



One by One: The Ministry of Belonging

Breakout Sessions

Session Title (Location)	Presenter(s)	Presentation Title
Breakout Session I (9:05-9:50)		
Building a covenant community of belonging (3228 WSC)	Jonathan Sandberg (Ryan Gabriel) Liz Darger	Inviting faculty to engage in the work of belonging Building Bridges as Disciples of Jesus Christ
Enhancing student belonging through mentorship (3222 WSC)	Jeff Thompson Kori Wakamatsu (Rhythm N' Soul Collective) Michael Atkinson (Liz Dixon)	Covenant Belonging through Christ-Centered Leadership Rhythm 'N Soul Collective Student Performers Beyond the Checkbox: Cultivating Belonging in Online Sections with AI as a Ministering Partner
Belonging in student life and success (3224 WSC)	Jessica Green (Julie Swallow) Lindsay Harper Niwako Yamawaki	Belonging in Your First Semester: Learning Communities and UNIV 101 Embedding Belonging into Your Unique Roles and Responsibilities Finding a Calling from God through Belonging Programs at FHSS
Enhancing belonging in the classroom through classroom feel, learning design and activities (5519 WSC)	Julianne Holt-Lunstad Emily Soderborg (Brenda Beyal, Cally Flox, Stephanie West) Laura Cutler (Mark Keith)	Moment of Connection in the Classroom Native American Curriculum Initiative: increase belonging and connection through the arts and Indigenous pedagogy Fostering belonging in the classroom by intentionally forming diverse student teams
Breakout Session II (10:00-10:50)		
Data-driven efforts to enhance student belonging (3228 WSC)	Whitney Catt (Corallee Alexander) Lisa Knowlton (Nicole Stewart) Julianne Grose (Lisa Leake) Monica Eastman (Farris Child, Carol Copling, Daniel Dearden)	Owning the Experience: Insights from BYU Athletics Engineering a Sense of Belonging Designing Study Experiences that Create Covenant Community Seeking Out the One: Promoting Belonging through Proactive Advising
Belonging through service and sacrifice (3222 WSC)	Chris Crippin Joe Everett Bryn St. Clair Jill Piacitelli (Rose Palmer)	Rooted in Service: Cultivating Connection and Community Fostering Belonging Through Family History and Temple Work BYU Community Garden Will Increase Connection Developing Faith and Skills Through Experiential Learning
Enhancing student belonging through mentorship (3224 WSC)	Jen Bonnett (Marissa Stephens, Zaina Al-Sahili) Erin Measom Amy Soto Scott Goodwin	Ministering to the one Teaching Belonging: How Student Leaders Can Create Spirit-Led, Inclusive Learning Environments Finding Your Y: Students Inspiring Belonging Through Exploration Broadening Exposure, Empathy, and Inspiration through Belonging Internships
Building a covenant community of belonging (5519 WSC)	Grayson Morgan Joe Price Dillon Boss Royce Kimmons	A Call for Geographic Empathy: Loving your neighbor Using Family History to Create Belonging and Connection "He Denieth None": Increasing Accessibility to Inspirational Content & Messaging Removing Textbook Costs as a Barrier to Belonging
Breakout Session III (11:00-11:50)		
Enhancing belonging in the classroom through classroom feel, learning design and activities (3228 WSC)	Maria Summers Justin Paulsen Chelsea Romney Ben Beck	Not Just at BYU—Part of BYU: Belonging Through UNIV 101 What students say faculty can do to create belonging in the classroom The Importance of Learning Students Names From Icebreakers to Impact: Fostering Belonging in the Classroom
Enhancing student belonging through inspirational experiential learning (3222 WSC)	Darren Hawkins Marianna Richardson (Josh Clawson and Michael Insero) Stephanie Allen Egbert (Abby Harris, Betsy Hopkins, Emilie Hansen, Sarah Allred) Steve Moody Price (Shinsuke Tsuchiya)	Finding the One among the Overlooked Fostering Student Belonging Through Teamwork in the Classroom Belonging to a Global Church and Church Educational System Belonging in Language Learning: The Japanese Program at BYU
Building a covenant community of belonging (3224 WSC)	Morgan Anderson Bruce Haraguchi Kahea Clark (Moises Aguirre) Peter Tennis	How Belonging Promotes Social Wellness in the Workplace Belonging in Humanities Fostering Connection and Community Across Differences Part-Time Professors, Part-Time Belonging: Closing the Divide between full-time research and part-time adjunct faculty
Belonging in daily life and interactions (5519 WSC)	Dave Fawcett Nicole Lewis Mario Pereyra (Barry Rellafor)	Belonging Together: How Relationships Shape Mental Health Fostering Belonging through Library Descriptions Leadership Coaching and Understanding our Strengths

ABSTRACTS: Breakout Session I (9:05-9:50)

Building a Covenant Community of Belonging (WSC 3228)

Inviting Faculty to Engage in the Work of Belonging

Jonathan Sandberg (Ryan Gabriel)

For the past three years, the College of FHSS has held a four day seminar in May with an invited faculty member from each department to focus on unity in belonging. In this presentation the workshop co-chairs (Ryan Gabriel and Jonathan Sandberg) will share principles and practices from this workshop and how it is creating a community of belonging among faculty for the benefit of students.

Building Bridges as Disciples of Jesus Christ

Liz Darger

Enhancing Student Belonging Through Mentorship (WSC 3222)

Covenant Belonging Through Christ-Centered Leadership

Jeff Thompson

This session will briefly introduce the Christ-Centered Leader Model, highlighting the three core principles of expressing love, honoring agency, and inviting accountability. Examples from the Savior's ministry demonstrate how He consistently embodied these principles as He reached out to the one, and invited people to follow Him. When we employ these principles in our relationship with others, we create a covenant community where people experience belonging because they 1) feel connected and valued (through expressions of love), 2) see opportunities to contribute through their uniqueness (through honoring of agency), and 3) experience competence and responsibility (through invitations for accountability).

Rhythm 'N Soul Collective Student Performers

Kori Wakamatsu (RSC students)

Rhythm 'N Soul Collective is a student-founded, student-led, student-centered performing group whose mission is "to create a beloved community of covenant belonging through song and dance." It is a place where students can explore, celebrate, and share dance and musical arts from the African Diaspora via methods that cultivate spirituality, leadership, empathy, and human connection. Students will perform a selected dance piece and the faculty mentor, Kori Wakamatsu, will discuss impacts of the group on belonging, mentorship, and relationships through the arts.

Beyond the Checkbox: Cultivating Belonging in Online Sections with AI as a Ministering Partner

Michael Atkinson (Liz Dixon)

PROBLEM – Online sections often feel transactional; student engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes can be lower **INTERVENTION** – Together with AI I created three new, mandatory touchpoints: Touchpoint 1 - Live Town Halls (Wednesday 7 pm) for real-time discussion, Q&A, current/next week review, extra tidbits, and well-being check-in. Touchpoint 2 - Community Discussion – an always-open "watering hole" for community & professor presence. Among other things, I share current real-life scenarios from my own life and ask their assistance as my "interns." Touchpoint 3 - Weekly Email Check-ins between each student & myself – I create personalized communication rules for each student based on their own needs and wishes; students report back on lived experience and progress as a core part of their check-in.

Belonging in Student Life and Success (WSC 3224)

Belonging in Your First Semester: Learning Communities and UNIV 101

Jessica Green (Julie Swallow)

For many students, deciding whether they fit in at BYU happens within their first few weeks of school. First-Year Learning Communities is a new program from the office of General Education where students take three classes together as a cohort during their first semester to help them build connections to faculty, peers, and the campus community. Our research shows that Learning Communities have had a significant impact on academic, social, spiritual, and institutional belonging for first-year students, particularly at-risk students who have a higher likelihood of being on academic warning or probation in subsequent semesters. We believe that Learning Communities have the power to transform our campus as we “value and embrace” the “gifts of each member of the community and the richness and strength they bring to our community.” Join us to find out what makes Learning Communities unique and how to foster similar feelings of connection and belonging in your students.

Embedding Belonging into Your Unique Roles and Responsibilities

Lindsay Harper

At BYU Marriott, we aspire to embed belonging into all our unique roles and responsibilities, whether that’s welcoming our students back to school with a smile and donut during “Deans and Donuts,” encouraging attendance at various Marriott Inclusion and Belonging Society events, or highlighting the stories of various students on our social media pages. In this short presentation, Lindsay will share some of BYU Marriott’s belonging best practices and encourage session participants to share best practices in their respective roles and responsibilities, too.

Finding a Calling from God through Belonging Programs at FHSS

Niwako Yamawaki

This presentation examines how students discover a sense of divine calling through their participation in two transformative programs: the Career & Leadership Academy and the Research Academy. Based on the belief that vocation includes not only professional success but also spiritual purpose, these academies equip underrepresented students with the tools, mentorship, and experiences that help them understand their unique contributions to the world. Through structured lectures, research opportunities, and reflective practices, participants learn to see how their talents, interests, and identities align with meaningful academic and career paths. Using student voices and program results, the presentation demonstrates how combining academic rigor, leadership training, and spiritual reflection enables students to envision futures where their work embodies faith, service, and personal calling. By helping students connect their academic pursuits with a deeper sense of purpose, the Career & Leadership Academy and the Research Academy support the overall development of emerging scholars and leaders dedicated to making a difference in their communities and beyond.

Enhancing belonging in the classroom through classroom feel, learning design and activities (WSC 5519)

Moment of Connection in the Classroom

Julianne Holt-Lunstad

"To promote connection in the classroom, we sought to assess the effectiveness of a brief two-minute peer interaction at the beginning of each class, guided by a discussion prompt provided by the instructor. This "moment of connection" included instruction to students to turn to the students around them and answer one fun prompt per day, like "what superpower would you pick and why?" and "what is your favorite smell in the world?"

Faculty members in our study were randomly assigned to facilitate a moment of connection at the beginning of class (intervention) or not (control). Students in both conditions also responded to a series of survey questions regarding their self-reported social connection, mental health, and academic outcomes. They completed these measures at the beginning and end of the semester.

Data collection is complete, and analyses are underway. We hypothesize that students in the intervention condition will report greater social connection, well-being, and academic outcomes compared to their peers who did not receive the intervention.

Our findings will inform whether regular, low-cost social engagement embedded into class routines can serve as an effective intervention to support student social and mental health and academic success."

Native American Curriculum Initiative: increase belonging and connection through the arts and Indigenous pedagogy

Emily Soderborg (Brenda Beyal, Cally Flox, Stephanie West)

We will share guiding principles that have led our Native American Curriculum Initiative. Participants will explore how every student can feel genuinely seen and valued. Grounded in culturally sustaining practices, the presentation will explore how integrating Indigenous ways of knowing and arts integration can foster academic achievement and student engagement.

Fostering belonging in the classroom by intentionally forming diverse student teams

Laura Cutler (Mark Keith)

How can you intentionally form teams for group projects to increase belonging? The BYU Information Systems department studied just that. Through literature review and experimentation, we have developed a pattern of starting students in groups of similar personalities, then progressing over time to more diverse teams. They feel greater comfort and confidence with new material when they are in teams with people who share their personality traits. Once they are more familiar with the subject, having a more diverse team stimulates their growth. Strategically forming teams this way increases students' sense of belonging with their peers and in the program.

ABSTRACTS: Breakout Session II (10:00-10:50)

Data-driven efforts to enhance student belonging (WSC 3228)

Owning the Experience: Insights from BYU Athletics

Whitney Catt (Corallee Alexander)

In this 7-minute presentation, Whitney Catt will outline the data-driven strategies her team in BYU Athletics uses to assess and enhance student-athlete belonging. The goal is to demonstrate how surveys, focus groups, and anecdotal evidence provide a nuanced understanding of student-athletes' experiences—insights that allow the department to proactively identify challenges and strengthen team culture. Due to this emphasis on data, Catt emphasizes that Athletics must take full ownership of what it can control and serve as a model for inclusion and belonging across the university. Catt will present data collected since 2021, revealing that a meaningful portion of student-athletes—especially those from underrepresented racial, religious, or gender identities—report experiences of discrimination or unequal treatment within Athletics. Findings point to issues around performance expectations, NIL opportunities, and feelings of value, particularly among non-Latter-day Saint athletes. Grounding her message in humility and personal growth, Catt calls on campus leaders to stay attuned to students' needs, model inclusive leadership, and seek continual improvement in fostering a culture of belonging.

Engineering a Sense of Belonging

Lisa Knowlton (Nicole Stewart)

Our presentation will highlight the journey of building a culture of belonging in the BYU College of Engineering from 2018 to 2025. Before “belonging” was even a buzzword on campus, the college focused on supporting women—our largest underrepresented group. In response to Title IX requirements, those efforts expanded to include all students, and in 2020 we launched BYU Engineering (BE) Together, our college-wide belonging program. To better understand student needs, we conducted a college-wide survey in 2021. The results guided us in creating meaningful programs and events designed to help students feel seen, supported, and connected. These include: (1) an annual Unconscious Bias workshop; (2) a Belonging Faculty Committee, which developed a New Student Lecture introducing freshmen to resources and community; (3) weekly Snack and Study sessions that bring students together in a relaxed space to connect, collaborate, and recharge; (4) new events designed to support LGBTQ students; and (5) continued initiatives for women in engineering. We will share stories and feedback from students and faculty who have been part of these efforts, along with the lessons we've learned about creating a community where everyone feels they belong.

Designing Study Experiences that Create Covenant Community

Julianne Grose (Lisa Leake)

While study abroad programs are often designed around specific academic disciplines, they inherently foster a sense of belonging through various mechanisms—such as creating close-knit peer communities and encouraging appreciation for diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This presentation explores the intentional design and implementation of three short-term study experiences focused specifically on cultivating belonging and focused on recruiting students that are unable to participate in traditional study abroad. We examine the strategies used, successes achieved, and challenges encountered in fostering inclusive and supportive environments through these short-term study experiences.

Seeking Out the One: Promoting Belonging through Proactive Advising

Monica Eastman (Farris Child, Carol Copling, Daniel Dearden)

How can academic advising foster belonging at BYU? This presentation will cover the proactive advising efforts of the Life Sciences Advisement Center. These efforts include contacting students who are new to campus, might be currently struggling in classes, have struggled in the past, or may be at risk of not graduating. We use data and reports to identify these students and encourage them to connect with our advisors so we can help them reach their full potential and know they belong at BYU. Our presentation will include the reports and data we use, how we reach out to students, and the results of our proactive efforts.

Belonging through service and sacrifice (WSC 3222)

Rooted in Service: Cultivating Connection and Community

Chris Crippen

College is an exciting, challenging and often overwhelming experience. This presentation will discuss how engaging in community service both on- and off-campus can help students find personal meaning and rich connections which foster belonging. Whether you're new to campus or looking to deepen your involvement, this session will inspire you to root your college experience in something bigger—and find your community along the way!

Fostering Belonging Through Family History and Temple Work

Joe Everett

Modern prophets have promised blessings to those who help gather Israel through family history and temple work. In addition, academic research shows that family history stories help develop positive identity, resilient well-being, and strong relationships. Small and simple service and experiential learning activities as well as curricular opportunities can help students enjoy these blessings and benefits. Service activities include providing ordinances for ancestors, contributing to the global Family Tree, and helping others get involved. An example of a simple inspiring learning activity is Discover the Aims in Your Ancestry, facilitated by the BYU Library Family History Center, which helps students learn values from their ancestors that help them in their BYU experience and in life. Among other classes, any student may take History 205, Introduction to Family History Doctrine and Practice, which focuses on the joy of discovery and the fundamentals of gathering and connecting families, while earning two Religion credits. Any faculty member may explore ways to integrate family history experiential learning and service in their teaching and research across a variety of disciplines. Help is available to faculty and students from several campus entities to facilitate opportunities that foster covenant belonging through family history and temple work.

BYU Community Garden Will Increase Connection

Bryn St. Clair

Research in science education shows that gardens function as neutral, shared spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds can collaborate, exchange traditions, and foster belonging. Gardening practices—planting, caring, harvesting—create opportunities to share cultural knowledge, build empathy, and highlight difference as a strength rather than a barrier. Studies further suggest that gardens help minority groups sustain cultural identity while also offering a platform for connection across communities. Drawing on experiences from international study abroad programs where students encountered generosity and resilience in food-sharing practices, this talk explores how similar outcomes could be cultivated at BYU. A campus garden could encourage cross-cultural dialogue, reduce social divides, and provide a politically inclusive space for engagement with sustainability and stewardship. By working side by side in the soil, students and faculty may strengthen unity and belonging, embodying a vision of Zion as a community of shared labor, respect, and connection.

Developing Faith and Skills Through Experiential Learning

Jill Piacitelli

The Ballard Center for Social Impact's work is done by students, through transformative mentors who serve as stewards of the Center's work while helping to develop the capacity of students to carry it out. Everyone feels a sense of belonging as together we engage in organizational learning and continuous improvement to reach our ultimate goal, which is an increase in human flourishing and decrease in human suffering.

Enhancing student belonging through mentorship (WSC 3224)

Ministering to the one

Jen Bonnett (Marissa Stephens, Zaina Al-Sahili)

This presentation will give a brief overview of the CS department's experience with piloting a Belonging Peer Mentor Team, now in its seventh year. We describe the strategic benefits and blessings associated with employing students on this team, to both lead out and collaborate with us in this sacred work. The CS Belonging Mentor Team strives to create a community of love, unity, and belonging in the department by ministering to the one. This aim is accomplished through peer academic and career advising, psychosocial and spiritual support, as well as providing education, activities, and resources to bless and lift individual students throughout their time in the CS program.

Teaching Belonging: How Student Leaders Can Create Spirit-Led, Inclusive Learning Environments

Erin Measom

Belonging often begins with a peer. In this short session, I'll share how I train online undergraduate teaching assistants to see themselves as belonging-builders—peers who help others feel safe, supported, and seen. Drawing from research and gospel-centered principles, I'll outline how we explore unconscious bias, psychological safety, and the ministering mindset needed to create inclusive peer learning environments. While rooted in online education, these principles are adaptable for anyone who works with student mentors, tutors, office staff, or other student employees. Participants will leave with renewed vision for how student leaders can act with empathy, faith, and intentionality to foster belonging in powerful and Christlike ways.

Finding Your Y: Students Inspiring Belonging Through Exploration

Amy Soto

"The University Advisement Center's Exploration Point office offers a powerful model for cultivating student belonging through peer-to-peer interactions. With the ultimate goal of helping students "find their Y" at BYU, these one-on-one interactions can lead students to a deeper understanding of their divine potential and help them find their place during this pivotal time in their lives.

We train student advisors to guide their peers through short, structured activities that focus on developing deeper self-awareness, setting goals, and connecting with campus resources. As we honor and embrace the "variety of individual characteristics, life experiences and circumstances, perspectives, talents, and gifts of each member of the community", this peer-led model creates a unique environment of trust and genuine concern, where students feel seen and valued for their individual "characteristics, life experiences and circumstances" (1 Corinthians 12:12–27) and make connections to campus stakeholders and resources to help students make the most of their time at BYU.

By helping students articulate their personal purpose for being at BYU, we empower them to take ownership of their educational journey, transforming their experience from simple attendance to active, meaningful participation through the exploration process. Our presentation will share the framework of this successful program, illustrating a best practice in action that helps create the "environment of belonging" (Ephesians 2:19) essential to student success and the fulfillment of BYU's mission."

Broadening Exposure, Empathy, and Inspiration through Belonging Internships

Scott Goodwin

As recognized by both academic literature and Elder D. Todd Christofferson in "The Doctrine of Belonging," we feel greater belonging when we are able to participate and make personal contributions. The Office of Belonging's Belonging Internship program strengthens students' belonging through experiential, service-based internships that, together with course readings and reflection assignments, invite students to connect disciplinary knowledge and skills with Christ-like discipleship. These internships prioritize interactions with others, allowing students to practice gospel-centered belonging principles while broadening their exposure to and empathy for the varied experiences of those they work with. Intern feedback and data, including from our Office's partnership with the No More A Stranger Foundation (NOMAS), demonstrate the benefits of this Belonging Internship model.

Building a covenant community of belonging (WSC 5519)

A Call for Geographic Empathy: Loving your neighbor

Grayson Morgan

Geographic empathy can be described as the ability of an individual to place themselves in the spatial context of another individual in order to better understand their decisions and actions. While there may be significant differences in approach and values throughout the university, respect and geographic empathy should be our calling card. We should be leaders in understanding and kindness, working to build stronger communities at a multitude of scales and across political boundaries. In short, geographic empathy is a key to living the second great commandment of loving our neighbor and creating a community of belonging.

Using Family History to Create Belonging and Connection

Joe Price

I run a research lab at BYU that explores new ways to allow individuals to see their connection with each other and with the past. We create connection projects that focus on specific communities that have been underrepresented by family history efforts in the past. These include connection projects for African Americans, Puerto Rico, and Vanuatu. This presentation will show how groups at BYU can set up a family history connection project that they can integrate with other efforts to facilitate a greater sense of belonging and connection at BYU.

"He Denieth None": Increasing Accessibility to Inspirational Content & Messaging

Dillon Boss

The Member Audience Communication division of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints strives to reach every heart and home with prophetic messages, helpful resources, and other inspirational content across numerous channels and platforms for global audiences. These audiences include members and friends of the Church representing dozens of languages, unique cultures and circumstances, varied levels of education, and individuals with disabilities. This presentation highlights efforts by the Church to increase accessibility to the prophetic word and other inspirational content, with particular emphasis on content for deaf children and their families. Discover how to learn about individual needs, increase in understanding, and unite in efforts to share gospel messages in compassionate partnership with the Savior, who “inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him...” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Removing Textbook Costs as a Barrier to Belonging

Royce Kimmons

One of the most sobering scriptural chapters for educators should be 3 Nephi 6, which explains that as people are economically separated by "chances for learning," then rank and class divisions will appear, which leads to the ultimate destruction of the Church and society. Today, students in the U.S. spend about \$1,200 per year on textbooks, while roughly 1/3 of our BYU students experience food insecurity and many more experience other serious economic challenges. This state of affairs has a variety of serious effects on student wellbeing, mental health, physical health, and belonging. It also has serious educational consequences, as high textbooks costs have been shown to slow student progress, delay graduation, reduce course load, increase dropout rates, and reduce learning. In this presentation, I will share what educators at BYU and throughout the world are doing to combat this via open textbook publishing and showcase open.byu.edu as a prime example of how chances for learning may be more universally provided to our students.

ABSTRACTS: Breakout Session III (11:00-11:50)

Enhancing belonging in the classroom through classroom feel, learning design and activities(WSC 3328)

Not Just at BYU—Part of BYU: Belonging Through UNIV 101

Maria Summers

"The UNIV 101: Foundations for Student Success course at BYU is an inspired initiative designed to cultivate a deep sense of belonging among first-year students. It's grounded in the university's commitment to helping students recognize their divine identity as children of God and grow into their potential as disciples of Jesus Christ. Through a combination of reflective activities, meaningful discussions, peer mentoring, and connections with faculty, UNIV 101 helps students feel like they're not just attending BYU—they're part of it.

In a time when many students struggle to find their place, UNIV 101 offers a transformative model of community building rooted in the restored gospel. It helps students see their own worth and recognize the value others bring to the table. More than just talking about belonging, UNIV 101 gives students the tools and experiences to actually live it—to feel seen, valued, supported, and connected from the very beginning."

What students say faculty can do to create belonging in the classroom

Justin Paulsen

What makes a classroom feel like a place where students truly belong? To explore this question, we invited BYU students to journal about their classroom experiences and followed up with interviews and focus groups to dive deeper into their reflections. Through more than 50 student journals and interviews, we identified patterns in how faculty actions, interpersonal dynamics, and teaching choices shaped students' belonging at BYU. This session offers a window into what belonging feels like from the inside out and how educators can create it more intentionally. Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all approach, we highlight a range of practices, that emerged across disciplines and course types. Our findings offer concrete, student-informed ideas for fostering belonging that faculty can implement regardless of their subject area.

The Importance of Learning Students Names

Chelsea Romney

"God sees you not only as a mortal being on a small planet who lives for a brief season—He sees you as His child. He sees you clearly—He sees you as a being of infinite worth. He knows you by name."—Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, October 2011 When instructors learn their students' names, they show students that they care about them. Prior studies reveal that a sense of belonging at the university and in the classroom predicts student success and retention. The current study assessed students' outcomes when instructors learned their names. Findings revealed that students (N = 280) whose instructor knew their name reported significantly higher levels of belonging in the classroom, increased motivation to participate, and gave higher ratings of the class. These results emphasize the importance of learning students' names to promote participation and belonging in a classroom setting and represent a small but meaningful way we can help students feel Christ's love.

From Icebreakers to Impact: Fostering Belonging in the Classroom

Ben Beck

In this presentation, I will share a simple yet transformative classroom practice that fosters a deep sense of belonging among students. At the beginning of each semester, I invite students to participate in an online "icebreaker" discussion board (using Canvas) where they share personal interests and meaningful details about themselves. I record these insights in a spreadsheet and intentionally review them before office visits and throughout the semester. This allows me to reference students' unique experiences and interests during class discussions and one-on-one interactions. This practice helps students feel seen, known, and loved—affirming their divine identity and individual worth. Rooted in the BYU Statement on Belonging, this approach reflects a commitment to creating a classroom where "hearts [are] knit together in unity and love" (Mosiah 18:21) and where each student's divine potential is nurtured. Attendees will leave with a replicable strategy to build genuine connection and foster a Christ-centered environment of belonging.

Enhancing student belonging through inspirational experiential learning (WSC 3222)

Finding the One among the Overlooked

Darren Hawkins

The Political Science Department is focusing on those who are often overlooked. We spend a lot of time and energy, appropriately, on students who are visibly achieving the fields of research or experiential learning. Yet 64 percent of our current students have not participated in experiential learning outside of normal class-mandated opportunities. Many of our students work long hours off campus and cannot engage in their educations as deeply as others. Who are these students and how can we reach them? We have some ideas we wish to share. These involved informal lunches, department-level peer mentors, and extra-credit opportunity-exploration activities. Many of these are inspired by Univ 101 ideas. We also have analyzed newly available data to identify the sorts of students in need of greater outreach. In inviting all to come unto Christ, it is helpful to target some of those who may be struggling the most.

Fostering Student Belonging Through Teamwork in the Classroom

Marianna Richardson (Josh Clawson and Michael Inero)

In Pres. Kevin Worthen speech to BYU faculty (August 22, 2016), he said: “Experience connects theory with application and deepens our understanding of the principles and truths we learn.” Through experiential learning, students not only acquire academic skills, but also learn how to work together in teams. Team forming and team building activities foster positive team experiences which bring a sense of belonging to individual students. In January 2017, the Marriott School of Business started a peer-reviewed journal run by students for students entitled Marriott Student Review (MSR) to promote experiential learning in business communication. There is palpable creative energy in the room as the editorial board organizes our next MSR issue or as the podcast team prepares for an interview. Students are engaged, and excited to work together; they feel like they belong. Their learning has gone beyond the classroom, having a deep and lasting impact. In this presentation, the MSR faculty advisor along with the current student co-editors will present the process of belonging in the learning environment of experiential learning and team building.

Belonging to a Global Church and Church Educational System

Stephanie Allen Egbert (Abby Harris, Betsy Hopkins, Emilie Hansen, Sarah Allred)

BYU Instructional Psychology and Technology (IP&T) learn how people learn and how to create exceptional learning experiences. One of the best ways to learn these skills is through experiential learning – creating instructional solutions for real organizations. This past school year, 21 IP&T students and Design Thinking Minor students partnered with BYU-Pathway Worldwide (BYU-PW) to design training materials for the 4,000 BYUPW missionaries who support BYU-PW students around the globe. During Winter Semester, students created draft training materials based on available information and guidance from US-based BYU-PW missionaries. During Spring Term, six students traveled to Uganda and Kenya to have BYU-PW missionaries there field test the training materials. At the request of BYU-PW leaders, they also interviewed 50 BYU-PW students and missionaries to better understand their needs. The opportunity to develop, test, and revise the training materials for BYU-PW missionaries helped the students improve them, understand the challenges that international BYU-PW students and missionaries face, and recognize that their BYU education really is “for the benefit of the world.” It also helped students develop a deep sense of belonging within BYU, within the instructional design discipline, and especially within the global church and Church Educational System. They now better appreciate its purpose to help members around the world develop into disciples of Jesus Christ who lead in their homes, the Church, and their communities.

Belonging in Language Learning: The Japanese Program at BYU

Steve Moody Price (Shinsuke Tsuchiya)

Foreign language students often find themselves navigating environments where there need for belonging is in the foreground. As they learn new language and cultural perspectives, they seek to build meaningful connections across national and social boundaries. Belonging also works in the other direction as research suggests that a stronger sense of belonging is associated with more effective language learning, especially in out-of-class social settings. The Japanese program at BYU has recently adopted several initiatives to strengthen belonging among students participating in experiential learning programs including the Language Immersion Student Residence, Study Abroad, and Service Internships. This presentation will highlight these efforts and how belonging in such settings is most effectively cultivated when built around shared identities—as language learners, as children of God, and in service of others.

Building a covenant community of belonging (WSC 3224)

How Belonging Promotes Social Wellness in the Workplace

Morgan Anderson

This presentation is about how promoting psychological safety promotes belonging, a core part of social wellness that is essential for one's well-being in and out of the workplace, and how we can promote psychological safety on campus as a way to show love for our fellow students, faculty, and staff.

Belonging in Humanities

Bruce Haraguchi

"In its mission statement, the College of Humanities affirms eight fundamental values, including:

""We believe that humanity is made in the image of God and that their creations reflect, if imperfectly, the glory of God.

We believe that studying others—especially those different from us—leads us to feel empathy, develop charity, understand ourselves, and become better disciples, citizens, and lifelong learners."" (<https://hum.byu.edu/college-of-humanities-about-page>)

In its belonging efforts, the College seeks to implement and cultivate these values. My presentation will report on belonging experiences that have enriched academic and spiritual life in the College. Neurodivergent students have explained what gifts they bring to campus. Muslim students have recited scripture from the Quran and shared how they live their faith. On a field trip to This Is The Place Heritage Park, students gathered among statues of Black pioneers to learn stories of faith and perseverance that provided a more complete picture of pioneer heritage. I will share why we have offered these experiences, what we have learned so far, and how participants have ""become better disciples, citizens, and lifelong learners.""

Fostering Connection and Community Across Differences

Kahea Clark (Moises Aguirre)

Each Summer, Multicultural Student Services invites 350+ high school seniors from across the United States to BYU as part of a 5-day college prep initiative. These students represent a wide mix of cultures, backgrounds, beliefs, and life experiences. Participants will see the intentionality behind the program from start to finish that foster a strong self-concept and a Spirit of Belonging. By the end of the experience, many express a deep sense of connection to each other and an affinity to BYU insomuch that they don't want to leave.

Part-Time Professors, Part-Time Belonging: Closing the Divide between full-time research and part-time adjunct faculty

Peter Tennis

I will share the findings of a recent (Spring/Summer 2025) and original study of the adjunct faculty experience in the Marriott School of Business. I will share ways in which college Deans, Department Heads, and full-time faculty can increase unity and belonging with valued industry practitioners teaching in our classrooms. I will also share recommendations for adjuncts to extend themselves into productive working relationships with full-time staff and faculty. We will address these topics from both a research-based and gospel-centered perspective, aimed at aligning behavior with the mission and vision of the university.

Belonging in daily life and interactions (WSC 5519)

Belonging Together: How Relationships Shape Mental Health

Dave Fawcett

This presentation is focused on interactions between interpersonal relationships, mental health, and belonging. Rather than viewing mental health as something that exists solely within an individual, the presentation highlights how it responds to interactions with others—family members, friends, and social networks. Discussion will include how even small changes in one part of a relational system can influence the whole, showing the interconnected nature of human experience.

The presentation will emphasize how supportive relationships can promote emotional stability, feeling connected, and a sense of safety, while strained or disconnected relationships can contribute to stress, isolation, and emotional distress. Belonging is presented not just as a personal feeling, but as something that emerges from the quality and structure of relational systems. The presentation will include experiential activities to gain insights and perspectives on how connection, change, and healing move through systems, influencing mental well-being and belonging across our social networks.

Fostering Belonging through Library Descriptions

Nicole Lewis

In late 2023, the BYU Library adopted an Inclusive Metadata Policy as part of its commitment to fostering a campus culture of belonging. This policy reflects the Statement on Belonging, which affirms that we “value and embrace the variety of individual characteristics, life experiences and circumstances, perspectives, talents, and gifts of each member of the community and the richness and strength they bring to our community” (BYU Statement on Belonging, n.d.). In this session, we will share how catalogers and archival processors at the library are engaging in practices of cultural humility to ensure that the language and frameworks we use to describe people, communities, and histories are inclusive and respectful. We will highlight specific initiatives and projects created to align our descriptive practices with the values of belonging.

Leadership Coaching and Understanding our Strengths

Mario Pereyra (Barry Rellafor)

As the Leadership Education Administrator overseeing our Leadership Coaching efforts it's imperative to create safe and trusting environments where all feel welcomed and valued. Through skills such as empathic listening, asking inspired questions, and seeing individuals as creative, resourceful, and whole in Christ, we are able to foster a genuine sense of belonging. We consistently help students, faculty, and staff maximize their full potential and understand and use their strengths, while creating actionable steps to becoming the Christ-centered leader they strive to become. We do this through one-on-one coaching sessions, as well as group coaching, and workshop facilitation/presentations. As a Gallup Strengths Certified Coach, I also illuminate the importance of understanding your unique gifts, talents, and strengths and how you can use them more in your stewardships and recognize them in all of God's children.