

Fall 2020

## Premier, Fall 2020

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## Premier Fall 2020 E-Newsletter



### Premier Fall 2020

Premier is published for University of Northern Iowa College of Education alumni, friends, faculty and staff.

**From the Dean: Finding our rhythm forward** Doing our best, we remain resilient and hopeful for spring.

**Perseverance, defined** Learning continues in a semester that felt like more of the same, yet different.

- Adjustment in the classroom
- Getting hands-on with athletic training
- The outdoors as classroom
- Staying focused on special education
- Profile: Hannah Gates, Level 1

### **Research: A different kind of learning**

Kinesiology students explore the connection between depression and exercise.

### **Derecho? Pandemic? Not to worry...**

Adapt, adapt, adapt. That was the mantra in response to a historic storm

### **Despite derecho, student teachers carry on**

In her own words: Bailey Wright ('16)

### **New EdD cohort welcomes PSE to the mix**

Revamped EdD program offers flexibility for working professionals.

### **Perspectives: How should Iowa schools grade during a pandemic?**

Matt Townsley reviews three principles for Iowa educators to keep in mind.

### **College News and Notes**

#### **UNI Foundation News**

- A year of challenge and opportunity
- Your support, making a difference

## From the Dean: Finding our rhythm forward

Dear Friends and Colleagues,



When I taught seventh through 10th grade, I learned early on that you never have the same day twice. You have to very quickly adapt, revise and re-invent -- and go with it. You have your training, your experience and your best practices and, armed with that, you navigate through.

Since the disruption and upheaval of the spring and summer, we've spent this past semester finding a new rhythm. Not a return to normal, but life that "is what it is." We've

committed to our work, our studies and our research, and through it found new patterns of perseverance and resilience.

Everyone's experience has been different. At the college, we have talked regularly about grace and flexibility, understanding that each of us has been in different places of acceptance, understanding, frustration and, yes, exhaustion.

We're doing the best we can because it's all we can do. If I can capture that spirit as a "vibe" for our community this fall--that, to me, was extremely impressive.

Masks on, we

welcomed our students that first day of classes in August.

We adjusted classrooms, protocols and schedules. We worked with our school district, community and clinical partners to

ensure students gained critical field experiences. We hosted and “attended” a limited slate of virtual conferences and events.



I believe this pandemic single-handedly will change how we teach and learn. I don't know what it will look like. My hope is that this challenging time helps us appreciate how extremely adaptable we are and that we remain open to the opportunities that adaptability can bring while grappling with what comes next for higher education and for our college.

Our nation has suffered great loss from COVID-19 and the impact -- physically, emotionally and mentally -- has been felt by our faculty, staff and students. A common refrain we've heard? We need greater connection. We miss each other. We want to engage.

In a small way, this issue of Premier helps us maintain these important connections with you during this challenging moment. As we weather the winter and earnestly watch for the hints and hope of spring and a world with vaccines for all, our best wishes to you in this shared time of reflection and resolve.

Stay safe and healthy,

**Colleen S. Mulholland**

Dean, College of Education

## **Perseverance, defined**

During the worst health crisis befalling the country in more than 100 years, fall semester 2020 at University of Northern Iowa was more of the same -- yet different. What was unexpected in the spring became, in this moment, the new normal. Students successfully returned to campus -- and, for the most part, stayed through a shortened semester ending the day before Thanksgiving.

College of Education faculty learned from the spring, prepared through the summer and, this fall, just ...kept ... adapting. They figured out seating charts for socially distant spacing, split classes into multiple sections, accommodated combinations of students in class and viewing via remote learning -- and went fully remote when needed.

A continuing challenge was maintaining the hands-on learning that the college and university is known for through its myriad of classroom and clinical field experiences. It proved somewhat smoother this fall.

Schools were back in session, albeit with varying modes of delivery. For the most part, clinical partners and cooperating organizations welcomed student interns back on site as long as they followed specific masking, sanitizing and physical distancing guidelines.

## **Adjustment in the classroom**



This scene is but one example of the effort, collaboration and adjustment which happened in classrooms hosting UNI students gaining early exposure to teaching in Level 1 and Level 2 field experiences this fall. Level 1 is intended to help answer the questions: *Do you want to be a teacher? Are you suited for this? Do you have what it takes?* Level 2 introduces students to hands-on lesson planning and delivery. Meeting the objectives for both had their challenges this past fall.

Kim Miller, College of Education Department of Teaching, is one of the field experience coordinators for Level 1 and Level 2. Last spring when the COVID-19 disruption began, most Level 1 students had completed much of their 25 hours of experience. This past fall, figuring out how to create opportunity for engagement, learning and observation was “totally different,” Miller says.



Of her 27 Level 1 placements, the majority were on site within classrooms, while nine students engaged virtually due to teacher preference and student choice. "The mentor teachers that volunteered have been fabulous. They have welcomed the UNI students even during this uncertain time," she says.

Some UNI Level 1 students were virtual -- even quarantined -- and connecting remotely with students in a classroom. For a handful, everyone was remote -- UNI student, elementary student and teacher. All had to be more purposeful in their interactions to ensure a necessary level of engagement.

"Level 1 is a critical class, and I do think UNI does it better than anyone," Miller says. But as COVID-19 has taught everyone, there is more than one way to achieve goals.

### **Making connections**

During a final lesson by one group, the two paired students read a book online to the entire classroom who were on a big screen. They then moved into small groups, with the cooperating classroom teacher moving the computer around the class.

"The whole thing about Level 2, it's about how to write a lesson plan, and they did get to deliver it, with some assistance. When they were done, the students gave the UNI virtual students cards and they were touched," says Miller. "You can make a connection virtually. It is more difficult and has to be intentional, but it can happen."

Miller, like all UNI field experience coordinators, was constantly juggling, adapting and learning. She recalled one week when she had Level 2 students delivering five lessons that she needed to monitor. With on-site observation currently limited, she could watch live or go back and watch later, and then debrief with students and the classroom teacher -- all virtually.

She knows there is a perspective missed by not being in the classroom. But all in all, everyone -- teachers, preservice students, students, paraeducators -- made it work.

"We did the best we could and still created purposeful learning opportunities," she says.

### **Higher levels, challenges and opportunities**

Between logistics and an ongoing pandemic, the majority of Level 3 experiences--normally a one-week hands-on experience in a classroom



in school districts around and beyond Iowa--remained virtual for most students.

The alternative? Teach via Zoom, which Robin Dada, head of curriculum and instruction, says provided an experience that faculty may continue to incorporate. "Our students preferred face-to-face, but were grateful for support to teach via Zoom and having to work through some of the issues of engagement as they preplanned for instruction at a distance from their students."

Student teachers did teach, though for two seven-week instead of eight-week sessions, with some interesting twists (see [Despite derecho, student teachers carry on](#)).

"Student teachers seem so thankful to be connecting with their class, working closely with their cooperating teachers and teaching! My student teachers were in every conceivable configuration of teaching, from full face-to-face classes, all virtual to unique hybrid opportunities (same cohort two days a week, to mix of face-to-face and virtual classrooms)," says Cindy Cone, Omaha/Council Bluffs student teaching coordinator. "Schools have been creative in their response to COVID-19 and our student teachers are gaining many unique experiences this semester."

## Getting hands-on with athletic training



After disruptions and interruptions in clinical experiences in the spring, students in the master's of athletic training (MATR) program were able to fully resume hands-on training this fall.

"Our clinical experiences ran very similarly to what they have in the past -- with the addition of typical COVID policies (masks, shields, etc.)," says Tricia Schrage, assistant professor, athletic training, and coordinator of clinical education.

Second year MATR students completed a required four-week immersive experience into the day-to-day and week-to-week roles of an athletic trainer. For one student, that was on campus with UNI Athletic Training Services, and two completed the experience off campus at Columbus High School and Dike-New Hartford High School. Others gained experience in patient care with diverse patient populations and health conditions and at local family practice facilities (People's Community Clinic and Northeast Iowa Family Residency). Students were able to observe surgeries with Dr. Benjamin Torrez at Buchanan County Health Center later this fall.

"The students and preceptors all submitted first rotation and immersive experience evaluations and the feedback has been very positive. Students were able to engage in patient care and apply their knowledge and skills and, most importantly, progress towards graduation," says Schrage.

Learning often requires hands-on skills training within coursework for pre-health degrees like athletic training and rehabilitation studies and the graduate MATR. Schrage teaches a course on equipment skills, while Kelli Snyder, associate professor and program director, teaches another focused on learning anatomy through palpation, or touching, joint range of motion measurement and neurovascular assessment.

As with other laboratory-type classes, the faculty needed to create protocols that met both university guidelines for safety and health within a pandemic while maintaining accrediting agency guidelines. This included the students working within the same small group during the semester, wearing masks and gloves and distancing as much as possible while using their hands to learn to touch, probe or apply equipment correctly during class exercises.

"Overall, clinical experiences this fall were a huge success," says Schrage. "We look forward to offering even more variety in the spring, including the ACE-SAP clinic (free medical clinic) in Waterloo where our students have gained unique experiences in the past."

**The outdoors as classroom**



Learning while living within a pandemic brought added creativity elsewhere as well.

As an American resident and Canadian citizen, Rod Dieser perceives COVID-19 with multiple perspectives. The recreation, tourism and nonprofit leadership professor noticed the lighter impact within his home province of Alberta in comparison to Iowa and the United States.

He decided to move his fall classes outside when possible.

"One of the public health strategies in Canada, among many, are sound limits so people do not speak loudly in school and restaurant settings. I felt having any discussions in the classroom, especially passionate discussions, would be unsafe, and knew that being outside, with face coverings and social distance, was an epidemiological evidence-based practice that was safer," he says. "This is all about science-based safety, going beyond the minimum levels of safety, and then having some class discussion."

He found safety and learning can go together well. Weather permitting, he was outside for five hours teaching on Wednesdays. "I was shocked at how outstanding it's been. Students have overwhelmingly stated they 'love it,'" he says. "I have had over 20 emails stating the outside experience has been excellent and students encouraging me to keep having the class outside."

Due to spacing guidelines, some classes moved from smaller classrooms to larger -- or even in chairs set up in gymnasiums. Mauricio Nunez, assistant professor, kinesiology, and his fellow faculty are proud of the technology they can offer their students as part of their studies

regarding exercise physiology and biomechanics. But working around the classroom guidelines also led to alternatives.



On a hill just west of the Wellness and Recreation Center, undergraduate biomechanics students discovered how to use free tools on their phones to conduct basic motion analysis techniques during activities such as swinging a bat or throwing a frisbee -- something they could safely use in outdoor coaching situations.

## Staying focused in special education

When COVID-19 disrupted spring coursework, students working on their special education endorsements had been in their practicum classrooms for several weeks, knew the students and had begun teaching. School shutdowns led to alternative learning experiences. For example, the UNI students created lesson plans, recorded themselves teaching and then received feedback from faculty.



The fall would be different with UNI students engaging from the beginning in a world adapting to the pandemic. Yet, UNI special education faculty, who work with Becker Elementary School in Waterloo to provide practicum opportunities specific to special education, had a goal: to create and maintain a safe **face-to-face** learning opportunity for their students. Doing that would require preparation.

“We kept using the words flexible and pivot. We began working with Becker administration in the spring and summer to think through possibilities. How could we make it work if the children were in school? How could we make it work if a UNI or Becker student had to be away for a bit?” says Amy Staples, associate professor, special education.

The principal converted a computer lab to a special education workspace, so UNI and Becker students could be in a bubble of sorts, she says. From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., children rotated through by grade level. Lora Hickman and Terre Hirst, field supervisors for



special education, managed the comings and goings of UNI students, taking their temperatures upon entry -- and sending those with an elevated temperature home. The UNI and Becker students used hand sanitizer when entering and exiting the computer lab and wore face coverings throughout their sessions.



Hickman and Hirst sanitized work stations in between each round of students, connected students to the UNI Student Health Center as needed, worked to ensure compliance with district and Iowa guidelines and kept everyone at Becker and UNI apprised of any developments.

“It took a massive amount of wrangling!” Staples says. “Due to planning and ongoing efforts by Lora and Terre, and the UNI students’ taking our guidelines seriously, we were able to remain in the school until just a few days before the practicum was slated to end.

“Our students understood that being in a school during this time was highly unusual, but they really felt teaching benefited them,” she says. “They were grateful for the opportunity to work with students every day for nearly nine weeks. They built relationships with their students, learned to design lessons that supported the students' needs and the work of the classroom, and to monitor students' progress. They saw teachers working during a challenging time and saw the flexibility and resilience of school staff and children.”

## Profile: Hannah Gates, Level 1

Hannah Gates, an elementary education transfer student from LaPorte City, Iowa, was among those whose entire Level 1 field experience was virtual in fall 2020.

Initially, she was upset. Then, she says, “I realized I was going to get out of this experience what I put in.”

She more than accomplished her goal.

"I truly believe this was such a positive experience because I had the best mentor teacher to help me along with this journey," she says, referring to Stacy Childs at Kittrell Elementary in Waterloo.

Gates joined classes via Google Meet and worked one-on-one with students on math.



"The biggest thing I was worried about losing in a virtual Level 1 experience was getting the opportunity to build relationships with the students. I soon learned this was not going to be a problem," she says. "I took the time to get to know the students and for the students to learn about me. This allowed me to develop a personal connection with them, so they were not just talking to a stranger through the computer."

Gates also teamed up with her fellow Level 1 student, Kaitlyn Goedken, to prepare a tutorial on using Google Meet for students and, for teachers, a step-by-step guide on how to plan a meeting, the options in Google Meet and resources for online teaching.

"Teachers in the building needed to prepare to be able to go to virtual teaching at any time. The teachers were so grateful for this because it provided them with extra guidance through this difficult time," she says.

The fall experience taught Gates the value of flexibility. "I learned to roll with what comes and make the most out of every situation. I am



grateful to now be able to say that I do have experience teaching virtually," she says. "It takes more time and effort, but can be done just as well as teaching in person. It is all about what you put into it!"

And how did Gates answer that question: *Do you want to be a teacher?*

"Teaching is most definitely for me," she says. "I loved getting to know the students in the classroom and providing ways to further their understanding and education. This Level 1 experience has given me so much excitement for my future. I cannot wait for more experiences like this and to make an impact on the future students I meet."

## Research: A different kind of learning



Understanding the science behind movement and exercise is a foundation for University of Northern Iowa kinesiology students. In the classroom, clinical labs and through internships, students prepare for careers in personal training and fitness, strength and conditioning, youth sports or health professions such as physical or occupational therapy.

Some of these College of Education students go one step further. They add to that knowledge as student research assistants while earning their undergraduate degree.

### **One question leads to another**

Terence Moriarty, an assistant professor in kinesiology, initially completed his Ph.D. dissertation on exercise-based cardiac rehabilitation and how it helped improve function in cardiovascular disease patients. After subsequent research and publications, he says, "I have learned that aerobic exercise can have a tremendously positive

impact upon aerobic capacity, cognition and brain oxygenation in diseased populations. This has huge implications for the importance of exercise in rehabilitation programs of this nature.”

While UNI is considered a comprehensive university focused primarily on education, research happens here as well. Kinesiology faculty, with their emphasis on human performance, regularly collaborate on studies and papers with colleagues here and across the country. For students, this means opportunity, including as an undergraduate student.

In research, answering one question often leads to another. Moriarty sought to extend his investigations through another project, this time with the assistance of UNI undergraduate students in movement and exercise science (MES).

Last spring, emails went out inviting students to an informational meeting about two potential research study projects. Five students were selected to join in with Moriarty's project:

- Mason Palmer, Guttenberg, Iowa, class of spring 2021
- Ellie Spillane, Galena, Ill., class of spring 2021
- Allie Nietzel, Muscatine, Iowa, class of fall 2021
- Madi Young, Earlham, Iowa, class of spring 2022
- Mary Sutton, Marshalltown, Iowa, class of fall 2022

While Moriarty oversees the project, the students played a pivotal role in its development. “When we began reading about this topic back in January of this year, the students had a large say into what exact exercise intervention as well as what population of individuals that we would conduct this study in. They then helped write the IRB (Institutional Review Board) application and have been instrumental in learning the techniques of data collection ever since then. They have been so awesome to work with since the very beginning,” he says.

Sutton became involved her first semester as an MES major. She explains the student research role as: “to help design the experiment, conduct background research, collect data, analyze the data, and contribute to the research article.”

The group spent the spring reviewing current literature. Though not the most exciting part of the project, the five understood its purpose.

“During spring semester my classmates and I spent many hours finding and digging through case studies similar to our own. We would look for

ideas for what we actually wanted our study to specifically be about as well as ideas as to what we may want to include in our study, or techniques we want to use,” explains Spillane.

Young found the process initially overwhelming and complicated, but became more comfortable over time. “Dr. T (Moriarty) and Fabio (Fontana) did a great job of answering my questions. During the first semester I learned a lot from both of them on how to read scientific writing,” she says. “As we progressed through the semester we started considering what aspects of other research projects we wanted to include in our own. Slowly we put the pieces of our own research project together.”

### **The project comes together**

The group defined their project as a study of how exercise impacts



cognitive performance and brain oxygenation--increasing the amount of oxygen delivered to the brain--in patients with depression. It will include a six-week multimodal exercise intervention, using various

pieces of equipment to focus on agility, balance and brain training.

“We’re hoping to provide evidence that exercise increases brain oxygenation and cognitive skills and decreases depressive symptoms,” says Young.

The literature review of the spring gave way to preparation for data collection this fall and development of the UNI IRB application. After review by the IRB, required for all proposals using human subjects, the group will begin actual testing with both healthy subjects and those suffering from depression in early 2021. Students will conduct studies with middle-aged and older subjects. The participants will wear a piece of equipment on their head called a functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) device. Optical sensors collect data via infrared light which help measure oxygenation and blood flow.

“For us, we are focusing on the prefrontal cortex during three different cognitive tasks. This gives us 10 data points every second, so as you can imagine the files from 10 minutes of data are very large,” Moriarty says. The last steps of the research cycle, students will collect and analyze the results and then develop recommendations for a paper for submission to professional journals.

The team just added a three-month follow-up trial to the research parameters. They’ll be testing the level of depression through questionnaire and interviews; aerobic capacity on a treadmill; and cognitive performance with brain oxygenation at pre-, post- and three months after initial testing.

“We feel this will very much enhance our understanding of how exercise can impact levels of depression, aerobic capacity, cognitive function and brain oxygenation for the long term, even after the intervention has finished,” says Moriarty.

When the group achieves final publication of the manuscript in a top-tier journal, Moriarty will consider the project done. He estimates that could be fall 2021 or early 2022. With varying graduation dates, not everyone will see the project through to the end. But most expect to assist as long as possible.

“I’m graduating in May (2021), but I plan to stick around until August, or whenever all of our data is collected,” Palmer says.

## **The ebbs and flow of research**

Through the past months, the students learned the ebbs and flow of a

research process.

"Last semester was very monotonous and was the most difficult part so far. Lately we have been getting to practice with the fNIR brain reader and the cognitive apps so that has been a lot more interactive and fun," says Spillane. "However, even though the first part may not have been super exciting, it was crucial to getting to where we are today. I am excited to actually record data and put it all together."

Nietzel, somewhat nervous as she joined the project, was surprised by her response. "I had never done something remotely close to this. I am not fond of writing papers or anything of that nature. However, I found that I actually really enjoy research. Testing and evaluating something that you're interested in definitely helps, but it has been fun to work with this group and go through it together," she says.

Palmer had a similar reaction.

"When I think of doing a research project, I typically think of reading boring articles and meaningless meetings with our group. Rather, I was pleasantly surprised when we started researching. We were given lots of freedom with the process of figuring out what exactly we wanted to research and test," says Palmer, who hails from Guttenberg, Iowa.

### **New perspectives, future options**

Whether or not research is part of their future careers, these UNI students already see benefits to participating in the study.

For Young and Sutton, this experience prepares them for further research opportunities in graduate school for physical therapy.

"This is a really neat project for me especially, since I'm a movement and exercise science and psychology double major," says Sutton. "I've gotten to see how both of my interests can be combined and hopefully lead to results that can help people. It has helped in the classroom setting as well by familiarizing me with the language used in research papers."

"I've learned a lot about the field of kinesiology in general and the research process. It's taught me to think critically and to think outside of the box," adds Young. "My professors reference lots of studies that have been done in the past and how research affects every field within the realm of exercise science. It's helpful to understand the process of research when it's being referenced."

Nietzel plans on practicing occupational therapy, but this experience

has opened her up to research, given the right group and topic. "If you would have asked me about research before participating, I would have laughed and said no. After going through the process and learning a lot from it, I am not opposed to doing another research project," she says. "It has also been so much fun to get to know this group and build deeper connections with Fabio and Moriarty as they truly are some of the most helpful, knowledgeable and enjoyable faculty members I have met at UNI."

Spillane, also a pre-OT student, sees the potential for research, but finds the experience itself enriching.

"Since we are a small group, we get to be very hands on and each of us is responsible for everything that happens. We are held accountable for getting what we need done completed, because there is no 'I'll take a zero on this homework,'" says Spillane. "Every assignment is crucial to keeping us moving forward. We are lucky to be so heavily involved with every step of the process. It makes every success extremely rewarding."

She adds: "If there was an opportunity to conduct research involving adaptive equipment or recovery rates or something of the sort, I would love to take part. My experience at UNI would definitely prove helpful."

Palmer, who's leaning toward a future in strength and conditioning, is uncertain whether more research is part of that path. Nevertheless, he says, "I'm extremely glad that I got to conduct this research at UNI. The experience I gained while working on this project will no doubt help me in my career, no matter what that may be."

### **The value of a research experience**

Moriarty has specific goals in exposing these undergraduates to research.

"I hope that they are able to appreciate the volume of work that goes into one research project, especially an intervention or longitudinal one like this. In addition, they should be knowledgeable--almost experts--about our topic area, understand the IRB process, be fully comfortable with operating the equipment and interacting with participants in the study. Being able to interact and converse with participants is something that is really important as they progress through their own careers," he says.

These five MES students are part of something special, Moriarty says.



"It's important to note that these opportunities are very rare at the undergraduate level. I did my undergraduate in Ireland and was fortunate enough to complete my own project in golfers during my senior year, but there is no other school in the U.S. that I have seen anything similar. This experience will set these students apart when moving on to future careers and graduate school," he says.

"If students can walk away with the ability to fully understand and appreciate the research process as well as gain some credit hours and have fun, then I think they have benefited hugely," he adds. "We see the 'real' student outside the classroom and during the undergraduate research experience, which is a real joy."

Palmer spoke for all the students in acknowledging the impact of their work.

"Being part of this research group has more of a 'real life' feel to it. It does not seem like I have to be doing this for a grade. Instead, I feel like an important factor in gathering this information and being able to apply it to real-life situations," says Palmer. "For me, this has added to my classroom learning by getting to put my hands on a project that will potentially have an effect on how people will consider using exercise as a method of treating or lowering depression in middle-to-older-aged people."

## Derecho? Pandemic? Not to Worry...



*Leasha Henriksen, Cedar Rapids Center student teaching coordinator, debriefs with student teachers Efting and Chloe Pflughaupt.*

Student teaching coordinator Leasha Henriksen normally looks forward to a face-to-face celebratory orientation and kick-off to student teaching prior to the field experience she oversees each semester for the UNI Teacher Education Program.

Instead, on Monday, August 10, 2020, she was sitting at her kitchen table at her house near Alburnett, Iowa, finishing an orientation video on her laptop. "I had communicated to my students that starting Monday, I would release one asynchronous orientation module; a second on the 11th, and then we'd gather for a Zoom and Q&A," she says.

Then, her phone rang. It was her mother in New Hartford, Iowa. "You have terrible weather coming your way," she said.

Henriksen glanced out the window and said, "It looks fine." Shortly after hanging up, her husband Josh, the principal at Alburnett Elementary

School texted: "Get to the basement."

A neighbor next called over, concerned. "Then, just like that -- boom! -- it was like a curtain dropped, it turned black and it started," says Henriksen.

"It" was a historic storm called a derecho, a combination of rain and 100+ mile-per-hour straight winds that roared through central Iowa that day, turning an already unusual summer upside down once again for many in its path.

Henriksen turned on the radio, which almost immediately lost power. The wind picked up, bending small trees to the ground in the young subdivision north of Cedar Rapids and blowing lawn furniture everywhere. She scurried to the basement. "I could hear the wind, and then all of a sudden I heard a waterfall, turned around and saw water pouring out of the heat runs. You could barely see through the basement window -- the rain was so heavy -- and you could see black things flying by. This was the real deal," she recalls.

Eventually, the wind died down, she headed back upstairs and looked out to see shingles and debris everywhere and a backyard trampoline lying mangled in a neighbor's garage. She had a yard, a house and a neighborhood to clean up, no power -- and about 30 students still on the eve of their student teacher orientation and placement. Did they have somewhere to go?

### **Picking up the pieces**

"I was supposed to meet a group of my student teachers that afternoon to pass out their masks and student teaching face shields. We were going to meet in a Target parking lot. But there were power lines all down, I couldn't even get out of Alburnett," Henriksen says.



**Leasha Henriksen**

She did manage to track down working cellphone service at a neighbor's later that day, getting emails out to her students -- hoping she would connect, and reassuring them to "hold tight" as everyone figured out next steps. With road blockages and limited communication, she did not fully realize the scope of the storm's impact at first. "I never thought we'd be talking 12 days without power," she says.

Nevertheless, that Thursday she met up with about one-third of her

students in a coffee shop in North Liberty. "They just wanted reassurance. I said we need to learn more from the state and the Department of Education. We'll figure it out and deal with orientation next week," she says. Thanks to her persistence and welcoming and supportive school district partners, by August 27 all her students were in a classroom or in professional development.

As the student teaching coordinator for the Cedar Rapids Center, the UNI College of Education instructor coordinates placements ranging from grade school through high school across multiple area districts. Cedar Rapids, Linn Mar and the Marion school districts were the hardest hit, with building damage to middle and high schools also creating a ripple effect in terms of classroom availability.

As the state and the schools figured out their next steps, Henriksen's approach was triple-pronged -- reassuring her students and her school partners while reaching out to other schools for assistance.

"I just told my CR, Linn Mar and Marion students--we've just hit pause, don't worry, we'll figure this out," she says. Her students now fell into three cohorts: those greatly impacted and needing new placements; those less impacted, but needing some adjustments; and those in a few districts which escaped the storm's wrath. About 10 students would need new placements.

"We had great Cedar Rapids teachers and partners who were willing to continue to do whatever they could--but we also wanted to get our students into the classroom, so I started placing them," she says. "I emailed Cedar Rapids teachers right away. I just let them know...this is not your burden, you have to take care of your families and homes."

She then turned to contacts in neighboring districts, like College Community, HLV and Alburnett for help. In one case, it took just one email to HLV principal Cory Lahndorf, who responded right away: "Yes, he's welcome here. Here is my teacher contact information." Teachers at College Community offered to take students for the first seven-week session instead of the later session, giving Henriksen more flexibility to adjust.

"We have some amazing partner schools," she says. "Those mentor teachers were willing in midstream to say yes, bring them over. Some were already in school. They were able to help the profession and their neighbors. It was just wonderful."

## Returning to classrooms



Bailey Wright ('16, elementary education) is a special education teacher at Alburnett Elementary who unexpectedly stepped into the role of cooperating teacher this fall. She, too, sat out the storm in the basement.

"The wind sounded stronger than anything I had ever heard....When I went back upstairs, the power was out, my phone didn't work, and it was chaos outside." Insulation covered the ground, one tree was completely missing and power lines were snapped. "It was hard not being able to call family members to check in and know what was going on with other colleagues and loved ones in the area," she says.

She and other neighbors pitched in to help, running over to a nearby apartment complex with buckets and totes to help with a flooding basement in those first hours. Later in the week, they grilled food outside for elderly neighbors. Generators hummed for 10 days straight. And then, two days before she thought school was starting, Wright received a request to add **UNI student teacher Chloe Pflughaupt** to her class.

"While it was not in my plans, I knew that with her UNI training, she would be a great addition to our classroom. I also knew that with trying to limit group sizes due to the virus, it would be helpful to have more hands on deck to work with students. Our start date was pushed back one week due to the derecho, so we had a little more time to prepare for students," she says.

Steve Vanderpol, student teaching coordinator for the Marshalltown

Center, did not need to move students after the wind swept through central Iowa. However, some student teachers encountered shorter placements or more time working with cooperating teachers and building level colleagues as district schedules adjusted to a return to school, post-derecho and in a continuing pandemic.

"No one got hurt and everyone is slowly recovering, which we are all thankful for," he says. "The other things our student teachers experienced will make a difference in their classrooms of the future."

Wright says her student teacher "got a very real look into teaching and the flexibility we must have as teachers. Chloe got involved in the classroom quickly to help meet student needs and support the wide array of situations we were challenged with. We were working with students that had experienced hardships with parents losing their jobs, family members experiencing the coronavirus and students displaced and living in hotels or with family due to the derecho.

"She did a fantastic job connecting with students and also planning engaging instruction. It was important for us both to reflect often on our teaching and students and be ready to change our plans as needed," Wright says.

Lyn Countryman, head of the college's Department of Teaching, says a strong network supporting field experience at all levels made it easier for UNI to adjust to this year's unprecedented challenges.

"Part of the reason why this has worked so well is because our coordinators across the breadth of the field experience, from Level 1 to student teaching, have developed personal relationships with teachers and districts," she says. "It's the personal quality assurance and personal relationships built over time -- because we have full-time faculty -- that allow us to team with the public schools to make these placements."

## **Despite derecho, student teachers carry on**

When a historic derecho struck the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, area on August 10, Annie Efting found herself in the basement of the home where she served as nanny to seven children.



"We were in a room with no windows, thankfully, so no kids knew exactly how bad the storm truly was," says Efting, a University of Northern Iowa senior who was about to begin orientation for student teaching in the Cedar Rapids school district. "Once we got the okay that it was safe to go upstairs, I was in a state of shock. I couldn't even contact the rest of my family in Cedar Rapids because no one had cell phone service. It was nerve wracking for a couple of hours until I could get home!"

Chloe Pflughaupt was another student preparing for student teaching while living in Palo with her family over the summer. That day, though, she was in Cedar Rapids where she and her boyfriend were planning to go golfing. Then her mom called, telling her about the storm.

"When it hit, we (Chloe, her boyfriend and his grandmother) were all upstairs watching it roll in," she recalls, surprised by the unexpected storm. "The wind quickly picked up and trees started blowing over--one of the trees actually hit a kitchen window and broke it in. At that point, we went downstairs to wait it out from a safer location."

After the wind slowed, they emerged from the basement to find multiple trees down in the neighborhood, including two large trees that buried her car in the driveway. [Read the rest of the story.](#)

### **In her own words: Bailey Wright**

*Much has been written about the changing experience of UNI College of Education students and faculty in university coursework, classrooms and field experience. We asked alumna Bailey Wright (who is currently working on her principalship M.A.E. through the UNI College of Education) to*



*describe her experience in a K-12 classroom these past months.*



"Once we shut down in the spring, our main goal shifted from academics to safety. We were checking in on families, ensuring they had food, and trying to provide some sense of normalcy for our students. We did many Zoom lessons centered around math and reading, but also some just to talk as a class, have talent shows, show and tell, etc.

"Over the summer, I placed a lot of my focus on the possibility of being in school or virtual, and how I could be prepared for either. Some students were in every Zoom class and completed every activity, and some we never heard from despite our endless attempts. It was important for me to plan for that scenario over the summer and think about where I could build in the missed standards to the current grade level standards.

"We did not know we were fully back in person until the end of July. We came back fully in person, with masks strongly recommended. We had no shortage of hanging shower curtains, plexiglass and spaced desks, which made the learning atmosphere quite different for students.

"Now more than ever, I am learning to check in with students emotionally first and acknowledge the COVID fatigue we are all feeling. Academics remain a priority, and our students' mental health does as well. The kids have adapted incredibly well to our new normal this year, and I have been focused on meeting the kids where they are and embracing the hardship we are all in.

"During my time at UNI, I learned a great deal about differentiating instruction, which is what this fall has been all about. Now more than ever, we have students at different levels, and I have leaned on my background in co-teaching and inclusion to meet the needs of students without just pulling them out of the classroom.

"I also have relied on my (classroom) management background in recognizing student behavior as communication and helping the whole child. In these times of stress, students have different ways of communicating that to us, so it has been important for me to be on alert and notice changes in behavior."

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### **Connecting with UNI student teaching coordinator**

“I didn't have service to contact Leasha (Henriksen) until the next day,” she says, referring to the UNI student teaching coordinator for the Cedar Rapids Center. “She emailed everyone in our cohort to notify us that our Target pickup times had changed, along with our virtual orientation due to no one having power. She was very accommodating to the situation,” says Efting.

Pflughaupt's car, though not damaged itself, was buried by trees in front and behind. It took two days of ax work to clear the car. Cell service did not return until Friday, and further clean-up around the yard delayed her from picking up materials from Henriksen until a week later.

For a couple of weeks, the two were in limbo, uncertain when or where they would student teach, if at all.

Pflughaupt was originally set to teach at Van Buren Elementary in a first grade class and, for her second session, at Cedar River Academy at Taylor Elementary, working with K-5 for a special education placement. Efting was set to student teach first grade at Garfield Elementary, followed by placement at Prairie Creek in the College Community School District.

Henriksen emailed them both on August 24. Due to storm damage to the Cedar Rapids schools, they were switching districts and schools. Both would start at Alburnett Elementary, where Pflughaupt would do two placements, one in special education for K-5 students and the second with a second grade classroom. Efting would start at Alburnett in that second grade classroom and move on to College Community for her second seven-week session. After orientation and some

professional development, they were in class as kids returned on Monday, August 31.

"I had already established a great relationship with my mentor teacher so I was very bummed to hear it wasn't going to happen," Efting says, reflecting the emotions of fellow students whose placements changed. "However, I was excited at the same time to be placed at Alburnett Elementary. I was thankful I would have as much time in the classroom as possible."

### **Cleaning up, moving forward**

Fortunately, Alburnett schools did not sustain the same level of damage as Cedar Rapids, though both students joined in neighborhood clean-up efforts. "It was definitely a group effort to clean up the ginormous mess, but we have a great community in Cedar Rapids overall which made it possible," Annie says.

While the derecho and ensuing clean-up made for a challenging start to the school year, it further complicated what was already a tough return to school in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pflughaupt says the setback from the pandemic and school ending early in spring 2020 led to teachers this fall working together to get students back in an "environment of learning."

"For a lot of students, this is the first time they have been in school in six months. Many are behind, some are struggling with listening, paying attention in class and working with peers again," she says. "However, I am very surprised to see many of the students making progress towards 'functioning' in a school setting again. The kids came back to school ready to learn and ready to see their teachers and friends again. Teachers have taken the time to review what it means to be in school again as well as really listen to students' experiences they had while being out."

### **The benefits of adapting**

Between an ongoing pandemic and a surprise derecho, Pflughaupt and Efting found a resilience they know will benefit them as they look to leading their first classrooms.

"The biggest thing that this situation has taught me is that nothing ever goes to plan and that's ok. I had to adapt at the last minute and 'start over' in a sense with my new mentor teacher and my new school. I was excited for the challenge, however," Efting says. "This made me think

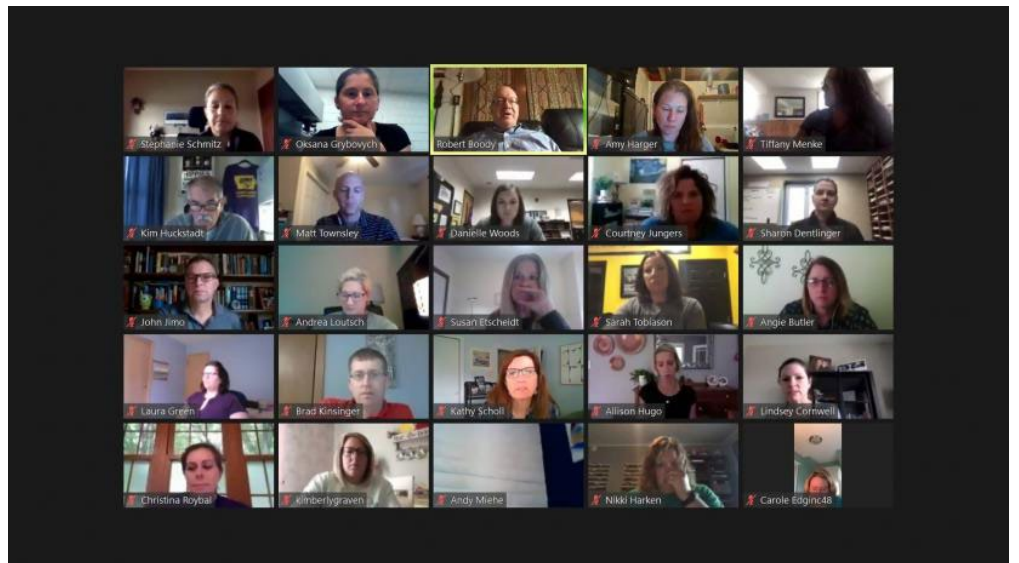
about being a teacher in general, and how nothing ever goes to plan sometimes. Teachers are constantly adapting with lesson plans, schedules, you name it! Being able to adapt and work well through changes are some of the most important things we can do as teachers.

Pflughaupt adds: "One thing I have always known in my training as a teacher is the art of flexibility. The aftermath of the storm and the pandemic is really highlighting this as a key trait of a teacher.

"Another thing I have definitely learned through this experience specifically is the saying 'it takes a village to teach.' I am seeing teachers asking each other for suggestions of how they can teach in such a different time than what they are used to. Teaching is such a team sport and I am very fortunate to be seeing this in such a close community school. I think Alburnett has really shown me exactly what it means to take what you are given and roll with it and ask for help when needed."

*Upon graduation on November 28, 2020, Chloe Pflughaupt looks forward to joining the Iowa City Community School District as a special education teacher, while Annie Efting plans to substitute teach in the Cedar Rapids area for the rest of the 2020-21 school year.*

## New EdD cohort welcomes student affairs to the mix



Brad Kinsinger was facing a decision. In search of a Ph.D. program, he saw great opportunities, though it would mean a move. Then he learned about the new postsecondary education: student affairs intensive study area (ISA) within the [\*\*Doctor of Education \(Ed.D.\) program\*\*](#) at the University of Northern Iowa College of Education.

“This program has provided a path to pursue my doctoral degree in a scenario where we didn't have to uproot our family and I could continue working in a position at Hawkeye that I love,” says Kinsinger, currently the director of the Global Agriculture Learning Center at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo.

Kinsinger joined a total, combined cohort of 32 students for the 2020 kick-off of a revamped doctoral program focused on meeting the needs

of part-time, working students like him. Now a combination of online and hybrid learning offered in conjunction with UNI Online and Distance Education, students attain a degree through a streamlined 48-hour plan of study--down from 60.

In addition to the new PSE ISA, the program encompasses three other ISAs: educational leadership (includes special education director), curriculum and instruction and allied health and community services. The emphasis of this initial cohort is educational leadership and PSE.

The addition of the PSE ISA is actually a revival. David Schmid, assistant professor and ISA coordinator with the Department of Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies, was in the last class to earn its PSE doctoral degrees at UNI before that iteration closed in 2011. Since then, as a faculty member leading the master's-level PSE program, he had received ongoing inquiries. "I knew that we had a market and could serve a need, so it was brought up for discussion and happily accepted as a new ISA beginning with this fall's cohort," he says.

### **Broadening interests and goals**



Doctoral study was not top-of-mind as Kinsinger moved from serving as an agricultural educator and FFA advisor at West Branch (Iowa) Community Schools to a new position at Hawkeye in 2010. "If you would have told me 10 years ago that I would



be pursuing a doctoral degree I would not believe a word you were saying," he says.

However, his broadening interests and role in global agricultural education at Hawkeye led him to pursue his master's degree. About halfway through, conducting research and writing his thesis, he knew a doctoral program was next. "Furthering my education provides countless opportunities whether I stay in my current position or explore further," he says.

Janel Newman joined UNI as assistant dean of students in 2018. She has worked in the areas of residential programming and student conduct in positions in New York and Missouri, earning her master's in organizational performance and leadership along the way.

"I always knew I wanted to get my doctorate, it was just a matter of when and where," Newman says. "When I started working here, my supervisor Allyson Rafanello ('20, Ed.D.) was halfway through her doctoral program and she supported and encouraged my desire to take the step to start now. Sometimes things align."

The online option offers a latitude that both Kinsinger and Newman appreciate, though they look forward to the face-to-face engagement of the "post-pandemic" version of the program.

Kinsinger completed his master's online, so he was accustomed to the format--though he considers the UNI version "much improved" from previous experience.

"While I prefer being in the classroom and the interaction that it can bring, the online format provides excellent opportunities to learn from others who may not be able to attend class in person in the Cedar Valley," Kinsinger says. "I look forward to our weekly Zoom class sessions and discussions. While the coursework is challenging, it is rewarding and often a highlight of the week to connect with so many great professionals in education."

"As a working professional and a parent, remote learning allows for



flexibility for me with evening classes,” Newman concurs. “Due to COVID, we were not able to meet in person, but that is the only drawback, not getting to connect with cohort members outside of class and really get to know one another.”

Despite the distancing in place, Newman says the new cohort is quite engaged. “We each bring different experiences and knowledge to the conversations during class, so the learning is never-ending,” she says.

As he begins this new adventure, Kinsinger noted the support of family, mentors and colleagues at UNI and around the world. “All of the professors that I have had the privilege of working with have been extremely supportive of my journey and are always challenging me to grow professionally and personally,” he says.

### **A program that meets student needs**



Schmid says most of the PSE students are full-time professionals in student affairs positions or already in academia. “We have individuals with three to over 20 years of experience in higher education currently in the program. I am proud that our program is so eclectic as it speaks to the different needs that a degree such as ours can meet

for our students,” he says.

Schmid acknowledges some “bumps” in these first months. “But what hasn't there been with COVID-19?” he says. “We are still working out some of the kinks and the students are working on their dissertation topics and committees already in their first semester.”

As this cohort gets under way, the Ed.D. faculty are already assessing progress and evaluating future opportunities. UNI Online and Distance Education staff are also providing ongoing support to students and to COE faculty for the development of high-quality online courses. The next cohort for all four ISAs is slated to begin in fall 2022.

“We’ve seen great enthusiasm for the new program and we’re already hearing from people in Iowa and beyond with interest in the next cohort,” says Oksana Grybovyh Hafermann, associate dean for academic affairs, who oversees the program.

The Ed.D. degree is one of only two doctoral degrees awarded by the Graduate College at UNI.

*For more information on individual ISAs and their program coordinator contact information, go to the **College of Education Ed.D. program** website. To be notified when we begin accepting applications, contact **Online and Distance Education.***

## Perspectives: How should Iowa schools grade during a pandemic?

By Matt Townsley, Ed.D.

***Matt Townsley** is an assistant professor in educational leadership in the **Department of Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies** at the College of Education.*



In Spring 2020, the New York Times and Washington Post, among other newspapers, published stories about schools adapting their grading policies in lieu of a sudden shift to emergency remote learning. More close to home, the Quad City Times ran a similar story describing Bettendorf school board deliberations around third quarter grades. In response to these unprecedented times, schools utilized “do no harm” grading methods, such

as freezing the previous grades, replacing letter grades with pass-fail and providing students’ choice among the aforementioned methods. Colleges and universities were in a similar position during the spring and continue to adapt this fall, according to one Harvard administrator who said, “This is not a normal semester.”

Fast forward to the current academic year and Iowa K-12 schools are currently implementing a variety of instructional delivery models, providing 100 percent remote options for families and quickly moving students in and out of quarantine-induced learning environments. Any sense of “normalcy” beyond our current pandemic-era of learning appears to be months or perhaps years away. For over 100 years, researchers and practitioners have documented educators' use of grades and concluded that when a “hodgepodge” of factors go into determining a letter grade, the output, frequently in the form of a letter grade, does not adequately communicate what a student has actually learned or is able to do. Rather than serving multiple functions (i.e., points for participation, progress and proficiency), grades ought to serve a single purpose: communicating students' current levels of learning. In this column, I offer three grading principles focused on communicating learning that school leaders should consider during pandemic-era learning.

### **Base grades on learning goals vs. activities**

First, letter grades should be based upon the level at which students have learned a prioritized set of course objectives or standards. Too often in the past, teachers have based grades upon activities rather than learning goals.

For example, a culminating English assessment may be reported as “Unit 5 Test” in the grade book, which limits demonstration of learning to a single assessment medium. In hybrid or remote learning environments, secondary teachers might more appropriately provide students with options to demonstrate their progress toward an individual learning goal, such as supporting claims using textual evidence. In response to potential hardships at home and learner preferences, some students might choose to video-record a verbal explanation, while others may opt to write an essay. Regardless of the assessment medium, learning should be reported in the grade book based upon the understanding of the learning goal. Thus, using a 1-4 integer scale, Suzy might receive a “4” in the grade book for supporting claims using textual evidence which reflects her proficiency of this particular learning goal.

### **Report non-cognitive behaviors separately**

Second, schools should report non-cognitive behaviors, such as homework completion and participation, separately, if at all. Honestly assessing these behaviors within flexible delivery models may be a

challenge; therefore, it will be even more important to separate or omit non-cognitive behaviors in order to accurately communicate what a student has learned in flexible delivery settings. When non-cognitive behaviors and academic learning are inappropriately combined, the result is a grade that fails to communicate anything meaningful to students or parents.

### **Emphasize what is learned, not when**

Third, school leaders should create a grading system emphasizing what students have learned over when they have learned it. Interruptions to learning in remote settings should be expected; therefore, educators will need to be flexible in their deadlines for demonstrations of learning to be submitted. Furthermore, when students have not yet demonstrated learning by the deadline, schools should consider utilizing lenient reassessment procedures such as providing students with a checklist of tasks to complete before providing additional assessment opportunities.

With temporary grading changes implemented in the recent months, now is the time for schools to overhaul their grading practices on a more permanent basis. These three grading principles are often packaged together as “standards-based grading.” While not new or unique to remote learning, they serve as guideposts for school leaders seeking to communicate learning in the “new normal.” It took over 100 years, but a public health crisis caused many schools to temporarily change their grading practices. Whether the “new norm” is here to stay, or schools eventually return to primarily face-to-face instruction, the current pandemic-era of learning provides school leaders with an opportunity to reclaim the purpose of grades to communicate student learning.

## College News and Notes: Fall 2020

### COE hosts diversity dialogue



About 25 teacher education students joined face-to-face and remotely for Diversity Dialogue to discuss diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to educator preparation. Common threads emerged through small group breakouts, such as interest in resources for both students and educators; how to handle difficult conversations and cultural competency, in general; and how to be a part of change in curriculum as future teachers. “I was thankful that we had a group of students who were willing to take some time and join in the discussion—I think we got some great feedback!” says **Stephanie Schmitz**, associate dean. Schmitz plans to continue the dialogues as part of an overall effort to engage and connect with students in coming semesters.

### Virtual visits to the forefront with prospective students





Though on-campus tours remained available by appointment, the usual fall open houses and visit days all went virtual this year. For College of Education, that included

TransferTeachTransform, a visit day attended by about

25 prospective transfer students interested in elementary or early childhood education; one-hour, evening “Be a Teacher” and pre-health virtual events this fall, and COE-specific events including preview days hosted by postsecondary education: student affairs. Admissions, college faculty, advisers, current students and alumni joined in the efforts to keep prospects informed and engaged.

## Be a teacher at UNI



Looking to help a son, daughter or friend find their path to teaching--at the University of Northern Iowa? You can now turn to [teach.uni.edu](https://teach.uni.edu), a new introductory web page to help students explore where to turn, depending on their interest.

## New leader for Jacobson literacy center named

[Lori Norton-Meier](#) began her duties as the director of the [Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy](#) in August, replacing interim director Deborah Tidwell. She also serves as a professor of literacy



education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the College of Education.

The Denver, Iowa, native, is a literacy specialist with a focus on early childhood. She has previously served in several positions within the Department of Special Education, Early Childhood and Prevention Science in Louisville, most recently as director, Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Research Center; director, Kentucky Reading Project; and professor, literacy education. She previously worked at Iowa State University, Kansas State University and Wichita State University.

"I've focused on the study of the language and literacy practices of children, adolescents, teachers, and families as they engage in the act of inquiry. My goal is to disrupt the deficit narrative to transform teaching and learning environments," Norton-Meier says. In doing so, she looks to what learners can bring to the learning environment to enhance their learning.

Norton-Meier has been busy laying the groundwork for her vision for the center. [Turn here](#) for more on the center or read her [new blog](#).

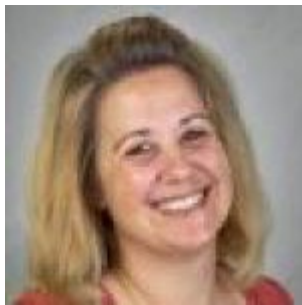
## Associate deans Grybovych Hafermann and Schmitz confirmed

Two associate deans were selected for two-year positions with the UNI College of Education, Dean Colleen Mulholland announced in summer 2020.

**Oksana Grybovych Hafermann** is the new full-time associate dean for academic affairs. A faculty member with the College of Education since 2004, Grybovych Hafermann served as head of the Department of Health, Recreation and



Community Services since 2018. Her experience covers teaching, administration and consultation, with a particular emphasis in participatory tourism planning, community development and economic impact analysis. She has authored or co-authored numerous publications and remains an associate professor with HRCS. As associate dean, she provides support for academic programs and strategic initiatives for all undergraduate and graduate levels, including the Ed.D. program, and also works with the COE centers of excellence.



**Stephanie Schmitz**, who served as interim associate dean of graduate studies and faculty affairs since 2019, was appointed to the half-time position of associate dean, research and faculty excellence. A faculty member since 2011, Schmitz is a nationally certified school psychologist with expertise in child development and response to intervention and has contributed to numerous publications in her discipline. She remains a faculty member in school psychology with the Department of Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies. In her redefined role, she serves as a liaison and lead for scholarships, professional development including the Bill and Linda Tubbs Teaching Connections and Carlton-Mellichamp Lecture series, and advising and student success services.

## Scholl heads health, recreation and community services

**Kathleen Scholl**, professor in recreation, tourism and nonprofit leadership, was named head of the Department of Health, Recreation and Community Services. With the college since 2001, she has taught at the



undergraduate and graduate levels and is well published. Her current research focuses on how built and natural

environments affect a broad spectrum of human well-being. She has previously served as division chair from 2009-2011 and interim division chair in 2015.

## Welcome new faculty and staff

In addition to welcoming Lori Norton-Meier, departments added faculty and staff members to the College of Education this academic year who brought a range of expertise to the college:

- Educational psychology, foundations and leadership studies: **Shelley Price-Williams**, assistant professor, postsecondary education;
- Health, recreation and community services: **Kaitlyn Maloney**, instructor and head athletic trainer, football; **Cari Zubke**, instructor and head athletic trainer, women's basketball;
- Kinesiology: **Kelsey Bourbeau**, instructor;
- Special education: **Whitney Hanley**, assistant professor; and,
- Teaching: **Kelly Rohlf**, Southwest Iowa student teaching coordinator.

## Honoring our retirees

The UNI College of Education appreciates the years of accomplishments and the memories shared with these four retirees since mid-summer 2020. Best to all!

- **Carol Bean**, 20 years, Health, recreation and community services
- **Brenda Whiteside**, 7 years, Center for Educational Transformation
- **Michael Helten**, 23 years, HNI Corporation Instructional Resources and Technology Services
- **Lynn Dykstra**, 37 years, Teaching

## Tubbs Teaching Connections adds to understanding of ACEs

More than 250 students, educators and fellow professionals from across the state participated in one of the virtual Bill and Linda Tubbs Teaching



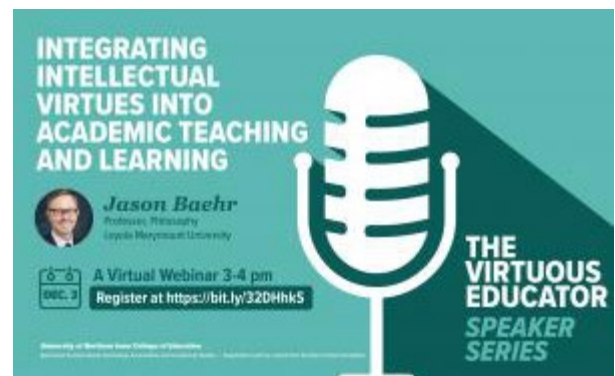
Connections sessions on November 13, part of “ACEs: Building Trauma-Sensitive Communities.” A **full slate of speakers** touched on everything from defining adverse childhood experiences and the data on societal impact, to discussing cultural and racial intersections and identifying tools and various therapeutic and educational approaches in response.

“This was a great day of learning. The speakers all emphasized things that participants can DO in their own communities to create trauma-sensitive environments--in schools and in other spaces. We all have a role in building support and fostering resilience, and the conference presenters emphasized that so well.,” says **Disa Cornish**, associate professor, public health and education, one of the COE Senate faculty coordinators.

In addition to the speakers, an early highlight was a live, virtual welcome from Linda Tubbs on behalf of her and her husband Bill. Their donation to the UNI Foundation has supported the conference, now in its fifth year.

## Virtuous Educator Speaker Series kicks off

With the topic of “Integrating Intellectual Virtues into Academic Teaching and Learning,” Jason Baehr, a guest speaker from Loyola Marymount University,



helped launch the new

Virtuous Educator Speaker Series, a virtual event in December 2020.

Baehr was the first of seven speakers slated for eight presentations through the academic year. The series is sponsored by the Department of Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies in the UNI College of Education. Go to the [Virtuous Educator Speaker Series](#) page for the full schedule.

The series is an extension of work coordinated by five EPFLS faculty (Benjamin Forsyth, Suzanne Freedman, Anthony Gabirele, Elana Joram and Ron Rinehart) who received a grant from the Kern Family Foundation earlier this year, which partly supported the series. The team is studying the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtue in two core courses in teacher education and expect to make recommendations for curricular change as a result of their review.

## College supports national town hall

Gloria Ladson-Billings was the featured speaker and facilitator of a town hall sponsored on October 13 from 1 to 2 p.m. (CDT) by the UNI College of Education in conjunction with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), and the Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities (TECSCU). Called “The Part of the Problem We Own: Taking an Anti-Racist Stance in Teacher Education,” the town hall was part of the fall TECSCU conference.

The topic aligns with efforts by a coalition of these three organizations and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) to address significant educator shortages and inequities in participation in the profession at the federal level through potential Higher Education Act policy proposals related to financial aid, loan forgiveness and the TEACH Grant.

## Honors and achievements

**Leigh Zeitz**, assistant professor, curriculum and instruction, received the 2020 International Society for Technology in Education Global Collaboration Network Award, which recognizes an educator who promotes global collaboration with social responsibility in mind.

Six College of Education alumni were named to the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier’s “20 under 40.” They include faculty member **Kelli Snyder** (’03, athletic training, ’12 Ed.D., rehabilitation studies); COE Dean’s



Advisory Council member **Megan McKenzie** ('12, LYHS); current doctoral students **Jesus Lizarraga-Estrada**, ('17 M.A., PSE: student affairs); **Joyce Levingston** ('17 M.A., LYHS); **La Toshia Burrell** ('09 M.A., physical education); and **Tara Raymond** ('05, health education).

## ICYMI (In case you missed it)

College of Education faculty, staff, students and alumni are regularly featured on or in College of Education and University of Northern Iowa social media and online. In case you missed it, here are links to the stories of the past few months:

- [UNI mural project highlights Cedar Valley diversity](#)
- [‘A system of interconnected institutions’: Racial inequality in schools](#)
- [UNI alum Jane Elliott reflects on legacy of anti-racist work](#)
- [Where passion and leadership meet](#)
- [Blood, sweat and tears: UNI students help lead the charge for racial equality](#)
- [UNI alum helps address food insecurity in the wake of COVID-19](#)
- [A recipe for success](#)
- [UNI students persevere through COVID-19](#)
- [Making change happen: UNI alum and instructor is a leader on campus and beyond](#)
- [Finding Your Once-in-a-Lifetime Internship](#)
- [#TuesdayTalkwithMattTownesley](#)
- [20 under 40: UNI professor a pillar of community service](#)
- [A crowning achievement](#)
- [Have you had a COVID talk with your roommate yet?](#)
- [Former UNI football player tackling disease research](#)
- [The value of forgiveness](#)
- [UNI successfully completes fall semester on campus](#)
- [Meet the next generation of Panther graduates](#)
- [Pioneering UNI alum receives posthumous award for a lifetime of service](#)

***NOTE: Up-to-date alumni notes and donor listings will appear in the next issue of Premier.***



## Foundation News: Fall 2020

### A year of challenge and opportunity




Dear friends,

Thank you to all who made generous gifts to support students, programs and faculty within the University of Northern Iowa College of Education this past year. You are making a difference and impacting student success through your gifts!

This year has been full of challenges and opportunities, both here at UNI and throughout our world. As we transitioned to online coursework in March, I heard from many alumni who wanted to know how everyone was coping with such drastic and immediate changes. Through all of this, opportunities emerged. The [UNI Foundation](#) fund-raised for the UNI Student Emergency Fund in March and April and raised almost \$15,000 for students who needed funds to help with housing, travel costs as students transitioned home to finish the semester, and safety needs. An additional \$66,000 for the fund was raised this fall. This support has had an immediate impact on our students.

You have read how UNI and the College of Education made adjustments in 2020, but what didn't change was the quality education you expect and the personal impact that our faculty have on their students. Our students are successful because of the support they receive in and out of the classroom.

To give UNI students the highest quality learning environment and ensure a UNI education continues to be affordable, donor support has taken on an even greater significance. I invite you to join us in taking the necessary steps to ensure a UNI education remains accessible and affordable for all. With your investment in scholarships, students can focus on their studies, enjoy all that a university education offers and contribute to our society and economy.

Please consider making a gift to support student scholarship or another area of passion. For more information or to discuss, contact me at 800-782-9522, 319-273-7319, or [kimberly.hanna@uni.edu](mailto:kimberly.hanna@uni.edu) .

## Your support, making a difference

Your support counts. Just ask Chelsea Bolhuis.



In January, Bolhuis begins her final semester student teaching at the Hudson and Waterloo school districts in Iowa. She is a student whom early childhood education program coordinator and associate professor Mary Donegan-Ritter says “gets it” about a high quality curriculum.

“She is so good--down to earth, hard working, great with kids,” Donegan-Ritter says. “During her Level 3 placement at Elk

Run preschool, she observed that the children were very interested in finding insects on the playground and so she did a long term project on crickets. It was so well done.”

Bolhuis was selected to receive the spring 2021 Jean Kelly Early Childhood Award to apply toward her student teaching semester. This \$1,200 scholarship, provided each semester, was made possible by a donation to the University of Northern Iowa Foundation by Jim Kelly, a former UNI student teaching coordinator.

The award honors his late wife Jean, a long-time kindergarten teacher in Cedar Falls who, while earning her master’s degree in early childhood education at UNI, teamed up with Judith Finkelstein to



develop early childhood units which became part of the curricular programs of many kindergarten and pre-K classrooms throughout the state and nation.

Students do not apply for the award, but are selected by the early childhood faculty based on criteria Jim Kelly established with the faculty's assistance, focusing on: professionalism, content knowledge, pedagogical skills and communication skills.

### **A surprise honor**

"I am sincerely honored to have received the Jean Kelly Early Childhood Award. It means a lot to me and my family. It will help lower the cost of tuition for my final semester," Bolhuis says. "I had no idea I would receive this award. I am truly grateful!" says the Cedar Falls native.

"I have been in contact with Jean's husband, Dr. Jim Kelly. He expressed to me how important early childhood education was to his wife and the values she held," Bolhuis says. "I am very thankful to Dr. Kelly and the early childhood faculty for choosing me for this award based upon my values and passion that I have for early childhood education."

Adds Jim Kelly: "The award has been given to 11 students now and stands ready to serve many in the future."

*For more information on how you can support students at the UNI College of Education, please connect with Kim Hanna, director of development, at [kimberly.hanna@uni.edu](mailto:kimberly.hanna@uni.edu) or 319-273-7319.*

***NOTE: An up-to-date listing of donors will appear in the next issue of Premier.***