

University Education in the Utah State Prison System



Welcome From Our Director

Hello, and welcome to the inaugural newsletter of the University of Utah Prison Education Project. This newsletter details some of the progress we have made so far and shares many of our future plans. In our newsletters, you can hear directly from UPEP students, professors, and volunteers.

UPEP grew out of the [2016-2017 Honors Praxis Lab, Education, Incarceration, and Justice](#). The creation of UPEP is the result of much collaboration, and this collaboration is ongoing. We worked in partnership with prominent college-in-prison programs across the country to build the infrastructure for the Project and have designed UPEP in accordance with best practices established by the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison, a coalition of quality college-in-prison programs.

UPEP provides on-site college curriculum to two groups of students incarcerated in the Utah State Prison in Draper, one in the women's facility (Timpanogos) and one in a men's facility (Wasatch). We assist incarcerated students and non-incarcerated volunteers to live lives of impact, both in prison and post-incarceration, by fostering academic excellence, leadership, and civic engagement. There is no cost to participate in UPEP and we will always engage face-to-face quality instruction at the prison.

As Director, I have the distinct privilege of working with a talented group of students on two campuses: one in Draper and one at the University of Utah main campus. The last six months have been a lot of work and we are well on our way planning for summer and fall 2018. As we move through this first year, it is my goal to continue reaching out to our communities, recruiting dedicated volunteers to join the Project, and working with our students to build the infrastructure necessary for a first-rate college-in-prison program here in Utah. Join us!

Erin L. Castro, PhD
Director & Co-Founder, UPEP
Assistant Professor, Higher Education, University of Utah



We kicked off our UPEP lecture series with Dr. Suresh Venkatasubramanian, a professor in the School of Computing at the University of Utah. Dr. Venkatasubramanian's lecture, titled, "How to do Math while Cutting a Cake!", focused on the role of algorithms in society. He captured his thoughts about the lecture on his blog:

When I first mentioned this on Facebook, many people were curious about what it was like. I can report here that my lecture was.... more or less exactly like a lecture would happen in any of the other places I lecture. Students came in with a lot of fear of math (which is why I thought I'd talk about recreational math). There was an actual cake and lots of nervousness when I had students run the algorithms on the cake. There were lots of questions about the different models of fair division, and some confusion about whether we could trust the results of the process.

In other words, every kind of question one might expect in any setting. The students were engaged and interested. They hadn't had too much math experience except what they did in high school, but they were able to follow along quite well and come up with their own algorithms as we advanced further into the lecture. I enjoyed myself, and I hope they did too!

The students in Timpanogos enjoyed the lecture and collectively wrote a response for the newsletter.

You Say Cake...We Say When?

A new brand of anticipation hung in the evening air at the Timpanogos campus as our familiar space transformed into a university lecture hall. We had a rare opportunity to feel beyond the walls as we were surrounded by other like minds. Dr. Suresh Venkatasubramanian taught us the principles of "I cut, you choose," "The moving knife," and how "everything involves pigeons." We examined concepts like: Everyone has their own idea of what they value and the way we perceive sharing values allows us to share more. These words bounced in our brains for days after the presentation. We saw our world differently and ourselves differently. We were treated like students, we acted like students, we became students. Most importantly, we felt worthy of being students. Briefly, we were an interlaced group. We were a blend of scholars who were willing to enter a prison for education's sake, officers securing a facility who couldn't help but listen to a charismatic professor, and curious students, wide-eyed, starved of knowledge, salivating for new, wholesome experiences...and a slice of cake.

You can read Dr. Suresh's blog here: <http://blog.geomblog.org/2017/10/cake-cutting-algorithms-in-prison.html>

Educator Spotlight



Susannah Nevison teaches in the English Department at the University of Utah, where she is completing her doctorate in English Literature and Creative Writing. Many of Susannah's courses at the University of Utah focus on identity politics in poetry, and she is eager to bring the same kind of material to her incarcerated students in her Introduction to Creative Writing course. This course emphasizes writing and the reading of many different genres, but Susannah is most excited about teaching Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*, because it combines poetry and prose so dramatically and effectively.

Susannah has recently completed her second book of poetry, *Lethal Theater* (forthcoming from Ohio State University Press, 2019), which focuses on prison practices and the ethics of isolation. She is also the author of *Teratology* (Persea Books, 2015), winner of the Lexi Rudnitsky First Book in Poetry Prize. New work has appeared in or is forthcoming from *Tin House*, *Pleiades*, *Crazyhorse*, and *The New York Times*. She lives in Salt Lake City, where she teaches and studies at the University of Utah.

Why Become Involved with UPEP?

Susannah Nevison is one of many people who volunteer their experience, expertise, and effort with UPEP. We are eager to work with individuals who are passionate about expanding access to quality higher education in prison. UPEP has a variety of needs, including education, administration, fundraising, and outreach. To operate, UPEP relies on a diverse group of volunteers who work both inside and outside the prison, on campus, and in the local community.

Because we are a new initiative, our immediate needs are diverse and include: instructors, tutors, teaching assistants, technological support, librarians, and individuals to help us build a writing center, math lab, and computer lab inside the prison. We seek to work with instructors from all disciplines and fields, students, and community members.

If you are interested in volunteering for UPEP, please contact us at: upeg@utah.edu. In your email, please specify why you want to work with the Project, what work you would like to do, and provide any relevant information about your credentials.



Spring 2018 Admissions Team

Spring 2018 Orientation



In January, we held UPEP Orientation for new and returning volunteers. Included here are undergraduate and graduate students, University staff, and community members. Together we reviewed academic research regarding college in prison and discussed goals for the upcoming year. Instructors shared their insights from the fall and we reviewed feedback from students. We are looking forward to this academic year.

Donations

This work would not be possible without the generosity of multiple donors. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to support UPEP. We provide all of our students with the necessary supplies to be successful in rigorous undergraduate coursework. There is no cost for students to participate in UPEP and all donations are used to support our students. Checks can be addressed to: University of Utah Prison Education Project and mailed to our address at the end of the newsletter.

If you are interested in helping us provide these supplies, please see our [Amazon Wish List](#). We also are collecting used books (no textbooks please) on an ongoing basis. These books expand the access our students have to new knowledge and creative thinking in an environment that is isolated from both public libraries and internet access.

Our immediate goal is to provide credit-bearing courses to UPEP students and we are actively fundraising to cover all costs of attendance. Individuals, organizations, and businesses can support UPEP by sponsoring a course, purchasing supplies, and/or purchasing necessary equipment - such as computers, microscopes, calculators, and digital cameras, among others. Our needs are great. All donations directly fund the program. For more information, please see our website.

Fundraising Spotlight



Last summer UPEP was awarded a small grant from the Newcomers' Club of Salt Lake City. Our undergraduate Honors intern, Erin Feeley, accepted this award on our behalf.

UPEP volunteers are working to compile a list of small grant opportunities. Grants like this play an important role in helping us secure the school supplies and textbooks needed for our students. If you know of any such opportunities, please contact us.



Activities

DO GOOD WITH BURRITOS



UPEP volunteers and organizers made the most of March with a fundraiser at the Chipotle in downtown Salt Lake City. Over 60 people came and bought food, resulting in over \$500 in donations! Thank you to Chipotle and our supporters!

KRCL's RadioACTIVE hosted UPEP in March and discussed the need for college in prison in Utah. We also highlighted our need for tutors, instructors, and volunteers. Get active with UPEP!



Join us at our restaurant for a fundraiser to support the University of Utah Prison Education Project. Just come in to the Chipotle at 734 East 400 South in Salt Lake City on Wednesday, March 28th from 8:00pm to 9:00pm. Bring in this flyer, show it on your smartphone or tell the cashier you're supporting the cause to make sure that 50% of the proceeds will be donated to the University of Utah Prison Education Project.



Contact Us and Learn More!

If you would like to become involved, donate, or simply learn more about the UPEP, please reach out to us! Follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Please share this with anyone who you think would be interested.

upegp.utah.edu
upegp@utah.edu



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Amazon Wishlist

