

FCS MASTERS STUDENTS 2022/2023

Masters First Year

Sarah Cochran

I graduated with my BA in English and editing from Brigham Young University. My career has been in instructional design and curriculum development. I am interested in studying domestic violence prevention and intervention, particularly in early childhood and public school curriculum.

I live in Herriman, Utah with my partner and two maniac toddlers (I should be going into prison reform because you know those guys are hitting the system sooner or later). I love exploring Utah, McDonald's coke, and cyberbullying my senators.



Tania Akter

I came to the US from Bangladesh to pursue a master's degree in Human Development and Social Policy. I did my bachelor's in economics. I grew up in a developing country, where I experienced that family violence and inequality both are positively correlated with poverty. I could have gone for a master's in economics, but thought it is more important to concentrate in-depth on these social issues to figure out what contributes to the failure of some policies and how we can alter those policies for the greater good. In the beginning, I was feeling unpleasant about the weather in Utah, but as time passed by I began to like everything related to Utah.

Amelia Herder

Amelia has a Bachelor of Individualized Studies in Family and Child Life in Healthcare from Dixie State University. She plans to become a Certified Child Life Specialist and help make hospital experiences easier for children and families.

Amelia enjoys hiking, kayaking, rock climbing and just being outdoors. She also enjoys exploring new places and hopes to one day volunteer with Child Life Disaster Relief, an organization that deploys Child Life Specialists throughout the world to help children cope after natural disasters. Her favorite place, so far, is Cape Town, South Africa.



Masters First Year

Emma Maxwell

I'm a recent SLC transplant, by way of Illinois and then the mid-Atlantic. I graduated with my BS in Cognitive Science from Johns Hopkins in 2019, then spent some time working with an education nonprofit focusing on middle-school students. I'm super excited to hopefully blend my undergraduate coursework with that social impact work through this HDSP program. In my free time, I love to read, eat, play competitive sports (let me know if you're looking for a pickleball partner or an extra player on your rec league teams!), and can't wait to explore the great Utah outdoors.



Masters Second Year

Sydnee Sartor

My name is Sydnee Sartor. I have lived in Salt Lake City my entire life. I attended the University of Utah for my undergraduate degree. I studied sociology and sustainability. I have worked with children in many settings and completed a research internship at the SLC Bicycle Collective. This year I am a TA for an undergraduate research methods course. In my spare time, I love to garden, camp, hike, and sew. I spend a lot of time caring for both my indoor plants and backyard garden. I live with my boyfriend and dog in Salt Lake City and we enjoy cooking dinner together and going on long walks or bike rides.

I am still unsure of what comes next for me after graduate school, but I am excited to be here! During my time here I would like to study policies impacting underserved children and families, healthy city planning and transportation methods, and food justice.



Olivia Gruwell



"I finished my undergrad at BYU-Idaho in Marriage and Family Studies. Since then I've worked as a Case Manager for Utah Valley Refugees and as a Site Coordinator for Utah County 4-H Mentoring. I love my family which consists of my husband, two cats, a dog, and we are expecting our first baby in November! My dog loves hiking and we discovered that one of our cats does too so if you see a random Golden Retriever hiking with a large black cat, you probably found us! My goal is to create a preventative program that educates adolescents and young adults on relationship skills and dynamics. My hope is that the program will prevent domestic violence and increase family stability in young people's future marriages and partnerships."

Nicole Davisson

I graduated in spring 2021 with an undergrad in Sociology. Single parenting a wonderful 16 year old who attends the High School for Performing Arts, and two Siamese cats. I worked with VOA Homeless Outreach for 4 years until Covid hit, then took an at-home job as a Covid-19 Contact Tracer, discovered working from home saves time I could use for studying so now I work from home for Rad Power Bikes.

My hobbies are tea, writing, plant murdering, sleeping, and reading Mo Dao Zu Shi fanfiction obsessively. I plan to live on a float home, in the not too distant future.

I chose the HDSP program so I can use the numerous years of non-profit work and apply it to a career at the federal level, particularly in regard to policy affecting the most vulnerable populations.





Hannah McAtee

I just moved to Salt Lake City from Chicago so I have been exploring the new city and getting excited to start the program. I enjoy hiking with my dog and spending time with friends and family.

I am hoping to learn more about nonprofits because that's what I want to do with my degree. I am interested in nonprofit administration

Maja Allred

I recently completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Utah with a BFA in Ballet and a minor in Human Development and Family Studies. Since then I have had many opportunities for personal development through service, teaching, and work experiences. I enjoy spending time in nature or with my family. I hope to be able to use my master's degree in human development and social policy to help advocate for and provide support for people with disabilities.



Skye McPherson

I finished my undergrad at the U in Dec of 2020. My major was business management with a minor in information systems. I am currently working full time as a business analyst. In my free time I love to read, hike, and hang out with my husband and our two boys. They keep us very busy with all kinds of little league sports.

Although I'm still not 100% certain of what I want to do in the future, I'm currently interested in how business policies can support families. I am considering a future in diversity management or possibly teaching.



Masters Third (+) Year

Eric Payne

After taking the summer off, I'm jumping back into my 2nd year in the Master's HDSP program; also starting my 8th year with nonprofit Playworks.

My hobbies are paddle boarding, hiking with my dog, and archery.

I'd like to study how to use research to influence educational policy, particularly on emphasizing children's social and emotional wellbeing.



Angie Eliason

I've been working on my Masters degree, working on my thesis which is focusing on parental relationship dynamics and parental relationship equity.

I enjoy baking and watching scary movies.

After earning my degree, I hope to find a way to be actively involved in my community and serve the public.



Lesley Garaycochea

Lesley is a University of Utah graduate and continues her education pursuing a Master's Degree in Social Policy through the FCS department. Her research focus is on homicide/suicide events where there is a child custody dispute.



FCS PH.D. STUDENTS 2022/2023

PH.D First Year



Susan Perkins

I recently completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Utah with a BFA in Ballet and a minor in Human Development and Family Studies. Since then I have had many opportunities for personal development through service, teaching, and work experiences. I enjoy spending time in nature or with my family. I hope to be able to use my master's degree in human development and social policy to help advocate for and provide support for people with disabilities.

Kristen Krueger

I graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 2016 with a dual degree in Human Development & Family Studies and Social Welfare. Following undergrad, I went to graduate school and received my Masters in Marriage & Family Therapy where I discovered my passion for working with individuals and families. I am currently a first year PhD student in Human Development & Social Policy. I am interested in learning more about mental health disparities and how policies support or deter individuals from receiving the support and services they deserve. I believe the HDSP program will help me take a multidisciplinary approach to working with individuals, couples, and families while also supporting my future goals of program development.

In my free time, I enjoy snuggling with my golden retriever Bori.



Shanna Jaggers

Shanna has a Masters in Public Administration. She had the opportunity to engage in academic research and found a desire to explore research-informed implementation strategies. She has an interest in exploring the implementation of evidence-based interventions in clinical settings related to substance use in transitional age youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

PH.D Second Year



Brittany Alosi

Il received my BS from the University of Utah in Psychology and my MA in Education Foundations Policy and Practice from the University of Colorado, Boulder. I currently work as a Lead Public Health Analyst for the Health Resources and Services Administration in the Bureau of Primary Health Care. I'm also a mom to 5-year-old twins and a 3-year-old little girl. Lately I've been super into true crime podcasts, which is terrible for my anxiety. But I've learned 2 valuable lessons: 1) always request an attorney and 2) never agree to a polygraph. In terms of this program, I'd really like to further develop my data analysis and research skills to better understand and measure the impact HRSA's programs are making in the communities we serve. I'd also love to research and identify certain practices and innovations that are working at the local and community level and link that to some of HRSA's strategic planning and decision making for future initiatives.

River August

River is your friendly neighborhood queer, who has been all-out gender-bender since they were a little tot trundling around in cowperson boots & plaid button-ups. In 2005, they received their Master of Education from the University of Utah. Prior to receiving their Masters they earned an undergraduate degree at Westminster College in Sociology & minor in Art while participating on the golf & basketball collegiate teams. River is currently working for Salt Lake County where they serve as a Facility Director in the Parks and Recreation Division. River is among the individuals in Utah, championing social justice, growth & change as they serve as a leader in the effort to defend gender-expansive rights. River is considered somewhat of a transgender pioneer, in Utah, from undergoing pivotal gender-affirming surgeries like being the third to have a phalloplasty to accomplishing several legal achievements such as being one of the first, to legally change their gender marker to "X" setting a historic precedent for others. River is a Ph.D. student in the U's Human Development & Social Policy program where they hope to study childhood & family trauma, epigenetics, gender identity & building inclusive communities. River is an avid skier & motorcycle rider who lives in Salt Lake City with their partner Jo, their three kids & four dogs.



Sarah Bauer

Most recently I have been running our family non-profit and making lots of memories with my kiddos before my time became more limited this fall.

I love to entertain, parties are my jam! I also love to bake, but I recently discovered that I am gluten-intolerant so I am trying to find good alternatives that measure up!

On completion of my PhD, I hope to have a positive effect on educational options for children in hardship around the world. Still determining what that means entirely, but I am loving my coursework so far.



Robert Porter

I currently work as an investigator with the Utah Division of Consumer Protection. I have been with the Division since 2016. I hold an MPA from Brigham Young University, a BA in Spanish from Utah State University, and an AS in Aviation Maintenance Technology from the Community College of the Air Force.

I have been married for about 13 years and have 4 children ranging in age from 4 to 11.

I enjoy riding horses, urban farming, hiking, traveling, and reading. I spend a lot of time in my yard and garden with my plants, my chickens, and my steer named Moo.

I want to focus my PhD studies on immigration. I am particularly interested in the root causes of immigration both on the societal as well as the individual scale. I am most interested in entering academia as a research professor, but we will see where life takes



PH.D Third Year

Bridges Eatchel

After finishing up my MS in 2020, I started working on my PhD at the start of 2021. I am now currently working on my qualifying exam, and hope to start working on my dissertation in the Spring. Outside of school, I enjoy photography and participating in community theatre programs. My husband and I recently moved, so most of our free time right now is spent on unpacking and finishing up the house! Once I finish my degree, I hope to continue with research and teaching.



Janae Chandler

Janae has taught personal finance in higher education for over ten years and is the mother of four children. She enjoys exploring the world with her family. Janae's area of research is family financial decision-making; she hopes to continue to teach in higher education and develop cognitive and behavioral-based methods that improve financial outcomes across the income spectrum.



Miriam Barth

Hi, I'm Miriam and I'm a second year Ph.D. student. I'm thrilled to be pursuing research in psychedelic psychotherapy and how it may intersect with optimal human development. My goal is to contribute to this emerging field, ensuring that as many people as possible - especially disadvantaged communities - have access to safe, effective therapies.

I enjoy dancing (especially with my girl), traveling, connection & collaboration with others, spinning fire and the creation of music, ideas, projects, the works.



Rebecca Mabe

Al have recently finished my MPP work and now in my second year of the Human Development and Social Policy PhD program.

My husband and I have just moved to Herriman city center and love the easy access to parks, trails, swimming and any kind of recreation you can imagine. I love working in the community garden, and taking my grandchildren to all the fun places and events there.

I am very interested in Health and Aging policy, and hope to further my experience as a Congressional Health and Aging Policy APSA Fellow by participating in local governance and working with Utah non-profits to provide access to healthcare for all Americans.



PH.D Fourth Year



Tessa Washburn

I continue to work on my PhD. I love to spend time with my family and travel. I also love the sport of tennis and started playing when I was four years old. I really hope, with my degree, to develop the necessary skills to help children and families more effectively in lower-income and lower-middle-income countries.

Joy Qiao

This is my third year in the Ph.D. program of HDSP. My research interest is how parenting behavior and practices influence children's social-emotional development and academic performances. Particularly, I am interested in studying factors in parenting behaviors that are associated with fostering growth mindset in children, factors that promote the development of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation in relation to satisfaction of basic psychological needs; and how these, in turn, facilitate optimal learning in children and adults.

I love being outdoors with my family, walking and hiking whenever possible, and I am pretty good at enticing my husband and daughter to go along with me, that's when many good conversations come about.



Marin Christensen

I have been slowly chipping away at the Ph.D. program, and started a new position in June as the Associate Director of the Utah Women & Leadership Project.

I enjoy paddleboarding, lounging in our dinky above-ground pool, wrestling my dogs, and daily walks and hikes with my partner. I would love to publish a book from my Ph.D. research, or at the very least I hope it makes some sort of impact on those who make policy decisions (they are who I'm studying, after all!).

Prem Narayanan

Prem is interested in healthcare delivery and context. He is interested in Statistics and Quantitative Analysis. He received an undergrad degree in Mechanical Engineering from NIT India and has a Masters in Finance and a Masters in Statistics from the University of Utah.

