

Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship
Karen Williams-Aguirre - CSN

Karen Williams-Aguirre is a culinary student chef training in Las Vegas, at the College of Southern Nevada. During her time at CSN, she was appointed president of the Culinary Club and enrolled as a student member of the American Culinary Federation (ACF). In 2020, she was recognized by her culinary peers and mentors as the ACF Student of the Year, and participated in Chef for Kids community programs. Mrs. Williams-Aguirre is also a member of the CSN Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society as well as A.N.T.S. club, where she participates in community food drives. Outside of the culinary world, Mrs. Williams-Aguirre holds a BFA degree in Fashion Design and Merchandising. She is the head designer and costumer at widow71 and has worked on the visual design and management teams for Lord & Taylor, Dillard's, and other high end retailers. Mrs. Williams-Aguirre is a decorated combat veteran, continuing her service through the Vegas Valley Rose Society via helping female veterans with their transition back to civilian life through the Nevada Cooperative Extension's Master Gardeners. These activities are complemented by her activities as a member of Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc., which promotes women and students in education and business. As an Iota, Mrs. Williams-Aguirre has aided in food and toy drives, in addition to, event planning for education week, clothing drives for teenage mothers and fundraising for breast cancer awareness.

Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship
Zachary Stamp – GBC

"Zachary Stamp is the current President of the Student Government Association at Great Basin College. He has also served as the SGA Vice President and Senator. He is a Marine Corps Veteran, a full-time Emergency Medical Technician, and studying to become a clinical psychologist to help the veteran population struggling with addiction and PTSD. Zachary worked as an NYC EMT during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020 and is currently employed as a Psychiatric Social Health Technician in an inpatient children's psychiatric ward in Bellevue Hospital. A current resident of New York City, Zach is extremely passionate about mental health issues and brings a wealth of knowledge and personal experience to the SGA and NSHE to help students who struggle with these issues. Zach is currently pursuing the Associate of Arts - Social Science degree and plans to finish his Bachelor of Arts - Social Science at Great Basin College."

Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship
Cassandra (Cassie) Barber - TMCC

Cassie is a proud long-time resident of Nevada, who is passionate about preserving our unique State's history and natural beauty. Cassie was born in Elko and grew up in Winnemucca before moving to Reno in 2009, during her freshman year of high school. During the summers growing up, she spent time with her family where her mother grew up on a remote ranch in the Medicine Bow Mountain range of Wyoming. Here, she explored the vast Wyoming wilderness with her family by hiking, fishing, learning survival techniques, mushroom hunting, riding horses, and identifying plants and animals. Her grandparents, owners of the remote ranch, lived through and grew up during the Great Depression. Thus, they were very conscious of the significance of sustainability. Her grandmother was the local schoolteacher and valued education, especially when immersed in nature. She would share with Cassie the history of the area and her passions for being in nature and education. This made a lasting impression on Cassie and ignited her own passion for learning and being in nature. Cassie's father worked in the mining industry as an Environmental & Safety specialist, and thus Cassie has lived in and traveled to many unique and remote places throughout Nevada. In 2020, her father created his own environmental consulting company, Mountain Valley Professionals, LLC., and shortly thereafter she joined the team as an Environmental Intern. Here, Cassie assists with bookkeeping and project management while learning about sustainable practices in the modern mining industry. Prior to this position, Cassie had been a Cosmetologist since graduating high school. She especially enjoyed the positive impacts on other peoples' lives by making them look, and feel, great. And Cassie intentionally joined Aveda salon for most of her career, because the Aveda product line is renown in the hair industry for naturally-derived products, no animal testing, and leader in sustainable practices. This is when Cassie realized the importance of sustainability and nature to her personal life, which surpassed her passion for hair, and that led her to TMCC to begin pursuing a degree in Environmental Science. While attending TMCC, she has enhanced her growing opportunities beyond that of a student; she has sought out and grown her skills and resume as an undergraduate research student, and as an intern. Her first project was to assist in hosting two Ecoblitz events at Rancho San Rafael regional park. Here, she soon realized how much she enjoyed research and protecting Nevada's natural resources. As an Assistant Curator at the TMCC Natural History Museum, Cassie reignited her childhood passions of hiking, preserving plants and insect specimens, learning, and sharing the history of Nevada, and conducting research. Cassie holds immense gratitude for the opportunities presented to her while at TMCC, which have allowed her to reinvent herself as she pursues her new career path.

Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship
Ki'Hana Garcia - WNC

I, Ki'Hana Garcia, have served in the Nevada Army National Guard (NVARNG) for over 12 years and have been Active duty for the last four. I am currently in my last year of the ADN Nursing program here at Western Nevada College (WNC) and this journey hasn't been easy. My husband returned from a deployment three weeks before the first semester of nursing school, and I got pregnant with my second child. I delivered this child shortly after the spring semester ended. Navigating a household, pregnancy, nursing school, and my military obligations have been a constant battle of balancing and time management. Outside of home, school, and work, I am also the treasurer of the WNC National Student Nursing Association chapter and work with the NVARNG family programs to distribute donation items amongst Soldiers and their families in need.

I have had countless experiences that led me to pursue a nursing degree at WNC, but the most prominent one happened during my deployment. In 2011 while deployed in Kabul, Afghanistan, I experienced a tragedy that changed the trajectory of my life. A six-year-old girl ran into the street and was struck by an up-armored tactical vehicle and crushed. She was my first critical patient as an Army medic and following this incident; I knew that I wanted to do more in the healthcare realm. Nursing was not something that I knew I wanted to do at a young age, but something that life experience revealed to me as the career choice I am meant to pursue. Every experience since that day has solidified my reasoning for pursuing my career goals in nursing because everyone needs a caring and supportive person on their side, and I want to be that person to as many people require it.

Upon graduation from WNC, I intend to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at Nevada State College or the University of Nevada at Reno while working in the nursing field, hopefully at Renown Medical Center. My ultimate career goal is to be a nurse practitioner in the acute care setting and hopefully teach future generations of nurses. I believe that every person is responsible for creating positivity and promoting growth in their community. Education, teaching, and community outreach are critical components to reaching this goal. I have been fortunate to have access to education and resources to develop me into the person I am today and know that I want to give others as much, if not more.

Regents' Scholar
Lauren Porter, NSC

Lauren Porter is a student nurse passionate about making a difference on her college campus and her community. Lauren currently serves as the Nevada State Student Alliance (NSSA) president at Nevada State College. While serving the student body, Lauren has shown strength and commitment to the holistic student experience, predominately pertaining to students' mental health. Her crowning achievement was being the leading force behind the mental health initiative Sting Out Stigma. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline was placed on all newly printed identification cards at Nevada State College through Lauren's advocacy and leadership.

Lauren strives to be connected to and help her community. She has had the honor to work with several nonprofits in the Southern Nevada area, most notably the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). She serves as an executive member of the Nevada chapter board of directors. During her time with AFSP, Lauren has cherished the opportunity to be involved in many facets, including planning community events, testifying for legislation at the state level, and leading mental health smart trainings for different groups and organizations.

As a future health care professional, Lauren understands the importance of patient advocacy and the need for all voices to be heard. Obtaining her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Nevada State College will help propel her into a bright future of helping others. Lauren strives to exemplify the Nevada State College motto: Be Bold, Be Great, Be State!

Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship – Undergraduate
Vanessa Booth, UNLV

Vanessa Marie Iustina Booth is a Romanian-American policy researcher, student lobbyist, and community volunteer. She is currently a rising junior at the University of Nevada Las Vegas Honors College studying for her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a minor in Brookings: Public Policy. Vanessa currently works as a Research/Communications Intern for the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Office, a Chapman Cox Diplomacy Scholar at the U.S. Department of State, and is a Policy Researcher for Brookings Mountain West & The Lincy Institute. Both on and off campus, Vanessa has involved herself extensively in the community to give back, further herself academically, and contribute to academia with her research. As a Ronald E. McNair Scholar, Vanessa represents UNLV through her research in critical policy issues facing the Las Vegas metropolitan area and beyond. As a Policy Researcher for Brookings Mountain West, Vanessa possesses a multi-policy research agenda that transcends the boundaries of conventional academic policy research. She has conducted research related to national security, the digital divide, the Opioid Epidemic, social mobility, wildlife crime, and higher education governance among other disciplines. Her very laudable and visible track record of very high research activity also includes research assistantships under a number of UNLV faculty members and serving as a Program Coordinator for the UNLV Office of Undergraduate Research where she mentors CCSD high school students interested in research. Outside of her academic research activity, Vanessa has been accepted to prestigious research conferences hosted by the nationally recognized Public Policy & International Affairs Program, the Chapman Cox State Department Scholars Program, and just recently, the American Enterprise Institute's conference on Hispanic Policy taking place in Miami on October 8 with foreign officials and policy scholars. Some of her other notable and impressive academic/scholarly accomplishments are as follows: (1) Publishing a variety of research policy factsheets in the Brookings Data Hub. (2) Recipient of the Lance & Elena Calvert Undergraduate Research Award. (3) 1 of 20 selected globally for the United Nations Girl Up Scholarship for research furthering women's advocacy. (4) Recipient of the OUR Surf Scholarship. (5) Recipient of the OUR Stimulus Program Award. (6) Recipient of the McNair Scholars Institute \$5,000 Research Scholarship. Outside of Vanessa's scholarly contributions, her impressive leadership-oriented accomplishments are as follows: (1) Recipient of the White House Presidential Volunteer Service Award. (2) UNLV's 2021 Student Committed to Public Service. (3) Recipient of the U.S. House of Representatives Congressional Award. (4) UNLV's 2020 Outstanding Emerging Leader. After graduation, Vanessa hopes to pursue a joint degree consisting of a Masters in Public Policy (MPP) and a Juris Doctor (JD) to pursue her passions of working on both policy and law within the executive department of the U.S. federal government.

Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship - Graduate
Maria Ramos Gonzalez – UNLV

Maria Ramos Gonzalez is a Mechanical Engineering doctoral candidate at UNLV. Her goal of starting a smart prosthetics company has taken her through multidisciplinary research including legal studies, robotics, biomechanics, computer programming, bioengineering, and even aerodynamics. Her doctoral research consists of designing, manufacturing, and mechanically testing a custom-fitted knee implant made from an FDA approved biocompatible material (funded in part by the UNLV NSF I-Corps grant and Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) Sports Research & Innovation Catalyst Grant). Her undergraduate honors thesis led her to work in a prosthetics clinic where she interacted with patients and tested various prosthesis designs. In her spare time, she competes in hackathons and was the grand prize winner at the Consumer Electronics Showcase (CES) Smart Cities Hackathon in 2017 and Young Innovator Awardee at the BattleBorn Hackathon in 2018. As a first-generation immigrant and college student, she openly shares her academic and personal story to encourage others with similar backgrounds to pursue a STEM education.

Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship – Undergraduate
Nicole Choma – UNR

Nicole was born and raised in Reno and has always appreciated all that the Reno area has to offer, such as skiing at Mt. Rose, swimming in Lake Tahoe, and hiking. Many of her earliest memories are from trips to National Parks. She has continued developing these recreational hobbies and traveling. Prior to the completion of her time at Galena High School, Nicole traveled to Cozumel, Mexico, where she completed her scuba diving certification. After her first open water dive, where she experienced the serenity of aquatic ecosystems alongside hurricane damage and human impacts, she became determined to contribute to the protection of the oceans. As a result, when it came to choosing a career path, she was overwhelmingly led to environmental science.

Nicole started at the University of Nevada-Reno in Fall 2019 and spent her first two years with a declared major in Environmental Science (Pollution and Environmental Contaminants specialization). She declared an additional major in Biology when starting her third year. Her original interests centered around climate change; however, after taking a range of classes and working in a research laboratory, her interests expanded to the interwoven fields of chemistry, ecology, animal physiology, and contaminants. She has excelled in her classes.

She began working in Dr. Gustin's laboratory in the summer of 2020 and has mentioned how fortunate she has felt about having the opportunity to participate in research that has trained her in laboratory processes, instruments, and analyses. This opportunity has solidified her desire to pursue marine research and led her to apply for an Undergraduate Research Grant. At UNR, she is part of the Honors College and on track to complete the Honors Baccalaureate pathway and has maintained her National Merit Finalist Scholarship each semester.

She has been in the University of Nevada Wolf Pack Marching Band (WPMB) for three years and is in her second year as the piccolo section leader. Participating in the WPMB and the Howlers pep band has enabled her to continue her love of music that she developed in high school. Representing UNR through the WPMB has been an important experience of her college career. Outside of school, she still spends a great deal of time in the outdoors and is an avid dirt bike (motorcycle) rider.

Sam Lieberman Regents' Award For Student Scholarship – Graduate
Ashish Kasar – UNR

Ashish Kumar Kasar is a Ph.D. candidate in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Nevada, Reno. Prior to UNR, he completed his master's in Materials Science & Engineering from Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur and bachelor's in Metallurgical Engineering from National Institute of Technology, Raipur. His research focuses on self-lubricating composite materials, wear and tribo-corrosion of additively manufactured alloys. He has published 23 publications in peer reviewed journals and given 10 conference presentations. He has published 2 book chapters and currently editing a book on "Multiphase bio-based lubricants". He is an active member of Society of Tribologists and Lubrication Engineers (STLE) and served as a vice chair to conduct a session in STLE-2021 conference.