CEHS Announces New Dean’s Scholars

2026 Dean's Scholars Jessica Shumway, Ph.D., and Tyler Renshaw, Ph.D.

Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services Endowed Dean Al Smith recently announced two new Dean’s Scholars for three-year appointments: Tyler Renshaw, professor in the Department of Psychology, and Jessica Shumway, associate professor in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership.

“Drs. Renshaw and Shumway are leading scholars and student mentors, as well as generous colleagues,” said Smith. “They are models of excellence who showcase the incredible capacity of our college to advance science, promote excellence in learning, and benefit Utah communities. I am deeply grateful for their leadership by example and am thrilled they will represent our college as Dean’s Scholars.”

Tyler Renshaw, Ph.D.

Tyler Renshaw is a professor in the Department of Psychology at Utah State University. He works primarily in the school psychology program, where he teaches graduate courses, conducts clinical supervision of mental health services in schools, and serves as director of training for the Ph.D. specialty. Recently, Renshaw was recognized as one of the top two percent of global researchers in school psychology by Elsevier. He is also the new editor-in-chief of *School Psychology Review,* one of the leading peer-reviewed journals in his field.

“I really value mentoring graduate students,” Renshaw said. “At the journal, there is a student editorial board where students are mentored by faculty and conduct peer reviews. The editor provides training for graduate students and creates a culture that introduces them to the scholarly process. I was in that same place early in my career, a grad student reviewing submissions, and others took a chance on me. I value paying it forward because so many people did it for me when I was starting out.”

His research program focuses broadly on advancing mental health services in K-12 schools— more specifically, on improving the quality and accessibility of mental health assessment for youth. “Much of the focus is on prevention,” he said. “This is important, but it is also crucial to focus on positive aspects to help develop prosocial relationships.”

Renshaw plans to use the Dean’s Scholars award to advance his research on mental health resources in public K-12 schools. “I’m excited about the opportunity to do research that I typically wouldn’t be able to do because it’s expensive and doesn’t fit within traditional grant funding priorities,” Renshaw said. “There’s meaningful research to be done at large scales; however, it’s not always funded by organizations or the government. One area of my research is developing screeners for youths’ mental health.”

These questionnaires track measures completed by students, teachers, and parents to assess a student’s overall mental health. The information allows school counselors, teachers, and parents to quickly evaluate a student’s mental health status.

“For example, a student might come into a school counselor’s or school psychologist’s office and begin to talk about life,” Renshaw said. “The counselor or psychologist might suspect mental health concerns beyond normal adjustment. Instead of depending on intuition, the provider can administer a brief screener questionnaire with targeted questions.”

The questionnaire is then scored and interpreted to assess the student’s current mental health level in a short format. Screeners help school officials and parents determine when to take action and what supports should be provided. Renshaw has worked in other public K-12 school systems outside Utah where mental health screeners are already in use.

“The problem with most mental health screening tools for K-12 students is they are expensive to administer, and tracking the data is also costly,” Renshaw said. “The stipend from the fellowship will allow a pilot program to be developed with graduate students and students from a local high school,” he said. “The financial resources and three-year time period will allow data to be collected, assessed, and implemented on a smaller scale.”

Jessica Shumway, Ph.D.

Jessica Shumway is an associate professor who teaches mathematics education courses in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership and conducts research on instructional practices and learning technologies that support children's mathematical thinking. In 2023, Shumway received a Fulbright Award to travel to Brazil, expanding her research on mathematics education with colleagues at São Paulo State University.

"I wanted an opportunity to explore this culture, not just through reading books, but by engaging in research and teaching with Brazilian scholars. There's something very different about being immersed in their context that you can't replicate without the time and funding to go there in person," shared Shumway.

A former elementary school teacher, Shumway said her classroom experience shaped her research interests. "When I was a second-grade teacher, I learned how to approach teaching mathematics through the lens of how children construct and develop ideas," she said. "That piece is critical." Her focus on children's development of mathematical thinking led her to pursue a doctoral degree and her goal of working with elementary education undergraduate students at the university level.

Over the last 15 years, this developed into a research agenda on students' development of number sense, spatial thinking, and problem solving and instruction to support their learning. Currently, Shumway is principal investigator on a National Science Foundation research grant studying elementary students' computational and spatial thinking. "The purpose of the research is to help young students develop a solid foundation of critical thinking in an increasingly digital world," Shumway said. "I am especially interested in the ways students put mathematical thinking to work in STEM contexts, such as coding. The more we understand how children develop these ways of thinking, the better we can plan for meaningful and integrated STEM instruction."

Shumway uses research-based frameworks of children's mathematical thinking in her mathematics methods courses at USU, but now she has an opportunity to focus on her pre-service teachers' use of these frameworks in the field. Shumway plans to use the Dean's Scholar stipend to innovate her undergraduate teaching and launch a longitudinal study on pre-service teachers' mathematics methods learning. She is interested in how pre-service teachers understand and use elementary students' mathematical thinking to be responsive to their students' learning needs and prepare high-quality instruction. She said, "I want to develop a program that follows up with first-year teachers in the classroom— a community where early-career educators can share which components of the math methods course were most useful and where they need additional guidance."

Over the next three years of the Dean's Scholars fellowship, Shumway hopes to strengthen support systems for new teachers by creating a communication channel between pre-service and early-career educators to enhance mathematics instruction. "Using the funding to develop this type of program will directly benefit our undergraduate students by understanding the impacts of the math methods foundation at USU and providing supports in the early years of their career," she said. "It will be exciting to measure the impact these supports provide teachers over the next three years."