



Peabody College

COMMENCEMENT • AWARDS CEREMONY

Graduate and Professional Student Awards

May 8, 2025 | 1:00 p.m.

Peabody College

COMMENCEMENT AWARDS CEREMONY

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Associate Dean Nicole Cobb

Peabody College

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Human and Organizational Development Departmental Awards

Newbrough Award

Presented by Yolanda McDonald

Presented annually to a Community Research and Action, Community Development and Action, or Human Development Counseling student with the best completed dissertation, thesis, or empirical paper, as judged by a faculty-student award committee.



Mariah Danielle Caballero
(Warden, WA)

Mariah Caballero will begin her tenure-track assistant professor position in the Environmental Studies department at Wellesley College in the fall of 2025.

Roger F. Aubrey “North Star” Award

Presented by Jessica Tyler

Established in 1998 in memory of Roger F. Aubrey, a professor of psychology from 1977 to 1997 at Peabody College, to honor a member of the graduating class in human development counseling each year who demonstrates the greatest potential for facilitating human development through counseling.



Hannah Jewel Crider
(Santa Clarita, CA)

After graduation, Hannah plans to begin her career as a clinical mental health therapist at Allied Behavioral Health Solutions, where she'll have the opportunity to support children, adolescents, and adults and grow as a compassionate, client-centered clinician

Outstanding Community Development and Action Student Award

Presented by David Carlone

The Outstanding Community Development and Action Student Award is given to one graduating CDA student each year who demonstrates excellence in academic achievement, community engagement, and service to the program, department, and/or university.



**Christopher Andre
Abarientos Moneda**
(Christchurch, New Zealand)

After graduation Christopher will be staying in Nashville to work in community development, specifically in youth-based roles.

The Speer Award: Outstanding Human Development Studies Student Award

Presented by Ashmeet Oberoi

The Speer Award, named for HOD Chair Emeritus and HDS pioneer Paul Speer, recognizes an HDS graduate known to have humane instincts, a passion for developing themselves and their colleagues, and a demonstrated capacity for promoting human flourishing.



Jaime Halee Biskup
(Raleigh, NC)

After graduation, Jaime will be working for "The Wall Society" in North Carolina as a Brand marketing coordinator this year

The Pathfinder Award

Presented by Jessica Tyler

The Pathfinder Award, acknowledges leadership and service related to the core HDC values of diversity and justice within the program, university, and professional and broader communities.



Srinidhi Sukanya Panchapakesan
(McDonough, GA)

Srinidhi will be moving to Washington DC and will be seeking roles with high acuity populations.

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Leadership, Policy, and Organizations Departmental Awards

Arville V. Wheeler Prize

Presented by Marisa Cannata

Endowed by Raymond Murov (Ed.D. '63) to honor Arville V. Wheeler, professor of education at Peabody College, 1947 - 1965. Awarded to a graduating student who has excelled in the Peabody doctoral program, with preference given to a student in the area of education administration.



Blanchard George Diavua
(Collierville, TN)

After graduation, Blanchard plans to pursue district leadership and education policy roles.

Dave Jones Award for Excellence in Institutional Advancement

Presented by Emily House

Established in 1997 by alumni and friends to honor David R. Jones as the founder of the specialization in institutional advancement at Peabody College. The award is presented annually to a Department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations graduate who has excelled in academics and service.



Zoe Elizabeth Mitchel
(Little Neck, NY)

After graduation, Zoe will be moving to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and joining the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Michigan.

Outstanding Achievement and Professional Promise in Education Policy

Presented by Chris Candelaria

Presented annually to a graduating student in the Master of Public Policy Program who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement and exceptional promise.



Jack Wyatt Roberts Jue
(San Francisco, CA)

Jack plans on continuing his full-time role as an education policy analyst at Tennessee SCORE and cheer on his wife as she begins her Vanderbilt Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy!

Outstanding Achievement and Professional Promise in Independent School Leadership

Presented by Xiu Cravens

Presented annually to a graduating student in the Independent School Leadership Program who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement and exceptional promise.



Brandon Anthony Walker
(Houston, TX)

Brandon is currently the Head of Middle School at Presbyterian School in Houston. He is eager to continue leveraging the skills and frameworks learned in the ISL program to pursue his goal of becoming a Head of School.

Outstanding Achievement and Professional Promise in International Education Policy and Management

Presented by Xiu Cravens

Presented annually to a graduating student in the International Education Policy and Management Program who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement and exceptional promise.



Michelle Sarah Shibu Thomas
(Dubai, UAE)

Michelle plans to stay in Nashville and continue her work with non-profits, focusing on managing community-driven education programs and volunteer teaching at her church.

Outstanding Achievement and Professional Promise in Leadership and Learning in Organizations

Presented by Sherard Robbins

Presented annually to a graduating student in the Leading and Learning in Organization Program who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement and exceptional promise.



April China Crenshaw
(Chattanooga, TN)

April plans to continue advancing equity in education by leading efforts to expand access and student success in higher education, nonprofits, or policy organizations.

Outstanding Achievement and Professional Promise in Leadership and Organizational Performance

Presented by Christine Quinn Trank

Presented annually to a graduating student in the Leadership and Organizational Performance master's student who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement and professional promise.



Jordan Michelle Zahora
(Miamisburg, OH)

Since graduating, Jordan has continued her work in corporate HR as a Learning and Development Coordinator at Tractor Supply Company—while also wrapping up her first semester as a doctoral student in Organizational Psychology at Rutgers University.

Outstanding Achievement and Professional Promise in Higher Education Leadership

Presented by Marissa Canata

Presented annually to a graduating student in the Leadership and Organizational Performance master's student who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement and professional promise.



Solomon Kaleolani Enos
(Durham, NC)

Solomon is excited to apply what he has learned at Peabody towards addressing the current challenges in higher education. Solomon aspires to become the first Dean of Admissions of Native Hawaiian descent.

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Psychology and Human Development Departmental Awards

Outstanding Achievement and Professional Promise in Child Studies - Applied

Presented by Vicki Harris

Presented to a graduating master's student in the Child Studies Program for excellence in academics and professional contributions.



Samirah Ania Tunks
(Chicago, IL)

After graduation, Samirah will be a Developmental Therapist with First Steps, Inc., supporting young children and their families in reaching developmental milestones. She also plans to join the Research Committee at Infant Massage USA to explore how caregivers' nurturing touch and children's love languages strengthen caregiver-child bonds.

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Special Education Departmental Awards

Distinguished Teacher of Excellence in Special Education Award—Early Childhood Education Track

Presented by Kiersten Kinder

Established in 1999, this award is presented annually to the student who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education. The recipient exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.



Ella Francis Hewitt
(Wilmington, NC)

After graduation, Ella will be staying in Nashville and working as a teacher at the Susan Gray School

Distinguished Teacher of Excellence in Special Education Award—High Incidence Track

Presented by Alexandra Da Fonte

Established in 1999, this award is presented annually to the student who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education. The recipient exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.



Katrina Faye Vogel
(Ft. Lauderdale, FL)

Distinguished Teacher of Excellence in Special Education Award— Severe Disabilities Track

Presented by Alexandra Da Fonte

Established in 1999, this award is presented annually to the student who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education. The recipient exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.



Dakota-Kanae Tania Harris
(Hazlehurst, MI)

Distinguished Teacher of Excellence in Special Education Award— Severe Disabilities Track

Presented by Alexandra Da Fonte

Established in 1999, this award is presented annually to the student who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education. The recipient exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.



Barbara De La Pena
(Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico)

Upon graduation Barbara plans to work as a special education teacher in middle school.

Distinguished Teacher of Excellence in Special Education Award— Visual Disabilities Track

Presented by Rachel Schles

Established in 1999, this award is presented annually to the student who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education. The recipient exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.



Hailey Renee Naftel
(Bowling Green, KY)

After graduation, Hailey plans to serve both children in early intervention and school-aged students as a dedicated Teacher of the Visually Impaired, providing tailored support that fosters independence, development, and academic success at every stage of their growth.

Distinguished Service in Special Education Award: Severe Disabilities Track

Presented by Alexandra Da Fonte

Established in 1999, this award is presented annually to the student who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education. The recipient exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.



Carly Lucille Knauss
(Whippany, NJ)

After graduation, Carly will be working at Heritage Middle School in Williamson County School District as a Learning Lab teacher!

Distinguished Service in Special Education Award: Visual Disabilities Track

Presented by Rachel Schles

Established in 1999, this award is presented annually to the student who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education. The recipient exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.



Tabitha Hope Revak
(Everson, WA)

After graduation, Tabitha plans to work in Special Education in the Nashville area.

Distinguished Service in Special Education Award: Applied Behavior Analysis Track

Presented by Johanna Staubitz

Established in 1999, this award is presented annually to the student who exemplifies outstanding teaching in special education. The recipient exemplifies a student who has demonstrated knowledge and skills through field-based experiences and, more specifically, during student teaching. These students have demonstrated knowledge and skills in assessment, planning, data collection, instruction, collaboration, and professionalism.



Mary Grace Bridges
(Atlanta, GA)

Mary Grace plans to move home to Atlanta and pursue a career as a special educator and BCBA.

Distinguished Service in Applied Behavioral Analysis Award

Presented by Johanna Staubitz

This award is presented annually to the graduating student who exemplifies the highest commitment to professional service in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis. The recipient of this award exemplifies a student who has gone beyond the expectations with their commitment to support, guide, or advocate in the field.



Landry Chandler Chiles
(Nashville, TN)

After graduation, Landry will begin his role as a behavior analyst with Williamson County public schools in Tennessee

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Teaching and Learning Departmental Awards

Otto Bassler Award

Presented by Heidi Carlone

Presented annually to a professional or graduate student in the Department of Teaching and Learning who submits the most significant research study.



Natalie Annabelle Rae
(New York, NY)

Natalie is currently an Assistant Professor of Learning, Design, and Technology at Penn State University, teaching courses and researching the politics of STEM learning and teaching.

Outstanding Professional Promise Award for M.Ed. in Elementary Education

Presented by Brian Kissel

Presented annually to a professional student in the Department of Teaching and Learning who shows exceptional promise in the area of elementary education.



Annie Caroline Schweitzer
(Orlando, FL)

Annie is committed to continuing her work as a first-grade teacher at Glenclyff Entrepreneurship STEAM Magnet Elementary School for the next several years. Looking ahead, she aspires to pursue her Ed.D. with the goal of transitioning into a leadership role in elementary education administration."

Outstanding Professional Promise Award for M.Ed. in Multilingual Learner Education

Presented by Huili Hong

Presented annually to a professional student in the Department of Teaching and Learning who shows exceptional promise.



Olivia Christine Campbell
(Knoxville, TN)

After graduation, Olivia will start her teaching career as a first-grade multilingual learner educator at Charlotte Park Elementary School in Metro Nashville Public Schools.

Outstanding Professional Promise Award for M.Ed. in Learning and Design

Presented by Andy Hostetler

Presented annually to a professional student in the Department of Teaching and Learning who shows exceptional promise.



Lily Dahlstrom
(Mount Vernon, IA)

Lily will be teaching High School Spanish and will pursue a PhD in the future.

Outstanding Professional Promise Award for M.Ed. in Learning, Diversity and Urban Studies

Presented by Ana Christina da Silva
and Jacob Bennett

Presented annually to a professional
student in the Department of Teaching
and Learning who shows exceptional
promise.



Sydney Jae Mason
(Nashville, TN)

Jae will be entering her second year
teaching history at MNPS's John Overton
High School in addition to starting the
school's new dance program.

Outstanding Professional Promise Award for M.Ed. in Reading Education

Presented by Emily Pendergrass

Presented annually to a professional student in the Department of Teaching and Learning who shows exceptional promise.



Isabelle Ciaramitaro
(Memphis, TN)

Since completing her program Isabelle started her 7th year teaching. She teaches 3rd grade reading at a title one public school in Memphis, TN.

Outstanding Professional Promise Award for M.Ed. in Secondary Education

Presented by Rebecca Peterson

Presented annually to a professional student in the Department of Teaching and Learning who shows exceptional promise.



Grace Jieun Lee
(Euless, TX)

Grace will stay at Whites Creek High School and continue teaching Chemistry.

Outstanding Professional Promise Award for M.Ed. in World Language Education

Presented by Rebecca Peterson

Presented annually to a professional student in the Department of Teaching and Learning who shows exceptional promise.



Abigail Grace Keys
(Euless, TX)

After spending the summer working on the Academic Team for Vanderbilt Programs for Talented Youth, Abby will start her educator adventure this fall as a Spanish Teacher at J.T. Moore Middle School in Metro Nashville Public Schools.

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Peabody Student Life Awards

Peabody Student Life Compass Graduation Award for Professional Students

Presented by Yu Wu

Presented to a professional or graduate student who has provided exemplary leadership, vision, and coordination for a Peabody student organization.



Michelle Sarah Shibu Thomas
(Dubai, UAE)

Michelle plans to stay in Nashville and continue her work with non-profits, focusing on managing community-driven education programs and volunteer teaching at her church.

Peabody Student Life Compass Graduation Award for Graduate Students

Presented by Yu Wu

Presented to a professional or graduate student who has provided exemplary leadership, vision, and coordination for a Peabody student organization.



Melissa Luong
(Spring Valley, NY)

Melissa will be continuing her studies here at Vanderbilt as an advanced doctoral student in Community Research and Action.

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Peabody Office of the Dean

Master's Student Marshals

Presented by Dean Benbow



Miso Kim
(Apex, NC)

Miso is applying for jobs in North Carolina and looking to work at a university counseling center or community mental health agency to work towards full licensure for her LCMHC counseling license.



Caroline Ruth Simmons
(Raleigh, NC)

After graduation, Caroline will be working as a public-school history teacher for Metro Nashville Public Schools.



Jack Wyatt Roberts Jue
(San Francisco, CA)

Jack plans on continuing his full-time role as an education policy analyst at Tennessee SCORE and cheer on his wife as she begins her Vanderbilt Ed.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy!



Jordan Michelle Zahora
(Miamisburg, OH)

Since graduating, Jordan has continued her work in corporate HR as a Learning and Development Coordinator at Tractor Supply Company—while also wrapping up her first semester as a doctoral student in Organizational Psychology at Rutgers University.

Doctoral Student Marshals

Presented by Dean Benbow



Zohra Damani
(Chicago, IL)



James Allen Mullis
(Cookeville, TN)

Allen looks forward to continuing his journey in higher education leadership and is excited to explore future possibilities that align with his passion for student success.

Peabody Banner Bearers

Presented by Dean Benbow

The Peabody Banner Bearer is an honor bestowed on a graduating student in recognition of academic distinction and contributions to the Peabody community. The recipient is judged by the faculty to have excelled in all aspects of the program of study and is considered an outstanding example of a Peabody professional student.



Audrey Marion Thresher
(Nashville, TN)

After graduation, Audrey will be continuing work as a mental health therapist in Nashville, TN.



Zaina Hashmi
(Alpharetta, GA)

Zaina will be continuing her service in public education as both a teacher and instructional leader in Fulton County Schools.

The Peabody Medal – Master of Education

Presented by Dean Benbow

The Peabody Medal is the highest honor Peabody College can bestow on a graduating student. It is awarded to the graduating master's student who best personifies academic distinction, professional accomplishment, and co-curricular contributions to Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, and the larger community.



Skyler Marie Hughes
(Arrington, TN)

This fall, Skyler will be starting the Clinical Psychological Science Ph.D. program at Peabody College, working with Dr. Bruce Compas in the Stress and Coping lab. She will be involved in research focusing on families experiencing high levels of stress, including those affected by pediatric cancer, school violence, and Huntington's disease.

The Peabody Medal – Doctor of Education

Presented by Dean Benbow

The Peabody Medal is the highest honor Peabody College can bestow on a graduating student. It is awarded to the graduating doctor of education student who best personifies academic distinction, professional accomplishment, and co-curricular contributions to Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, and the larger community.



De'Shawn Cergill Washington
(Boston, MA)

Dr. Washington plans to expand his newly found LLC, Cultivating Changemakers, and organization that supports school districts across the country increase researched supported relationship building through restorative practices that increases student outcomes in K-12 settings.

