



UCCS Graduate School

Monthly Newsletter



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Feature Story

Graduate School Office Services

The Graduate School Office is dedicated to advancing graduate education, upholding academic excellence, promoting graduate student success, fostering inclusivity, and nurturing a supportive community across all our graduate programs. UCCS graduate programs include 41 master's degrees, 11 doctoral programs, and an array of graduate certificates.

We also support non-degree seeking students who are returning to campus after previously earning a bachelor's degree. We work closely with the Office of Admissions, academic departments, and other support offices across campus to support graduate students in their academic journey.

Feature Story

The Graduate School supports students in many ways including:

- Ensuring quality across all facets of graduate education through policies and standards that uphold best practices.
- Advocating for graduate education locally, regionally, and nationally.
- Representing UCCS's graduate programs in partnership with the State of Colorado, federal agencies, industry collaborators, and the broader community.
- Supporting program development and the launch of new degree and certificate programs within our graduate offerings.
- Providing resources and personalized service to prospective and current students.
- Supporting student success and timely completion of graduate programs.

Our office consists of a small but mighty staff:

- Graduate School Dean: **Dr. Hillary Fouts**
- Graduate School Assistant Dean: **Dr. Janel Owens**
- Senior Administrative Support Specialist: **Lauren Harriott**
- Administrative Support Specialist: **Kim Paine**
- Student Success and Support Coordinator: **Asjia Trotter**

If you need assistance or are ever unsure who to go to for help, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are located in Cragmor Hall 110. Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 8:30 am to 4 pm. You can also email us at gradinfo@uccs.edu.

Please feel free to stop by our office to say hi, to ask questions, or to meet with us.

MEET our STAFF



Dr. Hillary Fouts

Graduate School Dean

Dr. Hillary Fouts grew up in a small town in Washington State and earned undergraduate degrees in psychology and anthropology from Central Washington University, followed by a PhD in cultural anthropology from Washington State University. She then completed a four-year postdoctoral research fellowship in the Section on Social and Emotional Development at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, part of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. After spending much of her academic career at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 2020 she moved into academic leadership at Western Oregon University. In January 2024, Dr. Fouts joined UCCS as Dean of the Graduate School, and we are lucky to have her expertise and guidance.

In her role as Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Fouts is a fierce advocate for graduate students, faculty and staff at UCCS. She works effectively with graduate students, staff, faculty, other deans and campus leadership in advancing the quality of graduate academic programs, graduate student research, and collaborations. Working within a framework of shared governance, Dr. Fouts leads the Graduate School in its mission to offer resources, create opportunities, and promote excellence so that our graduate students, faculty, and staff are successful.

Dr. Fouts first visited Colorado Springs in 1996 to play in the National Collegiate Rugby Championship hosted by USAFA. The second time she visited Colorado Springs was in 2023 when she interviewed to be the UCCS Graduate School Dean.

MEET our STAFF

Dr. Janel Owens



Graduate School Assistant Dean

Dr. Janel Owens is from South Texas, where she was raised in a small town near San Antonio. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from Southwestern University in Georgetown, TX, and her PhD in Agricultural and Environmental Chemistry from the University of California, Davis. She started at UCCS in 2009 as an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, and rose through the academic ranks to become full professor in 2024. She joined the Graduate School as a faculty fellow in Fall 2024, and was appointed as the Assistant Dean for the Graduate School in Fall 2025.

Dr. Owens provides high-level support for the Graduate School by overseeing processes, policies, and initiatives related to graduate student success, retention, and completion. This includes but is not limited to, leading the planning and execution of initiatives designed to support graduate students' academic and professional development. Dr. Owens also supports the processes relating to funding graduate students in partnership with the Office of Financial Aid through the Graduate School's various grants, fellowships, and scholarships.

Dr. Owens enjoys writing mystery novels (although none have been published) and won the Claymore Award from Killer Nashville Writing Conference in 2025 for best unpublished mystery.

MEET our STAFF



Lauren Harriott, M.A.

Graduate School Senior Administrative Support Specialist

Lauren is from Tampa, Florida. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in History and her Master of Arts Degree in European History, with concentrations in Modern Ireland and Cultural Nationalism, at the University of South Florida. She started working for the Graduate School in Spring 2022.

Lauren provides support for day-to-day operations in the Graduate School. This includes reviewing paperwork submitted to the Graduate School, performing graduation audits and thesis checks for graduate students, providing services to other units and people on campus through interpretation, and problem-solving concerning application of graduate school rules, procedures, and policies.

Lauren spent two summers in the Gaeltacht learning to speak Irish Gaelic.

MEET our STAFF

Kim Paine, M.A.



Administrative Support Specialist

Kim was born in San Antonio, TX, and moved to several places while growing up. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Behavioral Science from the U.S. Air Force Academy and is a UCCS Alumnus, earning her Master of Arts degree in Leadership. She started working for the Graduate School in January 2023.

Kim provides overall support and aid for the Graduate School staff and projects, which includes managing the graduate student travel award budget, and creating initiatives, surveys, and proposals that further aid in graduate student development and retention.

Kim enjoys playing the video games Hollow Knight and its sequel, Silksong.

MEET our STAFF



Asjia Trotter, B.A.

Graduate School Student Success and Support Coordinator

Asjia is from Aurora, Colorado. She is also a UCCS Alumnus, having earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication in Spring 2023. Asjia started working for the Graduate School in Spring 2024 as the administrative assistant. She was recently promoted to her current Student Success and Support Coordinator position in July of this year.

Asjia acts as first point of contact for the Graduate School office located in Cragmor 110 and via gradinfo@uccs.edu or 719-255-3417. Asjia responds to inquiries from current students, and she provides guidance, directions and recommendations via email, phone, or in person to support prospective and current graduate students. Asjia also plans and prepares programs, events, and newsletters to support graduate student success, and also provides overall support and aid for the Graduate School staff and projects.

Asjia met former Denver Broncos Quarterback, Peyton Manning, in 2017 and walked on the field at Mile High Stadium in 2018.

Graduate Student Research Travel Award

The Graduate Student Research Travel Award makes funds available to graduate students presenting their research findings each semester at conferences on a first-come, first-serve basis until the funds are exhausted. If there are additional funds available, the Graduate School will consider funding students who are attending conferences or are traveling to collect original data for their research. All graduate students, including international students, are eligible to receive one research travel award during the time of their graduate training, but members of the Graduate Research Academy and doctoral students are eligible for two awards.

Amount

Awards of up to \$500 are made to support students who present at conference. Students need to request support before they travel, and after returning from their conference travel, they are able to submit receipts for reimbursement.

Students should apply for travel support well before they intend to travel by [following the instructions available on the Graduate School website](#).

Eligibility

All graduate students in good academic standing, including international students*, are eligible for this award. Students must be active students at the time of application, attending UCCS as full-time, part-time, or nearing completion as candidate-for-degree. Conference-related costs such as registration fees, airfare, hotel or housing costs, etc., are eligible for reimbursement.

*For international students: This award may be taxable because it is not considered to be a tuition and fees scholarship.

For more information and to learn how to apply, please visit our website [here](#).

CONTACT US

 gradinfo@uccs.edu

 719-255-3417

 Cragmor Hall 110

 [linkedin.com/in/uccsgraduateschool](https://www.linkedin.com/in/uccsgraduateschool)

 <https://graduateschool.uccs.edu/>

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Joseph Taylor
Leadership, Research & Foundations, COE

This year, you can find Dr. Joe Taylor taking on not one but two important roles in supporting UCCS graduate students. He will continue to serve as the Graduate Program Director for the PhD program in Educational Leadership, Research, and Policy (LRP) PhD program while assuming a new role as Faculty Fellow for the Graduate School. Dr. Taylor's long-standing academic interests have focused on education in the STEM fields: he holds a Bachelor's degree in Physics Education (California University of Pennsylvania), a M.Ed. in Mathematics Education (Ohio University), and a PhD in Science Education (Penn State). Before arriving at UCCS in 2018 as an Assistant Professor, Dr. Taylor worked at BSCS Science Learning here in Colorado Springs, an organization with a mission of transforming K-12 science education.

**Joseph Taylor, PhD**

Dr. Taylor's role at UCCS is not that dissimilar from his multi-year tenure and impact at BSCS. Since joining the faculty, Dr. Taylor has helped LRP PhD students hone their statistical skills, where students need to be adept and skilled at completing mixed method analyses for qualitative and quantitative datasets. By mentoring dozens of PhD students in his stats courses, he has trained a new generation of researchers, teachers, and K-12 administrators to transform educational practice.

This coming year, Dr. Taylor's experience in statistical analyses and deploying surveys will be incredibly useful to the Graduate School mission. Using his skillset in quantitative methodologies, his goal is to apply a rigorous, empirical approach to understanding what keeps students, especially PhD students, from completing their degrees.

"Retention and completion problems are complicated, and in finding patterns in the data, I hope to support programs and students in finding ways to complete their graduate degree."

-Dr. Joseph Taylor

GRADUATE SCHOOL TEAM SPOTLIGHT



Kim Paine, M.A.

Student to Staff to My Dream Career: A UCCS Gratitude Story

When I decided to make a career change a few years ago, I knew I wanted to work in higher education, but I had no prior experience in the field. Seeking a pathway forward, I discovered UCCS's Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) Master's program—a degree specifically designed to equip aspiring professionals with the tools to support college students.

Shortly after applying to SAHE, I took a leap of faith and applied for an entry-level position in the UCCS Graduate School. I was thrilled when the team took a chance on me, opening the door to my very first job in higher education. Working in graduate student support allowed me to collaborate with offices across campus, from the Registrar's Office and Financial Aid to various academic departments. My daily tasks directly reinforced what I was learning in my SAHE courses.

My long-term goal was to return to my alma mater across town, the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), as an academic advisor. Through the SAHE program, I secured a hands-on practicum with the USAFA advising team. That experience proved invaluable: shortly before graduation, a position opened up at USAFA advising cadets pursuing health professions. Thanks to the relationships and skills built during my practicum, I was recommended for the role and landed the job!

For the past few months, I've had the unique privilege of balancing part-time roles at both UCCS and USAFA. As this month comes to a close, my time at UCCS draws to an end, and I am officially transitioning into my full-time dream job.

UCCS truly made my dreams come true by welcoming me as both a student and a colleague. I will forever carry fond memories of the kind, dedicated people I've worked alongside in the Graduate School, and I am endlessly grateful to this institution for giving me my start.

Thank you, UCCS!

Kim Paine

**“What would life
be if we had no
courage to
attempt
anything?”**

**-Vincent van
Gogh**

Reminders

Reminders for Students

- **Clyde's Cupboard:**
 - Provides free food and hygiene items for all students.
 - Students may take **up to 8 food items and 5 hygiene items each week.**
 - Please bring your Student ID to the Student Life Front desk in the Student Life Lounge, located in the University Center (next to the Campus Store).
 - Open Monday – Friday:
 - M, W, F: Open from 10:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
 - Tuesdays & Thursdays: Open from 11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Don't forget to bring a reusable bag!

For more information on Clyde's Cupboard please click [here](#).

- **Fall 2026 Graduation Deadlines**
 - If you plan to graduate this year, please be sure to review the important deadlines and steps for applying to graduation listed on our website here: [Graduating Students | Graduate School](#).

Reminders for Faculty and Staff

- **Mentor Mondays:**
 - Graduate School and Center for Student Research are hosting "Mentor Mondays" with our second meeting on **Monday, October 12th, from 11:30 - 1 pm in the UC (Cafe 65 area).** Bring your lunch, tell your colleagues, and come by to discuss mentorship and strategies for writing the Thesis or Dissertation, that supports students on their writing journey.
- **iThenticate**
 - iThenticate is available to all faculty working with graduate students. Information on how faculty can gain access to iThenticate can be found on the [Graduate School's website](#) or on the [FRC website](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS



Graduate Student Virtual Writing Circle

Need dedicated time to write or some extra writing support?

Join the Graduate Student Virtual Writing Circle! Come work on your articles, fellowship applications, coursework, dissertation, and more. **RSVP here:** ([Please fill out this form](#))

Dates: September 11th, 2026 - December 4th, 2026

Times: Fridays 9-10:30am

Location: Microsoft Teams

Questions? Reach out to csr@uccs.edu for more information!



4th Annual UCCS Career Crossroads Networking Event

The UCCS Career Center is hosting the annual UCCS Career Crossroads networking event. Come by to network and find employment opportunities.

Open to students from all majors and alumni.

Featured industries: Defense/STEM, Government and Non-Profit, Healthcare, Business, and Education.

Date: Wednesday, September 30th, 2026

Time: 11:30 - 2:30 pm

Location: Berger Hall in the University Center

Please RSVP [here](#). Questions? Please reach out to careers@uccs.edu.

For other events happening across campus, please visit [Mountain Lion Connect](#).