

# 2024 Regents' Awards Nominees



February 29 - March 1, 2024















































**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 Ebrahiamian – UNR**

Dr. Ebrahiamian 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. Ebrahiamian 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.