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Cultivate

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By Lynnette Harris and Marcus Jensen | April 16, 2021



Assistant Professor Heloisa Rutigliano teaches complex subjects in clear and creative ways to students of animal science in the Department of Animal, Dairy and Veterinary Sciences (ADVS), and to future veterinarians in USU's School of Veterinary Medicine. Her efforts and success as an educator were recognized in 2020 when the college named her the CAAS Teacher of the Year and she was then selected as the recipient of the Eldon J. Gardner Teacher of the Year Award, USU's top teaching honor.

Rutigliano's teaching is not just reserved for her classroom. She is also an esteemed researcher who welcomes students who are willing to learn and work into her lab group—including those with little or no laboratory experience—and she guides them in making meaningful discoveries and contributions to the field of animal science.

It was deep interest in animal science that drew Rutigliano to earning a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at Sao Paulo State University in her native Brazil, and then master's and doctoral degrees at the University of California, Davis. Experiences there as a teaching assistant sparked her interest in teaching.

"I thought it was a very fulfilling experience," she said. "I never thought I would want to be a teacher. But seeing students learn and the excitement of transferring that knowledge to them was inspiring. From that experience, I started thinking about pursuing a teaching career."

Rutigliano came to USU in 2009 in a post-doctoral research position and joined the faculty in 2013. Through her near decade as an instructor, Rutigliano has adjusted and refined her teaching philosophy. As a scientist, she approaches her classroom in a way similar to how she approaches any experiment.

"I have an idea, I test it in the classroom," she said. "I collect and analyze the results. If the results are positive, I will continue using it in future classes. If the results are not positive, I will modify it or move on to another idea. I see myself as a catalyst of learning and I strive to provide a positive learning environment to my students."

As an instructor, Rutigliano seeks to facilitate an environment that is conducive to learning, is collaborative, creative, transparent and empowering to students, helping them to become competent professionals as well as cultivate a desire for lifelong learning.

She currently teaches courses in animal physiology, immunology, endocrinology, and veterinary ethics and professionalism. Her students note that Rutigliano begins each semester stressing her desire for them to succeed and making it clear that she welcomes their questions in and outside of class time. Students appreciate her use of activities such as case studies that let them apply and test their knowledge without negative effects on their grades and praise her interest.

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<https://www.youtube.com/embed/SxBDb39aFtI560314>

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