

Undergraduate Students Present at Research on Capitol Hill

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Two undergraduate students from the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University presented their research at Utah's Research on Capitol Hill (ROCH), which took place on February 2, 2021.

Organized by USU, ROCH is an annual celebration of undergraduate research, traditionally held in the Rotunda of the State Capitol. It features student research projects from Utah State University and the University of Utah, the top two research universities in the state.

Jayme Warner (Kinesiology and Health Science) and Janice Snow (Psychology) each presented their research via Zoom to Utah legislators, as did students of all disciplines from around the state.



Jayme Warner:
Exercise's Impact on Substance Abuse

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of exercise program participation on recidivism and relapse among drug court participants. Exercise can help

individuals struggling with substance abuse to replace harmful habits with healthy habits and harmful friend groups with supportive, healthy friend groups. It also can provide them with a safe space to fully recover. This study examined whether or not exercise had an impact on these individuals as they worked to overcome their substance abuse issues.

Analysis of the collected data has revealed a significant association between exercise, especially exercise program participation, and a decrease in relapse and recidivism rates. Participants reported a decrease in cravings and urges to use again, and comments suggest that participants largely believe that exercise has helped them become and stay clean and sober. These findings shed light on an effective avenue to change the statewide approach to substance abuse and lower recidivism rates.

Jayme Warner's research is overseen by Dr. Scott Deberard of the USU Psychology Department.



Janice Snow:
How COVID-19 Impacts Undergraduates' Mental Health and Grades

During the spring 2020 semester, colleges and universities throughout the nation made sudden, unprecedented shifts to online instruction due to COVID-19. The shutdown of campuses led many students to move back home, with some living in a different state than their institution. This study aimed to assess undergraduate mental health and

academic outcomes in light of the additional stressors caused by the pandemic.

Two separate but related surveys of undergraduate students were conducted during the end of the spring 2020 semester: a brief national survey, and a more detailed survey focusing on USU students. Nationwide, students reported higher depression, anxiety, and academic distress scores, which predicted decreased grades during the spring semester.

Because many college students live out of state, therapists need to have the ability to work with these students in order to ease this emerging mental health crisis. Current licensing and policy regulations prevent most counselors from providing mental health counseling to out of state students, even though they pay for it in their tuition fees. Utah is part of [Psypact](#), which allows psychologists to practice via telehealth in other participating states and temporarily in nonparticipating states. Additional regulations can be examined to ensure that college students are able to receive the mental health support they need.

This research has been accepted to the Council on Undergraduate Research's [Posters on the Hill 2021](#). Only 60 student researchers in the nation are accepted to this prestigious conference to present their work on the federal level.

Janice Snow's research is overseen by Dr. Crissa Levin of the USU Psychology Department.