

DECEMBER 9TH 2025

EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

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Time to Rest and Reset

As the semester comes to a close and winter settles in, this break offers something we all need but rarely give ourselves: a pause.

You've pushed through challenges, deadlines, early mornings, and long nights. Now it's time to step back and breathe.

Winter break isn't just time off; it's a chance to reset. Reflect on how far you've come, reconnect with the people who ground you, and allow yourself moments of genuine rest. I can't wait to see what the Spring semester has in store!

Did you know, within the first year after graduation, 89% of Buffalo State teacher education alums are working within their chosen field?

Read more on our website

<https://exceptionaleducation.buffalostate.edu>

Quick Highlights

- **Student Spotlight: American Sign Language Microcredential Student**
- **ASL Microcredential & IPDP Germany**
- **Exceptional Education Awards Ceremony**
- **Winter Break, and more**
- **Resources to Support Your Semester**



Student Spotlight: Olivia Kilmer American Sign Language (ASL) Microcredential Student

This December, we are shining the spotlight on Olivia Kilmer, a dedicated sophomore in the Speech-Language Pathology program who is already making a remarkable impact in and beyond the classroom. Olivia is also pursuing a micro-credential in American Sign Language (ASL) through the Exceptional Education Department.

Olivia's teaching journey began at her high school, where she first discovered her love for education. Originally imagining herself as an elementary or special education teacher, Olivia spent two hours each day during her junior year working in a 12:1:1 classroom with K-3 students. It was there she fell in love with students, the atmosphere, and the world of individualized support. Being exposed to speech therapy, occupational therapy, and other specialized resources opened her eyes to the ways professionals can help children communicate and grow. Soon after, she shadowed a speech-language pathologist, and everything clicked.

She describes one of her biggest inspirations as seeing real growth: "Watching where a student starts at the beginning of the year and where they are at the end is amazing." She loves viewing communication through different lenses, recognizing that while anyone can notice a speech delay, understanding the why behind it is what allows a speech pathologist to help. The field, she says, is both "challenging and rewarding," especially because communication isn't always black and white. "There's a gray area," she explains, "and you have to figure out what someone really needs."

Olivia's love for communication also comes from an unexpected place, soccer. A forward on the Buffalo State's team, she has always loved connecting with teammates on and off the field. Some of her teammates are also speech majors, and their enthusiasm helped guide her toward the program. The fact that Buffalo State has its own speech clinic on campus made her even more confident it was where she belonged. She plans to attend graduate school here as well, earn her master's degree, and complete the necessary certifications to continue her training.



Student Spotlight: Olivia Kilmer American Sign Language (ASL) Microcredential Student

Her interest in ASL grew naturally from her desire to support as many people as possible.

She believes ASL is
“a good tool to have” and an
essential part of being **truly
inclusive.**

After taking her first course, she realized how meaningful the language is, not only as a form of communication but as a connection to the Deaf community and its culture.



Her ASL skills have already had a profound impact: while volunteering at Gigi's Playhouse, she connected instantly with a Deaf participant who had no interpreter.

“I’m not even the best,” Olivia says,
**“but it changed her experience,
and mine.”**

She was able to communicate with her, help elevate her voice, and form a bond no one else could.

In ASL I, II, and her advanced-level course, Olivia has practiced grammar, vocabulary, conversational skills, and even translating songs. She appreciates the immersive teaching style of Exceptional Education Department professor, Mrs. Crockford, who conducts class entirely in ASL.

**“She wants people to learn, she’s
understanding, gives
opportunities, extra credit, and
tells you everything you need from
the start. You just have to apply
yourself.”**



Outside of academics, Olivia enjoys playing soccer, watching movies with friends, thrifting, and exploring new coffee shops. Her favorites include Son in Law, and she never turns down an iced matcha with lavender or an iced caramel latte. She's also passionate about ceramics and hopes to pursue an art therapy minor, appreciating the sustainability and creativity of handmade pieces, especially mugs.



ASL Microcredential

American Sign Language (ASL) Microcredential

The Exceptional Education and Speech-Language Pathology Departments offer a Microcredential available to all Buffalo State undergraduate and graduate students.

This microcredential is a valuable addition to your transcript, future employers and graduate programs will recognize the marketable skills you gain through this pathway.

The program consists of five required courses. If you are interested in learning ASL, click here: [ASL Micro Credential](#).

IPDP – Teaching in Germany

The International Professional Development Partnerships (IPDP) currently offers international student teaching experiences. Emilee Backstrom and Kait Krauss are completing their student teaching in Stuttgart, Germany this fall.

They are both majors in Special Education and Childhood Education. If you want to follow along their journey, please click here: [Student Blogs](#).

To learn more about international opportunities for education majors, please click here: [IPDP Opportunities](#)



IPDP Germany

Awards Ceremony

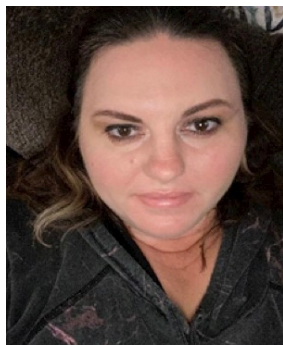
The Exceptional Education Department holds its annual award ceremony each November during the fall semester. This event recognizes outstanding students within the department, remarkable K-12 students, and distinguished alumni who exemplify what it means to be a part of Exceptional Education. Each year, award recipients are invited to attend a formal ceremony where they are honored for their achievements. These awards are made possible thanks to the generosity of donors whose commitment helps celebrate and uplift the outstanding members of our Exceptional Education community.

This year, the Exceptional Education Awards Ceremony took place on November 6, 2025, in the Campbell Student Union.

Exceptional Education Awards Committee Members



Dr. Vince Garland
Committee Chair



Mrs. Kristy Blask
Member



Mrs. Amy Crockford
Member



Ms. Carol Shaw
Member

Guest Speaker



Dr. Wendy Paterson

Dean of the School of Education and Applied Professions

Dr. Paterson received two degrees from Buffalo State, both in education. She began her teaching career in 1976 as a reading specialist in the Kenmore-Tonawanda public schools and later transitioned to higher ed.

Dr. Paterson has served as the Dean since 2012 and previously was awarded the Cooperative Leadership Award from the National School Development Council.

Guest Speaker



Dr. Andrew Hashey

Chair of the Exceptional Education Department

Dr. Hashey received his Bachelor of Arts from University of Massachusetts Amherst, Master's from SUNY Buffalo State and PhD from University of Buffalo. He has been an associate professor at Buffalo State for seven years and is reaching year three as department chair.

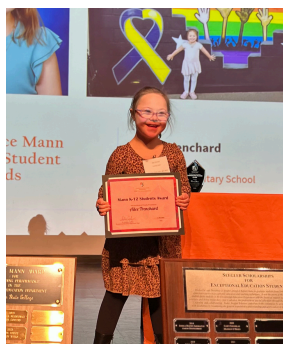
In his K-12 teaching career, Dr. Hashey taught in classrooms serving students experiencing significant behavioral and emotional difficulties.

Awards Ceremony Continued

Horace Mann, K-12 Student Winners



Abby
School & Community
Activities



Ailee
Arts



Alex
School & Community
Activities



Giovanni
Self Advocacy

Dr. Horace Mann established The Horace Mann K-12 Student Award through a generous charitable gift annuity to SUNY Buffalo State. These awards honor K-12 students with disabilities and celebrate the achievements in one of the following areas: Academics, Arts, Athletics, School and Community Activities, Self-Advocacy, Technology, and Transition.

Joseph & Mary Jean Daly Varga



Jenna Terry
Applied Behavior Analysis

This scholarship is awarded to one graduate student who has demonstrated strong academic performance and a clear interest in supporting students with disabilities.

Dr. Judith Bondurant-Utz Early Childhood Scholarship Fund



April Wright
Special Education: Early Childhood

This scholarship is awarded to one graduate student in the Early Childhood Special Education master's program who has shown solid academic achievement and a commitment to working with young children with special needs.

Awards Ceremony Continued

Dorothea & Mildred Seegler Endowed Scholarship Fund

In name of Dorothea Seegler



Dariana Candelario

Special Education & Childhood
Education

In name of Mildred Seegler



Abigail Winiatowski

Special Education & Childhood
Education

This scholarship was established to honor the memory and work of two SUNY Buffalo State graduates who attended the university in the 1940s and 50s. It reflects their long-standing commitment to education and provides support for students preparing to enter the field of special education.

Horace Mann Endowment for Exceptional Education Scholarship Fund



Kaitlyn Krauss

Special Education &
Childhood Education



Grace Eleey

Special Education:
Early Childhood



Emilee Josker

Special Education &
Childhood Education



Bella Mullen

Special Education &
Childhood Education

These scholarships are awarded each year to students in the Exceptional Education Department who have shown strong academic performance and contributed positively to the department community. Recipients also demonstrate a clear commitment to working with students with disabilities, reflecting the values Dr. Mann upheld during his career.

Awards Ceremony Continued

Gustave & Geraldine Werner Foundation Scholarship



Bethany Sherman

Special Education: Childhood



Tallia Maness

Special Education: Early Childhood

This scholarship, supported by the Geraldine and Gustave Werner Foundation, is awarded annually to full-time undergraduate students majoring in a field related to working with individuals with disabilities. Recipients maintain strong academic standing and show a clear commitment to supporting learners with diverse needs.

Exceptional Education Alumni Impact Award - Andrea Faden



This award recognizes an alumna or alumnus whose professional accomplishments and lifelong dedication have made a meaningful impact on individuals with exceptionalities and on the field of special education. This year marks the first time this award is being presented.



Our inaugural recipient has devoted her career to advocating for children with disabilities and their families. Her interest in special education began with a close relationship with her cousin, who was blind and developmentally delayed. Witnessing the barriers he faced inspired a lifelong commitment to building more inclusive and supportive educational environments. Andrea earned both her bachelor's degree in 1974 and her master's degree in 1978 from Buffalo State's Department of Exceptional Education. She fondly recalls the program's small, close-knit nature and the profound mentorship she received from faculty members such as Linda and Warren Gleckel—experiences that shaped her professional path and her values as an educator. After more than thirty-five years in the field—including ten years teaching in a 12:1:1 classroom at Orleans/Niagara BOCES and twenty-five years as Student Support Coordinator at Nardin Elementary—Andrea continues to serve the community as a Parent Advocate. In this role, she guides families through the special education process, ensuring that their children's needs are met and their voices are heard throughout Western New York.

Awards Ceremony Continued

The Children's Guild Foundation ABA Scholarship



Jannat Inqiyad
Applied Behavior
Analysis



Kassia Balus
Applied Behavior
Analysis



Collin Filippi
Applied Behavior
Analysis



McKenna Lalonde
Applied Behavior
Analysis



John Lempko
Applied Behavior
Analysis



Morgan Arnold
Applied Behavior
Analysis



Natalie Mirco
Applied Behavior
Analysis

The Children's Guild Foundation Scholarship supports students pursuing the Master's Program in Applied Behavior Analysis at SUNY Buffalo State. The scholarship was established to strengthen expertise in supporting individuals with disabilities, especially those needing behavior-change interventions.

Recipients agree to provide ABA services in the eight counties of Western New York after graduation. This scholarship is awarded to students who have strong academic records and prior experience working with individuals with disabilities.

Awards Ceremony Continued

The Exceptional Education Cooperating Teacher Award



Maria Goldman

Amherst Middle School



Christine Taggart

Erie Boces, Maryvale Academy

This award recognizes two cooperating teachers who have shown consistent dedication to mentoring our teacher candidates. Their guidance has played a key role in supporting students during their field experiences, and their contributions have helped strengthen the preparation of future educators.

Bernard Yormak Award



Natalie Perl

Undergraduate



Vanessa Uhteg

Graduate

This award is presented annually to one undergraduate student and one graduate student in the Exceptional Education Department who have demonstrated strong academic performance and clear potential for working with students with disabilities.

The award honors Dr. Bernard Yormak, a respected colleague and Emeriti faculty member of the department. Both recipients have shown a solid commitment to inclusive education and to supporting individuals with disabilities in their future work.

Winter Break

The last day of classes are December 11th and start back on January 26th. Use this time to rest, reset, and gear up for the spring semester!

If you haven't done so already, please make sure to register for classes. If you need help, please reach out to your academic advisor for guidance.

If you need mental health support, the Counseling Center is here for you and can connect you with a professional to talk to, click here: [Counseling Center Website](#).



Get Involved!

Looking to get involved on campus? Bengal Connect is your one-stop hub for all things student life at Buffalo State!

From club meetings and events to campus-wide activities, you can find everything that's happening right here.

<https://www.bengalconnect.com>



Upcoming Events

December 17th

- Enjoy open skate at the Ice Arena! This event is free for all students with ID, and skate rentals are just \$3. Skating runs from 10:00 AM to 11:20 AM. Want to learn more? Click here: [Open Skate Information](#).



Campus Resources!

Buffalo State has a wide range of resources to support your success both inside and outside the classroom.

From academic tutoring and career services to counseling and the food pantry, help is always available when you need it.



Keep in Touch

Want to keep up with everything happening in the Exceptional Education Department?

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for the latest updates, event reminders, and student spotlights.

Resources and Supports

Student Conduct and Community Standards Office

- <https://studentconduct.buffalostate.edu>

Weigel Health Center

- <https://weigel.buffalostate.edu>

The Counseling Center

- <https://counseling.buffalostate.edu>

Student Resources Page

- <https://deanofstudents.buffalostate.edu/academic-resources>

Stay Connected

Instagram Account

- Username: [buffalostate_exed](#)

Facebook Account

- Username: Buffalo State Exceptional Education Department

Twitter Account

- Username: [bsc_exed](#)

Exceptional Education Website

- <https://exceptionaleducation.buffalostate.edu>