Jamal-Jared Alexander, a third-year Presidential Doctoral Research Fellow in the Technical Communication and Rhetoric Ph.D. program, has been named as the student recipient of the 27th annual Utah State University Diversity Award. Now in its 27th year, the program recognizes individuals and/or organizations on campus and in communities served by USU who have made significant contributions to diversity and inclusion. In addition to Jamal-Jared, the recipients for the 2020-21 school year are Janis Boettinger in the administrator category, faculty member Christy Glass, staff member Nahomi Jimenez, and community member Dennis Briscoe. This year's community diversity award was given to a collection of individuals and community groups who responded to a coronavirus outbreak at the JBS Beef Plant in Hyrum, Utah, in June 2020.

Jamal-Jared was recently selected for the first Diversity and Inclusion Assistantship from the School of Graduate Studies, where he will serve as Diversity Recruitment Officer. While this places him in a more empowered position to enact change at USU, Alexander’s work in recruiting, supporting and mentoring graduate students of color has already garnered the attention and appreciation of the university. Alexander approached his doctoral program to ask about recruitment and retention efforts for students of color, leading to a new targeted recruitment plan in which he and associate professor Rebecca Walton visited historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and met with students to encourage them to consider applying to graduate school. He planned the entire trip, leveraging his existing contacts at HBCUs and forging new connections at schools that had undergraduate or master’s courses in technical communication but no Ph.D.

In addition, Alexander serves as a mentor in the Black Student Union, works with the Inclusion Center to improve their communication and student visibility, and conducts research that helps marginalized groups navigate often oppressive institutions. He is also working closely with President Cockett, Interim Vice Provost Richard Cutler and Inclusion Center coordinator Luis Rodriguez to develop the Graduate Student of Color Association (GSCA), where he is the principal founder. His commitment to service and passion for his work benefit our entire community.

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