This spring we honored those graduating from the Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program and new inductees to Sigma Phi Omega (SPO) the International Academic Honor and Professional Society in Gerontology. This academic year, we saw 10 students complete the Graduate Certificate, 4 complete the minor, 1 undergraduate certificate and 2 graduate with masters degrees.

Amber Thomas received the Anna Dresel Award for Outstanding Graduate Student in Gerontology. Her masters project examined "How Healthcare Chaplains Respond to Spiritual Distress in Older Adults Nearing Death."

Kayla Cook, MS in Gerontology, also completed a masters project titled, "Staying Positive, Active, Engaged, and on Course: Self-Care for Caregiving Dyads."

Congratulations to all of our graduates!
GERONTOLOGY INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM GRADUATES 2018-19

Gerontology Master of Science
Kayla Cook | Fall 2018
Amber Thomas | Fall 2018

Gerontology Minor
Christina Nistler Lambacher | Fall 2018
Mikkel Sutorius* | Spring 2019

Gerontology Graduate Certificate
Ketevan Amirkhanashvili | Fall 2018
Catherine Lindsay | Fall 2018
Ben Coulam | Spring 2019
Anna Freudenberg | Spring 2019
Taryn Young | Spring 2019

Gerontology Undergraduate Certificate
Sarah Ontiveros | Spring 2019

We also inducted 10 new members of Sigma Phi Omega for 2019. These students meet rigid academic standards and pledge to maintain such standards in service to older persons through scholarship, professionalism, friendship, and education. Congratulations to our newest members.

Sigma Phi Omega Inductees | 2019
Lauren Chamberlain
Gabriella Dull
Katarina Falappino-Williamson
Sherrie Harding
Tamara Mabey

Christy Pugh
Jared Richardson
Briana Sisofo
Mikkel Sutorius
Anna Testa

We anticipate the transformative work that Gerontology graduates and current students will do in their roles as the future leaders and experts in aging.
GERONTOLOGY MASTER OF SCIENCE GRADUATES

AMBER THOMAS WINS OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT IN GERONTOLOGY | ANNA DRESELM AWARD

Ever since I was young, I had a deep passion for the health care field and aging community. Starting in 2004 and still to this present day I have been a Certified Nursing Assistant, working in long-term care, memory care, home health and hospice, and rehab occupations. In 2015 I received my bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of Utah, then in 2015 I became a Board-Certified Inter-Faith Chaplain. With my love for the aging population I wanted to continue my knowledge and growth where in the fall of 2017 I entered the Gerontology program. By obtaining my master’s degree in the Gerontology program, I have expanded that knowledge and love to a deeper and higher level.

I am eternally grateful for the faculty, my supervisory committee, cohorts, friends, and family who gave me support and direction in my education and personal journey. My zeal for learning, love for geriatrics and interfaith ministry is not only a passion, but a calling and blessing.

This award is presented to a master's student who has been outstanding in their area of focus, contributed to a new knowledge or innovations to facilitate the role of gerontology in higher education.

My name is Amber Thomas I am 33 years old living in Taylorsville Utah with my husband of 8 years, two beautiful girls and a handsome 6-month-old little boy.

KAYLA COOK

Kayla Cook graduated from Utah Valley University in 2017 in Behavioral Science with an emphasis in family studies. From a young age, she has always loved older adults. So she eventually decided to make her passion into a career. She spent summer 2017 interning at a prestigious assisted living facility in Washington, D.C., where she really found her passion and drive to make a mark in the Gerontology Field. Kayla is a Certified Family Life Educator, and would like to use this talent and certification one day to help educate and assist caregivers of dementia patients.

Along with this, Kayla is starting a business to help seniors write and publish their life story. She has found a passion for learning about the lives of the many older adults around her, and wants to help them share their life lessons with others.
GRADUATION 2018-19

Esther Okang

L to R: Jackie Eaton, Amber Thomas, Mike Caserta

Mike Caserta, Jackie Eaton, Amber Thomas and Family
SIGMA PHI OMEGA INDUCTION CEREMONY

MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2019

Students inducted to SPO were (L to R): Tammy Mabey, Sherrie Harding, Gabriella Dull, Briana Sisofo, Anna Testa, Lauren Chamberlain, Jared Richardson

Esther Okang and Jackie Eaton

Jackie Eaton
Katarina Felsted
Nanci McLeskey
Dr. Katarina Friberg Felsted has been elected to the Sigma Phi Omega International Academic Honor and Professional Society in Gerontology as President Elect. This is the first year of a four year term, continuing into two years as President and one year as Past President. Katarina has been a member of Sigma Phi Omega since 2008. She recognizes and celebrates the success of students and professionals and looks forward to serving locally and internationally in this new position. More information about Sigma Phi Omega can be found on the website: https://www.sigmaphiomega.org/.

Lauren Chamberlain Testifies Before Legislature

As part of her practicum experience with AARP, Lauren Chamberlain, Gerontology MS Student, testified before the legislature in February 2019 for SB11: a bill to reinstate dental benefits for individuals on Medicaid.
This year’s Utah Aging Alliance (UAA) Conference titled, “Exposing the Underlying Challenges of Aging… Discussing Circumstances Often Left Unspoken,” focused on subjects such as loneliness, suicide, homelessness, patient dumping, elder fraud, and more. Briana C. Sisofo, an MS student in Gerontology at the University of Utah (U of U) and a student representative on the UAA Board, had a goal to attract more students to this year’s conference. In this pursuit, Briana supported lowering the ticket price for students and made sure the conference was advertised to the students as well as faculty in the U of U Gerontology Interdisciplinary Program. She made great strides in increasing the student attendance! To compare, the 2018 UAA Conference totaled 3 students and the 2019 UAA Conference broke the record with having 13 students attend. Ms. Sisofo loves being a part of a board that supports successful aging and encouraging the community to learn about the issues so many like her can one day help promote the aging needs.

With being a student representative, it allows her access to the world of Gerontology with the network of people that want to help you learn and grow in the field!

The President of the Utah Aging Alliance Board, Bill Whitworth, explains the theme of the 2019 UAA Conference, “Exposing the Underlying Challenges of Aging… Discussing Circumstances Often Left Unspoken:”

“As the elderly population in Utah continues to balloon, we realize there are circumstances and conditions that are difficult, even untenable, occurring in our own neighborhoods. Utah Aging Alliance promotes the exchange of ideas, the facilitation of relationships, the promotion of knowledge in aging through research, public policy and we continue to promote the concern for ethics and a standard of excellence to help guide each of us to the understanding of our aging population.”

Daveen Haws, Anna Testa, Lauren Chamberlain
KATHIE SUPIANO PRESENTS AT THE UTAH AGING ALLIANCE CONFERENCE

Kathie Supiano discussed her research to develop the LEAD guide to facilitate goals of care discussions in older adults and their families as they plan for the possibility of dementia at the Utah Aging Alliance Conference 2019. The title of her presentation was “The LEAD Guide: Life-Planning in Early Alzheimer’s and Dementia.” In the presentation, she summarized the development of the LEAD guide—a tool for persons with early memory loss and persons preparing for the possibility of memory loss to create an end-of-life care plan that reflects their values and preferences for care. This is a research project that is led by Dr. Kara Dassel, Dr. Kathie Supiano and Dr. Becky Utz and was funded by the University of Utah Center on Aging as well as the Dick and Timmy Burton Research Fund of University of Utah College of Nursing.

Kathie Supiano, PhD, LCSW, F-CSA, FT, is an Associate Professor in the College of Nursing, and the director of Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program at the University of Utah College of Nursing. She teaches Interdisciplinary Approaches to Palliative Care for graduate students in Pharmacy, Social Work and Nursing, and Geriatric Care Management. Dr. Supiano’s research is in clinical interventions in complicated grief, prevention of adverse grief outcomes, suicide survivorship and prison hospice. She has been a practicing clinical social worker and psychotherapist for over 35 years. Her clinical practice has included care of older adults with depression and multiple chronic health concerns, family therapy, end-of-life care, and bereavement care. Dr. Supiano is a Fellow in the Gerontological Society of America, and a Fellow of Thanatology. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Social Work Hospice and Palliative Care Network, the Board of Directors of Advanced Palliative Hospice Social Worker Certification Board, and the Editorial Board of the Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care. She received her PhD in Social Work at the University of Utah as a John A. Hartford Foundation Doctoral Fellow.