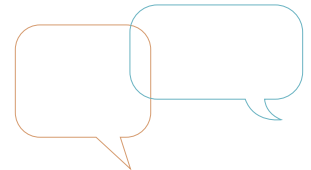
The Savior has literally saved my life. I owe Him everything.



I know with Him I have no need to fear.

Jesus loves me even if I fail.

Christ is always the answer. Jesus unlocks the impossible.



EASTER: HOLY WEEK THOUGHTS

I can continue to get out of my comfort zone in dating and find peace in Christ while I push forward.

Family history work exists only because of Jesus. He is the reason for families.



Every individual is known personally and loved infinitely by God.

Because of Him, I can have joy despite my circumstances and I can have it abundantly!

I've been able to repent and understand that my divine worth is not a condition of my actions.

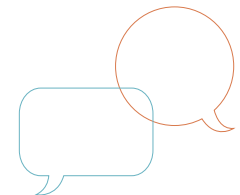
"Because of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, I look at myself and others as individuals who are profoundly loved."



Forgiving frees me of malice, allowing me to move on past hurt.

Through Christ, I am no longer bound to the pain of the past.

He knows me. He loves me still. And I love Him.



GRADUATION: FAVORITE BYU MEMORIES

"Learning about how I can make a difference for good in the world."



Giving a guy a tour of campus. I ended up marrying him.

Going on top of the Kimball Tower!

I absolutely loved attending devotionals, especially when President Worthen was released and bore his testimony. He and President Reese give me examples to look up to.

Taking my son with me to floral design.

Making crepes in Paris on a fashion and design study abroad.

Learning how intertwined human development is with the gospel.



Volunteering at Y-Serve.

Presenting my research at the Mary Lou Fulton Mentored Student Research Conference!

Lunch with my sisters between classes in the JFSB.

Working with the Navajo Nation for urban planning.



Social Support Shapes Spiritual Journeys

BY
JENNIFER
FLETCHER

For Erika Olson (BS '25), one of the benefits of being a sociology student was learning how to understand and connect with others.

"A big part of building Zion is all about relationships," says Olson. "Everyone is part of a larger system, and understanding where we are in that system can be incredibly impactful."

She saw these ideas at play as she undertook a research project with classmates in a sociology capstone course led by department chair Curtis Child in fall 2023. The team investigated factors that helped BYU students with faith

questions choose to remain active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The unpublished study found that many students' concerns dealt with exclusion—whether in the culture, language, or policies of the Church—and that many helpful factors in choosing to stay were also relationship-based.

"Part of the reason people have concerns in the first place is because they care so much about their relationships with other people," says Olson.

The student researchers reported that interviewees "found it helpful when they felt supported and accepted by people in their social networks and the university regardless of their faith status. Likewise, they found it harmful when they felt isolated and unsupported in their concerns,

both from their social networks and from [BYU] culture."

Child explains, "People are never in a vacuum. They are always embedded in social networks—and these networks are critical to individuals in both beneficial and negative ways."

To foster beneficial relationships, the student researchers recommended creating safe spaces on campus where conversations on faith can take place.

"It's important for students to be able to have honest conversations, and many students have found safe relationships to be really valuable," says Child. "We're preparing students to live in a world where these things are everyday issues. And if we do it right, I think we can help them approach problems faithfully and with compassion and understanding." **C**

ABOUT THE STUDY

Capstone students conducted one-on-one, in-depth interviews with 20 current or recent BYU students between the ages of 18 and 28. Each of the interviewees had experienced a significant faith challenge and self-identified as an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Interviewers asked 10 primary questions, and answers were analyzed with 19 unique codes. The average interview was 57 minutes.

The research found that many study participants had relied on relationships with BYU professors, fellow Church members, family, and friends to work through their questions, resulting in 25 percent of students finding closure and deeper faith and another 55 percent continuing to face concerns but accepting uncertainty and expressing hope.



Guiding Student Discovery

BY
**BRITNEY HEIMULI AND
JORDAN KARPOWITZ**

"Mentored research is just one of many ways—but an important way—that our students are able to engage in inspiring learning," said Dean Laura Padilla-Walker at the April 2025 Mary Lou Fulton Mentored Student Research Conference. "We feel that the opportunities students have to engage with faculty research are a real strength of the programs that we offer."

On the last Thursday of fall and winter semester classes, students from across the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences gather in the Wilkinson Student Center Ballroom for the poster conference.

Students work with mentors throughout the year to apply research methods to social science questions. They then present at the semiannual poster conference, where they may receive awards for their work.

Aaron Skabelund, a history professor, has mentored student research for almost every conference since the program began in 2005 with funding from the Mary Lou Fulton Chair in the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences. "It's amazing what a team of capable, hard-working, well-mentored students can do in one semester or one year," he says.

Not only does the experience boost student learning, but it also prepares students for graduate school and their career fields. "Students must apply research, thinking, writing, visual design, and oral presentation skills as part of the project," explains Skabelund. "I encourage all of my research assistants to present their work at the conference."

The conference supports graduate school entry in more ways than one: In April 2022, the college added a program to allow conference participants to apply for a grant of up to \$250 to offset the cost of graduate school application fees. Nearly 200 students have already taken advantage of this benefit.

In December of the same year, the college began hosting fall semester conferences to allow more students to participate; originally, the conference only took place during winter semester. The December conference

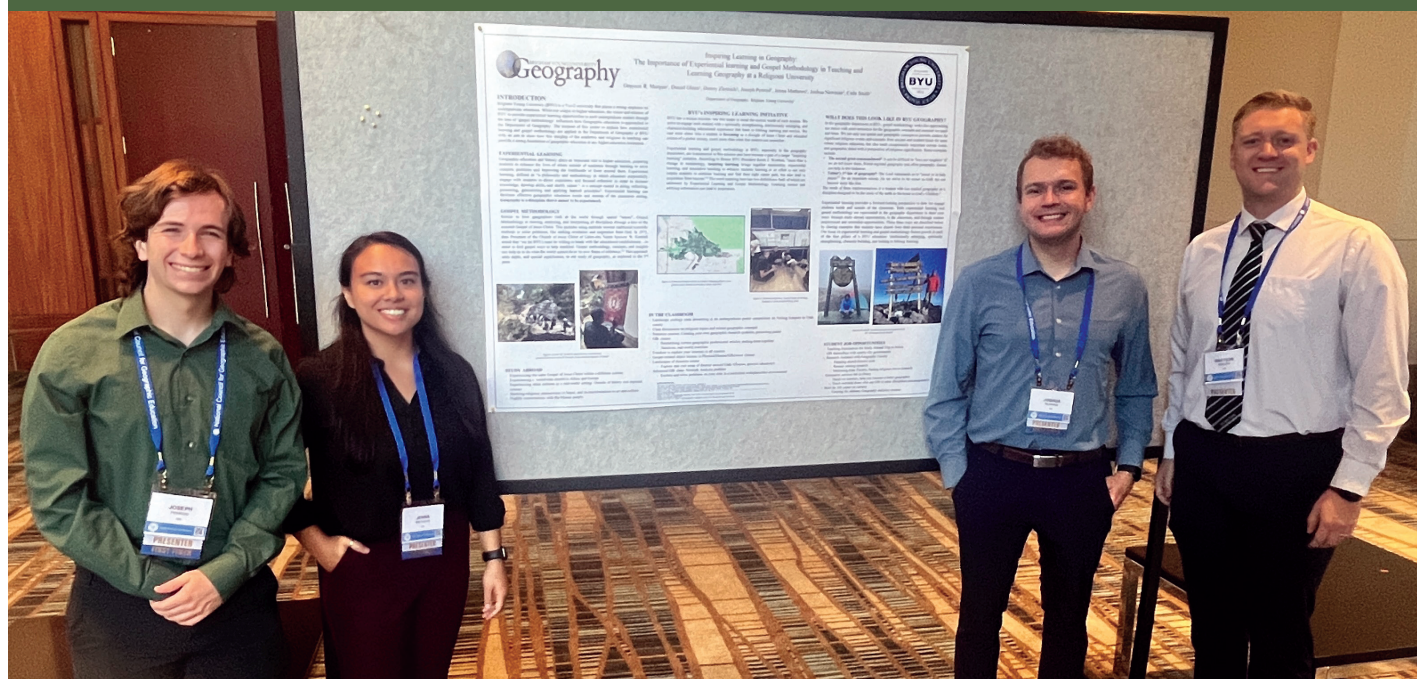
now averages 200 posters from 300 students and about 75 faculty mentors. The April conference has grown to nearly 400 posters presented by about 550 students with over 100 faculty mentors.

The college's computing services team regularly updates a custom web app to simplify research submission, poster printing, judging, and student sign-in on the day of the conference. The app also incentivizes students to interact with presenters. This technology helps improve the experience for everyone involved—in April 2025 there was no registration line, and students hung 385 posters in record time!

Top research posters from the April 2025 conference included titles such as "Social Gaps and Urban Divides: How Social Factors Shape Economic Disadvantage in American Cities," "Digital Pacifiers: The Longitudinal Influence of Using Media to Regulate Children's Emotions," "The Effects of Awe and Wonder on Well-Being: A Pilot Study," and "Petals of Resistance: A Florist's Fight Against Wartime Bias." View these and other posters at fultonconference.byu.edu under "Past Conferences." 



Brent and Cheri Andrus accept an Award of Appreciation, presented in recognition of their significant and ongoing support of mentored research. They are joined by President C. Shane Reese, donor liaison Jim Crawley, and Dean Laura Padilla-Walker, as well as Andrus family members.



Bridging Geography and Faith

A BYU Professor's Gospel Approach to Teaching

BY
BRITNEY HEIMULI

“Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come” (Doctrine and Covenants 87:8).

For Grayson Morgan, assistant professor of geography, this scripture testifies of eternal truths found in his chosen field of study. He sees a distinct link with Tobler’s First Law of Geography: “Everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things.” As we strive to be closer to God, we can become more like Him.

“The concepts of proximity and familiarity are important in both geography and the gospel,” says Morgan. “Phrases like ‘Stand ye in holy places’ and ‘Come unto me’ are more than invitations to be nearer to Christ. They are calls to become like Him.”

In the Geography Department at BYU, applying gospel methodology deepens

students’ appreciation of course material. “All things unto [God] are spiritual” (Doctrine and Covenants 29:34), including geographic and spatial concepts.

Gospel methodology also aids students in becoming disciples of Jesus Christ as well as educated citizens of a global society. For example, regional and human geography courses help students keep the great commandment to love our neighbors.

In fall 2023, Morgan felt inspired to share BYU’s unique approach with others. “I thought it was one way I could follow President Reese’s invitation to have the courage to be different,” shares Morgan.

Together with several students, he formalized thoughts on gospel methodology in geography with a poster presentation at the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) 2023 Annual Conference. Educators from all over the United States gathered at this event to discuss teaching techniques and curriculum for geography.

The team’s research poster, titled “Inspiring Learning in Geography: The

Importance of Experiential Learning and Gospel Methodology in Teaching and Learning Geography at a Religious Institution,” outlined how gospel methodology enriches experiential learning. Photos displayed students’ inspiring learning experiences—from climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania to analytically determining the ideal location for a new grocery store.

Morgan was encouraged by conference attendees’ responses. “They really appreciated the example of teaching with a gospel lens. Many took pictures of the presentation to refer to later in teaching.” Now, he says, “I am happy to be bolder and share my testimony in professional settings.”

Reflecting on the experience, Morgan adds, “The Lord is willing to provide guidance on how to incorporate gospel methodology and build and defend His kingdom as we seek it.”

In April 2025 students Joseph Penrod, Jenna Matthews, and Joshua Newman accompanied Morgan to the NCGE conference.

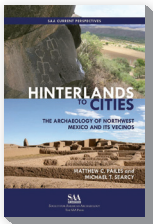


BOOKSHELF

BOOKS BY OUR FACULTY

Hinterlands to Cities: The Archaeology of Northwest Mexico and Its Vecinos

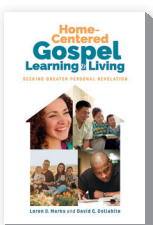
M. C. PAILES AND MICHAEL T. SEARCY
(*Society for American Archaeology Press*)



Pailes and Searcy examine relationships that evolved over 14,000 years between societies on the Sea of Cortez coast, in the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts, and in the Sierra Madre Occidental.

Home-Centered Gospel Learning and Living: Seeking Greater Personal Revelation

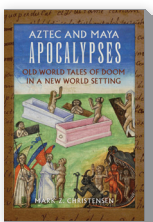
LOREN D. MARKS AND DAVID C. DOLLAHITE
(*BYU Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book*)



By weaving experiences of everyday Latter-day Saints with social science research, Marks and Dollahite offer guidance for those seeking to maximize the power of gospel study in the home.

Aztec and Maya Apocalypses: Old World Tales of Doom in a New World Setting

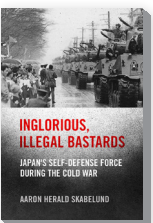
MARK Z. CHRISTENSEN
(*University of Oklahoma Press*)



Christensen explores how European, Aztec, and Mayan perspectives influenced apocalyptic texts written by Spanish and Indigenous writers in the 16th to 19th centuries.

Inglorious, Illegal Bastards: Japan's Self-Defense Force During the Cold War

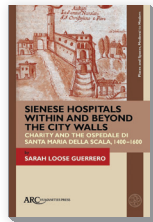
AARON HERALD SKABELUND (*Cornell University Press*)



Skabelund conveys how Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force achieved legitimacy and developed a long-lasting identity following World War II.

Siense Hospitals Within and Beyond the City Walls: Charity and the Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala, 1400-1600

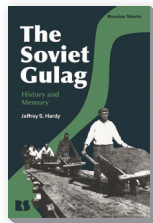
SARAH LOOSE GUERRERO (*Arc Humanities Press*)



Using an Italian hospital and its farms as a case study, Guerrero examines the power dynamics between urban entities and rural properties from the late medieval to early modern era.

The Soviet Gulag: History and Memory

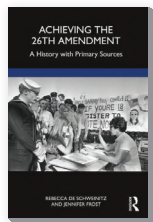
JEFFREY S. HARDY (*Bloomsbury*)



Hardy shines a light on the history of the Soviet Union's Gulag, from conception to collapse. The book explores the system's descent into violence and addresses resulting current debates.

Achieving the 26th Amendment: A History with Primary Sources

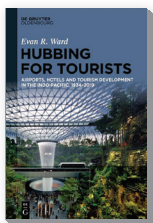
REBECCA DE SCHWEINITZ AND J. FROST (*Routledge*)



De Schweinitz and Frost provide an analysis of primary sources—government documents, campus newspapers, and personal collections—on the movement for youth suffrage.

Hubbing for Tourists: Airports, Hotels, and Tourism Development in the Indo-Pacific, 1934-2019

EVAN R. WARD (*De Gruyter Oldenbourg*)



Ward examines the strategies implemented by major cities of the Persian Gulf, Southeast Asia, and East Asia in their efforts to promote tourism through hotels and air travel.

Being Single in Georgian England: Families, Households, and the Unmarried

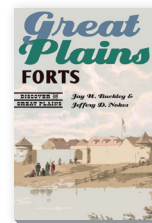
AMY HARRIS (*Oxford University Press*)



Harris dives into the lives of the Sharps, an abolitionist family of the 18th century, to illuminate the experiences and contributions of single or childless individuals in household dynamics.

Great Plains Forts

JAY H. BUCKLEY AND JEFFERY D. NOKES
(*University of Nebraska Press*)



Buckley and Nokes tell the history of fortifications on the Great Plains: cities of Indigenous peoples, Spanish presidios, French and British outposts, and modern military presences.

Contingent Loyalties: State Agents in the Yunnan Borderlands (1856-1911)

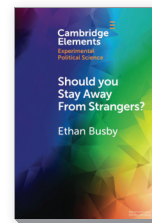
DIANA DUAN (*Amsterdam University Press*)



Duan explores the history of the Yunnan region of the People's Republic of China, which was marked by rebellion, revolution, and state consolidation.

Should You Stay Away from Strangers?

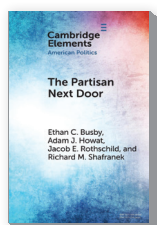
ETHAN BUSBY (*Cambridge University Press*)



Using data from existing studies, Busby considers how types of intergroup contact promote or detract from harmony in democracies.

The Partisan Next Door

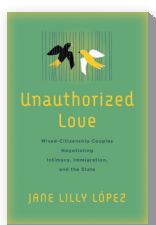
ETHAN C. BUSBY, A. J. HOWAT, J. E. ROTHSCHILD, R. M. SHAFRANEK (Cambridge University Press)



The elimination of partisanship in the United States may not be necessary to heal divides; rather, shifting from trait-based stereotypes to issue-based stereotypes may do the trick.

Unauthorized Love: Mixed-Citizenship Couples Negotiating Intimacy, Immigration, and the State

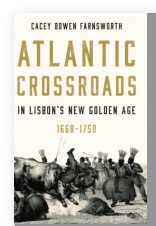
JANE LILLY LÓPEZ (Stanford University Press)



López analyzes the myriad challenges that US family reunification law poses for married couples with mixed citizenship.

Atlantic Crossroads in Lisbon's New Golden Age: 1668-1750

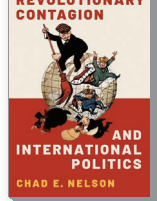
CACEY B. FARNSWORTH (Pennsylvania State University Press)



Farnsworth investigates the Atlanticization of Lisbon between 1668 and 1750 as colonial and international developments led to the capital's transformation.

Revolutionary Contagion and International Politics

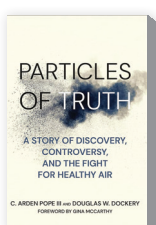
CHAD E. NELSON (Oxford University Press)



Nelson considers what happens when leaders fear that a revolution abroad will spread to their own country and how that fear affects international relations.

Particles of Truth: A Story of Discovery, Controversy, and the Fight for Healthy Air

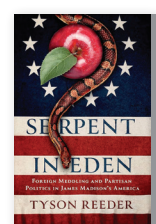
C. ARDEN POPE III AND DOUGLAS W. DOCKERY (MIT Press)



Pope and Dockery utilize firsthand accounts and scientific research to address the controversy surrounding air pollution and its contribution to disease and death.

Serpent in Eden: Foreign Meddling and Partisan Politics in James Madison's America

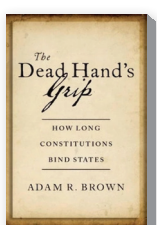
TYSON REEDER (Oxford University Press)



Reeder explores the partisan politics and foreign involvement of the early United States through a look at the James Madison's career from the American Revolution through the War of 1812.

The Dead Hand's Grip: How Long Constitutions Bind States

ADAM R. BROWN (Oxford University Press)



Using comparative analysis, Brown argues that state constitutions with higher specificity (measured as constitution length in words) can restrict state governments in harmful ways.

Early Childhood and Digital Media

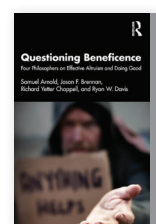
RACHEL BARR, HEATHER KIRKORIAN, SARAH COYNE, AND JENNY RADESKY (Cambridge University Press)



The authors set aside the current focus on imprecise estimates of young children's screen time to study family media ecology using a new framework.

Questioning Beneficence: Four Philosophers on Effective Altruism and Doing Good

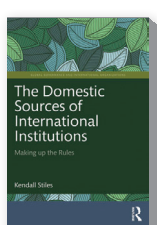
SAMUEL ARNOLD, JASON F. BRENNAN, RICHARD YETTER CHAPPELL, AND RYAN W. DAVIS (Routledge)



Four philosophers engage in a roundtable discussion on Effective Altruism, a movement that applies microeconomic principles to beneficent action.

The Domestic Sources of International Institutions: Making Up the Rules

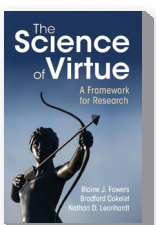
KENDALL STILES (Routledge)



Schools of thought, periods in time, and areas of study intersect as Stiles argues that international affairs are shaped by the domestic institutions of international actors.

The Science of Virtue: A Framework for Research

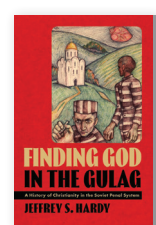
BLAINE J. FOWERS, BRADFORD COKELET, AND NATHAN D. LEONHARDT (Cambridge University Press)



The authors present an empirically tested model and interdisciplinary approach to study the science of virtue and moral development.

Finding God in the Gulag: A History of Christianity in the Soviet Penal System

JEFFREY S. HARDY (Oxford University Press)



Hardy tells the story of how Christianity flourished in the gulag system as inmates found ways to worship despite the anti-religion efforts and ideologies of the Soviet Communist Party.



A New Light in El Paso

BY
JENNIFER FLETCHER

Steve Willis (BS '95) isn't mistaking early retirement for a slower pace of life. Instead, he's answering BYU's call to "go forth to serve."

Last year, he and his wife, Margaret, accepted a call to open a new mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in El Paso, Texas. "My wife and I are leading about 100 missionaries," says President Willis. "There were three contributing missions, and one of our jobs has been to take those three distinct groups of missionaries and make them into a new distinct group with a shared culture and feeling of purpose."

To help build a strong group of missionaries, Willis is using the skills and learning he gained from his education and over the

course of his career. "I'm excited to work with those missionaries to help them become their best selves and connect with the people around them so that they can be an asset to that community more quickly and more consistently," says Willis.

Connection is what drew him to sociology to begin with. When Willis took his first social psychology class, he loved everything about it and knew he had found his path. "When I found social psychology, it helped me understand interpersonal relationships—why people do what they do," he says. "It requires those who study it to interact with people and to develop a connection with those they're working with."

Though it's been many years since Willis studied sociology, that training helped him make his way in the business world. Willis launched his career at the Stephen R. Covey Leadership

Center before joining VitalSmarts (now Crucial Learning). In each of these roles, his background in the social sciences bolstered his work in organizational behavior.

More recently, he worked with The Other Side Academy and later The Other Side Village in Salt Lake City, where he helped people who had formerly experienced homelessness develop applicable life and career skills. "I got to help prepare them to live in a democratic therapeutic community where they have small businesses to support one another, get back on their feet, and learn how to be functional again in society," says Willis.

He taught 10- to 15-minute lessons to help clients learn skills such as managing self-talk, forming healthy habits, and navigating conflict. "A big part of helping those who came to us involved helping them gain self-confidence and self-mastery and just seeing themselves in a different light," says Willis. "And a big part of

social sciences is being able to see people in different lights, which allows us to give ourselves and others the grace to become more than we are right now."

In his role as a mission leader, Willis has continued to find joy in getting to know people from all walks of life. He says, "The people of El Paso are some of the friendliest people we've encountered. And yet they usually don't know the people who live more than one house away." He and Sister Willis have been inspired to implement community building by introducing themselves to neighbors, inviting them over, and introducing the neighbors to each other. "That's been a blessing for us and for them, I think," he says.

Through the light of the restored gospel and a social sciences mindset, the couple is fostering a mission culture grounded in genuine connection—one conversation, one relationship at a time. 

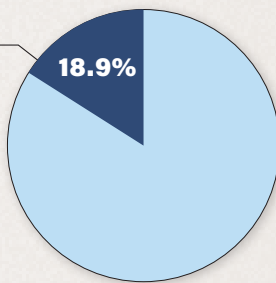
Alumni:

Our Best Ambassadors

As alumni of the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences, you are the best ambassadors we have. You direct students to our college, mentor them through their university experience, help them successfully transition to careers and lives of service, and share the light of the Y with the world. It's no small job.

87,749

Alumni from the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences



462,007

Living BYU Alumni

Recently, Associate Dean Niwako Yamawaki noticed that many of our young alumni were reporting below-standard salaries after graduation. They were applying to too few jobs and took positions that did not require a bachelor's degree or remained in jobs they had during school. This past winter semester, Yamawaki launched a new one-credit course called Career and Leadership Academy, specifically designed for students who are not planning to attend graduate school. The course helps students recognize the value of skills they develop during their undergraduate years and gain confidence in pursuing higher-paying career opportunities.

The first students to complete the course especially appreciated having National Advisory Council members attend on two different occasions to help them prepare for interviews and learn networking techniques. At the beginning of the course, less than 30 percent of students reported having clear career plans, and only half said they felt confident in their ability to achieve their goals. At the end of the semester, 93 percent had clear goals and career plans, and 100 percent felt confident in their ability to achieve their goals and career plans.

Three easy options to mentor students:

- 1 Create an account on BYU Connect at alumni.byu.edu/byuconnect.
- 2 Follow us on LinkedIn at linkedin.com/company/byu-fhss. Look for your department's account too!
- 3 Reach out to fhss-alumni@byu.edu and let us know what you can offer.

WE'LL SEE YOU AT THE GAME!

Last fall, we traveled to three BYU tailgate parties—at Southern Methodist University, the University of Wyoming, and Arizona State University. In Tempe, Arizona, we also joined more than 20 alumni for dinner on the eve of the ASU game. This fall, we're looking forward to more opportunities to see alumni when we tailgate at East Carolina University, the University of Arizona, and the University of Cincinnati. If you'll be in the area, be sure to watch your email for activities we're planning. You can also stop by our booth for some branded items at the BYU tailgate party!



Top left: Dean Laura Padilla-Walker presents a gift basket to the winner of a tailgate drawing by the college. **Top right:** The college greets BYU fans at the tailgate at Arizona State University. **Middle:** The National Advisory Council for the college gathers on campus in fall 2024 for its annual meeting. **Bottom:** Graduates celebrate their transition from student to alum at the annual Grad Bash at LaVell Edwards Stadium.



DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

BRIGHT SPOTS FROM EVERY DISCIPLINE

ANTHROPOLOGY

In 2024, **David Johnson** led a field school in Petra, Jordan, where students helped excavate a Nabataean tomb. While there, he received an award for his archaeological research and years of service in Petra. Artifacts from this and other Petra projects were displayed in a student-curated exhibit at the BYU Museum of Peoples and Cultures. **Becky Schulthies** took anthropology students to Morocco to complete various ethnographic projects that would inform their senior theses. Several students presented their original research at the Utah Conference on Undergraduate Research. **Jordan Haug**, **Jacob Hickman**, **Becky Schulthies**, and **Greg Thompson** accompanied their 18 student mentees to present at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting. Undergraduate students continue to be accepted into excellent graduate programs, including at UCLA, University of Dundee, UC Berkeley, University of Wyoming, and BYU. The university recognized **Jaime Bartlett** with an Adjunct Faculty Excellence Award.

ECONOMICS

The department continues to host its popular Visiting Scholar lecture series, and **Olga Stoddard** delivered our department devotional in March 2024. She coauthored the paper “Strength in Numbers? Gender Composition, Leadership, and Women’s Influence in Teams,” which was published in the *Journal of Political Economy*. The *Journal of Labor Economics* published **Brigham Frandsen’s** article “Machine Labor,” which he coauthored with Nobel laureate Joshua Angrist. **Christian vom Lehn** received the Marjorie Pay Hinckley Early Career Faculty Award from the college and **Brigham Frandsen**, **Lars Lefgren**, and **Emily Leslie** received the FHSS Excellence in Impactful Scholarship

Award for their paper “Judging Judge Fixed Effects,” which was published in the *American Economic Review* and has been cited more than 200 times. **Josie Fillmore** was recognized for her work at the BYU Major Fair with a Staff and Administrative Employee Recognition Award.

FAMILY LIFE

Two family and consumer science education students, **Kourtney Glenn** and **Ashley Berges**, were selected as national ambassadors to promote careers in technical education. The school hosted a total of 12 Faith and Learning Initiative lectures. According to student feedback, the seminars helped students strengthen their testimonies and discipleship, connect to their heavenly parents and Savior, and prioritize trust and patience over doubt. **David Dollahite** and **Loren Marks** continue to publish research from the American Families of Faith Project. The project includes in-depth interviews with 700 people in about 300 families that come from 33 states and a variety of religious and ethnic groups. **Jocelyn Wikle** collaborated with **Riley Wilson** of the Economics Department and **Chloe Gibbs** from the University of Notre Dame to understand the impact of full-day kindergarten on families. The team analyzed nationwide data from surveys collected from federal agencies, the US Census Bureau, and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, as well as the national education data. The research was published by the Annenberg Institute.

GEOGRAPHY

David Simpson worked with students to complete urban development research and recommendations for the Tólikan (Sweetwater) Chapter of the Navajo Nation. **Perry Hardin** and **Ryan Jensen** led the Kilimanjaro: Adventure Travel in Tanzania study abroad and **Sam Otterstrom** led Landscapes and

Nations in Western Europe. For BYU Green Week, the department, the BYU Library Geospatial Services and Training Lab, the Ballard Center, and the Sustainability Office partnered to host a “mapathon.” Over 157 students mapped more than 7,000 features in 11 countries, including Mozambique and Papua New Guinea. Faculty and students presented research posters and students competed in the World Geography Bowl at the 2024 Association of American Geographers annual meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii. Students **Ethan Schatz** and **Abner Hardy** were recognized at the conference in the list of top 10 most useful Geography Bowl players. The department initiated a visual works art contest with the theme *Genius Loci*, or “the spirit of the place.” Students were invited to think broadly of “place” and submit original photography, art, graphic design, or maps.

HISTORY

Amy Harris worked extensively with family history major **Kris Kale** on the Early British Census project—an initiative that aims to bring together all pre-1841 British census records into a single searchable database. The college awarded student **Becca Driggs** the Interdisciplinary History Award for her essay “‘Great Injustice in American Literature’: African American Girlhood in Black and White Authored Children’s Publications, 1887–1920,” which was published in the college’s student journal *The Thetan*. Driggs also worked with another student to propose a park that was approved by the Orem City Council. The park is at the site of the graves of two infant children of Scandinavian pioneer Eva Charlotta Andersson. Andersson was the second wife of her husband; due to anti-polygamy laws, she lived mostly in hiding and was unable to bury her children in a proper grave. Professors across the department served in key roles for Truth and Reconciliation: A Conference of the BYU Slavery Project. **Jenny Hale**



Pulsipher led the third Native American Rights Seminar, sponsored by the college and the American Indian Studies minor. **Brian Cannon** returned to research after serving for six years as department chair. **Spencer Fluhman**, former director of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, began his tenure as department chair on May 1, 2025.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Three political science students were nationally honored as Truman Scholars over the past three years: **Adam Johnson** in 2023 for his work with nonprofit organizations including Conserve Utah Valley, **Jane Drinkwater** in 2024 for her work making online government tools and technology more user friendly, and **Dallin Bundy** in 2025 for his work in public service as well as his research on depolarization and bipartisanship. In 2025 the annual Beyond BYU networking event saw 75 students travel to Washington, DC, to network with nearly 60 alumni professionals and choose from nearly 20 site visits. **Quinn Mecham** and **Chad Nelson** led 36 students on a study abroad to explore international politics in Europe, visiting more than 100 sites in 13 countries. **Ryan Davis** taught a political philosophy course using Taylor Swift lyrics to illustrate ethical principles. Three students from the class traveled to the University of Alabama, Birmingham, and presented their work to students in a similar course, Taylor Swift and Philosophy. The department began the Initiative for Peacemaking, hosted an inaugural Peacemaking Conference with academics and opinion leaders who study peace, and sponsored a new student association, The Peacemaker Project. The student chapter of the Political Affairs Society hosted Senator John Curtis during his first campus visit as a US Senator when he delivered the lecture “Inspiring the Next Generation of Public Servants.” **Jeremy Pope** was named lead investigator for the national Cooperative

Election Survey. **Chris Karpowitz** and **Jessica Preece** began serving as coeditors for the journal *Political Behavior*.

PSYCHOLOGY

Julianne Holt-Lunstad presented her research on social connection and human flourishing at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the Vatican and contributed to the US Surgeon General’s 2023 advisory “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation.” **Jenae Nelson** coauthored a study with **Sam Hardy** and alumni **Justin Hendricks** (BS ’11) and **Jocelyn Cazier** (BS ’20) on Latter-day Saints’ experiences with daily repentance. **Dawn-Marie Wood** supported the department’s student-run Belonging and Diversity Committee in several activities, including cosponsoring a screening of the documentary *Join or Die* to highlight the value of joining clubs, volunteering, and attending events. Clinical psychology doctoral students received department awards for excellence: **Gus Salazar** for clinical practice, **Leah Talbert** for research, **Conner Deichman** for teaching, and **Jeremy Bekker** for advocacy. **Chad Jensen** became department chair in October 2024 and **Gary Burlingame** retired in 2025.

SOCIAL WORK

In 2024 four of **Steven Hoffman**’s students traveled to Washington, DC, to present research at the Society for Social Work and Research Annual Conference. The 2026 cohort of MSW students visited the Utah Islamic Center and Congregation Kol Ami, a Jewish organization, to develop a greater understanding of different religious cultures, which aligned with the theme of the social work conference organized by **Cory Dennis**, Divine Intersections: Spirituality in Social Work. Hoffman had three papers accepted for publication: “Health Literacy and Mental Well-Being Among University Students in the United States,” “A Descriptive Look at the Mental

Health Literacy of Student-Athletes,” and “Parent-Child Conflict and Adolescent Health Literacy in Mexico: Results from a Nationwide Dyad Study in Mexico.” **David S. Wood** published “Are Veterans Willing to Assist with Firearm Safety for Suicide Prevention?” in *Military Psychology*. **Cole Hooley** was awarded a grant from the Association of Social Work Boards and elected to the Lindon City Council. He consulted with Utah’s Office of Artificial Intelligence Policy about regulations they are considering on the use of AI in mental health. **Stacey Shaw** began her tenure as director of the School of Social Work on May 1, 2024.

SOCIOLOGY

As part of the Program Evaluation and Assessment Team (PEAT), **Scott Sanders** took senior students to Bolivia and Peru to analyze the impact of different nonprofits that receive funding from US NGOs. Future PEAT groups are partnering with engineering students to evaluate the impact of their Global Engineering Outreach projects. The Sociology Academic Student Association began operating again in the 2024–25 school year. **Hayley Pierce** and **Jane Lopez** received college awards—the Martin B. Hickman Excellence in Teaching Award and the Martin Hickman Diversity and Inclusion Award, respectively. **Jacob Rugh** received a Faculty Excellence Award from the department. **Ryan Gabriel** oversaw the African American Civil Rights Seminar in winter 2024, and **Hayley Pierce** and **Jonathan Jarvis** both spoke in the Sociology Disciple-Scholar Lecture Series. **Melissa Alcaraz** was a 2023–24 Visiting Scholar at the Center for Demography and Ecology at the University of Wisconsin. After years of dedicated leadership, in 2025 the department ends its role as host of the Rural Sociological Society and its flagship journal *Rural Sociology*, for which **Carol Ward** serves as editor.



Benjamin Williams (BA '25), a photography major who has worked as a student employee in the college for over four years, captured these shots at Serengeti National Park on the Kilimanjaro: Adventure Travel in Tanzania study abroad. Students in the program not only climb Kilimanjaro but—more importantly—interact with expert local

guides and porters and learn about their experiences. Students also take a tropical ecology short course at the College of African Wildlife Management near Mweka, Tanzania, then experience what they've studied by visiting Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, and Tarangire National Park.



New Faculty

Meet the college's new hires on the continuing faculty status (CFS) track.

2022



ALEJANDRA ALDRIDGE
Assistant Professor, Political Science
PhD, Political Science, Stanford University, 2022



STEFANIA ASHBY
Assistant Professor, Psychology
PhD, Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Oregon, 2021



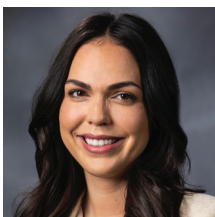
CORTNEY EVANS STOUT
Associate Professor, Family Life
Integrative Writing Coordinator
PhD, Marriage, Family, and Human Development, Brigham Young University, 2008



DANA HUNTER
Associate Professor, Family Life
MS, Family Sciences, Brigham Young University, 1992



NATHAN LEONHARDT
Assistant Professor, Family Life
PhD, Psychology, University of Toronto, 2022



CHELSEA ROMNEY
Assistant Professor, Psychology
PhD, Health Psychology, University of California, Los Angeles, 2021



DARIN SELF
Assistant Professor, Political Science
PhD, Government, Cornell University, 2022

2023



RUTH AGUIRRE
Assistant Professor, Social Work
Director of Field Education
Master of Social Work, Brigham Young University, 2011



DOUG ATKINSON
Assistant Professor, Political Science
PhD, Political Science and International Affairs, University of Georgia, 2018



ADRIANE CAVALLINI
Associate Professor, Psychology
PhD, Clinical Psychology, Brigham Young University, 2011



REBECCA DUDLEY
Assistant Professor, Political Science
PhD, Political Science, Duke University, 2023



JEFF JACKSON
Associate Professor, Family Life
PhD, Marriage and Family Therapy, Brigham Young University, 2009



GRAYSON MORGAN

Assistant Professor, Geography
PhD, Geography, University of South Carolina, 2022



TYSON REEDER

Assistant Professor, History
PhD, History, University of California, Davis, 2016



BECKY SCHULTHIES

Associate Professor,
Anthropology
PhD, Linguistic Anthropology, University of Arizona, 2009



DAVID SIMPSON

Professor, Geography
PhD, City and Regional Planning, University of California, Berkeley, 1996



DAYE SON

Assistant Professor, Family Life
PhD, Family and Human Development, Arizona State University, 2023



TRACE STAY

Assistant Professor, Psychology
PhD, Neuroscience, Baylor College of Medicine, 2019



JOSEPH STUART

Assistant Professor, History
PhD, US History, University of Utah, 2022

2024▼



SUZANNE ADAMS

Associate Professor, History
Director of the Center for Family History and Genealogy
MA, History, Brigham Young University, 2008



EMILY BRUNSON

Professor, Anthropology
PhD, Anthropology, University of Washington, 2010



MALLORY MILLETT

Assistant Professor, Family Life
PhD, Developmental Psychology, Radboud University, 2024



JENAE NELSON

Assistant Professor, Psychology
PhD, Psychology, Brigham Young University, 2022



ELIZABETH THOMAS

Assistant Professor, Anthropology
PhD, Anthropology, Southern Methodist University, 2024



REBEKKA WEIDMANN

Assistant Professor, Psychology
PhD, Psychology, University of Basel, 2017



AMBER WILLIAMS

Associate Professor, Family Life
PhD, Curriculum and Instruction, Utah State University, 2021

Stan Knapp: *Opening Minds*



The following remarks are excerpted from an address Michael Wood delivered at the Family, Home, and Social Sciences fall meeting on August 28, 2024.

Stanley Jay Knapp passed away on June 26, 2024, at the age of 60, after 15 months of battling a glioblastoma brain tumor. He was a beloved colleague, mentor, and friend who served in the Sociology Department for 29 years. His loss is incalculable.

Stan was not content with teaching only the sociological theory canon. Stan aimed much higher, pushing students to interrogate their taken-for-granted ways of thinking about all the relationships that comprise the social world, ranging from dyads and familial relations to covenant relations between God and His people. His teaching had a profound impact on his students.

Here's a personal example. On September 16, 2010, two days after my 23rd birthday, I attended Stan's lecture on James Faulconer's work contrasting Greek and Hebrew thinking.¹ The lecture opened my mind to a new way of thinking about the concept of Truth: not as a static thing one can possess, but as a way of being—being True.

This insight shook me, took root, and transformed my religious imagination, eventually leading to new ways of understanding

God, discipleship, and testimony. Regarding testimony, I came to see it not just as the capacity to say "I know that the word is true" but as the awareness of the joy of "being true," of making the word of God effective in your life, of "nourish[ing] the word."²

I remember this lecture so clearly because it made me feel like the ground beneath me had vanished, leaving me suspended in the air. But instead of falling, I was soaring, seeing the world as if for the first time. After leaving that evening class, I rode my bike around campus in the dark for several hours, trying to understand what I had just learned.

For many years to come, I'll be where Stan left me that night in 2010, metaphorically and perhaps literally riding my bike around campus, reflecting on the profound legacy of his life and teachings. ☐

NOTES

1. See James E. Faulconer, *Scripture Study: Tools and Suggestions* (The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), appendix 2.
2. See Alma 32:41.

COURTESY OF JILL KNAPP

George Ryskamp: *Whole-Hearted*

George Richard Ryskamp passed away on July 1, 2022, at the age of 72, on the first day of his retirement after working as a professor in the History Department for nearly 30 years.

"[He] gave his whole heart to the family history program at BYU, and the students felt his commitment to them," says Jill Crandell, former director of the Center for Family History and Genealogy and Ryskamp's colleague. "His work in Spanish genealogy is well-known in the profession, and he left a legacy with many students who served internships in Spain under his tutelage."

Ryskamp's lifelong passion for family history was sparked by a series of genealogy classes he attended as a 12-year-old. He later studied history at BYU in hopes of helping others discover their own histories.

Though Ryskamp also earned a degree at BYU Law and worked as an attorney for many

years, his love for family history persisted. Notably, in 1984, he self-published *Tracing Your Hispanic Heritage*, which became a definitive guide for connecting Latin American ancestry to Spain.

Eventually the Spirit and his passion led him back to BYU as a family history professor. In this position, Ryskamp took student interns with him on research trips to Spain, France, and Italy. While director of CFHG from 2003 to 2013, he spearheaded the Immigrant Ancestors Project, which allows researchers to locate information about immigrants that is unavailable in their destination countries. He additionally led the development of the Script Tutorial website, which aids in deciphering archaic handwriting styles or alphabets.

"He was instrumental in bringing me and several other faculty members to the university, and we all feel his loss," says Crandell. ☐



COURTESY OF PEGGY RYSKAMP

MEMORIALS



Allen Bergin
(1934–2024)

Allen Eric Bergin passed away February 15, 2024. Bergin was known for his research on integrating spirituality and psychotherapy. He was president of the Society for Psychotherapy Research and of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists. He earned many awards, including the Distinguished Professional Contributions to Knowledge award from the American Psychological Association.



David Crandall
(1960–2024)

David Peter Crandall passed away December 11, 2024. As a sociocultural anthropologist, Crandall developed lifelong friendships with and became the leading expert on the Himba people of Namibia. After joining the Anthropology Department in 1993, Crandall quickly organized a study abroad program to take students to Namibia and continued his studies of the Himba people. He retired in 2020.



Bob Goss
(1943–2022)

Robert Pike Goss Jr. passed away March 8, 2022. He served for a time as an assistant dean in the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences and as the director for BYU's Washington Seminar. Goss worked in governmental positions in New York, Illinois, and Washington, DC, throughout his career.



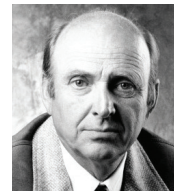
Catherine Burnham
(1950–2024)

Catherine Ann Burnham passed away November 20, 2024. Burnham taught clothing and textiles courses for many years and received the prestigious Karl G. Maeser Teaching Award for her excellence. She enjoyed taking students on trips to New York, Texas, and California to learn about fashion.



Carol Ellsworth
(1929–2024)

Carol Annabell Ellsworth passed away March 26, 2024. In 1969, Ellsworth accepted an offer to teach at BYU in the College of Family Living, where she taught future home economics teachers. She served as chair of the Department of Home Economics Education for nine years and later established a Phi Kappa Phi scholarship.



Fred Gowans
(1936–2023)

Frederick Ross Gowans passed away December 7, 2023. Gowans taught history at BYU for more than 30 years. He was a member of the Utah Westerners and served as a consultant on numerous films and documentaries about the West, for which he received many prestigious awards. From 1973 to 2001, Gowans was the Native American Studies coordinator at BYU.



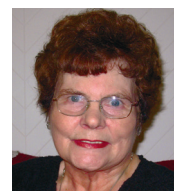
Bruce Chadwick
(1940–2022)

Bruce Albert Chadwick passed away October 18, 2022. During his 35-year BYU tenure as a sociology professor, he was often recognized for his teaching ability and published many materials on both sociology and family relations. Chadwick also enjoyed teaching Old and New Testament religion courses at the BYU Jerusalem Center.



Gene Gibbons
(1935–2023)

Willard Eugene Gibbons passed away November 30, 2023. Gibbons was a catalyst in the creation of the School of Social Work at BYU and sought to serve disadvantaged communities. He and his wife Evelyn were honored by lighting the Y prior to the BYU–Utah football game in 2019 due to his status as a season ticket holder for 58 years.



Anne Horton
(1938–2024)

Anne Lamkin Horton passed away July 5, 2024. Horton's experiences as a social worker inspired her to combat domestic and child abuse. As a professor of social work, Horton received the Susa Young Gates Award and the Virginia R. Cutler Outstanding Scholar and Lecture Award. Horton was named Child Advocate of the Year in 2000 by Prevent Child Abuse Utah for her life's work in abuse prevention.

MEMORIALS



Jeff Larson
(1949–2024)

Jeffrey Hale Larson passed away September 30, 2024.

Larson blessed the lives of many students as a professor of marriage and family therapy, and he also served as the director of the marriage and family therapy graduate program.



Gene Mead
(1934–2025)

Donald Eugene Mead passed away February 14, 2025.

After receiving a doctorate in counseling psychology, Mead taught at BYU for 40 years. He also was key in the development of the marriage and family therapy program.



Maxine Rowley
(1938–1925)

Maxine Lewis Rowley passed away April 4, 2025.

She began her career teaching high school home economics, at which she excelled, before joining BYU's faculty. There she taught research methods, statistics, and religion. She also oversaw student teachers within the home economics education department, later serving as the department's chair.



Gene Shumway
(1925–2023)

E. Gene Shumway passed away July 7, 2023.

During his career as a social worker, Shumway contributed in a variety of ways to organizations across Utah. Shumway was a founding faculty member of the BYU School of Social Work and worked closely with Gene Gibbons and Barbara Wheeler to gain the school's initial accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education.



John Sorenson
(1924–2021)

John Leon Sorenson passed away December

8, 2021. Sorenson was the epitome of BYU's dual heritage—proving that productive thinkers can be both scientific and religious. He worked as an archaeologist in southern Mexico with the New World Archaeological Foundation before joining the BYU Anthropology Department, where he served as chair. He was well-known for his study of Book of Mormon historicity.



Wanda Spaid
(1946–2022)

Wanda Marie Spaid passed away October 18,

2022. Spaid worked as a social work professor at BYU, where her students described her as “challenging and fair.” She was hired by Eugene Gibbons, who described her as “a woman of complete integrity” and “a perfect fit for the university.”



Stan Taylor
(1934–2022)

Stan A. Taylor passed away January 15, 2022.

Taylor taught political science and international relations at BYU for nearly 40 years, with particular expertise in national security. He was chair of the Political Science Department for six years and was the founding director of the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies. He received every award offered by BYU to its faculty members and was beloved by his students. A scholarship fund was set up in Taylor's name.



Barbara Wheeler
(1935–2022)

Barbara Lee (Roberts) Wheeler passed away July

1, 2022. Wheeler spent much of her career in psychotherapy at a private practice. From 1990 to 1995, she served as the director of the BYU School of Social Work, where she helped develop the graduate program. She received multiple accolades during her career and served on several community service boards.



DISCIPLE HUSBAND CADET STUDENT

This summer, **Joshua and Holly DeLaigle** lived at the Milton A. Barlow Center in Washington, DC. Joshua is a BYU political science student, an ROTC cadet, and a future JAG officer. He landed a premier internship in the nation's capital that was financially out of reach, but thanks to generous alumni and friends like you, his internship at the Department of Justice became the highlight of his undergraduate career.



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“BYU professors care about their students, and they show it by their actions. The university is well connected around the world. And these advantages lead to unique learning opportunities.”
—Joshua DeLaigle





BYU FHSS DIGITAL MEDIA/ALLY WRIGHT

Upcoming Events

2025

OCTOBER 15-16

BYU 150: Nights of Light

OCTOBER 16

Honored Alumni Lecture:
Senator and Ambassador Jeffry Flake

OCTOBER 21

Giving CougsDay

NOVEMBER 7

Social Work Conference:
Understanding Moral Injury

NOVEMBER 7

BYU 150: Night of Light

NOVEMBER 13

Family, Home, and Social Sciences
Mentoring Event

NOVEMBER 14

National Advisory Council
Annual Meeting

NOVEMBER 22

College Booth: BYU Tailgate at
University of Cincinnati

DECEMBER 1

BYU 150: Night of Light

DECEMBER 4

Mary Lou Fulton Mentored
Student Research Conference

2026

JANUARY 23

BYU 150: Night of Light

FEBRUARY 5

Marjorie Pay Hinckley Lecture:
Karin Wulf

FEBRUARY 20

BYU 150: Night of Light

MARCH 4

Family, Home, and Social Sciences
Internship Fair

APRIL 1

BYU 150: Night of Light

APRIL 9

Mary Lou Fulton Mentored
Student Research Conference

APRIL 23

University Commencement

APRIL 24

College Convocation

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