



WILDCAT

WSU Alumni Magazine | SPRING 2024

Teaching Beyond **THE NOTES**

HOW PROFESSOR YU-JANE YANG AND DEDICATED STUDENTS
MADE WEBER STATE A PIANO POWERHOUSE

Advancing radiology careers across the country

Radiology professionals from all over Utah and across the United States upscale their careers in Weber State's Master of Radiologic Sciences Radiologist Assistant program.

Program director **Laurie Coburn's** students study in states from Oregon to New York, while learning skills to become mid-level radiology assistants in all areas of imaging. "These students come from different backgrounds, and they bring their areas of expertise to our graduate program," she said. "They learn a lot from each other."

The program is delivered in a hybrid model with virtual class discussions, intermittent in-person campus meetings and weekly clinical education at affiliated medical facilities.

Since the program began in 2019, radiology assistant graduates have more than doubled. They fill in-demand roles, assessing patients and performing imaging procedures while working side-by-side with radiologists and physicians.

"Not only does the program provide a great career path for radiographers, but it also helps fulfill the current need for radiology physician extenders," Coburn said.



Laurie Coburn, RRA, RT(R)(CV)(ARRT), RPA (top right) with WSU radiology assistant students from across the country



A litter of adoptable kittens were brought to campus for a photo shoot last June. WSU Public Relations Director Bryan Magaña provided a home for Waldo, pictured here.

 **BENJAMIN ZACK**





“It is a very hard and demanding program, but I feel like the professors are so **supportive** and so **encouraging**, and they really care.”

— EMMA PETERSON, WSU keyboard performance student

14



ON THE COVER:
Yu-Jane Yang, Brady Presidential Distinguished Professor and director of Keyboard Studies, prepares students for careers and further education while finding the magic in music.

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TAKE OUR SURVEY

to help shape the future of *Wildcat*. You can enter to win a Weber State gift package. The survey closes on **June 1, 2024**.

WILDCAT

WSU Alumni Magazine

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WEBER ATTACH

DAZZLING WILDCATS for 45 years

The Lindquist Family Symphony Pops Concert and Fireworks will light up the skies above Weber State and put a tune in Wildcats' hearts on July 14, 2024.

The celebration will include fireworks and an outdoor performance by the New American Philharmonic at Ada Lindquist Plaza. John A. and Telitha E. Lindquist initiated the first event in 1978. Today, John E. Lindquist, president of Lindquist Mortuaries and Cemeteries in Ogden, proudly continues the tradition.

"It's a hallmark of summer in northern Utah," said WSU President **BRAD MORTENSEN**. "Every year, we are grateful to the Lindquist family for sponsoring this beloved event that brings our community together on WSU's beautiful Ogden campus."

Rachel Badali BS '17, MBA '22
Krystiana Davis AS '20
John Kowalewski
Bryan Magaña BS '06, MA '09
Jaime Winston BA '22

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



WEBER STATE PROFESSOR LENDS EXPERTISE TO PBS DOCUMENTARY

SARA DANT, Brady Presidential Distinguished Professor, H. Aldous Dixon Award winner and recent history department chair, offers her expertise in a new film by Academy Award and Emmy Award-winning documentarian Ken Burns.

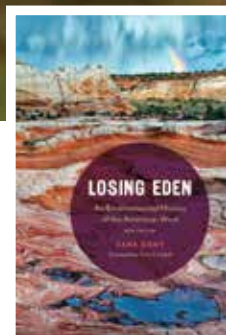
Dant, who specializes in the American West and environment, served as a historical advisor and interviewee for *The American Buffalo*, a two-part PBS documentary that focuses on the iconic national mammal and its history with peoples in America.

“History is ultimately a great story,” Dant said, “and Ken Burns is a master storyteller. This film is an astonishing biography of an animal that

provides a unique window into the past 10,000 years of our continent’s history — the good, bad and ugly — to reveal how the bison story was simultaneously unique and tragically typical.”

Dant is the author of *Losing Eden: An Environmental History of the American West*, which traces the interaction of people and nature across time, a theme woven throughout the Burns documentary. A screenwriter for several of Burns’ projects, Dayton Duncan, was familiar with Dant’s work and called upon her expertise for the film.

“It’s hard not to be flattered and honored when someone of this caliber reaches out for your perspective,” Dant said. “When you get the



ABOVE: Sara Dant’s book, *Losing Eden: An Environmental History of the American West*, which traces the interaction of people and nature across time

opportunity to help make history relevant and accessible to the general public, you jump at the chance, and that’s what Ken Burns does very well.”

Dant and three other historical advisors met several times with writers, producers and sometimes Burns himself to review drafts of the script and film, offering their insights. She also appears in both episodes to offer commentary. She said the final product is “beautiful and powerful.”

“Watching it, it’s nice to see how they stitched together all these diverse pieces into something coherent and compelling,” Dant said. “I’m particularly impressed with how Indigenous voices and experiences were seamlessly integrated into the narrative.”

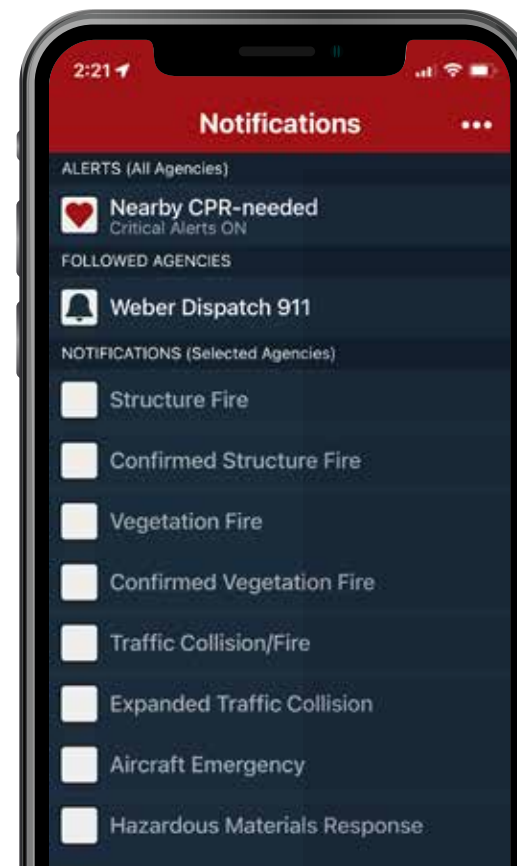
Dant said the film’s ultimate message is one of hope, focusing on a species that humans nearly drove to extinction but saved in the nick of time. Dant said that “save,” the subsequent Endangered Species Act, and current efforts at buffalo re-wilding have helped establish the United States as a global leader in environmental stewardship.

“That’s the whole point of history: understanding the consequences of the choices we’ve made in the past so that we can make better and more informed choices moving forward,” she said.



The American Buffalo is currently streaming on [pbs.com](https://www.pbs.com).

Now that the film is wrapped, Dant said she looks forward to engaging in more public-facing writing and podcasts on topics including environmental politics, sustainability and the importance of public lands. Spring 2024 was her final semester at Weber State, where she served 23 years before retiring.



PulsePoint

AN APP FOR SAVING LIVES

Weber and Morgan counties have a new tool to save cardiac arrest patients.

BILL ROBERTSON, associate professor of emergency healthcare, recently partnered with Ogden City Fire Department Deputy Chief **MICHAEL SLATER** to bring the PulsePoint mobile app to these communities.

During a cardiac arrest, the app can be used to notify emergency responders and nearby CPR-trained volunteers who can provide life-saving care until emergency responders arrive. The app also gives volunteers the location of nearby defibrillators. Robertson, along with the Dean’s Office of the Ezekiel R. Dumke College of Health Professions and others from the college, helped secure funds and training to launch the project.



WSU VOLLEYBALL WINS BIG SKY, achieves third NCAA tournament berth

Weber State's volleyball team reached the NCAA tournament for the third time after winning a dramatic 2023 Big Sky Volleyball Championship.

The Wildcats executed three comeback wins at the Big Sky tournament last November in Greeley, Colorado, defeating Portland State 3-0 in the first round, Sacramento State 3-2 in the second round and Montana State 3-2 in the championship match. The win capped off a successful season with an overall record of 21-10, including 11-5 in the Big Sky Conference.

WSU standout **DANI RICHINS** was named MVP of the Big Sky tournament, **MAKAYLA SORENSEN** was named the Big Sky Libero of the Year and earned second team All-Big Sky honors, and **KATE STANDIFIRD** also earned first-team All-Big Sky honors.

Despite a strong fight, the Wildcats fell to BYU in three sets in the opening round of the NCAA tournament. The Wildcats previously competed in the tournament in 1998 and 2021.



ABOVE: Dani Richins (number 12) and her teammates on the women's volleyball team; photo by Robert Casey

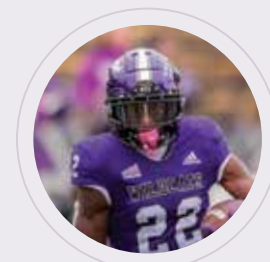
BELOW: The Wildcats celebrate the team's third-ever Big Sky Volleyball Championship.

ALL-PRO WILDCATS

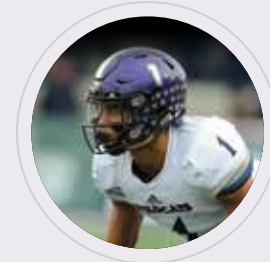
Former Wildcats **RASHID SHAHEED BS '22** and **TARON JOHNSON** made history during the 2023 NFL season, becoming the first two Wildcats ever named to the NFL All-Pro team.

Shaheed, in his second year with the New Orleans Saints, was named the first-team punt returner. Johnson, who was selected by the Buffalo Bills in the fourth round of the 2018 NFL draft, was named a second-team All-Pro slot cornerback.

Johnson helped his Bills earn their fourth consecutive AFC East title this past season. In March, he signed a three-year contract extension to remain with the Buffalo Bills through 2027.



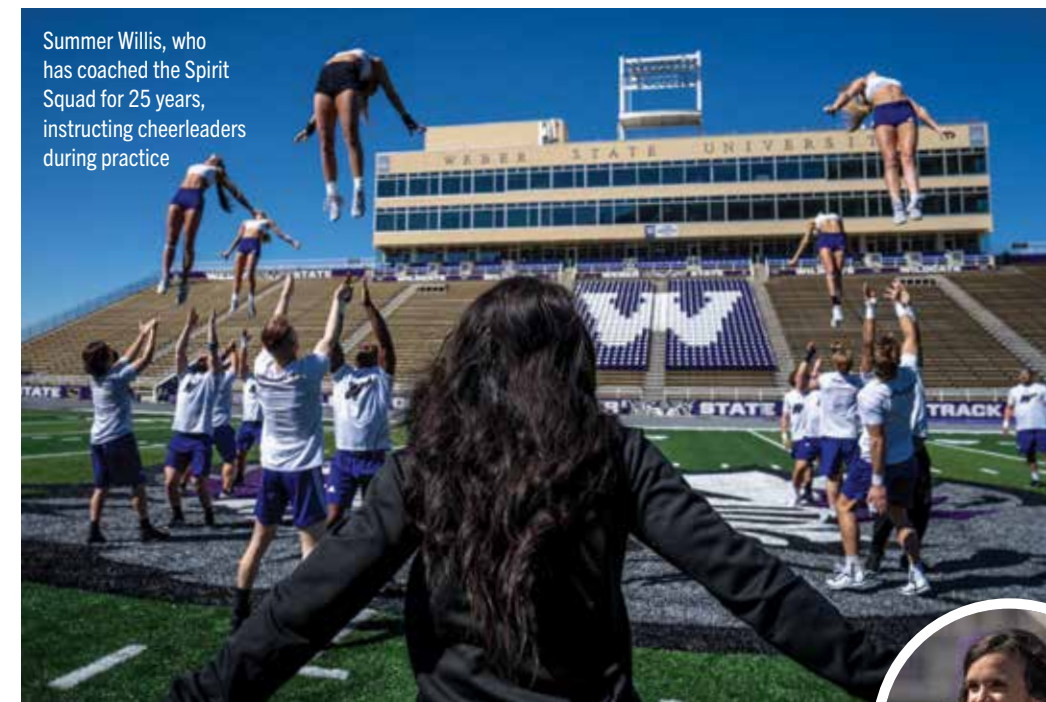
RASHID SHAHEED



TARON JOHNSON

SUMMER WILLIS CELEBRATES 25 years with WSU's Spirit Squad

Summer Willis, who has coached the Spirit Squad for 25 years, instructing cheerleaders during practice



When you ask **SUMMER WILLIS** what it means to lead a team to seven national titles, she'll tell you it's not about the trophies; it's about the people.

Twenty-five years after becoming head coach of WSU's Spirit Squad, Willis has placed those trophies in the corner of the room, facing away from the door and largely out of sight. What takes up most of the space is a collection of memories: photos, gifts and newspaper clippings from past and current students, most of whom she still talks to today.

"It might be the one you lost or the one who found their purpose in life," Willis said when talking about how the people she meets keep her motivated year after year. "For me, it's just so important that we don't lose sight of who we are." Before Willis coached the Spirit Squad, she worked as Weber State's assistant marketing director of athletics. By the end of that same year, Willis was working as head coach for the team.

"I didn't know how much I was going to fall in love with coaching," Willis said. It was through this experience her passion for the sport and her students came to fruition.

Through her leadership, Weber State has risen to international acclaim with students seeking out opportunities with the Spirit Squad from Venezuela to Germany.

"There are so many people who would love to be here," she said. "I think it's so important to realize what an opportunity we have to represent."

“For me, it's just so important that we don't lose sight of who we are.”

— **SUMMER WILLIS**

Miss Roy 2023, Loryn Merrill, now studying to become a paramedic



FOLLOWING HER ARMY SERVICE, Miss Roy enrolls at WSU to serve patients as a paramedic

LORYN MERRILL plans on a career serving patients as a paramedic, much as she served her nation in the U.S. Army and city as Miss Roy.

She can't think of a better place to continue her service streak than the medical field.

In the Army, Merrill worked in a clinic where, among her many duties, she gave vaccinations, managed medications and performed examinations to gather information for providers. Outside the clinic, she treated soldiers injured in training exercises.

"I did a lot of COVID swabbing, tracking and tracing as well," she said.

While the Army provided her with new experiences and allowed her to travel the world, prior to arriving at Weber State for the fall 2023 semester, she took on a challenge unlike anything before. She entered the 2023 Miss Roy Scholarship Competition and won.

As Miss Roy, she loves being involved in service projects for the city. Her professional network has grown to include members of the city council, first responders and Mayor Robert Dandoy. Being Miss Roy also gave Merrill an opportunity to pursue a passion, encouraging others to meet, spend time with and learn from senior citizens.

"In Roy, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of people over age 70 who live alone and just have nobody to spend time with them," Merrill said.

Merrill has worked with volunteers at assisted living communities to meet the need, and she encourages others to get involved. She has also provided companionship and help with daily tasks for adults with disabilities at a group home.

Merrill will compete for the Miss Utah crown in June 2024.

Aside from preparing for the pageant, she recently earned her EMT certification and is completing prerequisites for WSU's paramedic program. After some time saving lives as a paramedic, she eventually wants to help patients as a physician.

YUDI LEWIS recognized as top leader in higher education

YUDI LEWIS, Weber State's executive director of Hispanic-Serving Institution Initiatives, earned two prestigious accolades for serving Utah students.

In September 2023, Lewis was listed among the top successful women by Utah's 40 over 40, a nonprofit organization that celebrates the achievements of women who make a difference in their community.

"I feel a deep sense of honor and humility to receive recognition for the work I am truly passionate about: fostering opportunities for students to access and achieve their dreams in higher education," Lewis said. "This award serves as a beautiful testament to the remarkable women who, each in their unique ways, are reshaping Utah's landscape to be more inclusive and equitable."

Also in September 2023, Lewis was named a Living Color Utah award recipient for cultivating diversity and inclusion in Utah.

Thanks to support from Ally Financial Inc., Lewis joined Weber State in 2022 to help the university reach its goal of becoming an emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution with at least 15% Hispanic and Latino enrollment. Prior to WSU, she helped increase the enrollment of Hispanic and Latino students and graduation headcount at Utah Valley University.

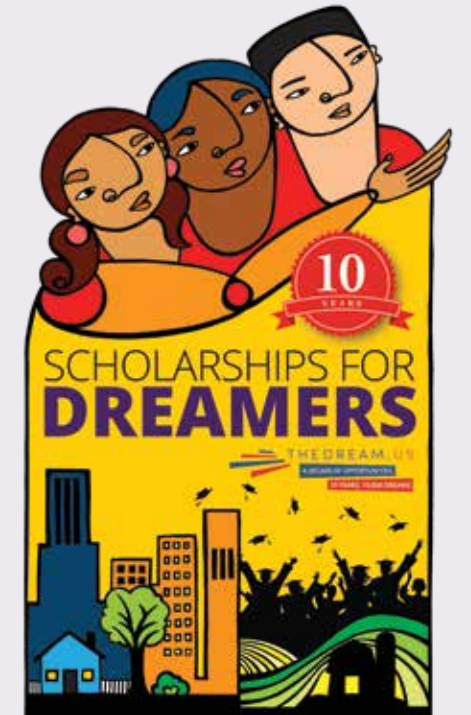
Lewis is an acclaimed presenter at national and international conferences. Her tuition-free Latino Scientists of Tomorrow program has been replicated at six schools nationwide. She also helped acquire over \$600,000 in grant money to support educational opportunities for Utah youth. She has connected with thousands of students by sharing her story and advocating for them.

"My role in higher education enables me to give back by opening doors to educational possibilities for students, just as someone once did for me," Lewis said. "I firmly believe that the only true impossibilities in life are the things you do not try. I urge every student to discover their passion and relentlessly pursue their dreams."



“I firmly believe that the only true impossibilities in life are the things you do not try.”

— YUDI LEWIS



WSU, THE DREAM.US PARTNER TO SUPPORT UTAH DREAMERS

Weber State became one of 70-plus partner colleges across the country with TheDream.US, the nation's largest college and career success program for undocumented students. This partnership resulted in 31 scholarships during the 2023–24 academic year and a \$1.2 million multiyear commitment.

"This scholarship is instrumental in helping me achieve my dreams," said **BIANCA ALVARADO**, a microbiology student and scholarship recipient. "I now have the freedom to focus on my studies and academic goals."

WSU plans to increase the number of students who benefit from this program in years to come. The funding covers the cost of tuition for up to six years or until students complete their degree, allowing recipients to attend school with less financial stress.

"For a really long time, I worried that my family and I would have to face the financial burden of college alone," said **HANNIA SANDOVAL GONZALEZ**, a scholarship recipient and social work major. "Receiving this scholarship proved me wrong, and it showed me that all my hard work is worth it."



🎵 **CHIA-YING SHEN BM '23** practices piano in the Austad Auditorium in the Browning Center for the Performing Arts in 2022. She went on to pursue her master's degree with a full scholarship at University of Michigan.

TEACHING BEYOND THE NOTES

by Jaime Winston



EMMA PETERSON, WSU student earning a Bachelor of Music with a keyboard performance emphasis

Emma Peterson smiled to the Browning Center audience before sitting at the Steinway. She lifted her hands intently above the keys, took a deep breath... and then took everyone else's away. Johannes Brahms' Capriccio Op. 166 No. 7 filled the performance room with powerful, contrasting tempos, setting the stage for the WSU piano program's fall 2023 jury recital.

Weber State's piano students began performing a concert as their final each semester 18 years earlier, instead of only playing for teachers, explained **Yu-Jane Yang**, director of the program.

The recital means more than a grade for students. It's a semester's worth of practice.

"The day of juries, everyone's just as nervous as they are excited," Peterson said. "There is so much energy, and it's so rewarding to not only perform yourself but watch all your peers perform the pieces that they worked on all semester."

Peterson's classmates followed up with works by Robert Schumann, Frédéric Chopin and others.

While the audience of about 50 included mostly teachers, family and friends, their applause at the end was more than just moral support. They saw an elite piano program at work.

PIANO POWERHOUSE

Students in the piano program, officially titled Keyboard Studies, regularly win state, national and international competitions, and receive scholarships to the nation's top graduate programs.

Regularly placing at the annual Utah Music Teachers Association (UMTA) state competition, WSU students received four of the six top honors in the state for piano at the university level in both 2015 and 2020.

Often, when a pianist has the credentials to go to any music school in the country, they pick WSU for its quality teaching, low tuition and scholarships, Yang said.

Scholarship donor **Jeanne Hall BA '69** echoes Yang's point about quality teaching.

"I watch Dr. Yang as she teaches them, and she's not just saying 'You have to hit the right notes,' she's saying 'Where is the magic in this?'" said Hall, cofounder of The Alan and Jeanne Hall Foundation.

Hall nominated Yang for her 2023 Governor's Mansion Artist Award for performing arts. Yang has also been named Brady Presidential Distinguished Professor and Endowed Scholar/Artist of the College of Arts & Humanities at WSU, along with Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Teacher of the Year in 2020.

Growing up in Taiwan, she began playing piano at age 5 after seeing *The Sound of Music*.

"I was really intrigued by all those beautiful melodies, and I came home and tried to figure out all those tunes on my toy piano," she recalled. "Eventually, I tried to play my kindergarten teacher's piano, and the teacher told my mother, 'Well, you might want to give her some lessons.'"

Yang moved to the United States for graduate studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, among the top five music schools in the country at the time. Her husband, **Shi-Hwa Wang**, became a Weber State violin professor while she completed her doctoral studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She joined him on the WSU faculty, teaching piano, in 1992.

About 15 years later, Yang became Keyboard Studies director. She succeeded **Diana Page**, who established Weber's UMTA student chapter — once known as the Treblemakers and now the MTNA student chapter — as well as the annual WSU Piano Festival, which welcomes pianists in grades one to 12 to campus to perform.

The piano faculty also includes professor **Esther JeeHae Ahn** and adjunct instructors **Sean Steiner** and **Cammie Titus BS '98**. Yang said it's their goal to make sure students are competitive in graduate school or their careers. "I'm just so excited about getting students where they can be after being at WSU," she said.

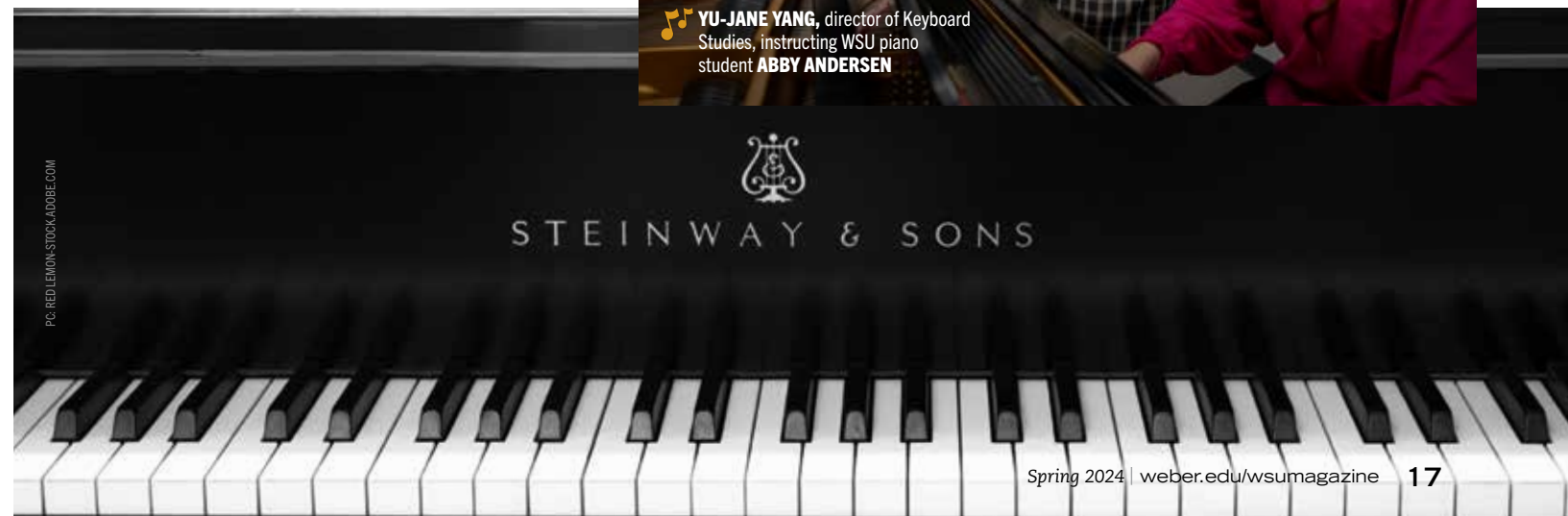
One way the faculty do so is through quality equipment. WSU is an all-Steinway school.



YU-JANE YANG, director of Keyboard Studies, instructing WSU piano student **ABBY ANDERSEN**

Would you like to share a memory of the piano program?

Write to us at magazine@weber.edu.



The company, founded in 19th century Germany, is known worldwide for handcrafted, quality instruments. Thanks to an initiative put forward by former WSU provost **Michael Vaughan**, all pianos Weber State students use on campus are made by Steinway. "It attracts not just students, but faculty," Yang said. "They would think, 'This school really values art and the quality of student education.'"

Of course, quality teaching and instruments only get students so far. Their dedication drives them.



FANYA LIN, University of Arizona associate professor and WSU graduate

DRIVEN BY DEDICATION

Fanya Lin BM '13 turned down Juilliard to attend Weber State, and she has no regrets.

She began playing piano at age 4 in Taiwan. While both of her parents were rock musicians, she discovered a love for classical music through a music conservatory when she was 9.

She dreamed of going to The Juilliard School for her undergraduate degree until a master class with Yang put WSU on her radar. "I really enjoyed her style of teaching," Lin said. "So, when I was applying for my undergrad, I applied to Juilliard, Oberlin and Weber State."

Lin was accepted to all three. She chose WSU to study with Yang, who taught her to play mindfully, know what she wants to say as a musician and put the music above her own ego.

She attended Juilliard for her master's degree. She later earned her doctorate at the University of Minnesota,

where she studied with Yang's former professor Lydia Artymiw. Today, Lin is an associate professor at the University of Arizona and has performed across the world, including a recent performance and album with the Polish Wieniawski Philharmonic Orchestra of Lublin. She is a certified yoga instructor — teaching yoga for musicians — surfer, boulderer and practitioner of the martial art Krav Maga.

Weber State set her on her path to success: She won first place in the MTNA National Steinway Young Artist Collegiate Piano Competition as an undergraduate, becoming the youngest student to ever win first place nationally in the competition's history.

"I remember when I was preparing for the competition; we had a very strict schedule," she said.

First, she attended lessons, and then she would practice for six hours. After that, she recorded herself performing so she could discuss the recording and how to improve with Yang. She repeated the same schedule the next day. "That really shaped how I prepared for future competitions and concerts," she said.

Lin's success inspired other Taiwanese students to study at WSU. One of those students, **Chia-Ying Shen BM '23**, won first place at Utah's MTNA Steinway Young Artist

Collegiate Piano Solo Competition. Now, she is earning her master's degree on a full scholarship at the University of Michigan.

While WSU's program is a destination for international students, pianists come from nearby as well.

Miranda Vanderpool BM '22, who lived in North Ogden when accepted, didn't become serious about piano until her senior year of high school. While every student in the piano program must demonstrate a certain level of skill to be accepted, she still noticed her peers were further ahead.

"It was at first really intimidating for me, and I almost quit my freshman year and changed majors," she admitted, "but I decided to stick with it and keep working hard."

A video from Vanderpool's first year shows Yang teaching her basic hand movement. One filmed three years later



MIRANDA VANDERPOOL, WSU graduate now completing a master's degree at the University of Oklahoma

A Musical HISTORY

THE KEYBOARD STUDIES PROGRAM TRACES ITS HISTORY TO THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WSU SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES



Weber Stake Academy
Moench Building, 1891

The 1906–07 catalog listed **John J. McClellan** as the institution's piano/organ instructor. At the time, students prepared to play for church services.



James Clair Anderson
c. 1947–49

As the institution became Weber Normal College, **Gladys Peterson** served as the piano/organ instructor. Notably, **James Clair Anderson** served as the main piano instructor through two more name changes, Weber College and Weber State College, from 1923 to 1969.



Weber music students
at the piano c. 1947–49

Until Weber became a four-year institution in 1962, piano classes at the institution helped prepare students to complete their bachelor's degrees in music at other schools.

EXECUTIVE MASTER of HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

features her playing a piece by Ukrainian composer Nikolai Kapustin — with perfect form. Vanderpool eventually began competing alongside WSU’s best pianists in competitions. She won honorable mention at the UMTA State Collegiate Piano Concerto Competition.

When doubting herself, Vanderpool relied on other piano students for encouragement. She recalls Thanksgiving dinner, holiday parties and trips for ice cream with fellow students.

“It was really like a piano family,” she said.

Vanderpool is now completing her master’s degree at the University of Oklahoma. To her surprise, many of her assignments are things she has done at WSU. “A lot of people here have never taught group classes before. At Weber, you are required to help teach,” she said.

She said pianists with big dreams who feel they don’t measure up to their peers should stop comparing themselves and focus on continuing to improve. “And that’s so hard to do in music, because you’re constantly listening to other people play,” she said. “Know that everyone has a different background, everyone started somewhere, and you will get better if you put in the work.”

Lin encourages students to look beyond the notes on the page for inspiration.

“You want to say something; it’s not just about playing the notes,” Lin advises her students. “Whenever you can, you want to find inspiration through literature, movies, films and television, or any other means to find stories that would move people to tears or uplift people’s hearts.”

For weeks before her uplifting performance at the fall jury recital, Peterson practiced the Brahms piece slowly and methodically. The year prior, her many hours of practice led to carpal tunnel and tendonitis in her arms. Through her recovery, she couldn’t wait to return to working on her dream of completing her Bachelor of Music and becoming a piano teacher and event pianist.

Peterson first came to WSU as a radiology major and music minor. The encouragement and welcoming atmosphere she found in the piano program convinced her to change majors.

Like Lin and Vanderpool, she found a place where her talent could blossom.

“It’s a really SPECIAL program,” Peterson said.



Through the WSU Piano Preparatory Program, a training lab run by Keyboard Studies director Yu-Jane Yang and assistant director **Laurisa Cope**, WSU students gain experience teaching piano to children ages 6 to 18. If interested in pre-K education, they can become licensed to teach the program’s Kindermusic classes for ages 3 to 7, which Yang directs with instructor **Sydnee Johnson**.

Students also give back to the community by performing for assisted living facilities and other locations.

“There’s a sense of mentorship in this program. People here want you to become better.”

— Marcus Garong, MHA grad



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Passing on their SKILLS

WSU STUDENT PIANISTS HELP INSPIRE
THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUSICIANS.



MICROFUND, MAJOR IMPACT

WSU's Wildcat MicroFund gives Utah entrepreneurs the opportunity to launch and build their businesses.

BY JEN WRIGHT



From gumballs to volleyballs, and from churning butter to building community, the Wildcat MicroFund helps Utah's everyday entrepreneurs bring their dreams to life.

The Wildcat MicroFund started small in 2018, focused on helping Weber State students, faculty and staff get funding for their business ideas. With support from America First Credit Union, it's grown into a statewide program that has helped hundreds of Utah small businesses.

The MicroFund was conceived within the John B. Goddard School of Business & Economics. **Brandon Stoddard**, director of the Hall Global Entrepreneurship Center; **James Taylor**, director of the Technology Commercialization Office and Office of Sponsored Projects; and their former colleague **Patrick Thomas** wanted to expand support for entrepreneurs.

The trio worked to create the MicroFund as a lower rung of funding — grants range up to \$3,000 — to help early-stage entrepreneurs get their ideas off the ground.

"We are geared toward the everyday entrepreneur, the people in your community who need funding that's not available through traditional banking, and need expert guidance to help them flesh out an idea and to launch and grow their business," said **Catherine Holbrook Clark**, who has managed the MicroFund since 2021.

While money is always helpful, it's the MicroFund process that may be most valuable. Applicants advance through several stages: filling out the application, creating a business plan, building a pitch deck, and, finally, making their pitch to judges who award the grants.

Everyone who meets the minimal participation criteria in their application is paired with a mentor — usually someone from a local Small Business Development Center — who helps them with the other pieces. At each stage, applicants submit their work and receive feedback until they get the green light to advance.

"This process helps the entrepreneur hone in on, 'This is what I'm selling. This is whom I'm selling it to. Here's why I'm pricing it this way,'" Holbrook Clark said. "A lot of entrepreneurs start a business and get ahead of that step."

She encourages MicroFund applicants to take advantage of the mentoring and resources available. "I think some people approach this thinking, 'I just want to get the money. And I want to go through this process as fast as I can,'" she said. "But believing in the process is incredibly helpful and beneficial for their business. We are trying to set people up to succeed."

STUDENT STARTUP: Outdoor Volleyball Club

Brothers **Dalton** and **Jackson Kohl**, both juniors at Weber State, take their roles as ambassadors for the Weber Entrepreneurs club seriously — so seriously that they are already running their own business, with help from the Wildcat MicroFund.

“We both submitted ideas to the MicroFund and agreed that whatever got picked, we would go in on together,” said Jackson, 23, a business administration and psychology dual major. “Dalton’s idea got more traction, so we went that way.”

Business administration major Dalton, 26, pitched his vision for the Outdoor Volleyball Club. “We both grew up playing volleyball, and we love outdoor grass volleyball,” he said. “But there aren’t many organizations in Utah that set up leagues and tournaments.”

His successful pitch was rewarded with a \$3,000 MicroFund grant in August 2023, and they used it to buy equipment for 3-on-3 and 4-on-4 tournaments they’re organizing across the state.

“Our plan is to continue to apply for the MicroFund to grow our tournaments and do some marketing,” Dalton said. MicroFund applicants can receive grants three times, for a total of up to \$9,000.

The brothers see a lot of potential in their startup.

“When you grow up playing sports but don’t go on to play in college, it’s hard to find that competitive outlet,” Jackson said. “This will help fill that gap.”

With the Utah High School Activities Association adding boys volleyball to its sanctioned sports for the 2023–24 school year, Dalton anticipates interest will continue to grow. “Our eventual goal is to have tournaments across Utah every weekend,” he said.

The MicroFund application process has been an excellent learning experience, they said. “There are a lot more opportunities out there to help you start a business than you think,” Jackson said. “There is free money, and resources and people who can help.”

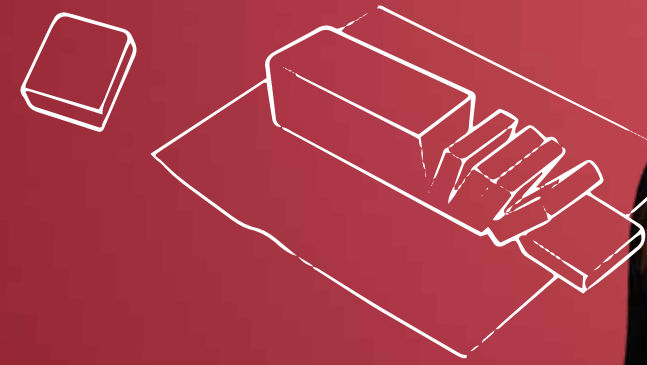
Dalton added the mentorship was a huge benefit. “In class, we learn and talk about hypotheticals: what could happen, what we could do,” he said. “But this has been a hands-on experience of all the things we’re learning.”



“

There are a lot more opportunities out there to help you start a business than you think. There is free money, and resources and people who can help.”

— Jackson Kohl



BUTTER BY BAYLEE: Mountain Born Creamery

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people started new hobbies. **Baylee Sorenson** conceived a new business.

By June 2021, the former medical benefits insurance professional and mother of two young kids had a new career: making and selling small-batch premium butter.

“Really good dairy and dairy products should be locally and regionally based,” said Sorenson, 33. Originally from Erda, Utah, she has lived in Ogden since 2019 and rents a small commercial kitchen space there. “We want to make butter and eventually other dairy products, and do it Utah-style.”

That means sourcing cream from Utah dairies and using a small churn — purchased with a grant from the Wildcat MicroFund in early 2021 — to turn it into butter. She kneads and presses it by hand, experiments with recipes to create seasonal flavors, and sells products at local farmers markets, neighborhood shops and through the creamery website.

“Farmers markets are the best,” Sorenson said. “I love meeting my customers face to face, along with all of the other people who are out there making and doing incredible things with their own ideas.”

Owning a small business is also exhausting. “The biggest challenge is the mental game you play with yourself,” she said. “There are so many ups and downs to having your own business.”

Balancing business with motherhood — her children are 4 and 7 — adds to the challenge. “Sometimes it feels impossible,” Sorenson said. “But I think about things like: ‘What am I modeling for my daughter and son? Am I demonstrating what my core values are to both of them?’”

To handle it all, she reminds herself to slow down and not everything will be perfect.

“You can’t be an entrepreneur and just work 40-hour weeks. It doesn’t happen that way. So you have to step away and be good with that. Am I going to be rich tomorrow? No. But am I setting myself up to have a good business five years from now? Yes, I think so.”

“

I love meeting my customers face to face, along with all of the other people who are out there making and doing incredible things with their own ideas.”

— Baylee Sorenson

NORMA'S FAMILIA NUEVA: Oaxaca en Utah

Norma Carver felt alone when she first arrived in Utah in 2008. But 16 years later, she's brought together a vibrant community of her own — and for many others.

Originally from Oaxaca, Mexico, she had been living in Wisconsin with family until she got married and moved to Kaysville. Today, Carver, 42, is the founder and executive director of Oaxaca en Utah, a nonprofit organization that celebrates the diversity and traditions of her original home.

As she traveled around Utah for her photography business, Carver met people from Oaxaca and other Mexican states, and from other countries. She began to think about ways to bring people together and came up with the idea to celebrate La Guelaguetza, an Oaxacan festival.

"It's a beautiful event when the diverse people of Oaxaca come together and bring their food, textiles, beautiful dresses, music, everything to share with the whole community," Carver said.

Her first La Guelaguetza in Utah was held in 2020 for 30 close friends. In 2021, they opened it to the public at a park near Carver's home, and about 550 people attended. "That gave us the opportunity to think bigger for the next year," she said. They began fundraising by selling food and holding raffles.

Carver also began the process to formalize her organization by registering with the state as a nonprofit in early 2022, with the help of Flor Lopez, program manager at the Suazo Business Center, a business resource center for Latino/Hispanic and other underserved communities. And La Guelaguetza kept growing: In July 2022, it drew more than 7,000 people. And, in 2023, 15,000 attended the daylong festival.

As La Guelaguetza has grown, so has Oaxaca en Utah. The organization welcomes people from all cultures: Some of its 35–40 regular volunteers come from Oaxaca and other parts of Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Guatemala. "We love to have everybody come and embrace our culture and be part of who we are," Carver said.

Oaxaca en Utah is often asked to give cultural presentations across the state. It also receives invitations to participate in community events and parades, and to lead Dia de los Muertos celebrations — which is what led Carver to the Wildcat MicroFund.

When organizing a 2023 celebration at Myers Mortuary in Ogden, Carver wanted to make it as authentic as possible. "We already have beautiful, colorful outfits," she said. "But I wanted to do all the outfits in black and white, which is the



“

I have big dreams, and everything is possible if you work hard yourself and also work as a team.”

– Norma Carver

traditional way.” **Enrique Garcia**, an employee at WSU, pointed her toward the MicroFund, and Carver's successful pitch allowed the organization to purchase clothing from Mexican artists.

"I went to Oaxaca in October for vacation and was able to meet the people who made these outfits," Carver said. "I'm grateful for them because they put in so much effort and work to make them special. And we really appreciate the MicroFund for making it possible."

Looking forward, Carver hopes to find a home for Oaxaca en Utah. "We're looking for sponsors, people who can help us build a cultural museum, where all the props and outfits are on display, and where people can come and have workshops about art, food, dialects, customs," she said. "I have big dreams, and everything is possible if you work hard yourself and also work as a team."

QUARTERS FOR KYLE: KL Vending Services

Kyle Lewis' excitement and drive are obvious every time he speaks. They're also helping power him into largely uncharted territories.

Kyle, 34, has a neurodevelopmental disorder and autism. After years of working in kitchens at restaurants like Wendy's, Chili's and Texas Roadhouse, he became the first person in Utah to take advantage of a state program that helps people with disabilities attain self-employment — and he's getting his business off the ground with a boost from a Wildcat MicroFund grant.

KL Vending Services, LLC, began in April 2023. Kyle runs the business along with his mother, Lisa, and a job coach, Jory Cross. They focus on quarter-operated machines that vend gum, candy and toys.

"The reason we came up with vending is because Kyle loves keys," Lisa said. "Ever since he was a kid, he's carried around a big set of keys."

Sure enough, when asked if he carries the keys to his vending machines, Kyle answers with an emphatic "Yes!" and produces a jangling set of keys hanging from a lanyard around his neck.

By the end of 2023, he had installed machines at four different businesses in Ogden and surrounding towns. "We want to stay local and support and work with local businesses," Lisa said.

KL Vending Services received \$2,000 from the MicroFund in October 2023, allowing them to pay off a loan that helped purchase their first two machines, as well as buy three others. Brad Lewis, Kyle's father, appreciates how supportive the MicroFund has been. "They were so excited about this idea and wanted it to succeed," he said.

While Lisa manages the books, Kyle and Cross handle the vending work. Cross is a job coach at the Ogden office of Community Options, a national nonprofit that supports people with disabilities. He spends four hours a week with Kyle collecting money and restocking machines, and also meeting with local businesses to find new locations.

"I want to help grow this the way Kyle wants, and it's been going very well," Cross said. "This is all about Kyle — he is what will make this business grow."

Kyle is also happy with how it's going: "I like being the boss," he said. "I want to have a great business."

MICROFUND NUMBERS

200–300
applications each month

3 PITCHES
heard each week

6–8 weeks
to go through process

\$1.2 MILLION
grant from America First Credit Union
helped grow program statewide




WSU graduate and retired medical professional Clair Weenig gives students a boost when applying to medical schools.

PHOTO BY KELLI SANTOS



BY ANNA BURLESON



STEP UP TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

**A WSU ALUM
PAYS IT FORWARD
BY HELPING PRE-MED
STUDENTS SUCCEED.**

CLAIR WEENIG BA '65

ividly remembers the anxiety he felt arriving in San Francisco with only \$10 and no place to stay, hoping to get into medical school.

Knowing first-hand that even a little assistance can go a long way, Weenig, a successful anesthesiologist, funds a Weber State scholarship with his wife, Joan, that pays for students to apply and interview at medical schools. “Being in San Francisco without much in your pocket isn’t exactly a party,” he recalled. “I still can’t believe I pulled it off, but I did.”

BELOW: Clair Weenig in his surgical scrubs while working as an anesthesiologist; photo courtesy of Clair Weenig



After high school, a close friend urged Weenig to enroll at Weber Junior College. As the seventh of eight children, and with his father’s small meat market failing financially, it was apparent the family couldn’t afford higher education.

Nonetheless, Weenig took odd jobs to earn the \$111 required for the first quarter.

A paper he wrote in a first-year English class caught the attention of **E. Carl Green**, Weber’s debate coach. He earned a spot on the debate team, along with a scholarship to continue his education. As the junior college officially became Weber State College, a four-year institution, Weenig decided to major in life science.

“Going to Weber State really was fortuitous for me,” Weenig said. “It was a very important springboard.”

While he originally planned to pursue law school, his advisor, **Jennings G. Olson**, recommended medical school because of his near 4.0 in math, physics, chemistry and other science courses, and very few courses geared toward law.

At the time, students applied to each medical school individually. Weenig remembers most application fees cost about \$15. His family had lost their home and moved in with his grandfather on a farm in Plain City. While Weenig’s University of Utah application was free, he paid the application fees for Georgetown, Johns Hopkins and the University of Pennsylvania. With only \$5 left, he had just enough to apply to the University of California, San Francisco as well.

UCSF invited him to an interview; the only problem was paying for the trip.

Luckily, he found an affordable train ticket — \$29 round trip from Salt Lake City.

Along with his \$10, he brought a brown paper bag for his luggage and a shoe box with tuna sandwiches for provisions. In San Francisco, he realized most hotels cost \$20 to \$30 per night. Luckily, a stranger at the bus station told him his brother was the night watchman at a hotel he could stay in for only \$8 — given that he checked in late and checked out before housekeeping made its rounds. This left Weenig with \$2, enough to cover the fare for the trolley to and from campus the next day with change to spare.



THE SCHOLARSHIP WAS A HUGE BLESSING TO BE ABLE TO GO THROUGH THAT PROCESS AND NOT GO INTO DEBT.”

— **BEN PACKARD**



Other interviewees at the UCSF dean’s office looked polished with their suits, ties, shined shoes and leather briefcases, a sharp contrast from Weenig’s humble attire and baggage. Still, he did his best through three interviews.

Four weeks later, he received a letter inviting him to join the UCSF medical school class of 1969. It also said he received a scholarship, covering his tuition and providing a \$2,500 annual stipend.

After graduating from the university’s medical school, Weenig completed an internship at the University of Colorado Hospital in Denver, residency at the UCSF Medical Center and two years in the U.S. Navy. He began his practice as an anesthesiologist in Walnut Creek, California, and held numerous leadership positions. After 20 years in private practice, he entered academic practice and retired from UCSF in 2006 as a clinical professor emeritus in anesthesiology.

While Weenig looks back on his UCSF acceptance with a smile, he doesn’t want other pre-med students to face the same uncertainty he did walking into the dean’s office.

“I don’t want students to think ‘But I’m from this small town...’ he said. “I didn’t want them to feel intimidated and that they shouldn’t apply and wouldn’t be able to afford it.”

Now, students usually apply to about 10 medical schools through one company for a flat rate of around \$200, with each additional school costing about \$100 each. If a school shows interest, there’s a secondary application that costs around \$100, and a subsequent application interview only means paying more, including travel costs.

WSU senior **Ben Packard** graduated pre-med in December with a major in microbiology and dual minors in neuroscience and chemistry. He said the scholarship was incredibly helpful as applying to medical schools is expensive. He applied to about 30 schools.

“The scholarship was a huge blessing to be able to go through that process and not go into debt,” Packard said.

ABOVE: Ben Packard was able to apply to 30 medical schools with help from the George Gregory M.D. Pre-Med Student Assistance Scholarship.

**WITHOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP
I DON'T THINK I WOULD HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO VISIT THOSE SCHOOLS."**

— DRAKE ALTON

Drake Alton found out he had received the scholarship after already paying for his applications, so the ability to reimburse himself for those costs meant he had the money to travel and see which school he preferred in person. He ultimately chose Mayo Clinic's Arizona location.

"Without [the scholarship] I don't think I would have been able to visit those schools," he said.

Weenig initially donated \$10,000 to create the scholarship, which is now endowed with over \$50,000 to award students.

He named the scholarship after George Gregory, a professor of anesthesia at the University of California Medical Center, San Francisco, known for developing a treatment of respiratory failure in prematurely born babies whose lungs have not fully developed. Gregory also provided Weenig with invaluable training during his residency and served as a role model and mentor.

"One of my best friends has a daughter who weighed less than one kilogram; about two pounds. None of those babies survived back in the early days, and now she's alive, a mother of two and a practicing nurse because of his technology," Weenig said.

Since the endowment was created in 2004, 15 pre-med students have been awarded \$15,298 total in scholarship money to assist with their medical school application expenses.

LEFT:

WSU graduate Drake Alton visited the medical schools he applied to with help from the George Gregory M.D. Pre-Med Student Assistance Scholarship.



Thanks to the George Gregory scholarship, and other financial assistance, **Brian Farnsworth** graduated from WSU debt-free before going to medical school at The Ohio State University. "That's a much better place than some people are at when they start medical school," he said.

Weenig also created a scholarship available to any WSU student, and named it in honor of his grandfather, Henry Merwin Thompson, who provided a home during those lean financial years. Weenig and his wife, Joan, have included WSU in their estate plans, which will increase funding for the Gregory Scholarship and, hopefully, benefit pre-med students for many more years.

RIGHT:

Joan and Clair Weenig, who together fund an endowment to help students applying to medical schools; photo courtesy of Clair Weenig



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PROFESSIONAL SALES MEETS CIVIL RIGHTS

Tim Border, professor of professional sales, teaches WSU students the essentials for success, including selling techniques, contract negotiation and, more recently, civil rights.

While visiting Georgia for the National Collegiate Sales Competition each spring, he takes students on tours of sites connected to Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy.

Border answered Wildcat's questions about the tours and how they connect to sales.

How did these tours begin?

In 2011, I accepted the role as a WSU sales coach and took a group of students to Atlanta for the National Collegiate Sales Competition at Kennesaw State University. Before we returned, I called a long-time friend, Charles Harris, who lives in Atlanta and asked him if he would give my students a personal tour of the King memorial and the historic district, including The King Center.

Charles was a personal friend of Dr. King who had marched with him on the bridge in Selma and spent time with him as a student and Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity brother. Because of his rich knowledge of civil rights and Black history, I felt like it would be good for my students to meet Charles to learn from his stories and knowledge. We have competed

in the NCSC every year since, and each trip includes the Dr. King tour and the Charles Harris history lesson.

What do civil rights have to do with professional sales?

Understanding the significance of civil rights, race relations and why it's important to know the history of where we have come from and where we want to go in the future when it comes to respect and inclusion has everything to do with professional sales in business. Segregation and discrimination have had a negative impact in U.S. history and U.S. business. Hurting people hurts the economy and limits us as a democracy. Involving all people and respecting and honoring them for who they are creates a synergistic power in business relationships and economic strength worldwide.

“CONNECTION AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY IN PROFESSIONAL SALES.”

What are the stops on the tour?

After we compete, we visit The Martin Luther King Jr. Historic District, which includes Dr. and Mrs. King's memorial crypt, the Eternal Flame, a museum dedicated to Dr. King, a stylized 'Freedom Road,' Dr. King's birth home and the Ebenezer Baptist Church. At each of these stops, Charles gives personal accounts of history and Dr. King's life. He also shares insights on how we need to treat each other today and stand up for treating people with respect.



ABOVE: Charles Harris, who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and WSU professional sales professor Tim Border

Can you share a fun memory from the trips?

One year, Charles invited all the students to his home for a home-cooked Southern meal, and, after the meal, my students were able to see many artifacts and pictures of Dr. King. We listened to personal recordings of Dr. King and Charles would later elaborate on his teachings.

What do you hope students learn?

The main objective I have as a professional sales professor is to expose my students to rich learning experiences. Professional sales students aspire to be trusted influencers. Dr. King was the quintessential influencer, and I want my students to study the character, skills, methods and principles Dr. King embraced. The things Dr. King advocated for 60 years ago are still relevant today, and it's important for my students to learn, remember and appreciate.

LEFT: Professor Tim Border (center) with Weber State students Isaac Clarke, Cort Dixon, Bailey Penhorwood and Cline Chatterton



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WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

SALUTES



Weber State honors outstanding individuals for their contributions to the campus and community at the Annual WSU Salutes Homecoming Awards ceremony.

"WSU Salutes is one of the many highlights for me during homecoming week where we celebrate a select group among our many alumni, community leaders and changemakers for their great, Great, GREAT accomplishments," said Brad Mortensen, WSU president.

The 2023 ceremony was held in October at the Browning Center Austad Auditorium.

EMERITI HOMECOMING ROYALTY



EDWARD G. BS '72 &
DEANNA SPARROW KLEYN

Ed Kleyn and Deanna Sparrow Kleyn attended Weber State until Ed completed his degree and was drafted into the Army. Ed relied heavily on his WSU education and previous church service to fulfill his duties as a counselor in the Army prison system at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He also started work on a master's degree at Pope Air Force Base. Following his military service, Ed accepted a job at a bank and gained a passion for banking. He finished his MBA in 1976, cultivated meaningful associations with his customers, supported numerous community organizations and served on several boards. In 2010, Ed received the Wall of Fame Award from the Ogden-Weber Chamber of Commerce. Deanna assumed primary responsibility for raising the couple's six children, four of whom graduated from WSU. She also worked at her family business, Sparrow's Home Furnishings, for 49 years. Deanna and Ed have been married 54 years and appreciate how much WSU has enriched their lives. They give back to the university through a scholarship fund and Ed's service on the John B. Goddard School of Business & Economics Business Advisory Council.

EMERITI ALUMNI LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



S. NEAL BERUBE BS '79

Neal Berube is a lifelong resident of Weber County and a proud graduate of Weber State. As a student, he served as vice president of Academic Affairs. While campaigning for this office, Berube met fellow student Jeana Hancock, and they were married in February 1979. Upon graduating, Berube went to work for Deloitte in Salt Lake City and obtained his CPA. He was subsequently employed by the Goddard family at United Savings Bank in Ogden. He spent the last 30 years of his career at Associated Food Stores, where he served a decade as CEO. Berube, a former commissioner for the Utah Department of Alcoholic Beverage Services, was invited to serve on Gov. Gary Herbert's committee for efficient and effective government. Currently, he is mayor of North Ogden and serves on Intermountain Health's board of trustees. Berube lends his time and expertise to the WSU Alumni Association Board of Directors and the John B. Goddard School of Business & Economics Business Advisory Council. He and Jeana have three sons, all of whom are WSU alumni. In honor of their oldest son, Ryan, who has muscular dystrophy, they established a scholarship for WSU students who may have a disability. Berube was also instrumental in obtaining scholarship funding for students with a family history of renal disease.

WSU PRESIDENT'S AWARD



JESSELIE BARLOW
ANDERSON

Jesselie Barlow Anderson credits her parents for influencing her commitment to education and serving her community. Her father, former Utah State Senate President Haven J. Barlow, and mother, Bonnie Rae Barlow, were powerful role models for their six children and set an inspiring example of community engagement and public service. Anderson attended Davis High School and earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Utah. She took a summer job in the Washington, D.C., office of Utah Sen. Wallace F. Bennett and remained on the East Coast for 12 years, working for Rep. Laurence J. Burton, Rep. Dan Marriott and Sen. Jake Garn. She married Scott Anderson in Tokyo, Japan, where he worked for Bank of America. The couple also lived in the San Francisco area before moving to Salt Lake City in 1991, when Scott accepted a position with Zions Bank. Anderson worked for her family business, Barlow Companies, for 30 years and currently chairs its board of directors. An advocate for higher education, she served on the Utah State Board of Regents, which later became the Utah Board of Higher Education, from 2013 to 2023. At WSU, Anderson is actively involved with the Olene S. Walker Institute of Politics & Public Service. Anderson chairs the state's Executive Residence Commission. Previously, she served on the Governor's Mansion Foundation, the Natural History Museum of Utah associates board, and Salt Lake County's Zoo, Arts & Parks Preservation Committee.

LEWIS W. SHURTLIFF AWARD FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION



SYDNEE DICKSON

Sydnee Dickson has served Utah children for 42 years. In 2007, she joined the Utah State Office of Education, which became the Utah State Board of Education and oversees public K-12 education in Utah, and was named Utah superintendent of public instruction in 2016. Her previous roles have included teacher, counselor, and school and district administrator. Dickson's education began in a two-room schoolhouse in rural Utah. She went on to earn master's degrees in school counseling and school administration, as well as a doctorate in education leadership and policy. Dickson has served on numerous state and national committees, task forces and boards and is frequently called on to present at national convenings. Currently, she serves on the Council of Chief State School Officers Board of Trustees and WestEd's Board of Directors, along with many state councils and commissions. She is passionate about developing education ecosystems of support to ensure all students are given access and opportunities for success through a high-quality education.

OUTSTANDING YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD



MORGAN SAXTON BS '13

Morgan Saxton credits Weber State for helping her launch her career as an award-winning broadcast journalist. Saxton recognized her professional path in seventh grade, and WSU nurtured her passion by helping her graduate from high school with an associate's degree. After earning her bachelor's degree at age 20, Saxton was hired at the *Standard-Examiner* newspaper. Six months later, she landed her first broadcast position as a reporter in the Midwest, where she brushed shoulders with several presidential candidates during the 2016 Iowa caucuses. She moved back to Utah to marry Chase Saxton, whom she first met while covering a story as a student journalist, and to work at KUTV Channel 2 as a morning reporter. She stayed at KUTV six years before giving birth to the couple's first child. Today, Saxton is a host for FOX 13's lifestyle show, *The PLACE*.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD



BRETT D. NELSON BA '99

Brett Nelson has worked on all seven continents with organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF and Physicians for Human Rights. Weber State set Nelson on a path toward a global healthcare career. In addition to benefiting from excellent teaching, Nelson served as a teaching assistant for multiple WSU courses. He also assisted with clinical research at McKay-Dee Hospital, used electives to join a surgical mission to Mali, and participated in service projects that laid the foundation for his passion in addressing health disparities among vulnerable communities. Nelson went on to receive medical and public health degrees from Johns Hopkins University, clinical training at Harvard University and a tropical medicine diploma in London. One of his first positions out of training was chair of pediatrics and senior pediatrician for Liberia's Ministry of Health, where he established curricula that trained the first pediatricians in post-conflict Liberia. Nelson has authored more than 100 peer-reviewed articles and is the editor of a textbook on clinical global health. He has obtained millions of dollars in grant funding for training programs to equip healthcare providers across Africa with life-saving skills. He also co-developed low-cost clinical innovations that continue to save lives.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD



ANTHONY JOHN "TONY"
JUSTMAN BS '88

Tony Justman grew up on a family farm in Colorado. In high school, he became active in speech and debate, which led him to Weber State's nationally recognized debate program. As a student representing WSU, he traveled across the country, winning awards and tournaments while building skills that would shape his professional life. Justman completed majors in political science and communication. With strong support from WSU faculty mentors, he pursued a law degree at Stanford University. After law school, Justman clerked for the Honorable Herbert Y.C. Choy of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, the first Korean-American appointed to the federal bench. Justman then practiced law for more than a decade in San Francisco, learning from lawyers in respected firms. In 2007, he joined Sony Interactive Entertainment, the headquarters for Sony Corporation's PlayStation division. He advises global teams and executives in intellectual property, antitrust law, data privacy, e-commerce and consumer protection. He helped launch products like PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, PlayStation Store and PlayStation Plus. Recently, Justman provided executive leadership in industry efforts to ensure video game player well-being and online safety. He supports diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives within SIE, in SIE's products and services and the legal community. He has been an executive sponsor of PlayStation's Latinx employee resource group and supports young, aspiring attorneys through organizations like the National Hispanic Bar Association.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



BETTY O. SAWYER

Betty Sawyer has been at the forefront of many civil rights, justice and equity initiatives in Utah's public and private sectors. She moved to Utah from Maryland in 1975, and later earned her second bachelor's degree and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Utah. As director of the Governor's Office of Black Affairs, Sawyer worked to gain passage of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday and the establishment of the Utah Martin Luther King Jr. Commission. She collaborated with legislators and members of the Board of Regents, which later became the Utah Board of Higher Education, to gain \$1 million to support a minority scholarship endowment and funding to develop strategic economic development initiatives, including Ethnic Young Achievers and the Marketing & Advertising Program. In 1991, Sawyer helped launch Project Success Coalition, a nonprofit supporting education, health equity, cultural arts, leadership and job opportunities for Ogden youth. For 33 years, Sawyer led the movement to have Juneteenth Freedom Day recognized as a Utah holiday. She founded the Utah Black Roundtable, a think tank and policy organization that brings individuals, congregations, organizations and businesses together to provide proactive solutions to pressing issues. Sawyer is a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and serves as president of the Ogden branch. She led a community effort to preserve the city's historic Marshall White Community Center, and has received many awards for serving the community. She is married to Gerod "Butch" Sawyer.

CLASS NOTES

ALUMNI UPDATES

'60s

CHERYL STRONG AS '67, BS '69, MS '04 retired from Weber School District, where she taught physical education, business and English for 30 years. She volunteers for Friends for Sight, a local nonprofit providing free vision screenings, helping people of all ages and backgrounds access quality eye care. Cheryl also worked as an usher for Snowbasin and Weber State University Athletics. Her husband, **GARY STRONG BS '69**, is a retired educator and coach of 40 years from Weber School District, where he taught physical education, health, history and first aid. Cheryl and Gary have served three missions for their church.

ARTHUR JONES BS '68 and **CALLEEN WOOLSEY JONES BS '69** met in a Weber State sociology class and were married in 1968. After graduating, Art pursued a master's degree at Southern Illinois University. Afterward, they returned to Utah, where Art worked as a 4-H youth specialist and was later appointed assistant state 4-H leader. He completed a doctorate at the University of Utah in 1978. In 1981, Utah Governor Scott Matheson appointed Art to manage the Utah State Fair and the Division of Exposition. Art encouraged the International Association of Fairs and Expos to promote university training for fair managers. In 1986, Art helped create the curriculum and became the first professor of fair and exposition management at

Georgia State University. In 1990, Art accepted a faculty position in the Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Department at Utah State University. He taught for 20 years and served as department head for six years. Calleen taught four years of elementary school with the Fulton County School District in Georgia. After raising their four sons, she taught in the Logan City School District for 23 years. Art and Calleen enjoy life in Paradise, Utah, while keeping track of 19 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

'70s

THOMAS R. AUSTAD BS '71 is a retired podiatric physician and surgeon of 34 years. He practiced at The Foot

and Ankle Clinic in Roy, Utah, McKay-Dee Hospital, Ogden Regional Medical Center, and Davis North Hospital, now Holy Cross Hospital - Davis. He earned a Doctorate of Podiatric Medicine from the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine, now Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine, in 1977 and held diplomate status with the American Board of Podiatric Medicine and the American Board of Podiatric Surgery. Tom was also a fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Orthopedics and Medicine. He served a medical humanitarian mission to the Marshall Islands in 2011. **SHAWNEE HARROP AUSTAD BS '70** is a retired elementary teacher from Valley View Elementary in Roy, where she taught first, second and third

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grade. Tom and Shawnee both served on the WSU Alumni Association Board of Directors. They are proud parents of eight children and recently completed a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

'80s

DAVID WILLIAMSON BS '82

attended Weber briefly before joining the United States Navy in 1972. He served as a nuclear power reactor operator and was stationed on the George Washington submarine. After his time in the Navy, he returned to Utah and resumed his studies. He held various positions with Envirotech, a data processing center in Salt Lake City, before working with the Utah State Board of Education as a computer programmer. During his 35-year career with USBE, he applied evolving software technologies to provide easier access to data. David was also part of a small team that wrote the Integrated Rehab Information System (IRIS), a program that supported vocational rehab education. He was president of Utah-based user groups for SoftwareAG and Computer Associates International, now known as CA Technologies.

JENNIFER HUNTER DENHALTER AS '84, BS '86

is a guidance counselor at Cedar High School in Cedar City, Utah. She earned a Master of Social Work degree in 1991 from

the University of Utah. Prior to moving to Cedar City in 1998, she worked as a school social worker in Salt Lake County. She loved her time at Weber, where she met her husband. They volunteer summer evenings at the Utah Shakespeare Festival. They have three adult children and look forward to grandchildren.

WILLIAM ORMOND BS '84, BS '11

is a language arts and U.S. government teacher at Clearfield Job Corps. He also works as an independent attorney specializing in wills, trusts and evictions. He received a Juris Doctorate in 1988 from J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University. He is a member of the Utah Council of Teachers of English and the Utah State Bar. He served as a member of the Ogden School District Board of Education for four years and a local Boy Scouts of America troop leader for over 20 years. He received the Silver Beaver Award for pro bono services. William's wife, **NATALIE SMITH ORMOND MS '08**, taught math at Ben Lomond High School for 35 years. She also taught for two years at Carbon High School and Dixie College, now known as Utah Tech University. She is retired and helping to care for their grandchildren in Hurricane, Utah, and Liberty, South Carolina.

KALE SYME BA '88, MS '00 has taught math at South Ogden Junior High School for the

past 10 years. He previously taught at Weber High School and Sand Ridge Junior High School. Between teaching stints, he worked as a CPA for seven years and then as the accounting manager at an Ogden electrical contractor. He earned a Juris Doctorate from Brigham Young University in 1992. His wife, **TRACY SYME BA '91**, is currently an educational aide at Burch Creek Elementary in South Ogden. She previously worked for Davis School District as an elementary classroom teacher and reading specialist.

'90s

JAMES "LUKE" ROBERTS BS '90

is retired from healthcare as a cardiovascular sonographer. He worked for 10 years as an independent provider through Colorado Valley Radiology, providing care in many states, including Hawaii, Maine and Alaska. He then worked for the University of Texas before retiring in 2023. As a student, Luke transferred from Baylor University to Weber State and immensely enjoyed his experience and Utah's beauty. He and his wife have started a real estate business, R Squared Property Solutions, serving Northeast Texas and Dallas. They have two children and live in rural Texas.

ANDREA WOODRING BA '94,

BA '98 has been an educator for over 25 years and is Weber

School District's principal assigned to Weber Adult Education, the 2022 Utah Adult Education Program of the Year. As a teacher and a school librarian, she has taught on every level in the K-12 setting. She was president of the Utah Educational Library Media Association and also started PDS Conferences, offering professional development services for educators. She was named the 2008 Utah Educational Library Media Association School Librarian of the Year and the 2022 Utah Adult Education Leader of the Year. She is also an Ogden-Weber Chamber of Commerce Athena Award finalist. She holds a library media endorsement from Utah State University; master's degrees in both educational leadership and curriculum design, along with an English language learners endorsement, from Western Governors University; and graduate certificates in integrating technology in K-12 classrooms, adult learning, and elementary reading and literacy from Walden University.

CAROLYN AUSTAD BS '98

became marketing manager for Destination Cinema and publications editor at the Utah Travel Council during the 2002 Olympic Winter Games following graduation. She currently owns and manages two VRBO locations in Florida and St. George, Utah, and

serves on the Salvation Army board in Ogden. She has four children with her husband, **TOM AUSTAD AA '01**, a general dentist at Clinton Dental Group and Orthodontics. He attended Dalhousie University's dentistry school. Carolyn and Tom are avid Weber State fans and live minutes away from the university. Their oldest daughter, Lauren, recently attained her associate's degree through WSU's Concurrent Enrollment program while in high school and was accepted to WSU's School of Nursing. They are proud to have the WSU tradition continue in their family.

CAMI PETERSON AA '98, BA '00

is a case manager and peer sports specialist with Davis Behavioral Health, where she helps patients with parenting skills and cultivating nurturing home environments. She has worked as a reading specialist for Ogden School District and, through Davis Behavioral Health, prevention specialist with Title I schools in Davis County. As a prevention specialist, she helped students in grades three to six with setting goals and avoiding peer pressure. Her husband, **BRANDON PETERSON AA '98, BA '99**, took part in running a family business, Jeremiah's Restaurant and Best Western High Country Inn, which his grandfather established in 1979. Brandon oversaw

accounting, hotel operations and a major renovation beginning in 2003. He earned his Master of Business Administration from the University of Utah in 2004. They have five children.

DIANA MEISER AA '99, BA '04

is an assistant professor and librarian for the College of Engineering, Applied Science & Technology at Weber State

University. Diana serves as a student mentor and an advocate for first-generation students. Diana also serves as a volunteer with the Ogden City Christmas Village Committee and the Pilar Pobil Legacy Foundation.

'00s

JACOB HANSEN AS '00, BS '03

is a project manager for



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WSU Campus Planning & Construction. After graduating from WSU, he worked with youth in a wilderness setting through RedCliff Ascent Wilderness Therapy Program. Afterward, he worked on a gas pipeline from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas with Sterling Construction. He found his way back to WSU as the Wildcat Stores receiving manager before becoming the Wildcat Design & Print manager and then moving into his current position.

BEN NADOLSKI BS '00 supervises operations in northern Utah for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. He is a member of the Ogden City Council and was elected Ogden mayor in 2023. He worked as a biologist before overseeing legislative affairs and working on public lands issues with the governor's office. In 2008, he completed a Master of Science in Fisheries Biology from Utah State University. He is active in youth sports and numerous local

initiatives such as the GOAL Foundation, Wildcat Club and Weber River Partnership. His wife, **JAYNEE PASKINS NADOLSKI BS '02**, is the senior associate commissioner of the Big Sky Conference and oversees governance and compliance for all conference schools. She is the sport supervisor for volleyball, women's basketball and tennis. Jaynee has served as president of the Junior League of Ogden and has been recognized for her leadership in the community

by a variety of organizations, including being named the JLO Difference Maker and receiving the 2019 ATHENA Leadership Award presented by the Ogden-Weber Chamber's Women in Business. She is currently an honorary commander at Hill Air Force Base. Jaynee is a fierce advocate for youth sports and has volunteered her time mentoring and coaching young girls in the Ogden Untamed program for the last five years. She and Ben live in Ogden with their two daughters.

JENNY BALD STONE AS '07, BA '12 has a passion for helping young people achieve their goals despite challenging circumstances. Her love for education and advocacy began at Youth Impact Ogden, where she learned from youth and mentors alike. This work led to a connection with Nurture the Creative Mind, where she has instructed multiple creative writing workshops. She has now

taken her experience to public education, where she incorporates valuable social and life skills into her language arts curriculum at Two Rivers High School in Ogden. Jenny is a member of the TRHS leadership team and was a speaker at the 2022 Utah Alternative Education Association conference. In 2023, she received her Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction from Western Governors University. She lives in Utah with her family, but regularly visits her old stomping grounds in Southern California.

BONNIE RUSSELL BA '09 is an engineering operations platform manager at Zions Bancorporation. In 2022, she earned an Executive MBA from the University of Utah. Bonnie has completed the American Bankers Association Business of Banking Program and the YWEmpowered development

program. She is an Equality Utah Ally, serves on the Board of Directors for the Salt Lake City Library and teaches yoga. She lives in Salt Lake City and loves to spend as much time outside as possible.

'10s

KERRI CLEMENT BA '11 graduated as a nontraditional student from the Teacher Assistant Pathways to Teaching program. After teaching elementary school for 10 years, she decided to take a different career path amid difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. With her love of baking, she created Jake's Bakes Dog Treats. The quickly growing company, which specializes in healthy, gourmet dog treats, is nearing two years in business. Custom packaged Jake's Bakes treats were featured at the WSU Alumni Association's third Annual

Purple Paw Parade. Kerri is excited for what the future of her business holds.

WESTON LARSEN BA '13 AS '22 has worked as a computer and network specialist for WSU's Division of University Advancement since 2014. He holds a certificate in Pro Tools, a digital audio workstation developed and released by Avid Technology for Microsoft Windows and macOS. He is currently pursuing a Master of Music in Music Technology at Southern Utah University.

ANTONIO MOYA BFA '13 is an award-winning graphic designer for WSU's Department of Marketing & Communications. He has contributed to major university projects such as Wildcat magazine, annual reports and the university's Ever Upward marketing campaign. Prior to his role at Weber, he was a graphic designer at FranklinCovey. He has also been a cast member in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* and *The Addams Family* at the Terrace Plaza Playhouse in Washington Terrace, Utah.

MIKELLE BARBERI-WEIL BS '14 joined Weber State's Department of Professional Sales as assistant director of the Alan E. Hall Center for Sales Excellence after 10 years of sales management experience, raising her children, and serving in many executive board positions. She was named



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Lori Belnap Pehrson BS '87, retired aerospace leader and WSU Board of Trustees member, with her mentee, 2022 computer science graduate **Dallin Welch**



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sales center director in July 2015 and recently accepted a full-time position as assistant professor. After serving as president of both the GOAL Foundation and the Community Foundation of Utah's boards of directors, Mikelle co-founded the Ogden Circle of Giving, which funds programs that promote positive change through creativity, innovation, education and enhanced well-being. Her research interests include leadership, prosocial theory, business communication and human skill/career life design. She earned an Executive Master of Leadership from the University of Southern California and a PhD from Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. Her husband, **BRENT WEIL BS '93**, has served in resident care for over 25 years and

is the president and CEO of Eden Health based in Vancouver, Washington. He joined Eden Health in 2023 after his tenure as chief operations officer, and then chief executive officer and president at EmpRes Healthcare. His career in healthcare began as a certified nursing assistant at a skilled nursing facility in Ogden. He later became administrator of Aspen Care Center. Before joining Eden Health and EmpRes, Brent served Sun Healthcare Group as divisional vice president, where he oversaw the company's western operations. They live in Huntsville, Utah.

CORBIN J. STANDLEY BS '15 earned a PhD in 2023 and a Master of Arts in 2019 in the psychology field from Michigan State University. As a leading voice in suicide prevention, Corbin has

presented research and served as a keynote speaker, featured speaker, panelist and moderator, both nationally and internationally, including engagements with the International Summit on Suicide Research, the World Congress of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, the International Conference on Community Psychology and the American Psychological Association. Corbin's research examines how social and systemic contexts impact suicide risk and prevention. He is the director of impact communication and continuous improvement at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and currently lives in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

ELAINE COPE AAS '17, BAS '18, MS '23 is a systems engineer with BAE Systems,

an aerospace company that provides technology-led defense and security solutions. At BAE Systems, she supports the Air Force's Sentinel program. She is also the owner of Endurance Laserworks, which offers custom engravings for products.

AMANDA WILLIAMS EITING BS '18 is a high school physics teacher at the Salt Lake Center for Science Education in Salt Lake City. Following graduation, Amanda volunteered in Mozambique, studied the NASA ICON mission at the University of California, Berkeley Space Sciences Laboratory, and taught physics and astronomy concepts to students in grades three to eight at AstroCamp in Idyllwild, California. Amanda recently received a Knowles Teaching Fellowship, a highly intensive program to support early career science and math teachers. She is one of 35 members across the nation selected for the 2023 cohort.

'20s

JASMINE LIECHTI AS '20, CP '23, BS '23 is a student success specialist at the Ogden-Weber Technical College Student Success Center, where she helps students with resumes, mock interviews, elevator pitches and job placement. She also helps oversee the operations of a self-serve

food pantry, hygiene station and the Zen Den stress relief center. Prior to her role at OWTECH, Jasmine was a medical receptionist at Mountain View Eye Center. She volunteers for Wasatch Wanderers, a nonprofit animal rescue organization.

DENISE CALL BS '21, MPC '22 is the interim program director at Catalyst Accelerator Ogden, a company that empowers startup technology companies to accelerate their involvement in the Department of Defense ecosystem by providing training, connections, mentorship and business development in a collaborative setting. In this role, she works with tech startup companies nationwide, teaching them

how to effectively create contracts with Hill Air Force Base and other Department of Defense organizations. This brings newer, faster and better technologies to serve the Department of Defense needs. Prior to this, she worked as a research assistant for Susan Madsen's Utah Women and Leadership Project and is the current Weber County lead for the UWLP's A Bolder Way Forward Initiative.

BILLIE HATCH MCJ '21, MPC '23 is a support staff member for Weber County. She competed for WSU in cross country in 2020-2021 and track and field in 2021-2023, earning several Big Sky Conference honors, including the 2022 conference MVP. Billie recently competed in the

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2023 Chicago Marathon, where she qualified for the U.S. Olympic Trials, finishing 23rd overall out of more than 40,000 runners. She married

teammate **KEVIN KIRK MED '23** in September 2023.



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A special thanks to everyone and their pups who participated in the third annual Purple Paw Parade this past fall. Thanks to Weber State Downtown, Ogden City and many Ogden businesses and you, we made Ogden purple like never before!

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October 5, 2024

WILDCAT INBOX

STAYING IN TOUCH WITH ALUMNI & FRIENDS

Wildcat was sad to learn of the passing of **Dean W. Hurst**, also known as "Mr. Weber State," on Jan. 14, 2024, at age 97. Hurst served as the first full-time director of the Alumni Association.

Over the course of his career, Hurst, a 1948 graduate, helped secure more than \$50 million in gifts to the institution. He procured funds for many iconic structures, including the Stewart Bell Tower and Dee Events Center. He is also credited with creating Weber State's beloved mascot, Waldo the Wildcat.

Wildcat honors the memory of **Sterling O. Sessions**, who served as dean of the School of Business & Economics from 1975 to 1983. In addition, he led the effort to fund the construction of Wattis Business Building and secured papers from Utah Construction Company, later known as Utah International, for the university's archives. Sessions forged strong connections with Utah's business community.

We welcome readers to send their memories of Hurst and Sessions to magazine@weber.edu.



Hurst was also a talented performer and appeared in many local theatre productions. This photo is from WSU's production of *The Music Man*, 1961-1963.

We honored a legend in WSU theatre, **Catherine Zublin**, with an article in our fall 2023 issue about her career teaching costume design and how she inspired students. Those former students wrote in.

That tribute to Catherine Zublin was beautiful. Thank you. It reminded me of all the ways that she has influenced my life.

I remember walking into her costume history class one semester. She welcomed me even though she had never seen me in any of her classes before. She asked about my studies and was surprised to learn I was studying to be an astrophysicist. "What the hell is an astrophysicist doing in my costume class?" she asked me with a smile. From the moment I stepped into her class, she found a way to support me in my efforts. She introduced me to the costume shop, where I seemed to light up with a whole new light — I was excited and free to use my creative skills to learn and grow. It was then that she suggested getting a BIS, which would allow me to still study my astrophysics while also studying my two other passions: costumes and story writing. She had been an answer to prayer! Every step of the way from that point on through graduation she was there, encouraging me and giving me ideas for success. She never doubted me, but she

did joke that my degree was the strangest degree she'd ever seen. I have learned so much from her, along with my other two mentors (Ryan Ridge and Stacy Palen). Weber State is truly blessed with wonderful teachers!

Thank you for letting me share a pivotal memory with you!

— **Kymira Brandon, BIS '21**

Catherine was an incredible instructor and a master of costume design. She designed almost every costume I wore in productions at Weber, my favorites being *Pirated!*, *Dracula* and *Man of La Mancha*. Happy retirement, Catherine. Thank you for making us all look great.

— **Timothy Letheic Goins**

Our fall 2023 issue honored the memory of Charles "Chick" Hislop, legendary track and field and cross country coach, with an editorial by current coach Corbin Talley.

A former runner wrote in with this memory.

As a freshman during 1977 indoor track...

ME: Coach, I've heard that carbonated water (soda pop) will cut your wind?

HIM: I don't know about that, but the sugar alone'll kill ya.

I didn't drink a can of pop for another three years.

Coach Hislop was right. And ahead of his time. An uncomplicated and uncompromising leader.

— **Clark Skeen, BS '84**



WSU's stone wall near Harrison Boulevard is a popular backdrop for student photos, but most don't realize it was the first structure built on the school's "new" campus in 1954. When Weber went from a college to university in 1991, the lettering was updated on the wall to reflect the name change.

We posted about the historic wall on Instagram [@WeberStateAlumni](#) and received the following responses:

"I remember that. I had started attending in Aug of 1990 and it became a university shortly after! ❤️"

@deb_ks

"I was there going from college to university! What a great experience 🥰"

@steph_maxx_2011

"I remember standing out on Harrison New Year's night when the new university sign was unveiled. 🥰❤️"

@sithmarisbrood



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The WSU Marching Band performed at the Homecoming Fan Fest before the football team faced University of California, Davis, losing by only one point, on Oct. 14, 2023.

 BENJAMIN ZACK



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For 45 years, Weber State has been lighting an electric W on a slope of Mt. Ogden during Homecoming week, igniting Wildcat spirit and community pride.

It has never been a permanent fixture. Now, WSU plans to change that. A permanent Flaming W on the mountain is in the works. It will be the first hillside letter built with solar panels — reflecting the university’s commitment to sustainability. The W will be lit with purple and white bulbs to celebrate special WSU occasions.

While much of the funding is already in place to build and maintain this landmark, Weber State is working to raise the final \$500,000 to light the W for Homecoming 2024.

Help Wildcat pride light up the night!

