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University of Northern Iowa
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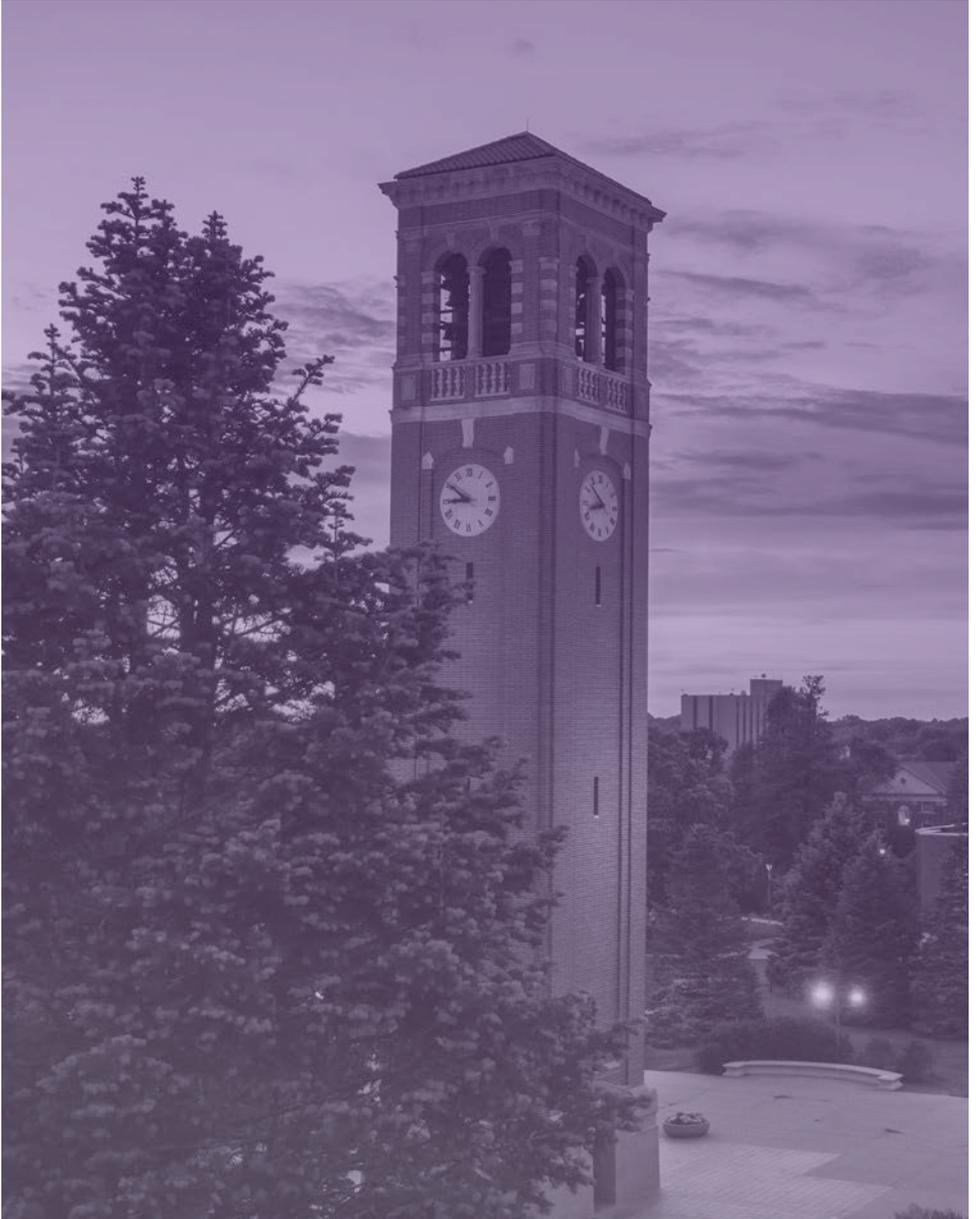
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TEACHING IN A PANDEMIC — A REFLECTION



SCOTT PETERS | PROFESSOR &
DEPARTMENT HEAD

In my 23 years of teaching, I've never encountered a more difficult year than the one we just made it through. I've also never been more proud of my students, more grateful to be surrounded by such amazing faculty colleagues, or more fortunate to have been supported by staff across campus.

While many other universities across the country and in Iowa shifted much of their teaching online, UNI kept 70-80% of our

courses face-to-face throughout the academic year. Within Political Science, the only courses we moved online were our larger introductory courses. Offering in-person courses was no small feat, however. It required enormous effort to determine how to do so as safely as possible. Facilities staff made changes to building ventilation systems and room seating, even creating usable classroom spaces out of larger rooms designed for other purposes (e.g., Commons Ballroom). Our custodial staff did extra cleaning in public areas to try to reduce the likelihood of surface transmission. Because we had to be able to accommodate students who might be sick, in isolation, or quarantined, even in-person courses needed to have significant online infrastructure. Our IT staff worked tirelessly over the past year to provide additional training and support to faculty and students as we relied upon our online learning resources more than we ever had before.

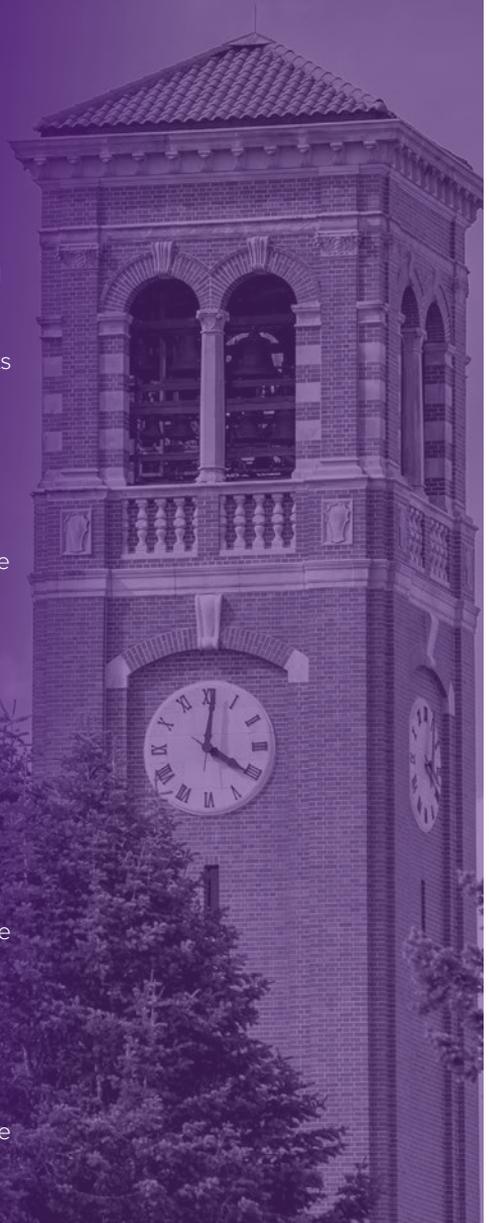
Which brings me to our faculty, whose herculean efforts this year allowed us to provide students with quality teaching and personal support in these difficult circumstances. The need to accommodate students who might have to come in and out of the classroom meant that faculty essentially had to teach two courses at once: an online version and an in-person version. Faculty members live-streamed their courses and/or recorded video lectures to supplement their in-person lessons. They restructured all of their courses at the same time. They reinvented assignments or in-class activities that were too difficult to do in our masked-and-distanced classroom environment. They reached out to students who were missing class or who were having difficulty, assuring that they got the support they needed. They did all of this while they were working from home while their kids attended online school, caring for small children or older parents, or worrying about family across the country (or the globe) whom they couldn't visit.

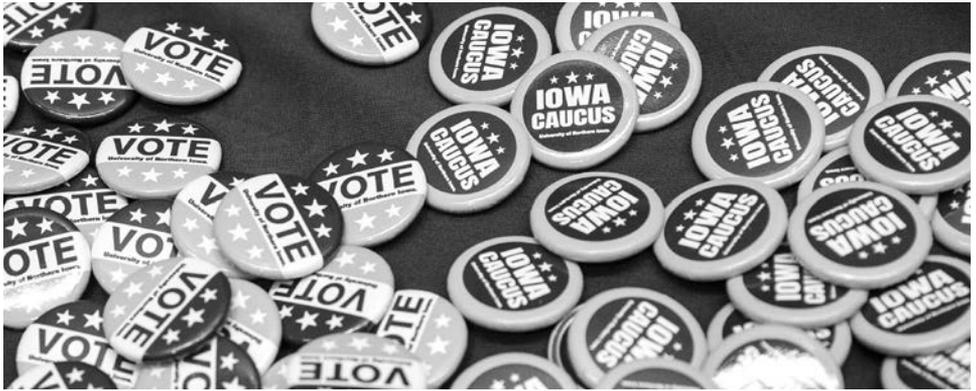
Finally, let me tell you about our amazing students. This wasn't the college experience that any of them wanted. Even though classes were in person, our masked-and-distanced-environment sometimes made for a less than ideal learning environment. In many cases, co-curricular activities were similarly constrained. It could be tough to make personal connections in the classroom and outside of it.

Beyond that, just like the rest of us, students faced enormous hurdles navigating daily life in a pandemic. Many of them were working in jobs that put them at increased risk of contracting COVID. Some of them got sick or had to take care of sick family members. A handful lost loved ones to the virus. I don't know that I would have had the tools or the wherewithal to make it through an academic year like this one when I was their age. I marvel at their persistence and determination.

We're all looking forward to the fall semester, when it looks like things will be back to normal. We all learned some new skills this year. Students grew a little more independent in their learning. Faculty will probably incorporate some of the techniques we learned into our courses. The Department will likely do more community and alumni outreach via Zoom.

But the heart of what we do well at UNI—faculty in classrooms, personalized attention to students, and a dedication to student success and well-being—thrives on the kind of in-person contacts we should be back to in August.





#PANTHERSVOTE IN A PANDEMIC

#PanthersVote is a unified, nonpartisan campaign to increase student participation in elections. It's led by the Northern Iowa Student Government (NISG) and university chapters of the American Democracy Project (ADP) and Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) along with the Department of Political Science and, for the first time this year, UNI Athletics.

Our efforts in previous years helped UNI achieve one of the highest rates of voter turnout among campuses nationwide, but 2020 presented a special set of challenges. Planning for #panthersvote typically starts in the spring or summer preceding the election, but at that time we had no idea what conditions would look like in November. We didn't know in July that our COVID mitigation efforts would be effective and that in-person learning would continue throughout the entire fall semester.

Such unknowns posed a series of planning challenges. Should we recommend that students vote by mail or vote in person? If they're likely to vote by mail anyway, should they register at their Cedar Falls address or at home? What if they requested a mail-in ballot, but campus was forced to close weeks before the election because of a COVID spike?

Eventually, with the leadership of ADP Chair **JUSTIN HOLMES**, and considerable contributions from UNI Athletics and University Relations, we managed a mostly digital voter turnout campaign. UNI Poli Sci faculty **DONNA HOFFMAN, JAYME RENFRO, EVAN RENFRO, SCOTT PETERS**, and **JUSTIN HOLMES** recorded a series of videos so students could gather information before casting their votes. (These videos are archived at bit.ly/polisciplaylist).

President Mark Nook and Head Football Coach Mark Farley recorded videos urging people to register to vote and vote. UNI Athletics distributed #panthersvote masks to athletes and encouraged competition among its teams to achieve 100% registration rates. We offered early voting at the UNIDome and NISG gave rides to the polls on election day. We also established a one-stop website for all information regarding voter registration and voting: panthersvote.uni.edu.

We'll find out how successful we were when we receive a report this summer, but we already know that the new partnerships we formed across campus and the new tools we used will enhance our #panthersvote efforts in the future.

POLI SCI SENIOR RECEIVES NATIONAL ESSAY AWARD

Growing up in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan, **ALLADIN DAFALLA** was constantly reminded of the gap between the wealth of the city and poverty of the southern towns in the grip of war. When his family moved to the Midwest in 2013 in pursuit of better educational opportunities for Alladin, he was surprised to see similar issues in the United States.

Witnessing these disparities inspired him to undertake a career in public service and became the basis for an essay that recently won the American Economics Association's Andrew Brimmer Undergraduate Essay Prize. The award is given each year to a student pursuing a degree in economics, political science, public policy, or a related field in honor of Dr. Andrew Brimmer. Dr. Brimmer was the first Black member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve Board. The essay must focus on a topic related to the economic well-being of Black Americans.

Alladin's essay argued that, because many school districts are funded through property taxes, comparatively low homeownership and high poverty rates in Black neighborhoods were driving down investment in local schools and increasing the education gap relative to more affluent areas.

"Until this system of property-tax-funded schools is abolished or completely overhauled so that low-income children are entitled to the same education their rich counterparts are, the cycle of poverty will continue to churn," he wrote. For Alladin, the topic of his essay was all too familiar. "If you compare schools in the capital city to other, more rural areas of Sudan, there's a huge disparity in funding for education resources," Alladin said. "The scary thing is that, while Sudan is still a developing country, the United States has the resources and the ability to solve these problems, but they're not being addressed."

Alladin and his family initially moved to the United States in 2010 after they won a lottery to obtain a



visa. After arriving in Philadelphia, they returned to Sudan after only a few weeks to care for a sick family member. They settled in Dubuque in 2013, when Alladin was 13. The desire to continue to receive the best education available led him to visit UNI. His experience with Model United Nations led him to political science.

"The environment [of Model UN] was so welcoming, I just absolutely loved the culture of the department. I wound up changing my major to political science."

Alladin has certainly made the most of his time on campus at UNI. In addition to his involvement in Model United Nations, he was a senator in the Northern Iowa Student Government representing the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. He helped first-year students transition to campus life as a Jump Start Summer Orientation Staff Member and as a member of Student Admissions Ambassadors.

Alladin will attend University of California at San Diego in the fall to pursue an M.A. in International Affairs. He is considering a career in the United Nations.

AYAH AL-DURAZI RECEIVES LUX AWARD FOR SERVICE

AYAH AL-DURAZI has always seen herself as a change maker.

So when she arrived at UNI as a political science student, she immersed herself in diversity, equity and inclusion issues while taking a course load that allowed her to graduate in just three years.

“I would hear about UNI tackling some of its diversity issues, and that’s one of the things that led to my involvement and acknowledging what can be changed,” Ayah said. “But it was also about my appreciation for UNI. I was really glad for the opportunities that I’ve had with faculty and creating connections. So, it was just my way of giving back to the university.”

She started her first semester, joining the Latinx student organization UNIdos UNI and Ethnic Student Promoters, a student group that seeks to increase the amount of students of color in higher education, as well as attending Black Student Union meetings. She served as the director of community outreach for the Ethnic Student Promoters and the program coordinator of UNIdos UNI.

Ayah joined the Northern Iowa Student Government in her second year, eventually becoming chair of campus relations.

“Helping others isn’t something I do for recognition, it’s just part of my personality,” Ayah said. “It just was a big thing to know that I really did have an impact on the university. And I’m leaving here knowing that that will go on and the work will continue.”

After graduating, Ayah will attend Colorado State University to pursue a master’s degree in public policy administration, concentrating in International Policy and Management.



POLI SCI STUDENTS RECEIVE CAMPUS LEADERSHIP AWARDS



Each year, UNI recognizes exceptional student leadership across campus. As is typical, UNI Poli Sci students were celebrated for their service to UNI and the impact they have on their fellow students and community. In addition to **AYAH AL-DURAZI'S** Lux Award, the following UNI Poli Sci students received awards:



Three UNI Poli Sci students served on the NISG Cabinet this year. Congratulations to **ELLE BOEDING** (NISG President), **COLE PASSICK** (Director of Administration and Finance), and **SYDNEY WAGNER** (Director of Government Relations). We thank all of them for their service to UNI.



COLE PASSICK received the Boots to Books Scholarship for veteran students.



Political Science major **YADIRA GUZMAN** was recognized with two campus leadership awards. First, she received the Student Employee of the Year Award in recognition of her work in Admissions. She also received the Servant Leader Award, recognizing those who work for the common good while putting the needs of others first for her work enhancing the experiences of multicultural students on campus.



EMILY NEUMANN, Political Communication major, received the Greek 360 Award this year for her work as a representative for her sorority, Student Admissions Ambassadors, Connecting Alumni to Students, and the Honors program.

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Black Hawk County Bar Association: **JOE LINK**

Charles and Ada Hoxie Scholarship: **SERENITY KOLLASCH**

Dennis Jensen Memorial Scholarship: **WITT HARBERTS**

Glaesner Political Science Scholarship: **JADA THOMPSON**

Vajpeyi Scholarship: **BRADY FISHER**

Women in Politics: **JASMINE CARBIN, MEGAN ROBINSON, AUBRIANNA WOODY**

CONGRATULATIONS 2020-21 GRADUATES!

MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

NATHAN GRUBER

BACHELOR OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

REBECCA ABERLE
MARISSA ANDERSON
ALEX BAGBY
JACOB COURTOIS
WILLIAM FLANEGIN
CALEB GIPPLE
PETER JOHNSON
SUSAN PRATT
MORGAN SMITH
KIERNAN YOUNG

BACHELOR OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

KALEY BLINN
ELLE BOEDING
SHAWN BURRAGE
WILLIAM FLANEGIN
OLIVIA HABINCK
EMILY NEUMANN
MORGAN PRATKELIS

BACHELOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

AYAH AL-DURAZI
GAGE BRANDT
NATHAN BURK
ALLADIN DAFALLA
ANTHONY DEBARTOLO
PETER DREIFUSS
MADISON EVERSON
LILAH FLICKINGER
HANNAH HATCH
KWON HYUKCHAN
COREY JONES
EMILY LOOMIS
LIAM MCINROY
KODY MULLEN
PHUC NGUYEN
ALYSSA NOE
JAMIE STEIN
SKYLER SCHRUM
SYDNEY WAGNER
TYLER WHITEHEAD
YADIRA GUZMAN



HELIODORO MORENO, '07, is Senior Removal Defense Attorney of Stand Together Contra Costa, a program run by the Contra Costa County public defender's office, who represents people threatened with deportation. He ran for election to his local school board in 2020. You can read more about his work at insideuni.uni.edu/uni-alum-fighting-immigrant-rights

RYAN STEVENSON, '18, was recognized as one of the 20 Under 40 by the Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier in October.

BRYCE WILLIAMS, '14, joined First Wealth Financial Services in Marshalltown last summer.

JASON KNITTEL, '97, history teacher at Waterloo East High School, was recognized as a Gold Star Teacher.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT VIDEOS

This year, the Department started connecting with some of our alums via Alumni Spotlight video podcasts. **EVAN RENFRO** interviewed a handful of recent graduates to discuss their academic journeys at UNI and what they've been up to post graduation.

See interviews with **AARIKA FORNEY**, '18, **NOELLE TROUTMAN**, '18, **ERIK VELIZ**, '17, **AARON RIDGELY**, '17, and **ANDRE MILTON**, '19, at bit.ly/polisciplaylist.

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CITIZENS

NATALIE DEAN, '19, teaches 2nd Grade in the Des Moines Public Schools. This year she found an innovative way to introduce her students to key political science concepts. Natalie teaches at Moore Elementary, an International Baccalaureate school that uses an inquiry lens in learning and seeks to foster internationally-minded global citizens.

During election season, Natalie was teaching students how to create tally charts, picture graphs, and bar graphs. She split students up into two groups that had different rules for counting votes (to simulate electoral and popular vote), and they voted for either cheeseburgers or pizza for their favorite lunch.

Pizza won both the popular vote and electoral vote, but this allowed Natalie to discuss with students how one choice might be able to win the popular vote and the other the electoral vote. They then graphed the class vote and the possibility of the popular vote and electoral vote not being aligned.

This background knowledge helped students understand the purpose of the Electoral College and understand that it gives more representation to smaller populations. The class closely monitored the electoral map in the days following the election.

Students had a lot of questions. They wondered why we needed to have two different types of votes, and they wondered why only grown-ups could vote. Through the activity she planned, Natalie was able to engage her second graders in important discussions about citizenship and introduce key concepts about how our democracy works.



KYLE ENDRES | ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Kyle Endres joined UNI this year as an assistant professor of political science and Associate Director of the Center for Social and Behavioral Research. Prof. Endres earned his Ph.D. from the University of Texas and spent four years as a postdoctoral fellow at Duke University's Initiative on Survey Methodology. He researches political campaigns, participation, and political behavior. More specifically, he focuses on how electoral campaigns and interest groups exploit competing issues, partisan, and

racial predispositions to influence who participates in politics (and how they participate). In research published last year, he teamed up with colleagues at Northeastern and Columbia to see how several large companies were affected by tweets from President Trump. The research shows how brands can become entangled in partisan politics, and how this can affect how partisans view the brands. Prof. Endres taught Public Opinion and Voting behavior this spring, leading students through the process of creating and carrying out their own public opinion survey.



CHRIS LARIMER | PROFESSOR

This past academic year has been a challenge but also very rewarding. It was a pleasure to teach "Intro to American Politics" during the fall semester leading up to the 2020 presidential election as students were very engaged and interested in the process, and voting for the first time. The election also brought numerous opportunities for community engagement through invited talks and media commentary on federal and Iowa politics. Within the discipline, I continue to serve on the Executive Council for the Association of Politics and the Life Sciences. I also continue to serve on

the Board of Directors for the Cedar Valley United Way and the Panther Scholarship Club. In March, I was very honored to be awarded the James F. Lubker Faculty Research Award for "an outstanding record of significant research" by the Graduate College. In terms of graduate education, our Master of Public Policy (MPP) program is currently finishing with its third cohort of students under our online model and we are recruiting for our next cohort to begin in the fall of 2021. As Graduate Coordinator for the program, I have been very pleased with its progress and we continue to update our curriculum to ensure we are offering courses that will help students meet the needs and demands of the public sector. If you are interested in this program, I encourage you to visit our program webpage: continuinged.uni.edu/distance/public-policy



RAMONA MCNEAL | ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

As I suspect for most everyone, the 2020-2021 school year was challenging and required doing things in new ways. I took part in my first virtual conference (the Annual Midwest Political Science Association Meeting) where I presented a co-authored paper "State-Level Response to Mass Shootings: A Focus on Domestic Violence." This paper explored the relationship between domestic violence and mass shootings and represents a continuation of my research into state-level gun policy. This year, I also had published a co-authored book chapter, "Variation in State-Level Response to School

Shootings", which examines state policies for addressing school shootings. My upcoming research agenda for the summer includes studies on cyberbullying and prison reform. Finally, Dr. Susan Kunkle from the Sociology Department at Kent State University and I wrapped up our program evaluation of a reentry program undertaken by the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio.

RETIREMENT



Professor **KENNETH BASOM** announced his retirement, effective at the conclusion of the '20-21 academic year. Ken came to the University of Northern Iowa in 1991 after visiting positions at two other universities from 1989-91. Promoted to associate professor in 1996, Prof. Basom has been a stellar university citizen and has contributed to a number of important initiatives at the departmental, college, and university levels during his 30 years here.

Prof. Basom's expertise lies in the politics of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1989 at the dawn of a period of tremendous change in the politics of that region. This transition presented a challenge to many young scholars of the era, but Prof. Basom adapted quickly and published a series of papers in the early 90s that examined democratic transitions, privatization, and environmentalism in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Throughout his time at UNI, Dr. Basom has been a dedicated teacher and mentor. In addition to teaching the Non-western Cultures Russia course, he has anchored the department's comparative politics curriculum, teaching our introductory-level course as well as courses in Western European Politics, Russian and Eastern European Politics. In recent years, two of his more popular courses have centered on highly relevant and engaging issues: Nationalism, and the Politics of Nonviolence. Ken has also given freely of his time to do independent study courses and supervise Honors theses. (Indeed, as just one indicator that he finished strong, he supervised an Honors thesis during his final semester). Perhaps nothing speaks more to his dedication to students than the extra effort he has exerted within the past year. Ken would be the first one to tell you that he is not very comfortable with technology. During the past year, though, he has brought a positive attitude to learning new technology and has done what it takes to serve students and keep them engaged with his classes.

During his 30 years at UNI, Professor Basom has consistently provided excellent teaching and service to our department, the College of Social Behavioral Sciences, and the University. All of his colleagues thank Dr. Basom for his meritorious service to UNI. We will miss him, but we wish him a very happy and fulfilling retirement.



The Department of Political Science at the University of Northern Iowa offers undergraduate degrees in political science, public administration, and political communication, as well as the graduate Master in Public Policy degree. We emphasize student-focused education with small class sizes, research opportunities, engagement opportunities, and internships. Our award-winning faculty turn excellence in research into excellence in the classroom. Visit us on the UNI campus in Sabin Hall or at csbs.uni.edu/polisci.

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