

## Henry L. Alder Awards

### Brittany Stephenson

*Lewis University*

Dr. Brittany Stephenson received her PhD in Applied Mathematics, with a concentration in Mathematical Ecology, from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in 2018 before joining the faculty at Lewis University in Romeoville, IL as Assistant Professor of Mathematics. At Lewis University, Dr. Stephenson has brought her student-centered, engaging teaching style to a wide range of classes that include 12 unique courses during her first three years. Her pedagogical repertoire includes flipped classrooms, mastery-based testing, active learning, student support through lecture outlines and notetaking guides, and small-group modeling projects that address real-world issues. Dr. Stephenson has impacted her department's curriculum through course development and revision in courses ranging from Mathematical Modeling to graduate-level Mathematics for Data Scientists to a service-learning general education course. She revised the probability and statistics course to support student preparation for actuarial exams, and founded the Actuarial Sciences Club, for which she is the faculty mentor. In addition, Dr. Stephenson regularly supervises independent studies in actuarial science or applied mathematics topics, and she has supervised students in the Lewis University Summer Undergraduate Research Experience.

Dr. Stephenson is active in research in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, where she is working with other Lewis faculty on a study comparing traditional lecture with active learning. This group has presented their research in papers at meetings of the Association of Christians in the Mathematical Sciences, an organization for which Dr. Stephenson serves as a mentor in the Graduate Student Mentoring Network. She is also a member of the Illinois Section Project NExT and lends her talents to judge and evaluate student research at both the section and national MAA levels. Dr. Stephenson's considerable energy extends to service on the leadership team for Southwest Chicago Math Circle for middle and high school teachers, providing logistical support for meetings as well as leading several sessions over the past few years. She has also created sessions for programs such as Girls Create with Technology where she hopes to encourage more females and underrepresented groups to work in STEM fields.

Having been recognized with her MAA section award for early career teaching, we believe Dr. Stephenson's dedication to the teaching and learning of mathematics enthusiastically recommends her as an Alder Award recipient.

### Response

It is an immense honor to be a 2022 recipient of the MAA Alder Award. I would not be where I am today without my amazing mentors along the way. From my family to my advisors and to my now colleagues, all have contributed to my academic and professional pathways. I also want to thank my wonderful students who motivate me each and every day. When I began my undergraduate degree at Mississippi State, I wavered back and forth about my major in mathematics until I met my advisor, Ratnasingham Shivaji. I am not sure if he knows the immense impact he had on my life. He showed by example what it meant to be a dedicated, compassionate, and supportive professor, and he introduced me to the world of mathematics research. For that, I am forever grateful. I will never forget that he was the first one to call me at midnight on my 21st birthday. It is also thanks to him that I met my graduate-level advisors, Judy Day and Suzanne Lenhart. They are a dynamic duo of strong women in mathematics who taught me, and still continue to teach me, so much. Their care and compassion carried me through my PhD. To my current colleagues at Lewis University, thank you for making even the most stressful days fun and for inspiring me with your in-

novative techniques and ideas. To Amanda, you are an amazing mentor and even better friend. The love of mathematics is in my genes—my mother, aunts, brother, and sister all majored in mathematics. Instead of playing “house” when I was young as many other girls did, I played “school,” where I wrote my own math tests and solutions to use when I “graded” them. I have always wanted to teach mathematics, so to now not only be teaching it, but also receiving recognition for doing so, I am truly humbled. To my parents and sister Kayla, thank you for the constant love, sacrifices, and support you have provided me. To my brother, Matt, my career in mathematics is thanks to your example and assistance, and you continue to inspire me. Last but certainly not least, to my husband Thomas, none of this would be possible without your encouragement and the joy you bring to me each day.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Originally from Mississippi, Brittany Stephenson grew up in a mathematically oriented family. Her older brother and first mentor Matt never missed a phone call when she needed help and would even answer difficult math questions while riding his bike across campus. Following in her mother and brother’s footsteps, Brittany decided to major in mathematics and attended Mississippi State University to complete her degree.