The USU Folklore Program had a strong presence at last weekend’s Folklore Society of Utah (FSU) virtual meeting. In 2020 Fife Honor Lecture, in conjunction with FSU’s 2020 Keynote Lecture, was presented by Dr. Andrea Kitta, award-winning associate professor of folklore in the English Department at East Carolina University. Dr. Kitta, who specializes in medicine, legend, and pandemic illness, spoke about why folklore studies is more important than ever during this unprecedented global pandemic. Kitta discussed that folklorists’ focus on the experience of individuals, the adaptation of tradition, and the dissemination of legends, rumors, conspiracies, and propaganda through social networks is essential in understanding and navigating public responses to COVID-19.

Several USU Folklore graduate students also presented at this year’s FSU. Victoria Jaye discussed her thesis project “In the Presence of Evil: Patterns of Perception Within the Demonic Narrative.” Steven Merrell presented “Wizards, Witches and Warlocks: How Folklore is Affected by Sex and Gender,” and Alex Ziegler presented “Women in Fairytales: Feminism and the Folkloresque.”