



PSYCHOLOGY

2020

NEWSLETTER

2020 PSYCH NEWSLETTER



Photo by: BYU

WHAT A YEAR!

The 2019 school year was a year to always be remembered. We experienced new and unexpected events that allowed us to grow in ways we never had before. As we reflect on this unique school year and the stories, accomplishments and changes in the Psychology Department, let us ponder what we have learned for ourselves and look forward to whatever lies in store for the new year.



Photo by: BYU

2020 VALEDICTORIAN:

CAMILLE CARTER TUTTLE



Photo by: BYU

Camille Carter Tuttle, a double-major in psychology and human development, is the daughter of Eric and Allison Carter and the fifth of seven siblings. The activities she enjoys most are playing with her family, spending time outside, reading excellent books, and swimming. During her undergraduate studies and mission to Mexico, she was repeatedly drawn to the complex nature of cognition and the human experience. Throughout her BYU education, she

participated in the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Student Outreach Council as well as Dr. Birmingham's Health and Behavior Lab as a research assistant. She began a master's program in counseling psychology in January and looks forward to the day when she can open her own private practice for mental health counseling. She attributes her success at BYU to the support of her incredible husband, Lawrence, her wise professors, ambitious classmates, and to God for all He encouraged and helped her to accomplish.

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FACULTY ADVANCEMENTS



Photo By: BYU

Brock Kirwan: Full Professor



Photo By: BYU

Sam Hardy: Full Professor



Photo By: BYU

Rebecca Lundwall:
Associate Professor



Photo By: BYU

Wendy Birgmingham:
Associate Professor

FAREWELL TO KAT GREEN

Written by: Dr. Chad Jensen

As the 2019/2020 academic year concludes, we bid farewell to one of our valued psychology faculty members, Kat Green. Kat is leaving the university to pursue an opportunity in clinical practice. She has made many important contributions in our department and we regret that she will no longer be part of our faculty. Kat has made a notable influence in our clinical psychology doctoral program. Her expertise in assessing and treating psychological problems of early childhood prepared her to offer a unique training opportunity for our students in the comprehensive clinic. She has been active in mentoring women graduate students, helping students prepare for clinical internships, and improving our mentoring of doctoral students. Kat has also been a skilled and conscientious classroom instructor. She has made significant contributions to our undergraduate psychology curriculum as a member of the undergraduate curriculum committee and she has taught many core undergraduate courses. Kat has also been an outstanding colleague and department citizen. We wish Kat well as she begins a new chapter in her career. Her influence has made a lasting mark on our department.



Photo By: BYU

FAREWELL TO DR. MILLER

Written by: Dr. Michael Larson

We are grateful for the service of Dr. Harold “Hal” Miller who retired from the BYU psychology faculty in July 2020. Dr. Miller graduated with his PhD from Harvard in 1975. He joined the Department of Psychology faculty soon thereafter (1975) and has served BYU and BYU students for nearly 45 years. During his time at BYU, Dr. Miller was instrumental in fostering relationships with students and providing deep learning experiences in the honors and general education programs throughout the university. His unique interest and skills in developing students led to his appointment as Associate Director of the Honors Program, Associate Dean of General and Honors Education (now Undergraduate Education). Dr. Miller is a scholar and devoted behavior analyst with expertise in the application and understanding of learning and motivation theory, self-control, and behavioral economics (among many other areas). He set up the first operant conditioning lab at BYU and was instrumental in bringing the study of behaviorism to BYU students. Perhaps one of his greatest scholarly contributions is *The Sage Encyclopedia of Theory in Psychology*, a two-volume set published in 2016 with nearly 300 entries on theoretical topics across the range of psychological disciplines. Dr. Miller is also a remarkable leader in the local community.



Photo by: BYU

Dr. Miller was deeply involved in the Boy Scouts of America, receiving multiple awards and serving in numerous leadership positions, including the President of the Utah National Parks Council from 2009 to 2011. He served as a member of the Provo City Council from 2012 to 2016 where he emphasized pollution reduction and was instrumental in developing the Provo Clean Air Toolkit (<https://provocleanair.org/>). In addition to his work as a scholar, educator, and civic leader, Dr. Miller is a kind and thoughtful individual with a penchant for deep thought and personal connection. His intellect and character stand out as traits admired by his peers in the Psychology Department. We are truly grateful for Dr. Miller's service to the department and wish him the best in his new adventures in retirement.

STUDENTS WHO HAVE RECEIVED AWARDS FOR THE 2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR TO ATTEND CONFERENCES AND PARTICIPATE IN INTERNSHIPS:

Rocky Mountain Psychological Association, Denver, CO

Hannah Brown
Katelyn Jackman
Sabrina DuPaix

American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

Hannah Brown

Assn. for Applied Psy Assn. for Applied Psychophysiology and Biochophysiology and Biofeedback, LaJolla, CA:

Tyrone Johnson
Hannah Erickson
Kelsie Giras
Samira Ghalkani
Mikel Cressman
Colter Clayton
Ashlie Thacker

Society of Pediatric Psychology, Dallas, TX

Carson Clark

Internships

Sean Vanhille: Utah Valley Pain Management
Rebecca Lynn: Coalition on Human Needs
Kristalynn Appiah: AMAR Foundation
Janice Elizabet Evans: Division of Child and Family Services
Aspen Briggs: Blip Digital Billboards

COMING FULL CIRCLE

Congratulations to Professor Dawn-Marie Wood on
becoming a Visiting Assistant Professor



Photo by: BYU

Dawn-Marie Wood:

BYU Visiting Assistant Professor, BYU Alumna

Early on a Saturday morning, with fall sunlight filtering through the trees lining the outdoor-seating area at Gourmandise Bakery in downtown Salt Lake City, I perused the breakfast menu while seated across the table from a dear friend and fellow BYU alumna. After getting caught up on what our children were doing and debating whose privilege it would be to pick up the tab (as is our

custom), the conversation turned to our common mentor, now an emeritus professor at BYU, Dr. Erin D. Bigler. My former-graduate-student friend, now a licensed clinical neuropsychologist herself, expressed how influential Dr. Bigler had been, mentoring her along the path from doctoral candidacy to professional practice. "I wouldn't be where I am today without Dr. Bigler's guiding influence," she shared with absolute conviction. I nodded in agreement and recounted my own story:

When my husband, Mark (MAcc '94), and I were newlywed undergraduates at BYU, Dr. Bigler was the bishop of our first married student ward on campus; little did I know when we met him as "Bishop Bigler" that his positive influence would shape the trajectory of my personal and professional life. Eventually serving as both my spiritual

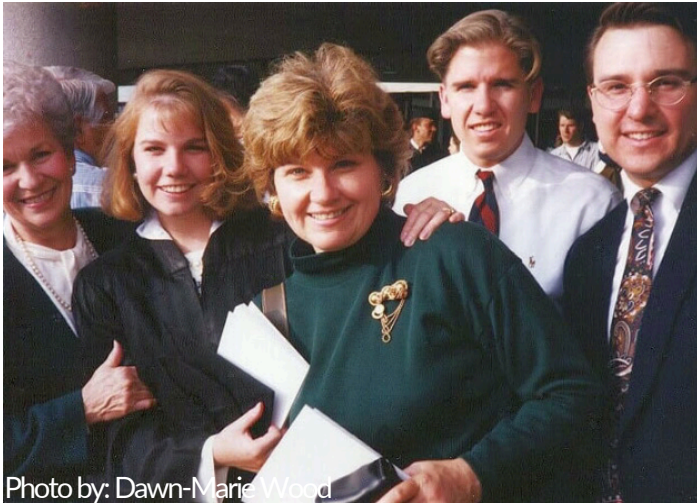


Photo by: Dawn-Marie Wood

advisor and academic mentor, he became a trusted supporter throughout my formative undergraduate experience, ever patient and always understanding as we counseled together about graduate studies, career, and family. His wise counsel to “follow the Spirit” and “put family first” was instrumental in helping me to make the difficult decisions I

faced in my early 20s. During that time, I shifted my academic focus from pre-med-type classes to better understanding the biological underpinnings of human behavior, which became the emphasis of my coursework and research contributions as a graduate student under Dr. Bigler’s continued supervision.



Photo by: Dawn-Marie Wood

Not long after graduating from BYU with master’s degrees and relocating to the San Francisco Bay Area, Mark and I welcomed a daughter, the first of our four children, and I prioritized the challenging but rewarding full-time pursuit of motherhood. Two decades (to the semester) later, in Fall 2014, this same daughter began her under-graduate studies at BYU, and I started turning my thoughts to teaching

Photo By: Dawn-Marie Wood
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(on a part-time basis) and to help coordinate the research efforts in Dr. Bigler’s Brain Imaging and Behavior Lab. Considered (by then) nothing short of a living legend in his field, Dr. Bigler was still on campus, still mentoring



Photo by: Dawn-Marie Wood

young minds, and still more than willing to assist former graduate students to “come full circle” and fulfill lifelong dreams.

“There’s no question that my return to campus was facilitated by Dr. Bigler’s continued encouragement and support,” I concluded before my friend and I parted ways at the Gourmandise Bakery that crisp autumn morning.

In fact, I will never forget Dr. Bigler’s openhanded response when I inquired about the possibility of contributing in BYU’s Psychology Department some 20 years after I graduated. His email response began: “The first thing is CONGRATULATIONS for navigating parenthood that’s a Ph.D. itself.



Photo by: Dawn-Marie Wood

He always made me feel not only needed but valuable, whether as a member of his ward, as the undergraduate valedictorian in his department, as a graduate student on his research team, or (eventually) as an adjunct faculty instructor and research coordinator in his lab. Twenty years prior, when I had defended my master’s thesis in a small, windowless conference room on the 11th floor of the Kimball Tower, Dr. Bigler and the other defense committee members had listened with great interest, had asked pointed questions, and had offered helpful suggestions for my thesis manuscript’s revision before asking me to step into the hallway so they could deliberate privately. Some minutes later (after what felt like an eternity), I was

invited back in, and they extended one final question. As it turns out, that last query contained a life-changing invitation: “We just have one more question for you—one that might bring you ‘full circle,’ if you’re amenable to considering the possibility.”

I swallowed hard and steadied my hand on the overhead projector beside which I stood. My mind raced with rising panic, imagining the committee's inevitable insistence that I go back and revise my research hypothesis—because I'd missed something—which arduous task would likely include collecting additional data and/or rerunning

statistical analyses. How would there be time to accommodate such a request, when my husband and I were both trying to complete our master's degrees by December? I took the cap of my pen, ready to note what would be required. The committee looked firm and resolute—and I was sweating (probably visibly now). Then Dr. Bigler half-smiled, gave a slight nod of approval, and the committee member to his right spoke: “Would you consider, at some future time, returning to teach on a full-time basis at the University? We could use your talent in this department—if that might someday be of interest to you.”

You could have knocked me over with a feather.

In that moment of simultaneous shock and elation at the conclusion of my thesis defense, I knew that teaching at BYU (among associates whom I admired and respected) was EXACTLY what I wanted to do. My committee's kind invitation to consider returning to my

alma mater one day as a full-time, teaching faculty member became my lifelong goal. So it is that four children later and on the heels of teaching for six years in a part-time (adjunct) capacity, I'm thrilled to have recently accepted a full-time position as a visiting assistant teaching professor in BYU's Psychology Department. This is where my journey began—and where I hope it will continue for many years to come.

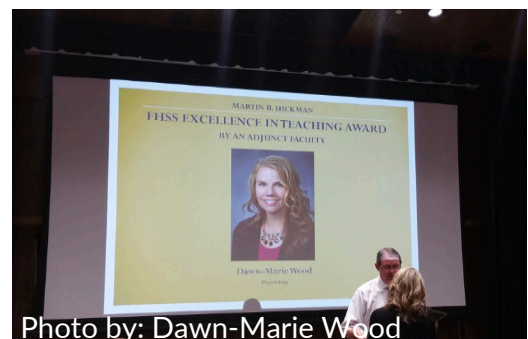


Photo by: Dawn-Marie Wood

Student of Courage Award : EVAN HANCOCK

"My first memory was when, as a three year-old, I was trying to figure out how to get into my tree house up the ladder with my bad leg. I didn't remember the first round of surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation treatments when I was two, but I did have my disabilities to remind me. In a way, my disability was my solace. It allowed me to understand, even as a young boy, what had happened to me and take pride in the life-changing experience that I had overcome, even if I couldn't remember that.

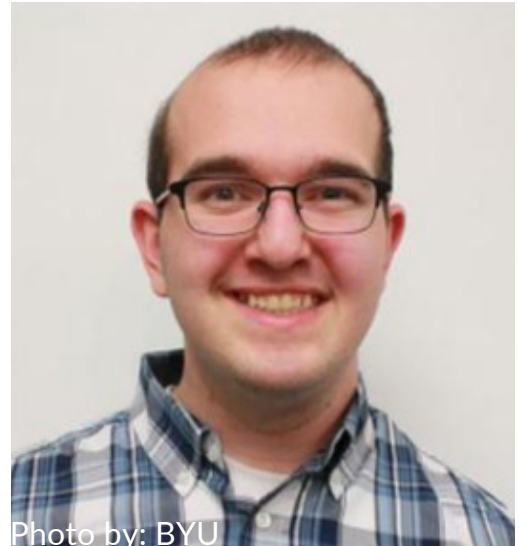


Photo by: BYU

That changed when I was diagnosed with a recurrence of the same brain tumor and again at age 16, and then a kidney tumor at 21. I overcame it by focusing on others. Even though my cancer experiences got harder each time, my capacity to empathize and help others only grew. I started looking for ways to serve others, to use my experiences as a tool rather than a hindrance. Because of my disability, I can't work in most places that will hire college students because most require a type of physical labor. I also cannot walk far distances, which means to find a job at BYU, I have to find something on campus, and most jobs on campus are taken by other students. I also have additional expenses to accommodate for my physical disability, such as purchasing a locker for my books, or paying for numerous prescriptions to combat depression and anxiety that have occurred due to my last cancer experience. Because of my experiences, I would use any financial assistance I receive to pursue a masters in health administration after getting my bachelors in psychology. With my unique personal experience being in and out of the hospital for 22 years, some good, some bad, I hope that I can make the hospital system just a little bit better. As I've explored this career path, I have grown more excited about the possibilities, and have overcome my trial of truly accepting my disability as a unique, important, and valuable part of who I am." -Evan Hancock's Scholarship Essay Submission

MENSTRUAL CYCLE EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOR IN DECISIONS ABOUT POTENTIAL GAIN AND LOSSES OF FOOD By: Marcia M. Ventura

Does the menstrual cycle affect a woman's judgment and decision-making and subsequent choice behavior? Every day, we make choices about how to respond to possibilities of gaining, or losing, money, food, social credibility, and social resources, etc. In Professor Hal Miller Jr.'s Experimental Psychology Lab, doctoral student Marcia M. Ventura and a crack team of excellent undergraduate RAs (about 40 over 3 years) have been investigating if the menstrual cycle affects women's behavior when it comes to food.

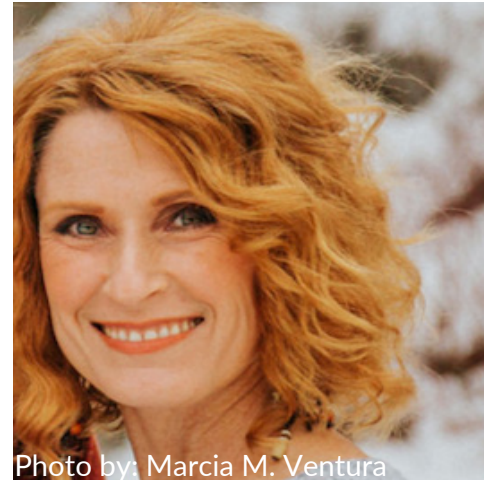


Photo by: Marcia M. Ventura

While it is well-documented that the hormonal fluctuations associated with menstrual cycle phases are correlated with internal biological phenomena and certain behaviors—particularly those associated with reproduction—there is plenty of folklore surrounding its possible effects and it is not at all clear if, or how, menstrual cycle phases affect judgment, decision-making and choices when possible gains and losses are at stake.



Photo by: BYU

We know that all humans, male and female, have bounded rationality—we don't behave like the mythical homo economicus who always acts reasonably, assesses all relevant information and maximizes personal goals and satisfaction. Besides common departures from rationality like over-eating, under-sleeping, over-spending and failing to exercise regularly, we systematically employ cognitive biases when making decisions. For example, we predictably change our preferences based on the way situations are framed; we tend to make decisions based on the first information presented to us and fail to

properly evaluate subsequent information; we consistently overweight low probabilities and underweight high probabilities depending on our desired outcome; we seek for information that confirms our prior beliefs about a situation ignoring information that may affect the outcome; and, we are more motivated by losing something than gaining it, a phenomenon called loss-aversion. Loss-aversion can heavily influence the way we make decisions, preventing us from pursuing available gains as we scramble to avoid perceived losses.



To investigate the role of the cognitive bias, loss-aversion, in food choices across the menstrual cycle, regularly cycling women, age 18-25, are recruited to come to the lab, either at specific points of their cycles or each morning during 2-3 menstrual cycles. Having just fasted for 10-14 hours, the women are hungry and ready to earn delicious food. They play a simple computer game in which they decide between alternatives that allow them to earn food points that are exchanged for food (yogurt, fresh fruit, granola, oatmeal, pancakes, breakfast burritos, etc). Occasionally, the game causes them to lose some of the food they have earned. How much food the women earn depends on how they allocate their choices between the alternatives and how they respond to the losses. For each group of women tested, a matched, non-cycling group of men were tested for comparison.

As we carefully measure the participants' behavioral responses, we calculate a precise value for how much the women value the loss of food over a gain of the same amount of food. In other words, for each participant, we can determine the precise value that she over-values a loss compared to a gain—she might value the loss of 1 unit of breakfast food 3.4 times more than gaining it and this will affect her choices about how to pursue earning the food. (Outside the laboratory, the risk of perceived losses of food could come from projected food scarcity or dieting, for example)

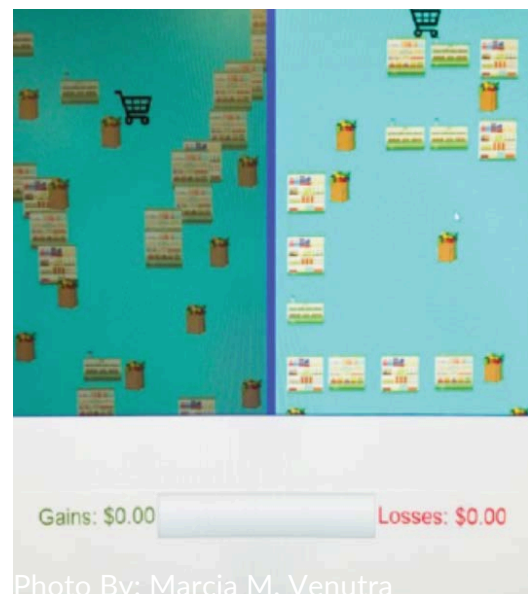




Photo By : Marcia M. Ventura

We have also conducted a similar study to measure women's degree of loss-aversion when making choices about money. In both studies, the goals are to elucidate the degree to which loss-aversion affects women's choice behavior in two common decision-making domains—food and money; to determine if loss-aversion co-varies with the menstrual cycle phases; and to identify real functional relationships between the menstrual cycle and its possible effects on judgment and decision-making and discredit harmful, folkloric beliefs.

Sex Offender Treatment Program



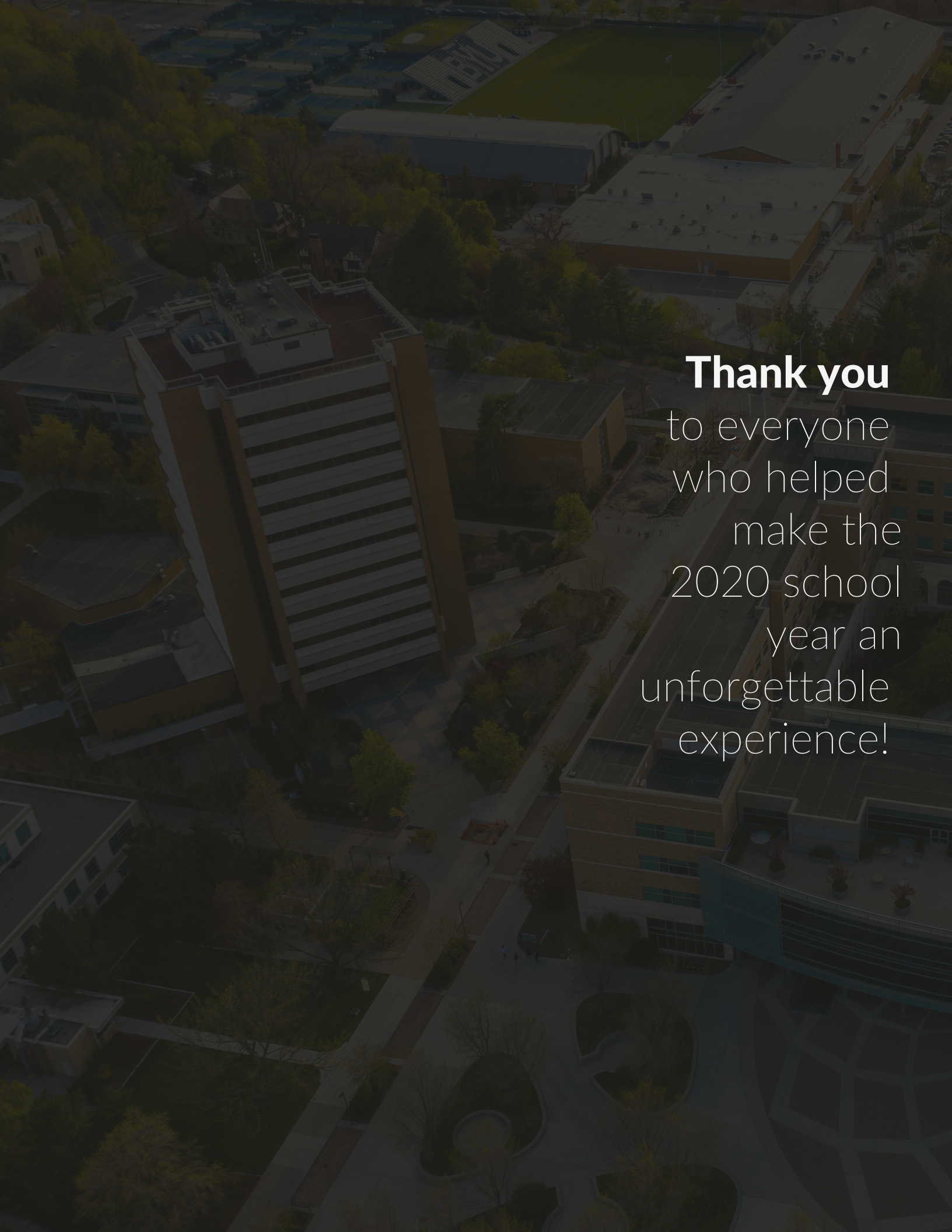
Photo By : Sierra Jarvis

Erica Bennett shared with us about her experience working as an intern at the Utah State Prison and what she has been able to learn from the experience. "It is refreshing to be given so much responsibility as an intern--we make our own schedules, manage our own caseload, and navigate

the prison on our own. Besides the normal life skills that come from managing your own work and time, I have also developed a larger sense of empathy for those in the criminal justice system. Society often deems these people monsters, and to be honest, some of them are. They certainly have done awful things. But I have learned a lot about remembering another's humanity, especially as the majority of these offenders want to get better, want to function in society, and want to leave these deviant sexual behaviors behind. It has been incredible and frankly humbling to watch society's "monsters" be allowed to change, grow, and progress."



Photo By : Sierra Jarvis

An aerial photograph of a university campus. A large, multi-story brick building with horizontal white stripes is the central focus. To its right is a long, low brick building. In the background, there are green sports fields and a parking lot. The foreground shows a paved walkway with some trees and landscaping. The entire image is dimmed with a dark overlay.

Thank you
to everyone
who helped
make the
2020 school
year an
unforgettable
experience!

