

Basil Payne Named Master's Student Researcher of the Year

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Basil Payne has been active in research at USU since their time as an undergraduate, as a 2023 Peak Fellow, an URCO grant recipient, and a nominee for the 2024 Peak Prize: Undergraduate Researcher of the Year for the university. As a master's student, that hard work didn't stop, as Basil continued to research and create multimodal poetry.

For Basil, the most important part of their journey at USU has been finding community. They note, "Historically, I've been a bit of a loner. I love being by myself, writing by myself, pondering by myself, doing things by myself; though I love my alone time, I spend more time now with my friends and other graduate students — who also happen to be my friends. Spending time outside of my brain with other people kept me afloat throughout my master's."

As Basil begins their MFA program in poetry at the University of Maryland, this community, including the different writing groups composed of people within and outside of USU will continue to provide support. "Spending weekly time to write and talk about writing with these people has brought me so much peace," they say.

With the ultimate goal of teaching poetry at the collegiate level, Basil is excited about continuing their graduate education, where they will build upon the base of teaching they started as a graduate instructor at USU.

"I've wanted to do an MFA for a while," Basil reflects, "but when I graduated with my bachelor's, I didn't feel quite ready for it. Spending the two years at USU to get a master's degree helped me become a stronger, more confident student and writer. This department, especially the people within it, have given me the time and space I needed to grow and blossom into the tree I want to be."

When asked if they have advice for students, Basil said: "Follow your joy! The worst thing you can do is follow a path because you feel like you have to. I am happy because I follow my heart. Even if where your heart leads you doesn't make sense, follow it; you'll find more joy and peace than you could have ever expected."