

Professor Jody Clarke-Midura Named Associate Dean for Graduate Studies

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Dr. Jody Clarke-Midura, newly appointed associate dean for graduate studies

Jody Clarke-Midura, associate professor in Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences (ITLS) in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services (CEHS), was recently appointed associate dean for graduate studies.

“Professor Clarke-Midura brings a strong commitment to the graduate student experience into her role as associate dean for graduate studies,” says Endowed Dean Al Smith. “Her efforts will help us meet the needs of our graduate students, be highly effective mentors, and develop robust graduate-level programs.”

Clarke-Midura joined the ITLS department at USU in December 2014. She grew up in Massachusetts and earned bachelor’s degrees in both English and women’s studies from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Later, she received a Master of Education in Technology in Education and an Ed.D. in Learning and Teaching at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Since joining the college nearly 10 years ago, Clarke-Midura has been intentional about mentoring graduate students. She has graduated five PhD students, three of whom are now faculty members on other college campuses and two are employed in design positions in higher education and industry. She has also served on eighteen doctoral committees of students who graduated. Currently Clarke-Midura is chairing six doctoral students. In 2017 and 2021, Clarke-Midura’s students nominated

her for Graduate Mentor of the Year in ITLS and she was awarded Graduate Mentor of the Year in CEHS in 2021.



Dr. Jody Clarke-Midura with doctoral student and mentee Michael Folland

Andrew Walker, department head of ITLS, acknowledges the long-term impact Clarke-Midura has on her mentees. “Jody is an excellent graduate mentor. Her students often find positions in higher education as faculty members and postdocs. It is even common for some of her students who have graduated to connect with her current students and help them navigate life in Cache Valley as international students or to give advice on important milestones. These connections happen because her former students-turned-colleagues clearly value the time they spent with Jody.”

Her new responsibilities as associate dean for graduate studies are a natural extension of the role Clarke-Midura already fills as a mentor. “My role is to help all graduate students—students from all backgrounds, interests, and perspectives—find the support and resources they need to succeed,” she says. “I want to be accessible and approachable. I want all graduate students to feel comfortable reaching out to me if they have any questions and concerns. I may not have an answer immediately, but I will work to find one.”

The new position has already been an eye opener for Clarke-Midura. “As a professor, I saw USU through my own experiences and needs as a faculty member. Now, I am getting a different perspective. I have been trying to get to know the graduate program coordinators and

the amazing work they do as well as the programs and policies not only in CEHS but also at USU.”

“Right now, there are a lot of good things happening,” Clarke-Midura continues. Improvements to the handbook in the School of Graduate Studies are being released soon and will provide clear information about timelines and processes for graduate students. Once the new handbook is released, she says, “I hope to work with departments in CEHS to incorporate it into their existing handbooks and policies and de-mystify the graduate experience for students.”

The new responsibility will not take her out of the research lab, where Clarke-Midura remains passionate about investigating STEM learning and finding ways to make it accessible for all students. “I am involved in the co-design of learning and assessment experiences that enable all students to connect with STEM content in meaningful ways,” she says. “I want them to see themselves as someone who can do STEM.”

Currently, she is involved in a \$1.5M project funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) called Spatial Activities and Robot Coding for Mathematics, or SPaRC. The project involves a design team of first- and second-grade teachers in the community, along with Jessica Shumway, associate professor in the Department of Teacher Education and Leadership, and their team. The researchers will use robot toys like Botley to help children understand the dynamic nature of math. Ultimately, the team will co-design curriculum for teachers to use in their classrooms.

As associate dean for graduate studies, Clarke-Midura is sure to thrive in her efforts to impact every graduate student in the college for the better. “I appreciate the diversity of experiences the undergraduate and graduate students in CEHS bring and I look forward to working with the grad students throughout the college more closely,” she says. “I may be biased, but I think CEHS students are amazing.”