



Photograph by Matt ...

The Shape of the Dominican's Past and Future

BY KURTIS KENDALL

Dr. Diego Ubiera found his love for literature late into his undergraduate career. After originally pursuing a degree in chemical engineering, his growing passion for literature compelled him to change his academic pursuits. Now, years later, at Fitchburg State in the University's English Studies Department, Ubiera teaches various courses on Latin American and Caribbean Literature.

Ubiera was born in the Dominican Republic, moving to the United States when he was 10 years old. The interest in his home nation has guided his academic work including his recent work in the field of Dominican Studies. Ubiera published "Caribbean Exceptions: The Problem of Race and Nation in Dominican Studies" in the *Latin American Research Review* – the top journal in his field – in 2019. The article is on the oversaturation of race, nation, and identity within this field of study, which he co-authored with Brendan Jamal Thornton, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Ubiera calls the work "a call to action to expand the imaginative horizons of Dominican Studies."

In the article, Ubiera and Thornton outline how the question of race, nation, and identity by far dominates the field of Dominican Studies, saying how there are over 180 books on these issues in the Dominican Republic. Ubiera explains "these are very important questions, but we still haven't moved beyond that as a field." These questions are so prevalent in Dominican Studies that they constrain other topics. "This really came to a head for us when we went to a couple of conferences and it was still the same thing. Undergraduates, graduate students, and professors presenting on the Trujillo dictatorship or anti-blackness in the DR, questions of identity. We felt like it just became a little too repetitive."

This is exactly what Ubiera is trying to stand against in his article: an oversimplification of the Dominican Republic by academic work produced in the US. Comparing academic work on the DR to neighboring Latin American countries like Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Ubiera says these nations aren't similarly represented. "The only thing that a lot of folks outside of the field know about is that Dominicans have this sort of tribulation with blackness."



Many elements of Dominican history and culture tend to be ignored, and he would love to see a wider variety of topics engaged by scholars in the field. Political activism, the cultural history of the 1961-65 Civil War, and the effects of neoliberalism are just some of his ideas. Including other topics such as social class, ethics, visual art, gender and sexuality, sports, religion, the economy, and labor studies into Dominican Studies would help to push fresher research agendas on the Dominican Republic as a country that is culturally rich and unique; and bring the field more in line with studies of neighboring Latin American and Caribbean countries.

"There's something there with the repetition of the topic, there's more to it than just fascination." Ubiera says there can be a tendency for US academics to frame studies about foreign countries into a specific narrative before even deeply studying the subject. "I think there's a tendency from the North to write about countries in the context of the savage slot or suffering poor; 'Look what's happening down there, we must intervene and suggest how people should identify.'"

For Ubiera, there is a need for more native academics or accounts from those on the ground in the DR to gain a fuller understanding of the country. “There’s a problematic connection between those who write and those who are written about. We need to pay more attention to that from an ethnographic perspective, we need more embedded ethnography if we really want to flesh out the complexities of the Dominican experience.” The academic market - which rewards fashion and speedy publication - adds to these problems, Ubiera believes. He argues that the demands of the US academic marketplace are responsible for so many publications

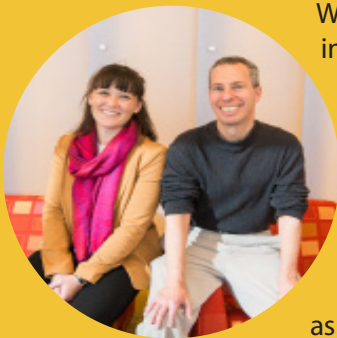
on a single question, however interesting the question may be.

Ubiera is now expanding his dissertation work about the Dominican novelist, essayist, and politician, Pedro Francisco Bonó (1828-1906). Bonó was a member of the nation’s elite in the 19th century before he turned his back on that lifestyle after being disillusioned with patronage politics, the growth of the sugar industry and its effects on the national economy. He settled in a small town to write, critiquing what unfolded in his country from his newly adopted vantage point in the isolated countryside. Bonó published the first Dominican novel in 1856 and wrote some of

the most interesting essays produced by a Caribbean writer in the late nineteenth-century.

Bonó is a relatively unknown figure in Dominican history, despite his importance in understanding the Dominican Republic at the end of the nineteenth century and influencing Caribbean political thought as in the case of the famous Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz. Ubiera plans to go beyond Bonó and explore those who influenced him. “Who was Bonó talking to? Who were his interlocutors throughout the Americas? I plan to write not just about him, but about a wider set of Caribbean intellectuals who were raising similar issues.”

From the Co-Coordinator, Eric Budd and Elise Takehana



While we certainly find ourselves in unusual times, given 2020 has turned into near constant upsets, we are still filled with joy to return for the academic year and to reconnect with our friends and colleagues, even if from a distance. If COVID-19 has taught us anything as human beings, among its most distinct lessons must be the value of community and the overlooked reliance and pleasure we’ve gained over the years from the many impromptu conversations we’ve shared in hallways and doorways.

Certainly state closures and the move to online and distant teaching has posed challenges to most especially in our ability to continue with research and understandably so. Although conditions are not ideal for many, we’re still committed to celebrating and supporting FSU faculty as they continue on with their lives as researchers, even if that means slowing down or pausing their research. You remain a scholar and researcher even if you find yourself serving as a caretaker, third-grade home school teacher, or professional toddler distractor.

Given physical (not social) distancing, we’ve taken to Google Meets for our Speaker Series as well as the rescheduled colloquium on Digital Humanities. We’ll also quadruple our efforts to utilize social media and our interdisciplinary research groups to maintain a sense of community.

Below you’ll find some links to a few articles that explore the different ways that faculty are navigating through this pandemic and how the pandemic has effected researchers differently.

Nature magazine reports on gender disparities for faculty researchers in the sciences: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-0921-y>. The Chronicle talks about the impact of COVID on female faculty members more broadly at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/being-a-woman-in-academe-has-its-challenges-a-global-pandemic-not-helping>.

Inside Higher Ed reports on institutional changes that can account for declining research amidst the pandemic: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/09/04/advice-academic-administrators-how-best-support-faculty-during-pandemic-opinion> and some tips on how faculty can shift their research practices and time use while researching from home: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2020/04/02/how-continue-push-your-research-forward-while-staying-home-during-pandemic-opinion>

In short, there is no right answer, and each of us has to find what works for us. In that spirit, we are organizing a virtual forum where we can come together to talk about what is, and isn’t, working for us, the challenges we are facing, and what could help us overcome these challenges. We’ll be sharing more information once we schedule the forum. As the co-coordinators for the Center for Faculty Scholarship we are here to promote scholarship across the community, so if you have any ideas on ways we can do that, please let us know.

Understanding Gun Ownership

BY KURTIS KENDALL

Many groups of people in the United States face stigma. Though we might think of heavily stigmatized conditions such as mental illness, a criminal record, or a physical disability, Dr. Zachary Miner, of Fitchburg State's Behavioral Sciences Department, applied his interest in stigmatization towards a uniquely understudied group: gun owners.

Multiple factors led to Miner's fascination with gun enthusiasts and their subculture. "I'd always had interest in firearm ownership as a topic, as I grew up not owning firearms at all and didn't really know anything about them."

In the mid 2000s, an argument with a friend about the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban prompted him to actually read the bill and become more aware of how gun ownership in the US operated. "There were a lot of things going on with public shootings and possible legislation at the time, so it really was a timely topic and, unfortunately, has remained a timely topic ever since."

A few years later, when Miner was a graduate student, he decided to conduct his dissertation work on gun ownership. Miner's research interest led him to upstate New York, where his research focused on gaining a better understanding of the culture of gun owners and to gauge the stigma of such a culture in that region of America. Miner wanted to cast as wide a net as possible due to the lack of research data on gun owners. To gather data for this study, Miner conducted interviews as well as observed aspects of daily life with a few dozen legal gun owners in the region.

What Miner found in upstate New York was surprising. Essentially, "as a group, gun owners in upstate New York did not perceive themselves to be stigmatized." Previously, results around the nation indicated that gun owners were hesitant to tell people about their gun-owning status for fear of being stigmatized. However, in this region, gun owners said they have faced relatively few instances of social stigma by other individuals. Gun owners in upstate New York did say though that on a political level, they have dealt with negativity especially from state-level politics.

Miner theorized that aspects of the area's way of life played a significant role in why gun owners in his study didn't feel stigmatized. "There's a very prominent hunting culture in upstate New York. I don't think they're broadly viewed negatively because there are so many people who hunt. Plus, there's a good safety record there. When I was doing the studies, sometimes there were one or fewer hunting accidents an entire season, with thousands of people out hunting." This community strictly emphasizes gun safety and adhering to the law. However, these measures seem to conflict with the general public's perception of gun ownership and its dangers.



According to Miner, there isn't much research in the area of gun ownership, "partially because there's very little funding for it. In 1996, there was a law passed that the federal government is not allowed to provide any money for research that could be construed as supporting gun control." Miner states that due to this law, public information about guns and gun ownership is very limited. "What that has led to, unfortunately, is people not really understanding a lot about gun ownership." This has led to polarization of the topic in the United States.

This lack of knowledge and information motivates Miner to find the truth in his studies and present them clearly to his audience. "One of the things I like to do is give people facts and say, 'make your own decision about this.' I think people should reason from a factual position, not just from an opinion."

Miner says follow up studies that further inform the nation about gun ownership would be something he'd like to see. For example, there is very little research into the experiences of female gun owners and gun owners who are non-White. Miner also thinks research into gun owners who come from families whose parents did not own guns would be of interest to pursue in the future. Studies of these groups would help the public better understand the full spectrum of gun ownership in America.

The Privilege of Human Connection

BY ELISE TAKEHANA

When making a documentary film, Kevin McCarthy most frequently works as a one-person crew for the artistic freedom it affords him to follow his creative impulses while allowing him the space to build trust with the subjects of his films. It is this opportunity to connect intimately with the people he is filming that he most loves about non-fiction filmmaking. Making a film about someone yields “that feeling of connectedness we probably all yearn for as human beings.” It is a kind of connection where a subject might share with you parts of their lives that they would not even show their own family.

McCarthy’s films embrace such an intimacy because his interest is in the characters, in the people and their stories, so a kind of objective, anthropological distance is

not a part of his practice. He hopes to get closer to his subjects. “The dynamic between the filmmaker and the subject becomes kind of a power play between the person with the camera, and the person who’s on camera. I think my desire is to get closer, get to a better understanding, I tend towards probably crossing that line.”

McCarthy has been working on a film on advocates of undocumented immigrants in the United States that centers around a childhood friend’s legal practice in Florida. Like his last two filmmaking projects, *Stumped* and *Scenes from a Protest*, *South Florida Immigration Lawyer* (working title), is a multi-year commitment.

While he researched the issues immigration lawyers face and spoke to attorneys in the Boston area, there was no way he would

have the rapport and access that he would

have filming his friend. “The degree to which my friend was willing to open up his life was not what anyone else would be willing to do.” So during his spring 2019 sabbatical, McCarthy journeyed to Hollywood, Florida twice for two extended shoots to discover what the life of a lawyer representing undocumented immigrants looks like.

Filming a lawyer at work in his office, at first, did not result in the most visually engaging footage, offering an interesting filmmaking challenge. “I wonder how the story might come out with that lack of doing, but my friend is very expressive about his frustrations



Jeffrey Botelho meeting with a client at the client’s home in South Florida



Jeffrey Botelho working late in the day at his office

and shares a lot of asides with me.” To complement the lawyer-at-work footage, he captured his friend en route to immigration hearings at the Miami Immigration Court, moments at home with his Colombian-born wife (who also works in his practice), and numerous interviews with the attorney, his support staff, and clients. To contrast the observational-style of the office footage, he took a more lyrical approach to shooting scenes outside the office, capturing the South Florida environment and moments of quiet that could serve as an allegory to the story of his friend and his clients.

McCarthy has faith that there’s a story there “rooted in my friend’s character.” Even more, because McCarthy turns to the character to drive the story, he wants his film to uncover the personal and spiritual motivations his friend has

to do the work he does given the burn out rate among immigration lawyers.

While the first shoot focused on the working life of the attorney, the second shoot included filming clients both in meetings with their attorney and in interviews with them afterwards. For McCarthy, the interviews are a challenge since he does not speak Spanish and his attorney friend has had to serve as an intermediary and translator. Despite the language barrier, the details of the immigrants’ situations have been moving, even heart-wrenching. “It’s quite an honor to hear their stories.”

Near the end of that second week of shooting, McCarthy was interviewing two married clients, both illegal immigrants, at their home. As they described the uncertainty of their shadow life in South Florida and their hopes for

their family and future, his friend interjected. “He basically said ‘this is why I do what I do’ and I thought ‘oh my god this is the end of the movie’... I just have to figure out how to get to that moment.”

McCarthy planned to return during summer 2020 for a final round of shooting, however the pandemic squashed those plans for the time being. He is looking towards returning when it is safe to travel to capture the final scenes of the film and follow up on storylines from 2019. Then it is on to the grind of editing and “figuring out how all these moments amount to a compelling film....You think it will. You hope it will. But there’s that fear I think all filmmakers have that you have nothing. But for some perverse reason, I love walking that razor’s edge of not knowing if you’ve completely wasted two or three years.”

Intimacies of Lived Culture

BY ELISE TAKEHANA

Yasser Derwiche Djazaerly began his academic career working against identity politics. “I didn’t want to be the stereotypical Arab who comes to the west and what does he or she do? Middle Eastern Studies, Arabic literature. Those who come from North Africa go into Francophone literature, which is a product of colonialism.” His focus during undergraduate and graduate studies was French and German cultures and literatures, which he found “was like travelling to an undiscovered county because Germany was beyond the Arab cultural horizon since it, unlike Britain and France, did not occupy or colonize an Arab country.”

While he was revising his dissertation on Goethe and developing another project on Frederick the Great’s response to the French courtly culture of Louis XIV, the Arab Revolutions of 2011 erupted and Djazaerly was swept up by the current. “I was reading so many bad interpretations from people who had this tunnel view, unfortunately, including us Arabic people.” Too often interpretations were culturally unilateral or superficially comparative.

“There were so many things that were missing in terms of interpretation.” Djazaerly attributes this oversight to several causes: an overly politicized field of Middle Eastern Studies, the politicization of studying Arabic itself, and the unfortunately misunderstood or limited impact of the work of scholars like Edward Said particularly beyond the field of Middle Eastern Studies. Djazaerly finds the western leftist adoption of Said’s “orientalism” especially troubling in its blind ethnocentrism.

“The biggest example is the leftist journalist Robert Fisk,

who works for The Independent and has been covering the Middle East for more than 30 years. Here’s a guy who claims to have been a friend of Edward Said and yet in his articles he talks exactly in the manner that Edward Said criticized. He himself sits in a cafe in 2013 in Cairo, and what comes into his mind? The nineteenth-century French painter Delacroix! I’m amazed. Said begins his influential book *Orientalism* by criticizing a French journalist writing about Lebanon in the 1970s and thinking of Chateaubriand’s travel to the Levant at the beginning of the nineteenth century.”

The reaction of the European and American left to Arab Revolutions, especially the Syrian one, revealed that their adoption of Said’s criticism of orientalism was a matter pure ideology and not the result of a genuine understanding and appreciation of Middle Eastern cultures. Instead, his work was just another tool to attack Western imperialism. “This leftist reaction has implications that go beyond the Middle East because it illustrates clearly that we are still in the age of ideology.”

For Djazaerly, the turning point came in 2014 when The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, the largest research center in the Middle East, had a conference on sectarianism. “There things came together. Given my study of European history, I had a perspective on sectarianism that other scholars don’t have because they mostly look at sectarianism as a ‘Middle Eastern problem.’ Participating in these conferences was very exciting because I finally started meeting Arab intellectuals



and activists.” Djazaerly has since presented at eight conferences hosted by the Center. His latest conference presentation examined the European debate about migration, focusing on Syrian refugees and their integration in Germany.

Ultimately, Djazaerly found that having studied German and French cultures, and the experience of living in the US, France, and Germany gave him a different cross-cultural perspective that Arab and Western scholars don’t have. Furthermore, his research about Middle Eastern politics has persuaded him of the importance of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary work, something his joint PhD. in Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities has methodologically primed him for long before he began his work in Middle Eastern Studies.

His 2019 printed study, published in Arabic, “Lawrence, Brémont and the Strategy of Sykes-Picot,” is an example of his cross-national and interdisciplinary approach. While historians of the birth of the modern Middle East during World War I focus on the role of the so-called Lawrence “of Arabia,” Djazaerly combined the analysis of Lawrence’s role with that of Édouard Brémont, the soldier orientalist France sent to ensure a unified Arab state was not created after World War I and thus safeguard France’s plan to occupy what is today Syria and Lebanon. By combining the critique of orientalism with history and the strategic thinking practiced in international relations,

Djazaerly could compare Britain's strategies with its representative Lawrence against those France exercised through its executor, Brémond, who, incidentally, is barely mentioned by historians of World War I.

Such a study would have been impossible without knowing English, French, and German, which

makes Djazaerly deeply appreciative of Goethe's famous saying, "he [and we should add she] who doesn't speak a foreign language knows nothing about his [or her] own language.' The now famous dictum of the American political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, 'a person who knows only one country knows no countries,' is but

a translation of what Goethe said about languages into the field of political science. You don't start becoming self-aware until you go out and discover other cultures. Every culture has its great treasures and it's such a beautiful thing to have that intimate access of being able to speak the language, appreciate the sound of its poetry."

The ABC's of IRB

AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS SCHILLING
BY ERIC BUDD

You are the Chair of FSU's Institutional Review Board. Who else is on the IRB?

There are eight members of the IRB, which includes Dr. Meg Hoey as a non-voting member, Dr. Robert Hynes as the Administration's representative, and a community member. The other members are all faculty. The rules and guidelines that the IRB uses as the basis for its decisions are determined by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), which is a branch of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

What projects require an IRB, and how does a faculty member know if their research requires one?

Basically all research projects that involve human participants require an IRB. However, it is tricky because the OHRP has its own definition of what it considers research. For example, a journalist interviewing a politician would not be considered to be doing research. If you aren't sure if your research requires an IRB, just ask me and I can explain whether or not you need one.

Because there was always a lot of confusion, the OHRP recently clarified its guidelines, and that has made the process a lot easier now. There are three categories of research: exempt, expedited, and projects that require a full IRB.

What types of research projects would be exempt from needing an IRB?

If someone was using databases that are widely available to the general public, or if there would not be any identifying information attached to the data obtained, it would be considered exempt. Similarly, a lot of educational research can be exempt if it is part of one's teaching, or just involves comparing an old curriculum with a new one. If your research is exempt, you still need to file an IRB application, but it is a much shorter application and the IRB Chair can determine right away that the project is exempt.

What types of research projects are expedited?

These are projects that do not rise above a minimal risk. All research is considered minimal risk as long as it doesn't involve protected populations such as children, pregnant women, prisoners, etc. Also, all of the information obtained must be de-identified and maintained confidentially. As long as these criteria are met, the project can be expedited where it is sent out right away to two other IRB members, and the entire Board doesn't have to consider the proposal.

So then what type of projects do require a full IRB?

Projects that entail more than minimal risk, or that involve protected populations, or entail unusual procedures, or research with which the IRB is unfamiliar. The IRB usually meets twice a

month, but it meets even more regularly prior to the Undergraduate Research Conference when a lot of the undergrads need an IRB for their projects.

What can you do if you're not sure if your project would require an IRB?

If your project involves human subjects, come to speak with me. Once you have the germ of an idea, come to see me and I can give you feedback on your project. I could raise any red flags so that you can address them prior to submitting a proposal. That will make it a lot easier when you actually fill out the application, by making sure you include all of the relevant information and emphasize the key points.

Is there anything else you'd like faculty to know about the IRB?

We deal with each application as unique, and read through each one carefully. We are very mindful that this is someone's project, and that they're the experts, so our role is to determine if their project can proceed. We are here to facilitate research, while ensuring that the rights of research participants are being protected, and that none of the OHRP's guidelines are violated. If the participants' rights were not being protected, or if the guidelines were being violated, it could result in serious sanctions on the University, so we take our role very seriously. I'm always happy to talk about research, so don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the IRB process!

Events

Please send details of events related to faculty research or intellectual life to etakehan@fitchburgstate.edu for inclusion on the Center for Faculty Scholarship's calendar and newsletter.

11 02 20

12:30 PERC 208

Prof. Ben Levy presents his talk "Modeling the Effect of HIV/AIDS Stigma on HIV Infection Dynamics in Kenya."

11 02 20

7:00pm Virtual

Prof. Robert Charles discusses and screens restored 1941 footage of Fitchburg meet.google.com/ujn-otbf-tat

10 05 20

12:30 PERC 208

Prof. Christine Devine's FSU Speaker Series talk, "[Nursing Student Perceptions of Academic and Clinical Integrity.](#)"

10 22 20

12:30 Virtual

Prof. Daniel Sarefield leads the CIC talk "Bad Emperors" at <https://meet.google.com/oyr-tydv-pdt>

11 18 20

3:30 PERC 208

A Colloquium panel on public digital humanities featuring Joe Wachtel, John J. Sylvia IV, Catherine Buell and Elise Takehana and moderated by Kisha Tracy.

12 07 20

12:30 PERC 208

EB Caron presents her talk "Identifying Therapist Strategies that Predict Early Childhood Intervention Outcomes." as a part of the FSU Speaker Series.

Conference Funding

Academic Affairs has set aside funding for faculty participation at remote/virtual conferences. To request funding, complete a simple form at <https://forms.gle/zHYwAroTEFvPFScu6>

The Deans will be making the conference funding decision using the following criteria. If approved your funding will be transferred to your department budgets. The applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and awarded while funds are available.

1. The faculty member is early in their career at FSU or nearing promotion.
2. The faculty member has been invited to give a talk or present their scholarly work, or holds a substantial leadership position.
3. The travel will advance the strategic initiatives of the university and/or prepare the campus for an accreditation process.

OER Creation Grants

Open Education Resources Creation Grants - The Open and Affordable Education Committee are awarding up to three (3) \$2000 grants to encourage faculty at Fitchburg State to create original course material (textbook, ancillary materials) for a class they teach and license it under a Creative Commons license.

Grants will also be awarded for replacing commercial textbooks with original course content or creating ancillary materials (labs, quizzes, slides, homework platforms) for existing OER textbooks. Newly created materials should fill a gap in existing Open Educational materials. Please note that previously created course content is not eligible for this grant.

ELIGIBILITY: All full-time faculty who will teach a course between July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 are eligible to apply. Applications are due by Friday, October 30, 2020. More details are available in the online application form at <https://forms.gle/pZFJA4KxAcarvLPf6>

Racial Justice Fund for Faculty and Librarians

The Office of the Provost has allocated immediate funding (\$6000) for faculty-led projects that engage students and/or community groups in research/scholarly projects addressing issues of racism. This funding is available immediately.

The proposals should explore issues of racism, including systemic racism, racial injustice, or anti-racism. The projects are intended to generate immediate and initial areas of scholarship and exploration and should span this academic year. Initial funding will be available as early as October, but may continue through June 30, 2021. At the end of the project, a brief report summarizing the results should be submitted.

Proposals should seek to build, test, or increase understanding of programs, policies, or practices to reduce inequality and racism in the academic, social, behavioral, or economic lives of people. Proposals should pursue studies about reducing inequality on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, language minority status, or immigrant origins.

See Dr. Alberto Cardelle's 9/9 email for details on the two-page application for funding. Review of proposals begins on September 21, 2020 and continues on a rolling basis until no funds remain.

Deans' Anti-Racism Fund Recipients

Congratulations to **Drs. Ron Kreiser, Kori Ryan, Zachary Miner, Lori Steckervetz, and Denise Sargent** on their funding awards for anti-racism and anti-bias initiatives on campus. Applications from the faculty are still being accepted. Please go to https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLS-dusuufE-aZytk3uEN4-MPbD87uh4657puP7h7sSBL15lcCEg/viewform?usp=sf_link&urp=gmail_link&gxids=7757 to apply.

Research Live

[The Center for Faculty Scholarship](#)

Co-Coordinators: Eric Budd and Elise Takehana
Newsletter Staff: Kurtis Kendall

If you are interested in having your work featured in Research Live, contact Elise Takehana at etakehan@fitchburgstate.edu