

# The Graduate School Citations for Academic Excellence

Winter 2023

Presented by The Graduate School

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in collaboration with the  
Graduate Student Association (GSA)





Dear friends and members of our graduate education community,

At the end of each academic semester, we have the great pleasure to honor those students and faculty who have distinguished themselves in graduate education at Grand Valley State University. The Graduate School Citation Awards for Academic Excellence and the Graduate Student Association Faculty Awards are proud Grand Valley State University traditions that began in 2006 thanks to the combined efforts of the University Graduate Council and the Graduate Program Directors. The Graduate School and the Graduate Student Association serve as co-sponsors for this event.

The Graduate School Citation Awards recognize excellence in academic performance in several categories. Graduate students are nominated for these awards by staff or faculty members, advisors, graduate program directors, and departmental chairs or school directors. The Associate Vice-Provost for the Graduate School reviews the nominees and approves the final selection. Each recipient receives a certificate of recognition and a graduate honors cord. Additionally, the Graduate Student Association honors members of our graduate faculty who have distinguished themselves in mentoring and supporting our students at Grand Valley. Their noteworthy dedication helps to create a vibrant and engaged learning community.

Grand Valley State University is extremely proud of the accomplishments of these graduate students and graduate faculty members. I commend each of our award winners and wish them a very successful future.

Congratulations to all!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey A. Potteiger'.

**Jeffrey A. Potteiger, Ph.D., FACSM**  
Associate Vice-Provost for the Graduate School  
Grand Valley State University

# Table of Contents

Graduate School Citations Recipients for Winter 2023	5
Graduate Student Association Faculty Awards for Winter 2023	10
Academic Excellence in a Degree Program	12
Outstanding Master’s Thesis	19
Outstanding Final Project	23
Outstanding Publication	28
Excellence in Service to the Community or Profession	32
Excellence in Leadership and Service to GVSU	36
Excellence in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion at GVSU	41
Excellence in Sustainability	45
3-Minute Thesis Competition	47
Kimboko Inclusion Award	49
Outstanding Mentorship Award	50
Outstanding Teaching Award	55
Graduate Student Presidential Research Grant Recipients	58
Other Graduate Students Demonstrating Academic Excellence	60
Graduate Student Association Officers	61
Graduate Council Officers	61
The Graduate School Staff	62

**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATIONS FOR  
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE  
Winter 2023**

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN A DEGREE PROGRAM**

*Seidman College of Business*

- ❖ Jose Velasquez, Business Administration

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ Lyndsey Bensel, Literacy Studies
- ❖ Elizabeth Clark, Higher Education
- ❖ Alyssa Klein, School Counseling
- ❖ Andrea Mehall, Educational Specialist in Leadership
- ❖ Alexandra Patterson, Health Administration
- ❖ Abena Pinamang, Criminal Justice
- ❖ Hannah Rethamel, Public Administration
- ❖ Malik Robinson, Social Work

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ Isaac Beasley, Cybersecurity
- ❖ Sarah Schneider, Engineering
- ❖ Purva Shah, Applied Computer Science

*College of Health Professions*

- ❖ Katelyn Erickson, Physical Therapy - Doctorate

*College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Mary Gifford, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Joshua Hamilton, Communication
- ❖ Samantha Howell, School Psychology and Psychological Specialist
- ❖ Satya Veni Lekkala, Health Informatics and Bioinformatics
- ❖ Elayna Saint Amour, Biostatistics

*Kirkhof College of Nursing*

- ❖ Kara Roman, Nursing Practice - Doctorate

**OUTSTANDING MASTER'S THESIS**

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ Michael Doran, Engineering

*College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Erika Forest, Biology

**OUTSTANDING FINAL PROJECT**

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ Breanna Carter, Social Work

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ Roxanna Azmoudeh, Health Informatics and Bioinformatics
- ❖ Isaac Beasley, Cybersecurity
- ❖ Nicole Nelson, Engineering

*College of Health Professions*

- ❖ Katelyn Erickson, Physical Therapy - Doctorate
- ❖ Jared Gregory, Physical Therapy - Doctorate
- ❖ Sydney Sprau, Public Health
- ❖ Gabrielle Ureste, Physical Therapy - Doctorate

*College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Russell Hartley, Communication
- ❖ Taylor Segorski, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Karina White, Biology

*Kirkhof College of Nursing*

- ❖ Abigail Voss, Nursing Practice - Doctorate

**OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION**

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ Brendan Beauchamp, Engineering
- ❖ Hyeong Gyu Jang, Applied Computer Science

*College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Jessica Ensing, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ John Hart, Biology

**EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY OR PROFESSION**

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ Kingsley Njoku, Criminal Justice
- ❖ D'Angelo Starks, Social Work
- ❖ Michael Sullivan, Public Administration

*College of Health Professions*

- ❖ Judith Eguzoikpe, Public Health
- ❖ Emily McDonagh, Physical Therapy - Doctorate

*College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Elizabeth Cazallis, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Allison Cox, School Psychology and Psychological Specialist

*Kirkhof College of Nursing*

- ❖ Emily Bemben, Nursing Practice - Doctorate

## EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE TO GVSU

### *College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ Rachel Dobben, School Counseling
- ❖ Alina Foreman, Health Administration
- ❖ Brian Hedberg, Public Administration
- ❖ Elizabeth Johnson, Social Work

### *Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ Joseph Ohaeche, Cybersecurity

### *College of Health Professions*

- ❖ Samantha Behl, Physical Therapy - Doctorate
- ❖ Shannah Mwanda, Public Health

### *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Dahlya Kamarudin, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Madison Schierbeek, School Psychology and Psychological Specialist

### *Kirkhof College of Nursing*

- ❖ Kristin Cooper, Nursing Practice - Doctorate

## EXCELLENCE IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT GVSU

### *College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ Donald Avery, Public Administration
- ❖ Finn Marcks, Social Work

### *Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ Joseph Ohaeche, Cybersecurity
- ❖ Ciana (CJ) Witherell, Engineering



*College of Health Professions*

- ❖ John Mittelbrun, Physical Therapy - Doctorate

*College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Javier Guillen, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Autumn Stokes, School Psychology and Psychological Specialist

*Kirkhof College of Nursing*

- ❖ Katina Kuerth, Nursing Practice - Doctorate

**EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY**

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ Katelyn Fauska, Social Work

*College of Health Professions*

- ❖ Jared Gregory, Physical Therapy - Doctorate
- ❖ Rachel Walsh, Public Health

*Kirkhof College of Nursing*

- ❖ Kaylie Waters, Nursing Practice - Doctorate

3 Minute Thesis Competition

*College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Karina White, Biology

*Congratulations to the Winter 2023  
Graduate School Citation Award Recipients!*

## GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION FACULTY AWARDS

Winter 2023

### KIMBOKO INCLUSION AWARD

#### *College of Health Professions*

- ❖ Tonya Parker, Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training

### OUTSTANDING MENTORSHIP AWARD

#### *College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ Paul Bylsma, Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling
- ❖ Tonisha Jones, School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Legal Studies

#### *Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ Samah Mansour, School of Computing

#### *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

- ❖ Sok Kean Khoo, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Richard Rediske, Annis Water Resources Institute

#### *Kirkhof College of Nursing*

- ❖ Joy Washburn, Kirkhof College of Nursing

## OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARD

### *College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ Judy Williams, Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling
- ❖ Emily Nichols, School of Social Work

### *College of Health Professions*

- ❖ Sarah Nechuta, Public Health

*Congratulations to the Winter 2023  
Graduate Student Association Faculty Award Recipients!*

**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATION FOR  
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN THE DEGREE PROGRAM  
Winter 2023**

*Seidman College of Business*

❖ **Jose Velasquez, Master of Business Administration**

Jose has displayed excellent academic performance throughout his time with the program. He has always been prepared to participate and be engaged in course discussions. He has provided his own experiences to connect his perspectives to broader business contexts. Jose is a student that shows initiative by asking tough questions beyond the surface of the material to address fundamentals. Outside of the classroom, he is an Advanced Lead Engineer at GE Aviation Systems in Grand Rapids. He is also the co-founder of a wholesale exporting company focused on selling electronics and computer hardware to Latin America. Overall, Jose is a critical thinker, a team player, and results oriented. He has consistently proven to be passionate in his field of study through his 4.0 GPA and success in his professional career.

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

❖ **Lyndsey Bensel, Master of Education in Literacy Studies**

Lyndsey has demonstrated academic excellence by maintaining a high GPA and providing valuable experiences for her students. Her thoughtful and conscientious persona in her literacy instruction practicum course has guided her students to grow as readers and writers. Lyndsey also stood out in her other two practicums, demonstrating the thoughtful and excellent application of learning. She is seen as a leader in her courses, and as an emerging leader in the field.

❖ **Elizabeth Clark, Master of Education in Higher Education**

Elizabeth has consistently demonstrated a sincere commitment to growing as a scholar-practitioner. As a student, Elizabeth asks critical questions that are the result of her thoughtful engagement with the material. She is punctual

with her work, produces work that exceeds course expectations, and is consistently a leader among her peers. She is responsive to feedback, communicates clearly and openly in verbal and written form, and her coursework reflects her thoughtful and analytical approach. Elizabeth is a reliable teammate, a critical thinker and conversationalist, and holds her classmates to a high standard. She is an inclusive collaborator with her peers inside and outside of the classroom.

❖ **Alyssa Klein, Master of Education in School Counseling**

Since her enrollment into the program, Alyssa has excelled in all aspects of her graduate student experience. She has demonstrated the ability to balance multiple responsibilities, apply critical thinking and commitment to seeking what is right for her students, and demonstrated scholarly knowledge through her exceptional academic work. Her passion for serving elementary students was evident in her internship experiences and her desire for feedback from supervisors to further enhance her school counseling skills. Her passion for her field has allowed her to build a virtual community with her students and colleagues. Alyssa's students and classmates frequently speak of how she was able to share her experiences and the support they received from her despite the distance and being in different stages of the program.

❖ **Andrea Mehall, Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership**

Andrea exemplifies academic excellence, not only through her academic performance, but also through her exceptional dedication to her field. She currently serves as the high school principal for Holland Public Schools and was able to maintain a 4.0 GPA. She contributes well thought-out discussions and creates a collaborative atmosphere to in-person sessions and discussion boards. Faculty members see Andrea as a leader and role model among her student colleagues and have said that she is the kind of educator they would want for their own children.

❖ **Alexandra Patterson, Master of Health Administration**

Alex has demonstrated exceptional academic performance. She was able to reach the top of her class with an excellent GPA while serving as president of the Health Professional Graduate Student Alliance. She actively works to

support her fellow students and improve the program by seeking ways to increase student engagement and participate in MHA program committee meetings. She has been open about program strengths and opportunities for improvement while asking for faculty support for student organization events. She is enthusiastic about her chosen field and will start a postgraduate administrative fellowship with Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin, putting her on the fast-track in her healthcare leadership career. She exemplifies excellence in the program and was also recognized by the university with the Glenn A Niemeyer award.

❖ **Abena Pinamang, Master of Science in Criminal Justice**

Abena has proven to be a driven student throughout her time in the Criminal Justice program. She is a recipient of the 2022 *Justice & Society Graduate Fellowship* award and maintains a 3.95 GPA. Abena is president of the highly recognized Honor Society, Alpha Phi Sigma, and also mentors other graduate students. Her abstract was also accepted at the American Society of Criminology annual meeting for presentation. She has already received acceptance letters for doctoral programs and is looking forward to furthering her graduate education. Her academic and leadership accomplishments have made a positive impact on the program.

❖ **Hannah Rethamel, Master of Public Administration**

Throughout her time in the program, Hannah has proven herself to be an outstanding student and a key contributor to our community of learners. Her work is always of the highest quality. She has mastered the ability to balance her studies with her work at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Hannah aims to connect real-world examples to classroom discussion, which brings life to the theories explored in the program. Faculty and peers have shown gratitude for her support of other students when opportunities with her organization have become available.

❖ **Malik Robinson, Master of Social Work**

Faculty have described Malik as a great example of what the Academic Excellence in a Degree Award represents. He has maintained a high GPA while balancing his studies with his internship requirements, as well as pursuing a second master's degree. He does not rush through his learning

and is dedicated to prioritizing processes over quick outcomes. Malik has been described as a leader and is innovative in his approach to social issues. In his capstone project, he identified a need for diversification of board membership and focused his efforts on reviewing models of recruitment and board leadership that seek to promote diversity. His hard work in both academic and professional settings has been commemorated by professionals in his field.

### *Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

#### ❖ **Isaac Beasley, Master of Science in Cybersecurity**

Beyond his outstanding grades in his coursework, Isaac is highly engaged in all his class discussions, lab assignments, and course projects while maintaining a 4.0 GPA. Both faculty and his peers agree that Isaac's performance goes above and beyond course requirements. He exudes professionalism and has a strong passion for ethics. Outside of class, he works as a student worker and recently helped the School of Computing with setting up the Cyber Threat Range that was highlighted in the GVNEXT news in March. Isaac continues to showcase his enthusiasm for his field of study through his academic and professional relationships and projects created throughout the program.

#### ❖ **Satya Veni Lekkala, Master of Science in Health Informatics and Bioinformatics**

Satya has demonstrated important qualities of academic excellence such as initiative, enthusiasm, and endurance in her field of study. She currently holds a 3.9 GPA. She has shown leadership and teamwork skills through her group projects in her courses with colleagues within and outside of her program. She has mastered various projects and challenges without difficulties. Faculty have noted that her organization and listening skills were among some of her most admirable and outstanding qualities as a student. Above all, she has maintained a positive attitude in everything she does.

#### ❖ **Sarah Schneider, Master of Science in Engineering**

Sarah is described as a very intelligent and motivated student who is passionate about learning everything she can about engineering. She asks

relevant questions to help understand topics that are not in the class reading. She is dedicated, mature, and not afraid to present herself and her thoughts in front of the class. For her graduate thesis, Sarah chose a topic of an application of a thermal generator that she has had no formal training with and was completely self-taught. Her determination has allowed her to successfully balance both work at Gentex and her academic responsibilities with the program. Faculty have noted her dedication, drive, and positive attitude is what make her work interesting and an enjoyable student and professional to work with.

❖ **Purva Shah, Master of Science in Applied Computer Science**

Purva has proven herself to be a dedicated and passionate student. Her remarkable academic performance has given her a 3.9 GPA. Faculty have noted Purva to be an intellectually curious and hard worker. Her devotedness to excellent work in the classroom has set her above her peers in the program. Her program instructors unanimously agree that her work ethic and enthusiasm for education exemplify this award.

### *College of Health Professions*

❖ **Katelyn Erickson, Doctor of Physical Therapy**

Since the beginning of her enrollment into the program, Katelyn has stood out to faculty members as an academic leader in her cohort. She has demonstrated mastery of course content, the ability to apply concepts into clinical practice, and teamwork by assisting her peers with their education. She maintains a 3.97 GPA and has made significant contributions in the areas of scholarship and service. Her group research project was selected as her cohort's Outstanding Research Project and will soon be submitted for publication in the Journal of Acute Care Physical Therapy. Katelyn has consistently proven her passion for service which reflects the mission, vision, and values of the Doctor of Physical Therapy program.



## *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

### ❖ **Joshua Hamilton, Master of Science in Communication**

Throughout his time with the program, faculty have described Joshua as a dedicated student who exhibits a level of mastery of the subject matter that is rare. He possesses remarkable reading knowledge relevant to the field of communication and skillfully applies conceptual principles to practical communication problem-solving situations. Joshua's passion for education and commitment to learning is shown through his 4.0 GPA. Faculty have stated they are confident that he will continue to be a major contributor in the field of communication throughout his career.

### ❖ **Samantha Howell, Master of Science in School Psychology and Psychological Specialist**

Sam has been described to exemplify academic excellence each year of her graduate training. She has earned some of the highest course grades and has the highest graduate GPA amongst her cohort, all while maintaining a Graduate Assistantship with the program. Her work in local K-12 schools over the past three years has also been exceptional. Her current internship supervisor shared that Sam goes "...above and beyond what is expected of a school psych intern. She is functioning almost completely independently and has built relationships and trust in her role, allowing her to effectively service her buildings and have a presence that goes beyond the cases she has. She is a true asset to Grandville, and we love having her here!"

### ❖ **Mary Gifford, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**

Mary has demonstrated academic excellence through her 4.0 GPA and her skills applied in lectures and laboratory classes. She has meticulous attention to detail when performing her lab experiments, analyzing data, during presentations, and in her papers. One of her instructors described her manuscript for the Scientific Communication course as being "most extensive in both literature scope, length, and maturity of analysis. It's still one of the best papers among the PSM [Professional Science Master's] students in this course." Outside of class, she served as the financial officer and the president of the Professional Association of Graduate Scientists student organization.

Mary's dedication inside and outside of the classroom is a great example of this award.

❖ **Elayna Saint Amour, Master of Science in Biostatistics**

Elayna will be graduating this semester after an incredibly strong performance throughout the Biostatistics master's program. Her strong attention to detail and work ethic have been evident through her assignments, presentations, and her 4.0 GPA. She made a positive impact during her Graduate Assistantship in the 2021-22 academic year and during her internship in the 2022-23 academic year. Jessica Parker, Elayna's internship supervisor and 2013 alum of the GVSU Biostatistics master's program, stated, "While she has been an intern with us, Elayna has grown and shown us the great work she can do. She is constantly taking on more projects and tackling them in a timely manner along with the application of the appropriate statistical techniques. We were excited she wanted to stay on with the team and that we are able to bring her on full-time as an Associate Biostatistician after graduation."

*Kirkhof College of Nursing*

❖ **Kara Roman, Doctor of Nursing Practice**

Kara represents academic excellence through, not only her outstanding academic performance, but also through her compassion and empathy as a clinician. She strives to ensure that patients consistently receive healthcare that is both high-quality and person-centered. Her doctoral project, *Reducing Delirium and Functional Decline in Hospitalized Older Adults: Implementation of CoCare HELP®*, *An Evidence-Based Intervention*, highlights the dedication she has to evidence-based care. The program's clinical and theory faculty consider Kara to be an excellent student who demonstrates the essential characteristics of a doctorly-prepared nurse practitioner.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATIONS FOR  
OUTSTANDING MASTER'S THESIS  
Winter 2023**

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

❖ **Michael Doran, Master of Science in Engineering**

- **Thesis Title:** RISC-V Virtualization with seL4 Microkernel
- **Thesis Committee:** Nabeeh Kandalaft (Chair) – School of Engineering, Chirag Parikh – School of Engineering, Byron DeVries – School of Engineering

Michael's thesis includes advanced areas of engineering and computer architecture. His research presents the first public implementation and evaluation of the RISC-V architecture, in particular Embedded virtualization with Modular Open-Source. Faculty has described Michael as an outstanding computer engineer—both in industry and within the program. He is ambitious and self-motivated, and his passion for the field is clear through his research.

*Michael's abstract appears on the next page.*

## ABSTRACT

Virtualization is now becoming an industry standard for modern embedded systems. Modern embedded systems can now support multiple applications on a single hardware platform while meeting power and cost requirements. Virtualization on an embedded system is achieved through the design of the hardware-software interface. Instruction set architecture, ISA, defines the hardware-software interface for an embedded system. At the hardware level the ISA provides extensions to support hypervisor software. A hypervisor is software that can run and monitor virtual machines. Virtual machines emulate a physical hardware device that can execute an operating system or software application.

In addition to an ISA that supports hypervisor extensions it is equally important to provide a hypervisor completely capable of providing the benefits of virtualization for securing modern embedded systems. Currently there does not exist a commercial hardware design that leverages the RISC-V ISA hypervisor extension co-designed with an open-source microkernel.

This research describes an implementation of the seL4 open-source microkernel with the latest version of the RISC-V hypervisor extension (H-extension v0.6.1) specification in a Rocket chip soft core. The combination of open ISA, open-source OS and open-source hardware enables hardware and software co-design for securing embedded applications.

The implication of this research provides a meaningful evaluation of RISC-V with the seL4 open-source microkernel by providing an open-source hardware implementation on a Zynq Ultrascale+ MPSoC ZCU102 to assist the RISC-V community towards ratification of the H-extension.

## *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

### ❖ **Erika Forest, Master of Science in Biology**

- **Thesis Title:** Relationships Among Age, Relative Telomere Length, and DNA Methylation in *Pteropus* Bats
- **Thesis Committee:** Amy Russell (Chair) – Department of Biology, Charlyn Partridge – Department of Biology, Gerald Wilkinson – Department of Biology

In her thesis research, Erika examined the genetic mechanisms of aging in two species of old-world fruit bats, *Pteropus pumilus* and *P. hypomelanus*. Bats are extraordinarily long-lived for their body size, with some species having measured longevity of more than 40 years. However, we do not have a reliable method for estimating the age of unmarked bats in the wild. Previous work had investigated the use of molecular markers including telomere length and DNA methylation as indicators of age in some species of bats, but these types of markers had never been directly compared. Erika used a variety of genetic and bioinformatic techniques to determine (1) whether telomere sequences decay at a predictable rate with age in these *Pteropus* species, and (2) whether telomere sequence length is associated with epigenetic changes in DNA methylation throughout the *Pteropus* genome.

*Erika's abstract appears on the next page.*

## ABSTRACT

Bats are the longest-lived mammalian order relative to body mass, but questions remain about relationships among mechanisms related to aging. Relative telomere length (rTL) decreases with age in most mammals, but the relationship between age and rTL is highly variable among the few bat taxa studied to date. More recently, DNA methylation (DNAm), a type of epigenetic regulation in which methyl groups are added to cytosine-phosphate-guanine (CpG) sites across the genome, has been shown to be highly predictive of age in many species of bats.

We examine the relationships among age, rTL, and DNAm in *Pteropus pumilus* and *P. hypomelanus*. We hypothesized (1) there is a negative linear relationship between age and rTL and (2) rTL is significantly correlated with DNAm at some sites (rTL-associated differentially methylated positions, or tDMPs), especially those associated with age. We found a significant negative linear relationship between age and rTL in *P. hypomelanus*, but no such relationship in *P. pumilus*. Additionally, for both species, few tDMPs were also significantly associated with age. Many genes near tDMPs in both species control regulatory and metabolic processes, suggesting that epigenetic regulation by DNAm of these genomic regions may have an impact on telomere length dynamics in bats.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATION FOR  
OUTSTANDING FINAL PROJECT  
Winter 2023**

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

❖ **Breanna Carter, Master of Social Work**

- **Project Title:** A Panel Discussion: The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Breanna has worked diligently in developing her final project. This event took place virtually on March 22nd and brought together an excellent group of speakers that included tribal member representatives, child welfare experts, tribal lawyers, and two chief judges. One of the judges included Anita Fineday, who was appointed by President Obama to serve as a member of the Attorney Advisory Committee on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence. Her project served to bring awareness to the ICWA at a crucial time when the *Brackeen V. Haaland* case sought to strike down ICWA as unconstitutional. This panel discussion had over 60 people in attendance and provided the GVSU community with an invaluable educational opportunity. Breanna has demonstrated her determination and ability to identify a knowledge gap, conceptualize her idea, and articulate her project.

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

❖ **Roxanna Azmoudeh, Master of Science in Health Informatics and Bioinformatics**

- **Project Title:** Roxanna Azmoudeh Internship Project with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM)

Roxanna's persistence and quality of work shine through her internship project with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM). Population health management is a healthcare strategy with the goal to improve the health of a selected population by preventing and managing disease, promoting wellness, and reducing health disparities. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan's Care Management program targets individuals with high or moderate risk diseases such as diabetes and coronary artery disease in

Medicare Advantage plan populations. Roxanna analyzed member profiles to identify high-risk Medicare Advantage members to help better manage the diseases and reduce overall costs. Faculty have noted that she not only leveraged her project with what she learned in class, she by far exceeded the expectations of an internship project.

❖ **Isaac Beasley, Master of Science in Cybersecurity**

- **Project Title:** Cybersecurity Skills Gap Analysis for West Michigan

Isaac has shown dedication to producing a valuable project that contributes to the field of Cybersecurity. His project aims to identify the region's current and future cybersecurity workforce needs. The project includes analyzing historical data from Cyberseek covering the years 2018 to 2022. This novel data analysis will help to identify trends and changes in cybersecurity job roles, skill requirements, and salary ranges. The project also includes interviews with Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) in West Michigan to gather their unique perspectives on how to "obtain, retain, and advance" the cybersecurity workforce. The results of this project will provide insights for businesses, educational institutions, and workforce development agencies to understand and address the cybersecurity skills gap. Isaac plans to submit the project results to the 2023 ACM SIGITE conference.

❖ **Nicole Nelson, Master of Science in Engineering**

- **Project Title:** Material and Process Development of PEDOT:PSS for Transparent Electrically Conductive Applications

Nicole's project focuses on developing a method that coats substrates with a transparent conductive polymer and provides the sponsoring company a tool as it develops new products that could benefit from this type of conductive transparent coating. There is very little literature on the use of the transparent conductive polymer poly (3,4-ethylenedioxythiophene) polystyrene sulfonate (PEDOT:PSS) because companies that use this for their products do not want to share their formulations, processes, or testing results. Through Nicole's hard work, she has been able to greatly expand the understanding of PEDOT:PSS and the benefits of its use.



## *College of Health Professions*

### ❖ **Katelyn Erickson, Jared Gregory, Gabrielle Ureste, Master of Science in Physical Therapy**

- **Project Title:** Interaction between median sternotomy post-operative complications, sternal precautions, and functional status

This project was in collaboration between GVSU, Corewell Health's Rehab Services Department, and Corwell Health's Cardiothoracic Surgical Team. The purpose of their retrospective study was to examine the relationship between functional status, compliance with sternal precautions, and post-operative incision complications. Faculty mentors of this project have stated Katelyn, Jared, and Gabrielle's initiative, commitment, follow-through, execution, and quality of their work were among the best groups they ever had. The graduate students devoted an incredible number of hours conducting chart reviews and data collection at one of Corewell Health's hospitals last summer. Their dedication and passion for their field clearly demonstrated through their project does not go unnoticed by other professionals in the field of physical therapy.

### ❖ **Sydney Sprau, Master of Public Health**

- **Project Title:** Hormonal Contraceptive Use and Postpartum Depression: Results from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System, 2016-2020

This project was established in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) Working Group and the Florida State Department of Health. Sydney took the lead on this project and submitted an abstract to disseminate her findings at the Michigan Epidemiology Conference in April of 2023. She plans to submit this work for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, *Journal of Women's Health*. She conducted a careful review of the literature and developed her novel research questions for this study, and conducted a large-scale public health data analysis to answer her proposed research questions with PRAMS data. During this project, Sydney has demonstrated outstanding scientific writing, strong organizational skills, and the ability to work independently and take initiative on a complex study. Through this project, she has showcased professionalism and a commitment to producing ethical and important scholarly work.

## *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

### ❖ **Russell Hartley, Master of Science in Communication**

- **Project Title:** Efficacy Analysis of Online Artificial Intelligence Fact-Checking Tools

Faculty have described Russell's final project as exemplary of what world-class communication scholars and professionals do best: problem-solve significant issues so that individuals and organizations may better understand communication and improve their communication effectiveness. His project analyzed the efficacy of online AI tools in producing accurate readings in response to debunked claims determined by a consensus of independent fact-checking organizations. His study recorded key distinctions among AI tools and provided recommendations for future analysis of the efficacy of AI fact-checking. This is a complex, multi-step project that is sophisticated in its scope and is at the forefront of research concerning AI applications in our lives.

### ❖ **Taylor Segorski, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**

- **Project Title:** Pepper Mild Mottle Virus as a Tool for Standardization of SARS-CoV-2 in Wastewater Based Epidemiology

Taylor has been creating exceptional work during her internship at the Molecular Monitoring Laboratory. She has been leading ongoing efforts to use Pepper Mild Mottle Virus (PMMoV) as a fecal marker to normalize RNA virus concentrations in wastewater and optimize sampling methodology. PMMoV co-purifies with SARS-CoV-2, and thus, is ideally suited to normalize counts of this virus for human fecal matter. Taylor's reliable, low-cost method to monitor PMMoV in wastewater can now be used to normalize RNA viral counts, solving a problem that has confounded accurate prediction of infection levels and trends using Wastewater Based Epidemiology. Her normalization method makes the interpretation of SARS-CoV-2 levels in wastewater more secure, predictive, and useful for public health.

### ❖ **Karina White, Master of Science in Biology**

- **Project Title:** Developing a Protocol for Middle School and High School Students to Provide a Long-Term Solution to Restoration Monitoring at Grand Ravines Park (Ottawa County, Michigan)

Karina's project brings together science, K-12 education, and collaboration with the Ottawa County Parks system into a single integrated package in which all participants stand to gain. For her project, she and her students conducted floristic and invertebrate surveys on two plots of land at Grand Ravines Park. One plot had been recently seeded with native plants and the other had not. Her goal was to have her students participate in a real science project and to have the results be directly useful to park officials. The data that she and her students collected has been deposited as an online resource that the public and park officials can access, and it will serve as the foundation for the long-term monitoring of these two sites. Additionally, she has produced educational modules that will enable other teachers to design and conduct similar studies with their students. Karina's multifaceted project will have a broad impact on her professional development, on the students in her class, and on the ability of park managers to make informed management decisions.

### *Kirkhof College of Nursing*

#### ❖ **Abigail Voss, Doctor of Nursing Practice**

- **Project Title:** Development of an Advanced Practice Provider Diagnostic Clinic within an Oncology Practice

Abigail's project focuses on the oncology patient population by developing a rapid diagnostic clinic for a large oncology practice. The clinic's objective is to facilitate rapid diagnosis and treatment of various cancers, thereby shortening the time from diagnosis to treatment and decreasing morbidity and mortality rates. This clinic is now operational, largely due to Abigail's diligent work on behalf of the organization. This project was complex, requiring the development of a business plan, appropriate coding and billing schema, an internal referral process, and a multidisciplinary workflow plan. The partnering healthcare organization has been highly pleased with her work.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATIONS FOR  
OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION  
Winter 2023**

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ **Brendan Beauchamp, Master of Science in Engineering**
  - **Publication Title:** Coherence of Hand Muscles During Activities of Daily Living
  - **Co-authors:** Dr. Nabeeh Kandalajt – School of Engineering,  
Dr. Samhita Rhodes – School of Engineering

Brendan’s motivation and work ethic is shown through his publication which received two Best Paper Awards. He has excellent writing and presentation skills and is always looking to expand his knowledge in his field of study. His paper investigates the application of the Coherence Spectrogram algorithm to forearm EMG, providing a novel tool for the analysis of human interface devices that can be used to observe different physiological actions of muscles during activities of daily living.

**ABSTRACT**

This paper applies the Coherence Spectrogram (CS) to forearm muscles of 22 patients performing activities of daily living in order to study the spectral characteristics of forearm muscle coherence. This study is novel in that it observes coherence spectra between EMG locations on the arm for three sources of coherent activity, namely that from sensors reading the same muscle, agonistic muscles, and antagonistic muscles. Coherent activity for thumb actuation was observed when comparing EMG from the dorsal and palmar forearm halfway between the elbow and hand above the radius. This was the largest source of coherence in the entire data set. This research could be improved by observing joint angles during actions and increasing the time resolution. The application of CS algorithm to forearm EMG provides a novel tool for analysis of human interface devices and can be used to observe different physiological actions of muscles during activities of daily living. A complete appendix of muscle origin, insertion, action, and joint angle for the forearm and hand can be shared upon request.

- ❖ **Hyeong-Gyu Jang, Master of Science in Applied Computer Science**
  - **Publication Title:** Towards Species-Specific Coral Classification in Reef Monitoring Efforts
  - **Co-Authors:** Jonathan Leidig – School of Computing, Greg Wolffe – School of Computing

One of the primary indicators of ocean health is the coverage and species-diversity of coral reef habitats. Given the size of reefs and the practical limitations of underwater surveys, only a small portion of reefs are routinely monitored. Surveys rely on large photomosaic images comprising benthic maps. Hyeong-Gyu and his team’s research aims to develop a methodology that leverages modern Deep Learning models to automate the classification and annotation of benthic maps. He conducted a comprehensive set of coding, construction, training, and evaluation experiments that resulted in optimized binary models that exhibited accuracy levels of 95-99% for the 11 species of coral with the most images. Hyeong-Gyu, who is the primary author of this paper, has been accepted for publication, and he plans to present the results at the 36<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Florida Artificial Intelligence Research Society in May of 2023.

### **ABSTRACT**

Monitoring the health of coral reefs has traditionally required human labor-intensive effort in the collection of underwater data and the analysis of captured survey data and images. Typical Marine Ecology tasks involve the classification of features within benthic maps and the estimation of coral coverage of the seafloor. In an effort to determine the feasibility of automating part of this process, this work trained and evaluated machine learning models to classify eleven species of stony and fire corals. Binary classifiers (with accuracy levels of 95-99%) were developed for each separate species, followed by a single multiclass model (accuracy 92%). This paper details the architecture, parameterization and effectiveness of these models as trained on a curated set of images. The models were then evaluated using one-square kilometer maps of the seafloor to assess their practicability for automating several image-based analysis tasks on a widespread scale. Developing future monitoring workflows that utilize these machine learning models will minimize the human labor-intensive component of benthic map analysis.

## *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

### ❖ **Jessica Ensing, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**

- **Publication Title:** EGFR-initiated endocytosis of Wnt9a and Fzd9b is required for  $\beta$ -catenin signaling
- **Co-Authors:** Nicole Nguyen – Department of Cell Biology, Kelsey Carpenter – Department of Cell Biology, Kate Thurlow – Department of Cell Biology and Van Andel Institute Graduate School, Emily Mu - Department of Cell Biology, Carla Gilliland - Department of Cell Biology, Stephanie Grainger - Department of Cell Biology

Jessica secured an internship in the lab of Dr. Stephanie Granger at the Van Andel Institute and as a result of her work, she has made significant contributions to this research. This paper explains the requirements for the endocytosis of a Wnt-receptor complex. The work suggests that specific modes of endocytosis and trafficking may represent one of the ways in which Wnt/Fzd specificity is established, since other Wnt ligands do not require endocytosis for activity. Jessica's role in this publication in addition to her academic success throughout the program is highly praised by the Department of Cell and Molecular Biology.

### **ABSTRACT**

Cell to cell communication through secreted ligands like those encoded by the Wnt gene family is critical for development and homeostasis during organismal life. One of the bottlenecks in the Wnt field has been identifying specific ligand/receptor pairings and decoding the mechanisms for their downstream signals. We previously discovered that the Wnt9a ligand signals through the cell surface receptors Fzd9b, LRP5/6 and EGFR to promote early proliferation of hematopoietic stem cells during development. We used this exquisitely specific ligand/receptor complex as a platform to determine if Wnt9a requires endocytosis for signaling. Using fluorescently labeled, biologically active Wnt9a and Fzd9b fusion proteins, we demonstrate here that the Wnt9a receptor complex is rapidly endocytosed within one minute of contact with Fzd9b. Following this, the Wnt9a/Fzd9b complex is trafficked through the cell to early and late endosomes, lysosomes, and the endoplasmic reticulum; it is also recycled back to the membrane. Using small molecule inhibitors, genetic and siRNA approaches, we identified that mechanistically this endocytosis requires EGFR-mediated phosphorylation of the Fzd9b tail, followed by endocytosis through a caveolin and EPS15 dependent pathway. Specific modes of endocytosis and trafficking may represent one of the ways in which Wnt/Fzd specificity is established, since other Wnt ligands do not require endocytosis for activity.

❖ **John Hart, Master of Science in Biology – Annis Water Resources Institute**

- **Publication Title:** Using watershed characteristics to enhance fecal source identification
- **Co-Authors:** Megan Jamison – Oakland University, James McNair – AWRI, Sean Woznicki – AWRI, Ben Jordan – Ottawa Conservation District, Richard Rediske - AWRI

John has migrated the Annis Water Resources Institute's work on Microbial source tracking (MST) to a droplet digital PCF (ddPCR) platform in his research. Geographic information system (GIS) was also used to obtain information on watershed characteristics that may be influencing MST results. His paper represents a synthesis of state-of-the-art molecular methods for fecal indicator bacteria and watershed information by GIS to help identify problem areas in two watersheds. His results were used by the Ottawa Conservation District for their 319 Grant on Bass River and Deer Creek. John's work represents an outstanding example of high-quality science and applicability to local water quality issues.

**ABSTRACT**

Fecal pollution is one of the most prevalent forms of pollution affecting waterbodies worldwide, threatening public health and negatively impacting aquatic environments. Microbial source tracking (MST) applies polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology to help identify the source of fecal pollution. In this study, we combine spatial data for two watersheds with general and host-associated MST markers to target human (HF183/BacR287), bovine (CowM2), and general ruminant (Rum2Bac) sources. Concentrations of MST markers in samples were determined with droplet digital PCR (ddPCR). The three MST markers were detected at all sites (n = 25), but bovine and general ruminant markers were significantly associated with watershed characteristics. MST results, combined with watershed characteristics, suggest that streams draining areas with low-infiltration soil groups and high agricultural land use are at an increased risk for fecal contamination. Microbial source tracking has been applied in numerous studies to aid in identifying the sources of fecal contamination, but these studies usually lack information on the involvement of watershed characteristics. Our study combined watershed characteristics with MST results to provide more comprehensive insight into the factors that influence fecal contamination in order to implement the most effective best management practices.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE  
TO THE COMMUNITY OR PROFESSION  
Winter 2023**

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

❖ **Kingsley Njoku, Master of Science in Criminal Justice**

Kingsley has proven his passion and dedication to serving the community throughout his time in the program all while working for the Kent County Sherriff's Office and serving in the U.S. Army National Guard for the State of Michigan. U.S. Army Spc. Njoku, a distribution specialist, recently participated in the U.S. Africa Command's largest premier, joint, military training exercise in Tunisia, alongside representatives from Morocco, Ghana, and Senegal. In this exercise, more than 7,500 participants from 28 nations and NATO trained together with a focus on enhancing readiness for U.S. and partner nation forces. The goal of these multinational exercises is to strengthen interoperability among participants and set the theater for strategic access. For outstanding performance during the exercise, unit leadership awarded Kingsley the Army Achievement Medal.

❖ **D'Angelo Starks, Master of Social Work**

D'Angelo has distinguished himself for his service to the Belknap neighborhood where he is currently interning. He has gone above and beyond in taking on the responsibility of learning and understanding community needs first and thinking creatively to identify and promote practices that will have a high impact. He has been instrumental in assisting in the development of training on implicit bias as it relates to housing policy for the Board of Directors of the organization. He has additionally led a neighborhood-wide canvassing project to gain an understanding of community needs. With data in hand, he has sought collaborations to obtain funding to meet neighborhood needs and has researched racial equity partnerships around the city to identify best practices.



❖ **Michael Sullivan, Master of Public Administration**

Faculty have described Michael as someone who exemplifies commitment to professionalism and excellence in all he does. During this past academic year, Mike served as President of the International City/County Management Graduate Student Chapter and took the lead in organizing many excellent events. One of these events brought more than 30 area city and county managers to campus to have lunch and network with graduate and undergraduate students and faculty. The event was a success due to his leadership and preparation, and the event served as a significant bridging activity that connected students with professional public servants.

*College of Health Professions*

❖ **Judith Eguzoikpe, Master of Public Health**

Judith has utilized her professional skills and experiences to serve the greater Grand Rapids community since her enrollment into the program. She worked as a prevention Program Evaluator Intern for Resilience: Advocates for Ending Violence in Holland, MI during the Fall semester. She conducted data analyses for intervention and prevention program evaluation, provided timely data reports of trends and outcomes, and designed and evaluated a pre-and-post survey using SurveyMonkey. Judith also worked with Corewell Health's Butterworth Hospital, observing in-patient and out-patient rounds and clinical diagnosis while gaining knowledge in Cardiac MRI. She also assisted with left cardiac catheterization on a patient with coronary artery disease. In addition, she also worked for GVSU as a K-12 lead tutor and a virtual math and reading tutor, as well as volunteering with cleaning and sanitation of food facilities and equipment. Being an international student, Judith utilized her time as best as possible to serve the local community using her professional competencies while learning from her work experience.

❖ **Emily McDonagh, Doctor of Physical Therapy**

For the past two years, Emily has served as a student coordinator for the GVSU Physical Therapy pro bono clinic. She has been an excellent leader in all regards; she is committed to her role, is passionate about serving the underserved population of Grand Rapids, displays excellent communication skills, and is an excellent overall coordinator. Emily has also volunteered her

time for other activities including a Parkinson's exercise class and Physical Therapy Day of Service. The impact of her work has been considerable, and her sustained effort has reduced the negative impact of social determinants of health on those who do not have the means to afford appropriate healthcare for movement system related disorders.

## *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

### ❖ **Elizabeth Cazallis, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**

Elizabeth is one of the graduate students who stepped up to make the Molecular Monitoring lab in the Cell and Molecular Biology department a success. Her work has expanded the collaboration between the department, the Kent County Health Department, and MDHHS to include the University of Missouri and the Northern Michigan Health Department. Her supervisors observed: "Elizabeth Cazallis is one of our most technically accomplished analysts. Since she joined the lab in Fall, 2022, she has played a key role in our ongoing efforts to help KCHD, MDHHS, and CDC keep abreast of the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US. She has led the development of a collaboration between Marc Johnson at the University of Missouri which has allowed our lab to pursue targeted sequencing of viral RNA. This has enabled the lab to identify variants of the SARS CoV-2 virus quickly and effectively. Elizabeth is now guiding scientists from other health departments through the process of analyzing and interpreting data she has produced with their samples, thus allowing them to identify variants and increase the quality of their COVID-monitoring work."

### ❖ **Allison Cox, Master of Science in School Psychology and Psychological Specialist**

Although Alli is still in the early stages of her professional career as a school psychologist, her contributions have been enormously valued by her colleagues, her supervisors, and the students and families she supports. Her supervisor has commemorated her ability to work with parents, staff, and students with a wide range of needs and ages. Colleagues are able to depend on her and seek her input. Alli's work also goes beyond the school and students and staff in Fennville. She has coached Girls on the Run, supporting both the physical and emotional health of students during a critical stage of development. She coordinated the district's crisis response after a recent

trauma and specifically conducted outreach to families for mental health and crisis support and resources. She has connected families with equine therapy opportunities through the Red Horse Center; she takes elementary and middle school students there for therapy on Mondays after school hours. Lastly, Alli has supported the profession and other related professions through her graduate assistantship efforts in the Psych Friends Peer Mentoring program.

### *Kirkhof College of Nursing*

#### ❖ **Emily Bemben, Doctor of Nursing Practice**

Emily has demonstrated excellence in service to both the nursing profession and various communities. When she lived in Austin, Texas, she volunteered in the community to serve the homeless population, particularly women and children. She also volunteered for Planned Parenthood and a non-profit, promoting fitness and healthy eating in women from low-income backgrounds. She also collaborated with MomsBloom for her Doctor of Nursing Practice project. This project examined the impact of the volunteer home visit model that provided support to families in their homes, and how these home-based interventions can have a positive impact in reducing symptoms of Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs). Through her hard work, she has made important contributions to improving health outcomes for infants, mothers, families, and communities.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATION FOR  
EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE TO GVSU  
Winter 2023**

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

❖ **Rachel Dobben, Master of Education in School Counseling**

It is during a time of hardship that true leaders step up. Rachel was one of them. While the School Counselor Graduate Student Organization (SCGSO) was still navigating the obstacles of the Pandemic, her service provided support and an anchor for the organization. She was doing this while being a distance learner. When assuming the presidency in Fall 2022, Rachel continued to exemplify incredible leadership. She singlehandedly brought on a new Executive Board, mentored board members through challenges, and even secured funding to help them attend professional development opportunities. She also worked to create workshops for her fellow classmates on helpful topics and hosted study sessions for graduating students to pass the school counseling credential exam. Furthermore, she took the initiative to collaborate with faculty to better understand how SCGSO can support students and connect them with faculty. Drawing from personal experience, Rachel worked with her e-board to create a new position for a Distance Learning Representative. She recognized the unique needs of distance students and collaborated with others to address them to improve student engagement and retention. Rachel has left behind a legacy of mentorship and excellence, and this award is deservedly hers.

❖ **Alina Foreman, Master of Health Administration**

Alina is strongly recommended for this recognition by her fellow Executive Board in the Health Professional Graduate Student Alliance. Her effort was crucial in the development of the Health Administration peer mentorship program and increased student participation in the organization. Alina took the lead on defining the mentorship, recruiting students, and matching everyone together. New students have reported the value of the mentorship, which supported their continued enrollment in the program and factored into their success at Grand Valley. By promoting general student involvement,

Alina contributed to one of the highest participation rates in years. Through leadership and service, she has rightfully earned this award.

❖ **Brian Hedberg, Master of Public Administration**

Aside from working in Grand Valley's Department of Public Safety, Sergeant Brian was also the Accreditation Manager. He is a tremendous asset to the university. While pursuing a degree in Public Administration, he continued to serve the campus community. Brian's leadership and commitment to public service are why he deserves this recognition.

❖ **Elizabeth Johnson, Master of Social Work**

Being of service to others is a practice that Elizabeth is called to and that she does not shy away from. Also known as Liz to students and faculty in Social Work, she is a well-rounded individual who exemplifies servant leadership. In the program, she joined a few other students in the Weekend Hybrid path. This is an asynchronous model that allows flexibility for working professionals and parents. However, it also presents certain challenges when accessing campus resources and connecting to the larger campus community. Liz took the further step of joining the Weekend Hybrid Committee, where she can contribute to the ongoing development of this program, the representation of current students, and welcoming newly admitted students. She willingly shared her story and promoted community events to improve the experiences of other students. In the professional environment, she demonstrated care and ethical practice toward the people she worked with. At the core of Social Work is service to others, and Liz's embodiment of this quality warrants her recognition of this award.

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

❖ **Joseph Ohaeche, Master of Science in Cybersecurity**

Despite studying in a country away from his home, Joseph cares for his Grand Valley peers as if they are his own family. He is described to have shown incredible determination, a strong work ethic, and a caring spirit through the way he has helped fellow graduate students with resource concerns. Times and again, he went out of his way to refer students to the CARE outreach program, and to offer his own support. This commitment to

others extended into his leadership roles. As a member of the Graduate Student Association executive board, Joseph often went above and beyond his immediate responsibilities. When extraneous circumstances affected the board's leadership, he stepped up and took charge of new initiatives. He worked with faculty and staff advisors to ensure smooth transitions for future e-boards. Joseph had also volunteered with different organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club and Alternative Breaks, among others. Through his leadership, support, and advocacy for fellow peer students, Joseph is indeed an exemplary receiver of this award.

### *College of Health Professions*

#### ❖ **Samantha Behl, Doctor of Physical Therapy**

Samantha leads by example and inspires others to follow. Her strong leadership and ability to clearly communicate expectations resulted in successful advocacy for students in the Physical Therapy program, as well as effective service to the university. During her time in the Physical Therapy Class of 2023 board, she supported her cohort through the disruptions of the Pandemic. Samantha also seeks out opportunities to improve the learning environment for everyone, such as recording and sharing additional lab techniques. Through exceptional communication with faculty, she advocated for the well-being of her cohort. Samantha was also instrumental in the representation of Grand Valley at various professional gatherings, including the first APTA-Michigan National Advocacy Dinner and the Michigan Physical Therapy Political Action Committee. For the past three years, she has been a tireless leader. The extent and depth of her commitment to serving the community and profession are outstanding. Samantha rightfully has earned this award.

#### ❖ **Shannah Mwanda, Master of Public Health**

Shannah is a student that displays active leadership and service. In the Public Health program, she ensured the student perspective has a presence in the community. Through the Engaged Community Partnership Initiative (ECPI), she helped establish a new partnership with the Kent County Health Department. This collaboration required regular commitment, including proposal development, crafting meaningful community-engaged learning, and contributing to future plans beyond her graduation. Even during the

time of the break, she was willing to share her story on WGVU, from her time in ECPI to her experiences as a student at Grand Valley. Shannah is a leader that went above and beyond traditional expectations of graduate study, and her service will have an impact on future students.

### *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

#### ❖ **Dahlya Kamarudin, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**

In working as a teaching assistant for Kent Intermediary School District (KISD) students in our dual-enrollment program, Dahlya has demonstrated leadership and service qualities. Combining her technical expertise, patience, good humor, and personal experience as a school teacher, she brought the lessons to life for both the students and the KISD instructor. Through her works, these students learned and gained enthusiasm for the foundations of life sciences and the research process. Dahlya's efforts in bringing young talent to choose Grand Valley and more have earned her this recognition.

#### ❖ **Madison Schierbeek, Master of Science in School Psychology and Psychological Specialist degree**

Madison is viewed as a leader amongst her cohort in the School Psychology program and last year served as the President of the Student Affiliates in School Psychology (SASP) organization. After the challenges brought on by the Pandemic, Madison's commitment led SASP to more accomplishments than any other year before. From cross-cohort social events, recognizing and celebrating a local school psychologist, securing funding to help students attend various conferences, to supporting a fellow student after an apartment fire, among other initiatives, she has been an instrumental contributor. These achievements far exceeded the expectation of their advisor. It only goes to show that Madison has been an exceptional leader at Grand Valley, deserving of this recognition.

## *Kirkhof College of Nursing*

### ❖ **Kristin Cooper, Doctor of Nursing Practice**

Kristin is an individual that capably wears multiple hats. As a Nursing Practice student, she has spent many hours collaborating with the Family Health Center (FHC) as a part of her scholarly project. She established effective and supportive relationships with external resources to ensure the center's recognition as a quality care provider, which also allowed for financial initiatives leading to viable and sustainable operations. As a leader, Kristin worked with FHC to establish a scheduling system, enabling sufficient nursing students to provide vaccinations at various flu clinics in Grand Valley. As a faculty member, she taught three simulation courses in the undergraduate nursing program. In the Forest Hills Public School community, she volunteered in various sports teams, utilizing her nursing skill and expertise to make a positive impact. With all of these hats and more, it is no surprise that she is also a recipient of this award.



**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN  
PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT GVSU  
Winter 2023**

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

❖ **Donald Avery, Master of Public Administration**

Donald is intensely committed to expanding awareness and support for those impacted by stigma and social injustices. Through his work, he advocated for increasing access to behavioral health services for individuals with developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, and substance use disorders. Donald also served on the board of the Momentum Center for Social Engagement, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the interests of marginalized members in West Michigan. In the Public Administration program, he explored ally leadership, developing innovative methods of promoting equity in organizations of all types. Class discussions were greatly enhanced by his experience and passion, particularly with examples and questions that got everyone to think in more inclusive perspectives. Donald is well deserving of this recognition.

❖ **Finn Marcks, Master of Social Work**

Finn is described as an outspoken and passionate individual who does not shy away from difficult conversations relating to the daily experiences of members of the Grand Valley community. They worked tirelessly to advocate for the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, including through events that promote inclusivity. Serving in the LGBT Resource Center and the Board of Directors of the Grand Rapids Trans Foundation, Finn developed programs that welcome students from marginalized identities to campus, as well as foster a sense of belonging. As a student in the Social Work program, they worked on a project focusing on alternative anxiety treatment methods for underserved populations that may otherwise not have access to traditional services. They went on to present this project at the Michigan Sociology Association's annual conference, expanding the potential impact in the field. Finn is an inspiring leader, with the potential to enhance Grand Valley's reputation as one of the most welcoming communities.

## *Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

### ❖ **Joseph Ohaeche, Master of Science in Cybersecurity**

Joseph's impact on the Grand Valley community can be seen beyond the classroom. Throughout his time here, he has demonstrated outstanding leadership, support, and advocacy. He is committed to not just his peers of color, but also the wider community. From personal experience, Joseph recognized the importance of a united and welcoming community. He actively encouraged others to find their place in Grand Valley and served in influential roles to offer insights into enhancing campus culture. Centering graduate student belonging, he offered valuable feedback to faculty and staff as a representative in university committees. As President of the Graduate Student Association, he also worked to bring graduate student recognition and presence to events and organizations that traditionally focused on undergraduates. Joseph's impact will persist beyond his time at Grand Valley, and our community is truly a better place for it.

### ❖ **Ciana (CJ) Witherell, Master of Science in Engineering**

During their time at Grand Valley, CJ had left behind a legacy, especially for students in the LGBTQ+ community. They were instrumental in establishing the QSTEM student organization and then served as its Vice President. Here, queer students and allies in the STEM fields have a safe place to meet and work in enacting changes in the university and the community. Despite having the option to just focus on their academic program, they recognized the need to support our diverse student population, particularly those in STEM disciplines. In the end, CJ was able to complete the combined BSE/MSE program with exceptional academic standing and leave GVSU a better place than before.

## *College of Health Professions*

### ❖ **John Mittelbrun, Doctor of Physical Therapy**

Even while an undergraduate, John was already a strong supporter of inclusion and diversity. He supported and volunteered with various organizations, including Special Olympics, Kids Food Basket, International Student Learning, and many others. His commitment continued into the

Physical Therapy program when he joined the GVSU DPT Pro Bono Clinic. Through his volunteer and advocacy, John is a tremendous contributor to patient care, especially for non-English speaking members of the community who are uninsured. Additionally, John's classmates have learned from him about how social determinants of health connect with the insurance gap in our communities. In leadership positions, he assisted in planning, as well as personally participated, in events such as Wheel Run Together and Day of Service. Through a sustained commitment to service to others, John has become a deserving recipient of this award.

❖ **Katina Kuerth, Doctor of Nursing Practice**

For the past two years, Katina has served as the Professional Development Officer for the KCON Graduate Student Organization (GSO). She oversaw the development, and support, of mentorship programs among graduate and undergraduate students. Mentors aided undergraduates in their transition into graduate study, as well as professional nursing practice. For graduate students, this mentorship program provides a welcoming and inclusive environment. Katina herself has served as a mentor in this program. She has also been involved in DEI efforts, participating in discussions on cultural climate assessment, and helping to lay a foundation for future GSO board involvement. Through her efforts in promoting inclusivity and diversity on campus, Katina has well-earned this recognition.

*College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

❖ **Javier Guillen, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**

Throughout his time at Grand Valley, Javier has contributed to the success of various organizations, including being an active member of the Cell and Molecular Biology student organization. During his work as a Student Success Coach, he oversaw and supported many organizations and scholarship programs dedicated to students of color and others from underserved communities. After completing his internship at Michigan State University's College of Human Medicine, located in Grand Rapids, he will be taking a position at Grand River Aseptic Manufacturing. This award recognizes Javier's work in promoting inclusion and diversity, for both the department and the larger Grand Valley community.

❖ **Autumn Stokes, Master of Science in School Psychology and Psychological Specialist**

Autumn consistently goes above and beyond requirements in Master of School Psychology and Master of School Psychology and Psychological Specialist and maintains a positive and supportive attitude. In committing to diversity, equity, and social justice in her education, she sought out field placements where she could work with diverse student populations. Autumn was also engaged in discussions about these issues, utilizing her personal experiences, best practices, and current research. She also pushed for inclusivity in the classroom, as well as new content delivery methods to diversify existing perspectives. As Vice President of the program's student organization, she took the initiative to bring in guest speakers promoting advocacy for students that have been systematically minoritized. Autumn's passion and drive will continue to inspire faculty for years to come.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL CITATION FOR  
EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY  
Winter 2023**

*Each Excellence in Sustainability award nominee has demonstrated outstanding leadership and innovative thinking in the community by implementing sustainable best practices. The award recipients must have given life to a sustainability initiative in one or more aspects of the triple bottom line in sustainability (economic, social, or environmental).*

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

❖ **Katelyn Fauska, Master of Social Work**

Katelyn has demonstrated an ability to look at social problems from different perspectives and to imagine new ways of addressing issues. In collaboration with Oriole Park Elementary staff, she implemented a sustainable evidence-based curriculum for working with cognitively impaired students.

Additionally, she also worked with school administrators to identify funding to adopt and implement the curriculum in the upcoming years. Her work not only supports the growth, sense of belonging, and well-being of the students, but it also aligned with the need of the school for continuous financial support, staff training, evaluation, and adaptation. Katelyn is an excellent recipient of this award.

*College of Health Professions*

❖ **Jared Gregory, Doctor of Physical Therapy**

As the Chair of the Fundraising Committee in the Class of 2023 Executive Board, Jared spearheaded various initiatives that benefited all classes, especially in the economic aspect of the triple bottom line in sustainability. He also led the effort in raising money for license examination preparation materials and student-led graduation events. In the Physical Therapy program, Jared supported his fellow graduate students by securing funding for their attendance at the 2023 APTA-Michigan Student Conclave. He exceeded the typical expectations of the Fundraising Chair, earning himself this recognition.

❖ **Rachel Walsh, Master of Public Health**

Through the work on her project, Rachel has proven to be an advocate for health, impact, and long-term change in the community. Her passion and commitment shined in striving to expand awareness of social spaces being instrumental to teens' development, socialization, and overall mental health and wellbeing. Rachel hopes her efforts and outcomes of the project will influence awareness and policy change in our local community. In striving to create an impact with sustainable results for the future, she had gone above and beyond the general expectations of graduate education. Rachel is a deserving recipient of this award.

*Kirkhof College of Nursing*

❖ **Kaylie Waters, Doctor of Nursing Practice**

In the Nursing Practice program, Kaylie is described to be hardworking, focused, and passionate about her education. She successfully secured funding to purchase, in excess, materials to support not only the implementation of her project but also the long-term effects of her interventions after completion. Kaylie's project focused on addressing the breastfeeding gap in an underserved rural community. The impact of her work will support long-term health benefits for the population, an exemplary demonstration of sustainability.

## **3-MINUTE THESIS COMPETITION**

### **2023 First Place Winner**

*The Graduate School hosted GVSU's annual 3-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition on February 16, 2023. Students presented their independent research in exactly three minutes with the aid of one static PowerPoint slide. A panel of faculty judges from a variety of disciplines at GVSU determined the winner.*

The GVSU faculty who served on the 2022 3MT judging panel included:

- Dr. Andrew Booth, College of Health Professions
- Dr. Brian Hatzel, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Dr. Tonisha Jones, College of Education & Community Innovation
- Dr. Cray Mulder, College of Education & Community Innovation
- Dr. Wendy Reffeor, Padnos College of Engineering & Computing
- Dr. Gregory Warsen, College of Education & Community Innovation
- Dr. Janet Winter, Kirkhof College of Nursing

### *College of Liberal & Arts Science*

- ❖ **Karina White, Master of Science in Biology**
  - **Presentation Title:** Developing a Protocol for Middle School and High School Students to Provide a Long-Term Solution to Restoration Monitoring at Grand Ravines Park (Ottawa County, Michigan)

Dr. Timothy Evans, Karina's advisor, stated, "Karina's project brings together science, K-12 education, and collaboration with the Ottawa County Parks system into a single integrated package in which all participants stand to gain. For her project, she and her students conducted floristic and invertebrate surveys on two plots of land at Grand Ravines Park. One plot had been recently seeded with native plants and the other had not. Her goal is to have her students participate in a real science project (i.e. creating new knowledge) and to have the results be directly useful to park officials. The data that she and her students have collected will be deposited as an online resource that the public and park officials can access, and that will serve as the foundation for the long-term monitoring of these two sites. These results will provide valuable information for management decisions on the park.

Additionally, she has produced educational modules that will enable other teachers to design and conduct similar studies with their students. As a high school teacher, Karina has been able to use this project to improve herself professionally, as well as to directly impact her current and future students. The multifaceted approach to this project is its primary strength and what makes this project stand out. Her project will have a broad impact on her professional development, on the students in her class, and on the ability of park managers to make informed management decisions.”

### RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

*Developing a Protocol for Middle School and High School Students to Provide a Long-Term Solution to Restoration Monitoring at Grand Ravines Park (Ottawa County, Michigan)*

Access to authentic research is limited at the 7-12 science education level. At the same time, many local restoration projects would benefit from, but don't have access to a long-term system of monitoring. My project sought to unite those two needs by developing a protocol for 7-12 classrooms to be able to participate in authentic research through long-term monitoring of a local restoration project. The protocol developed in my project was used for Jenison High School students at Grand Ravines Park. Grand Ravines Park is a recently acquired Ottawa County park with a history of anthropogenic disturbances. Shortly after the acquisition of the final section of the park, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation (OCPR) staff seeded the portions of the north side of the park with native grasses and forbs, and the south side of the park was not supplementally seeded. This study aimed to develop protocols for the student collection of vegetation and invertebrate biodiversity data in both the north and south sides of the park. Various metrics of plant and invertebrate biodiversity were compared between the seeded and unseeded areas. Students from Jenison High School were involved in the data collection and analysis, increasing their exposure to scientific research and field sampling and developing their scientific literacy. A set of resources was developed to facilitate other 7-12 teachers in implementation of similar studies in their classrooms, and all data from the field study will be deposited into a publicly available database as the foundation for long-term studies at the park.

The project has enhanced my classroom in a variety of ways. As a science educator, I am always interested in helping my students know the process of science. Giving students the opportunity to participate in, and not just hear about, authentic research is so powerful. In addition to their research work, students from my class have been able to interact with scientists and professionals, working alongside them to collect data. This project will continue to serve the Ottawa County Parks, my classroom, community, and other 7-12 teachers for many years to come.



**GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION  
KIMBOKO INCLUSION AWARD  
Winter 2023**

*The Kimboko Inclusion Award recognizes faculty who have made significant contributions in outstanding teaching, distinctive scholarship or creative work, or noteworthy service in moving GVSU graduate education toward being a more diverse and inclusive community. The award recognizes the accomplishments of Dr. Priscilla Kimboko, GVSU's first Graduate Dean, and represents her commitment to these values.*

*College of Health Professions*

- ❖ **Dr. Tonya Parker, Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training**  
Nominated by: Alyssa Dall, Athletic Training

Alyssa writes: "I have the pleasure of having Dr. Parker as one of my professors and mentors. As I read the description for the Kimboko Inclusion Award I knew that I would nominate Dr. Parker as she holds herself to a high standard of inclusion and diversity. I have watched as she has taken the time to educate students on reproductive autonomy, black lives matter, correct terminology, social determinants of health, and more. She always expresses the importance of seeing your patient as a person and understanding the many layers that go into a person's health. She has emphasized asking questions about mental health. As our clinical coordinator, she makes it her job to make sure you get a diverse clinical experience. When we leave graduate school, we have worked with patients from all types of backgrounds. As her student, Dr. Parker has pushed me and challenged me to understand different backgrounds in healthcare and I know I will leave graduate school with a better understanding of the world around me."

**GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION  
OUTSTANDING MENTORSHIP AWARD  
Winter 2023**

*The Faculty Mentor Award serves to acknowledge faculty who exemplify a deep commitment to fostering the professional and personal development of graduate students. This includes encouraging the development of individual talent through advising graduate-level research, promoting professional development opportunities beyond the classroom, and providing a successful transition from graduate studies to individual careers.*

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ **Paul Bylsma, Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling**  
Nominated by: Brianna Greenough, Higher Education

Brianna writes: "I have had the opportunity to have Paul as a professor three times in my program and he has been an incredible mentor since the start. He is incredibly invested in each student's success and shows it in and out of the classroom. Paul is encouraging, supportive, intelligent, and compassionate which inspires students like me to push through any challenge. From his thoughtfully planned lessons to his guest speakers, Paul is dedicated to providing opportunities for growth professionally and personally. Paul is intentional with encouragement and motivation to keep students engaged while supporting their learning and development. Paul has helped me write my resume and cover letter, prepare for the job search, deal with rejection, and so many other things. He knows how to meet students where they are and work with them to achieve their goals. Back in Fall'21, I went through a difficult struggle with my mental health, causing me to make the tough decision to withdraw from the semester. I was met with compassion and grace from Paul after making the decision. Upon my return to school in Winter 22, Paul made me feel like I could really finish this degree with his encouragement and advice. Whether it's giving an extension on an assignment or being a listening ear, Paul exemplifies the qualities of a fantastic mentor to all of the graduate students that have the privilege of having him as a professor and mentor."

❖ **Dr. Tonisha Jones, School of Criminology, Criminal Justice, and Legal Studies**

Nominated by: Abena Pinamang, Criminal Justice

Abena writes: “Dr. Tonisha Jones is not just an outstanding teacher, but she has been a great mentor and friend to me. I had the opportunity to take her Victimology Class during my second semester in Graduate School and her unique style of teaching and patience drew me closer to her. Fortunately, I became her Graduate Assistant during my second year, and I had the privilege of working closely with her on some research projects. After working with her for some months, I was convinced that I wanted her to be my Thesis Supervisor. She always goes out of her way to assist me with my project work even on weekends. Aside from schoolwork, she has been very instrumental in my personal development. She talks to me about my career path, personal life, and family. In November 2022, she showed great support for me when I got stuck at an airport on my way to attend a Criminal Justice Conference in Atlanta. I was very frustrated, but her encouragement kept me going. When I spoke to her about my interest in applying for Doctor of Philosophy programs, she showed great interest and has supported me every step of the way. Though I am an International Student and I have different opinions on various issues, Dr. Jones always shows me great respect and is always willing to learn from me. I could not have wished for a better mentor than Dr. Jones. I am truly grateful for your dedication towards my personal development.”

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

❖ **Dr. Samah Mansour, School of Computing**

Nominated by: Isaac Beasley, Cybersecurity

Isaac writes: “As a graduate student under her guidance, I have been fortunate to experience her exceptional mentorship firsthand. Dr. Mansour embodies all the qualities and values that the award seeks to recognize. Her dedication to student development goes beyond classroom teaching. She has consistently gone above and beyond her duties to support my academic and professional growth. For example, she helped me network with Local Chief Information Security Officers, which resulted in valuable insights and opportunities for my Master’s Project. Her feedback on my work has always been insightful and thought-provoking, pushing me to do my best. It's clear

Dr. Mansour is an advocate for her students. Encouraging me to push my limits and helping me prepare to have my work featured at the SIGITE conference this fall. Dr. Mansour has always demonstrated genuine respect and interest in my well-being, taking the time to listen to my concerns and offering valuable advice. Her unwavering support has given me the confidence to pursue my academic and professional goals. In conclusion, Dr. Mansour's commitment to my, and other graduate students' development and her exceptional mentorship make her a deserving candidate for the Mentorship Award. I am honored to have had the opportunity to work under her guidance and recommend her without hesitation."

### *College of Liberal Arts & Sciences*

❖ **Dr. Sok Kean Khoo, Cell and Molecular Biology**

Nominated by: Dahlya Kamarudin, Cell and Molecular Biology

Dahlya writes: "Oprah Winfrey once said, 'A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself,' That is exactly what Dr. Khoo has done for me. So here I am, trying to find the words to express my gratitude and my attempt to draw a portrait of her truthful self for everyone else to see. I never felt more compelled to write an essay to nominate anyone, but I knew immediately that this award was meant for her. She deserves to be celebrated for every dedication and the time she spent, even on the weekend, to come to campus to ensure that I got the research skills I needed to face the real world. She not even just provided me with guidance, but she has also pushed me over the limit and brought me confidence in myself. She encouraged and helped me get all the essential experiences that I needed, such as presenting at conferences, and made me feel comfortable throughout my journey with her. Dr. Khoo took the chance to employ me and allow me to prove my worth without needing any prior related experiences, and that, to me, is a real mentor. She saw and believed in my capabilities and allowed me to thrive in her lab. That said, because of her, I have secured my dream position to start my career. Undoubtedly, I nominate Dr. Sok Kean Khoo for the Outstanding Mentorship Award."

❖ **Dr. Richard Rediske, Annis Water Resources Institute**

Nominated by: John Hart, Biology

John writes: “He has been a mentor that exemplifies all of the qualities outlined in the award description and has been an excellent mentor as I take my next steps post-graduation. With him as my major advisor, I was able to present my work at multiple professional conferences including the MiNET Michigan Network for Environmental Health and Technology Fall Meeting, Joint Aquatic Sciences Meeting, Industrial Hygiene Society Meeting, and the 2022 Great Lakes Beach Association Conference. We have also successfully received grant funding from Grand Valley State University Presidential Research Grant, Grand Valley’s Academic Conference Fund, and West Michigan Air & Waste Management Association Environmental Scholarship. Additionally, under his mentorship, I have published peer-reviewed manuscripts in the journals of Water Research, Journal of Environmental Management, and ACS ES&T Water and have seven other manuscripts that are currently under review. Dr. Rediske has been my strongest advocate in helping me navigate the graduate school process. He has played an active role in my well-being both in my academic and personal life and helped connect me with interested employers. He aided me in acquiring my first job postgraduation at Keiser & Associates LLC. Dr. Rediske has made a positive impact on both my personal life and professional career that has shaped me into the researcher, scholar, and environmentalist I am today. I cannot thank him enough for his mentorship.”

## *Kirkhof College of Nursing*

❖ **Dr. Joy Turner Washburn, Kirkhof College of Nursing**

Nominated by: Donna DeMann, Nursing Practice

Donna writes: "Joy has been a wonderful mentor throughout my MSN-DNP endeavor. I first encountered her as an instructor. I was impressed with her dedication to the students in class. She challenged us to learn and to do our best.

When I was assigned Joy as my project advisor, I was nervous. Joy is polished and professional and I am not. I was afraid that given her demeanor and her many years of teaching and advising experience, she might have unrealistic expectations of me. I soon learned, however, that Joy was able to meet me where I was in the educational process. Joy allowed me to work independently when I was able, but she also guided me when I needed it. She was supportive of me and positive in her feedback even when I knew she could have been frustrated with my slow progress. Joy knew the steps of the process and she shared this knowledge so that I never felt lost in the process. Joy was prompt in her reviews of my many drafts, and she helped me to turn the project into something that I could be proud to present. Joy was available to me for questions when I needed her, she was available for site visits, and she always kept me informed of her life plans so that we could work together yet continue life outside the classroom. Joy deserves this award."

**GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION  
OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARD  
Winter 2023**

*The Outstanding Teaching Award distinguishes faculty who deserve special recognition for exemplary teaching. This includes contributing to graduate student development by using thoughtful and creative methods of instruction, assisting in deeply understanding course content, and engaging students in a dynamic and inclusive manner.*

*College of Education & Community Innovation*

- ❖ **Judy Williams, Department of Educational Leadership & Counseling**  
Nominated by: Amy Teske, School Counseling

Amy writes: "I am writing this with the hope that I can convey to you just how deserving Mrs. Judy Williams is of the Outstanding Teaching Award. I have been fortunate enough to find myself in a few of Judy's classes over the last two years. She has created an enjoyable classroom experience which always made me look forward to attending every class. Judy's teaching style is unique to every other professor I have had. She always implements unique learning experiences in addition to the traditional spoken lecture, such as podcasts, flipgrids, amazing on-point clips from counselor experts or workshops, and just good 'food for thought' information which always sparked classroom discussion and interest. This is just one of the many ways that she exhibits exemplary teaching while educating graduate students. Judy makes virtual lessons come alive! Her video lectures are interesting, informative, and done in short enough segments to not become overwhelming. Each video is full of resources and information on target for course content. One memorable example was last year in a class with Judy, she had her lesson set up with a few videos, but it looked a little overwhelming. Each video had amazing clips from professional counselors and I was through the videos without realizing it. I had kept going and didn't realize I'd listened to the whole weeks' worth in one sitting. Judy is always there for us graduate students and I highly recommend her for this award, she is the best and most deserving GVSU school counseling college teacher."

❖ **Dr. Emily Nichols, School of Social Work**

Nominated by: Jasmine Krueger, Social Work

Jasmine writes: “Professor Nichols has made my time at Grand Valley State University memorable both in undergraduate and graduate studies. She is a professor that many in the School of Social Work seek to take classes with because of her knowledge of the material and her care for students. She regularly goes above and beyond to be available to assist students outside of her office hours. Professor Nichols has informed much of my approach to working with children as clients and helped to shape my professional philosophies as well. Professor Nichols has always been willing to go over cases with me after class and offer her advice. She has left the opportunity to grab a coffee and her office door open to students whenever needed. Given that she teaches foundational courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels, I and other students have been able to get to know her well and vice versa. She has been able to recognize and provide feedback on growth within the three years that I have known her. Professor Nichols goes above and beyond for her students while continuing to see clients and advise student organizations. She deserves this award for the many hours she has put into her students in the School of Social Work.”

*College of Health Professions*

❖ **Dr. Sarah Nechuta, School of Interdisciplinary Health**

Nominated by: Kassie Nguyen, Public Health

Kassie writes: “Dr. Sarah Nechuta is a great example of a professor with excellent teaching skills and who goes above and beyond to ensure resources and opportunities are accessible for her students. All epidemiology courses—especially the Advanced Quantitative Research Methods course—taught by Dr. Nechuta were one of the most fun and impactful courses I have taken throughout my education experience. I feel I have learned important and useful skills that I can apply to my career as an epidemiologist. She explains concepts efficiently and creates assignments organized in a way that is meaningful to our learning experience and the final projects within the courses. Outside of her classes, she provides useful resources to support furthering our education such as information on how to become SAS certified, and has taken time to write recommendation letters for students. Overall, Dr. Nechuta has made a positive impact on my graduate education



experience through her exemplary teaching methods and sincere care for her students' educational development. She is more than qualified for this award."

**GRADUATE STUDENT  
PRESIDENTIAL RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS**

**Spring/Summer 2022**

Addie, Leona. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.

Title: *Assessing Effects of an Extreme Weather Event on the Spatial Genetic Structure of the Woodland Jumping Mouse*

Daigle, Rebecca. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.

Title: *Ecosystem Responses to Fire and Girdling Treatments at Two Altered Oak Savannas in West Michigan*

Everhart, Kristin; Lanning, Jordan; McIntyre, Madeline; Novak, Nicole. College of Health Professions, Occupational Therapy

Title: *The Effects of Virtual Reality on Stress in Graduate Students*

Fischer, Abigail. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.

Title: *Avian Community Response to Oak Savanna and Oak Woodland Management Within Western Michigan*

Fray, Davis. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology – Aquatic Sciences.

Title: *Life in the Extreme - Characterizing Diatom Communities in Low-Oxygen High-Sulfur Spring Ecosystems in Michigan and Florida*

Gunnnett, Benjamin. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.

Title: *Habitat Suitability of Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) in the Grand River*

Hart, John. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.

Title: *Enhancing Precision Conservation Planning with Microbial Source Tracking Methods*

Hutton, Rebecca; Kukla, Olivia; Reidy, Julie; Ross, Blake; Sills, Kerri. College of Health Professions, Occupational Therapy

Title: *Identifying Gaps in Spinal Cord Injury Treatment in Post Acute Care: A Therapist's Perspective*

Mancero, Emilio. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences; Biology.

Title: *Analysis of Patterns of Island Gigantism in the San Cristobal Lava Lizard (*Microlophus bivittatus*)*

Suttorp, Taylor. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology – Aquatic Sciences.  
Title: *Impact of Invasive Asian Clam (Corbicula fluminea) on Midwestern Streams' Benthic Community*

Velasques, Paris. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.  
Title: *Effects of Microplastic Biofilms on an Anthropogenically Impacted Urban Lake*

White, Karina. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.  
Title: *Developing a Protocol for Students to Provide a Long-Term Solution to Restoration Monitoring at Grand Ravines Park (Ottawa County, MI)*

Wilson, Kathryn. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.  
Title: *Genetic Diversity and Pedigree Analysis of Captive Amur Tigers (Panthera tigris altaica) in AZA Accredited and non-AZA Accredited Sites*

#### **Fall 2022**

McCluskie, Bridie. College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, Biology.  
Title: *PCR Assay for the Detection of Mosquito Vectors Present in MI*

#### **Winter 2023**

Carey, Maggie. College of Health Professions, Public Health.  
Title: *Sensory-friendly built environments and accommodations for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*

Kellogg, Dolly. College of Health Professions, Public Health.  
Title: *An assessment of Kent County's kindergarten through fourth grade teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs: A focus on food allergies*

Peitsch, Chloe. College of Health Professions, Public Health.  
Title: *Perceptions of Physician Assistants Regarding Their Education and Genetic/Genomic Knowledge*

Waters, Kaylie. Kirkhof College of Nursing.  
Title: *Improving Breastfeeding Rates in a Rural and Medically Underserved Community*

**OTHER GRADUATE STUDENTS DEMONSTRATING  
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN WINTER 2023**

**GLENN A. NIEMEYER AWARD  
FOR OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENTS**

*This is a university-wide award honoring the most outstanding graduate students;  
selection is made by the Provost's Cabinet.*

***Outstanding Graduate Students***

- ❖ Alexandra Patterson, Health Administration
- ❖ Kerri Stapley, Nursing
- ❖ MacKenzie Sebesta, Physical Therapy

**Excellence-in-a-Discipline Awards 2022-2023**

***College Liberal Arts & Sciences***

- ❖ Trenton Dalm, Biomedical Sciences
- ❖ Ashley Duimstra, Biostatistics
- ❖ Mary A. Gifford, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Grace Pagone, Communications
- ❖ Autumn Stokes, Master of School Psychology and Psychological Specialist degree

***Seidman College of Business***

- ❖ Lydia Marsai Hanes, Accounting
- ❖ Kari L. Petersen, Accounting/Taxation
- ❖ Jose Velasquez Garrido, General Business

***College of Education & Community Innovation***

- ❖ Ben Russ, Health Administration
- ❖ Olivia Witsaman, Higher Education
- ❖ Genevieve Roe, Instruction and Curriculum
- ❖ Carley Andrus, Literacy Studies

- ❖ Emily Mathein, Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership
- ❖ Gerard Michael Sullivan Jr, Public Administration
- ❖ Fawn Bullock, School Counseling
- ❖ Shelby Denhof, Social Innovation
- ❖ Reagan L. Woodward, Social Work
- ❖ Krysta King, Special Education
- ❖ David A. Johnson, Educational Specialist in Leadership

*Padnos College of Engineering & Computing*

- ❖ Grant David Alphenaar, Applied Computer Science
- ❖ Brian Kiptalam, Cybersecurity
- ❖ Evan D. Steensma, Data Science and Analytics
- ❖ Ciana Janay Witherell, Engineering
- ❖ Hoang Le Mai Tran, Health Informatics and Bioinformatics

*College of Health Professions*

- ❖ Mary Ryan Pennington, Athletic Training
- ❖ Morgan Nicole Marsh, Clinical Dietetics
- ❖ Olivia Kukla, Occupational Therapy
- ❖ Lauren Greifenberg, Physician Assistant Studies
- ❖ Haley Danielle Elliott, Public Health
- ❖ Madeline Monan, Speech-Language Pathology
- ❖ Craig Andrew Kadrich, Audiology, Doctorate
- ❖ Sharyn Coates, Occupational Therapy, Doctorate
- ❖ Stephanie Tran, Physical Therapy, Doctorate

*Kirkhof College of Nursing*

- ❖ Kerri Stapley, Nursing
- ❖ Kara Roman, Nursing, Doctorate

## **GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OFFICERS**

**President:** Hannah Robinson, Doctorate of Audiology; Joe Ohaeche, Cybersecurity

**Vice President:** Jhon Kerby Gerlin, Business Administration

**Finance Officer:** Masego Seamogano, Accounting

**Communications Officer:** Joe Ohaeche, Cybersecurity

**Administration Officer:** Allan Loinyio, Biology

### **Advisors:**

Dr. Jennifer Pope, Department of Marketing  
Melissa Baker-Boosamra, Office of Student Life

## **GRADUATE COUNCIL OFFICERS**

### **Chair:**

Dr. Amy Campbell, Psychology

### **Vice-Chair:**

Dr. Monica Harris, Education

### **Policy Subcommittee Chair:**

Dr. Jennifer Pope, Marketing

### **Curriculum and Program Review Subcommittee Chair:**

Dr. Mark Staves, Cell and Molecular Biology



Dr. Jeffrey A. Potteiger, Associate Vice-Provost for the Graduate School

Trista Bergerud, Assistant Director of Programming and Communication

Sheri DeVries, Administrative Assistant

**Graduate Assistants:**

Kassie Nguyen, Public Health  
Long Ho, Public Administration

**Student Assistants:**

Riley Begeman, Advertising and Public Relations (undergraduate)  
Ashley Derfiny, Management and Marketing (undergraduate)

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