

# Focused on Research & Mentoring

Michael Metro has been pushing the limits – for his own education as well as to help others succeed. For the past two years, he has researched simulating proteins, specifically a protein that may be responsible for preventing cancer.

Metro's research involves Protein ITPA 2J4E and uses the technique of molecular dynamic solutions or “three-dimensional theoretical simulation of unknown reactions.” Through this process, a scientifically correct representation of the protein-nucleotide reaction – an atomic-level event – is virtually simulated on a computer. Since these reactions haven't been thoroughly researched, Metro's specific protein research is adding to the

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knowledge base of cancer research. “If our simulation proves successful, it will allow for synthesis of tailored proteins which would prevent specific types of cancer.”

Metro has also been involved in Lead to Succeed, a program that provides sustainable solutions to the education crisis affecting at-risk youth. This community service project inspired by EWU professor George Duvall and his experience in the foster care system. In schools today, attendance of at-risk youth is extremely low. Unfortunately, school districts often do not have the funding to aid these kids.

Lead to Succeed's answer is for college students to mentor at-risk high

## Building Inclusive Communities

In his first year of college at the University of Nevada, Sawyer Spackman felt there was a lack of community within the on-campus residential life. It was “lacking the involvement and comradeship that I wanted from my four years here.” Following his freshman year, he immediately got involved in the Housing and Residential Life on campus, which has both filled the void he felt as well as opened many doors to other communal opportunities. One of those opportunities was supporting the LGBTQ+ community on campus.

At a conference for College Resident Assistants in 2016, Spackman attended a session where other residential assistants discussed the LGBTQ+ community at their university

and their experience on the LGBTQ+ floor there. Spackman's reaction was immediate – “Why doesn't UNLV have that?” – especially when the University of Nevada is one of the most ethnically diverse campuses in the United States.

After eight weeks of research-based proposals, outreach to other universities with successful LGBTQ+ floors, and meetings with student leaders, personal supervisors, and housing administrators, Spackman was successful in gaining approval for a LGBTQ+ floor at his own university. Today, the floor community is “a place for queer and trans students, along with their allies, to live together while sharing a common experience – being non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgendered. The floor is a

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school students. Metro is helping the program to gain public attention through social media outreach. Currently the program is helping students succeed at Rogers High School in Spokane.

Through these two very different experiences, Metro has learned some valuable truths. The research in molecular dynamics has opened his interest into a future of scientific research. Lead to Succeed has changed his perspective on what it means to help others and the best ways to do that.

"Throwing money at deep societal issues simply isn't effective." He believes programs that approach the social injustice engrained in our society through people to people action will be more sustainable in the long run.

space where people feel safe, supported, and empowered to live their true lives and grow into successful adults, post-graduation."

Spackman has since enjoyed watching the students grow and learn through those shared experiences. He has observed that they support each other in ways other students don't. "A student asked me if I knew any trans women that were looking for makeup. The student had no use for makeup anymore, but didn't want to throw it away."

Throughout this experience, Spackman has become more experienced and better equipped to work with any and every kind of student in a variety of settings. "I like the idea of serving my students, not just being the 'superior' or leader that you might expect."

His experience also helped him decide to change his major to focus on

**"The greatest tool given to me was determination. Despite the failures I'm sure to experience, I'll never quit."**



**Michael and  
EWU professor  
George Duvall**

higher education and hospitality. Specifically, he wants to continue "going to other schools and working with them to promote diversity, inclusion, and social justice. I want to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to voice their voice, and rise to anything that they put their mind to."

**"Through servant leadership, I've been more effective and more engaged with my students. I think it's a really powerful concept."**

