

USU Uintah Basin Excels at Providing Excellence in Education | Statewide Campuses

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Utah State University and its 30 campuses and centers throughout Utah, is known for offering students quality education through a huge variety of credentials or degrees, and flexibility to fit any schedule. [USU Uintah Basin](#) is no exception. In Spring 2021, several faculty received recognition during the institution's annual awards for commencement.

Mike Christiansen, associate professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, was named College of Science's "*Teacher of the Year*," while USU Assistant Professor of Wildland Resources, **Mark Chynoweth**, was named "*Teacher of the Year*" for the S.J. & Jessie E. Quinney College of Natural Resources.

Additionally, **Shana Geffaney**, assistant professor of biology in the College of Science and **David Law**, professor in human development and family studies in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, were both named "*Undergraduate Faculty Mentor of the Year*" by their respective colleges.

"I could not be prouder of the faculty at the Uintah Basin Campus and pleased with the recognition they each have received from their department, college and the university," said James Y. Taylor, associate vice president. "They have made unique and specific impacts by following their passion and commitment to students in creative ways."

As an associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, Christiansen makes use of varied technologies to provide students with ready access to a vast library of learning materials. He has created nearly 870 online YouTube

chemistry videos which have garnered more than six million views. In addition, Christiansen is a prolific writer and actively publishes in the area of chemistry education. Beyond the classroom, Christiansen mentors aspiring researchers, and many of his students have earned awards, including the university's undergraduate research grants and USU Uintah Basin's *Undergraduate Researcher of the Year*.

With an infectious passion for teaching, more than a few USU alumni, who are now professionals in health care, research and education, confess they often return to Christiansen's lectures to refresh and hone their chemistry skills. Christiansen joined USU Uintah Basin in 2011 and resides in Vernal with his wife and four children.

Chynoweth joined USU in 2017, quickly becoming a teaching and mentoring force in the college. Along with a heavy teaching load, he has developed nine courses since joining the College of Natural Resources covering a wide breadth of topics. He has spent the last 7 years conducting fieldwork in northeastern Turkey focused on brown bears, gray wolves and Eurasian lynx. Chynoweth is involved with the Wildlife Society and was recently elected to the executive board of the College and University Education Working Group. He has focused many efforts to presenting at various professional meetings and building internship programs for the students at the Uintah Basin Mentoring Program.

Geffaney earned a doctorate at USU studying the evolution of toxin resistance in animals.

Her educational experiences showed her that collaborative science including undergraduates is a critical and exciting aspect of teaching at USU. She developed a unique research internship program (the Uintah Basin Research Internship) that provides early research experiences for undergraduates. Working with Geffaney, these students have published their research findings and attended national meetings. Her work has helped students find a place in a wider community of researchers as well as explore their own passions and interests.

Law is both a professor and associate director for the Uintah Basin Campus who oversees the Statewide Faculty-to-Student Mentoring Program, where he has mentored approximately 300 undergraduate students. He teaches courses on marriage and family relations and family life education. Law's research interests are in the areas of family life education, the scholarship of teaching and learning and the impact of faculty-to-student mentoring on student success.

With campuses in Vernal and Roosevelt, the Aggie experience and access to the same quality degrees, faculty, research is available right here in the Uintah Basin. For more information, visit uintahbasin.usu.edu.



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$('#content > .row.justify-content-end').remove(); });
    
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Assistant Professor of Wildland Resources, Mark Chynoweth (left), pictured here with students, was named "Teacher of the Year."



Shanna Geffeny, assistant professor of biology, was named "Undergraduate Faculty Mentor of the Year" by the College of Science.