Faculty Member Wins Prestigious University Award

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At this year’s Robins Awards, Dr. Jessica Lucero, Associate Professor of Social Work, was awarded the Faculty University Service Award. Dr. Lucero joined the Social Work program in August 2012 and since then her service hasn’t just benefitted the Social Work program but also CHaSS, USU, Cache County, and Utah. “As a community-focused researcher and practitioner,” says Dr. Terry Peak, “Dr. Lucero believes in the transformative power of community-engagement.” Her record suggests as much.

In recent years, Dr. Lucero overhauled both the undergraduate Research Methods class and the Community Practice course, a restructuring that benefitted not just her students but also Logan more broadly. To teach practical research and community practice skills, Dr. Lucero asked her fifty-two students to collect and analyze data for the Refugee Needs Assessment. This data was then used by the state of Utah to provide specific, targeted services for the local refugee community and suggested areas of possible service improvements. Dr. Lucero published a pedagogical piece on this intensive community-engaged classroom in the 2015 summer issue of Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly.

Lucero extends this characteristic thoughtfulness and attention to her graduate courses as well, where she has implemented other community engaged projects, all of which include demonstrable outcomes that benefit local communities. As part of the Community Bridge Initiative (CBI), she partnered with Logan City Community Development to conduct a neighborhood survey in both her Community Theory and her Research Methods graduate courses. Students designed a theory-driven study, collected and analyzed data, and presented their findings to a large group of Logan city officials. In another CBI course project, Dr. Lucero partnered with Dr. Sonia Manuel-Dupont to conduct surveys that assessed the cultural competency of after-school workers. Dr. Manuel-Dupont then used these data to develop cultural competency training for after-school workers.

Dr. Lucero’s commitments to USU are too numerous to list, but here are a few: she is the faculty member of the Anti-Racist Group, Aggies Think Care Act; a planning committee member for the Inclusive Excellence Symposium; a search committee member for the Access & Diversity Center; and faculty advisor for Aggies UNITE. She is also a faculty senate member, faculty senate executive committee member, and institutional review board member. Perhaps it’s no surprise then that she received the 2018 USU Presidential Award for Faculty Community Engagement. She has extended this commitment and engagement even further by serving at the co-chair of the Carnegie Community Engagement effort, a year-long application process, which, once complete, will determine whether USU qualifies for recognition as a community engaged institution. In the local community, Dr. Lucero is Board Secretary for the Cache Refugee & Immigrant Connection (CRIC), the University representative to the local Homeless Coordinating Council, an Advisor to the Cache Democrats, a Presenter at CAPSA Volunteer Training, a Community Council Member at Edith Bowen Lab School, and the Vice Chair of the Cache County Democrats.

For all the reasons mentioned here—and for many others—Dr. Jess Lucero was awarded the 2019 Faculty University Service Award. Please join us all in congratulating her on this outstanding achievement.

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