



College of Arts and Sciences

*Appalachian Center and
Appalachian Studies Program*

MAY 2025





Class of 2025 – Graduating Seniors



Austin Collier

Austin is graduating in August with a Bachelors of Arts in Sociology. They have enjoyed learning about the Appalachian region and its issues through the Appalachian Studies program, and it has informed their academic and career interests.

They plan to attend graduate school to study Anthropology and work on research into the religious beliefs and behavior of Appalachian people to better understand the social and political dynamics that may hinder or help advocacy and activism for the improvement of the region.



Madeline Duff

Maddie Duff, from Prestonsburg, Kentucky, is a Lewis Honors College senior, studying Neuroscience and Appalachian Studies. Maddie is the first female from the eastern Kentucky region to be elected student body president since the position's creation in 1939. For the 2024-2025 University of Kentucky academic year, Maddie hopes to focus her administration's efforts in the areas of student engagement, wellness resources, and food insecurity.

Maddie is actively involved, and a former president, of both the Appalachian Career Training in Oncology (ACTION) and the Appalachian Health Initiative (AHI) student organizations. She also conducts research on various chronic conditions through the University of Kentucky's College of Medicine. Maddie is also a member of Alpha Phi, Phi Delta Epsilon, Apollo Society, Neurocats, and serves as a Lewis Honors College ambassador.

She has loved getting to work with the Appalachian Studies Center and cultivated a deeper love and pride for the Appalachian region and eastern Kentucky.



Ryan Gibson

Ryan Gibson is from Salyersville, Kentucky. He is graduating with a BA in Human Health Sciences and a Minor in Appalachian Studies.

Through the Appalachian Studies Program, he has deepened his understanding of the region he calls home. Further, he has prepared himself for a career of providing compassionate and culturally informed care.

This fall, Ryan will be attending the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry.



Cierra Ledford

Cierra is graduating with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Anthropology and a minor in Appalachian Studies. Her biggest takeaway from being involved in the Appalachian Center is that community is our greatest tool against oppression.

Cierra's next steps after graduation are to take the next year to work and apply for the University of Kentucky's College of Law. Cierra hopes to be accepted for the Fall of 2026. Wish her luck!



Rebekah New

Rebekah New is a Beckley, WV native graduating with a B.A. in Theatre, a B.A. in Political Science, a minor in Appalachian Studies, and certification in Musical Theatre.

Her next step is working in theme park entertainment beginning this summer as a stepping stone into her Theatre career. She hopes to one day create political works of theatre that focus on social justice and political commentary. Another long-term goal is to become a Theatre educator in southern West Virginia, sharing her love of the arts with young Appalachians. Rebekah wants to thank the Appalachian Studies Program for allowing her to explore all of her interests within Appalachian Studies. Through the App Studies Program, she has been able to take classes focusing on Appalachian history, culture, music, environmental issues, and ethics. She plans to incorporate all of these aspects of Appalachian Studies into her future works and teachings.

Rebekah would like to thank Dr. Engle, Dr. Sandmeyer, Kate Field, and Mark Peffley for their support. She dedicates this aspect of her education to her entire extended family for their unwavering support and fierce Appalachian pride.



Madison Thacker

Madison Thacker is graduating from the University of Kentucky with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Psychology, along with minors in Appalachian Studies and Neuroscience. She has also completed an American Sign Language concentrated study.

Through involvement with the Appalachian Studies Program and the Appalachian Center, Madison has gained a deeper understanding of the region's strengths, challenges, and the importance of community-driven advocacy and mutual aid support throughout the region. She is committed to continuing her work in Appalachian Studies related fields focusing on harm reduction and addiction recovery care efforts in central Appalachia and hopes to continue her work with the Sunup Corbin Initiative as a community member and volunteer after working as a student intern and AppalachiaCorps student worker since last summer.

Her experiences have reinforced a commitment to increasing access harm reduction and recovery care and given her a unique perspective on the ever-evolving needs of the region, as well as encouraged her to explore dis/ability and debility advocacy in the future. After graduation, Madison plans to pursue a Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling with a concentration in Addiction Studies to further specialize in substance use treatment and policy, with the goal of becoming a licensed counselor in drug and addiction care.



Olivia Thornsbury

What are you graduating with/what is your graduating degree in?

B.S. Biology with a Minor in Appalachian Studies

What is your big take away from working in the Appalachian Studies Program/involvement with the Appalachian Center?

There is such a robust community of Appalachian students here at UK ready to tackle the next steps to a better future. I have been so inspired by my fellow Appalachian Studies students from so many different academic backgrounds to look beyond the norm and see how I can improve my home now rather than later.

What are your next steps after graduation?

I will be attending the University of Kentucky College of Medicine here in Lexington, KY.



Riley Wright

Riley Wright is from Glouster, OH (Athens County) and graduating with a B.S. in Biology with a minor in Appalachian Studies.

Riley's biggest takeaway from her time with the Appalachian Center is a greater sense and appreciation of self and culture. Also, the opportunities to celebrate Appalachian culture on campus with other students has been life changing.

After graduation, Riley is taking a gap year to get clinical hours as a phlebotomist, be with family, and apply to Physician's Assistant school next spring! Riley hopes to use her experience with the Appalachian Center to inform and improve culturally competent healthcare in Appalachia.



Abigail Stoffel

Major: Public Policy

Minor: Appalachian Studies



Madison Webb

Major: Business Administration

Minor: Appalachian Studies





Class of 2025 – Graduate Students & Appalachian Studies Graduate Certificate Grads



Allen Fletcher, PhD

Allen Fletcher is graduating with a PhD in History and a graduate certificate in Appalachian Studies. He served as a teaching assistant and instructor for APP 200 from 2021 to 2023, and he is thankful that Drs. Engle and Kingsolver allowed him to keep his office space, where he has written most of his dissertation. His time at the Appalachian Center has taught him the true meaning of community in an academic setting, and he will dearly miss collaborating with faculty and students on symposia, service trips, and conferences.

After graduating, Allen will remain in Lexington and has accepted a position as Associate Editor of The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society. He looks forward to working on his first book and will continue making music with various churches and choirs across central Kentucky.



Jacob Johnson, MA

Jacob is graduating with a master's in history this summer, as well as the graduate certificate. This program deepened his knowledge of and appreciation for the people of my home community and sustained a fiery passion around advocating for a better future for the region rooted in its past.

He hopes to fill a position that will allow him to continue serving Appalachia and Appalachians, with plans to continue his role as co-editor *Accessible Appalachia* providing free and new course readings materials for Appalachian Studies classrooms.



Emma Kiser, PhD

Emma Kiser is graduating with a PhD in History. Emma enjoyed working as a Research Assistant for Dr. Newfont and Dr. Engle for two years in support of planning the Appalachian Studies Association 2020 Conference, which was canceled just days before it was supposed to begin due to covid. (As we say: “may ASA 2020 rest in peace.”)

The Appalachian Center is a vibrant, inclusive, creative place where everyone is welcome. For Emma, the Appalachian Center became a place to feel a sense of belonging, have fun, and meet awesome, smart, and caring people. With her degree, Emma is looking forward to doing something in service to Appalachian forests and their human communities!

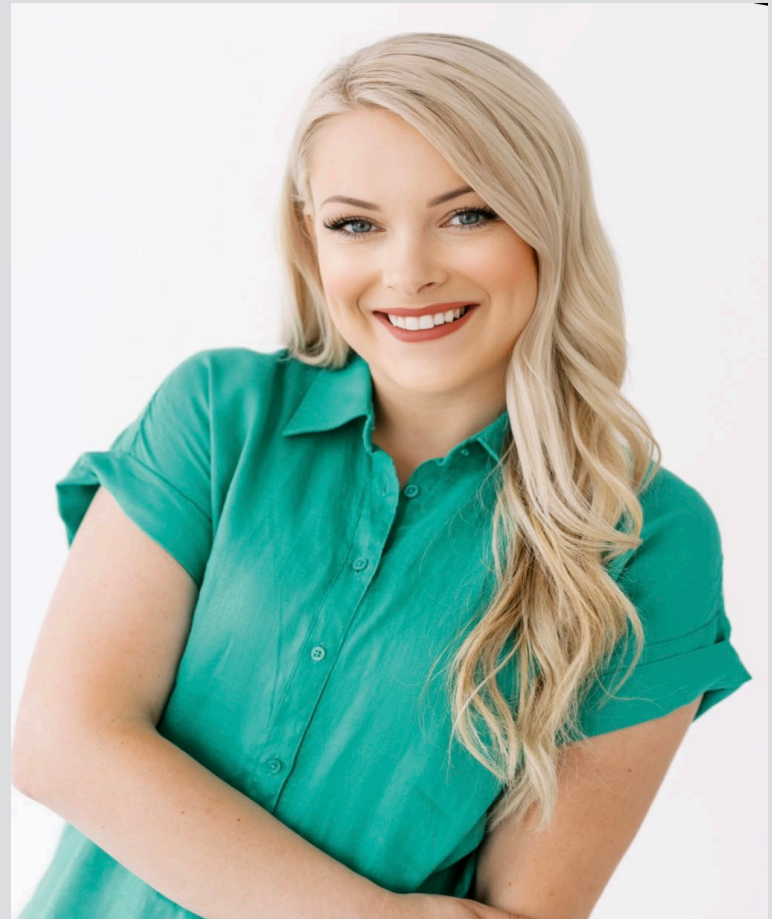


Courtney Martin, MS

Degree: MS in Kinesiology & Health Promotion
(August 2025)

I'm thankful to have been a part of the Appalachian Studies Program. During my time in the program, I have been constantly inspired by the diverse and impactful work being done by students, faculty, and community partners across the region. What I appreciate most is the deep sense of community – one built on shared values, mutual respect, and a genuine commitment to Appalachia. I'm especially grateful for the unwavering support and encouragement of faculty, who not only challenged me but also believed in my potential. I am deeply appreciative for all that the Appalachian Center and Appalachian Studies Program has done and continues to do.

Following graduation, I will be working as a research coordinator while applying to professional school.



Michelle Roberts, Graduate Certificate Appalachian Studies

Michelle is a fourth-year PhD Candidate in Anthropology graduating this semester with the Graduate Certificate in Appalachian Studies. The Appalachian Center has been a home on campus, an incredible source of support and place to find community. Michelle is grateful to not be leaving quite yet – next year, Michelle will be continuing work on her dissertation on disability and care in Eastern Kentucky. She plans to graduate with her PhD in May 2026.



Shelby Roberts, PhD

Shelby Roberts is graduating with a PhD in English Literature focusing on speculative climate and apocalypse fiction, especially in Appalachia.

She served as President of the Graduate Appalachian Research Community (GARC) and as both a TA and an Instructor of Record for App 200. The community and purpose her affiliation with the Appalachian Center provided have defined her experience at UK and have helped continue to shape her as an educator and scholar.

Upon graduation, she looks forward to continuing in the academic job search process and spending time with her dog.



Kopana Terry, MHP

Kopana is a preservationist, photographer, musician, producer, oral historian, and archivist/librarian. A native of Eastern Kentucky, her research concerns the effects of extreme weather events related to climate change on Place and Appalachian identity. By day, she is the Archivist at the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History and Curator of Newspapers in the Special Collections Research Center at the University of Kentucky. By night, you might find her playing in a local dive bar or taking pictures of something that strikes her fancy, like sacred spaces. She holds a BA in photography and a master's in library and information science. In May, she'll add a Master's in Historic Preservation and an Appalachian Studies Graduate Certificate. kopana.net

What are you graduating with/what is your graduating degree in?

Master's of Historic Preservation with the APP Studies Grad Certificate

What is your big take away from working in the Appalachian Studies Program/involvement with the Appalachian Center?

I wish I had known about the center when I was an undergrad back in the stone age. I would have made better academic choices - and probably better life choices, too. I'm eternally grateful I found it when I did because it has brought people into my life whom I value beyond words, and I've come away with knowledge and wisdom I can't find anywhere else on campus.

What are your next steps after graduation?

I get my life back! I can flex the photography muscle again, look after my aging mother a little better, play with the dogs, clean out the garage and turn it into a studio, play a lot more music, and maybe by the fall, I'll feel like writing again and whip up a couple of articles. Then, it's about transitioning from my day job into something meaningful in retirement, where I can focus on my research in ways that could be helpful to small Appalachian communities as we brace for continued extreme weather.



Mack Thompson, MA

Mack A. Thompson is graduating with a Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology and a Graduate Certificate in Appalachian Studies. They are very grateful for the people they have met and the life-changing community they have nourished at the Appalachian Center and through the Appalachian Studies Program.

He is currently working with the Independence Seekers Project, expanding the Disabled in Kentucky Oral History Project, helping organize a Kentucky Care Collective, and forever advocating for Appalachian Disability Justice.



Spring 2025 Awards & Recognitions



Jane Jensen, Associate Professor, College of Education



Many thanks to Jane Jensen and best wishes as she begins her phased retirement. Dr. Jensen's service to the Appalachian Center and Appalachian Studies Program, especially through her service on many thesis and dissertation committees, has been very much appreciated.

We thank Jane for her service as a core Appalachian Studies Program faculty member, especially her training of so many Appalachia-focused educators and her international exchanges and collaborations. We will luckily still have her at UK, but she is winding up her years as a core faculty member in App Studies, through which she has made so many contributions in her career at UK.



Shane Barton



THANK YOU for your extraordinary service to Central Appalachia for the past 20 years as VISTA Watershed Development Coordinator for the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable; Growing Local Economies Program Coordinator; Assistant Director of the UK Appalachian Center; and Downtown Revitalization Coordinator, UK CEDIK!

We wish you all the best in your new position back in your home region of SW Virginia!



Loka Ashwood, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

Best wishes to Loka Ashwood who is leaving University of Kentucky to take on a new position at University of Wisconsin – Madison. Thank you for your support and contributions to the Appalachian Center and Appalachian Studies Program. You will be missed.



Julie Zimmerman

Professor, Community and Leadership Development
Milton Coughenour Professor of Rural Sociology
Historian for the Rural Sociological Society

- M.D. Whiteker Award for Excellence in Extension

Julie was recognized with the M.D. Whiteker Award at the spring meeting of Kentucky Association of State Extension Professionals as a deserving Extension faculty member who is a member of KASEP and has five or more years of service in the Cooperative Extension Service as an Extension faculty member in Kentucky.

- Margaret Hagood Distinguished Rural Sociologist Award from the Rural Sociological Society (RSS)



Provost's 2025 Outstanding Teaching Award



Kentucky Writer's Hall of Fame 2025 Inductees

Crystal Wilkinson, Professor, English



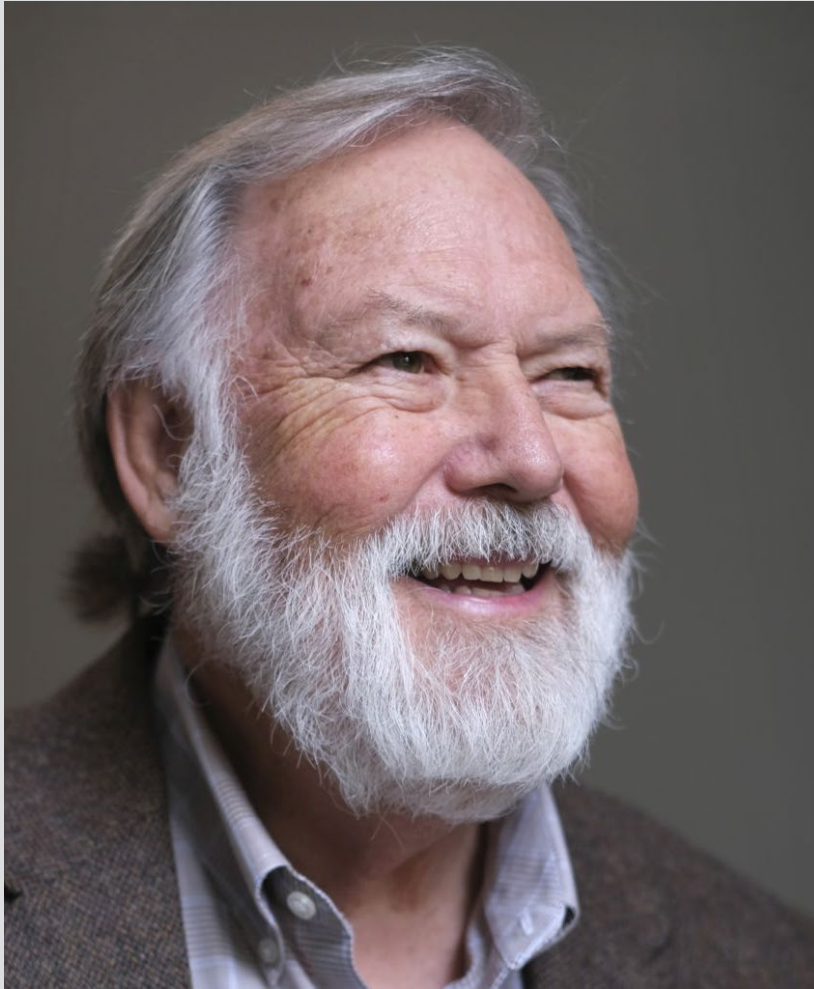
Frank X Walker, Professor, English



Congratulations to both Crystal Wilkinson and Frank X Walker for this prestigious recognition and thank you for your contributions through writing and in all the work you do.



Ron Eller, Emeritus Professor
Former Appalachian Center Director
University of Kentucky Distinguished Professor of History



**2025 Kentucky Writers
Hall of Fame Inductee**



In Memoriam – Tammy Clemons (January 1, 1973 – January 4, 2025)

Tammy "Tambone" Clemons was a leader in the Graduate Appalachian research community while a Graduate student in Anthropology at the University of Kentucky, and her 2021 Ph.D. Dissertation was titled "Producing Possibilities: Envisioning and Mediating Youth, Identities, and Futures in Central Appalachia."

We honor her wife Timi Reedy today and hold Tammy in our hearts – Tammy's heart was as big as Her smile.



Tammy "Tambone" Clemons Vision Award

In honor of her life and legacy, the annual Tammy "Tambone" Clemons Vision Award recognizes young and emerging artists and activists in Appalachia who embody Tammy's passion for storytelling, oral history, and creative expression, whether through oral history projects, creative media, filmmaking, writing, or other storytelling efforts that honor the culture, history, and voices of our beloved and vibrant region. This award not only acknowledges outstanding achievement but also serves as a reminder of Tammy's enduring legacy and her deep belief in the power of stories to shape and strengthen communities.

Contributions will be possible through the Kentucky Foundation for Women – information will be posted on our website and on the ASA's website.



Tammy "Tambone" Clemons Vision Award

UK Alumnus Madison Mooney



Tammy "Tambone" Clemons Vision Award

MICHELLE ROBERTS



Carl A Ross
Student Paper Award

Congratulations

Michelle Roberts

University of Kentucky
Insuring Health,
Insuring Limits



Carl A Ross
Student Paper Award

Wilma Dykeman "Faces of Appalachia"

UK Alumnus Jed DeBruin



Ann Kingsolver

Director, Appalachian Studies Program

Professor of Anthropology

- **Outgoing Director, Appalachian Studies Program**
- **2025 College of Arts & Sciences Distinguished Service Award**
- **UK Libraries OER Grant**
This grant will be used to develop an open-source textbook entitled *Global Kentucky* (for high school, community college and early-career university students) during Dr. Kingsolver's upcoming sabbatical.

Thank you for all your hard work, dedication, care, mentorship, and love. Words cannot express the impact that you have had on the Center and Program and all the students, faculty, staff, and community members that come through these doors. We are forever changed by the graciousness and light you bring!

"Community is our superpower!" - Prof. Kingsolver



Celebrating the announcement of new Appalachian Studies Program Director!

Professor Jennifer Cramer has been appointed by Dean Ana Franco-Watkins as the new Director of the Appalachian Studies Program, beginning July 1, 2025!

Prof. Cramer is in UK's Linguistics Department. Her research in sociolinguistics focuses on Kentucky dialects, and she has long taught a course for Appalachian Studies on Appalachian English. Prof. Cramer is serving currently as the Chair of the Board of the Kentucky Humanities Council and has served as a strong advocate for students, faculty, staff and community members. We look forward to her being our director of Appalachian Studies at UK!!!




Spring 2025 Events

COFFEE HOUR

Join us for a warm drink and a sweet treat!
Thursdays at 10 a.m.

January 16
January 30
February 13
February 27
March 13
March 27
April 20
April 24

624 Maxwellton Ct
Lexington, KY 40506
or Via Zoom



The Transcendent Pen

The supernatural powers of storytelling.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2ND
BOOK SIGNING 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM
EVENT 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

160 AVENUE OF CHAMPIONS
SUITE A250A & A268

WITH **SILAS HOUSE**

Final Lunch & Lit of the Spring 2025 Semester

Join us for an eye-opening presentation with one of the biggest names in Kentucky Art, Literature, and Rural Empowerment.

Free BBQ lunch will be provided on a first come, first serve basis.

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Appalachian Center and Appalachian Studies Program

PNC BANK

Lunch and Lit

Elevating Indigenous Voices: Reflections from a Native Delegation to the UN

April 11, 2025
3:00 P.M.
James F. Hardymon Theatre
in the Davis Marksby Building

WOLB *We Will Speak* film screening and discussion with director:
O'GYW / Schon Duncan | Member of the United Kctowah Band of Cherokee Indians | Instructor of Cherokee Language at University of Oklahoma

College of Arts and Sciences
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We Will Speak

Breaking Ground

UK Trailblazers celebrating *firsts*.

MONDAY, MARCH 3RD
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM
160 AVENUE OF CHAMPIONS
SUITE A250A & A268

HOSTED BY
WILLIE CARVER JR.
POET



Join us for an uplifting discussion with a panel of UK pioneers in their respective fields of art, literature, and justice.

Free catered lunch will be provided on a first come, first serve basis.

CARES
First-Generation
College of Arts and Sciences

MARIAMMA L. LOCKINGTON
AUTHOR

RACHEL ELLIOTT
CARTOONIST

GREG BOURKE
ADVOCATE

FRANK X. WALKER
VISIONARY



SHARING WORK ON APPALACHIA IN PROGRESS

JOIN US AT THE UK APPALACHIAN CENTER OR VIA ZOOM
12-1:30
Lunch Provided

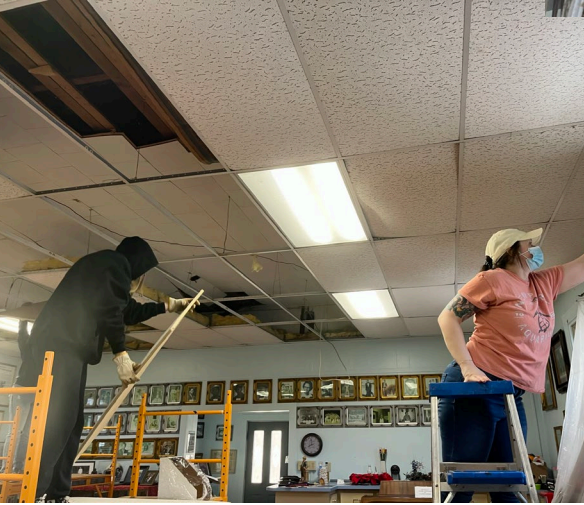
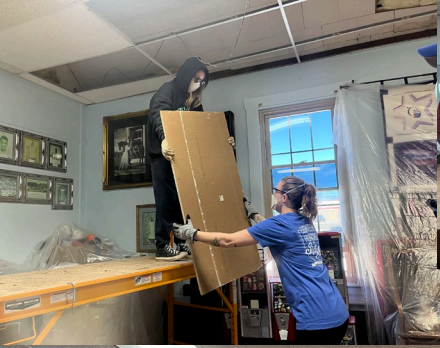
November 6, 2024 Masahumi Uchiyama, "Effects of Inadequate Sleep and Obesity on Plantar and Dorsiflexor Motor Unit Recruitment during Balance and Muscle Strength Testing" Ruth Toole, "Effects of Agricultural Education on the Resilience of Rural Appalachian High School Students in Kentucky and West Virginia"	February 5, 2025 Maria Barelli, Liken Knowledge, and Kathryn Newfont, "A2A: Making Aegean Appalachian Connections, Building Bridges of Knowledge Exchange and Visions Towards Just Futures"
February 19, 2025 Michelle Roberts, "From Survival to Living Well: A Socioecological Approach to Understand Acquired Disability and Advance Health Equity in Rural Appalachia" Courtney Martin, "The Role of Social Support in Diabetes Self Care Behaviors among Residents of Appalachia with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus"	March 7, 2025 Grace Seymour, "Trauma, Alcohol Use, and Sleep Health in Appalachian Kentucky"
March 26, 2025 Chandana Mathur, "Reflections on struggles over water in India"	April 9, 2025 Madoline Varas, "Avian Response to Legacy Coal Mine Reforestation in the Cumberland Plateau, Kentucky" Jimmy Robinson, "In the Greenhouse: A Multispecies Analysis of Scale, Rationality, and Technology in Agriculture"

624 Maxwellton Ct
appalachiancenter@uky.edu

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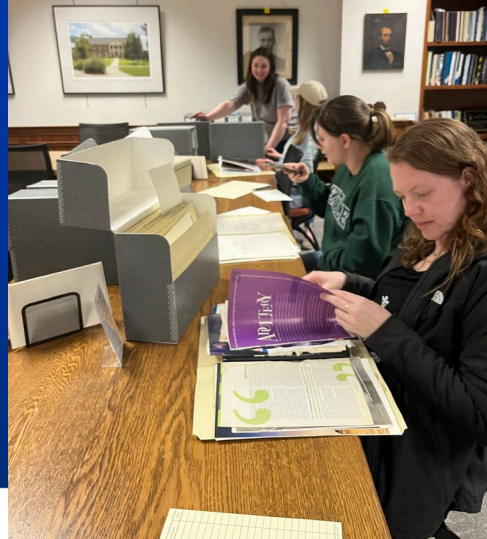
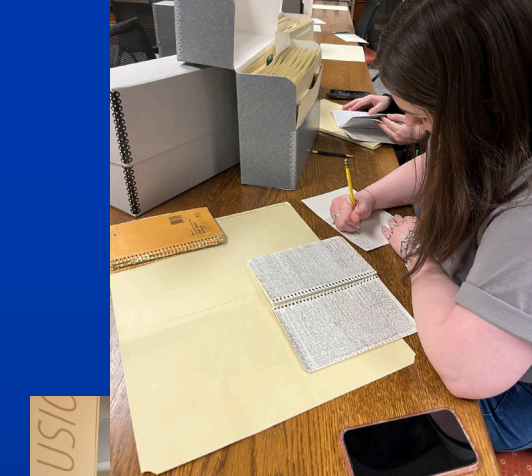
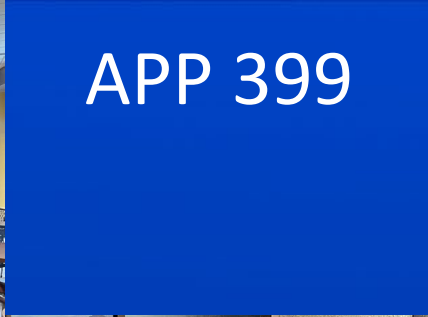
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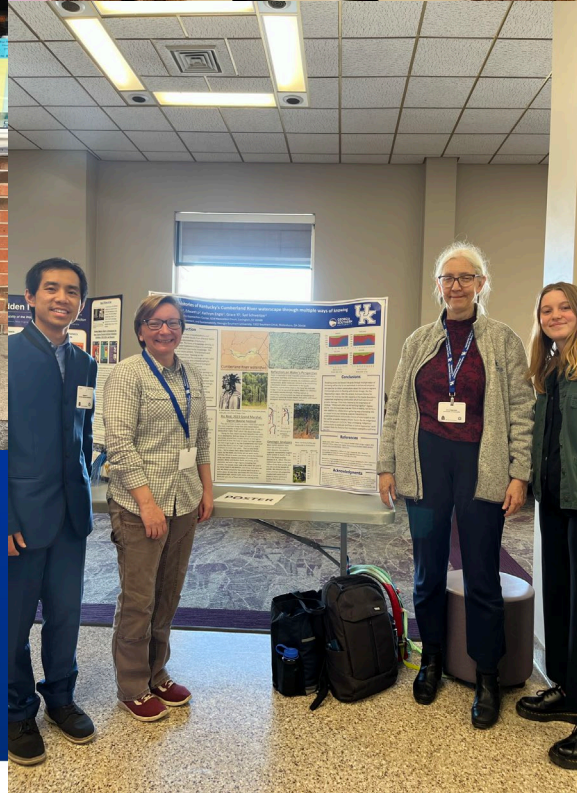
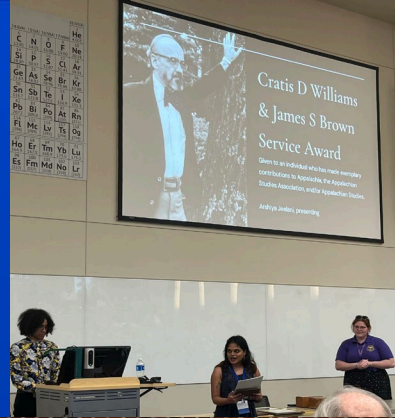
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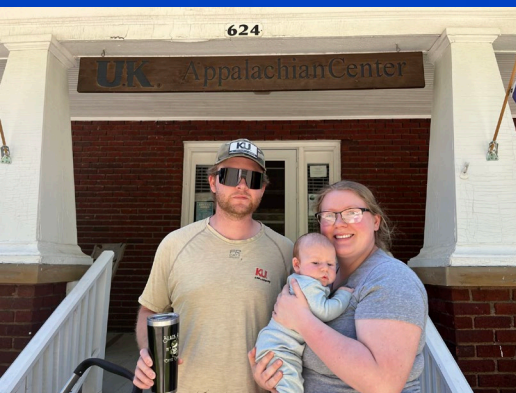
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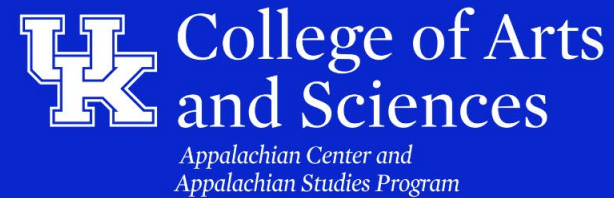






UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

JAMES S. BROWN GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD FOR RESEARCH ON APPALACHIA



RICCARDO P. D'AMATO, HISTORY, "UNEVEN WATER: THE POLLUTION AND SOLUTIONS OF WATER IN APPALACHIAN KENTUCKY"

HOLDEN DILLMAN, SOCIAL WORK, "WE ARE HERE: NATIONAL AND APPALACHIAN PERSPECTIVES ON MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES IN SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITY YOUTH"

MEGAN HALL, SOCIOLOGY, "INTERLOCKING DISASTERS: A WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CASE STUDY"

NICOLE MARKS, ANTHROPOLOGY, "AND THE CREEK DON'T RISE: DISASTERS, CLIMATE, AND RESILIENCY IN APPALACHIA"

JIMMY ROBINSON, SOCIOLOGY, "IN THE GREENHOUSE: AN ANALYSIS OF SCALE, TECHNOLOGY, AND RATIONALITY IN AGRICULTURE"



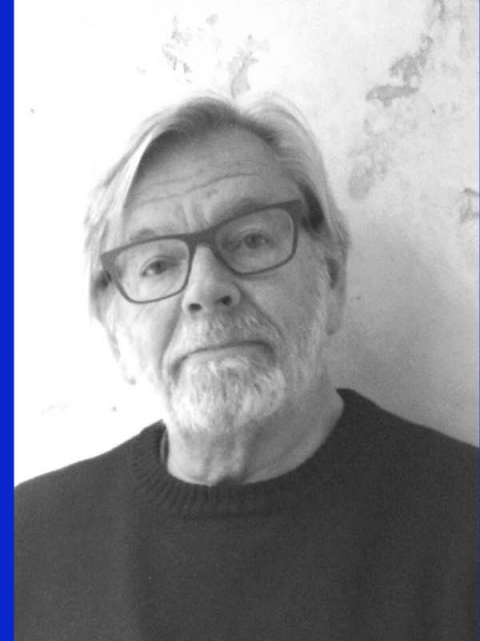
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

ELLER AND BILLINGS RESEARCH AWARD



College of Arts
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MORGAN GILBERT, ARTS ADMINISTRATION, "BEREA COLLEGE'S 'FIRESIDE INDUSTRIES' AS A MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY RURAL REMOTE WORK"

ZACHARY HACKWORTH, FORESTRY & NATURAL RESOURCES, "TUNING A GENERALIZED RAY-TRACING FOREST LIGHT SIMULATOR FOR KENTUCKY FORESTS"

DANIEL HAYES, RURAL PHYSICIAN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM, "DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A LOW-COST 3-D PRINTED TWO-POINT DISCRIMINATION TOOL"



Thank you!

Thanks to all our faculty, staff, and students for a wonderful academic year!

