

2024 Regents' Awards Nominees



February 29 - March 1, 2024

**Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship)
Zachary Billot - Undergraduate - UNLV**

Zachary Billot is a senior majoring in political science and minors in Brookings Public Policy and Great Works of Philosophy and Literature. He is a contributing researcher and coauthor of the Data Hub, a collaborative initiative between Brookings Mountain West and The Lincy Institute. Although Zachary has been most active in researching policy areas related to the environment, youth physical and mental wellbeing, and the intersection between the two, he is often found taking on new tasks in order to learn more about the communities he calls home. He served as a Teaching Assistant for the Introduction to Public Policy course in the Spring of 2023 within the Brookings Minor.

Zachary has been the recipient of several awards for both his research and service to the community. On campus, his research on Municipal Waste, completed through the Brookings Public Policy Minor, was awarded the UNLV Lance & Elena Calvert Award. He is the Nevada 2023 Harry S Truman Scholar, the Nevada 2023 Morris & Stewart Udall scholar, and completed the prestigious Public Policy and International Affairs Junior Summer Institute at Carnegie Mellon University.

He hopes to use the skills developed at UNLV and beyond to propel a career in sustainable international development, working to break the traditions of prescribed colonial policy. Instead, he wishes to work in a collaborative space where he can learn from those in Africa about best practices for resolving international concerns surrounding climate change and environmental disasters.

**Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship)
Alixé Bunyard - TMCC**

Alixé Bunyard was born in Reno, Nevada. Her journey in service and dedication to both her country and community reflects her unwavering commitment to making a difference. Departing from her hometown in 2009, she attended the University of Oklahoma in Norman, where she was a member of the Naval ROTC battalion and graduated with a B.A. in International Security Studies. Following her graduation, Alixé commissioned as an Ensign in the United States Navy, proudly serving as a Surface Warfare Officer for four years.

Driven by her devotion to her roots, Alixé made the decision to return home to Reno, where she embarked on the path of raising her family. Her commitment to service, however, did not diminish. In 2018, she joined the Nevada National Guard's 152nd Airlift Wing, taking on the role of an Intelligence Officer. She is an ardent volunteer within the Air National Guard, dedicating her time to supporting morale-boosting events, such as BBQs for deploying Airmen and special occasions like trick-or-treating events for Airmen and their families.

Alixé's generosity is also expressed in her avid support for blood donation, seizing every available opportunity to contribute. Eager to continue serving her community and nation, she made the decision to pursue nursing at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC). While undertaking her studies, Alixé has wholeheartedly invested her time and energy into rejuvenating the Truckee Meadows Veterans Club. Her efforts are directed at planning social events, service days, and fundraisers. Her vision for the club is clear: to create a social network for veteran students, fostering a supportive environment throughout their academic journey, and providing opportunities for club members to continue their service to the community beyond their uniforms.

**Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship)
Sarah Crews - GBC**

Sarah Crews is a devoted wife and mother of two young boys. After moving to Nevada and spending time as a stay-at-home mom, she decided it was time to pursue her education. Sarah enrolled in Great Basin College's (GBC) Winnemucca campus and began taking general education courses. That is when she discovered her passion for serving patients and was drawn toward a career in the medical field. After much consideration, Sarah decided on a career path in Radiologic Sciences. She quickly worked through her prerequisite courses, applied and was accepted to the program. Sarah is currently in her second year of the program and will graduate in May 2024.

Sarah always knew she wanted to serve others. She chose a career path that would fulfill this passion but did not stop there. In addition, Sarah serves as the current President of the GBC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) honor society, which has been extremely active in community projects including a foster child campaign that served infants to teenagers with over 12,100 donations. In addition, PTK has been an integral part of campus projects, planning and implementing the Campus Revitalization Campaign to clean up campus to demonstrate pride in our school and community.

Beyond her service to PTK, Sarah also serves as the RAD Group President. This organization is established to plan and implement fundraising events to help radiology students attend conferences to promote professionalism and networking. Through all her activities, Sarah is the model of excellence on our campus and in our community.

**Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship)
Alessandro Ralls - Graduate - UNR**

Alessandro Ralls is currently a Ph.D. student in the Mechanical Engineering Department at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). Prior to his Ph.D., Alessandro completed his master's in business administration (MBA) and bachelor's in mechanical engineering from UNR.

Throughout his Ph.D., Alessandro has successfully published 18 peer-reviewed journal articles (plus an additional 6 submitted papers that are currently under review), 1 conference paper, and 1 book chapter. Alessandro has also participated in 14 international conference presentations and 11 university-related research presentations all related to the field of tribology and surface engineering. Alessandro's Ph.D. thesis focuses on the structure-property relationships of additively manufactured high-pressure cold spray coatings. Furthermore, Alessandro has also had experience with projects from the Department of Energy (DOE), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Throughout Alessandro's Ph.D., he has received a total of 6 prestigious research awards all related to the novelty and impact of his research. Alessandro has also been active in academic and research communities, as he has participated in a variety of guest appearances. These appearances include the Society of Tribology and Lubrication Engineers (STLE) Northern California (NorCal) Session, the BS/MBA Info Session, and the Mechanical Engineering Undergraduate Student Orientation. Alessandro is also an active member of STLE and has served as a chair and vice chair for their conferences. Locally, Alessandro is a founder of UNR's mechanical engineering honors society, Phi Tau Sigma. Outside of research, Alessandro has worked as an instructor for an undergraduate mechanical engineering course called Engineering Thermodynamics for 4 years. When he is not teaching, Alessandro is active with professional service activities such as being a tour guide for university-funded programs such as the Engineers Day Tour and Nevada Bound Tour. Alessandro has volunteered for a total of 5 years. Additionally, Alessandro has mentored 8 undergraduate students, 3 high school students, and 1 middle school student. In the future, Alessandro has ambitions to become a faculty member, continue his work in tribology, and continue to positively contribute to society.

**Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship)
Alexander Rankin - NSU**

Alexander Rankin is a nontraditional student who is almost 30 years old, and he's trying to earn his bachelor's degree in nursing, which will change his life. Alexander's mother died when he was 15 years old, and he lived with his father for about a year. One day, Alexander came home to an empty trailer. His father had abandoned him. Alexander found himself homeless at 16 years old. Eventually, he discovered a flyer for the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth (NPHY). He went to a convenience store, called NPHY, and waited until he was picked up by a representative. For years, Alexander suffered from depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideations. One day he found God, and this turned his life around. He connected with St. Jude's program, which has helped him get through college thus far. It hasn't been easy. He currently sleeps on a couch in his uncle's trailer. Graduating with a nursing degree will give him choices in life. He has had to drop out of the nursing program once because he went through some financial trials. Currently, he works full-time while pursuing the part-time nursing program. Through all his adversity, he has maintained a 4.0 GPA in nursing school.

**Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship)
Suzanna Stankute – WNC**

Suzanna Stankute is a 3rd year student at Western Nevada College. She graduated in 2023 with an Associate of Arts degree and will graduate in 2024 with an Associate of Applied Science in Deaf Studies. Before joining WNC, she was an active member of the Boy Scouts of America and is the Second Female Eagle Scout in Nevada. She began her studies at WNC in 2021, as the institution emerged from the pandemic. As a former Homeschool Student, Suzanna appreciates the hard work of her parents who worked to give her a good education and ultimately decided to let her join WNC's Dual Enrollment Program.

While studying at WNC, Suzanna discovered her love for creative writing, particularly screenwriting, thanks to her English 101 professor who shared the same passion. She continues to write books and screenplays, inspired by her professor's guidance. In her final year in pursuit of an Associate of Arts degree, Suzanna needed to fulfill the foreign language requirement and chose an American Sign Language class. While she was timid at first, from the first day of class, she was captured by the beautiful language and culture, her professor, and the class staff who helped facilitate her learning. During her American Sign Language 3 & 4 class, Suzanna learned more about deaf culture and the need for Interpreters in schools. She decided to pursue becoming an ASL Interpreter and is following WNC's Deaf Studies program with hopes to transfer to UNR. During her tenure at WNC, Suzanna also became involved in Student Government, The Associated Students of Western Nevada (ASWN). Suzanna started as a Senator, then became Secretary by utilizing skills she learned in her time in the Boy Scouts. In 2022, Suzanna was appointed to be ASWN President. During her tenure in ASWN, they have expanded the scope and number of their events and connections with the students, faculty, and staff. In addition, the 2022-'23 Senate passed ASWN's first piece of legislation, Suzanna and her advisor restructured ASWN's leadership and committees, and in 2023, ASWN held a full Executive Board and Senate for the first time in years. Suzanna also sits on different college committees and currently serves on the Legislative Committee for Funding in Higher Education. Additionally, Suzanna currently serves as the 2023-2024 Nevada Student Alliance Chair, working to advocate for Nevada's Students and their needs.

Suzanna is grateful for her parents and family, ASWN and NSHE Advisors, and her friends and co-workers who always support her and have made her feel so welcome at WNC.

Go Wildcats!

**Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship)
Rebecca Taylor - CSN**

Rebecca Taylor is a successful non-traditional student who already sustains two careers as CFO and co-founder of a tech company and yoga teacher trainer. After her son left for UNR, Rebecca returned to college via Pell aid. During her time at CSN, Rebecca has been active in Student Leadership Academy and is presently a Henderson Senator in ASCSN.

Rebecca values volunteering and does so herself in our community, including teaching tree yoga to youth (via organizations such as UNR Cooperative Extension, 4-H, Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation, Children's Yoga Training, and Sport Social) and mentors breast cancer patients through healthy activities including dragon boating. She also volunteers for various activities in her rural town of Sandy Valley, Nevada. Additionally, she is the president of Look Beyond Cancer, a 501 c3 non-profit, on the Architectural Review Committee for her HOA, and at CSN she is a member of the Safety and Security Committee.

Rebecca has maintained excellence in her academic work at CSN; she is a member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and has maintained a 4.0 GPA.

In her personal life, Rebecca is a "forever-mother" as she mentors younger colleagues and strives to learn as much from her mentees as she gives. If you catch her in her down time, Rebecca is probably laughing with kids at the skate park where she is a brave middle-aged beginner skateboarder!

Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship) Emylia Terry - Graduate - UNLV

Emylia Terry is a third-year PhD student and Research Assistant in the UNLV School of Public Health's Department of Environmental and Occupational Health. Emylia was born and raised in Las Vegas, Nevada. She graduated as a triple major from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Honors College with University and Departmental Honors. As an undergraduate, Emylia received numerous awards, including the Calvert Award and Outstanding Liberal Arts Graduate, and represented her graduating class as UNLV Commencement Speaker. Upon graduating, Emylia undertook a year of AmeriCorps service with Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, completed a congressional internship, and continued to be an active community volunteer before being hired by the American Cancer Society (ACS). With ACS, Emylia managed access-to-care and health equity-focused programs and services, volunteers, projects, and partnerships for several states, including Nevada. During her tenure, there was a 51% increase in services provided in the organization's premier program. In August 2021, Emylia graduated from the Johns Hopkins University with a Master's in Communication, with specializations in Digital and Organizational communication. During her program, she was selected as a Bryce Harlow Fellow, a nationally competitive fellowship awarded to graduate students who demonstrate strong interest and potential in government advocacy. These experiences helped cement her desire to pursue her PhD in Public Health at UNLV.

Currently, Emylia's doctoral research focuses on health disparities impacting the LGBTQIA+ community, and she serves on the UNLV SPH LGBTQIA+ Research Team, the Nevada Minority Health Equity Coalition's LGBTQI+ Steering Community, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Disparities Modelling Project through the Southern Nevada Health District. She collaborates with the community on several initiatives, including homelessness/housing insecurity and public health equity-focused emergency preparedness. Emylia has also received grant funding from two different sources and helped lead an innovative LGBTQIA+ community needs assessment, problem gambling study, and seatbelt disparities project. Her contributions have been presented at numerous conferences and within over ten publications, and she has received many awards – including the President's UNLV Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship and the UNLV School of Public Health Outstanding Graduate Student Award – for her efforts. In addition to working closely with the community (e.g., serving as a facilitator for the LGBTQIA+ Housing Forum, conducting Listening Sessions with those experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness, and assisting with day-of logistics for the International Conference on Sport & Society through her selection as an Emerging Scholar), Emylia represents the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health as its GPSA Representative, where she serves on the Scholarships/Fellowships committee. Emylia is also the Director and Founder of a brand-new registered student organization dedicated to furthering knowledge about biostatistics and epidemiology. Upon earning her PhD, Emylia plans to

complete her JD to serve as a public health law practitioner and health policy lobbyist in southern Nevada.

**Nevada Regents' Scholar Award (Sam Lieberman Regents' Award for Student Scholarship)
Micah Woodruff – Undergraduate - UNR**

A senior undergraduate student at the University of Nevada, Reno, Micah Woodruff is a dual major in Neuroscience and Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. As a student, Micah has striven to succeed in a balanced approach to his academic career, stewarding the opportunities he has been given. In so doing, he hopes to lead and inspire others around him. Micah has maintained a 4.0 GPA across two NSHE institutions. At Western Nevada College, he received the 2021 Liberal Arts Student of the Year Award and participated in two INBRE summer research projects aimed at conserving Nevada terminal lakes. Micah transferred to the University of Nevada, Reno, with the intent to pursue a career as a physician-scientist, or MD/PhD. Micah hopes to position himself to have a lasting impact that reaches beyond himself. In his current research, being a recipient of the Nevada Undergraduate Research Award, Micah is investigating the pathological mechanisms of Parkinson's disease as a part of the Ruben Dagda Research Group in the Department of Pharmacology. He hopes to be uniquely qualified to bridge the gap between scientific discovery and improved patient outcomes. In his future career, Micah plans to pursue a residency in neurological surgery and to focus his research on neurological regeneration.

Micah believes that true leadership takes the form of service. While at the University of Nevada, Micah has sought to serve his classmates and has developed a passion for teaching. Micah has helped hundreds of students in his positions as a learning assistant, discussion group leader, program coordinator, and mentor in the Department of Biology's Peer Instructor program and over 200 Biology freshmen in NevadaFIT as a ScienceFIT teaching assistant. Micah has also held a deep commitment to serving his community throughout his college career. As a freshman in 2020, having received his license to work as a Certified Nursing Assistant, Micah worked throughout the COVID-19 pandemic at Carson Tahoe Community Hospital in Carson City. In July 2021, the summer before his junior year, Micah had the opportunity to work with at-risk children in Odesa, Ukraine. These experiences inspired Micah to continue that work with the vulnerable populations within his own community. Micah volunteers through Pathfinder's Children Ministry, which works with at-risk youth, and the UNR School of Medicine Student Outreach Clinic, which provides free medical services to the uninsured and underreached populations in the Reno area. Whether in daily tasks or long-term goals, Micah cultivates and demonstrates his passion for medicine, science, leadership, and service to his community.

**Nevada Regents' Outstanding Classified Staff Award
Sunny Remneff – UNR**

Sunny has been an integral part of the University of Nevada, Reno since February 2013, contributing her expertise and enthusiasm for over a decade. Sunny enjoys working at the University to support, not only the employees and campus' departments, but also the students and see them succeed. Sunny has been a part of various departments on campus including; Cashiers, Accounts Payable, College of Liberal Arts, and the Nonresident Alien Tax department. She has become the "go to" person for many questions and guidance as she has a broad knowledge of policies in the University Administrative Manual and University processes. Currently Sunny is part of the Nonresident Alien Tax department, where she is known for her proficiency in navigating in the nonresident alien tax regulations, offering clarity and guidance for all UNR and the other north campuses on how best to ensure that NSHE is within the US IRS regulations and compliance associated with foreign taxation polices for employees, guest speakers, independent contractors, and many of the campus' departments. Through her unwavering commitment to excellence and her genuine desire to make a difference, Sunny continues to leave a positive impact on those around her at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Early in her professional journey Sunny worked in the medical field in the community that she calls home, Truckee, CA. Growing up surrounded by nature, she developed an appreciation for outdoor activities and the beauty of her hometown. Sunny is also caregiver for her mother who battles dementia, providing love, support, and care within the comfort of their home. Her selflessness and compassion extend beyond the workplace, reflecting her unwavering commitment to her family and community.

Nevada Regents' Creative Activities Award – Community Colleges
Mark Maynard - TMCC

Mark Maynard's work has appeared in national and international magazines and anthologies, including *Lunch Ticket*, *The Nottingham Review* (UK), Baobab Press's *This Side of the Divide*, *Tahoe Blues* (Bona Fide Books), and *The Films of Clint Eastwood* (University of New Mexico Press). His 2012 collection of short stories *Grind* (Torrey House Press) was selected as the 2016-17 Nevada Reads Book by the Nevada State Library. In 2015, Mark was awarded the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame Silver Pen Award, and he was the winner of the inaugural Literary Death Match in Reno, Nevada in 2017.

Piconland: The Quest for the Picon Punch, a documentary film that Mark wrote and directed, about the unofficial state cocktail of Nevada, was selected as the Best Nevada Film at the 2023 Dam Short Film Festival, in Boulder City, Nevada. In addition, his animated short film *Empathy and the Power of Fiction* was featured on the Hitchcock Project for Visualizing Science website. In 2022, Mark was selected as the Great Basin National Park Foundation – University of Nevada, Reno Artist-in-Residence at Great Basin National Park, and as the Black Rock Desert Artist-in-Residence, by the Friends of Black Rock High Rock and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Mark has a B.A. in English from the University of San Diego, an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Antioch University Los Angeles, and a Masters of Journalism at the University of Nevada, Reno. He teaches English, journalism, and creative writing at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) in Reno, NV.

**Nevada Regents' Creative Activities Award – University/DRI
Peter Goin – UNR**

Peter Goin, Foundation Professor of Art at the University of Nevada, Reno, produces photographs dealing with the long-term impact of culture and technology on the environment. Using the language of the Fine Arts, Peter's work integrates history, architecture, urban planning, and the social and political sciences in an interdisciplinary manner. He has published more than 20 books with such prestigious publishers as The Johns Hopkins University Press, University of California Press, University of Chicago Press, University of Texas Press, the Center for American Places, and Norton Publishers. Peter's work is included in more than 43 major collections ranging from the Whitney Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The Library of Congress alone owns 350 of his photographs.

Peter's photographs have been exhibited in more than fifty museums nationally and internationally, and he is the recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships. His video work has earned him an EMMY nomination as well as the Best Experimental Video Award at the 2001 New York International Film & Video Festival. At the turn of the new century, Peter was awarded the Nevada Governor's Millennium Arts Award for Excellence in the Arts. He lives in Reno, Nevada.

**Nevada Regents' Teaching Award – Tenured/Tenure Track – Community Colleges
Meeghan Gray - TMCC**

Meeghan Gray has been a professor at TMCC for 11 years and has been serving as Department Chair for the last three years. She teaches a variety of courses including animal behavior, organismal biology, cell and molecular biology, and anatomy and physiology. Her teaching philosophy follows these principles: 1) To always be interested in her students and what she teaches, 2) To adapt to student's needs and interests, 3) To get students involved in the class, and 4) To facilitate the understanding of concepts, rather than memorization of facts. She loves teaching at a community college! One of her favorite parts of the job is getting to know her students and helping them accomplish their goals. Most of her students would say she is goofy and energetic, passionate about biology, and that she is approachable. She has been nominated by students for the Phi Theta Kappa teaching award four times and won the award in 2018. She also received the RGJ Teaching in Excellence Award in 2018. During the summer of 2019, she received an Erskine fellowship from the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand and taught Animal Ecophysiology for a semester.

Prior to working in higher education, she received her PhD in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology at UNR and her research studied the impacts of contraception on behavior in feral horses. Her research interests have focused on the behavioral ecology of large mammals, particularly the interactions between males and females, especially in the context of sex and reproduction. The majority of her research has stemmed from management-based projects that she uses to examine major themes in behavioral ecology. She has also studied a variety of mammals, including mountain lions, domestic cattle, bighorn sheep, and bobcats. Currently, she is studying suburban bobcat health and presence in West Reno. Most notably, her research is the first to GPS collar bobcats in the state of Nevada.

**Nevada Regents' Teaching Award – Non-Tenured – University/DRI
Ann-Marie Vollstedt – UNR**

Dr. Ann-Marie Vollstedt is an outstanding faculty member and an extraordinary teacher who specializes in teaching large enrollment courses. A homegrown talent, she received her M.S. degree in Secondary Science Education and B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Nevada, Reno. She has taught >10,000 students at the University of Nevada, Reno since she joined the faculty in 2013, reaching approximately 1100 students per year, mostly at the 100- and 200-level in the undergraduate curriculum. Her typical teaching assignments include courses that impact all students in the College of Engineering, such as the E-FIT academic bootcamp, the project-based engineering design course ENGR 100 (in which she also mentors a large team of graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants), and a challenging large-enrollment statics course. Even in large enrollment courses, Dr. Vollstedt skillfully creates learning environments that feel small and interactive by using team-based and project-based learning. She thoughtfully implements varied strategies to increase student motivation, cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and engage students in learning and demonstrating knowledge in various ways. Students comment that her classes are “engaging,” that she is “responsive and open,” and that she conveys “passion” and infectious enthusiasm. In recognition of teaching excellence, Dr. Vollstedt is a prior recipient of the university-level F. Donald Tibbitts Teaching Excellence Award in 2019, the student-nominated Paul and Judy Bible University Teaching Excellence Award in 2020, and she was selected as a Senior Scholar Mentor for the College of Engineering in 2023. She maintains a strong connection to scholarly work in engineering education through teaching publications and presentations and is a co-PI and project director on an NSF S-STEM grant to retain and engage low-income academically talented engineers. Outside the classroom, she supports students in engineering through the Engineering Living Learning Community mentor program and mentors colleagues in continued professional development.

**Nevada Regents' Teaching Award – Tenured/Tenure Track – University /DRI
Kaitlin Clinnin – UNLV**

Kaitlin Clinnin is an associate professor of English and Director of English Composition. She earned her MA in English from Virginia Tech and her PhD in Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies from The Ohio State University. She researches how writing instructors and writing program administrators can create effective learning environments for students given changing social and educational contexts. Dr. Clinnin's most recent research focuses on trauma-informed pedagogy in writing programs and classrooms. Her current grant-funded research examines K-12 teachers' exposure to trauma as a contributing factor to teacher career dissatisfaction and retention concerns. Her work has been published in several edited collections, most recently in *Understanding WPA Readiness and Renewal*, and journals such as *Communications in Information Literacy*, *Composition Studies*, *Computers & Composition*, and *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. Dr. Clinnin is an award-winning teacher and mentor who teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on writing pedagogy, antiracist and inclusive pedagogies, academic writing, and research methods. She directs the first-year writing program, which enrolls over 8,000 students each year in general education writing courses. In this role, Dr. Clinnin oversees the pedagogical training of new graduate teaching assistants, offers ongoing professional development on current pedagogical trends for graduate and part-time instructors, designs the curriculum for in-person, hybrid, and web-based courses, and assesses the effectiveness of these courses.

**Nevada Regents' Academic Advisor Award – Community College
Jolina Adams – GBC**

Jolina Adams earned her Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences from Great Basin College while raising her family and working full-time as the Center's Administrative Assistant, so she has experienced and overcome the same struggles as many of the students she serves. She has dedicated an impressive 33 years of her professional life to Great Basin College, where she currently serves as an NSHE Specialist with the primary duty of academic advising. Her remarkable journey at Great Basin College began at the front desk of the Winnemucca Center and evolved into serving as the primary academic advisor for the western region of our service area for the past seven years. During this time, she has become a pillar of support for countless students, many of whom are second and even third-generation attendees of our institution.

**Nevada Regents' Academic Advisor Award - Undergraduate - University/DRI
John Starkey – UNLV**

John Joseph Starkey (he/him/his) is a West Virginia native who began his college experience in 2005 as an undergrad at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). John spent his undergraduate career pursuing a B.S.B.A. in Marketing from Lee Business School while working for UNLV's Housing & Residential Life Office. Working in the residence halls and being involved on UNLV's campus inspired John to pursue an M.Ed. in Educational Leadership, also at UNLV. While a graduate student, John worked as an Academic Success Coach, where he discovered a love of working with first-generation, first-year college students. John also interned for both the Office of Student Conduct and the Student Engagement and Diversity Office at UNLV. After completing his master's degree in 2012, John was hired as an Academic Advisor for Lee Business School's undergraduate advising office at UNLV. He quickly established himself as a leader and a reliable team member, and he was promoted to Senior Academic Advisor in 2015. Working as an advisor at UNLV has allowed John to take on many additional roles that have influenced his advising philosophy, including becoming an advocate for transfer students and adult learners. In addition to advising, John currently serves as a supervisor for LEE peer mentors, a Search Advocate for human resources, an instructor of first-year seminars (BUS 103), and as the Representative on the Administrative Faculty Committee for Lee Business School, William F. Harrah College of Hospitality, and William S. Boyd School of Law. John also currently serves as the chairperson for the Administrative Faculty Committee and advocates for approximately 1,700 Administrative Faculty personnel at UNLV.

**Nevada Regents' Academic Advisor Award - Graduate - University/DRI
Keri Ryan - UNR**

Dr. Keri L. Ryan, Professor of Civil & Environmental Engineering (CEE), has been a member of the UNR faculty since 2010 and has advised and mentored over 30 MS and PhD students. In addition, she has mentored numerous MS Students in CEE who have completed their non-thesis degree. Dr. Ryan manages the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) Fellowship program and provides career mentoring to GAANN fellows. Her former students are in leadership positions in academia and industry throughout the world. She provides informal mentorship to PhD and Master's students in different majors. Focusing on recruitment and retention of underrepresented students in engineering, Dr. Ryan was appointed Graduate Program Director of for all CEE graduate programs in 2022. Prior to that she was the chair of the inaugural CEE Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee for two years. Dr. Ryan has focused significant efforts on enhancing graduate programs and advising and mentoring of graduate students, recruitment and retention of underrepresented students into in CEE degree programs, and creating a culture of inclusivity in the department and college. Considering the fact that she is a research active faculty member who conducts highly competitive research, has an impactful and significant publishing record, her leadership in graduate advising and mentoring is highly commendable. For her outstanding contributions to teaching and research in civil and environmental engineering, the department has honored her with the McKenzie Foundation Endowed Professorship since July 1, 2022.

**Nevada Regents' Researcher Award – Mid-Career
Xiaolaing Wang – DRI**

Dr. Wang's overarching research theme is to understand air pollutant emissions, transformations, and impacts. Specifically, his research interests include physical and chemical characterization of aerosols, pollution source emission measurement, and aerosol instrument development.

Dr. Wang has developed several widely used aerosol instruments. He is a co-inventor of nanoparticle aerodynamic lenses for efficiently delivering particles into aerosol mass spectrometers and the TSI DustTrak DRX Aerosol Monitor for measuring size-segregated aerosol mass concentrations in real time. He led the design of the DRI Portable Emissions Measurement System (PEMS) that has been used for characterizing gases and particles from vehicle exhaust, stack emissions, biomass burning, and biomass-derived syngas. Dr. Wang also led the design of the DRI Model 2015 Multiwavelength Thermal/Optical Carbon Analyzer that has been commercialized and used worldwide.

Dr. Wang has been studying real-world emissions from pollution sources with the goal of improving air quality management. His projects include researching dust emissions in underground coal mines, tailpipe and non-tailpipe (i.e., brake and tire wear, as well as road dust) emissions from vehicle traffic, toxic gas and particle emissions from the open burning of household solid waste in South Africa, smoke emissions from burning lithium-ion batteries and spacecraft-relevant materials, and mining fleet/industrial stack/fugitive dust emissions in the oil sands region of Canada. Recently, he participated in several projects to study the impact of visibility, air quality, and atmospheric deposition of particles generated from wildfires and prescribed burns in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Dr. Wang is an active participant in several scientific organizations. He conducts peer reviews for scientific publications and funding agencies. He served as co-chair and chair of the Instrumentation Working Group of the American Association of Aerosol Research (AAAR) annual conferences and chair of the Young Investigators Committee of the AAAR.

Dr. Wang has been granted three patents and published three book chapters and 80+ peer-reviewed journal articles. He is the recipient of the 2020 AAAR Benjamin Y. H. Liu Award that recognizes outstanding contributions to aerosol instrumentation and experimental techniques. Most recently, he received the 2021 DRI Science Medal for his outstanding scientific contributions.

Nevada Regents' Researcher Award – Distinguished Bing Zhang – UNLV

Bing Zhang is a Distinguished Professor at the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), the founding director of the Nevada Center for Astrophysics, and an elected fellow of the American Physical Society. He joined UNLV in 2004 as an assistant professor, was promoted to associate professor with tenure in 2008, and was further promoted to full professor in 2010. He served as Associate Dean for Research at UNLV College of Sciences from 2018 through 2022. Having worked at NSHE for 19 years, Zhang has made distinguished contributions to UNLV and NSHE. Zhang is an internationally renowned theoretical astrophysicist working in the frontier of multi-messenger, time-domain, high-energy astrophysics. He has published over 540 papers in refereed journals including 38 papers published in *Nature*, *Science* and their associated journals (*Nature Physics*, *Nature*

Astronomy, *Nature Communications*, and *Science Advances*). His work has been widely cited by his peers and broadly reported in the media. According to Google Scholar, his work has received more than 44,000 citations, and his citation “h-index” is 114. His more than 60 first-author papers have been cited more than 8,300 times, including 26 papers each cited more than 100 times. In 2023, he was ranked by research.com at #328 in the world and #189 in the US in the “Best Physics Scientists” list, which is in the top 0.1 percentile among all the physicists evaluated and is the highest in the NSHE system. The *Nature* paper (Lin et al. 2020, *Nature*, 587, 63-65) of which he is the corresponding author was featured with two other papers as one of the “Top Ten Breakthrough of the Year” in 2020 by the *Science Magazine* and one of the “Ten Remarkable Discoveries from 2020” by the *Nature magazine*. He is the sole author of a 579-page comprehensive book titled “The Physics of Gamma-Ray Bursts” published by Cambridge University Press and was the Finalist for the Association of American Publishers's PROSE (Professional and Scholarly Excellence) Award in the Cosmology and Astronomy category. He has attracted about \$4M in federal research funding to UNLV. He has taught/advised numerous students ranging from undergraduates to PhD students and has a strong service record for UNLV and his profession.

**Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Gabrielle Boisramé – DRI**

Gabrielle Boisramé is from north-central, California. She is interested in water resource management techniques that aim to provide reliable supplies for human use while also preserving ecosystem functions. Having majored in applied mathematics at Whitman College, she is especially interested in the application of numerical models. Her dissertation at UC Berkeley in Civil & Environmental Engineering is entitled: Wildfire Effects on the Ecohydrology of a Sierra Nevada Watershed with extensive field work done in the Illilouette Basin in Yosemite National Park. Her current research investigates the relationships between plant growth, groundwater storage, and streamflow generation, particularly in areas that have experienced changes in land cover due to wildfire. Previous work includes studying native plant and fish ecology through UC Davis, predicting the effects of changing climate on Uruguayan agriculture with INIA, modeling water quality for the Contra Costa Water District.

**Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Gabriela Buccini – UNLV**

Gabriela Buccini, Ph.D., MSc, IBCLC is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Social and Behavioral Health in the School of Public Health, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). She started her career in 2005 as a clinical speech pathologist and lactation consultant in primary care in the favelas in Brazil. Dr. Buccini received both her Master's (2012) and Ph.D. in Nutrition in Public Health (2017) from the renewed University of Sao Paulo (ranked #115 in QS World University Rankings 2023), followed by four years of postdoctoral training at the Yale School of Public Health (ranked #18 in QS World University Rankings 2023). Dr. Buccini's training and research expertise on social behavioral health, epidemiology, and implementation science focus on reducing, globally and locally, structural barriers to improving maternal and child health and nutrition equity, during the first 2,000 days (from conception to 5 years of age). She is a woman of color, a first-generation college and graduate student, as well as a mom of a four-year-old son. The intersection of her training and lived experiences shapes how she approaches health disparities, mentoring, and community research.

Dr. Buccini joined the UNLV School of Public Health in 2021 and since then she has been working with students, clinicians, and community partners to promote maternal-child nutrition and perinatal health research. She applies mixed-methods research guided through the lens of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), the Socio-Ecological Model, and the Nurturing Care framework to investigate the implementation, scale-up, and sustainability of programs addressing disparities in maternal and child health and nutrition. Dr. Buccini has published 60 manuscripts in top-tier peer-reviewed journals on the topics of breastfeeding, infant feeding, food security, and early childhood interventions in low-income settings in the U.S. and globally, receiving 1631 citations (per Google Scholar). Her research is supported by the National Institutes of Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), Common Fund from the Office of the Director (OD), Brazilian Ministry of Health, and World Health Organization (WHO). Through over \$4 million research portfolio, she has built a large maternal-child health & nutrition research program contributing to UNLV's mission to becoming a Tier 1 institution with high-quality research programs. Due to the impact of her high-quality research, she has been recognized with department, school, and university awards such as the Outstanding Faculty Research Award of the Department of Social and Behavioral Health (2022), the Delta Omega induction at the School of Public Health (2021), and nomination to the GPSA Award- Outstanding Mentor (2023). Outside of UNLV, at the national level, she has been elected to be trained by the Institute for Implementation Science Scholars (IS2) at Washington University, in St. Louis as the next generation of U.S. research leaders in dissemination and implementation science.

Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Joshua Island – UNLV

Dr. Joshua Island is an Assistant Professor in the Physics and Astronomy Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He completed his undergraduate degrees in physics, mathematics, and computer science at the College of Santa Fe (2004) and the University of New Mexico (2008). His master's work was completed at Concordia University in Montreal (2011) under the supervision of Prof. Alexandre Champagne and focused on ultra-short transistors made with carbon nanotubes. He earned a PhD from Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands (2016) studying two-dimensional materials and molecular devices under the supervision of Prof. Herre van der Zant. Before arriving at UNLV, Dr. Island spent three years at the University of California, Santa Barbara working with Prof. Andrea Young on van der Waals heterostructures. To date, Dr. Island has published over 50 research items including journal articles, book chapters, and topical reviews, many of which are highly cited in prestigious journals. He has received over 2.8 million in research funding as a principal investigator and co-principle investigator.

Since joining UNLV, Dr. Island and his research team (The Nanoscale Physics Group) have focused on better understanding materials that display quantum properties and harnessing them to make sensitive sensors and faster computers. He was recently awarded an NSF CAREER grant to investigate quantum materials with a new type of terahertz spectrometer. The work will solve long-standing problems in superconducting and magnetic nanomaterials. The Nanoscale Research Group also works toward building quantum bits (qubits) by combining the unique properties of various quantum materials. This work aims to develop more stable quantum computers for next-generation electronics.

**Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Austin Horng-En Wang – UNLV**

Dr. Austin Horng-En Wang is a tenure-track assistant professor in the Department of Political Science. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Duke University (2018), B.S. in Electrical Engineering (2009), and M. A. in Public Administration (2012) from National Taiwan University. His research and teaching interests focus on public opinion, political psychology, social media, data visualization, and East Asian politics. His research articles can be found in Journal of Peace Research, Social Media + Society, Political Research Quarterly, Journal of Computational Social Science, Electoral Studies, Evolution and Human Behavior, Political Studies Review, Journal of East Asian Studies, Scientific Report, Asian Survey, European Political Science, International Political Science Review, and Social Science Journal. His research is supported by the Wilson Center, Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, and Global Taiwan Institute.

**Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
El Hachemi Bouali – NSU**

Dr. El Hachemi Bouali is an Assistant Professor of Geosciences in the Department of Physical and Life Sciences at Nevada State University. He earned an A.S. from Kalamazoo Valley Community College (2007), a B.S. in Geophysics (2011) and M.S. in Geosciences (2013) from Western Michigan University, and a Ph.D. in Geology (2018) from Michigan Technological University. He was a NASA Earth and Space Science Fellow (2016-2018) and later a Postdoctoral Fellow in Environmental Science at Trinity College (2018-2020) in Hartford, Connecticut. He joined NSU in Fall 2020. Dr. Bouali is an applied geologist who utilizes a variety of techniques—remote sensing, near-surface geophysics, and traditional field methods—to quantify surface changes like landslides, stream processes, and subsidence. He has published fourteen peer-reviewed articles (six of which published while at NSU) on landslide detection and monitoring, geotechnical asset management approaches using various remote sensing techniques, and studying local-scale geomorphological landforms using near-surface geophysics and traditional mapping techniques. While at NSU, Dr. Bouali has mentored 11 undergraduate research students with grants acquired through INBRE, Nevada NASA Space Grant Consortium, and EPSCoR Nevada. More recently, Dr. Bouali has been interviewed multiple times by the LA Times and Inside the Issues with Alex Cohen on landslide events occurring on the Palos Verdes Peninsula in LA County, California. Dr. Bouali has developed and teaches many courses at NSU, including GEOL 101A/L Exploring Planet Earth, GEOL 333 Principles of Geomorphology, GEOL 405 Geology of the National Parks, NRES 322 Soils, NRES 467 Regional and Global Issues in Environmental Science, BIOL/ENV 494 Biology and Environmental Science Colloquium, and AST 103 Introduction to Astronomy: Solar System. He also runs multiple upper-division undergraduate research experiences in environmental science and biology, typically working with three or four students each fall and spring semester.

Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Elizabeth Villalobos – UNR

Elizabeth Villalobos is an assistant professor of Spanish literature at the University of Nevada, Reno and a scholar of Latin American literature. Her research focuses on cultural production of late 20th and 21st century Mexican border regions and Argentinian testimonial literature from 1970 to the present. She has conducted research on border studies and human rights in Mexico, Argentina, and Germany. Her research is disseminated through fourteen scholarly publications and thirteen paper presentations at multiple national and international academic conferences. Villalobos forthcoming book, *Border Killers: Neoliberalism, Necropolitics, and Mexican Masculinity*, by the University of Arizona, Press, counteracts official discourse that essentializes fictional and non-fictional murderers in contemporary Mexican borders. This book analyzes cultural production of 21st century Mexican prose, theater, and film concerning both Mexican borders with Guatemala and United States, using the metaphor of the “maquiladora” and Gilles and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome to describe the way that hyperviolent masculinity has spread and become mass-produced in the era of “free trade” and neoliberal capitalism. Additionally, Villalobos has demonstrated leadership in her field by co-editing another academic book published by the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs and the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, México. This book, titled *Bordx: Representaciones de géneros, sexualidades y fronteras. Una aproximación a las literaturas y culturas fronterizas [Bordx: Representations of Genders, Sexualities and Borders: An Approach to Border Literatures and Cultures]*, analyzes cultural representations of dissident subjects who challenge the physical and metaphorical borders of gender, sexuality, and national identities. Villalobos has received the American Research Fellowship, granted by the American Association of University Women (2020-2021), a Fellowship Program in Support of Research and Creative Activity granted by the College of Liberal Arts University of Nevada, Reno (2020), and the Dean’s Award for Outstanding Research in the Humanities, granted by the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Nevada, Reno (2023). Villalobos’s dedication to scholarly work and commitment to advancing knowledge in the humanities has allowed her to collaborate as Editorial Assistant at the Latin American Theatre Review and served as article referee for the academic journals Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association, American Journal of Philology, and The Comparatist: Journal of the Society for Comparative Literature and the Arts.

Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Hamed Ebrahhamian – UNR

Dr. Ebrahhamian is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). He moved to UNR from Bay Area, where he was working as a senior consulting engineer and researcher in private sector. Before that, he was a postdoctoral scholar at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in the Department of Mechanical and Civil Engineering. His Ph.D. is in Structural Engineering, from UC San Diego, and his two master's degrees are in Mechanical Engineering (Dynamic Systems and Control) and Structural Engineering. Before attending UC San Diego, Dr. Ebrahhamian served as a structural engineering consultant for more than four years and as an academic instructor and lecturer for about two years. His research broadly covers four fields of interest: (i) wildfire engineering and disaster management, (ii) integration of models with data for digital twinning, data assimilation, estimation, and uncertainty quantification, (iii) computational structural mechanics, and (iv) large-scale structural experiment and behavior study.

Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Jessica Parks – NSU

Jessica Parks, PhD, AFC® (she/her/hers) is an Assistant Professor of Business in the School of Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Business (LABS) at Nevada State University. Dr. Parks teaches various finance courses such as Financial Planning, Investments, and Managerial Finance. Her research focuses primarily on the use of poverty simulations and college students' attitudes towards poverty. To date, she has published in journals such as Community Development, Journal of Human Sciences and Extension, Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence, and the Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences. She has presented at conference such as the American Council on Consumer Interests, ClassCrits, Georgia Southern University's SOTL Commons Conference, Kennesaw State University SoTL Summit, and the Lily Conferences. Her research has been recognized with awards such as NSU's Sponsored Projects Seed Award for research, Summer Scholarship Institute, and AAFCS Emerging Researcher Award, the University of Georgia's Interdisciplinary and Innovative Research Grant. Dr. Parks is highly involved with the Association for Financial Counseling & Planning Education® (AFCPE). In addition to serving on the Board of Directors, she is a conference proposal reviewer and awards program reviewer since 2021. In her spare time, she enjoys watching horror movies, thrillers, and planning her next travel adventure.

Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Katherine A. Dockweiler – NSU

Dr. Dockweiler is an Assistant Professor of School Psychology at Nevada State University and is helping to lead the development and launch of the University's new School Psychology graduate program. Her research interests include school-based mental health workforce development programs, social-emotional-behavioral MTSS implementation, and policy frameworks for equitable service delivery. She is the creator of the Active Recruitment, Training, and Educator Retention to serve our Youth (ARTERY) Pipeline Framework for school psychologists and is the principal investigator of the \$1.2M ARTERY Pipeline Project for School Psychologists awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. She is also the principal investigator of the \$1.3M Psychoeducational Mental Health Clinic at Nevada State University funded through a Congressional community project appropriation. She is Vice President of the Nevada State Board of Education, Chair of the National Association of School Psychologists Communications Committee, and Director of Policy and Advocacy for the Nevada Association of School Psychologists.

Nevada Regents' Rising Researcher Award
Li Li - UNR

Dr. Li Li is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Health at the UNR School of Public Health. He and his research group “Health & Environment Assessment Team (HEAT)” develop and apply interdisciplinary tools to explore how manmade chemical substances in daily life, such as disinfectants, pesticides, flame retardants, and detergents, contaminate our indoor and natural environments and endanger the health of humans and wildlife. He teaches courses on environmental health and environmental exposure science at undergraduate and graduate levels. His developed models and datasets have helped decision making by environmental and health authorities in the U.S., Canada, and Singapore. His research outcomes have also served as critical evidence for the inclusion of two problematic chemical substances in the restriction by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)’s Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. He is currently serving as the co-chair of Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry’s Exposure Modeling Interest Group and a member of the UNEP’s Global Life Cycle Impact Assessment Guidance. Since joining UNR in 2019, he has received over \$1.7M in external funding as the single PI or Lead PI and another \$100k as a co-PI. He has supported 5 undergraduate and 5 graduate students from historically underrepresented groups in STEM research. He and HEAT have published 30+ papers in peer-reviewed journals, including the most prestigious interdisciplinary journal Nature and flagship journals in environmental sciences and health such as Environ. Health Perspect., Environ. Int., and Environ. Sci. Technol. He and his students are the recipients of several awards from international academic organizations including the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry and the Society of Toxicology.

Dr. Li Li received B.Sc. and Ph.D., both in environmental sciences, from Nankai University (2012) and Peking University (2017), respectively. He worked as a Mitacs postdoctoral fellow at the University of Toronto Scarborough (Canada) between 2017 and 2019 before joining UNR.