

Name: **Taylor Leigh Vargo, PhD**

Institutional affiliation: **Assistant Professor of Psychology & Neuroscience, Simpson College**

Area of specialization: **Cognitive Psychology, focus on individual differences in comprehension**

[Website](#)



Brief (1 paragraph) summary of professional interests:

While I am a cognitive psychologist by training, my professional interests are heavily focused on student development and career readiness. I use my cognitive psychology background as a launching point to engage students both inside and outside of my classes. Importantly, I build the research process into all my courses and often encourage students to turn a classroom project into a conference-worthy experiment. This approach is deliberately designed to build transferable skills—critical thinking, scientific communication, data literacy—while tapping into students' own curiosity and creativity. My mentoring, advising, and teaching all follow the same philosophy: I meet students where their interests are and help them develop projects that are genuinely their own, preparing them for graduate school and careers in which intellectual independence matters. For me, research and teaching are not separate endeavors—my scholarship is most meaningful when it pulls students in alongside me.

Representative publications (no more than five):

*denotes undergraduate authors

Vargo, T. L., Hutson, J.P., Yu, Y., Ueda, Y., Saiki, J, & Loschky, L.C. (In preparation; full manuscript available). The role of a goal and culture on eye-movements: Volitional and Mandatory Top-Down Attentional Selection During Film Viewing, to be submitted to *Cognitive Research: Principles and Investigations*.

*Hubbell, I., **Vargo, T. L.,** & Loschky, L. C. (In preparation; full manuscript available). Movie genre preferences and visual attention during movie watching, to be submitted to *Perception and Psychophysics*.

Vargo, T. L. McGatlin, K. C., *Hubbell, I., & Bailey, H. R. (In preparation; full manuscript available). Evaluating a novel comic drawing task to measure age-related declines in event memory.

Vargo, T. L., Yu, Y., Hutson, J.P., Ueda, Y., Saiki, J, & Loschky, L.C. (In preparation; full manuscript available). Executive control of eye-movements in film: understanding how the tyranny of film is attenuated by cognitively demanding tasks.

Representative honors or awards (no more than five):

Spring 2025	Speaker at the 2025 Simpson Psi Chi Honor Society Induction Ceremony
February 2023	Diversity Program Funding Grant [\$400; University-wide]
January 2023	William L. Stamey Award for Undergraduate Teaching [\$500; University-wide]
January 2022	Awarded the Global Campus Development Grant: PSYCH 625, Human Factors [\$9,000; University-wide]
October 2021	Teaching & Learning Center's Highlighted Teacher of the Week (LINK TO ARTICLE)

Involvement in MPA:

My involvement with MPA spans over a decade, beginning when I first presented as an undergraduate in 2016 and continuing through every stage of my academic career. Since becoming an official member, I have consistently attended and presented research through posters, talks, and roundtable sessions — including co-leading a roundtable at an STP affiliate meeting in 2022. I have also contributed to the organization by reviewing abstracts for Psi Chi undergraduate submissions for several years.

Mentoring students in research, typically culminating to an MPA presentation, has been a thread running throughout my career. During graduate school, I worked individually with six undergraduates on independent research projects, learning how to meaningfully engage students while connecting their work to broader scholarly goals. Since joining Simpson College as tenure-track faculty in 2023, that commitment has only deepened — I have supported more than 20 students in presenting independent research at MPA, which remains one of the most rewarding aspects of my professional life.

As I continue to grow into my faculty role (completing my PhD in May 2025), my scholarly focus has naturally evolved alongside my students' interests and my own classroom experiences. I am currently developing presentations that reflect on teaching, mentorship, and undergraduate research engagement to share with the broader MPA community in upcoming meetings.