USU Professor Wins Best Paper Award From Australian Journal | College of Engineering

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McCall won the 2020 Best Paper Award from the prestigious, peer-reviewed Australasian journal for her paper entitled “Exploring student disability and professional identity: navigating sociocultural expectations in U.S. undergraduate civil engineering programs.”

"A lot of times we as scholars write things and send it out into the world and you never really know who gets to see it or what impact it has," she said.

McCall wrote this paper in collaboration with Lisa McNair, Marie Paretti, and Ashley Shew from Virginia Tech, and Denise Simmons from the University of Florida. A special part of the experience for McCall is that the majority of their research team identifies as having some form of disability.

The study for the paper, which was funded by the National Science Foundation, explored the experiences of disabled civil engineering students in the United States. The paper identified the strategies students with a wide range of disabilities use to navigate socio-cultural systems and how that impacts their progress in becoming civil engineers.

The goal is to use this information to make global changes, due to the cultural similarities between education institutions in the United States and other countries, such as Australia. Because of this, McCall said the paper is starting an international dialogue surrounding disability in engineering education. Her hope is this work will lead to better support for disabled engineers in the future.

“We’re making progress as a field,” she added. “Even if you feel like you have a small part to play, having an awareness of what your students are going through and any sort of accessibility barrier that you can minimize for students, that is huge.”

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