A new and innovative Degree is now available for students at Dixie State University—a BA or BS Degree in Applied Sociology. The program offers a thorough compliment of academic courses in sociology and a senior year internship program in which our students spend a semester using their sociological skills in a real life internship with one of the organizational partners. This internship experience is a great situation for our students and the programs partners. Students get the opportunity to use their classroom knowledge in project situations and the employers benefit from the skills that the Applied Sociology students bring to the workplace. Further, our students will have the opportunity to add specific certificates to their portfolios. For example, the Certificate for Social Research Methods is the product of a successful completion of a prescribed four course sequence that includes statistics, qualitative methods, data analysis, and a review of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies.

Dixie State University Applied Sociology students engage intellectually with sociological concepts such as race and ethnicity, inequality and class, religion, family, sex and gender, rural and urban populations crime and the law, politics and the economy, culture, social movements, and globalization just to name a few. Our students acquire conceptual, interpersonal, computer, and research skills they can use in their post-college careers and in many areas of their lives. Through coursework and internships, majors have comprehensive understandings of societal institutions and the actions of the people within them. Our students are well prepared to work with diverse groups of people using refined analytical, methodological, and scientific skills, which position them to be outstanding contributors to our community and the economy.

Applied Sociology majors are prepared to do a number of things upon graduation. The sometimes pursue advanced degrees in diverse fields such as sociology, social work, education,
law, business, criminology, health care, public policy, and communications. Furthermore, Applied Sociology majors often go directly into the workforce in professions such as paralegals, non-profit administrators, crime science investigators, hospital administrators, educators, managers, computer consultants, market researchers, and survey workers. Applied Sociology majors at DSU have diverse sets of skills that allow them to be productive members of our complex local, national, and global economies. Importantly, it is through our internship programs that we bring students face-to-face with employers, a first step toward fulfilling career in Applied Sociology.

The Applied Sociology Program at Dixie State University is the only Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science Degree of its’ design being offered in the State of Utah. In fact, this Applied Sociology Program is only one of five similar programs in the United States. Upon completion of the academic, internship, with optional certifications the graduate of this program will be prepared to compete for the desired with a unique degree and internship experience to meet the challenges of competition for the desired position of employment.

Dr. Matt Smith-Lahrman is the program head of Sociology and has instructed at DSU for a total of 19 years. He was hired on when this school was only a meager community college. Of course, DSU has since grown immensely and Dr. Smith-Lahrman has played an integral role in building the radio and social science aspects of this university. Over the years he has published a book of his own and is in the process of writing another. He has and continues to share his love for sociology and learning with his students in the hopes of inspiring them to make big changes in the world.

However, for Dr. Smith-Lahrman this passion for sociology began when he finished Jane Goodall’s popular publishing, In the Shadow of Man. He said that her work inspired him to pursue anthropology, which opened the door to sociology. He explained that, “when I learned that I could apply the same focus of anthropology to people, that’s when I made the switch.” At that moment, he began his journey into the qualitative branch of sociology to observe and understand the behaviors of people.
Dr. Smith-Lahrman received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Northwestern University, and used his time in grad school to research to analyze the complexities of our society and culture. To him, the world is an interconnected web of structures in everything from religion to rock bands. He recently published a book titled: The Meat Puppets and the Lyrics of Curt Kirkwood from Meat Puppets II to No Jokes. His book investigated the culture and structure of modern bands from a sociological perspective which allowed him to spend time with his favorite band and helped him leave his mark in sociology. Dr. Smith-Lahrman continues to write and research along with teaching for DSU, though admittedly at a slower pace. “It took me 14 years to write that book, and now I’m writing another that still has a lot more work to be done,” he stated during our interview. The book will be based on his interest in world religions and will feature his experiences visiting a myriad of religious centers to explore the beliefs, stories, and teachings and how they all connect and influence others. Along with these publications, Dr. Smith-Lahrman has helped orchestrate the creation of the Bachelor’s Degree in Applied Sociology for Dixie State. He teaches several classes on campus from Sociology 1010 to Social Problems. One can also find him playing his favorite rock music on Radio Dixie 91.3, the college station he helped to develop. Overall, he is proud of how far our university has come and hopes that it will one day be accessible as an institute of social research to benefit the groups and businesses within the community. Until then, Dr. Smith-Lahrman will continue teaching students about the wonders of sociology and help mentor others to gain the valuable skills from this discipline. He is an incredible professor and a shining example of the best our university has to offer.

NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS (NAMI UTAH-SOUTHWEST)

By: Wayne and Pam Connors

The acronym NAMI stands for the National Alliance on Mental Illness. It is an organization dedicated to offer free education, support, and advocacy to residents in Washington and Iron Counties in Southwest Utah that are affected by mental illness. This includes all individuals that are members of the Dixie State University community. NAMI strives to erase stigmas and raise awareness about mental illness through ongoing education efforts. NAMI is a valued “Internship Partner” for students’ that have declared Majors in the
successes of others, and suicide & prevention. The mission of Peer-to-Peer is for participants to understand: “It’s not my fault. There is hope, recovery, and empowerment.”

Weekly Meetings on Thursday at 5:45 PM in the St. George Library.

FAMILY-TO-FAMILY CLASS:

This class is for the families of those with mental illness. It provides support and helps increases their understanding of mental and how to maintain their well-being as well as that of their loved one. The NAMI-trained volunteer teachers are family members who know what it is like to have a loved one struggling with a mental illness. Classes cover major mental illnesses and mood disorders, basics about the brain, problem solving skills, medication review, empathy and communication skills, self-care, recovery and rehabilitation, and advocacy.

Weekly Meetings are on Thursdays at 5:45 PM in the St. George Library.
SUPPORT GROUP:

Trained facilitators guide interested participants in a safe and confidential environment to share their stories, network, and realize they are not alone and that there is hope.

There is a Family-to-Family Support Group that meets the first Tuesday of the Month at 5:45 PM in the St. George Library. Also, there is a Peer-to-Peer Support Group that meets the first Thursday of each month at 5:45 PM in the St. George Library.

NAMI ON CAMPUS CLUB AT DIXIE STATE UNIVERSITY:

The onset of mental illness is generally around the ages of 17-29 years old, but can and does show up at any age. Dixie State University is the perfect place to provide awareness, support and education to that high risk population. The NAMI on Campus Club is student-led that tackles mental health issues on campus by raising mental health awareness, educating the DSU Campus community, promoting services and supports and advocating. The goal is to address the mental health needs of all students so they have positive, successful and fun college experiences. The 2017-2018 NAMI on Campus Club President is Chloe Smith and the Faculty Advisor for this academic year is Applied Sociology Instructor Dr. Robert H. Oxley.

If you would like to join the NAMI of Campus Club just contact the DSU Clubs and Organizations Office in the Gardner Center on campus dsusaclubs@dixie.edu

INVolVEMENT WITH DSU ACADEMICS:

On April 1, 2017, DSU is now offering a new Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science Degrees in the Applied Sociology Program. NAMI-Utah Southwest is a full Partner with this new program and will offer internship and certification opportunities for students enrolled as a Major in Applied Sociology. Professor and Program Director, Dr. Matthew Smith-Lahrman, Instructor, Dr. Robert H. Oxley, and Assistant Professor, Dr. Fanhao Nie provide the academic instruction, and the students use that knowledge and skills in “real life” as interns with community partners like NAMI. This combination prepares students with the necessary knowledge base and experiences that employers are seeking in today’s very competitive job market.

For more information concerning NAMI call Pam or Wayne Connors 541.331.0711 email: waconnors@gmail.com visit: name.org OR namiut-sw.org Facebook: NAMI Southwest Utah/Mental Health. NAMI is a community partner.
This semester, the Applied Sociology program gained a wonderful addition with Dr. Fanhao Nie signing on as a new associate professor of sociology. He is originally from Xuzhou in the Jiangsu province of China and moved to Indiana where he received his Ph.D. from Purdue University earlier this year.

It was at Purdue University where he truly began to dive into his studies in sociology and statistics. After he received his master’s, he also taught lessons within his school and worked with other grad students. He explained his interest in sociology has been in observing complex human behaviors and identifying the patterns across groups of people. “For me it all started with my interest in people’s religious beliefs. It was what really got me into sociology. I was so fascinated with the beliefs people had in my country and everything followed from that.” It was this curiosity which led him to want to understand research and statistical methods for showing the connections between people. Compared to Dr. Matt Smith-Lahrman, Dr. Nie prefers to focus on the quantitative or empirical side of sociology and has experience with utilizing professional statistical programs.

For Dr. Nie, it was a rough transition moving from a large city in China to a small town in Indiana. “I was worried that I would find myself in the middle of nowhere,” he joked, “but in reality, it was a really nice town. Having all the snow was a shock, though. And of course, here is very beautiful but also really hot. It has been quite the adjustment.” Thus far he has said that he is very impressed with how welcoming and supportive the faculty and staff have been at DSU. He stated that the environment is very different from teaching in a graduate school setting where most activities are research-oriented. Dr. Nie explained that Dixie State allows him to interact with students directly and see how quickly he can make a difference for other people. “I can see when a student understands a concept and I notice when it impacts them. To me, that is very satisfying.”

Students can take classes with Dr. Fanhao Nie this and next semester for sociology 1010, 2010, and social statistics 3112.
As Student Managing Editor, I would like to introduce the first issue of The Observer, a quarterly newsletter for the new Applied Sociology Program. With this newsletter, we hope to share wonderful stories of the people, projects, and events to come from this program. Our staff is comprised of Dr. Robert Oxley, the faculty advisor, and myself. Dr. Oxley is one of the professors leading the way for the Applied Sociology Program, and helped to develop this newsletter in the hopes of leaving a lasting mark on this university for years to come.

To accomplish this lofty goal, we want to do as much as possible to improve The Observer and build its staff. Interested students are encouraged to contact Dr. Oxley to join our staff as writers or photographers with manageable schedules. Our hope is that with more help, we can share more stories and photos of all the wonderful things happening within this program and university as a whole. Students can reach Dr. Oxley at roxley@dixie.edu, 435-652-7892, or can meet with him at his office in the McDonald Center room 240.

For the meantime, however, we are more than happy simply to share this first issue of The Observer, and we hope that readers will enjoy it as well. If readers would like more information about the function and goals of this newsletter or would like to submit an idea for an article, feel free to contact Dr. Oxley for more information.