

BYU GERONTOLOGY

CONTACT US

Gerontology Program
Brigham Young University
1065 JFSB
Provo, UT 84602

801.422.1410
gerontology@byu.edu
gerontology.byu.edu
[Student Club sign-up](#)



Director: Dr. Jeremy Yorgason
Office Manager: Sarah Rogers

We are living in a challenging time with the coronavirus pandemic raging throughout the world and especially the U.S. As you have likely noticed, rates of coronavirus deaths are particularly high among older adults – those we love and are trying to better serve through the BYU Gerontology Minor program. For many of us, interactions with older family members and friends have moved “on-line,” with fewer in-person visits. Many events have been cancelled, including our 2020 Russell B. Clark Gerontology Conference, as well as the annual Huntsman World Senior Games. One of the blessings of these challenging times is that we have all had a little more discretionary time, or time to consider what is really important in our lives. Among other questions I have asked myself, I have considered some gerontology-related questions.

Have any of you wondered why some older adults you see at the grocery store (or your own parents or grandparents) are often not wearing a mask? Have you been concerned at all about political views that suggest that we should just let the coronavirus [run its course](#), regardless of whose lives it might impact? Have you wondered what role ageism (discrimination against someone because of their advanced age) has played in how we respond to this pandemic? Let me share a few resources that I have found helpful in answering these questions for myself.

Why do some older adults not seem concerned about catching COVID-19? While many older adults are wearing masks, keeping physical distance, and taking precautions to avoid infection, many seem unconcerned. I recently read an article in the [Washington Post](#) that shed some light on this issue, citing discussion with some credible gerontology scholars. They suggest that older adults may have followed the lead of politicians in not wearing masks, or they may see the benefits of social interactions and physical activity as outweighing the costs of physical distancing. Older adults may have lived through more challenging times, and they might see this pandemic as less threatening, or they may simply live with less everyday stress. Older adults may be fully aware of their mortality, but less concerned about the risks involved. There is heterogeneity in how older adults view these issues – for proof, just check out the comments in response to that Washington Post article! We might benefit by considering common age-related biases in relation to this pandemic (see this related [infographic](#)).

A recent story in the [New York Times](#) suggested that while 9% of coronavirus cases in the U.S. have occurred in long-term care facilities, these have led to over 40% of the fatalities reported in the U.S. To me these numbers are quite alarming. What can we do to help diminish the impact of the coronavirus on older adults living in long-term care facilities? To increase the safety of older adults in long-term care, [guidelines](#) provided by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention have provided some direction. Is there more that we can do? Prior to the pandemic, professional long-term care of older adults with health needs was increasingly becoming part of the U.S. culture, with large numbers of older adults living in assisted living and nursing home care. (continued on page 2)



HIGHLIGHTS

- Students continue to add the Gerontology Minor in spite of social distancing. Many are finding creative ways to complete the internship requirement.
- Seven Graduate Student Fellowships were awarded to support graduate-level gerontological research at BYU.



continued from page 1

Perhaps this pandemic has encouraged more people to consider alternative care strategies for aging loved ones. [This opinion piece](#) in the New England Journal of Medicine addresses many of the relevant issues.

Last, let me ask how this pandemic has impacted how we interact with the older adults in our lives. Has our interaction with them increased, decreased, or changed venues but otherwise remained the same? If in-person visits are not possible, what efforts might we make to help them feel connected? Some have suggested making in-person visits with masks and physical distancing. Others have made efforts for virtual connections with older adults in long-term care or otherwise. Some have even started pen-pal programs with older adults that are socially isolated. My invitation is for the BYU Gerontology community to do what we can to help older adults be healthy and safe, while remaining socially connected. I hope we can look back on this time and see what new lessons we have learned in improving the lives of older adults in our communities.

Faculty Affiliate Spotlight

Corinna Trujillo Tanner is a clinician-scientist who joined the Brigham Young University College of Nursing as an Assistant Professor in 2019, after completing her PhD and a two-year National Institutes of Health Research Fellowship in cancer, aging and end of life. She is a Registered Nurse and holds post master's certificates in Gerontology, Adult Nurse Practitioner training and an International Certificate in Caring and Healing. Corinna is devoted to patient-centered care and maintains an ongoing clinical practice at the University of Utah Moran Eye Center, where she has worked for 9 years, creating curriculum designed to help older adults with vision loss maintain their independence and quality of life. Vision loss affects greater than 25% of older adults in the U.S. Corinna is also interested in vision rehabilitation, globally, and has worked as part of a multidisciplinary team, developing vision rehabilitation interventions in Barbados. Her research focuses on the epidemiology of vision loss and on identifying patterns associated with positive outcomes accruing from the struggle with vision loss. In the future, she hopes to develop, validate, and implement interventions which foster late life potential, growth and quality of life among older adults with sensory impairments. She is passionate about guiding students in honoring and fostering late life potential and creating an age-inclusive and ability-inclusive culture. Corinna and her husband Boyd have four children, ages 6-26 and enjoy the outdoors, theater, and BYU sports.



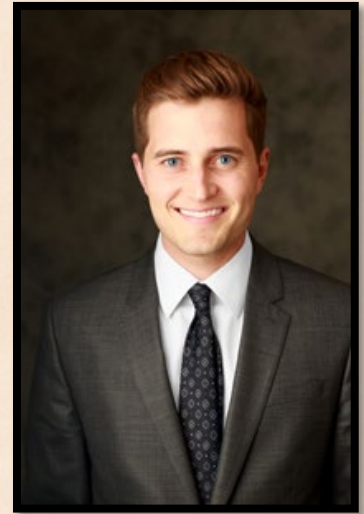
Faculty Affiliates Luncheon

The Annual Gerontology Faculty Affiliates Luncheon is held each January. All Faculty Affiliates are invited to attend a catered lunch and program presentation by the Program Director, Dr. Jeremy Yorgason. Attendees enjoyed meeting affiliates from different departments and colleges, learning more about the Gerontology Program, and hearing success stories of program alumni. They were able to connect with others who are conducting gerontological research and teaching courses on aging.

GERONTOLOGY STUDENTS

Alumni Highlight

Tanner Mitchell is a BYU Gerontology alumnus and the Administrator at Brentwood Health Care Center in Santa Monica, California. He was named one of the 2016 Leaders of Tomorrow in the field of Gerontology. An article in Long-Term Living Magazine praises his attention to the residents of Brentwood, and his great success using nonmedical interventions. Mitchell said, "When you get involved with residents and show you care about them, they respond. We want residents to be happy because we know residents who are happy get better faster."



Student Social

The second annual Gerontology Program Student Social was another great success. The room was full of enthusiasm and social networking. The students got to know the faculty and staff, they connected with other students who have similar interests and passions, and were very interested in the dynamic presentation on Skeletal Muscle Aging by grad student Nani Kaluhiokalani.

Scholarship and Award Recipients

2019 Service Award Recipients majored in Athletic Training, Dietetics, Exercise & Wellness, Exercise Sciences, Family Life, Latin American Studies, Neuroscience, Nursing, and Physiology & Developmental Biology.

2020 Academic Scholarship Recipients majored in Exercise Sciences, Exercise & Wellness, Family Life, Nursing, Physiology & Developmental Biology, and Public Health.

2020 Best Poster Award for Gerontology at the Fulton Mentored Learning Conference went to Whitney Allen and Colter Clayton from the Department of Psychology.

2020 Graduate Student Fellowships went to seven students in the following fields: Biology; Exercise Sciences; Marriage, Family, and Human Development; Clinical Psychology; Nutritional Science; and Micro & Molecular Biology.



FACULTY RESEARCH

Current Internally Funded Research Projects

Michael Cope (Sociology)

“Senior Health Care Selection Amid Declining Rural Services”

Julianne Grose and Pam Van Ry (Micro & Molecular Biology and Biochemistry)

“PAS Kinase as a Potential Moderator of Heart Disease”

Robert Hyldahl, Jayson Gifford, and Chad Hancock (Exercise Sciences and Nutrition, Dietetics, & Food Sciences)

“Heat Therapy: a Intervention to Improve Skeletal Muscle Bioenergetics and Vascular Function in Aged Adults”

David Thomson and Jonathon Hill (Physiology & Developmental Biology)

“Can Pharmacological Activation of AMPK Rejuvenate Gene Expression in Aged Skeletal Muscle?”

Michael Larson (Psychology and Neuroscience)

“A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Group-Format, Ecologically-Oriented, Executive Function Rehabilitation Program in Older Adults”

Scott Weber (Micro & Molecular Biology)

“Characterization of a CCRL2 Allele with a Protective Effect on Alzheimer's Disease”

Tracy Dustin and Blaine Winters (Nursing)

“Post-Fall Physical Assessment of Elderly Patients in Long-Term Care Facilities”

Recently Published by BYU Gerontology Faculty Affiliates

Click the title of the article to link to the abstract

Josue D. Gonzalez Murcia, Allen Weinert, Claudia M. Tellez Freitas, Daniel K. Arens, Meganne N. Ferrel, **Julianne H. Grose**, **Perry G. Ridge**, Eric Wilson, **John S. K. Kauwe**, **K. Scott Weber**

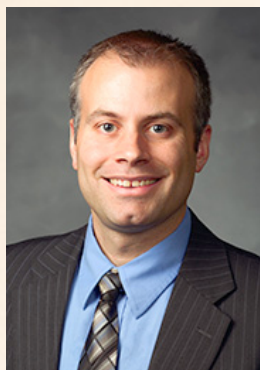
[Atypical chemokine receptor ACKR2-V41A has decreased CCL2 binding, scavenging, and activation, supporting sustained inflammation and increased Alzheimer's disease risk](#)

Adam Jacks, K.L. Haley, G. Bishop, **Tyson Harmon**

[Automated Speech Recognition in Adult Stroke Survivors: Comparing Human and Computer Transcriptions](#)



Julianne Grose



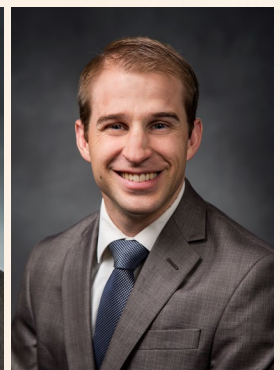
Perry Ridge



John Kauwe



Scott Weber



Tyson Harmon

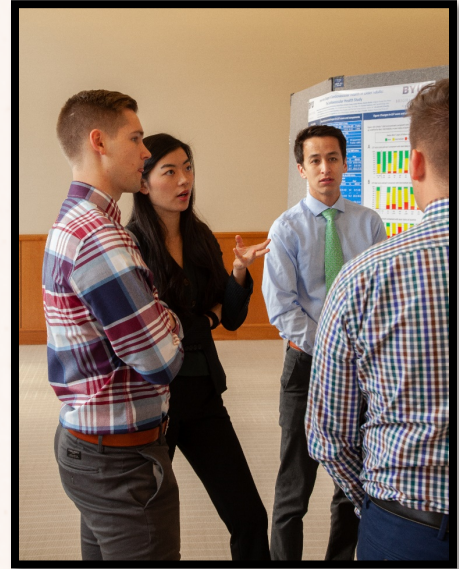
PROGRAM EVENTS

Russell B. Clark Gerontology Conference

We were very sorry to have to cancel the Gerontology Conference this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. We very much look forward to next year's conference.

The 30th Annual Gerontology Conference will be held March 17-18, 2021. All sessions will be virtual, with in-person attendance yet to be determined. Updates will be posted to the website as they become available.

To see videos from the 2019 conference, [click here](#).



Huntsman World Senior Games

Student volunteers travel to the Huntsman World Senior Games each fall in St. George, Utah. They administer various health screenings to ensure the health and safety of all senior athletes. Last October, more than 60 BYU student volunteers ran screening tests such as visual acuity, glucose, carotid ultrasound, body composition, blood pressure, and balance. Many student volunteers are “so impressed with what they see at the games in terms of healthy, happy aging seniors, they become committed to some type of gerontological study and career path. For many students, there is a complete paradigm shift relative to what they once thought regarding getting older” (data and quote from Ron Hager, BYU Exercise Sciences).

CALENDAR & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

[Huntsman World Senior Games](#): cancelled

[Student Service Award](#) Applications due: October 26, 2020

[Faculty Research Grant Proposals](#) due: November 13, 2020

Student Social*: January 15, 2021

[Miami Internship Applications](#) due*: January 18, 2021

Faculty Affiliates Luncheon*: January 22, 2021

[Russell B. Clark Gerontology Conference](#)*: March 17-18, 2021

[Student Scholarship Applications](#) due: March 26, 2021

[Fulton Mentored Research Conference](#)*: April 8, 2021
(Gerontology Poster Awards given)

*These events are subject to change pending updates on the coronavirus and may be conducted online only.

SAVE THE DATE



[Jeremy Yorgason, PhD](#)
School of Family Life
Director of Gerontology Program



[Ron Hager, PhD](#)
Exercise Sciences



[Sterling Sudweeks, PhD](#)
Physiology & Developmental Biology



[Blaine Winters, DNP](#)
Nursing



[Evan Thacker, PhD](#)
Public Health
Student Club Advisor



[Wendy Birmingham, PhD](#)
Psychology



[Sam Tsugawa, DMA](#)
Music Education



[Len Novilla, MPH](#)
Public Health