

2026 Research Question and Projects

Directions- Please put your name next to any thesis question you might be interested in advising. More is better! It's okay to have multiple staff names next to a question as well- gives us options when we play matchmaker tomorrow.

Capacity- If you need fewer than 2 students to advise (like, 0 or 1), or if you can take MORE than 2 seniors on, please send an email to Lori letting her know ASAP.

Name (First and Last)	Question and Project	Teacher Interest: Please add your name by the <u>research questions</u> that you feel you could advise. The more, the better! Project ideas should not play into this! More than one person can put their name for each student.	Resources or Connections If you have resources or connections for the thesis OR the project, please put those here with your name next to them.
Kinley Ash	Research Question: How effective are current laws and policies at preventing animal neglect? Or What role do animal shelters and rescue organizations play in preventing animal neglect? Or go into dog fighting Project: Spread awareness on social media, have an adoption event to also talk about animal neglect, have a fundraiser for local animal rescues	Christine Imming	Christine-On the Board of the Humane Society
Kalli Bane	Research Question: Why do drugs have such an impact on Hollywood actresses? Project: I'm going to be doing a podcast talking about Hollywood drug problems And hopefully get a famous actress on the podcast or a mental health profession.	Kyle Edmondson	

Ben Barrett	Research Question: How does the looming threat of a climate crisis (and maybe other factors?) impact the psychology of adolescents? Project: Uncertain- perhaps a film, moving in the artsy direction, not documentary.	Lori Fisher	
Lukas Bayer	Research Question: How did punks' DIY and anti-establishment mindset from the 1980s help shape today's protest movement? Project: I'm thinking of building a guitar inspired by the DIY aspect of punk and creating and printing zines to educate people about punk and my topic.	Matt Hughes	
MaryElla Benally	Research Question: How do animators and illustrators use shape language to develop their characters? Project: I'm thinking to use a comic breaking down the shape used for my characters	Cameron Elder	Elliot - An old LINK mentor does literally this job.
Noah Blakney	Research Question: What are the geometric principles of 3 link/4 link suspension systems and how might we use geometry to build a prerunner? Project: Make my car into a prerunner	Julian Springer	
Zoe Boespflug	Research Question: What are the relationships between mental illness and creativity in creators of visual, musical, and written art? Is there a correlation between their type of mental illness and the art they produce? Project: Art festival, Smiley cafe kind of set up, artists' booths creating different art forms	Lori Fisher	Relationship with Smiley Building, 17 years of mental illness and artist work. Multiple mental health professionals in the community.
Evelyn Bopp	Research Question: How does social media based cyberbullying manifest on a local scale, and what factors of internet access contribute to identity disturbance? Project: Mentoring piece, bringing in high school students to teach Middle schoolers about cyberbullying and social media.	Dreher Robertson	Middle School Relationships at all four middle schools.

	a. Initial Idea- 45-minute workshop for local small groups in Middle Schools (Escalante, Miller, etc) b. Parent workshop series that I host and run (backup plan)		
April Bramhall	Research Question: How did the disappearance of mining in Durango and surrounding communities affect our local culture and economy as a former industrial town? Project: Possibly an Art mural of the changes and affects this has had on our town/community or something else, I don't know.	Natalie Cohn	Elliot - Jonathan Thompson is a good source of info for this, I can connect her. Natalie - Have a contact who owns the Silverton mill that processed the Old 100 gold. Erin CR - my dad was a miner in Silverton at the Sunnyside mine in the 80's and I could connect her with him for an interview
Sam Brown	Research Question: How does the process of learning visual arts change your neural pathways and brain substrates, and how does this alter the function of your brain overall? Project: An art gallery featuring artists' earliest and latest works, and information about the parts of their brains that were engaged in the specific skills they used.	Mike Bienkowski	
Penelope Cartwright	Research Question: According to the logic of Aristotle, Plato, and other philosophers (TBD) about eudaimonia (fulfilment of the soul - courage, virtue, etc.) and hedonia (doing what is most comfortable in the moment), what lifestyle should we accept or aim for? Project: Not super set on this but maybe I could do a zine. I can interview different people in Durango living different and unique lives and ask what makes them fulfilled. I can then record the conversation on my phone (voice memos) and transfer the most impactful parts to my zine in a platonic style dialogue. I can do little drawing of the person that I think represents them and their life. Not directly related but I think it would be	Alec Johnson	

	cool to see what makes people fulfilled!! I can give the zine to local bookstores and different places around Durango for free.		
Vasti Castro-Sanchez	Research Question: Based on how teenagers' brains develop and all the changes they go through in Colorado, how can they build a healthy, safe, and comfortable relationship with their parents? Project: I want to do three workshops for mental health. One with teenagers, to get to talk to them and get them to say how they feel, do some kind of game as an experiment to see how they react and what this says about them. The other workshop would be for parents, in order to talk to them, and show them the experiment, talk to them about their teens' feelings and get them to understand them, and figure out a way for them to get to talk to each other in a healthy and respectful way. For the last workshop I would get both teens and parents together for them to talk to each other and express everything they need to, for them to get to an agreement to respect each other and always talk out things and talk to each other in a way they can feel safe and not just attacked.	Erin Skyles	
Saphira Coffman	Research Question: What changes can be made within the ranching community of the Four Corners region to develop more efficient devices and processes for branding, tagging, vaccination, and castration? Project: To bring in a live demonstration about what typically happens on a ranch in the four corners area. This is going to be a demonstration of Bringing, tagging, vaccination, and paperwork. Also if I can I want to bring a real cow and calf pair as part of my demonstration.	Erin Wall	
Ethan Deem	Research Question: What are the best mods you can do to a Tacoma to build a pre-runner with crawling capability (Forced induction/suspension)(i would research the amount of air the that engine inhales and the suspension geometry and setup) Project: Pre runner tacoma that i will build	Dave Farkas	

Natalie Deming	Research Question: Anesthesia and the Philosophy of Consciousness: What Anesthesia tells us about our neurophysiology and the connection with our levels of consciousness. Project: Some sort of personal research project, with the help of FLC lab	Leah Roy-Ehri	
Tillie Dirksen	Research Question: How has fashion been used politically and as a form of protest? Project: sew a series of dresses/suits that highlight different world issues, showcased in a fashion show.	Jessica McCallum	
Ethan Dugas	Research Question: How does the psychology of failure affect an adolescent brain, and what ways can be maximized the benefits and minimized the downsides using neuroplasticity? Project: Animated video on my experiences with failure, and explaining how you can learn from failure(storytime animation).	Cathy Hearn	
Bennett Esterday	Research Question: How can CRISPR and Cas9 research on allopolyploidy in staple crops, such wheat and oats, be applied to industrial agriculture in order tackle the greater issues of food insecurity and climate change in the next 25 years? Project: Multi-step, interdisciplinary project that hopefully will include drafting a scientific journal article for publishing after research has been completed, participation in the undergraduate research symposium at FLC, and some hands-on project working with local non-profit organizations and farms to explore innovative farming techniques.	Mike Bienkowski	
Monte Fahle	Research Question: What factors have contributed to Durango becoming such an influential and successful cycling community? Project: I want my senior project to be an inspirational cycling film, showcasing all of the various riding that Durango has to offer and possibly include some of the trips that in-town programs offer.	Peter Bradley	

Henry Foutz	Research Question: How does the economic impact of motorsports differ between the World Rally Championship, Formula 1, and World Endurance Championship? Project: Convert a race car into a road-legal vehicle.	Kyle Edmondson	
Wave Frazer	Research Question: How does childhood and adolescent exposure to positive female role models doing/mentoring/teaching hands-on activities influence girls' confidence in male-dominated fields such as motorsports, construction, and welding in their future? Project: Restoring and modifying a VW Bug for the Baja 1000 in the Baja, Mexico desert in November 2027. (This is a race that goes throughout the Baja Peninsula). I want to bring my project to the community and our school by getting sponsors for the Volts Wagon Bug. I also want to bring more awareness to our makerspace about how girls usually want to get into male-dominated fields, but they are intimidated or don't even know where to get started. So in the end, make our makerspace for welcoming and feel safe for girls.	Natalie Cohn	Natalie - I have run the DHS tech theater program for years, with a specific focus on mentoring young girls in carpentry.
Porter Fuson	Research Question: What are the long-term effects that polyfluoroalkyl substances (forever chemicals) have had on high-alpine watersheds and sensitive environments in Colorado? Project: I want to create a film where I go into these environments where these PFAS chemicals shouldn't exist, fly fish, and observe the areas and fish species, alongside attempting to take PFAS water samples.	Jake Stein	Andrew has a contact with someone who has a doctorate in this thing.
Addy Gallup	Research Question: Why are horses being transported from the United States to Mexico and Canada for horse slaughter and how can the slaughter of these horses be reduced or eliminated? Project: I want to Create a Documentary to spread awareness about horse slaughter and the process of it for horses. In the documentary at the end I want to add a QR code that will raise money for our local horse rescues to build more space for horses to go if they need help and a home.	Heather Prekup	

Abby Grindstaff	Research Question: How do the disparities within women's health research directly relate to the quality of female reproductive healthcare in the United States? Project: I want to start my own small business that has an informational website to educate visitors on the current state of women's healthcare. I would like to sell a product/accept donations where a percentage of the proceeds go towards funding a women's health organization.	Leah Roy-Ehri	Alexi - I have connections to women working in female health care/reproductive healthcare. I also have a great relationship with Abby. Heather - Personal experience Erin S. - personal experience - and close partnership with a PA in the community who co-taught Sex Ed with me for many years. Leah - been working on this with her in class, and Abby!
Han Grunert	Research Question: What are the main causes and reasons of suicidal thoughts and suicide? Project: I want to make a short film using a character that is dealing with suicidal thoughts, and those thoughts and feelings become a physical being that attacks mentally and physically, and the monsters will be different feelings and thoughts.	Andrew Allison-Godfrey	
Balin Hall	Research Question: How do different forging techniques affect the effectiveness of the blade in battle/war, and how have the techniques evolved with time to meet the requirements of battle? Project: Work with a blacksmith to forge a sword.	Kian Edmondson	Blacksmith in Mancos, Dylan McClain Not exactly at school - but Colin would help and he and I know blacksmiths Jess or Natalie connect Balin with Charlie Grice.
Olin Halsband	Research Question: What elements distinguish the “quality” of different jokes? How are jokes used differently in casual situations versus comedic performance?	Oliver Kennedy	

	Project: My best idea right now is to coordinate some kind of community event in Durango, possibly collaborating with different organizations/individuals		
Kyle Lhomi-Nuppa	Research Question: How have Western influences and cultural erosion affected the decline of Lhomi culture and language? What roles do traditional songs play in preserving history? Project: I will be in Nepal for 3 weeks next month. During that time, I will be capturing a lot of footage for an ethnographic documentary focusing on my people. I'm hoping to submit this documentary to the AHS film festival and potentially others as well.	Jessica McCallum	
Cooper Manganaro	Research Question: How do the different components of and off road vehicle, such as engine setup, suspension, tire size, and gearing, work together. Project: I am going to rebuild and restore a 1976 Chevy K5 Blazer. I will be heavily modifying it to be more off road capable, turning it into a pre runner/overland build of sorts. The rebuild will consist of completely stripping it down, painting it, full engine build and swap, off road suspension, lift kit, new transmission and gears, and new wheels and tires.	Dave Farkas	
Isaac Mesich	Research Question: How do the types and shapes of natural arches differ between Utah's major geological regions, and what geographical and geological factors explain those differences? Project: I am going to build a trailer suitable for overlanding out of an old Ford truck bed, built with weathertight storage, a tent, and an awning, along with other camping gear. I am going to refabricate/reinforce the frame if needed, put shocks and a lift on it, and all terrain tires.		
Hatch Miller	Research Question: How does climate change affect the stability and safety of the snowpack in the 4 different Types of snowpacks? Project: I am going to continue to create skis. I look toward the business aspect of it.	Zach Bain	

Henry Newcomer	Research Question: How is climate change impacting the golf industry? Project: Identifying ways local golf courses can manage courses with limited water resources. Possibly applying knowledge to a real golf course.	Dreher Robertson	Dreher- Access to local area golf professionals and superintendents.
Liv Okun	Research Question: How does spending time in nature affect the developing brain and mental health? Project: Start a club where we go different places and do different outside activities and have everyone in the club keep a journal with prompts I give them about how they felt before and after spending time outside. I also want to do a camping trip in the Spring with the same type of idea where we would hike, do mindfulness, yoga, meditation, and journal. To demonstrate this I'll either make an art piece or podcast or film.	Andrew Allison-Godfrey	
Caleb Osmera	Research Question: Which of the two main theories (Snowball Earth glaciation or tectonic uplift from supercontinents) are most true about the great unconformity in the Grand Canyon? Project: Build my 2000 toyota 4runner	Julian Springer	
Balen Rehman	Research Question: How exactly and why did the dog become Man's Best Friend? Project: Make a short narrative film about a dog with their owner. (action film, day to day life, point of view, it's still undecided)	Kian Edmondson	
Ben Rowe	Research Question: How have narrative techniques and storytelling evolved with video games? Project: Produce a videogame that successfully uses tropes, environments, and other factors to tell an engaging story.	Oliver Kennedy	
Riva Roy-Ehri	Research Question: How have political developments in the USA in the last 20 years lead to the development of new genres of art?	Peter Bradley	

	Project: Write and produce a play that tangentially incorporates what I learn in my research.		
Lacy Ruggiero	Research Question: How can communities in the US create more equitable access to organic foods? Project: Still brainstorming the project idea. Possibly a documentary	Genevieve Buzan-Dansereau	Erin W.-Worked for a co-op of organic farmers.
Kay Sherman	Research Question: What are the biggest challenges youth face while being in the foster care system and what reforms or interventions could address these challenges? Project: DOCUMENTARY? And/or I would like to fundraise and then make backpacks for children in foster care full of supplies that they might need. Toothbrushes, Blankets, Maybe school supplies, hair brushes, some toys maybe? Lots of children in foster care don't get to have their own things. Things get taken, lost and left behind. These kids need some structure and consistency.	Erin Skyles	Erin S - worked directly in the foster care system (with foster youth and foster families) for 3 years; worked with high-risk families and the department of human services for 6. Christine is also a resource here- she has lots of knowledge in this area.
Quinn Sparks	Research Question: What characteristics make a good backcountry aircraft? Project: Maybe models? Not sure yet.	Elliot Baglini	
Vivian Van Delden	Research Question: How can conservation efforts in sea turtle nest relocation, rescue and rehabilitation, and tracking devices, be balanced in environmental ethics and eco-efficiency? Project: • Paper mache scale model of Sea Turtle with biology • Removable shell to see inside • Make two versions of organs to show effects of plastic use, boat strikes, different illnesses?	Jake Stein	

Hunter Wildman	Research Question: How can I replicate the success of other hockey podcasts and use my knowledge of hockey to make a hockey-specific podcast? How has the medium of podcasting changed the landscape of sports journalism? How does podcasting create community? Project: Hockey Podcast	Drew Semel	
Nola Ziegler	Research Question: What are the main causes of homelessness in Durango, and what actions could have the most impact on reducing homelessness in this community? Project: Resource bags with resources	Zach Bain	Elliot - got contacts for this Leah/Colin - also contacts and Food not Bombs Natalie Cohn - Have a contact who ran a big department of the outreach program at FLC and then the Manna Soup Kitchen, focused specifically on homeless population outreach. I can get Nola in contact with her.
Mariah Zufelt	Research Question: What are the psychological effects of social media and television ad marketing strategies on body image and fast fashion in teenage girls? Project: Upcycle fabrics from a series of places to make a stance against fast fashion and prove that we don't need to make new clothes, we can just learn a new skills and update the clothes we already got.	Lori Fisher	Natalie - I wrote my undergrad thesis about a very similar topic. Mariah is welcome to chat with me whenever.
Ashleigh Hoff	Research Question: How does the ever evolving promotion of overconsumption in social media and ads impact the production of waste and the communities surrounding waste facilities?	Cameron Elder	

	Project: Upcycle fabrics from many places in order to make a statement against fast fashion and why we need to stop the over production of clothes.		
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