

Newsletter

Celebrating our Accomplishments

We are delighted to present the latest edition of the Empire State University Graduate Studies Newsletter. This newsletter informs our graduate students and faculty about recent developments, opportunities, and accomplishments within our graduate community.

We believe fostering strong communication and collaboration is crucial for an enriching graduate experience.

In this edition, we share a diverse range of articles and updates we hope will be of interest to you:

- Student and faculty research
- Funding and grant opportunities
- Alumni and student achievements

Compiled by GSRPDC Members:

Karis Jones, Jill McEvoy, and Sylwia Starnawska



EMPIRE STATE
UNIVERSITY

DID YOU KNOW?

YOU CAN APPLY

The Graduate Student Research and Professional Development Committee has funding available to support travel and registration costs for graduate students and recent alumni of Empire State University School for Graduate Studies who are presenting or attending research conferences.

Applicants are eligible for up to \$1,000 per academic year for presenting and \$500 per academic year for attending a professional academic conference, workshop, or convention. Students must be in good academic standing, and alumni must be within two years of graduation to be eligible. Funding is limited, so we encourage interested students and alumni to apply early. Student applications will be prioritized over alumni applications.



For guidelines and the application, visit the Graduate Student Center page on MySUNYEmpire at <https://my.esc.edu/GraduateStudentCenter> or contact Jill McEvoy, student and academic services coordinator for the School for Graduate Studies, at Jill.McEvoy@sunyempire.edu.



RISING ABOVE ADVERSITY

Jawana Carter-Richardson



As I reflect on my Spring '24 graduation, earning my MBA from SUNY Empire, I am overwhelmed with gratitude and emotion. My journey to that moment was filled with challenges, triumphs, and the unwavering support of countless individuals who helped me along the way.

I began my journey to complete my bachelor's degree in 2014 after years of attempts. Despite setbacks and disappointments, I was determined to achieve my academic aspirations. When I discovered SUNY Empire, I knew I found a home.

My journey was not without personal hardships. A few years prior to going back to school, I experienced the unimaginable loss of my only child. It took years to find the strength to move forward.

In my first semester at SUNY Empire, tragedy struck once again when I lost my husband to a drunk, drugged driver in a horrific hit-and-run crash. This devastating loss had me reevaluating whether I would continue pursuing my goal. The support of the SUNY Empire community gave me the motivation to stay the course, even when I wanted to give up.

Although my statistics course antagonized me (let's face it, who enjoys statistics?), I quickly realized I was much smarter than I had given myself credit for. With each semester, I surprised myself with my ability to excel in my coursework (earning a respectable 3.94 GPA). It served as a reminder to me that sometimes, our biggest obstacles are the ones we create in our minds.

It was not just my academic achievements that shaped my journey at SUNY Empire. It was also the numerous accolades and accomplishments I accumulated along the way, such as the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence, the Alumni Foundation's Community Impact Award, and the SUNY Act for Excellence Award.

I also had the privilege of serving on the executive board of the Student Alumni Federation Board of Governors, the Student Government Association as alumni ambassador, and near and dear to my heart, the Black Male Initiative's executive board as first vice president/treasurer. I served as commencement speaker and as the student/alumni speaker at President Vollendorf's inauguration ceremony. Suffice it to say I found my voice at SUNY Empire.

While I am thrilled I crossed the finish line, I am filled with a bit of sadness that this chapter of my life has ended. It is particularly poignant I graduated during the 10-year anniversary of my husband's passing, a reminder of the strength and resilience that carried me through. I leave SUNY Empire filled with gratitude for the opportunities afforded to me and for the countless individuals who supported me.

NEW DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE

Ian Grugan

Upon completing my Master of Arts degree at Empire State University in 2020, my adviser encouraged me to pursue my doctorate (rather than a second master's degree). My adviser believed in me so much that they nominated me to become part of the first cohort of the SUNY Empire PRODiG program, which played a significant role in shaping my decision to continue my academic journey.

In my doctoral program, I completed 15 academic courses and defended my dissertation, "A Generational Perspective of Queer Feelings Toward Police Acts of Rainbow-washing in the United States: A Qualitative Comparative Case Study."

Before completing my dissertation, I leveraged my status as an All But Dissertation (ABD) doctoral candidate to secure a grant management specialist role with the United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Additionally, I have been teaching at SUNY Empire and SUNY Oswego as an adjunct professor for the past two academic years, developing two regular criminal justice courses at SUNY Oswego that are now part of the annual curriculum.

Defending my dissertation and being recognized as Dr. Ian Grugan is a profound achievement that will remain etched in my memory as one of the greatest accomplishments of my lifetime.

I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and encouragement I received from Professor Talley and Professor Toma during my graduate program at SUNY Empire. They instilled in me the confidence to pursue my academic aspirations.

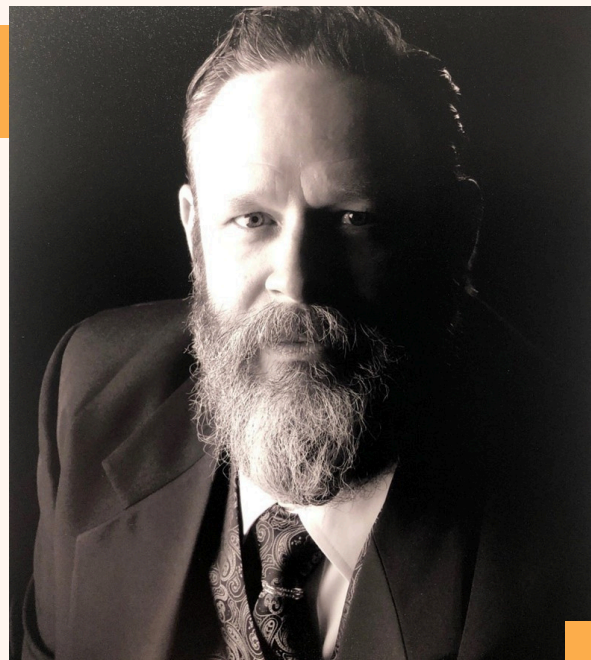


CONGRATULATIONS!

Anton Ruesing

Anton Ruesing, a Master of Arts in work and labor policy student from Frederick, MD, received a SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence. Ruesing earned his bachelor's degree in labor studies from Empire State University in 2021.

Currently, he serves as executive director of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) Finishing Trades Institute and Labor Management Fund, overseeing workforce training and development programs across the world.



Ruesing has extensive leadership experience in his field, working as a foreman, education coordinator, and training director over the course of nearly three decades. Under his direction, he's helped IUPAT secure a \$50 million job corps contract for the International Finishing Trades Institute through the Department of Labor. Ruesing's efforts have also led to a notable increase in diversity among apprentices within IUPAT.

"To be awarded something like this is amazing to me," Ruesing said, "because I do a lot of work without really thinking about where it's going to lead, other than trying to make things better."

Karen Viola

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies student Karen Viola's essay "Not a Walk in the Park" will be published in the fall edition of *Confluence*, a national, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal published by the [Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs \(AGLSP\)](#). The journal reflects the best scholarly and creative work, including fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and visual art, produced within and beyond AGLSP member institutions.

Viola completed the essay as part of an individualized study on outdoor conservation in which she explored the history of outdoor recreation and its connection with the preservation of natural spaces in the United States. In her essay, Viola offers rich descriptive observations of her experience walking segments of the Appalachian Trail and discusses larger issues of eco-social justice and the need to find 'measurable ways' to make a difference in environmental protection.



CONGRATULATIONS



AWARD WINNERS

Congratulations to Michael R. DiNicola and Roxana Toma, Ph.D., members of our community whose work was recognized this spring through prestigious SUNY Chancellor Awards!

We share this message from them to our community:

“Our profound thanks and gratitude to our colleagues who nominated us, Interim Dean Audeliz (Audi) Matías, Ph.D. who wrote incredible letters of support for us, and the amazing students we serve.”



Roxana Toma, Ph.D.

Chair, Graduate Liberal Arts and Science Programs
2023-2024 SUNY Chancellor Award for Excellence in Teaching



Michael R. DiNicola, M.S. Ed

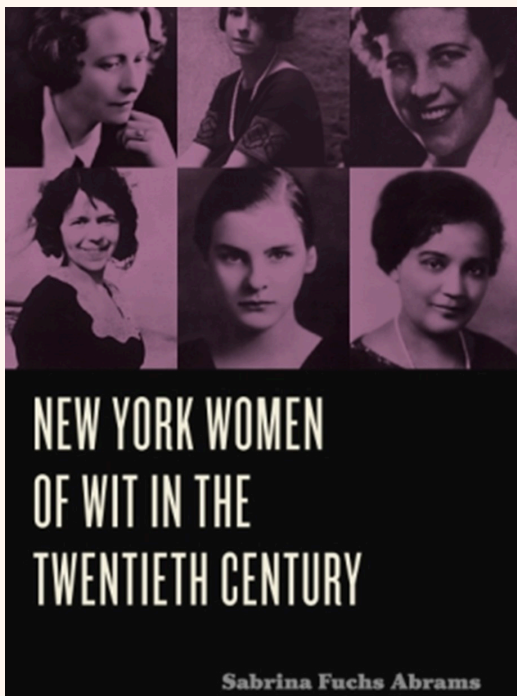
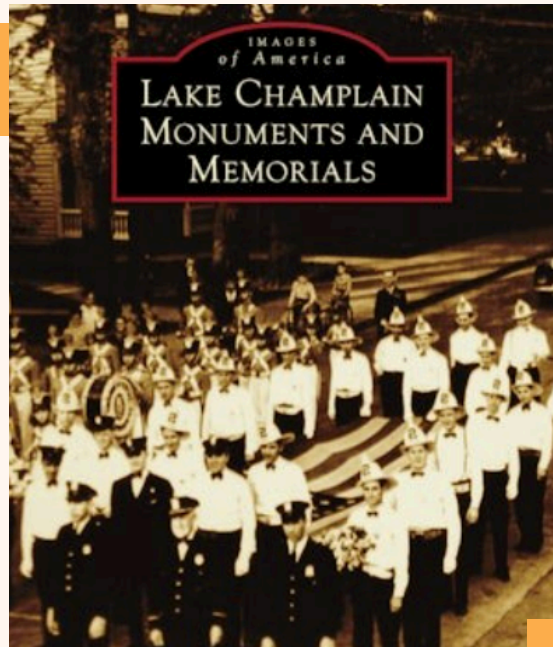
Graduate Academic Advisor
2023-2024 SUNY Chancellor Award for Excellence in Professional Service



FACULTY ACCOLADES

Check out these new titles!

Anastasia Pratt, Ph.D., a historian who splits her time between undergraduate and graduate studies at SUNY Empire, published a book with Arcadia Publishing. The book, *Lake Champlain Monuments and Memorials*, is part of the publisher's Images of America series, celebrating the history of neighborhoods, towns, and cities across the country. Professor Pratt gathered images from throughout the Champlain Valley, offering a vision of life and how markers celebrate local memories and ancestors. In addition to her scholarship, and in recognition of her mentorship work with students, she also received SUNY Empire's Excellence in Mentoring Award this spring.



Sabrina Fuchs Abrams, Ph.D., professor of English in the Master of Arts in liberal studies program, had a book published with Penn State University Press in November. The book, *New York Women of Wit in the Twentieth Century*, focuses on the foremothers of women's humor in modern America, who used satire, irony, and wit as indirect forms of social protest.

Professor Fuchs Abrams argues that the advent of modernism, the women's suffrage movement, the emergence of the New Woman and the New Negro Woman, and the growth of urban centers in the 1920s and '30s gave rise to a new voice of women's humor, one that was defiant and conflicted in defining female identity and underlying assumptions about gender roles in American society. You can read an excerpt of the book on The Gotham Center for New York City History [website](#).

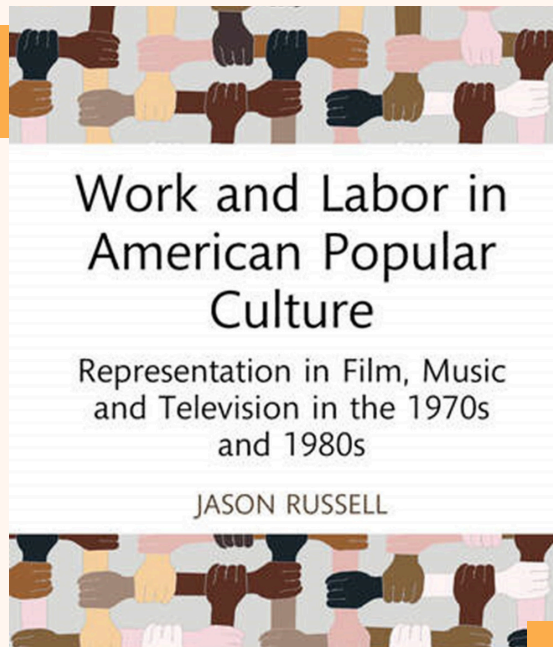
This spring, in recognition of her work, Professor Fuchs Abrams received the Susan H. Turben Award for Excellence in Scholarship at SUNY Empire.



FACULTY ACCOLADES

Check out these new titles (cont'd)

Jason Russell, Ph.D., professor in the Master of Arts in work and labor policy program is editing a new book series for Routledge. He authored the first of the series, *Work and Labor in American Popular Culture*, which was released in March. In this book, Professor Russell focuses on portrayals of social class and associated work and labor issues including gender and race in films, television shows, and music from the 1970s and 1980s. Routledge called this book vital reading for anyone interested in labor and work in the media, labor history, and popular culture history during two key decades in modern American history.



SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY



Mark Soderstrom, Ph.D., professor and coordinator of the Master of Arts in liberal studies and Master of Arts in public history programs, published his research on speculative fiction in *Socialism and Democracy*, a Taylor & Francis journal. His article is based on a conversation with Jenny Bonnevier, a science fiction scholar, where they discuss the impacts of Jemisin's work and how it weaves together feminism and other topics while challenging a resentful establishment. You can read the full article [here](#).





ROSILYN SANDERS



**Dr.
Sanders
(right)**

Rosilyn Sanders, Psy.D, assistant professor of industrial organizational psychology, was accepted to present her research “A Qualitative Study Examining the Benefits of Hiring Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in Retail Organizations” at the following conferences:

- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga River City Industrial and Organizational (RICO) Psychology Conference, Chattanooga, TN
- Blacks in Industrial Organizational Psychology (BIOP) Conference, Atlanta, GA
- 11th Annual European Conference on Positive Psychology, Innsbruck, Austria
- 37th World Summit on Positive Psychology, Happiness, Mindfulness, and Wellness, Paris, France



Professor Sanders contributed to the book by Alan Belasen, Ph.D. and Nicole Pfeffermann, Ph.D., *Brilliant Leadership—Unlocking the Power of Innovation-Communication as first author for Part D: Business Innovation: How Leaders Embrace Digital Transformation for Better Outcomes/Chart a Company’s Future. Focus of Ch 8: Driving Digital Transformation, Aligning Brand and Reputation. Publisher: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. Anticipated book release: November 2024*



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We are thrilled to share the work our Ed.D. program faculty and students have been doing in 2023-2024!

Dr. Lisa Ungst

In March 2024, Assistant Professor of Higher Education Lisa Unangst participated in the 5th edition of the [Bologna Process Researchers' Conference](#) held in Bucharest, Romania. The conference aims at providing a unique forum for dialogue between researchers, experts and policy makers in the field of higher education.

The first edition of this event (October 2011) resulted in a two-volume collection of research articles that framed the research development on topics of high interest for advancing international cooperation in the field of higher education and further evidence-basing the EHEA.

The articles resulted from the second edition (November 2014), third edition (November 2017) and fourth edition (January 2020) were made available in open-access format again also on Springer website.

A fifth edition will be made available in late 2024, with Prof. Unangst's contribution titled: Social inequality contested: Prior Learning Assessment in the context of displacement.

Brian P. Murphy

In March 2024, Brian P. Murphy had three papers accepted by the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE). As a Lecturer in the Engineering Technology Department at SUNY Buffalo State University and SUNY Empire Dr. of Education candidate, the ASEE aligns with his passion for sustainability and clean energy.

Buffalo State University is in the ASEE St. Lawrence Section. Two papers were accepted for the Annual Conference at York University, Lassonde School of Engineering in Toronto, Canada. Conference theme: Developing the Engineering Leaders of Tomorrow. His paper "Clean Energy Education and the Energy Transition Agenda" is part of the 3-article SUNY Empire University dissertation model, and another paper, "Analyzing Leadership in a Change Initiative at a Workforce Training Center," was accepted. Brian will present his papers at the conference on April 26-27, 2024, and be published to ASEE PEER <https://peer.asee.org>.

Fairfield University's School of Engineering and Computing, Fairfield, CT, is hosting the Spring 2024 ASEE-North East Conference. Because of the conference theme: Modern Engineering Education for the 21st Century, and the Keynote "Designing a Sustainable Future" by Julie Zimmerman, PhD, Vice Provost for Planetary Solutions and Professor of Green Engineering, Yale University. Brian was motivated to submit his paper "Seeing Sustainability in The Community, Practices on Campus, and How to Energize the Efforts". Brian will present his paper on April 19-20, 2024, at the conference and be published to ASEE PEER <https://peer.asee.org>.



EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY

We are thrilled to share the work our Education faculty and students have been doing in 2023-2024!

Conference Presentations

Eades-Baird, M. & Qiao, I. C.* (2024, November). Revealing the Factors Contributing to (and Diminishing) Japanese Science Teachers' Job Satisfaction: Evidence from TIMSS 2019. Paper to be presented at the 16th Asian Conference on Education (ACE). Tokyo, Japan.

Eades-Baird, M. & Nyaronga, D. (2024, June). Exploring Psychological, Informational, and Material Factors Impacting Girls Menstruation-related School Absenteeism in Rural Tanzania. Paper to be presented at the International Conference on Sociology of Education and Society, Nairobi, Kenya.

Eades-Baird, M., Wagle, T., & Izard, B. (2024, June). Continuous Improvement: Employing Rasch Analysis to Develop a Validated Instrument to Evaluate Teacher Candidates. Paper to be presented at the Paris Conference on Education. Paris, France.

Eades-Baird, M., & Nyaronga, D. (2024, April). Exploring Biological and Material Factors Impacting Girls Menstruation-related School Absenteeism in Rural Tanzania. Paper accepted at American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Izard, B. (2023, October). Designing an Education Abroad Program for Preservice Mathematics Teachers. Poster presented at the North American Chapter of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education (PME-NA) annual meeting, Reno, Nevada.

Izard, B. & Moss, D.M. (2024, May). Exploring Discipline-Specific Education Abroad Programming to Support Preservice Teacher Learning about Race and Culture. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Jones, K. & Kruidenier, S. (2024, April). Disrupting and Restoring Horror Tropes through Critical Fan Engagement with the Video Game Until Dawn. Refereed conference paper at the AERA Annual Convention, Philadelphia, PA.

Jones, K. (December, 2023). Resisting Dehumanizing Fandom Imaginaries at New York Comic Con. Refereed paper presentation in symposium (Criticality Across Interpretive Communities: Fandom, Literarian, and Classroom Spaces) at LRA Annual Convention, Atlanta, Georgia.

Jones, K. and Blood, S*. (2023, November). Teacher Learning about Equity Through Roleplaying Pedagogies. New York State Reading Association Annual Conference Faculty-Student Poster Session, Rochester, New York.

*School for Graduate Studies student



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Education continued...

Blog Posts

Jones, K. (2024, May 21). Reclaiming Gradelessness at a Formerly Gradeless Institution. *Grow Beyond Grades*.
<https://growbeyondgrades.org/blog/reclaiming-gradeless>

Book Chapters

Eades-Baird, M. (In press). Investigating the Relationship Between Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Students' Participation in Science Inquiry Practices and Science Achievement. *Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Science Education*. IGI Global.

Eades-Baird, M. & Hayden, H. E. (In press). *Disciplinary Literacies for Science: Understanding How Teachers Enact Educational Reforms. Utilizing Case Studies in Literacy and Language Education*. IGI Global.

Journal Articles

Eades-Baird, M. & Nyaronga, D. (In review). Psychological, Informational, and Material Factors Impacting Girls' Menstruation-related School Absenteeism in Rural Tanzania. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*.

*School for Graduate Studies MAT student

Eades-Baird, M. & Qiao, I. C.* (In review). Investigating Factors Contributing to Japanese Science Teachers' Job Satisfaction: Evidence from TIMSS 2019. *Science Education International*.

Eades-Baird, M. & Qiao, I. C.* (In review). Unpacking Teacher Contextual Factors Related to Japanese Student Intrinsic (Enjoyment) and Instrumental (Value) Motivation in Science: A TIMSS 2019 Study. *Science Education International*.

Izard, B. (2024). Teaching, Learning, and Growing through Grief. *Mathematics Teacher: Learning and Teaching PK-12*.

Izard, B., & Cloft, K. (2023). This graph stinks . . . but I fixed it: A lesson on data representation. *Ohio Journal of School Mathematics*, 95(1), 10–20.

Jones, K., Storm, S., and Beck, S. (2024). Navigating and Hybridizing Interpretive Claim-Making Across Discursive Communities. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*.

Jones, K., Storm, S., & Corbitt, A. (2023). Literary play gone viral: Delight, intertextuality, and challenges to normative interpretations through the digital serialization of *Dracula*. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, 22(2), 177–190.



EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY

We are thrilled to share the work our BML faculty and students have been doing in 2023-2024!

Conference Presentations

Borgos, J. (2024, April). Keynote Speaker: Nursing Leadership: The Patient Experience, Patient Satisfaction & Communication Strategies. Sigma Chi Tau at- Large Chapter Annual Meeting, Delhi, NY

Dilling, P. (April 2024): Sixteenth International Conference on Climate Change: Impacts Éklore-Ed School Of Management, Pau, France, "Climate Change Trailblazers –What makes them unique? An empirical Analysis"

Dilling, P. & Caykoylu, S. (June 2023): Climate change and corporate governance – did we get it all wrong? Ethical Finance and Sustainability Conference (EFS-2023), Paris (France), <https://efs-2023.sciencesconf.org>

Kennedy, J., & Sun, R. H. (March, 2024). Inviting AI as a Collaborator: New Perspectives for TPACK. Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education (SITE) 2024 conference, Las Vegas, Nevada

Renata, K., & Sun, R, H. (April, 2024). Time Use and Health Outcomes in Later Life: A Racial and Ethnic Comparative Study of Older Americans. International Conference on Humanities, Social and Education Sciences. San Francisco, CA, USA.

Starnawska, S. (January 2024). Versatile adaptation and effective solutions of incorporating case studies in economics and finance. American Economic Association Annual Meeting, San Antonio TX.

Starnawska, S. (October, 2023). The Financial Management Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, an annual meeting program committee member, a chair, and an organizer of the session on Mutual Funds, and a discussant of a paper Hurting the Fund Returns: Business Ties Constrains and Portfolio Misallocation.

Sun, R. H. & Sithole, M. (May, 2024) Promoting Digital Equity in Instructional Content Development and Instruction. 32nd Annual Conference on Instructional Technologies (CIT). SUNY the University of Buffalo, New York.

Sun, R. H., Wei, Z., Lin, D., Liu, Y., & Hu. (April, 2024). Synergizing Ecological Perspective and TPACK Framework: A Holistic Analysis of Technology-Driven Teacher Professional Development in Open Education. International Conference on Humanities, Social and Education Sciences. San Francisco, CA, USA.

Wei, Z., Sun, R. H. Zhang, Y. (March, 2024). Practical Examples of Enabling Learning Outcome Assessment Through Generative Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education. (full paper) Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education (SITE) 2024 conference, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Wiese, T., Sun, R. H., Lus, B., & Chen, Y. (May, 2024). Generative AI Applications in Assigning and Evaluating Student Teamwork Roles in Asynchronous Learning Environments. 32nd Annual Conference on Instructional Technologies (CIT). SUNY the University of Buffalo, New York.



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BML Continued...

Awards

Belasen, A.T. Outstanding Reviewer Award. Academy of Management, Management Education & Development, Boston, MA (2023).

Sun, R. H. & Sithole, M. PI for DEI Mini-Grant. Promoting Digital Equity in Instructional Content Development and Instruction.

Reviewing

Starnawska, S. Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research (JEECAR) - member of the Editorial Board and a Reviewer.

Belasen, A.T. Journal Reviewer:

1. Strategy and Leadership Journal (2024)
2. Journal of Healthcare Management (2023-2024)
3. The Journal of Health Organization and Management (2023-2024)
4. Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities (2023)

Books

Belasen, A. T. & Pfeffermann, N., Editors (forthcoming, 2024). *Brilliant Leadership – Unlocking the Power of Innovation-Communication* (Routledge).

Belasen, A., Eisenberg, B., Borgos, J. (2024) *Transforming Leadership, Improving the Patient Experience: Communication Strategies for Driving Patient Satisfaction*. Routledge Publishing

Book Chapters

Belasen, A. T. & Eisenberg, B. (2023). Building Trust for Better Crisis Communication: Lessons for Leadership Development, Chapter 7 in Nicole Pfeffermann & Monika Schaller, Editors, *New Leadership Communication - Inspire Your Horizon*, pp. 93-110, Switzerland, Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-34314-8_7

Belasen, A. T. & Pfeffermann, N. (2024). What Makes a Brilliant Leader? The New Leadership Mindset, Chapter 1 in *Brilliant Leadership – Unlocking the Power of Innovation-Communication* (Routledge).

Belasen, A. T. & Pfeffermann, N. (2024). Inspiring the Next Generation of Leaders Chapter 10 in *Brilliant Leadership – Unlocking the Power of Innovation-Communication* (Routledge).

Belasen, A. T. & Berlota, L. (2024). Co-creation, Strategic Visioning, and Iterative Loops, Chapter 4 in *Brilliant Leadership – Unlocking the Power of Innovation-Communication* (Routledge).

Borgos, J., Kinser, K., Kline, L. (2023). The Borderless Market for Open, Distance, and Digital Education. In O. Zawawcki & I. Jung (Eds). *Handbook of Open, Distance, and Digital Education*. Springer Publishing. https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-981-19-2080-6_22



EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY

BML Continued...

Journal Articles

Belasen, A. R., Belasen, A. T., & Bass, M. (2023). Tracking the Uneven Outcomes of COVID-19 on Racial and Ethnic Groups: Implications for Health Policy. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-023-01692-5>

Belasen, A. T., Belasen, A.R., & Feng, Z. (2023). The Physician CEO Advantage and Hospital Performance During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Capacity Utilization and Patient Satisfaction, *Journal of Organizational Healthcare Management*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHOM-04-2022-0126>

Borgos, J. Schueller, J. Lane, J.E., Kinser, K., & Zipf, S. (2023). The intersection of internationalization efforts and diversity, equity, and inclusion: the case of US-based international branch campuses. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000519>

Dilling, P.F.A.; Harris, P.; Caykoylu, S. (2024): The Impact of Corporate Characteristics on Climate Governance Disclosure. *Sustainability* 2024, 16, 1962. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16051962>

Egan, T., Kim, S., & Akdere, M. (2023). Advancing scholarly-practice and theory through participatory inquiry and prospective theorizing. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 34(4), 361-368.

Egan, T., & Kim, S. (2023). Reconsidering our uneconomic growth model: Human resource development's role in advancing sustainability. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 33(3), 257-263.

Lus, B. & Rufer, R. (2024). Developing Effective Teamwork in Online Courses. *Journal for Advancing Business Education*, 5(2), 7-24.



LESSONS LEARNED & PROGRESS

Supporting Autistic and Neurodivergent
Students in Higher Education

◆ A Newsletter Update



Center for Autism Advocacy: Research,
Education, and Supports (CAARES)

Read more below...



EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY

We are thrilled to share the work our CAARES faculty and students have been doing in 2023-2024!

The need to support a diverse student body within higher education institutions is critical, including diversity in neurotype. Although the call to acknowledge disability rights as civil rights has historically been acknowledged and continues to grow globally (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, Mégrét, 2017), resources for individuals with disabilities in higher education are often lacking, including for autistic and neurodivergent students (Cox et al., 2021; Toutain, 2019).

In the United States, most higher education institutions serve a primarily neuronormative population, with 83-129 colleges and universities (2- and 4-year institutions) reporting supports specifically for autistic students (College Autism Network, n.d.; College Autism Spectrum, n.d.). Approximately 50% of these programs require payment for supports, and the majority require disclosure of diagnosis (McDermott et al., 2022). Of autistic students who do attend, only 40% complete their postsecondary education, as compared to 60% of the general population (Accardo et al., 2019).

To increase inclusivity and accessibility of resources, the Center for Autism Advocacy, Research, Education, and Supports (CAARES), founded in 2020 with SUNY Empire State University and directed by Drs. Noor Syed and Lauren Lestremou Allen, is implementing universal and tiered behavioral supports across its statewide campuses and online programs through a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework.

Oversight and implementation of this initiative is collaborative, guided by advisory teams that include behavior analysts, autistic students, alumni, and advocates, caregivers in the autism community, and employees of the university. Of significant importance, CAARES is overseen by behavior analysts who collaborate with colleagues in the Neurodiversity Movement, including those who have been described as “anti-ABA,” to conceptualize and implement affirming, evidenced-based practices.

CAARES has engaged regularly in employee-, student-, and community-supportive initiatives. In the 2023-2024 school year, CAARES has been working with Academic and Student Supports to create a series of synchronous and asynchronous training opportunities, along with other collaborative resources.

We are also completing a series of webinars with SUNY Systems, and will be working with students to deliver and facilitate the remaining sessions. CAARES increased its community initiatives in Saratoga Springs and beyond, and has launched a Peer2Peer mentorship program that welcomes neurodivergent and neuromatative students. It was also a joy to support the Boyer Lecture with Dr. Temple Grandin at Empire State's Annual Meeting, and to have ice cream together afterwards! CAARES is looking forward to launching our second needs assessment in the coming months.

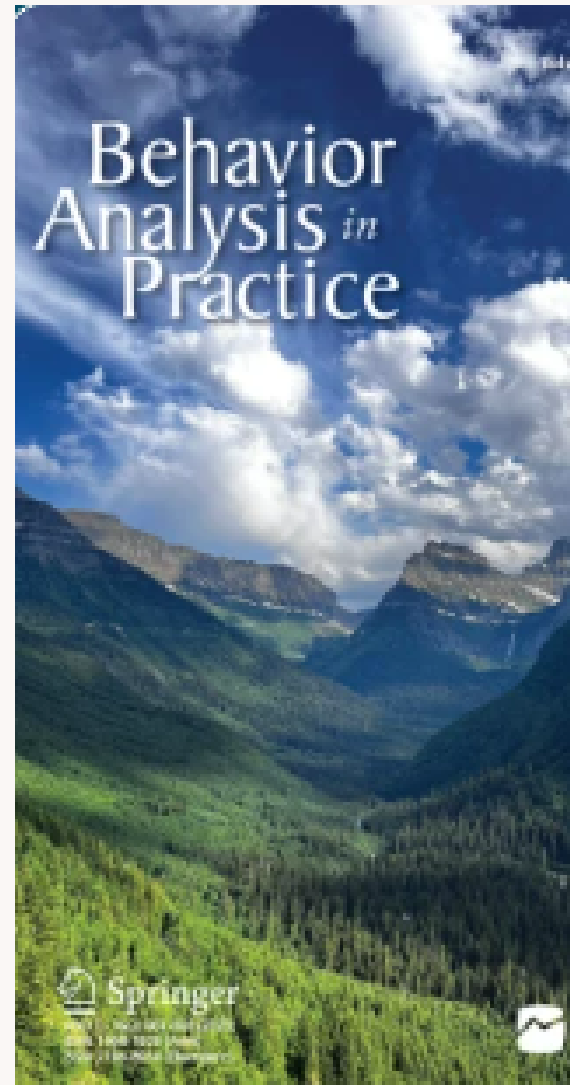
Neurodiversity-Affirming

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

Applied Behavior Analysis program faculty, Drs. Lauren Lestremau Allen and Noor Syed, along with their colleagues, Dr. Leanna Mellon (SUNY New Paltz), Joy Johnson, and Armando Bernal recently published Neurodiversity-Affirming Applied Behavior Analysis in the Behavior Analysis in Practice's Special Issue on Compassion.

The paper offers an overview of historical and current perspectives regarding disability rights, the Autistic and Neurodiversity advocacy movements, and disability as a form of diversity. The authors offer calls to action with accompanying neurodiversity-affirming actions that are informed by feedback from the Autistic and Neurodivergent communities along with other interested parties.

The authors are eager to continue this important line of research and dissemination, with upcoming presentations to Massachusetts public schools and via New York State Association for Behavior Analysis offerings.



HOT OFF THE PRESS

READ THE WHOLE ARTICLE

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40617-024-00918-0>



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Empowering Neurodivergent Students: Insights from SUNY Empire State University CAARES Panel Session at the Saratoga Springs Student Mini-Conference

Written in collaboration with Shannon Mulstay, student in SGS

In a recent panel session at SUNY Empire University's April All-Student Mini-Conference, held in Saratoga Springs on March 22, 2024, spotlight was on supporting neurodivergent students as they navigate the transition into the workforce. Organized and moderated by Dr. Noor Syed, assistant professor of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in the School for Graduate Studies and director of the Center for Autism Advocacy: Research, Education, and Supports (CAARES), it featured panelists Shannon Mulstay, a student and employee with SUNY Empire, Anita DiCianni Brown, Director of Career and Experiential Learning Services, and Dr. Lauren Lestremay Allen, assistant professor in and incoming coordinator of the M.S. in ABA program and assistant director of CAARES. The session provided a platform for a robust discussion, offering valuable insights in finding inclusive workforces who demonstrate a commitment to supporting diverse employees and practical strategies in support of neurodivergent students who are preparing for the workforce.

Panelists underscored the importance of creating inclusive environments that cater to the diverse needs of neurodivergent individuals. They highlighted tools and resources such as Guardians of Mental Health, the PCO Exam, Mentra, and the Employee Relation Group, stressing the role of support systems and accommodations in facilitating professional growth for neurodivergent individuals. Practical tips were also shared for neurodivergent students seeking inclusive employment opportunities. The panelists emphasized the relevance of State Exams like the Professional Career Opportunities (PCO) exam.

They encouraged students to explore programs like the Governor's 55 b/c Program, which supports veterans and individuals with disabilities in accessing diverse career paths. Additionally, leveraging SUNY Empire's Career Center resources and advocating for oneself by asking for help and accessing support were highlighted as crucial strategies.

Preparing neurodivergent students for the workforce was another focal point of the discussion. Panelists stressed the importance of developing self-advocacy skills and utilizing available support networks. We delved into relevant laws and policies, ensuring that students were informed about their rights and protections in the workplace, and empowering them to navigate professional environments confidently. The session also delved into ways SUNY Empire University could enhance support for student transition to employment. Suggestions included forging partnerships with organizations like JumpStart, integrating inclusive practices into the curriculum, and providing comprehensive resources through the Career Center to address the diverse needs of neurodivergent students. Collaboration among students emerged as a key theme throughout the session, with panelists highlighting its importance in creating an inclusive and supportive environment for neurodivergent individuals in the workforce. By equipping students with the necessary tools, resources, and confidence, SUNY Empire University aims to empower neurodivergent individuals to pursue their career aspirations and make meaningful contributions to the workforce. The panel session at SUNY Empire University's April All-Student Mini-Conference encapsulated a commitment to inclusivity, advocacy, and empowerment, reflecting the university's dedication to supporting all students in their professional journeys.

Conference Review

OUR STUDENTS SHARING THEIR RESEARCH AND WORK!

Genevia Aman and Amber Kupris, two Empire State University graduate students in the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis Program, presented at the virtual SUNY Graduate Research Conference 2024 on Friday, April 26, 2024. Amber and Genevia are research assistants in Dr. Lauren Lestremou Allen's Access and Affirm research lab.

Genevia is driven by a strong desire to destigmatize the Neurodivergent community and advocate for acceptance and inclusivity in our society. Genevia addressed the social justice issue of health equity in her presentation, "Challenges to Accessing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services - A Narrative Review." Genevia discussed barriers such as diagnosis, race, geography, socioeconomic status, age, state and public policies, insurance coverage, cultural and linguistic barriers, shortage of ABA professionals, and structures within the foster care system.

Amber presented her research project, "Addressing Ableism and Enhancing Inclusion Policies in K-12 Education with Neurodiversity-Affirming Approaches: A Review." Amber's presentation explored the current literature regarding neurodiversity-affirming approaches in K-12 education and offer a brief overview of the medical vs. social models of disability, current inclusion policies in K-12 education, and how these inclusion policies may be enhanced with neurodiversity-affirming practices and first-person perspectives.

Wonderful work, Genevia and Amber!

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