

**Department of
Recreation, Sport and Tourism**

RST

**2025 Honors
and Awards**



**College of Applied
Health Sciences**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Program

Message from the Department Head

Dr. Carla Santos

Message from the Dean

Dr. Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell

Undergraduate Awards

Joan Braswell Scholarship

Nicole Dudek

Charles K. Brightbill Memorial Scholarship

Gavin Christopherson

John Bruce Capel Memorial Scholarship

Sirui (Andy) Hou, Tadeas Placek

Chicago Knight Life Charities Scholarship

Shai Lichtenfeld, Derrick Julius Washington

Margaret K. and Edward W. Harvey Scholarship in Parks and Recreation

Ian Hall, Genna Peters

Burriss F. Husman Scholarship

Nik Slabakov

George and Mary Lowrey Memorial Scholarship

Carter Blount, Door Nguyen

Paragon Marketing Group Scholarship

Shayaan Baki

Triple S Scholarship

Amalia Malecek

Edmund J. James Scholars

Graduate Awards

Charles K. Brightbill Memorial Scholarship

Xin Du

Christine Ziebarth Howe Graduate Student Award

Zafar Waziha Sarker, Lance Warwick

Mary and Duke Regnier Scholarship

Yael Bravo Vega, Piyumi Kotagedara Liyanage

J. Robert and Linda L. Rossman Graduate Research Scholarship

Jenna A. Fesemyer

Allen V. Sabora Research Award

Sohyeon Kim, Shohgo Motoyama, Xue Yan

Additional Recognition

Message from the Department Head



Dr. Carla Santos

On behalf of the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, congratulations on receiving this well-deserved award or scholarship!

Your dedication to RST's mission—both in the classroom and through your contributions to organizations on campus, in Urbana-Champaign, and beyond—sets you apart, and we couldn't be prouder.

At RST, we are committed to improving quality of life by fostering healthy lifestyles and strengthening communities. Your hard work and passion brings this mission to life, creating meaningful opportunities that positively impact diverse populations. You are not only shaping the future of our field—you are inspiring all of us along the way.

Whether you are advocating for inclusive recreation, enhancing sport programs, or driving innovation in tourism, your achievements make a lasting difference. As you move forward, we have no doubt you will continue to make a difference as leaders in the industry, educators, or scholars whose research drives progress.

Wherever your path leads, know that you will always be part of the RST community—one that celebrates your success and supports your journey. Congratulations again! We are so proud of you!

Message from the Dean



Dr. Cheryl Hanley-Maxwell

Congratulations to the 2025 award recipients in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism!

Your hard work, creativity and dedication have earned you this well-deserved recognition. These honors celebrate your excellence in education, research and public engagement, as well as your commitment to personal and professional growth. I could not be more proud of you.

Now more than ever, we recognize the critical role of recreation, sport and tourism in promoting health and well-being for individuals, families and communities. At Illinois, RST is at the forefront of advancing knowledge and practice in ways that are culturally relevant and inclusive. Our values—fairness, equity, justice and respect—are the foundation of our work, and your achievements reflect those same principles.

As future leaders in the field, let these values guide you toward meaningful, impactful careers. Your contributions will shape the future of recreation, sport and tourism, making them more accessible, enriching and transformative.

I wish you continued success—keep striving, innovating and inspiring!

Joan Braswell Scholarship

The Joan Braswell Scholarship supports undergraduate students in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, with preference given to those studying recreation. Established by Joan Braswell, a proud alumna dedicated to the field, this scholarship reflects her passion for recreation education and her commitment to helping students succeed. Through her generosity, Joan ensures future recreation professionals have the support they need to pursue their academic and career goals in the field she loves.



Nicole Dudek

Dudek is in the 4+1 program and will receive her B.S. and M.S. in RST in 2026. She has a deep love for recreation and tourism and is thrilled to be entering a field that has the capacity to do so much good in the world. Dudek has recently worked with WT Group as an accessibility intern and Geneva Park District as a recreation intern. This past summer, she worked with programming and event management at GPD, focusing on outdoor special events and community engagement. Dudek works as a grading assistant for RST 335 and is a James Scholar. She also works with DoubleSpot, a recent RST-born tech startup. In the future, she hopes to explore her many interests, delving especially into community-building, well-being, accessibility and sustainability. In her free time, Dudek spends her time with the Illini Wildlife and Conservation Club and Newman Foundation Koinonia. She loves hammocking, reading, baking, working out and attending Illini sporting events.

Charles K. Brightbill Memorial Scholarship

The Charles K. Brightbill Memorial Scholarship is a highly prestigious award given to an undergraduate student in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism. Named in honor of Charles K. Brightbill, a visionary leader in the recreation and park field, this scholarship recognizes an RST major who has demonstrated outstanding academic merit. Brightbill's legacy includes shaping national recreation policy, advancing community programs and developing one of the nation's most respected higher education programs at the University of Illinois.



Gavin Christopherson

Christopherson will graduate in May with his bachelor's in RST. He has built what he believes is the most unique resume: At 21 years old, Christopherson has been a part time grave digger, flower salesman, zamboni driver, ticket salesman, event manager, YouTube intern, football videographer and pickleball tournament director, all while being a full-time student. In his four years at Illinois, Christopherson has been recognized with the Tony Clements Memorial Scholarship, the Chicago Knight Life Charities Scholarship and now the Charles K. Brightbill Memorial Scholarship. His capstone project, carried out over the past two years, has been to head the Illini Get Pickled Charity Pickleball Tournament, an event which has raised more than \$10,000 for local nonprofit Cunningham Children's Home. He could not have done this without the support of RST faculty and his peers. The lessons learned with this project will help Christopherson continue working in community engagement.

John Bruce Capel Memorial Scholarship

The John Bruce Capel Scholarship is awarded to a sophomore or junior in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism who demonstrates outstanding ability and potential. Lt. John Bruce Capel, a 1966 graduate, was a standout football player at the University of Illinois, where he played alongside legendary linebacker Dick Butkus. After graduating, Capel served in the Vietnam War, where he tragically lost his life in combat on May 2, 1966. This scholarship honors his legacy and sacrifice.



Sirui (Andy) Hou

Hou is an international student from China. He is a senior student with a dual degree in RST with a sport concentration and intradisciplinary psychology. He is a huge soccer fan and a soccer coach. He currently serves as U17 boys assistant coach at Illinois Futbol Club. He also obtained a USSF D coaching license and is working on the C license. During his free time, Hou also loves to travel the world, enjoy great food and watch a lot of movies. After college, he wants to become a professional soccer coach and coach in the English Premier League one day.



Tadeas Placek

Placek is an international student from the Czech Republic and is a junior pursuing a B.S. in Recreation, Sport and Tourism with a concentration in sport management. He is a Division I track and field student-athlete, balancing his academic and athletic pursuits with leadership roles on campus. Placek serves as a co-leader of International Illini, an affinity group supporting international student-athletes, and as a representative on the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, where he serves on the diversity, equity and inclusion subcommittee, focusing on initiatives that promote inclusion and enhance the overall student-athlete experience. Placek has been named to the Dean's List multiple years, reflecting his dedication to academic excellence. After completing his bachelor's degree, he plans to pursue a master's degree in sport management to further his expertise in the field and prepare for a career in international sports administration.

Chicago Knight Life Charities Scholarship

The Chicago Knight Life Charities Scholarship is presented to two undergraduate students majoring in Recreation, Sport and Tourism who have demonstrated outstanding academic ability, entrepreneurial drive and spirit, RST community involvement and potential as a future RST professional.



Shai Lichtenfeld

Lichtenfeld is a junior from Highland Park, Illinois, and started at the College of Applied Health Sciences as a transfer student. He began his RST path and ultimately loved the Business Strategies for Professional Sports Organizations course. Additionally, he's studying minors in business and psychology and has already integrated coursework in relevant work experiences on campus. During his free time, he works as a marketing street team intern with Fighting Illini Athletics, where he promotes fan engagement at Illini athletic events. He also works within Campus Recreation as a customer service assistant at the UI Ice Arena. Lastly, he's active in many RSOs as the vice president and member of the Division 2 ACHA ice hockey team, a consultant in Tamid Club and a campus engagement chair in IlliniPAC. Expected to graduate in May 2026 he plans to work with Monarch Collective as a marketing and sales intern working in the vacation rental management industry in Chicago this summer.



Derrick Julius Washington

Washington plans to finish his B.S. in RST in spring 2027 and later get his master's. He loved his experience with collegiate athletics and wants to pursue a career in collegiate athletics. Washington has fallen in love with many different sports and enjoys watching students fulfill their dreams. He works for the University of Illinois DIA student ambassador event staff in addition to Fighting Illini football team equipment staff. Each role has provided him with so many opportunities to grow as a professional in the sports industry. Washington is also a member of the RST Student Advisory Council. He along with several other RST students discuss issues, current events and new courses pertaining to RST. Washington really enjoys watching football but says track and field will always have his heart. He says he recently took interest in tennis and has his boss Todd Marshall to thank for it.

Margaret K. and Edward W. Harvey Scholarship in Parks and Recreation

The Margaret K. and Edward W. Harvey Scholarship in Parks and Recreation is awarded to an undergraduate student in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism who graduated from a high school in the state of Illinois. Preference is given to students who have a concentration in parks and recreation management.



Ian Hall

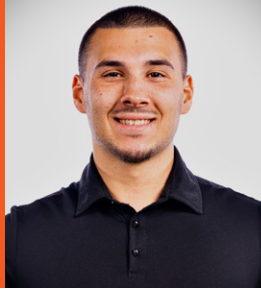
Hall is from Litchfield, Illinois, and is on track to graduate from the 4+1 B.S. and M.S. program in RST in May 2026. After graduation, he plans to work in an athletic department at the collegiate level in Central or Southern Illinois to help student-athletes become successful leaders and well- rounded people beyond their sport. Along with working in college athletics, Hall plans to work at the recreational level to make sports more inclusive to all athletes regardless of race, age, gender identity, income, skill level and other barriers. Hall is the lead manager for the Illinois women's soccer team, a student lead videographer for the Fighting Illini productions team and an event manager for the Department of Theatre. He is also the treasurer and pickle mascot for the RST charity pickleball tournament. Hall loves being outside, biking, hiking, wakeboarding and surfing, and he is building his photography business in his free time.

Genna Peters

Peters is a senior in the RST 4+1 master's program. She is working with Campus Recreation as their risk management intern and is a teaching assistant for RST 441. This spring, she is volunteering with the Illinois marathon to help plan the Michael Hogue Team Mile post-race celebration. Peters also serves as the varsity captain for the Illinois rowing team.

Burris F. Husman Scholarship

Dr. Burris F. Husman completed a bachelor's degree in the College of Education and a master's degree in physical education from the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois. Dr. Husman retired as a professor from the University of Maryland, where his research interests included fitness and physical education programs. This scholarship was established to assist undergraduates in the College of AHS.



Nik Slabakov

Slabakov is a junior at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, previously attending Harper Community College in Palatine, Illinois. He plans on completing his bachelor's degree in recreation, sport and tourism management with a sports concentration in April 2026. Slabakov aspires to work in the front office of an NFL team and is gaining valuable experience by working in marketing for the athletic department at Illinois. He works full time while pursuing his education and is independently funding his college expenses, showing how passionate he is about achieving his lifelong dream of working for the NFL.

George and Mary Lowrey Memorial Scholarship

The George and Mary Lowrey Scholarship was established by family members, former students and friends of Dr. George A. Lowrey. Dr. Lowrey taught in the Department of Leisure Studies for 20 years and was actively involved in programs through the Urbana Park District. He enjoyed summers spent taking students on canoe trips to the Canadian Boundary Waters, and he had a lifelong commitment to music and dance. The scholarship is awarded to undergraduate students in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism who demonstrate outstanding scholarship, service and merit.



Carter Blount

Blount is a Champaign native who has experienced the Illinois community from a young age, attending Fighting Illini sporting events for as long as he can remember. His passion for sports did not stop when he arrived on campus as a student. From his first day on campus to now, he has worked with the women's soccer team and at the Atkins Tennis Center. Blount is the head of finance for the Illinois Sports Business Conference and is one of two College of Applied Health Sciences representatives to the Illinois Student Council. He also serves on the RST Advisory Council and the Student Success Undergraduate Advisory Board, supporting the undergraduate student experience across campus. Academically, Blount was selected for the Dean's List in the fall 2023 and spring 2024 semesters. After graduation, Blount will attend law school to pursue a career in intercollegiate athletic administration.



Door Nguyen

Nguyen is pursuing a B.S. in Recreation, Sport and Tourism with a minor in hospitality management to gain valuable insight in the tourism and hospitality industry. After earning their B.S. in RST in May 2026, they plan on pursuing a career in event management, hotels or sustainable tourism. Nguyen is playing a key role in Scott Hall Council by collaborating closely with Rob Flowers to provide guidance, enhance the community experience and develop social events for residents. This semester, they recently started working with Clinical Assistant Professor Jorden Brotherton at the Spice Box in hospitality management as a learning assistant to ensure students have the best possible learning experience. Nguyen has earned Dean's List recognition every semester and is working on maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

Paragon Marketing Group Scholarship

The Paragon Marketing Group Scholarship is awarded to an undergraduate student in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism who is a freshman, sophomore or junior. The recipient must have a strong GPA, demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion and consistently exhibit leadership abilities and strong character. This scholarship recognizes students who embody the values of excellence, integrity and community, fostering future leaders in the field of recreation, sport and tourism.



Shayaan Baki

Baki will complete his bachelor's degree in recreation, sport and tourism (sport management concentration) with a business minor in May 2026. With a passion for sports marketing, Baki aspires to work as a marketing coordinator for a professional sports organization or agency, helping to create immersive experiences that connect organizations with their fans. Baki has gained valuable experience as a marketing assistant for Illinois athletics, where he has assisted in leading a team of interns, executed promotional campaigns and contributed to major events like the Illinois vs Michigan Memorial Stadium rededication game. He is also a James Scholar, an RST Student Advisory Council member and has been named to the Dean's List multiple times. This summer, Baki will continue developing his skills as a Road Warrior intern with Paragon Marketing Group, furthering his expertise in event activation and brand engagement. In his free time, he enjoys traveling, playing pickleball and volunteering in the community.

Triple S Scholarship

This scholarship was established by Sarah B. Nemeth to honor her three favorite professors—Dr. Kimberly Shinew, Dr. William Stewart and Dr. Monika Stodolska—whose last names all begin with “S.” Awarded to a junior or senior pursuing a concentration in recreation, this scholarship recognizes students who demonstrate exceptional ability, potential and commitment to the field. It is intended to support students as they continue their academic and professional journeys in recreation.



Amalia Malecek

Malecek will graduate in May 2025 with a bachelor's in recreation, sport and tourism with a concentration in recreation. She will be pursuing a master's degree in Europe and hopes to develop her research skills in studying different countries' cultures and views on outdoor recreation and how that connects to the value of nature and nature-based tourism in their communities. Malecek grew up in Onalaska, Wisconsin, and was surrounded by the bluffs formed in the Driftless Area, a geographic anomaly unique to the midwest. This created her love of outdoor recreation as well as tourism and inspired her to pursue a degree in learning to promote tourism and recreation in these natural wonders in a sustainable method that supports the local communities. She has had the wonderful opportunity to hold research assistant positions with RST Assistant Professors Sharon Zou and Nick Pitas and Teaching Assistant Professor Renata Endres. These opportunities have further solidified her passion for research in recreation.

Edmund J. James Scholars

The Edmund J. James Scholars Program, named for the fourth president of the University of Illinois, is the honors program within the College of Applied Health Sciences. The program recognizes undergraduates who have achieved academic excellence and provides them with unique learning opportunities. The following students in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science are 2024–25 James Scholars.

Chloe Anderson
Shayaan Baki
Nathaniel Beebe
Gabriel Bouyett
Morgan Brown
Nicholas Cecchi
SemaJ Davis
Reeziah De Guzman
John DeNardo
Karly Dolin
Nicole Dudek
Arianne Garcia
Sirui Hou

Madeleine Larson
Nathaniel Lau
Shai Lichtenfeld
Samantha Macek
Brody Pekelder
Lauren Ratajczak
Joel Ruderman
Jameson Ryan
Natalie Ryan
Thomas Scherf
Brett Tibbitts
Braeden Trotter
Weston Venamore

Charles K. Brightbill Memorial Scholarship

The Charles K. Brightbill Memorial Scholarship is a highly prestigious award given to an student in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism. Named in honor of Charles K. Brightbill, a visionary leader in the recreation and park field, this scholarship recognizes an RST major who has demonstrated outstanding academic merit. Brightbill's legacy includes shaping national recreation policy, advancing community programs and developing one of the nation's most respected higher education programs at the University of Illinois.



Xin Du

Du plans to pursue a career in academia upon completing her Ph.D. Mentored by Associate Professor Toni Liechty and Assistant Professor Joelle Soulard, her research focuses on technology and experience design in leisure and tourism contexts. Her work aims to enhance individual and community well-being through strategic use of technology. Before starting her Ph.D., Du worked as a global operation specialist at TikTok. She received the Robert P. Larsen Grant from the career center for her innovative research on the leisure-work dynamics of social media influencers. She also secured a research grant as a co-investigator from the Campus Research Board for a project exploring the transformative experiences of tattoo collectors. As Ph.D. student representative, she strived to improve RST graduate students' experiences by organizing social events and contributing to departmental decision-making. She also serves on the Global Relevance Committee of The Academy of Leisure Sciences, where she received the Leadership for the Future Award in 2025.

Christine Ziebarth Howe Graduate Student Award

The Christine Ziebarth Howe Graduate Student Award recognizes a doctoral student who demonstrates academic excellence in the field of leisure studies. Established in memory of Dr. Christine Z. Howe (1951–1997), this award honors her national reputation as a scholar, her extensive research contributions and her leadership in professional organizations. A dedicated professor and influential researcher, Dr. Howe’s legacy lives on through this award, supporting students who exemplify her commitment to advancing knowledge and shaping the field.



**Zafar Waziha
Sarker**

Sarker, originally from Bangladesh, is a second-year Ph.D. student in RST, supervised by Assistant Professor Nick Pitas. Her research explores how outdoor activities and physical activity impact mental and physical well-being, focusing on psychological, social and environmental influences on health behaviors. She holds a B.S. in Textile Engineering from Bangladesh University of Textiles and worked for three years in Bangladesh’s apparel industry before pursuing two master’s degrees in apparel merchandising and hospitality and tourism at Ohio University, where she was recognized as an Outstanding Graduate Student. As a research assistant at Illinois, Sarker contributes to multiple projects, engaging in data analysis, manuscript writing and mentoring junior Ph.D. students. She aims to advance research promoting well-being through recreation and physical activity. After graduation, she plans to pursue an academic career in research, teaching and mentorship.



Lance Warwick

Warwick is working toward the completion of his Ph.D. under the supervision of Assistant Professor Miki Sato, in which he is investigating the link between sport-based identities and pro-environmental behaviors among sport fans and participants. His goal is to encourage sport organizations to use their reach to help move the sport industry toward a more environmentally responsible future. Originally from Caledon, Ontario, Canada, Warwick holds an H.B.Comm. in Sports Administration from Laurentian University and an M.Sc. in Sport Management from the University of Guelph. He plans to pursue a faculty role where he can continue his research while influencing the next generation of sport managers through teaching. Outside of academia, Warwick volunteers for pro-environmental organizations and uses any spare time to snowboard, ski, hike or cycle. He is also the president of the North American Society for Sport Management Student Board.

Mary and Duke Regnier Scholarship

The Mary and Duke Regnier Scholarship supports students dedicated to enhancing human development through leisure and recreation. Established to continue the donors' lifelong service to rural communities, this scholarship honors their work in improving quality of life through programs in crafts, music, counseling and camping. Believing in the liberating effects of constructive leisure, the Regniers hope to inspire future leaders who will carry on their mission to enrich communities, both rural and urban, across Illinois.



Yael Bravo Vega

Bravo Vega is working toward completing his M.S. through the 4+1 program in RST and plans to graduate in December 2025. He aspires to work in different areas of the industry but has found joy in working within events. For the past two years, he has been a part of the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics and their event management team, allowing him to further understand the precise planning and execution of sporting events. Bravo Vega is also working as a teaching assistant for RST 240 and has previously worked as an undergraduate grader for RST 100. Bravo Vega has volunteered at the MedFest Special Olympics event at the Wintrust Sports Complex in Bedford Park, Illinois, through the help of RST faculty, ensuring 450 Special Olympians received important preseason competition certification. He loves interacting with his professors and aims to make a positive impact in the industry with everything he has learned through the department.



Piyumi Kotagedara Liyanage

Kotagedara Liyanage plans to complete her M.S. in Recreation, Sport and Tourism in summer 2025 under the guidance of Professor Laura Payne, the Joseph J. Bannon Director of the Office of Recreation and Park Resources. She aspires to a career in parks or recreation, focusing on program development that enhances public well-being through nature-based activities. Her research explores unstructured nature-based leisure and its impact on cancer survivors' mental health. Her previous study, "Socio-Economic Determinants of Wildlife Tourism Affecting Tourism Service Suppliers," was published in Uva Wellassa University's e-repository in Sri Lanka, her home country, in 2018. She won the Best Presenter Award in Hospitality and Tourism at the university's second International Research Symposium that year. As a research assistant in ORPR, Kotagedara Liyanage has expertise in community surveys, qualitative data analysis and report writing. As a teaching assistant, she holds office hours, grades assignments and assists with exam proctoring. She volunteered at the IPRA/IPDA Soaring to New Heights conference in 2024 and 2025 and received the IPRF Student Conference Scholarship in 2024.

J. Robert and Linda L. Rossman Graduate Research Scholarship

The J. Robert and Linda L. Rossman Graduate Research Scholarship supports graduate students in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism as they conduct dissertation or thesis research. Established to assist students in the final phase of graduate education, the scholarship gives preference to research on the antecedents, experiences and outcomes of recreation, sport and tourism. Inspired by Dr. J. Robert Rossman's own journey, this award helps future scholars advance knowledge in the field.



Jenna A. Fesemyer

Fesemyer is a dedicated scholar-athlete committed to advancing disability and sport studies in higher education. She plans to complete her Ph.D. in Recreation, Sport and Tourism in May 2026, with the goal of becoming a professor. As a research fellow for the Collaboratory of Adaptive Physical Education Research through the U.S. Department of Education, she explores ways to improve access and opportunities for athletes with disabilities. As a two-time Paralympian, Fesemyer draws from her experiences as an elite athlete to inform her academic work. Her journey through sport has shaped her passion for mentorship, policy and advocacy, which she hopes to integrate into her teaching and research. She credits her adviser, Associate Professor Toni Liechty, for inspiring her to bridge the gap between research and real-world application, emphasizing the importance of viewing sport as a vehicle for inclusion. Fesemyer is eager to bring her lived experience and academic expertise into the classroom to support future disability and sport scholars.

Allen V. Sapora Research Award

The Allen V. Sapora Research Award recognizes outstanding original research in the leisure field conducted outside of a class project. This award honors a student who has taken a leadership role in a research initiative, demonstrating innovation and scholarly excellence. Named after Dr. Allen V. Sapora, a pioneering scholar who integrated research into recreation education and co-founded the Academy of Leisure Studies, this award upholds his legacy of advancing knowledge in the field of leisure studies.



Sohyeon Kim

Kim, a Ph.D. candidate expected to complete her degree in May 2026 under Associate Professor Liza Berdychevsky, researches the complex interplay between technology and leisure, exploring how digital engagement shapes risks and benefits. She is interested in health and risk communication to equip individuals with tools and literacy for healthier and safer leisure participation. Her dissertation examines online sexual activity as leisure, investigating motivations and risk/benefit perception. Kim has presented at TALS and ICQI conferences, showcasing her qualitative and quantitative research. She mentored undergraduates through the SPARK and James Scholar programs, culminating in presentations at research symposia, fostering their academic development. As a global educator at ISSS, she cultivated cross-cultural understanding and promoted inclusive environments in school. Her goal is a faculty role with teaching and research responsibilities, where she can contribute to the field of leisure studies and mentor future scholars.



**Shohgo
Motoyama**



Xue Yan

Allen V. Sapora Research Award continued

Motoyama is a third-year Ph.D. candidate in Recreation, Sport and Tourism. He used to be a Division 1 baseball team scout in Japan. Based on his baseball scout career, he got a master's degree in sport management at the University of Minnesota and worked with an MLB team. His career goal is to be a faculty member in an educational institution and educate students in hands-on skills by integrating both academic and industrial experiences. His primary research emphasis is sport fans' loyalty formation. He published a paper focusing on sport fans' switching behavior as a co-author with Assistant Professor Miki Sato, and his current research investigates how sport fans create emotional attachments with their favorite teams through social media effects. Based on his research focus and industrial experiences, he has taught marketing in RST for two semesters and has offered practical insights that help RST undergraduate students' future careers.

Yan is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism at the University of Illinois, and she is advised by Dr. Liza Berdychevsky. Her research interests include sexual and social justice of individuals' leisure life, with a particular focus on transgender community. Yan is also interested in positive sexuality on gender and sexual minorities' leisure and recreation participation and sexual health education. Yan's dissertation uses an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to explore transgender individuals' perceptions of sex as a leisure activity and its impacts on their sexual subjectivity and sexual health. As a graduate assistant in RST, Yan has gained extensive experience in teaching. Her teaching experience includes courses that address foundational development in the RST field, further showcasing her readiness to contribute to academia and society for a diverse population.

Additional Recognition

Karen Martin Luetje and Robert E. Luetje Applied Health Sciences Scholarship

Madeleine Larson (renewed for the
2024–25 academic year)

Ariana Miguel (renewed for the
2024–25 academic year)

Don Hardin Endowed Fund in Recreation, Sport and Tourism

Seung-Jin Cho

Xin Du

Dalton Grimes

Sara Keivan

Latashia Key

Sohyeon Kim

Mia Li

Darcy Lu

Casey Moran

Shohgo Motoyama

Zachary Russell

Jonathan Ruwuya

Kshitij Tewari

Lance Warwick

Zeyu Wu

Xue Yan

RST Undergraduate Advisory Council

Matt Wargo

Vanessa Ramos

Bea De Guzman

Kia Southerland

Carter Blount

Shayaan Baki

Nicole Dudek

Derrick Washington

Michael Evans

Nate Beebe

Andy Hou

Todd Marshall

Sam Macek

Larry Parker

Forrest Reyes

Ella Shapiro

Peyton Rhodes

Kolin Dugle

Carson Damery

Emmet Rojas Nava

RST Honors and Awards Committee

Michael Raycraft

Toni Liechty

Monika Stodolska



**College of Applied
Health Sciences**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN