

# Celebration of Excellence 2021 Phoenix Awards

Quality Assurance Council



University of Nebraska  
Medical Center™



# Education Phoenix Award

The Education award is to recognize an educator of students, peers, staff, or community professionals in the classroom, in the clinic, in the community or in the research lab through the following:

- Innovative in developing or implementing clinical, classroom or laboratory teaching
- Interdisciplinary dynamics or appreciation are evident in their clinical, classroom or laboratory teaching
- Adaptive with their methods to meet the unique needs of learners at varying levels in the clinic, the classroom, or laboratory
- Invitations to present on their teaching methods or educational programs they have developed for clinical, classroom, or laboratory education
- Funding is pursued or secured for training activities in the clinic, the classroom, or lab
- Attitude is a consistent positive reflection of a passion for teaching/education
- Publishes book chapters, handbooks, papers or peer-reviewed research related to supervision/mentoring/training/teaching

# Education Phoenix Award Selection Committee



## **Keith Allen, PhD, BCBA-D**

Associate Director, MMI  
Academic Affairs  
Director, Psychology  
Professor

## **Allison Krase MS, CCC-SLP\***

Associate Director, SLP Clinical  
Services  
Clinical Training Coordinator

## **Amanda Zangrillo, PsyD, BCBA-D**

Director, Severe Behavior  
Associate Professor

## **Nicole Giron, MPH, HTR, CTRS**

Director, Recreational Therapy

## **Kerry Miller, PhD**

Assistant Professor  
Associate Director, Education &  
Child Development

*\*non-voting member due to being nominee*

# Education Phoenix Award Nominees



**Tara Fahmie**

Associate Professor  
Associate Director  
Severe Behavior



**Drissa Toure**

Assistant Professor  
Education & Child  
Development



**Brandy Clarke**

Associate Professor  
MHTTC Coordinator  
Assistant Director, Program  
Growth & Sustainability  
Psychology

# Education Phoenix Award Nominees



**Jessica Thompson**

Speech Therapist

Speech Language Pathology



**Allison Krase**

Speech Therapist

Associate Director, SLP Clinical Services

Clinical Training Coordinator

Speech Language Pathology

# Education Phoenix Award Nominees



**Bethany Hansen**

Assistant Professor

Associate Director

Pediatric Feeding Disorders



**Emily Drew**

Physical Therapist

Physical Therapy

# Education Phoenix Award 2021



## Brandy Clarke Associate Professor - Psychology



- Dr. Clarke exhibits extensive knowledge in grant-related activities and has been successful in obtaining funding for highly impactful projects. Dr. Clarke welcomes graduate students, junior and senior faculty to join her team to collaboratively work on grant projects. She has mentored faculty across disciplines in their grant writing, resulting in millions of dollars in new funding at MMI for training and research.

- “Dr. Clarke is able to break down complex federal grant requirements and share what she has learned from her years of experience in easy-to-understand ways. She makes sure everyone is part of a discussion. She clearly enjoys teaching others. Her success as an educator shows in the number of people attending her presentations and the positive impact she has had on the people around her.”

- Dr. Clarke regularly presents at conferences and trainings, many of which she organized herself. She leads a team of experts in development and disseminating information on key mental health topics, which have been provided to approximately 9,500 educators, health care professionals, psychologists, and rural populations on topics related to professional well-

being, mental health issues, integrated primary care, and other topics through a teleconferencing platform. Since the onset of COVID-19, Dr. Clarke and her MHTTC team has garnered national attention in their innovative work to address the immediate need for improved mental health training and education.

- “Dr. Clarke models inspiring excellence in leadership, collaboration, and communication, through a lens that is focused in diversity, equity, and inclusion. These skills are evident in how she approaches all scholarly activities including national/regional presentations, technical assistance meetings, MHTTC team meetings, and even meetings with our development staff.”



# Research Phoenix Award

The Research award is to recognize outstanding research achievement and encourage research activities through the following:

- **Productivity:** Productivity can include evidence of competitiveness for grants, research, contracts, scientific publications and or presentations at conferences or meetings
- **Rigor:** Scientific rigor includes the strength and quality of the experimental design, methodology, statistical analysis, interpretation, and reporting of results. Rigor also includes the appropriateness of the method to answer the questions
- **Impact:** Impact is a broad category that includes the impact on the scientific field or discipline (which may include awards received, membership in prestigious organizations), impact on clinical services (for example, clinical translational research), impact on the community and/or relevance to the MMI mission (including diversity and inclusion)
- **Innovation:** New or novel approaches to research, including new methods, technologies, concepts, or theories
- **Mentorship:** Mentorship includes obtaining support for trainees, mentorship of graduate level students in their research scholarship, mentorship of junior faculty and staff to support their research scholarship

# Research Phoenix Award Selection Committee



**Jennifer Blackford, PhD**

Director, MMI Research  
Professor

**Amanda Zangrillo, PsyD,  
BCBA-D**

Director, Severe Behavior  
Associate Professor

**Joe Evans, PhD**

Emeritus Professor,  
Psychology

**Sandy Willett, PhD, PT,  
PCS**

Wayne A. Stuberg Director of  
Physical Therapy  
Department  
Associate Professor

# Research Phoenix Award Nominees



**Jessica Gormley**

Assistant Professor  
Research Coordinator  
Speech Language Pathology



**Seth Walker**

Fellow  
Severe Behavior



**Allison Anderson**

Research Technologist II  
Administration

# Research Phoenix Award 2021



## Jessica Gormley Assistant Professor – Speech Language Pathology



- In her first two and a half years at MMI, Jessica has been extremely productive. She has submitted seven grants, of which three were funded, to further her research line related to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). She received two foundation grants, including one internal grant from the Munroe-Meyer Guild for the AACtive Learning Hub and a National American Speech and Hearing Foundation Grant for Teaching Acute Care Providers to Use Visual Support and Create Communication in Healthcare Routines.
- Jessica received a subcontract from NIDILRR for “mTraining in AAC for Communication Partners” as a part of the Rehabilitation Engineering and Research Center on Augmentative and Alternative Communication, with allowed MMI to join the premier national AAC research consortium for the first time.
- Jessica has also developed additional interdisciplinary research relationships at MMI and UNMC. She is a member of the TIPS research group, a design thinking research collaboration with UNMC College of Medicine, and early research collaborations with the College of Nursing. She also participates in mentoring with senior faculty at MMI in order to continue to advance her research career.
- Jessica has also leveraged her expertise and work in patient provider communication, to impact an international audience. She helped lead a nation-wide Patient-Provider

Communication COVID-19 Taskforce to develop communication tools to support communication in patients across the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 21, 2020, to November 21, 2021, these clinical materials have generated: 84,227 users, 258,843 page views, 45,455 downloads, from 188 countries.



# Spirit Phoenix Award

The Spirit award is to recognize an individual whose qualities and actions contribute to a positive and welcoming environment at MMI and represent MMI positively in the community through the following:

- Promotes and supports MMI programs within the Institute
- Serves as an ambassador of MMI in the community
- Presence and good cheer enhance the culture at MMI such that the encounters with the nominee lifts the spirits of others
- Leads and plans activities across their department and/or the Institute that boosts moral and a sense of togetherness across staff and faculty

# Spirit Phoenix Award Selection Committee



## MMI Quality Assurance Council Members

- Kim Brown, Administration
- Yuka Collison, Pediatric Feeding Disorders
- Amy Encinger, Education & Child Development
- Jill Fahrer, Business Office
- Bethany Hughes, Speech Language Pathology\*
- Amber Godsey, Severe Behavior\*
- Kim Falk, UCEDD
- Melonie Welsh, Community Engagement
- Jackie Hankins, Community Engagement
- Bethany Hansen, Pediatric Feeding Disorders
- Natalie Hoff, Psychology
- Cati Miller, Severe Behavior
- Garrett Nathan, Speech Language Pathology
- Abbie Nelson, Occupational Therapy
- Taylor O'Brien, Genetic Medicine
- Rachael Ludolph, Recreational Therapy
- Paige Kullman, Physical Therapy
- James Sullivan, UCEDD
- Kelly Uhing, Occupational Therapy

*\*non-voting member due to being nominee*

# Spirit Phoenix Award Nominees



**Amanda Lindsay**

Intake/Scheduling  
Representative

Patient Information Office



**Nikki Hackendahl**

Digital Media Manager  
Community Engagement



**Beth Hughes**

Speech Therapist  
Speech Language  
Pathology

# Spirit Phoenix Award Nominees



**Amber Godsey**

Clinical Authorization  
Representative  
Severe Behavior



**Tina Meinecke**

Office Assistant I  
Speech Language  
Pathology



# Spirit Phoenix Award 2021

## Beth Hughes Speech Therapist – Speech Language Pathology



- Beth is proud of MMI and it shows in all she does. She is a constant ambassador of MMI in the community. She is always willing to provide support at community events. At community RiteCare events, such as this year's RiteCare Golf Classic, she interacts with every person who attends and shares success of the program and makes sure she thanks all the Scottish Rite Masons and other participants for their support of the clinic.
- Beth brightens everyone's day as they run into her in the hallway and always makes the time to welcome new people to MMI and lend an ear to a friend as well. She also cares deeply about our team. She is the first to show up with flowers in a time of need or to celebrate a special day. She regularly coordinates whole departments gifts for occasions like Bosses Day – offering her own time to go out and purchase the gift components. She always shows appreciation to others and is supportive of others' successes. Not only does Beth attend the most department and MMI events out of all the staff in the Speech Language Pathology Department, but she also always encourages others in the Department to step up, participate, and get excited about events as well.

• As the chair of the MMI Quality Council, Beth works tirelessly to elevate spirit and appreciation within the MMI community. She is thoughtful and motivates all as she diligently welcomes all contributions of ideas and participation within Quality Council members. Beth truly represents the spirit of MMI!



# Support Staff Phoenix Award

The Support Staff award is to recognize outstanding support staff who have achieved an outstanding level of professionalism and consistently go above and beyond to support their department and Institute.

- Regularly exceeds expectations in their work responsibilities
- Demonstrates initiative as well as innovative, imaginative, and critical thinking to reach workable solutions to problems
- Promotes a sense of community within the team, the department, the Institute, and across the University
- Exhibits respect for diversity and strives for inclusivity
- Displays a positive attitude, deals tactfully with interpersonal issues, and genuine interest in patients, staff, faculty, and trainees across the Institute and University

# Support Staff Phoenix Award Selection Committee



## **Amber Godsey, BS**

Clinical Authorization  
Representative, Severe  
Behavior

## **Christy Williams**

Interim Director, Patient  
Information Office  
Manager, Behavioral Health  
Specialty Programs

# Support Staff Phoenix Award Nominees



**Cheri Bott**

Office Associate I  
Genetic Medicine



**Maggie Neujahr**

Social Worker  
Care Coordination



**Yuka Collison**

Clinical Services Associate  
Pediatric Feeding Disorders

# Support Staff Phoenix Award Nominees



**Latrice Bond**

Operations Associate  
Speech Language  
Pathology



**Christi King**

Administrative Associate I  
Psychology



**Darwin Pineda-Donis**

Concierge/Greeter  
Patient Information Office

# Support Staff Phoenix Award 2021



## Latrice Bond Operations Associate – Speech Language Pathology



- Latrice exemplifies excellence in everything she does at MMI. For example, to support MMI’s move towards centralized scheduling, Latrice not only made sure the entire department was templated, but she also worked to develop specialized blocks to allow the staff flexibility in their schedules that reflect their unique clinical specialties. In addition to maintaining SLP database tracking in excel, Latrice also worked to learn how to make pivot tables to manipulate the data to meet the need of the department.
- “Latrice has shown initiative by tackling the challenging daily task of scheduling modified barium swallow studies for the SLP Department. This involves balancing communication between the physician’s office, radiology, the SLP’s schedules, the family’s availability, and the pre-COVID testing, which results in a lot of phone tag!”
- “Latrice always exudes positivity! When making calls to those who routinely treat her poorly, she puts on a bigger smile and does not let it bring her down. She cares deeply for others and is a welcome face to all at MMI. We send people to her for support frequently as we know they are in good hands!”

# Faculty & Staff Clinical Services Phoenix Award



The faculty and staff member who receive this award demonstrates excellence in clinical services through the following:

- They demonstrate innovation and excellence by reimagining or improving a clinical service initiative or clinical program
- Their effort has had a positive impact on MMI's overall mission and community relationships
- They are dedicated to building the capacity of colleagues within MMI, in the community, or both through clinical mentoring by enhancing the quality, efficiency, or enjoyment of colleagues' responsibilities
- They are respected by clients, colleagues, and families, and consistently deliver family-centered and person-centered care

# Faculty & Staff Clinical Services Phoenix Award Selection Committee



**Amy Nordness, PhD, CCC-SLP**

Director of Clinical Services  
Associate Director  
Director, Speech-Language  
Pathology  
Scottish Rite Associate  
Professor

**Amy Drayton, PhD**

Director, Pediatric Feeding  
Disorders  
Assistant Professor

**Terri Blase, MS, CGC**

Assistant Professor  
Director of Genetic Counseling  
Services

**Graciela Sharif**

LEND Diversity Coordinator  
Community Parent Resource  
Coordinator

**Nicole Giron, MPH, HTR,  
CTRS**

Director, Recreational Therapy

# Faculty Clinical Services Phoenix Award Nominees



**Elizabeth Preas**

Assistant Professor  
Program Director  
ACTION Clinic



**Natalie Hoff**

Assistant Professor  
Psychology



**Bethany Hansen**

Assistant Professor  
Associate Director  
Pediatric Feeding  
Disorders

# Faculty Clinical Services Phoenix Award Nominees



**Whitney Strong-  
Bak**

Assistant Professor  
Psychology



**Nancy Foster**

Assistant Professor  
Psychology



**Rachel Knight**

Assistant Professor  
Pediatric Feeding  
Disorders

# Faculty Clinical Services Phoenix Award 2021



## Nancy Foster Assistant Professor - Psychology



- Nancy stands out as an accomplished provider capable of conceiving and implementing systemic-level ideas that have helped improve services across that state of Nebraska. The head of her Department, Dr. Keith Allen commented, “Nancy has been critical to building capacity to meet mental health needs in central Nebraska. Thanks to her help in support and development, we have established successful clinics with mid-level MMI providers in Kearney and York and have established a brand-new behavioral health provider at Great Plains Hospital in North Platte.”

- Nancy is ubiquitously respected in the communities in which she works. Candi Koenig, PRC, noted “When I am representing MMI-UNMC at a conference vendor booth, I’m often asked from both professionals and families if I know Dr. Foster. They associate MMI with her specifically. Professionals say that Nancy has helped them with patients, and families say that she helped diagnose their child with autism or provided behavioral health interventions that greatly improved the quality of life for both their child and family.”

- One student-turned-colleague, Sara Klingelhofer, PhD, commented, “The experience and knowledge I learned from Nancy is invaluable. She is someone that is highly respected, and seeing first-hand the impact she has had on families is what instilled my own desire, along with many of her other interns, to pursue careers in the behavioral health field.”

# Staff Clinical Services Phoenix Award Nominees



**Alexandra Gorup**

Behavior Analysis Specialist II  
ACT Clinic



**Kathryn Cervantes**

Physical Therapist  
Physical Therapy



**Maggie Neujahr**

Social Worker  
Care Coordination

# Staff Clinical Services Phoenix Award Nominees



**Laura Holst**

Speech Therapist

Speech Language Pathology



**Sherri Kallon**

NCI Program Associate

UCEDD



**Carol Gaebler**

Speech Therapist

Speech Language  
Pathology

# Staff Clinical Services Phoenix Award Nominees



**Jessie Weber**

Behavior Analysis Specialist II  
Severe Behavior



**Jennifer Kozisek**

Behavior Analysis Specialist III  
Pediatric Feeding Disorders



**Hannah Lydiatt**

Adaptive Therapy Specialist  
Recreational Therapy

# Staff Clinical Services Phoenix Award 2021



## Carol Gaebler Speech Therapist – Speech Language Pathology



- Carol doesn't settle for providing the best clinical services possible, but also strives to develop new programs. She developed a Memory Boot Camp in 2019 as a new service for patients with mild cognitive impairment to learn strategies and develop new habits to maximize cognitive outcomes now and in the future. She collaborated with OT, PT, and nutrition within the Neurology Department to ensure wrap around care.
- Carol has risen to the highest level of swallowing evaluation and treatment as well. She is the leading expert in modified barium swallow studies and fiberoptic evaluation of the swallow (FEES) studies in our department to provide either the gold standard radiologic assessment or the newer anatomic and physiologic assessment.
- Carol Gaebler provides the highest quality clinical services possible in the speech-language pathology (SLP) department. Not only has Carol provided services for 31 years in the SLP department, but she also continues to push herself year after year. She has demonstrated expertise in swallowing, cognition, and head and neck cancer evaluation and treatment. She is highly skilled and is highly sought after from patients and providers. The SLP team always seeks advice from "Dr. Carol!"

# Community Engagement Phoenix Award



The staff member receiving this award demonstrated a commitment to community engagement, and values reciprocal relationships with the community and inspired those around them to make a positive community impact and has advanced MMI's mission in the community. This was demonstrated through the following:

- **Service** – Engaged in service with others from MMI or surrounding communities to solve a new or existing problem. Inspired others to participate in service. Demonstrated integration of community engagement in one's teaching, research, and/or service. Participated in or created opportunities to impact communities
- **Curiosity** – Actively explored the needs of others. Used innovative, creative means to serve the community
- **Respect** – Demonstrated commitment to reciprocal community partnerships. Promoted civility and inclusion through an action project. Demonstrated respect and benefit for all individuals with disabilities reflecting the rich diversity in our culture without preference or exclusion for actual or perceived differences. These differences include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status and other personal identities and experiences
- **Accountability** – Created institutional impact through development of culture, programs or policies that promoted meaningful engagement at MMI. Demonstrated consistent commitment to inspiring and improving the lives of other individuals and groups. Developed and maintained committed to relationships within the community
- **Appreciation** – Worked to raise expectations and recognition for others in the community. Clearly showed value for relationship with community partners. Enriched the lives of others in the Institute and surrounding community through positive commitment to change. Highlighted the role of partners or stakeholders that demonstrated impact for the population MMI serves

# Community Engagement Phoenix Award Selection Committee



## **Justin Dougherty**

President & CEO, Autism  
Action Partnership

## **Sue Seline**

Chair, Munroe-Meyer Operating  
Board  
Chair, Christ Child Society

## **Heidi Keeler, PhD, RN**

Associate Professor  
Director, College of Nursing  
Continuing Nursing Education  
Director, UNMC Office of  
Community Engagement

## **Jacqueline Hankins**

Community Engagement  
Administrative Programs  
Associate

## **Nicole Hackendahl**

Community Engagement Digital  
Media Manager

## **Melonie Welsh**

Associate Professor  
Director, Community  
Engagement Director, Caring  
for Champions

# Community Engagement Phoenix Award Nominees



**Sydney  
Norton**

Speech Therapist  
Speech Language  
Pathology



**Liz Konopasek**

Physical Therapist  
Physical Therapy



**Jordan DeBrine**

Graduate Research  
Assistant  
Severe Behavior

# Community Engagement Phoenix Award Nominees



**Savannah Bowling**

Volunteer Coordinator  
Recreational Therapy



**Maggie Neujahr**

Social Worker  
Care Coordination



**Brenda Bassingthwaite**

Associate Professor  
Psychology

# Community Engagement Phoenix Award 2021



## Liz Konopasek Physical Therapist – Physical Therapy



“Everything Liz is involved in she does wholeheartedly” reports one of her co-workers. And that is saying something, because Liz is involved in a lot! Liz has gone well above and beyond her responsibilities as a physical therapist in Omaha Public Schools to advocate for physical activity and participation for all children with disabilities. She is passionate about advancing the health and physical activity levels of students with disabilities in our community, and shows it by:

- Coordinating the Fellowship Games, a district-wide fitness and competitive games event for middle-school children with disabilities or mobility restrictions
- Directing Fun Fitness, an MMI partnership with Special Olympics Nebraska, which required specialty training
- Serving as a liaison between NuMotion, our durable medical equipment provider, and the PT/OT therapy team to ensure we have all the information needed to work together for the good of our students
- Developing and teaching an adaptive physical education curriculum at Midlands Lutheran College to help ensure our future educators can provide physical education

access and participation to future Nebraska students with I/DD

- Leading in-services for PE teachers on adaptive PE in Omaha Public Schools
- Organizing and executing an annual wheelchair cleaning event at JP Lord

Another one of her co-workers summarizes, “Liz is our ‘go-to’ person for resources and information on inclusion activities in the community for the families we serve. She is the first to notify our staff of inclusive community events through Special Olympics as well as how to access materials and equipment for our children we serve. She makes it her mission to stay abreast of these opportunities and how to get access for our families.

# Diversity & Inclusion Phoenix Award



In selection of the Diversity & Inclusion Award recipient, the Selection Committee will consider creativity, innovation and creation of opportunities and access, including those that:

- Create and promote a welcoming and supportive institute through visibility, communication, and educational efforts.
- Create intentional connections. Bringing people together to provide an environment where people feel they belong.
- Promote a diverse perspective.
- Facilitate inclusion and/or access.
- Develop cultural awareness and competency.
- Foster intercultural communication and collaboration.
- Advance personal and professional growth in diversity and inclusion at MMI.
- Acts as a role model or ally in building an inclusive culture faculty, staff, students, patients and families MMI serve.

# Diversity & Inclusion Phoenix Award Selection Committee



## **Sheritta Strong, MD**

Assistant Professor  
Assistant Vice Chancellor,  
UNMC Office of Inclusion

## **Jhoanna Olmos**

Inclusion Program Associate,  
UNMC Office of Inclusion

## **Lena Bolivar Johnson**

Office Associate, UNMC Office  
of Inclusion

## **Janice Tompkins, MPH, MT(ASCP)**

Assistant Professor  
Assistant Dean for Diversity  
and Inclusion, College of Allied  
Health Professions

# Diversity & Inclusion Phoenix Award Nominees



**Jacqueline Hankins**

Administration Programs Associate  
Community Engagement



**Amanda Barton**

Speech Therapist  
Speech-Language Pathology

# Diversity & Inclusion Phoenix Award Nominees



**Adrian Lynn-Genevieve**

Behavior Analysis Specialist I

Severe Behavior



**Megan Morse**

Assistant Clinical Professor

Psychology

# Diversity & Inclusion Phoenix Award 2021



## Amanda Barton Speech Therapist – Speech Language Pathology



- Amanda Barton began co-leading the monthly Diversity Discussion Group for the MMI Speech Language Pathology Department in July 2020. Amanda's primary purpose for leading this group was to assist the members of the department in recognizing how the systems of inequity shape our lives, how we uphold these systems, and how we might interrupt them.
- In the Fall of 2020, Amanda actively participated in the three-part Erasing Cultural Indifference series educating on the impacts of microaggressions and privilege offered through UNMC. In preparation for this series as well as the monthly discussions she facilitates, Amanda has read, watched and listened to over 30 articles, documentaries, and podcast episodes. Currently, Amanda is organizing a small group within the department to lead an initiative to purchase more diverse therapy materials for use with the children and adults we serve to increase representation.
- Clinically, Amanda frequently evaluates and treats individuals from diverse backgrounds whose first language is not English. Amanda demonstrates excellent care by always ensuring an interpreter is present in-person or via phone. Amanda has also used her knowledge of EPIC to support diversity and inclusion. In order to update SmartPhrases to include patient's preferred name, gender identity, and preferred pronouns, Amanda identified common SmartLinks that can be used to auto-populate this information into our SmartPhrases, tested them with department leadership, and shared them with staff members. This ensured that the SLP Department can consistently use our patient's preferred name, preferred pronouns, sex assigned at birth, and gender identity.



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