

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Doctoral Commencement Ceremony

MAY 6, 2025



DOCTORAL COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

Tuesday, May 6, 2025
3:00 p.m.
Littlejohn Coliseum
Clemson, South Carolina

ORDER OF CEREMONIES

Processional
Stage Party

National Anthem
(Please stand as you are able)

Opening of Ceremony
University Marshal

Welcome and Introductions
John Lopes
Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Graduate Address
Sarah Otterbeck
Engineering and Science Education

Remarks
John Lopes
Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
and
Robert H. Jones
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Conferring of Degrees
President James P. Clements

Alma Mater
*(See last page for lyrics;
please stand as you are able and remain standing for the recessional of the stage party)*

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William Ferrell.....Associate Dean
Jeffrey C. HalloAssociate Dean
Marieke Van PuymbroeckAssociate Dean

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Hans W. Klar Educational and Organizational
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David Fleming Teaching and Learning

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David A. Bruce Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
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Engineering and Earth Sciences
Brian Dean School of Computing
Hai Xiao Electrical and Computer Engineering
Melissa C. Smith, acting Engineering and Science Education
R. Joe Watkins General Engineering
Kevin M. Taaffe Industrial Engineering
Kyle S. Brinkman Materials Science and Engineering
Laine Mears School of Mechanical and Automotive Engineering

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COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

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Associate Dean for Discovery, Graduate Education,
Space Optimization and Faculty Affairs

Calvin L. Williams
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Excellence
and Global Engagement

Karolina Mukhtar Biological Sciences
William T. Pennington Chemistry
David F. Clayton Genetics and Biochemistry
Colin Gallagher School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences
Chad Sosolik Physics and Astronomy

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Associate Dean of Clinical Programs

Nicki Wise
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

Brian Aldridge Veterinary Medicine and Sciences

GRADUATE ADDRESS



For each doctoral commencement ceremony, one graduating student is chosen by a panel of graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to deliver the Graduate Address.

Today's speaker is Sarah Otterbeck, who is graduating with a Ph.D. in engineering and science education.

The text of Sarah's speech will be available [here](#) shortly after the conclusion of today's ceremony.

A SLIDESHOW OF PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY TODAY'S GRADUATES

Click or tap to play.



2025 AWARDS IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

Outstanding Graduate Researcher Award

Ali Moghassemi
Electrical Engineering

Haley Swartz
Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design

Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award

Katie McGee
Literature, Language and Culture

Morteza Soltani
Industrial Engineering

Frankie O. Felder Graduate Student Award of Excellence

Devi Soman
Planning, Design, and the Built Environment

Commitment to Community and Engagement Award

Stefanie L. Whitmire, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Agricultural Sciences

Distinguished Doctoral Mentoring Award

Tony W. Cawthon, Ph.D.
Alumni Professor, Educational and Organizational Leadership Development

Kelly Best Lazar, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Engineering and Science Education

Distinguished Graduate Student Support Staff Award

Heather Tomlinson
Graduate Student Advisor, Department of Automotive Engineering

DOCTORAL PIN

To honor the extraordinary dedication and achievement of today's graduates, each one will receive a lapel pin designed exclusively for our doctoral graduates.

The pin features a block "C" logo that was in use in 1955 when Clemson offered its first doctoral degree program. Across the C are three stripes like the ones graduates are wearing on their sleeves today.



CENTENNIAL MEDALLION



In celebration of 100 years of graduate education at Clemson University and in honor of our "centennial graduates," each graduate participating in today's ceremonies is wearing a medallion that features our centennial logo.

DOCTORAL COMMENCEMENT

The doctoral hood is a symbolic honor of distinction bestowed upon scholars who have attained the highest level of formal education available in the world, representing a typical range of five to seven years of study beyond the bachelor's degree. Clemson's 46-inch-long doctoral hood is usually draped over the shoulders by the faculty member who, as chair of the advisory committee, has formally mentored and guided the student's research and education.

The University has named "Clemson purple" *Regalia* in a nod to the doctoral commencement gowns.

the American Council on Education. Caps are black and are usually mortar boards or tams with tassels. Doctors of philosophy wear gold tassels usually of metallic thread; those with other degrees wear black or discipline colors. Those who have received their degrees from institutions outside the United States wear regalia specified by the awarding institutions.

You will note that faculty members are wearing gowns, caps and hoods of many colors and designs. These academic costumes of medieval origin are, for faculty with degrees from U.S. institutions, specified by a uniform code maintained by



Doctors' gowns are full, with bell-like sleeves. The front is bordered with velvet panels and the sleeves are marked by three velvet bars. While some gowns are black with black velvet, one variation is to replace black velvet with velvet in the discipline color. A second variation is a colored gown usually of the university's colors.

All hoods specify the level of degree, the type of discipline studied and the awarding institution. The width of the velvet trim conveys the degree. In addition, the degree is indicated by the color of the trim edging the hood to form the throat over the gown. The most frequently seen color is dark blue, which designates the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree. Finally, the color of the hood's lining is specific to the awarding institution. The colors are displayed in combinations that are drawn from heraldry. Notice that the Clemson University hood is lined with purple through which is an orange chevron (a "V"). Although many combinations are duplicated by dozens of institutions, Clemson is presently the only institution with that registered combination of purple and orange.

The officers, trustees and honored guests wear academic, ecclesiastical or military regalia as set forth by their professions. The president of Clemson University wears a purple gown with four velvet bars piped in orange and the University seal embroidered on the panels. Each trustee wears a similar gown with three velvet bars piped in orange for doctorates and an embroidered palmetto tree on each sleeve for those who do not hold doctorates. Trustee hoods are either from Clemson or from the awarding school.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GRADUATE EDUCATION AND THE GRADUATE SCHOOL AT CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

[Clemson's faculty] would engage in original and important research, by which knowledge would be increased, whilst the immediate objects... would be the diffusion of facts on all scientific subjects. It would be vain to attempt to fix a limit to the benefits that would thus be conferred upon mankind and their effects upon society...
— THOMAS GREEN CLEMSON¹

In conceptualizing a "high seminary of learning" for South Carolina, Thomas Green Clemson knowingly set the stage for graduate education to emerge as an engine of economic development in the state. Graduate education quickly became synonymous with the application of theory to improving the practices of education and agriculture. The analysis of fertilizer, a contracted activity of the chemistry department that began in the late 1930s, would help restore depleted South Carolina soils, increase agricultural production, and spur a rapid development in opportunities for students at Clemson College to study beyond the baccalaureate degree.

Graduate coursework initially responded to the needs of veterans and to the interests of teachers wanting to improve their classroom skills, but also — from its inception — attracted international students' attention. On June 3, 1924, Patrick Hobson of Sandy Springs, South Carolina, earned the first master's degree awarded at Clemson. He used his degree in vocational education to serve as a high school principal and later as superintendent of schools in York County, South Carolina and Mitchell County, North Carolina. The third graduate degree, a master's in textile industrial education awarded to Ko-Chia Li from Mukden, China, on June 1, 1926, initiated an enrollment trend that has catapulted China to its status as the number-one sending country for international graduate students for many years. Mr. Li returned to China and taught as a professor of textile engineering at Peking University, and served as head of the construction department in LiaoBei Province.

From 1938 until 1945, all aspects of graduate education (courses, programs, policies, procedures, admission, and graduation) developed under the auspices of the Committee on Graduate Instruction, chaired by F. H. H. Calhoun, Dean of the School of Chemistry and Geology. Twice during these years, the University's attempts to formalize graduate education were thwarted because of the challenges to the Committee to maintain the necessary standards of quality. Clemson faculty recognized early that to establish a graduate program

that enabled Clemson alumni to enroll would require strengthening the undergraduate curriculum and courses to prevent knowledge gaps “between the two.”²

On March 14, 1945, President Poole received the Committee’s resolution requesting the appointment of a Dean of the Graduate School. It had been ascertained by that time that 19 courses could be offered immediately by the schools of agriculture, chemistry, engineering, textiles, and arts and sciences.

On July 27, 1946, the Board of Trustees approved the Committee’s proposed graduate program of study and, that fall, formally admitted the first class of students into “the Graduate School.” However, it would not be until June 15, 1951, that Herbert J. Webb, Chair of the Department of Chemistry and Toxicology, was appointed as the first Dean of the Graduate School.

Masterfully stewarded by President Poole himself and modeled initially after several prestigious southern institutions, Clemson’s graduate programs grew cautiously but The officers, trustees and honored guests wear academic, ecclesiastical or military regalia as set forth by their professions. The president of Clemson University wears a purple gown with four velvet bars piped in orange and the University seal embroidered on the panels. Each trustee wears a similar gown with three velvet bars piped in orange for doctorsteadily, introducing the first doctoral degree, in plant pathology, in 1955. Today, the Graduate School proudly enrolls more than 5,800 graduate students and is committed to continued growth at both the master’s and doctoral levels.

1. Holmes, A. and G.R. Sherrill. *Thomas Green Clemson: His Life and Work*. 1937, p. 129.

2. Clemson University Library System archives. *Minutes of the Committee on Graduate Instruction*, 1945-1953, p. 7.

CANDIDATES FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREE

John Lopes, Dean of the Graduate School

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND LIFE SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Plant and Environmental Sciences

Bennett Carl HarrelsonRembert, South Carolina

B.S., Clemson University; M.S., University of Georgia

Maximizing Crop Production and Profitability Through Double Cropping Corn
and Soybean Systems in South Carolina

Advised by Dr. Dr. Michael Plumblee

Bennett was awarded the Wade Stackhouse Fellowship by the College of Agriculture,
Forestry, and Life Sciences in 2023 and has won three national awards from the
American Society of Agronomy for his work relating to his dissertation.

Harleen Kaur Chandigarh, India

B.S., Punjab Agricultural University; M.S., Louisiana State University

Management of Fungal Plant Pathogens Through Advanced Diagnostics and
With Biorational Fungicides

Advised by Dr. Dr. Guido Schnabel

Harleen won her college's 3-Minute Thesis competition in 2022 and 2023 and was
elected president of her departmental graduate student association.

Binaya Parajuli Kapilvastu, Nepal

B.S., Tribhuvan University; M.S., Clemson University

Soil Microbial and Biogeochemical Responses to Differential Carbon and
Nitrogen Inputs

Advised by Dr. Dr. Rongzhong Ye

Binaya Parajuli has published nine peer-reviewed publications. He has been named
his college's outstanding graduate student in research in 2022 and recieved a Wade
Stackhouse Fellowship for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. Binaya has presented more than
a dozen oral and poster presentations in international meetings and has been awarded
prizes for outstanding presentations.

Prasanna Valavanur ShekarFlorence, South Carolina

B.S., M.S., University of Madras

Investigate the Use of Nucleic Acids as Pesticides to Manage Major Pests and
Pathogens of Crops in South Carolina

Advised by Dr. Sachin Rustgi

Wildlife and Fisheries Biology

William Kendall Annis, Jr. Holmes Beach, Florida

B.S., University of Florida; M.S., Georgia Southern University
Exploring Community Change of North American Stream Fish Communities

Due to Species Introductions
Advised by Dr. Brandon K. Peoples

William has published two first-author publications at Clemson and has accepted a postdoctoral research associate position at Florida State University.

COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE, ART AND CONSTRUCTION

Planning, Design and the Built Environment

Arielle Spencer Lake Forest, California

B.A., University of California, Berkeley; M.F.A., Savannah College of Art and
Design

An Investigation of Design Processes and Their Effects on Accessibility in
Narrative Themed Environments

Advised by Dr. Winifred E. Newman

Arielle plans to continue working on accessibility and inclusion in the themed
entertainment industry.

Russell Hampton Stall..... Greenville, South Carolina

B.A., Washington and Lee University; M.C.R.P., Clemson University; M.B.A.,
Emory University

Integrating Applied History and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Into City Planning
Practice

Advised by Dr. John Gaber

Russell is a Greenville City Council member and serves as the executive director of the
Greenville County Historical Society.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design

Jessica Kathryn Dyche..... Linden, Virginia

M.F.A., University of Maryland; M.A.T., Frostburg State University; B.A., West Virginia University

The Sound of Young America/The Soul of Young America: A Sonic Rhetoric Inquiry Into 1965 and the Music Defining a Generation in Crisis

Advised by Dr. Cameron Bushnell

Jessica heads the creative writing specialty program at Charles J. Colgan Sr. High School Center for the Fine and Performing Arts in Manassas, VA.

Haley M. Swartz..... Rye, New Hampshire

B.A., University of Rochester; M.A., Florida Atlantic University

Rhetorics of Vigilance: Refracting Discourses in Technologies of Self-Managed Health and Wellness

Advised by Dr. Michelle Smith

Haley is a 2024-2025 recipient of the Graduate School's Outstanding Graduate Researcher Award. During her time at Clemson, Haley has published seven articles in peer-reviewed publications, three of which are collaborations with Clemson faculty and peers. She plans to continue teaching in her home state of New Hampshire.

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE

Nursing Practice

Margaret Biddle.....Columbia, South Carolina

B.S.N., University of South Carolina

Evaluating Knowledge of the HPV Vaccine and Barriers to Vaccination in Low-Income, Adult Patients

Advised by Dr. Jennifer Nicholson and Dr. Casey Hopkins

Maggie, eager to serve her community as a nurse practitioner, seeks a fulfilling role in providing high-quality, evidence-based care. At Clemson, she co-authored a published article in the Journal for Nurse Practitioners.

Terry Kaye Hanks BusbyAnderson, South Carolina

B.S., M.S., M.S., Clemson University

Implementation of Standardized Depression and Anxiety Screening Protocol in Weight Management

Advised by Dr. Stephanie Davis and Dr. Charlotte Branyon

Terry serves as a principal lecturer in the School of Nursing and is a family nurse practitioner at Anderson Bariatric Physicians, Inc. Terry received the School of Nursing's Excellence in Student Engagement Award in 2017. This marks her fourth nursing degree from Clemson University.

Elizabeth Stogner CampbellGreenville, South Carolina

B.S., Clemson University; M.S., University of South Carolina

Evaluation of an Enhanced Recovery After Surgery Pathway: A Quality Improvement Project to Enhance Compliance and Patient Outcomes After Surgery

Advised by Dr. Stephanie Davis and Dr. Ross Simril

Liz is a practicing certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) in Greenville, South Carolina.

Margaret Rose Christy.....Simpsonville, South Carolina

B.S.N., Clemson University

Institutional Alignment With State Legislation and National Standards: A Nurse-Led Comparative Analysis on 'Do Not Resuscitate' Policies

Advised by Dr. Tracy Fasolino

Margaret received the 2025 SC Nurses Foundation's Palmetto Gold Graduate Nurse Scholarship. She has published two peer-reviewed papers. With six years of experience as a registered nurse, she plans to continue her work in hematology-oncology as a nurse practitioner. In addition, she hopes to continue to work with policy to advocate for and elevate the voice of patients and nurses by bringing real-world experience and evidence-based knowledge and practices to healthcare and nursing policies.

Daniel William CookRembert, South Carolina

B.S.N., University of South Carolina Upstate; M.S.N. University of South Carolina
A Quality Improvement Project: Improving the Timeliness of Antibiotic

Administration for Sepsis in the Prehospital Setting

Advised by Dr. John Whitcomb

Daniel plans to pursue a career in academia and utilize the knowledge he gained while completing his DNP, combined with his previous education and experiences, to give back and prepare the nurses of tomorrow.

Sarah EppersonLynchburg, Virginia

B.S.N., Bob Jones University

Clarifying the Role of the Nurse Assistant to Improve Delegation and Integration Into the ICU Care Team and Early Mobility

Advised by Dr. John Whitcomb and Dr. Amy Garrison

Katherine Elizabeth Gibson..... Easley, South Carolina

B.S.N., University of South Carolina-Upstate
Iterative Analysis: Comparing Institutional Medication Reconciliation Policies
Against National and International Guidelines
Advised by Dr. Tracy Fasolino and Dr. Lena Burgess

Erika Marie Handley Easley, South Carolina

B.S., Clemson University; B.S.N., Medical University of South Carolina
Corticosteroid Stewardship in the Urgent Care Setting
Advised by Dr. Lisa Miller and Dr. Brandi Giles

Erika received the 2024 CVS Foundation Scholarship and served as a class representative for the graduate student advisory committee. Erika has also published an article in the Journal of Pediatric Healthcare. She worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the College of Nursing during her DNP program and plans to work as a nurse practitioner upon graduation. In the future, she would love to teach nursing students as a professor in a higher education nursing program.

Dachely Hernandez.....Anderson, South Carolina

B.S.N., Florida State University
Quality Improvement Project: CLABSI Prevention in the Medical-Surgical
Setting
Advised by Dr. Jennifer Hall and Dr. Lisa Miller

Dachely hopes to incorporate current evidenced-based research, instill a culture of belonging, and advocate for improved preventative healthcare, and to work as a nurse practitioner in a family practice setting.

Nickole Morgan Mamaroneck, New York

B.S., St. John Fisher College; M.S.N., University of Rochester
Efficacy and Usage of Fentanyl Test Strips
Advised by Dr. Mary Ellen Wright and Dr. Amana Stover

Nickole has accepted a role as a neonatal intensive care unit nurse educator in Tampa, Florida.

Alison Nicole Peeples Pendleton, South Carolina

B.S.N., Clemson University; M.N.Ed., Western Governors; Post Masters
Certificate Family Nurse Practitioner, Purdue University
Measuring Parental Competence Using Parenting Sense of Competence
Screening Tool for Referral to Early Childhood Services
Advised by Dr. Mary Ellen Wright and Dr. Lisa Miller

Dionta Jamal Posey Spartanburg, South Carolina

B.S., Claflin University; B.S.N., University of South Carolina Upstate
Overcoming HIV Stigma in FQHCs: A Policy-Based Approach to Enhance HIV
Screening
Advised by Dr. Jennifer Hall

Dionta will soon serve as a family nurse practitioner at Park DuValle Community Health Center in Louisville, Kentucky.

Jasmine Ramsey..... Simpsonville, South Carolina

B.S.N., University of South Carolina

Patient Acuity Matters: Developing an Obstetric Patient Acuity Tool to Improve Nurse Satisfaction

Advised by Dr. Lisa Miller and Dr. Casey Hopkins

Jasmine is a registered nurse with 10 years of experience in labor and delivery and has earned certifications in inpatient obstetric nursing and external fetal monitoring. With a passion for women's health, Jasmine has accepted a nurse practitioner position at Parkside OB/GYN in Greenville, SC. She looks forward to serving patients, uplifting the community, and providing compassionate care in the obstetric and gynecological setting after graduation.

Taylor Elgin Rawls..... Simpsonville, South Carolina

B.S., USC Upstate

Improving Early Identification of Cognitive Impairment in Patients With the Utilization of a Standardized Cognitive Screening Tool: A Policy Proposal

Advised by Dr. Jennifer Hall and Dr. Amy Garrison

Cameron Nichole ScottDuncan, South Carolina

B.S., B.S., Clemson University

Obstetric Floating Support Tool: Enhancing Nurse Satisfaction and Self-Efficacy

Advised by Dr. Lisa Miller and Dr. Casey Hopkins

Cameron will use her education to provide patients with higher-level care and contribute to the broader transformation of healthcare systems, leaving a lasting imprint in patient care and nursing practice. She plans to pursue a career as an advanced practice provider within the urgent care setting.

Lu Tang Simpsonville, South Carolina

B.S.N., Bob Jones University

Evaluating the Impacts of an Information Session for Women's Health Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Providers on Delivering Bereavement Care and Psychosocial Support After Miscarriage

Advised by Dr. Margaret Wetsel and Dr. Casey Hopkins

Lu plans to practice as a family nurse practitioner in family medicine while continuing to expand her expertise in research and quality improvement.

Bailey Marie Vevon.....Charleston, South Carolina

B.S., Winthrop University; B.S.N., Clemson University

Development of an Online Portal to Improve Nurse Practitioner Preceptor Experiences: A Quality Improvement Project

Advised by Dr. Lisa Miller

Bailey received the 2025 Renatta S. Loquist Graduate Nurse Scholarship and the 2024 CVS Foundation Scholarship. She served as a liaison representing Clemson in the Graduate Nursing Student Academy. At the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties Conference this year, Bailey presented her doctoral project and published an article in the Journal of Pediatric Healthcare. She worked as a graduate teaching assistant for Clemson Nursing during her doctoral program and plans to work as a nurse practitioner upon graduation. She would love to work as a professor and teach nursing and nurse practitioner students.

Bailey Alyse Wagner Easley, South Carolina

B.S.N., Anderson University

Obstetric Trauma Debriefing: A Nurse-Facilitated Approach to Addressing Birth Trauma

Advised by Dr. Lisa Miller

Kelsey Bennett White Pelion, South Carolina

B.S., B.S.N., Clemson University

Mending the Mind: Stress First Aid for ICU Nurses

Advised by Dr. Lisa Miller

Kelsey has a forthcoming publication in The Nurse Practitioner journal. She plans to begin her career as a family nurse practitioner in an urgent care or primary care setting.

Erica Brooke Woods Greenville, South Carolina

B.S.N., Bob Jones University

An Assessment of Hospital Staff's Perceived Barriers and Facilitators on the Implementation of the IDEAL Discharge Model in an Acute Care Medical Facility

Advised by Dr. Jennifer Nicholson and Dr. Lucia Gonzales

Erica has worked as a registered nurse in the Greenville area for over 8 years. This work, alongside supervising undergraduate nursing clinical experiences at two upstate universities, has confirmed her desire to mentor future nursing generations. Her doctoral project work examined discharge practices, examining connections between providers, nursing staff, and patients. The findings from her study highlight valuable insights and demonstrate her ability to articulate and guide meaningful improvements within the healthcare industry. Erica plans to continue serving the Greenville community as a nurse practitioner, sharing her dedication and experiences in her hometown.

Tara M. Wright Jamestown, New York

A.A.S. in Nursing, Jamestown Community College; B.S.N., Indiana Wesleyan

Mandatory Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for IV Infusion Therapy: A Policy to Enhance Patient Safety and Nursing Excellence

Advised by Dr. Stephanie Davis and Dr. Jennifer Hall

As a seasoned nurse with extensive experience in the field, Tara has built a solid foundation in clinical practice while expanding her leadership and evidence-based decision-making skills as a doctoral student at Clemson University. Driven by a deep commitment to functional health and holistic prevention, she is dedicated to advancing patient advocacy through healthcare policy. As an advanced care provider, Tara plans to continue her work with national organizations to implement meaningful change and foster trust and understanding between providers and the communities they serve.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Carson Sadler Matsick Charleston, South Carolina

B.A., M.S., Clemson University

Serious Leisure, Passion, and Burnout

Advised by Dr. Cynthia Pury

Carson presented research at the 2023 Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology conference and plans to work as an organizational consultant.

Chelsea Elizabeth Robbins West Palm Beach, Florida

B.A., Wesleyan College; M.S., Clemson University

Leadership Matters: The Impact of Transformational Leadership and Matterings
on Job Attitudes and Perceived Performance

Advised by Dr. Patrick J. Rosopa

Chelsea received the R. C. Edwards Graduate Research Fellowship. She served as president of Clemson's Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, earning the Master's Graduate Assistant Teaching Award in 2021 and the college's Ph.D. Graduate Teaching Award in 2023. She has seven peer-reviewed publications and 13 conference presentations and now looks forward to publishing the results of her dissertation research.

Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management

Margaret Mary Domka Stevens Point, Wisconsin

A.S., Milwaukee Area Technical College; B.S., University of Wisconsin – Stevens

Point; M.S., Concordia University Wisconsin; M.S., Northwestern University

Upstate South Carolina Mental Health and Sport Initiative: Contributing
Solutions to the Mental Health Crisis Via Improvement of Mental Health

Literacy Among Adults in Youth Sport Communities

Advised by Dr. Skye Arthur-Banning and Dr. Fran McGuire

During her doctoral program, Margaret co-founded and will continue as the Executive Director of the national nonprofit US Center for Mental Health & Sport, which has already saved lives. She was a major contributor to a \$500,000 SAMHSA grant. In 2024, she received a PRTM Graduate Student Award of Excellence, and in 2025, she was named US Soccer's national Adapt and Thrive Award winner for her active involvement with the growth of disability soccer.

Sarah Renée Fischer Columbia, Maryland

B.S., Arizona State University; M.A., California State University, San Bernardino

An Examination of the Role of Recreational Therapy in Forensic and
Correctional Settings

Advised by Dr. Brandi M. Crowe

Sarah has been a recreational therapist for nearly 30 years, focusing primarily on individuals with serious mental illness in California. She is the recipient of the 2023 National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification Research Grant and has one peer-reviewed publication, with two more in progress.

Leslie Elizabeth Heffington Gainesville, Florida

B.S., Florida State University; M.S., Clemson University

Operationalizing Quality Youth Leadership Programs Within the Context of
Summer Camps

Advised by Dr. Barry Garst

Leslie has received the Marsha A. Ward Fellowship Endowment for Play and the Backman Graduate Student Service Award. She also has six peer-reviewed publications. Leslie is an assistant director for Clemson's Center for Student Leadership and Engagement.

Kathleen Marie Thurson Jacksonville, Florida

B.A., New College of Florida; M.S., M.S., Clemson University
“It’s What Scares Me to Death in the Industry Right Now:” Contextualizing the
Impact of Climate Change on Out-of-School-Time Programs

Advised by Dr. Matthew H.E.M. Browning

Katie recently received a national research award from the American Camp Association
and will continue working as the national youth protection manager for the Civil Air
Patrol upon graduation.

Healthcare Genetics and Genomics

Erin DiPietro..... Norwalk, Connecticut

B.S., Sacred Heart University; M.S., New York University
An Investigation on the Role of Genetics in Ovulatory Dysfunction-Related
Infertility

Advised by Dr. Sara Sarasua and Dr. Casey Hopkins

Peter D. Manolakos..... Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

B.Sc., Worcester Polytechnic Institute; M.Sc., Drexel University
The Genomic Landscape and Prognostic Impact of KRAS, STK11, and SMARCA4
Mutations and Co-Mutations on Survival Outcomes in Non-Small Cell Lung
Cancer

Advised by Dr. Janice Withycombe

Sarah Eleanor Moncado Elverson, Pennsylvania

B.S., University of the Sciences; M.S., Philadelphia College of Osteopathic
Medicine

Perspectives on Clinical Oncogenomics: Secondary Germline Variants
Associated With Tumor Genomic Profiling in Community Cancer Care and
Advanced Practitioner Oncogenomic Proficiency

Advised by Dr. Luigi Boccuto

Julie Anna Wiedower Little Rock, Arkansas

B.S., University of Arkansas; M.S., University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
A Stakeholder-Informed Conceptual Framework for the Value of Genomic
Testing

Advised by Dr. Stephanie Clark Davis

Julie is a certified genetic counselor with over 12 years of experience. She specializes
in utilization management to increase access to appropriate genetic testing across
healthcare. Medical Genetics and Genomics (Genetics in Medicine). It has been
accepted for publication in the Journal of Clinical Oncology Oncology Practice. Her
passion lies in speaking enthusiastically and effectively to multiple stakeholders while
advocating for increased access to quality genetics care and forming partnerships
between providers, institutions, health plans, and laboratories.

WILBUR O. AND ANN POWERS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Economics

Srijan Banerjee **Kolkata, India**

B.Sc., M.Sc., University of Calcutta; M.S., Clemson University

Essays on Worker Skills and the Black-White Male Unemployment Gap in the United States

Advised by Dr. Aspen Gorry

Jingyun Hu **Wuhu, China**

B.S., Anhui University of Finance and Economics; B.A., Millersville University;

M.A., Northeastern University; M.S., Clemson University

Live-Streaming E-Commerce: The Role of Firms and Influencers in Driving Sales

Advised by Dr. Matthew S. Lewis

Jingyun has completed several papers in economics, marketing, information systems, and management—some of which are currently under review—and has accepted a faculty position at Iona University in New York City.

Benjamin Robert Jaros **Boulder, Colorado**

B.S., Seton Hall University; M.A., Clemson University

Borders and Burdens: Three Essays on Interjurisdictional Tax Policy in America

Advised by Dr. Howard Bodenhorn and Dr. Robert Fleck

Benjamin enjoyed the late nights and camaraderie in Clemson's economics department. He will join the Hoover Institution at Stanford University as a postdoctoral research fellow.

Zhao Liu **Xi'an, China**

B.S., Xi'an University of Technology; M.S., Clemson University

Essays on Credit Default Swaps

Advised by Dr. Robert F. Tamura and Dr. Gerald P. Dwyer, Jr.

Krishna Sharma **Pokhara, Nepal**

M.S., Clemson University; M.A., South Asian University

Essays on Macroeconomics

Advised by Dr. Aspen Gorry

Krishna was named Best Teaching Assistant by the Undergraduate Student Government in 2022. He has accepted a postdoctoral fellow position at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Education Systems Improvement Science

Ginny Lee GastNorth Augusta, South Carolina

Ed.S., The Citadel; B.S., College of Charleston

The Quest for Kindergarten Readiness: A Study of One District's Early
Implementation of the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social-Emotional
Competence

Advised by Dr. Noelle Paufler

Ginny will continue her work as the director of special services in Greenwood 50 and as
an adjunct professor at Lander University.

Patricia Moultrie Goldsmith Orangeburg, South Carolina

B.A., M.Ed., University of South Carolina; Ed.S. Clemson University

Bridging the Gap in Rural Education: Exploring Solutions for Enhanced College
and Career Preparedness Among Secondary School Students

Advised by Dr. Brandi Hinnant-Crawford and Dr. Noelle Paufler

Patricia is a principal at Denmark-Olar Middle School in Bamberg County as and is
completing her 29th year as a public school educator.

Joshua Alan Young Clemson, South Carolina

B.A., M.Ed., Ed.S., Clemson University

Teacher Support and Professional Development Needs in a New Virtual
Academy

Advised by Dr. Noelle Paufler

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Educational Leadership

Stephen Walker Brown IIIGardner, Massachusetts

B.S., Framingham State University; M.S., Emporia State University

The Administrators' Role in Teacher Retention and Their Role on Teachers'

Perceptions of School Climate at an Exemplar Title I School: A Qualitative Study

Advised by Dr. Kris Frady

Stephen is a former math teacher. He is currently a tennis coach but is looking to return
to the classroom and eventually an administrative role in a K-12 capacity.

Diana Carol Carver Greenwood, South Carolina

B.S., M.Ed., Lander University; Ed.S., Clemson University

Grossly Misunderstood: How Two Low Socioeconomic Black Parents in the
Rural South Perceive Their Involvement in Their Children's Education

Advised by Dr. Phillip Grant Jr. and Dr. Michelle Boettcher

Diana is certified in music grades 1-12, special education grades 1-12, and elementary
education 2-6. Upon graduating, Diana is completing her certification in elementary
administration.

Stephanie Brand Davis..... Fountain Inn, South Carolina

B.A. University of South Carolina; M.Ed, Ed.S, Clemson University
An Analysis of Principal Influence on Teacher Retention in a Rural School
District: An Exploratory Qualitative Study
Advised by Dr. Tony Cawthon

Stephanie is a veteran PK–12 educator with extensive classroom experience. She serves at the district level as a Special Education Coordinator, supporting schools in meeting the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Her research interests focus on rural education and the preparation of school leaders, including alternative pathways to principalship and other leadership roles. Additional research focus includes leadership style and teacher retention.

Harolynn WilliamsDayton, Ohio

A.A., A.S., Sinclair College; B.A., The Ohio State University; M.S., Walden University
Am I Woke Enough to Serve in Healthcare: A Secondary Analysis of Pre-Health Students' Personal and Professional Growth by Engaging in Cultural Competency Assessments
Advised by Dr. Rachel Wagner

Harolynn has been a health professions advising director for 7 years. She is the first in her family to complete a Ph.D.

Learning Sciences

Cinamon Sunrise Bailey.....Charleston, South Carolina

B.S., M.Ed., College of Charleston; M.S.W., University of South Carolina
The Effect of Mobile Augmented Reality on the Self-Efficacy of Adults Learning English in the US.
Advised by Dr. Golnaz Arastoopour Irgens

Since beginning her Ph.D. program, Cinamon has published more than 20 journal and conference papers in computing and AI education, garnering more than 130 citations. She has also researched, published, and advocated in the area of adults learning English in the US through mobile augmented reality. Cinamon is dedicated to continuing to engage in research, education, and advocacy.

Cari Allyn Brooks Portland, Oregon

B.A., M.A, Miami University
Adults' Remembered Stories of Early-Grades Reading Groups: A Narrative Inquiry
Advised by Dr. Luke Rapa

Cari holds the rank of assistant professor at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon, where she is a library faculty member and teaches courses on learning strategies and college engagement. She directs the university's undergraduate peer tutoring program and serves on the Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) Inclusive Student Success Council.

Sharetta Marquese Wynn Bufford Blackstock, South Carolina

B.A., Winthrop University; M.Ed., Columbia College

The Interplay of Housing Instability and Mathematics During Adolescence: A Retrospective Study of Black STEM Folx

Advised by Dr. Meihua Qian

Sharetta was awarded Clemson's 2020 Martin Luther King, Jr. Award for Excellence in Service and the 2023 Class of 1956 Award for Staff Excellence. Her work gained attention after winning three consecutive national awards for the program she founded, the College of Science Mentoring and Inclusion Collaborative (COSMIC). She also published two pieces and presented at conferences. Sharetta is the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. in the Learning Sciences program at Clemson University.

Literacy, Language and Culture

Hannah Drew Spartanburg, South Carolina

B.A. Converse University; M.A. Furman University

Situated Learning Within a Transition Program for Youth With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Advised by Dr. Phillip Wilder

Hannah has assisted in conducting research in multiple studies while at Clemson. She has contributed to three peer-reviewed publications with another under review, presented at three national and multiple local conferences. Hannah plans on continuing her current role as a special education instructor in Spartanburg County, advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the workplace.

Special Education

Karon Ashleigh Burke Buford, Georgia

B.B.A., M.Ed., University of North Georgia; Ed.S., Piedmont College

Effect of Calculator Use on Algebra Progress Monitoring Slopes Among Students in Secondary Foundational Algebra Classes

Advised by Dr. Pamela M. Stecker

Karon teaches special education, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and general education mathematics at Buford High School in Buford, Georgia.

Mya Hart Kelley Fort Mill, South Carolina

B.A., South Carolina State University; M.A., University of North Carolina Greensboro

Preparing Preservice Teachers to Support Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students Through the Implementation of a High-Leverage Practice

Advised by Dr. Shanna Hirsch

Mya was named the 2023-2024 Graduate Student Award for Mentoring in Creative Inquiry and received one of the College of Education's 2023-2024 Graduate Student Awards of Excellence in Research. She has co-authored six peer-reviewed publications. Mya plans to continue her full-time work supporting South Carolina school districts with the Behavior Alliance of South Carolina.

Teaching and Learning

Kristin Ann Ambrose Seneca, South Carolina

B.A., M.S., Clemson University

The Effects of Storyline Units on the Self-Efficacy and Science Identity of High School Multilingual Learners

Advised by Dr. Julianne Wenner

Kristin was awarded the Graduate Student Award of Excellence in Teaching by the College of Education.

Devin Shanté Patterson Aucoin..... Durham, North Carolina

B.S., East Carolina University; M.Ed., North Carolina State University

The New Road Chosen: An Examination of Why Black Educators Are Choosing Alternative Certification Pathways

Advised by Dr. Kristen Duncan

Devin is passionate about improving support for new and alternatively licensed teachers and looks forward to continuing research and program development in education.

Brandon Joshua Beck Greenville, South Carolina

B.S., USC Upstate

Determinants of Resilience: How Black Students in Greenville, South Carolina, Navigated the School Desegregation Process

Advised by Dr. Kristen Duncan

Brandon has authored multiple book chapters and has several publications currently under review. His work with Black oral histories challenges the misconception that students of color are incapable of academic excellence. He has recently accepted a faculty position at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where he plans to combine his passion for the history of Black education with mentoring the next generation of preservice social studies teachers.

Jennifer Lee Gallman..... Enoree, South Carolina

B.A., University of South Carolina; M.A., Clemson University; Ed.S., Converse University

Mapping Educator and Librarian Perspectives Through a Qualitative Descriptive Study of Book Bans in South Carolina

Advised by Dr. Susan Cridland-Hughes

Jennifer published three peer-reviewed articles and presented at AES and AERA. She will present at ELATE in July. She is a full-time high school teacher at Dorman High School in Roebuck, South Carolina, and plans to work at the district and college levels.

Meghan Elyse Moore-Hubbard..... Pound, Virginia

B.S., The University of Virginia's College at Wise; M.A., Radford University

Defining, Defending, & Delusion: White Social Studies Teachers Grappling With Whiteness

Advised by Dr. Kristen Duncan

Meghan won the 2024 Taylor and Francis Past President's Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Research from the American Educational Studies Association.

Meredith Lynne Schwendemann Greenwood, South Carolina

B.S., M.A.E, Truman State University; Ed.S., Arkansas State University
Understanding How to Cultivate Culturally Responsive Dispositions Among
District Science Coordinators and Science Teachers
Advised by Dr. Brooke Whitworth

Courtney Sharday Tate Gastonia, North Carolina

B.S., Winston-Salem State University; M.A., Gardner-Webb University
An Examination of the Lived Experiences of Black Women Instructional
Coaches (K-12)
Advised by Dr. Shanita Anderson

Courtney was named to Winston-Salem State University's Forty Under Forty in 2021. She plans to work as a consultant to support instructional leaders and districts in improving instructional coaching.

Akhenaton K. Wilbourn Detroit, Michigan

B.A., M.A., University of Detroit Mercy; M.A.A.S., Air University
Countering Deficit Narratives Through a BlackCrit Lens by Examining Case
Studies of Black College Mathematics Students' Classroom Experiences
Advised by Dr. Brooke A. Whitworth

Akhenaton is an active-duty United States Air Force (USAF) officer who was inducted into the Service Academics Leadership Unity Tribute Excellence (SALUTE) Veterans National Honor Society for outstanding achievement. He has one individual publication and one co-authored publication currently under review. He will return to the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) to join the faculty in the Mathematical Sciences department.

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, COMPUTING AND APPLIED SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Automotive Engineering

Rakesh Mysore Gangadharaiah Mysore, India

B.E., Visveswariah Technology of Engineering; M.Tech., Indian Institute of
Science

*Understanding and Modeling Pooled Rideshare Acceptance: Influential Factors,
Preferred User Experiences, and Implications*

Advised by Dr. Johnell O. Brooks and Dr. Yunyi Jia

Rakesh's dissertation was sponsored by the US Department of Energy. He has eight peer-reviewed publications, eight full-length conference proceedings, seven additional conference presentations, and five manuscripts under review. Rakesh was the recipient of the SAGE Automotive Interiors Fellowship. His work utilizes human factors and user-centered design principles to enhance transportation systems, prioritizing safety and convenience to improve overall mobility experiences.

Haotian Su Beijing, China

B.S., Tsinghua University
User Acceptance of Shared Autonomous Vehicles
Advised by Dr. Yunyi Jia

Bioengineering

Callie Diane Clark Solon, Ohio

B.S., Clemson University
Ex Vivo Multiplex Knockdown of ANGPTL3 and Cypor in Hepatocytes as a Novel
Cell Therapy for Familial Hypercholesterolemia
Advised by Dr. Renee Cottle
Callie is graduating with authorship on four publications, with a fifth under review.
Driven by a passion for bridging the gap between cutting-edge science and real-world
medical applications, she plans to work as a research scientist in the cell and gene
therapy industry.

Kylie Love King Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina

B.S., M.S., Clemson University
Investigating the Influence of the Extracellular Matrix on Triple-Negative Breast
Cancer in Diverse Patient Samples
Advised by Dr. Heather Dunn
Kylie is a SC INBRE grant recipient and was named the Outstanding Graduate
Bioengineering Teaching Assistant for 2025. She has five peer-reviewed publications,
with two more under review, and plans to continue her research in the biotech industry.

Zhen Liao Hanzhong, China

B.S., Xidian University
Development of Rolipram-Loaded PgP Nanoparticles for Spinal Cord Injury
Repair
Advised by Dr. Jeoung Soo Lee
Zhen Liao has conducted pioneering research on nanoparticle-based drug delivery
systems to improve outcomes after spinal cord injury. With 13 presentations at
conferences and five publications in leading journals like Nanomedicine and
Experimental Neurology, she plans to pursue a career advancing neurotherapeutic
technologies.

Latoya Shanel McDonald Columbia, South Carolina

B.S., St. Augustine's University; M.S., The University of New Haven
Toward the Application of Natural Language Processing in Electronic Health
Record Analysis for Taxonomy Development
Advised by Dr. Melinda Harman
LaToya was an NIH AIM AHEAD awardee for both their PRIME and NCATS program, a
Southern Regional Education Board fellow, an Advisor for Cohorted Engineers fellow,
honored for exceptional presentations at the AIM-AHEAD and Big Data Health Science
conferences, and has been invited to serve as a mentor for the UCLA Computational
Genomics Summer Institute program.

Simeon Ja-Von McKelvey.....Decatur, Georgia

B.S., Morehouse College; B.S., North Carolina A&T State University

Understanding Dimensional Stability of Polymer Surgical Mesh

Advised by Dr. Melinda Harman

Simeon, an SMDP MedTech, SREB, and GEM Fellow, has accepted a position at Johnson & Johnson.

Allison Haley Reno.....Rock Hill, South Carolina

B.S., Clemson University

3D Bioprinting of Hydrogel Scaffold Skin Equivalents for Cosmetic and Drug Testing

Advised by Dr. Hai Xiao

Allison is now a scholar in pediatric cancer and a Hollings Cancer Center Fellow at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Emily Elizabeth Sawvell.....Chapin, South Carolina

B.S., Clemson University

The Effects of Cigarette Smoke Extract on Osteoarthritis in a Primary Joint Tissue Explant Model

Advised by Dr. Yongren Wu

As an undergraduate, Emily collaborated with the Hawkins Foundation on a clinical trial investigating the effects of amniotic tissue injection on osteoarthritis (OA). This ignited her passion for research and working with therapeutics that have biological sources. During graduate school, she developed a novel 3D model to study the effects of cigarette smoking on OA while working part-time as a medical writer to help bring new medical technologies to market. Emily hopes to use these combined skills to pursue a career in the biologics industry.

Mary Elizabeth Walker.....Tuscaloosa, Alabama

B.S., Mississippi State University

Understanding the Role of Ligamentous Constraint in Trapeziometacarpal Pathomechanics

Advised by Dr. Yongren Wu

Lizzie has three peer-reviewed publications, with two more under review. She is considering both research and consulting careers in the field of biomechanics.

Chemical Engineering

Braulio Andrés Ortega Quesada.....Cartago, Costa Rica

B.S., Universidad de Costa Rica

Development of Translational Microscale Systems to Interrogate How

Biophysical and Biochemical Cues Alter the Phenotype of Hormone-Positive Breast Cancer

Advised by Dr. Dr Adam Melvin

Braulio is from Costa Rica and has four peer-reviewed articles and two under review. He has plans to continue working in research and teaching.

Missouri D. Wolff Morgantown, West Virginia

B.S., Olin College of Engineering

Design and Characterization of Lignin-Based, Thermoresponsive Soft

Composites With Improved Mechanical and Transport Properties

Advised by Dr. Eric M. Davis

Missouri founded the student organization Women in Chemical Engineering in 2021 and received the graduate student Award of Excellence for the Advancement of Women in 2022. She placed 4th at this year's National College Disc Golf tournament, securing her spot on the All-American team.

Civil Engineering

Md Safwan Ahsanullah Dhaka, Bangladesh

B.S., Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology; M.S., Clemson University

Wind-Induced Gravel Blow-Off: Experimental Investigations and Predictive Modeling for Resilient Roof Design

Advised by Dr. Nigel B. Kaye

Safwan, who has won multiple awards for teaching, now drives clean energy progress by researching wind effects on solar infrastructure for improved resilience.

Reek Majumder Clemson, South Carolina

B. Tech., Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology; M.S., Clemson University
Integrating Artificial Intelligence for Transportation Cyber-Physical Systems:

From Detection to Cyber Resilience

Advised by Dr. Mashrur Chowdhury

Reek specializes in transportation cyber-physical systems, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. His research bridges advanced computing and real-world mobility challenges. From quantum AI for traffic safety to securing UAV networks, Reek's work reflects his passion for innovation and public impact. He aims to advance research and development (R&D) in intelligent systems and cybersecurity, leveraging cutting-edge technology to enhance safety, resilience, and societal impact while contributing to academia and industry.

Computer Science

Jessica Renée Baron-Lis Charleston, South Carolina

A.A., Rockingham Community College; B.S., University of North Carolina
Wilmington; M.S., Clemson University

A System and Method for Measuring Spatially Varying Surface Appearances
With a Study of Feathers

Advised by Dr. Eric Patterson

Jessica is now a Production Engineer in R&D at Lucasfilm's visual effects (VFX) studio, Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), to work on technology for creating movies. While at Clemson, she had a Fulbright Award in Switzerland and numerous film/game studio internships worldwide (Wētā FX, Pixar, and Epic Games). Her dissertation has been an immersive experience into the computer-graphics field, involving creating a giant system of lights and cameras for acquiring data useful for graphics like the appearance of bird feathers.

Ella Socha Kokinda North Charleston, South Carolina

B.S., M.S., Clemson University

Exploring the Pedagogical Impact of Software Development Live Streams:
Informal Learning Opportunities for Software and Game Developers

Advised by Dr. Paige Rodeghero

Ella was awarded the Churchill A. Carter '52 Endowed Memorial Fellowship and the Zucker Graduate Education Center (ZGEC) Ph.D. Grant. She has nine peer-reviewed publications, with another under review.

Guoxi LiuHeze, China

B.S., Chang'an University

Advancing Efficiency of Unstructured Mesh Processing With Localized Data
Structures

Advised by Dr. Federico Iuricich

Guoxi has published two first-author journal articles, and another is under review. He is now a postdoc at The Ohio State University.

Makayla Mary Moster..... Muenster, TX

B.S., University of North Carolina Wilmington; M.S., Clemson University

Learning Through Online Participation: From Breakout Rooms to Discord

Advised by Dr. Paige Rodeghero

While at Clemson, Makayla completed her graduate certificate in Engineering and Science Education. She has accepted an Assistant Professor position at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

Thomas Lenzy Randall Greenwood, South Carolina

B.S., Clemson University

A Systemic Approach to Maximize Heterogeneous System Performance

Advised by Dr. Rong Ge

Thomas was awarded the School of Computing's "Outstanding Computer Science Ph.D." award for the 2024-2025 academic year. He has three peer-reviewed publications, including a Best Paper award from the 2021 International Conference on Supercomputing, and two additional papers are under review. After graduation, Thomas plans to work in the United States Department of Energy National Laboratories.

Electrical Engineering

Buck F. Brown III Greenwood, South Carolina

B.S., M.S., Clemson University

Enhancing Photovoltaic Inverter Reliability Through Advanced Hardware
Protection and Simulation Techniques

Advised by Dr. Johan H. Enslin

Buck has seven peer-reviewed publications and two publications currently under review. He has served as a panelist at four webinars hosted by the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), won the best presentation award at the Applied Power Electronics Conference (APEC) in 2025, and won the most outstanding poster award at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's (NREL) Photovoltaic Reliability Workshop (PVRW) in 2022.

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- Elutunji Buraimoh Osogbo, Nigeria**
 B.Tech., Ladoke Akintola University of Technology; M.S., Obafemi Awolowo University
 Adaptive Delay Compensation Frameworks for Distributed Real-Time Co-Simulation in Power Systems
 Advised by Dr. Christopher S. Edrington and Dr. Gokhan Ozkan
- Ali Moghassemi Clemson, South Carolina**
 B.S., M.S., Islamic Azad University
 Real-Time Active Thermal Management and Degradation Forecasting of Power Electronics Building Blocks in All-Electric Ships
 Advised by Dr. Christopher S. Edrington
 Ali was named the Holcombe ECE Outstanding Graduate Student Researcher in 2025. He has multiple peer-reviewed publications, with several more to come. He is actively seeking job opportunities and hopes to secure a position in academia or industry.
- Jan Westman Portland, Oregon**
 B.S., University of British Columbia
 Grid Forming Inverters for Microgrid Operation Enhancement
 Advised by Dr. Ramtin Hadidi
 Jan has four peer-reviewed journal publications. He is a power system research engineer at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Seattle.
- Zhenyu Xu Nantong, China**
 B.S., Nanjing Tech University; M.S., University of Rhode Island
 Emerging Applications on Reconfigurable Computing Platforms
 Advised by Dr. Tao Wei and Dr. Linke Guo

Engineering and Science Education

- Sarah Otterbeck Chester, Massachusetts**
 B.S., Keene State College; M.S., Clemson University
 The Math Doesn't Add Up: Gender Inequity in Service Responsibilities in Research-Intensive Mathematics Departments
 Advised by Dr. Matthew Voigt
 Sarah was a finalist for the 2024 K. Patricia Cross Future Leaders Award and received the 2024 Excellence in Leadership Award from Clemson's Graduate Student Government. She plans to work in educational development, supporting instructors - faculty, staff, and grad students alike - in their teaching endeavors.
- Timothy Scott Ransom Elon, North Carolina**
 B.S., B.S., Appalachian State University; M.S., Clemson University
 Becoming a Computer Scientist: Multimethods to Make Sense of Professional Computer Scientist Identity Development
 Advised by Dr. D. Matthew Boyer
 Tim has been employed by the Clemson University School of Computing and looks forward to continuing his work in computer science education research and practice.

Environmental Engineering and Earth Sciences

Julia Ann Funk..... Spartanburg, South Carolina

B.S., M.S., Clemson University

Understanding Conversion of Long-Chain Fatty Acids in Anaerobic Digestion Systems

Advised by Dr. Sudeep Popat

Julia Ann was an Environmental Research and Education Scholarship recipient. She had accepted a position with Jacobs Engineering in the water group working in the wastewater space.

Weiming QiShenyang, China

B.S., Central South University; M.S., Clemson University

Ceramic Membrane Evaluation via Automated Filtration Systems for Water Treatment and Resource Recovery

Advised by Dr. Debora Rodrigues

Weiming has delivered nine platform presentations and six poster presentations and has authored four peer-reviewed publications.

Human Centered Computing

Rohit MallickBel Air, Maryland

B.S., Purdue University

Strengthening the Bonds Between Us: An Empirical Investigation of Morale in Human-AI Teams and the Socially Supportive AI Teammates Who Empower It

Advised by Dr. Nathan McNeese

Rohit was named the 2025 Outstanding Ph.D. Student in Human-Centered Computing and has 17 peer-reviewed publications with another four under review.

Materials Science and Engineering

Mary Ann Cahoon St. Louis, Missouri

B.S., Missouri University of Science and Technology

The Evolution of Nanoparticles in Nanoparticle-Doped Glass Optical Fibers

Advised by Dr. John Ballato

Mary Ann has six peer-reviewed publications and plans to work in materials characterization.

Siddhartha Sarkar[†] Kolkata, India

BS, Vellore Institute of Technology; MS, North Carolina State University

“Laser Processing of Multi-Phase Ceramic Coatings”

Advised by Dr. Kyle Brinkman

[†] degree awarded December 2024

Mechanical Engineering

Zhangke Yang Jingmen, China

B.S., Chang'An University; M.S., Huazhong University of Science and
Technology

Deciphering and Translating Bioinspired Structures for Engineering Materials

Design via Computational Modeling and Machine Learning

Advised by Dr. Zhaoxu Meng

Zhangke is the recipient of the Mechanical Engineering Excellence Award – Ph.D. He
has accepted a Postdoctoral Fellow position at Clemson University.

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Biological Sciences

Daniel A. Malagon Pendleton, South Carolina

B.S., University of Tennessee Knoxville

Spatial Variation in Host-Associated Microbiota

Advised by Dr. Sharon Bewick

Chemistry

Ralph Aderorho Clemson, South Carolina

B.Sc., Federal University of Petroleum Resources, EFFURUN; M.Sc., Sheffield
Hallam University

Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of New Psychoactive Substances and
Related Metabolites Using Liquid Chromatography-Ion Mobility-Mass
Spectrometry (LC-IM-MS)

Advised by Dr. Christopher Donald Chouinard

Andrea Nicole Conner Clover, South Carolina

B.S., Southern Wesleyan University

Biophysical Studies of Nucleic Acid — Small Molecule Recognition

Advised by Dr. Dev P. Arya

Andrea has one peer-reviewed publication, and another is under review. During her
last year in the program, she accepted and worked full-time in Clemson's Occupational
and Environmental Safety Department. She plans to continue to work in Clemson's
Occupational and Environmental Safety Department after graduation.

Dimuthu Sewwandi Edirisinghe Malabe, Sri Lanka

B.Sc., University of Colombo

Synthesis of Nanoparticles in Silicate Matrix and Stimuli-Responsive

Nanocomposite Polymer Films

Advised by Dr. George Chumanov

Dimuthu was awarded the Mandel fellowship in 2023, and She is a recipient of a 2024-2025 doctoral dissertation completion grant. She has two peer-reviewed publications and one under preparation.

Samuel KwainAccra, Ghana

B.S., M.S., University of Ghana

Development of Small-Molecule Inhibitors for Bacteroides, Naegleria, and

Toxoplasma Microorganisms and Synthesis of N-Heterocycles From

Thiolated Ene-Ynes and Azodicarboxylates

Advised by Dr. Daniel C. Whitehead and Dr. Brian N. Dominy

Samuel Kwain has authored eight peer-reviewed publications, with an additional three currently under review in reputable scientific journals, stemming from his Ph.D. research and collaborative projects. In April 2025, he was honored with the Outstanding Graduate Research Award in Chemistry from the Department of Chemistry and the Outstanding Graduate in Discovery Award from the College of Science at Clemson University. He aspires to pursue a career in the pharmaceutical industry, focusing on drug discovery and development.

Madhuka Vithaksha LiyanageHorana, Sri Lanka

B.Sc., University of Colombo

Silver Nanoparticles in Ammonia Sensing and Photovoltaics

Advised by Dr. George Chumanov

Recipient of Mandel Fellowship, Interdisciplinary Fellowship and Doctoral Dissertation Grant. Started a career in the pharmaceutical industry.

Bhakti Kiritbhai Patel..... Olney, Maryland

B.S., University of Maryland, College Park; A.S., Montgomery College, Rockville

Hydrothermal Synthesis of Single-Crystal Magnetic Oxides

Advised by Dr. Joseph Kolis

Three peer-reviewed publications with four under review.

Treasurer (2021-2022) and President (2022-2023) of Chemistry Graduate Student Organization (CGSO).

Plans on working in the chemical and biomedical industry.

Kirkland Wade Sheriff Toccoa, Georgia

B.S., Georgia Southern University

Synthesis and Characterization of New Inorganic Materials in Different Length Scales, From Nanometer to Micrometer

Advised by Dr. Shiou-Jyh Hwu

Kirkland was selected for the Dept. of Energy Graduate Student Research Program and published papers on solid state synthesis and carbon dots.

Rhianna Wolsleger St. George, Utah

B.S., Utah Tech University

Development of Mixed O/S-Donor Imidazole Thione Ligands for Trivalent

Lanthanide/Actinide Separations

Advised by Dr. Julia L. Brumaghim

Rhianna has accepted a position at Clemson to study nuclear waste material.

Environmental Toxicology

Scott William Ventrello Seneca, South Carolina

B.S., Toccoa Falls College

Stromal Cells in the Small Intestine: Physiology, Localization, Function, and

Alterations Induced by Chronic Arsenic Exposure

Advised by Dr. Lisa J. Bain

Scott Ventrello was honored with the Department of Biological Sciences “Outstanding Graduate Student in Discovery Award” in 2025. He has authored three peer-reviewed publications, with two more currently under review. Scott is also a recipient of the Dr. Stephen Klaine Annual Memorial Fellowship for 2023-2024, as well as two Biological Sciences Professional Development Course – Grants-in-Aid-of-Research for the years 2022 and 2023.

Genetics

Manwinder Singh Brar Rajiana, India

B.S., Punjab Agricultural University

Understanding the Genetic and Metabolic Underpinnings of Complex Traits in
C4 Grasses

Advised by Dr. Rajandeep Sekhon

Bharath Kunduru Gurazala, India

B.S., University of Agricultural Sciences - Bangalore; M.S., Govind Ballabh Pant

University of Agriculture and Technology

Identification and Characterization of Intermediate Phenotypes to Decipher

Genetic Architecture of Stalk Lodging Resistance in Maize (*Zea mays* L.)

Advised by Dr. Rajandeep Sekhon

Bharath was named Outstanding Graduate Researcher in 2025 and was awarded
Interdisciplinary Fellowship by the Department of Genetics and Biochemistry.

Mathematical Sciences

Trevor R. Camper Glennville, Georgia

B.B.A., Georgia Southern University; M.S., Georgia Southern University

The Spectral Asymptotics of Toeplitz Operators on Hilbert Spaces of Analytic
Functions

Advised by Dr. Mishko Mitkovski

Career Plans: Postdoctoral Scholar, Dartmouth College

Amy Grace de CastroColumbia, South Carolina

B.S., Union University; M.S., Clemson University

Decomposition and Coordination for Multiobjective Optimization: A Framework and Methodology

Advised by Dr. Hyesuk Lee and Dr. Margaret Wiecek

Amy will begin a postdoc at the University of Utah and hopes to be a professor to build a supportive community of holistic scholarship among students.

Philip de Castro La Habra Heights, California

B.A., Whittier College; M.S., Clemson University

Domain Decomposition for Coupled Systems of Fluid-Structure Interaction and Numerical Modeling for Thin Film Polymers

Advised by Dr. Margaret M. Wiecek

Philip has accepted a postdoctoral position at The University of Utah in Salt Lake City, Utah.

William Smith FisherAsheville, North Carolina

B.A., University of North Carolina Asheville; M.S., Clemson University

Statistical Designs for Learning User Preference and Experience

Advised by Dr. Qiong Zhang

William Fisher received two interdisciplinary research awards through Clemson's School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences, a best paper award in the operations research track at the IISE annual conference. He has published two peer-reviewed journal articles during his Ph.D. studies. He has accepted a position as a research statistician developer with JMP Statistical Discovery.

Elizabeth Viola Hawkins..... Ellabell, Georgia

B.S., M.S., Georgia Southern University

Robust and Efficient Solvers for Physics-Based PDEs

Advised by Dr. Leo Rebholz

She has accepted a postdoc position at Rice University.

Emma Kari SorianoSunnyvale, California

B.A., University of Portland; M.S., Clemson University

Decision Space Decomposition for Multiobjective Programs

Advised by Dr. Margaret Wiecek and Dr. Mishko Mitkovski

Physics

Allen Benton III Liberty, South Carolina

A.S., Allegany College of Maryland; B.S., Frostburg State University
Growth, Cladding, and Characterization of Single Crystal Optical Fiber: The Next
Evolution in Directed Energy Systems

Advised by Dr. Apparao Rao

Allen has published works spanning multiple fields, including thermoelectricity, semiconductor engineering, and high-powered fiber laser systems. He has accepted a postdoctoral fellow position at Clemson University to continue his research on single-crystal fiber lasers.

Scott Dennis Joffre Midland, Michigan

B.S., Hope College

Probing the “MeV Gap”: Discovery and Characterization of Persistent and
Transient MeV-GeV Gamma-Ray Sources With the Fermi Large Area
Telescope

Advised by Dr. Marco Ajello

Scott was the first author of three publications and co-author of 4 more. Additionally, Scott was awarded over \$400,000 and 118 hours of observations as the principal investigator for various grants. Moreover, he received the 2023 College of Science’s Outstanding Graduate in Student Engagement, named a 2024 John Mather Nobel Scholar while an intern at NASA Goddard, and received the 2025 Department of Physics and Astronomy’s Graduate Research Award.

Andrew Michael Pepper St. Louis, Missouri

B.S., B.S., University of Missouri Kansas City

The Role of the Neutral Wind in Observations of High-Latitude Ionospheric
Energy Transfer

Advised by Dr. Stephen R. Kaeppler

While chasing breathtaking auroras at Clemson, Andrew poured countless hours into unraveling the complexities of the ionosphere and Joule heating. His dedication earned him roles as a student representative on the CEDAR Science Steering Committee, president of the Panda GSO, and a contributor to two NASA-funded sounding rocket campaigns. With countless presentations and two peer-reviewed publications, he’s now set to launch the next phase of his space physics career.

Ryan Perrin Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania

A.S., Jamestown Community College; B.S., Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Charge and Spin Transport in Nanowires with Spin-Orbit Coupling

Advised by Dr. Catalina Marinescu

Ryan was named the physics and astronomy department’s Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant in 2023.

Jaad Antoun Tannous Rochester, New York

B.S., American University of Beirut; M.S., Clemson University

The Effect of Nuclear Isomers on s-Process Nucleosynthesis

Advised by Dr. Bradley S. Meyer

Jaad has developed multiple open-source projects centered on stellar astrophysics and quantum-level systems. He plans to pursue a career in academia.

Zhenzhen Zhang..... Seneca, South Carolina

B.S., Nankai University

Amyloid Aggregation and Mitigation

Advised by Dr. Feng Ding

Zhenzhen has been selected to receive the Department of Physics and Astronomy
Graduate Researcher Award in 2025. She has ten peer-reviewed publications and has
been cited more than 350 times.

CLEMSON ALMA MATER

Farmer and McGarity/arr. Freeman

Where the Blue Ridge yawns its greatness,
Where the Tigers play;
Here the sons of dear Old Clemson
Reign supreme alway.

Chorus

Dear Old Clemson, we will triumph
And with all our might,
That the Tiger's roar may echo
O'er the mountain height.

We will dream of greater conquests,
For our past is grand,
And her sons have fought and conquered
Every foreign land.

Where the mountains smile in grandeur
O'er the hill and dale,
Here the Tiger lair is nestling
Swept by storm and gale.

We are brothers strong in manhood,
For we work and strive;
And our alma mater reigneth
Ever in our lives.