

# Moline Dastrup, 2025 Professional Achievement Award: One Aggie's Journey to Change how the World Learns

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Moline Dastrup receiving PAA award

Moline Dastrup has spent her career creating opportunities for others to unlock the power of knowledge at Google, Duolingo, and innovative startups. Yet during and even after high school, her own path of learning was unclear until she encountered what she calls transformative experiences at the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business.

As a freshman in high school Dastrup suffered a severe brain injury and was unsure if she could ever attend college. She says it took years to overcome the brain injury and eventually made it to Utah State University (USU) in 2005, but even then, says as a first-generation college student, “I knew nothing about college.”

Dastrup recalls opening the USU course manual and randomly circling classes that looked interesting across campus and eventually stumbling into the Huntsman School of Business. Here she met students engaged in hands-on learning experiences and professors who would become important mentors. She says though she didn’t have a lot of money like most college students, she was encouraged to apply for travel scholarships. She did and after experiencing her first global learning experience to Peru – a precursor to today’s SEED program – found her path.

“I just couldn’t believe it,” Dastrup said. “To say that that experience transformed my life – that is the biggest understatement that I could say, because that opened my eyes to this whole new world of what it means to be a professional and what it means to be a student and what it means to be involved and engaged.”

Dastrup was accepted into one of the first Huntsman Scholar cohorts and calls that experience also life changing. During her time as a Huntsman student and throughout her career, Dastrup has exhibited the lasting and far-reaching value of experiential learning offered at the Huntsman School. In her junior year with fellow Aggies, she co-founded Effect International, a chain of private schools pioneering affordable education in India.

After graduating in 2011, Dastrup served as Effect International's chief operating officer and led teams to Nepal to provide technology solutions to trafficking and disaster relief. Following Effect International, Dastrup spent seven years at Google, starting in Google Apps for Business, now known as Google Workspace, before moving into Google Cloud Sales. Eventually she joined the development team in Google's Area 120 incubator that co-founded Rivet, which became the world's most popular reading app.

In 2021, Dastrup moved to Duolingo and founded the Media Learning Team and led development of some of Duolingo's most beloved learning features such as Stories and DuoRadio. Taking her expertise in strategy, business development, and her creative vision for developing accessible education content, Dastrup took the leap in 2024 to launch Boppo, a new start-up with her husband Ben Hansen, an engineer whom she met at Google.

Inspired by their two children, Boppo is a hands-on learning tool that fosters meaningful interaction and play, without the addictiveness of screens. The product is anticipated to launch fall 2025. Hansen, Dastrup's husband and Boppo co-founder, says with her ability to build partnerships and create, Dastrup has taken Boppo to a whole new level. He says that like a great basketball player who has an on/off court positive impact, when Dastrup is "in the game" she makes everyone on her team better.

In recognition of her entrepreneurial spirit and innovative contributions for the betterment of society, Dastrup was awarded the 2025 Professional Achievement Award at Huntsman Hall in July. Surrounded by her husband and children, parents, and former professors and mentors from the Huntsman School, Dastrup shared her story and thanked her mentors for their influence in the place she developed the confidence to make a difference in the world.

"Utah State is different, and the Huntsman School of Business is different," she said. "I loved the belief I learned here that anything was possible. I know that students in other universities don't get the level of contact with their professors, I know it's not the norm, and it's not lost on me how special it is that I can come here today and feel like I'm coming home."