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BRENT RYAN BIELEFELDT '16

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN RESEARCH
Department of Aerospace Engineering
College of Engineering
FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. DARREN HARTL '03

Brent is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Aerospace Engineering under the direction of Dr. Darren Hartl. His research explores the potential development of a biologically-inspired framework capable of improving exploration of the structural design space and identifying trends at the preliminary stage of the design process.

Groups from the Air Force Research Laboratory, Army Research Laboratory, and Boeing have adapted this approach to solve challenging problems, including the design of morphing airfoils/rotor blades and the determination of fold patterns in structural origami.

To date, Brent has co-authored four journal articles and nine conference papers, presented his research at seven national or international conferences, and has spent time as a researcher at both the NASA Langley Research Center and the Air Force Research Laboratory. His honors include the 2018 ASME Ephrahim Garcia Best Paper Award, the 2018 ICAST Best Student Presentation Award, and the 2019 Texas A&M Aerospace Graduate Excellence Fellowship Award.

He received a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Alabama in 2014. In 2016, he obtained a Master of Science in Aerospace Engineering from Texas A&M University, where he focused on structural health monitoring. A recipient of a National Research Council Postdoctoral Associateship award, Brent will soon begin work with the Air Force Research Laboratory to develop novel methods for multiscale and multiphysical structural design.
LIANG FENG '18

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN RESEARCH
Department of Chemistry
College of Science
FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. HONG-CAI ZHOU

Liang is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Chemistry with research interests in the synthesis and application of metal-organic frameworks with hierarchical porosities, architectures, and compositions.

He received his Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Wuhan University in 2016. In the same year, he joined Dr. Hong-Cai Zhou’s research group at Texas A&M University. He has 38 research publications in peer-reviewed journals during his four-year graduate career. Among the 38 papers, he has 25 first-author or co-first-author publications that have been cited more than 1,000 times.

Liang has received many national and international awards, including the RSC Materials Chemistry Division Travel Grants for Early Career Scientists, the Derek & Christiane Barton Graduate Endowed Fellowship, the JEMS Scholarship for Collaborative Research in Chemistry, the Martin Corera Memorial Graduate Student Travel Award in Chemistry, the MRS Graduate Student Award, ACS Division of Inorganic Chemistry Student Travel Award, and the OGAPS Graduate Student Research and Presentation Travel Award.

He also serves as an independent reviewer for several international journals in the areas of inorganic chemistry and materials science. Liang has remained professionally engaged in serving as an early career network representative for the Energy Frontier Research Centers at the U.S. Department of Energy, and has actively participated in several communication, diversity, and career activities. He will soon join Northwestern University as a postdoctoral fellow under the guidance of Nobel Laureate Sir Fraser Stoddart.
Keshav Karki '16

Distinguished Graduate Student Award in Research
Program of Toxicology
College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Stephen H. Safe

Keshav is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Veterinary Physiology & Pharmacology and interdisciplinary Toxicology program under Dr. Stephen Safe.

His research focuses on the development of novel drug targets for human pancreatic, lung, breast, and brain cancer and multiple myelomas. Through investigating the regulation of immune checkpoint molecule PD-L1 in triple-negative breast cancer cells, Keshav discovered drug interactions that represent a breakthrough in immunotherapy.

His findings have been featured as first-author publications in multiple journals, including Cancer Research, Journal of Neurooncology, Molecular Pharmacology and Cancer Prevention and Research. Keshav also received an invitation to present these research findings at several national conferences. He has been awarded several honors, such as the 2018 VTPP Outstanding Graduate Student Award. In addition, Keshav has also helped undergraduates and graduate students on their research projects.
Lauren received her doctorate in Toxicology from Texas A&M University in December of 2019 under the advisement of Dr. Ivan Rusyn. Her dissertation research focused on investigating inter-individual variability in epigenetic effects and DNA damage using in vivo and in vitro population-based models.

She is an author or co-author of 12 publications and the recipient of several Society of Toxicology awards, including the Colgate-Palmolive Award for Student Research Training in Alternative Methods, the Syngenta Fellowship Award in Human Health Applications of New Technologies, the WIT Celebrating Women in Toxicology Award, and the Supplemental Training in Education Award.

She has also served the Society of Toxicology in several leadership roles: Women In Toxicology Graduate Student Representative, Education and Career Development Committee Graduate Student Representative, and Graduate Student Leadership Council member. In addition, Lauren also served as the Chair of the 2020 Drug Safety Gordon Research Seminar. Lauren is now working as an investigative toxicologist in the Drug Safety Research and Evaluation group at Takeda Pharmaceuticals.
Alyssa is a postdoctoral research associate investigating vector-host interactions of Chagas disease and clinical outcomes of the disease in working dogs.

She first became interested in infectious diseases by leading research to prevent malaria transmission in Kenya and leishmaniasis transmission in India. Working firsthand with two of the world’s most common communicable diseases prompted her interest in a career in epidemiology.

She began her doctoral study at Texas A&M University in the fall of 2015 as an NSF Graduate Research Fellow, where she concentrated on the ecology and epidemiology of vector-borne diseases in Dr. Sarah Hamer’s lab. Her research demonstrated how ecological tracking of the host-vector-parasite interactions provides insight on the sylvatic maintenance and spillover risk of the Chagas parasite which could not only improve canine health, but also public health.
CLAYTON REED MULVIHILL '13

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN RESEARCH
Department of Mechanical Engineering
College of Engineering
FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. ERIC L. PETERSON

Clayton received his doctorate from the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Texas A&M University under the advisement of Dr. Eric L. Petersen. He received his Master of Science and Bachelor of Science from the same department in 2015 and 2013, respectively.

His graduate research focused on infrared laser absorption spectroscopy, chemical kinetics, and gas dynamics. By applying laser absorption diagnostics to chemically reacting or non-reacting flows behind reflected shock waves, he measured rate constants for several chemical reactions and provided other useful chemical kinetic or spectroscopic data.

During his time as a graduate student, Clayton published a total of 17 peer-reviewed publications, eight of which featured Clayton as the primary author, in international journals. He has given a total of 14 presentations at 11 conferences, including four international conferences. He has won a number of awards associated with these conferences, including awards in the Best Student Paper competition at two international conferences, and was also awarded a Graduate Research Fellowship from the National Science Foundation in 2014. During his time as a doctoral student, Clayton taught a Principles of Thermodynamics as the instructor of record for a total of 81 undergraduate students.

Since graduating, he has worked as a post-doctoral researcher under Dr. Eric L. Petersen and has taught courses on thermodynamics and heat transfer. Beginning in summer 2020, he plans to begin a post-doctoral appointment at Argonne National Laboratory.
PRASHANTH KUMAR SIDDHAMSHETTY ’20

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN RESEARCH
Department of Chemical Engineering
College of Engineering

FACULTY ADVISOR:  DR. JOSEPH KWON

Prashanth is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Chemical Engineering under the supervision of Dr. Joseph Kwon. His research focuses on developing a model-predictive control framework for the design of pumping schedules to regulate propped fracture geometry.

His research addresses key practical and fundamental challenges and has the potential to lead to a lower break-even price in extracting crude oil and gas and to greatly impact the economy of the State of Texas.

Upon receiving his Bachelor of Technology in Chemical Engineering from IIT Madras, Prashanth worked on the technical services team at Reliance Industries Limited and joined Texas A&M University in 2015. He has authored or co-authored 27 publications in leading journals, presented research at several national conferences, and made consistent contributions to securing grants. He has received several honors and awards, including the Paul & Ellen Deisler Fellowship by the Artie McFerrin Department of Chemical Engineering. Apart from academic work within the department, Prashanth was involved in Energy Research Society activities in 2017-2018 as a technical general officer.
HUA WANG ’19

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN RESEARCH

Department of Materials Science and Engineering
College of Engineering

FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. XIAOFENG QIAN

Hua earned his doctorate in Materials Science and Engineering. His doctoral research, under the supervision of Dr. Xiaofeng Qian, developed a first-principles theory and simulation methods for predicting and understanding nonlinear optical properties. To overcome existing knowledge barriers regarding nonlinear properties of optical materials, Hua created a systematic, quantum-mechanics based ab initio approach to investigate the microscopic mechanism of nonlinear optical responses. He has also investigated topological materials, superconducting materials, and perovskite quantum dots, as well as 2D magnetic materials.

In total, he has published 14 peer-reviewed journal articles with another 5 manuscripts under review. He is first or co-first author on seven papers and manuscripts. Hua is a recipient of the 2020 MSEN Best Ph.D. Thesis Award from Texas A&M University. An appreciation of the utility of mathematics and physics for establishing solid foundations for materials theory, discovery, and design recently led him to accept a postdoctoral associate position in Dr. Ju Li’s group at MIT. There, he will work on ab initio modeling of topological materials.
NA YOUNG AHN ’20

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of Health and Kinesiology
College of Education and Human Development

FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. GEORGE CUNNINGHAM ’99

Ahn is a doctoral candidate and graduate assistant in the Division of Sport Management in the Department of Health and Kinesiology at Texas A&M University. She also researches women’s roles in leadership for the Laboratory for Diversity in Sport. Prior to starting her doctorate, Ahn worked at the Korea Institute of Sport Science, as a research assistant in the Department of Policy Development and as a program coordinator for the Women’s Sports Leadership Academy.

Her research focuses two primary areas: cultural diversity, with specific focus on gender, national, and racial/ethnic equity, and inclusiveness in sport governance and leadership; and organizational behavior, such as discrimination and stigmatization, and organizational transformation in sport. Ahn has presented at various conferences and her work has been published in the International Journal of Exercise Science.
CHANTE AJALON ANDERSON ’20

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of Communication
College of Liberal Arts

FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. KRISTAN POIROT

Chante examines black bodies at the intersection of race, gender, media, and sport as a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at Texas A&M University. His research explores how the black activist athlete is represented in new media and how athletic black bodies serve multiple purposes for a variety of publics.

As an instructor of record, he has taught courses such as Communication and Popular Culture, Argumentation and Debate, Rhetorical Criticism, and Critical Race Discourse. Chante currently serves as the president of the Black Graduate Student Association and as a senator for the Graduate and Professional Student Government. He is a participant on the Rec Sports Participant Advisory Council and a member of the Graduate School Task Force.

In 2020, Chante received Texas A&M’s Fasken Graduate Student Teaching Award. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communication from Morgan State University, and his final paper contrasted the content of Blast Master KRS-One’s rap lyrics with the rhetoric of Malcolm X’s speeches. Chante received his Master of Arts from Texas Southern University, where he wrote an interdisciplinary thesis entitled, “The Role of Family Communication on the African American Male Matriculation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.” He has also worked in the field of broadcast journalism in New York City.
MICHAELA BACA ’17

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of English
College of Liberal Arts

FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. NANDRA PERRY

Michaela is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English under the advisement of Dr. Nandra Perry. She is also pursuing a certificate in Digital Humanities.


In both her research and approach to teaching, Michaela is interested in the literary and material voices of those who have historically been subverted or rendered invisible. She has taught Rhetoric and Composition, Business and Technical Writing, Writing about Literature, and Arthurian Literature at Texas A&M University. Michaela regularly incorporates digital methods and “critical making” exercises into her classrooms. Michaela earned her Master of Arts in English Literature with a certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies from Texas A&M University in 2017.
JESSICA C. BENSON ’12

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. JENNIFER STRONG ’02

As a doctoral candidate in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications Department, Jessica studies the concept of followership. Her research specifically concentrates on how national, societal, and organizational cultures influence followership preferences and behaviors.

During her graduate program, Jessica has been fortunate enough to serve as an instructor of record or teaching assistant for six core curriculum leadership courses.

In addition to teaching, Jessica has collaborated on research projects with teams of faculty and student researchers and has had the opportunity to develop grant proposals and present at conferences worldwide. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Leadership and Development from Texas A&M University, and a Master of Science in Agriculture Leadership, Education and Communication from the University of Georgia. Additionally, she holds certificates in College Teaching and Non-Profit Management from the University of Georgia, and certificates in Mediation, Leadership, and Professional Training and Development from Texas A&M.
Kimberly studies twentieth century transnational literature under the advisement of Dr. Marian Eide as a doctoral candidate in the Department of English.

She holds graduate certificates in Women’s and Gender Studies as well as Film and Media Studies. Her dissertation, “Women of Cover in Contemporary Transnational Literature,” explores literary representations of Muslim women’s veiling practices. She has presented her research at international academic conferences and been awarded travel grants to attend these events.

As an instructor of record at Texas A&M University, she has taught Composition and Rhetoric, Technical Business Writing, Writing About Literature, Twenty-First Century Literature and Culture, Literature from World War II to the Present, and American Ethnic Literature. She holds an Academy of Future Faculty Certificate from the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning. In competitive selection processes, she was previously appointed as a teaching mentor for first-year graduate student instructors and currently serves as the assistant to the Technical Business Writing Coordinator.
SURESH JOSHI ’19

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of Educational Psychology
College of Education and Human Development

FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. STEVEN WOLTERING

Suresh is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Psychology under the advisement of Dr. Steven Woltering and Dr. Jay Woodward. His research focuses primarily on digital social-emotional learning, placing a particular emphasis on understanding the impact of cell phone use on the cognitive, emotional, and psychological well-being of young adults.

Since summer 2017, he has served as an instructor of record for the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology. He also served as a teaching apprentice for two graduate and undergraduate courses, and as a teaching assistant for five additional courses, centered in learning theories and child development. Suresh is a Center for Teaching Excellence certified instructor. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics; a Bachelor of Education in the Teaching of Science and Mathematics, a Master of Science in Physics, and a Master of Technology in Education Technology.

Before joining Texas A&M University, he taught high school physics for seventeen years. Suresh received the Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program Fellowship in 2012 for his self-developed game-based teaching model. During this fellowship, he mentored ESL students at the University of Maryland. Before teaching high school, he taught courses on Quantum Mechanics and Particle Physics at the postgraduate level as an independent instructor for two years. He has received a litany of grants and awards, including the U. S. Department of State Alumni Grant, Scholar Research Award from the Department of Educational Psychology, and the Graduate Research Grant 2019 from the College of Education and Human Development.
HYUNKYUNG KWON ’16

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture
College of Education and Human Development

FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. ROBERT CAPRARO

Jessica is a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Mathematics Education at Texas A&M University’s Teaching, Learning and Culture Department. She studies STEM education, problem solving and posing, and effective instructional strategies in education, has authored several published journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings, and has presented at several educational research conferences.

She discovered her passion for mathematics education while working as a mathematics tutor in 10th grade. She earned a B.A. in Mathematics Teaching at the University of Minnesota, then a M.S. in Mathematics Education from Texas A&M University in 2014. Jessica worked as an associate editor for the journal Reading Psychology from 2014 to August of 2019.

She is currently an assistant editor for the Journal of Urban Mathematics Education and is a graduate teaching instructor for the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University. Her ultimate goal is not only to educate mathematics teachers in the future, but to also continue her research in mathematics education.
LACEY N. ROBERTS ’20

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. TOBIN REDWINE ’07

Lacey earned her doctorate under the advisement of Dr. Tobin Redwine. She studies visual communication in the context of international agriculture for the Narrative Engagement Research and Development Lab.

In her dissertation, using qualitative research methods, Lacey seeks to understand the images used to represent international agricultural development and development implementors’ perceptions of such images.

Starting in fall 2017, she served as a teaching assistant for the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications, and was an instructor of record for agricultural communications courses, including Agriculture Photography and Introduction to Agricultural Communications.

Outside of teaching and research, Lacey has served as a graduate student representative for the National Agricultural Communicators Symposium and currently serves as an International Committee member for the American Agricultural Editors Association. Lacey attended West Texas A&M University in Canyon, TX for her Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Media and Communications, graduating in 2013. After a journalism study abroad trip to South Korea and Japan, Lacey wanted to continue her education to focus on international agriculture. She completed her Master of International Agriculture with a focus on extension education and development from Oklahoma State University. After the completion of her doctoral program, Lacey seeks to continue her research in international agricultural development communication.
ELLEN SONG ’21

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of Chemistry
College of Science

FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. KIM DUNBAR

Ellen is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Chemistry under the advisement of Dr. Kim Dunbar. Her graduate research centers on designing dirhodium complexes as photosensitizers for photodynamic therapeutic applications and dye-sensitized solar cells. More specifically, she seeks to understand structure-function relationships so that these sensitizers can be better optimized for application.

Ellen has worked as a teaching assistant since her undergraduate years at the University of Guelph, where she obtained a Bachelor of Science in Biological and Pharmaceutical Chemistry in 2016.

Since joining Texas A&M, Ellen has taught upper level chemistry laboratories and lectures. She is dedicated to ensuring the best learning experience for her students and developing new course materials to meet that goal. Ellen is also passionate about mentorship and has successfully supervised a number of undergraduate students, with whom she is able to share her passion for research and discovery.

In addition to her time in the lab, Ellen is highly involved in initiatives relating to diversity, equity and outreach. Ellen leads the Organization for Cultural Diversity in Chemistry, regularly facilitates STEM workshops, and participates in science demonstrations. Through these initiatives, Ellen shares her love of teaching not only with students at Texas A&M, but the larger community as well.
FELICIA YORK ’22

DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD IN TEACHING
Department of Communication
College of Liberal Arts
FACULTY ADVISOR: DR. LU TANG

Felicia is a first-generation, second-year doctoral student in Health Communication at Texas A&M University. Her research interests include the study of culturally-centered communication in healthcare. Specifically, she studies the role that cultural factors (for example, historical mistrust in the healthcare system, unhealthy diets, and racial biases) play in African Americans’ decisions to engage in preventive behaviors and self-care. She is particularly interested in improving communication between doctors and their patients from marginalized populations, leading to a reduction of health disparities between demographic populations.

Felicia earned a Master of Arts in Communication (Public Relations) from the University of Houston, as well as a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting and a Master of Business Administration in Accounting from Sam Houston State University. As an accounting graduate student, she was the first author of the article, "Financial Implications of Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) Compliance," which examines how companies are impacted by legislation mandating additional financial reporting requirements resulting from high-profile corporate accounting scandals. Previously, Felicia was a financial accountant in the oil and gas and energy industries. She has been a collegiate instructor for over nine years.

Felicia was the recipient of the 2018 Texas A&M University Graduate Diversity Fellowship in Communication. She was also recognized for her collaborative efforts in utilizing health communication scholarship to enhance community engagement in the Navasota Examiner's January 2020 article, "Graduate student creates photovoice project." She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Texas A&M's Black Graduate Student Organization, and the Golden Key National Honor Society.