

Fall 2017

## Premier, Fall 2017

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# PREMIER

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

## Premier, Fall 2017

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## A Message from the Dean (Premier, Fall 2017)



Dear COE Alumni and Friends,

Welcome to the fall issue of Premier magazine. This past January, the College of Education transitioned back to Schindler Education Center (SEC) after the completion of the 18-month renovation. The college is filled with enthusiasm, and renewed focus on building community in our vibrant, modern learning environment. We are committed to advancing academic excellence and the impact of a university education through a dedicated focus on individual undergraduate and graduate students. We strive also to fulfill the potential of our talented and dedicated faculty with the support of alumni, parents, and friends of the college.

During the academic year, our faculty are deeply engaged in transforming teaching and learning for generations of students and the ensuing pages provide highlights of their work. There is much to share about the College of Education and I encourage you to take a moment to explore our faculty and student engaged in research/scholarly activities, teaching, and community engagement. Thank you for your continued support of the College of Education.

Sincerely,

Gaëtane Jean-Marie, Ph.D.  
Dean, UNI College of Education

# Schindler Education Center 2.0



It's been more than 40 years since the Schindler Education Center was first built. At the time, it was the first building to serve as a central hub for students and faculty in the College of Education, even though the university had been preparing educators as far back as 1876.

The building was, at the time, heralded as a state-of-the-art education center designed to serve the changing philosophies and methods of teacher education.

But in the four decades since, things have changed. What was once at the forefront of teacher education in higher education had become outdated, no longer able to serve the needs of modern students who would be expected to lead classrooms in the 21st century.

Over 18 months, the building was gutted as part of an extensive redesign spearheaded by individuals specializing in educational facilities. Hundreds of different people -- including architects, designers, engineers, plumbers, electricians and construction specialists, many of them from the local area -- worked together to renovate the entire building.

The core elements of the redesign were technology, collaboration and flexibility, which are all represented in the distinctive classrooms now housed within the building.

The Collaborative Active-Learning Transformative (C.A.T.) Lab is a high-tech classroom comes complete with eight wall-mounted monitors and an oversized projection screen that can function independently or as a network, allowing students to engage in small and large group activities.

The DaVinci Studios offer a learning environment that promotes collaboration between different disciplines, which is essential to any student's growth and development. This learning space represents a

unique blend of science, technology, engineering and math with the arts (STEAM).



The Sandbox classroom is furnished with a variety of different types of educational furniture to create a modern classroom that has the ability to adapt to the needs of its students.

The student lounge areas have also been enhanced to create a more welcoming atmosphere, in particular the G.R.E.A.T. Room, or Gerdin Resource Exchange for the Advancement of Teaching. When you walk into the building, you're greeted with a variety of comfortable seating options, not to mention abundant daylighting from the clerestory.

On that same level is the HNI Corporation Instructional Resource and Technology Services (IRTS) Lab, where students develop learning experiences for their classrooms using different resources. These include lesson plans, curriculum, books, reference materials and technology.

The renovated building was rededicated at a ceremony on March 31, 2017.

# UNI Minority Educators for Today and Tomorrow (UMETT)



Fifteen students from Waterloo and Marshalltown schools attended the inaugural UNI Minority Educators for Today and Tomorrow (UMETT) summer academy. The free program, which took place over the course of one week this past summer, is for future and current educators and aimed at addressing the nationwide shortage of diverse educators.

The participants spent five nights living on campus and experiencing college life, in addition to gaining hands-on experience with area youth, connecting with other students interested in a career in education, and learning how they can make a difference in the lives of students as an educator. If the participants attend UNI after graduating high school or after going to an Iowa community college, they'll be eligible for a scholarship of \$500.

"The vision behind UMETT began with Terri Lasswell and Jen Beck, in particular their dedication to our shared vision of developing a pipeline of diverse teachers for the state of Iowa and beyond," said Gaetane Jean-Marie, dean of the College of Education.

Jean-Marie emphasizes the vital importance of continued collaboration between the Waterloo and Marshalltown school districts, the UNI Center for Urban Education (UNI-CUE) and the broader university community, including dedicated faculty and staff, support from senior level administration, and academic support services.

"Collectively, we are building capacity through our shared commitment to diversify the teacher education field," said Jean-Marie. "I'm enthusiastic about the UMETT initiative, which is advancing UNI's mission of inclusivity, diversity, community engagement, and campus vitality with an overarching goal of student success."

# Serving Our Community

One of the overarching goals of the College Education is to educate, serve and lead in the state of Iowa. That service begins right here in Cedar Falls and Waterloo, where students, faculty and staff are active members of the community. Through various initiatives across the Cedar Valley, UNI and the College of Education are making an impact in the lives of the people around us.



## Hip Hop Literacy Summer School

Administrators from the Waterloo Community School District partnered with UNI and the College of Education to establish an eight-week summer school literacy program for Waterloo elementary students that incorporates African American culture, specifically hip-hop.

It first started as a small program at Mount Carmel Baptist Church three years ago. Shuaib Meacham, associate professor of curriculum and instruction, brought the unique concept to UNI after helping to establish a similar program at the University of Delaware.

This past summer, at least 30 students from Waterloo schools participated each week in the inaugural program, which culminated in a trip to Target headquarters in Minneapolis.

Students from the College of Education served as the primary instructors.

## UNI-CUE Tutoring Center

The UNI-CUE Tutoring Center serves Black Hawk County Students in grades K-12 and consists of one-on-one tutoring sessions for 1.5 hours each week during the fall and spring semesters. Student volunteers, predominantly from UNI's College of Education, are paired up with tutees that best fit their schedule and the subject area that the tutee needs help in.

"We have had students that have come into the tutoring program failing classes," said Megan Holbach, assistant director for the UNI-CUE. "And by the time the tutoring program has finished for the semester, they are passing their class with an 'A.'"

Holbach also emphasized that the program offers tutors the opportunity to work in a diverse environment, create lesson plans, understand the importance of adapting to the student's learning style and learn how to communicate with their teacher peers.



## Cedar Valley's Little Pantries

The Cedar Valley's Little Free Pantries initiative was started to address the challenge of food insecurity in Northeast Iowa, as well as to promote a program of community engagement. The concept is simple: Build a pantry, place it in your community, fill it with food and every-day items and then tell people about it. It is free and easy access of food to solve short-term and immediate food insecurity issues.

"Being aware of the statistics in Black Hawk County and the area schools in the Waterloo community inspired me with the idea of Little Free Pantries," said Joyce Levingston, the Leisure, Youth and Human Services graduate student responsible for bringing the initiative to the Cedar Valley. "Some schools have 90 percent of their students who qualify for free or reduced lunch."



## UNited Dance Company

Bethany Piotter, a senior elementary special education major, established the UNited Dance Company (UDC) last year. UDC pairs UNI students with K-12 students within the community who are with or without a disability. The UNI students work together with the children in an effort to spread the love of dance to as many people as possible, in addition to promoting inclusion.

The organization was recognized with the "Most Promising New Student Organization" award at last spring's Student Leadership Awards ceremony. Piotter was also nominated for and received a national award, "United for Acceptance," through the PACER's National Bullying Awareness Center for her work with her dance company.

## "CatchLife"

The educational leadership department has partnered with the School Administrators of Iowa, which is an organization that serves practicing superintendents and principals, to incorporate their "CatchLife" wellness initiative into the principalship program at UNI.

The goal is to help future superintendents and principals learn to take better care of themselves and handle the potential occupational stress and anxiety. Thirty four candidates from the principalship program have agreed to participate in the pilot "CatchLife" program from January through April. Participants must commit to a daily activity goal, working out at least three times for a week for a minimum of 30 minutes, and sleeping for at least seven hours per night.

Undergraduate and graduate students taking courses with Jennifer Waldron, a professor from UNI's School of Kinesiology, Allied Health and Human Services (KAHHS), will serve as coaches for the participants and monitor their progress via the data from fitness watches.

## International Justice Mission

The UNI chapter of the International Justice Mission (IJM) was established to raise awareness on campus and in the community about the reality of human trafficking. The group wants to act as a voice on behalf of victims of injustice. Their advocacy work includes raising funds to help IJM's global efforts to rescue the victims of "modern-day slavery."

Michelle Powers, the student organization's president, said that the chapter is working to create platforms for students to be engaged advocates. Just last month, she accompanied 15 students to Cedar Rapids for training on how to educate hotels on the issue of human trafficking.

## Kappa Delta Pi

The UNI Psi Chapter of the Kappa Delta Pi (KDP) International Honor Society in Education has been honored with the Community Service Chapter Program Award from their national organization. The chapter is responsible for at least ten active community service programs that were developed by student members to meet a specific need within the community.

The chapter is an official "Partner in Education" with Orange Elementary School in the Waterloo Community School District. They have partnered with the school for several programs, providing 1:1 tutors for elementary and early childhood classrooms and adopting five needy families at the holidays and twelve families at Thanksgiving. One of their most notable efforts is their after-school Girls and Boys Basketball programs, assisting with extracurricular athletic opportunities for families who cannot afford private lessons or tournament clubs.

# Caring for Neighbors from Other Nations



Cadi Trask graduated from UNI in the spring with a bachelor's degree in health promotion, with an emphasis on global health and health disparities, but her final semester was spent far from Cedar Falls. It was spent interning at a small non-profit organization in California.

The organization, which is run by Afghan-American women, serves the Afghan population in the Bay Area. As an intern, Cadi helped teach English classes for recent and older immigrants, assisted with a nutrition program for Afghan mothers, handled office duties as needed and was involved in a number of other activities through the organization.

"I felt it was such a privilege to get to work right under Afghan women serving other Afghans," Cadi said. "While it was very fun for me, it could also feel very isolating at times, just like it would feel if I moved to their country, and just like it must feel for them at times living in ours."

She often noticed these feelings of isolation and loneliness among elderly Afghans, who are most respected in their native culture but don't feel that same level of respect from their Americanized children and grandchildren. Conversely, the grandchildren don't understand why their elders are upset because they were not raised in that culture.

Cadi recalls hearing stories of how different people from Afghanistan came to the United States, from wealthy business owners fleeing Communist armies to those whose spouses worked for the U.S. Embassy and fled after being accused of being spies.

"Everyone has a story," Cadi said. "All of the Afghans I met were incredibly hard-working people, people I am so proud to have as part of our country."

More than anything, the internship confirmed her love for people from other cultures, hearing their stories and helping them in any way that she can.

Currently, Cadi is living in Colorado and working with churches that have dedicated their efforts to loving and caring for their neighbors from other nations.

# Award-Winning Alums

Congratulations to all our alums that have been recognized with major awards in their professions and also by the university. Below is a list of a select few:

## Iowa Teacher of the Year Awards

The winner of the Iowa Department of Education's 2017 Teacher of the Year Award and two of the remaining four finalists graduated from UNI, including:

Winner: **Shelly Vroegh** of Norwalk, fifth-grade teacher and instructional coach in the Norwalk Community School District

Finalists:

- **Amanda Schiller** of Donnellson, middle school science teacher in the Van Buren Community School District
- **Laura Tracy** of Swalesdale, kindergarten teacher at North Butler Elementary School

## More Educator of the Year Awards

- **Justin Wiese**, Hopewell Elementary School physical education teacher, was named the 2016 Iowa Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year by the Iowa Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
- **James Heithoff**, 7th grade history teacher at Winterset Junior High School, was named the 2016 History Teacher of the Year in Iowa, an award co-sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
- **Lynell O'Connor**, principal of Williamsburg Junior-Senior High School, was named the 2017 Iowa Secondary Principal of the Year by the School Administrators of Iowa
- **Greg Ebeling**, superintendent of the Pella Community School district, was named the Iowa Superintendent of the Year for 2017-18 by the School Administrators of Iowa

## Department of Teaching Excellence in Mentoring Educators Award

The Department of Teaching implemented a new award this year to recognize and celebrate mentor teachers. The Excellence in Mentoring Educators Award honors retiring or transitioning teachers who have been dependable and outstanding mentors for UNI students throughout their careers. **Sue Green**, who retired in June after 37 years of teaching, most recently mathematics at Holmes Junior High in Cedar Falls, was the inaugural recipient of the award.

## Postsecondary Education: Student Affairs IDEAL Award

The Department of Postsecondary Education: Student Affairs also implemented a new award to recognize alums that have demonstrated exemplary achievement in the field of student affairs. The first annual IDEAL Award (Innovative, Dedicated, Educational, Alumni Leader) was presented to **Jon Buse**, Vice President, Student Services, Kirkwood Community College.

## Educational Leadership Legacy Award

This year's Educational Leadership Legacy Award was awarded to Woodbury Elementary School Principal **Anel Garza**. The award, which is in its fourth year, is presented annually to an alum of the UNI principalship, superintendency or doctoral programs who exemplifies the program's core values of leadership of learning, service and change.

## Hall of Excellence Awards

The Hall of Excellence Awards are presented annually to School of Kinesiology, Allied Health and Human Services (formerly Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services) graduates that have:

- Demonstrated mastery of the knowledge base within their profession.
- Contributed significantly as a teacher, leader, executive and/or administrator and widely recognized for the quality of that contribution to their profession.
- Demonstrated scholarly activity through publications and presentations related to their profession.
- Contributed significantly to their profession while holding offices in professional organizations of state, regional, national and international scope.
- Demonstrated cumulative record (including awards and honors) of effective and enthusiastic service to their profession with the intent to bring useful knowledge and pertinent information to their field.
- Completed at least 10 years of service to the profession.

Congratulations to this year's winners: **Laurie Albert-Conner, Thomas Griffin, Kathy Green, Ken Green,** and **Bill Rauhauser!**

# Answering the Call

For the last 25 years, Michele Devlin, a professor of global health, has served as a disaster relief volunteer with the American Red Cross. She has also become part of the International Response Team for the American Red Cross, which has led to her being deployed to Haiti and the Philippines in response to earthquakes and Hurricane Yolanda, respectively.

So when Hurricane Harvey struck Houston, Texas, Michele was not far behind.

As a member of the International Red Cross, she was assigned to provide public health support to the Health Services Team of the Harvey Relief Operations. Michele helped identify vulnerable populations that had been affected by the disaster and had special cultural, language and economic barriers to relief services, as she coordinated culturally appropriate relief services and resources to best aid those areas in the wake of the hurricane.

“The entire experience was very intense,” Michele said. “It was very concerning to see so many people in need in Houston that had yet to be able to access assistance.

“The sheer scale of the disaster was massive.”

But as horrific as it was to witness the carnage that had been wrought, Michele was impressed with how Houston residents came together to help each other survive and recover.

“There was a lot of unity among residents in the fourth largest city in the United States.”



There were even eight UNI student teachers placed in the Houston area when the Category 4 hurricane made landfall back in August. When the start of the school was delayed, the students volunteered in the community through nonprofit organizations and at donation centers.

Three UNI students in the health promotion program, on the global health and humanitarian assistance track, have also volunteered with disaster relief efforts. Emily Dvorak, a sophomore, has been deployed to the U.S. Virgin Islands in the wake of Hurricane Maria; Alba Aguillon, a graduate student and physician from Colombia, is volunteering in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria; and Kitana Pickett, a junior, traveled to Florida in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma.

The impact of these Panthers' service and dedication extends well beyond the campus at UNI.

# Providing Support for Young Children in Their Homes



Not all teaching takes place in the classroom, and this is no more apparent than in the careers of home interventionists. These people provide services to families in collaboration with the Department of Human Services Child Specialty Clinics and the Iowa Department of Education.

Limited to early childhood, which is considered birth through age eight, these home interventionists assist parents with infants and toddlers in a number of different capacities, from helping them find high quality child care to providing evidence-based practices in the areas of communication, independent living skills and cognitive development.

Early childhood home interventionists also provide coaching to the families of children with disabilities or whose children are experiencing developmental delays.

To pursue this career path at UNI, a student must major in early childhood education, but are encouraged to also minor in early childhood special education for increased preparedness.

According to Dennis Ford, instructor for special education, many of the students who choose this path are inspired to do so because of a personal experience with special education. For others, the field experience -- actual in-home visits with a home instructor or speech-language pathologist -- is what leads them to develop a love for the work.

Ford also noted that there is currently a shortage of home interventionists, so students who follow this career path are likely to find themselves in demand after graduation.

# Dancing for a Cause



For Oksana Grybovych, associate professor of leisure, youth and human services at UNI, Dance Marathon holds a personal significance for her and her husband.

The university's chapter organization, which was first established at UNI in 2011 by a group of students with Oksana serving as their advisor, raises money each year for the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital and the Children's Miracle Network.

The University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital is where Oksana's son, Delmar, spent most of his short life before passing away at the age of seven months following treatment for an aggressive brain tumor. Helping to bring Dance Marathon to the University of Northern Iowa was her and her husband's way of honoring the memory of their late son.

Now in its sixth year, Dance Marathon has become the largest student-run philanthropy program at UNI. This year, the organization raised \$453,278, making UNI Dance Marathon the top Dance Marathon fundraising program in the country for schools with fewer than 12,000 undergraduate students. Since 2012, UNI Dance Marathon has raised a total of \$1,436,020.21.

As advisor, Oksana provides resources and guidance to help the students succeed and achieve their goals, but she is quick to credit students who devote so much of their time and energy to Dance Marathon year after year. "They are the ones who work tirelessly year round, and they are the ones who have made this organization what it is right now," said Oksana.

While involvement in UNI Dance Marathon stretches across campus, its roots can be traced back to leisure, health and human services, where volunteering and community service are integral parts of the division's culture. This philosophy of giving back to the community laid the foundation for Dance Marathon to grow into the program that it is today.

# Every Gift Matters

A special thanks to those who contributed to the college this past year. The example you set for our students is important. Your generosity helps them to learn and understand giving back is an important part of their role as future alumni. Every gift really does matter.

Although UNI is a public institution with a mandate to serve the people of Iowa, the State of Iowa does not fund all of UNI's costs. In fact, over the past 30 years, the percentage of costs funded by the state has decreased while the cost of education has risen dramatically. Today, state funding covers nearly 40 percent of the cost of a UNI undergraduate education for Iowa residents. The remainder is covered by tuition, federal grants and, most importantly, gifts from alumni and friends like you. That is why every gift matters.

To give UNI students the highest quality learning environment and ensure that a UNI education continues to be affordable, donor support has taken on an enhanced significance. With the newly renovated Schindler Education Center, we are now able to provide cutting-edge technology and flexible spaces for students to prepare to be the future leaders and educators in our nation. If you are interested in a naming opportunity for you or a loved one in the Schindler Education Center, I'd love to show you options. I encourage you to tour the facility – you will be amazed.

With the majority of UNI students relying on financial aid, your continued investment is greatly appreciated. Your gift really matters!



For information on how to establish a scholarship, to make a gift to the Dean's Fund, or make provisions for a legacy gift, contact me at 800-782-0522 or 319-273-4665 or email [Jane.Halverson@uni.edu](mailto:Jane.Halverson@uni.edu).

With sincere gratitude,

Jane Halverson  
Director of Development  
College of Education

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Names in Bold Denotes Dean's Fund for Excellence of \$1000+

\*Denotes Legacy Society Members