

*Ruth J. and Howard F. Newton Memorial Graduate Student
Teaching Award in Statistics
2025 Recipient - Isaac Ray*

Isaac Ray is the 2025 recipient of the Ruth J. and Howard F. Newton Memorial Graduate Student Teaching Award in Statistics. In 2024, Isaac taught STAT 489: Structured Research Experience (Spring) and STAT 201 (Fall). STAT 489 was intended to give senior undergraduate Statistics majors a taste of research and help them develop research skills. Because it is a more advanced class with relatively few prepared materials, Isaac had to invest significant time and energy on curriculum development. The department did not have another option for instructor of this class, and it would likely have not been offered if Isaac had not volunteered to teach it; “I like a challenge,” he said at the time. I observed firsthand how Isaac carefully navigated the challenge of balancing rigor with fairness in the classroom. He pushed students to engage deeply with the material—challenging them with thought-provoking problems that required them to apply concepts beyond the exact examples shown in lectures—while also demonstrating an understanding of their needs, ensuring that expectations remained reasonable and supportive. His ability to strike this balance made his course both demanding and rewarding, helping students develop both confidence and independence in their learning.

Isaac’s students commended his efforts in their end-of-semester course evaluations. For the item “On the whole, this was a good course,” the average response was 4.50 (out of 5, with 5 the best) in STAT 489 and 3.83 in STAT 201. For the item “On the whole, this was a good instructor,” the average response was 4.83 (again out of 5) in STAT 489 and 4.39 in STAT 201. Many students included enthusiastically positive comments in their evaluations, including the following:

- “Mr. Ray really enjoys teaching statistics and has a really good sense of humor that helps keep the class engaged during lecture.”
- “The way he teaches is highly engaging.”
- “He is a very encouraging professor, and never have I had the feeling that I could not go up and ask him a question when I was confused.”
- “He is an incredible teacher. He always sends out examples, even when not a lot of people look at them, showing how he goes above and beyond even for the few who need them.”
- “He doesn’t just go off of the slides, but he builds off of the slides by giving us examples that relate to us and by going in depth in the slide show. He is a really good lecturer.”
- “Mr. Ray always encouraged students to participate in class and actually made an 8am fun to attend. He always tried to make students laugh and helped me understand statistics on a better level.”

Isaac will receive a certificate and a \$1,000 cash award.

Well done, Isaac.

Alan R. Dabney

Professor & Associate Head for Teaching Excellence
Department of Statistics