

Fall 2023

## Premier, Fall 2023

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# PREMIER

## Fall 2023

Welcome to the Fall 2023 issue of the Premier Magazine e-newsletter.

Premier is published for University of Northern Iowa College of Education alumni, friends, faculty and staff. Take a look at this year's features or check out some of our past issues. Have something to share or update? Let us know at [collegeofed@uni.edu](mailto:collegeofed@uni.edu)!

# From the Dean: Aligning and engaging for the future

Dear Friends,

Another full year has passed since we connected, and we're well on our way in our new academic year. You'll find highlights and more in this issue of Premier, but a few I'll point out:

- / **Continued growth of our online programs**, which played a part in steady enrollment this fall 2024.
- / **Scholarly and research endeavors** in areas as unique as the use of artificial intelligence to highlight implied biases within fiction to securing federal funding to help us triple the number of school psychologists educated through our "Grow Your Own School Psychologist" program.
- / Planning for the **TEACH project** with the Rod Library, which will create a hub for teacher preparation and classroom experimentation in the instructional resources and technology services space in Schindler Education Center.
- / Our participation in the **successful launch of the public phase of the Our Tomorrow campaign** led by the UNI Foundation.
- / The **transition of our health-related majors, programs and faculty** to the new School of Health and Human Sciences, effective July 1, 2023.



The latter initiative, announced last fall, included adding a bachelor's degree in nursing and bringing together the majority of health-related programs. Many of our departing degrees and disciplines were longstanding programs within the college – particularly physical education, which traces its beginnings back to 1896. We wish only the best to everyone in their new home.

For the College of Education, this structural change represents an exciting opportunity which will guide our future growth. Moving forward, leadership, faculty and staff are working together to best align the college for tomorrow. Where is the synergy among our departments and disciplines? Are there opportunities to elevate and strengthen our focus? We plan to spend much of this year answering those questions and more.

We remain equally focused on three additional goals: fostering a thriving culture, elevating the college internally and externally and, as always, seeking to build upon new and existing avenues for enrollment growth for the long-term.

Overall, we continue to adapt to the needs of our potential and current students, alumni, faculty and staff. Undergraduate initiatives include completion of programming to support a deaf or hard of hearing teaching endorsement, situating UNI for its seven-year state review visit in 2024 and (continued progress) in transforming our teacher education curriculum. We are re-envisioning our graduate programs to make them more flexible, nimble and responsive to today's adult learners, including plans for the addition of a Master of Arts in Teaching.

As a college, we seek to intentionally engage – as faculty and staff, as leaders within our educational, civic and professional communities and with our students, alumni, donors, campus and community partners. This past year, I have had the privilege of engaging with many alumni and friends. Each time, I walk away with such an appreciation for the quality of the people and the impact represented by our proud Panther nation. Thank you, as always, for your support.

With warm regards,

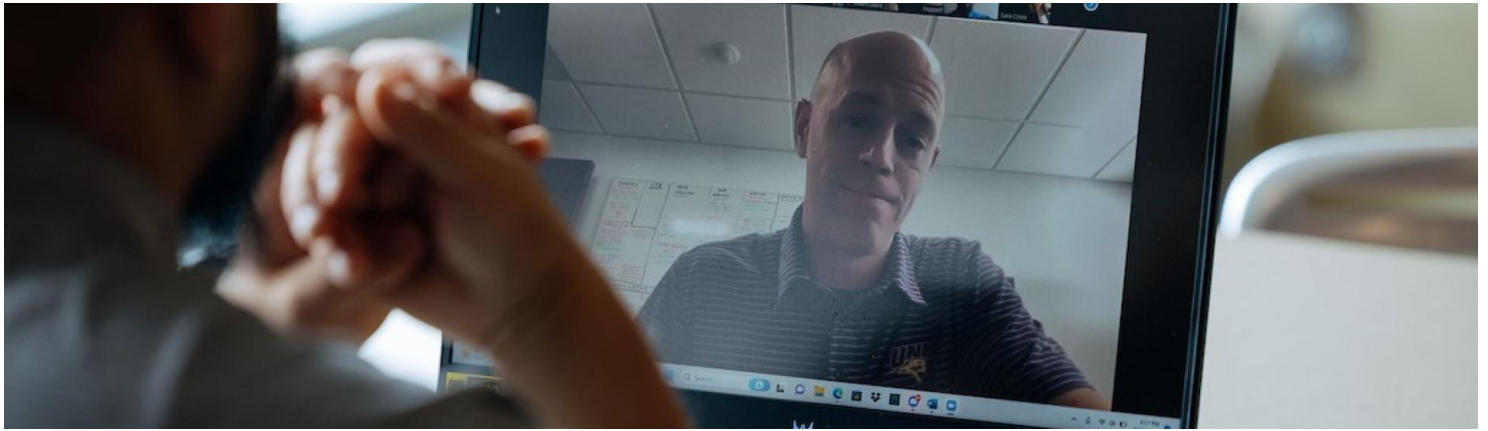
Colleen S. Mulholland, EdD  
Dean, College of Education



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1227 W 27th St  
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614  
319.273.2311

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## A powerful partnership

*Of the 40+ online education graduate and undergraduate degrees and certificates or endorsements offered at University of Northern Iowa, 20 are affiliated with the College of Education. In partnership with Online and Distance Education, this alternative pathway to achieve educational goals is recognized for its quality, including recognition by U.S. News and World Report for online master's in education and best graduate education programs.*

*Students consistently give these options high marks as well. Nearly 98% of graduate students and 96% of undergraduate students would recommend UNI's Online and Distance Education programs to others.*

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## The online evolution



Progress often happens in spurts. And sometimes it gets a nudge. A very strong nudge, like a COVID-19 pandemic nudge.

That overstates the history of online education at University of Northern Iowa. But it does reflect the surge in interest for this alternative pathway for students who, post-pandemic, increasingly find online delivery a flexible, convenient option to earn their degree.

From the foundations built through the state-supported Iowa Communications Network in the 1990s, the College of Education was an early adopter of distance education, particularly in its graduate programs. Back then, courses in early childhood education, elementary reading and language arts, early childhood special education, principalship, superintendency and school library studies were all in the mix.

Today, of the 40+ undergraduate, graduate, certificate and endorsement degrees offered by Online and Distance Education (ODE), one-third are College of Education offerings and, moreover, 40 percent are

online graduate programs.

ODE provides in-house program coordination and management of recruitment and enrollment of the adult learners seeking these pathways. They partner with college program coordinators and faculty in working through the recruitment funnel, from hosting informational webinars through admission to UNI and as students complete their program of interest.

“The significance is that we do this together. It’s a coordinated effort. We work collaboratively throughout the entire recruitment and degree completion process,” says associate dean **Karen Cunningham**, continuing education and special programs, which includes online and distance education.

“ODE does a fantastic job helping our students enroll for the next course and receive all of the extra support needed to create a seamless experience for our distance learners,” says **Matt Townsley**, program coordinator for the Educational Leadership intensive study area in the doctoral program.

As we move beyond the “pandemic” of COVID-19, the willingness to mix modes remains—whether that’s fully online, hybrid (online with some face-to-face on campus) or the latest, hyflex, engaging with students in a combination of online and face-to-face during a class.

For some students, learning remotely can mean the difference in finding an alternative, affordable, yet accessible way to achieve their dreams. And for working professionals—like teachers seeking to advance into administration or adding endorsements like teacher librarian—it’s the doable route in the midst of busy careers.

## Three years later



When COVID-19 hit, many of the college’s graduate education programs—and students—were well positioned, already familiar with this delivery mode. Three years later, that pandemic “nudge” is playing

out in ways affecting both undergraduate and graduate and the faculty, staff and students involved, says Cunningham:

- / acceleration of education technology tools
- / increased student engagement in online courses
- / increased competition for adult learners
- / creating a new way of thinking about online teaching and learning
- / expanded online offerings.

While not new to remote learning at UNI, “COVID helped to propel online education at a faster, more efficient pace,” says Cunningham.

**Robin Dada**, head, curriculum & instruction and interim head, special education, and **Benjamin Forsyth**, associate dean for undergraduate studies and teacher education, see similar patterns of growth and learning.

Prior to COVID, Dada says, online reflected an asynchronous format for curriculum and instruction and special education coursework (work online at your own pace, no student/class/faculty interaction online).

“COVID facilitated our experimentation with synchronous formats that linked professors to students and students to each other,” she says. “We developed strategies for small group work facilitated by Zoom and Zoom was able to accommodate student-organized out-of-class meetings with each other to support study groups and the production of group projects.”

“There is both more willingness and capability from faculty and better instructional tools to accomplish good remote instruction,” Forsyth says. “There is also better reasoning for when remote instruction should not be the preferred format for a course.”

Students also show increased capability to know what it takes to be successful online as well.

Forsyth adds that experience shows a willingness to adapt, while some polarization in preference remains. “The number of people who had actually participated in online instruction prior to the pandemic was relatively small,” he says. “A majority of faculty and students can now say they have had online instruction experiences and some want, or need, more. Others are convinced they want less.”

## The online future





The success of the existing and newer online programs reflect a forward-facing future.

All partners expect continued innovation, adaptation and expansion in online learning. Filling gaps in post-baccalaureate needs, creating a more stackable set of credentials, revisiting the admissions model, adding programs such as a master’s in applied teaching – all are up for discussion, says Graduate College Dean Stephanie Huffman, who also oversees ODE.

The majority of undergraduate coursework remains on campus. For some graduate programs, there are variables—such as accreditation requirements—that keep students on campus. But signs of an ongoing transition persist.

Of COE’s current on-campus graduate programs, school psychology is learning from a hybrid curriculum developed for its federal grant-funded “Grow Your Own School Psychologist” program with three selected area education agencies. And plans are underway to fully shift the master’s in postsecondary education: student affairs to a primarily online program beginning fall 2024.

“ODE, in collaboration with COE, will continue to seek out opportunities to increase accessibility to high-quality, high-demand online programs and courses where internal capacity for program delivery exists,” says Cunningham.

Forsyth expects continued mastery of the online space. At the undergraduate level, methods and field experience courses may seem less amenable to online formats. Yet, “relatively small changes to learning objectives and clever curriculum design decisions make it so that each of these courses could be taught in an online format,” he adds.

Having the in-house support of Online and Distance Education is a plus, he says. “ODE should continue to

be one of our strongest partners when it comes to designing and offering remote instruction because remote instruction is at the core of what they do,” he says.

## Access to learn

A key outcome of this partnership? Increased access, one of the overarching goals for UNI as a regional comprehensive institution.

“Our access to students that want a quality education, but otherwise cannot come to campus, has never been better. We also have good tools and experience to help us provide remote instruction in a rigorous and meaningful way,” adds Forsyth.

“The collaboration with ODE and the use of online learning have increased access to higher education in populations where higher education was not possible before. The growth of the 2+2 program is a testament to the opportunity that is recognized and the chance to change career and socioeconomic status in families,” says Dada.

“I believe COVID-19 affirmed the importance of online and distance education programs and also helped us understand more deeply how to provide quality online programming,” says **Amy Nielsen**, interim associate dean of the graduate studies for the college.

“As we look toward the future, I understand online and distance education programs as the future and especially relevant for our university. UNI prepares the majority of Iowa's teachers and it makes sense that we continue to provide learning opportunities through graduate education,” she says. “As educators, we recognize the importance of life-long learning and our online and distance education programs provide continued learning for our current and future educational leaders.”

## Speaking from experience



*"The distance education model provided by UNI was a great fit for my life. I was pleased that I didn't need to commute to classes and could still have access to the experts I needed to teach me. Our professors also each understood the life that we were leading and provided flexibility to meet the individual needs of each student."* -- **Anna Warner, Philanthropy and Nonprofit Development, MA**



*"I was thrilled at the idea of teaching my own classroom. I attend classes over Zoom so I'm home in the evenings with my kids. The professors keep our homework manageable so we don't feel overwhelmed trying to work while we attend school,"* **Melinda Hutchens, (current) Purple Pathway for Paraeducators student**



*“As a working professional and parent, remote learning has allowed flexibility for me with evening classes. Learning in a remote setting has also given me the opportunity to collaborate with many great individuals, with each of us bringing unique experiences and knowledge to our class conversations, making the learning never-ending.” – Janel Alleyne, ‘23, EDD*

## The Next Wave

Graduate education has always led the way as adult learners sought flexible ways to advance their education and their careers. For many years, the online 2+2 elementary education program was the college’s sole undergraduate offering. However, just since 2020, four new primarily online pathways have been added:

### **Doctor of Education, Fall 2020**

While elements of the doctoral program included some online instruction in the past, the program was revamped, streamlined and became a primarily online program in 2020. After working through this transition, enrollment has increased, with almost 60 students in the 2022 cohorts within four intensive

study areas currently offered. Associate Professor **Matt Townsley** notes a shift to a hybrid model for the doctoral program was already on its way as COVID-19 hit. He now considers that move visionary. “I think everyone, students and faculty, look back and are grateful we made that decision,” he says. “We are actively recruiting for the next cohort and prospective students come to us with **the expectation** that our program will include a flexible delivery model,” he adds.

## Purple Pathway for Paraeducators, August 2022

This program, offering a streamlined, accelerated path to an elementary education degree and special education endorsement, draws upon the experience and environments in which paraeducators work. Timing-wise, it filled a need and a moment of opportunity, with some tuition support for eligible students as part of a state (and COVID-) funded apprenticeship program.

Program development pushed faculty to create an online curriculum and format to ensure students would be in position to student teach and graduate in five semesters, including summer. The first cohort accepted 67 students. A year later, 63 remain in the program and are preparing for student teaching next spring in their districts. The success of the program has led college leaders to share the COE story with others at national conferences in the past year. And, in just one year, everyone continues to learn what’s possible in online education.



“We found success with laboratory experiences this summer with the Purple Pathway by the development of science kits that were distributed to class members around Iowa through the AEA network,” says **Robin Dada**, head of Curriculum and Instruction and Special Education. “This allowed students who could not come to campus an opportunity to engage with experimentation and project development with materials identified by the instructor. The success of the kits this summer have informed future work in science methods for instructors at a distance from UNI, particularly in programs such as 2+2 or sections that are taught online.”

## Purple Pathway for School Administrators, June 2023

The longstanding, primarily online principalship program is an anchor of the college’s online graduate education offerings (see related story). Taking advantage of the UNI@DMACC (Des Moines Area Community College) partnership, a dedicated cohort of 15 Des Moines School District candidates launched in fall 2023. Coursework is primarily online, with any face-to-face instruction occurring at the Urban Campus.

## Special Education Endorsement, August 2023

Seven students joined the first five-semester cohort for a new, entirely online Iowa Director of Special Education endorsement announced in spring 2023. The pathway is intended for special education teachers, school principals and administrators and AEA professionals holding a master's degree who are interested in leadership positions for PreK-12 special education at the district, AEA or state level.



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319.273.2311

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# Advancing your career, online

## A principalship perspective

This summer, five UNI principalship candidates in two cohorts (Purple and Gold) participated in the [filming of a video](#) focused on the principalship program. Here is the fuller story of what they had to share about what it is like working toward their master's in education or principalship advanced studies certificate in these primarily online programs.

Joining in the conversation were:



- / **Levi Miller**, (*LM*), business and computer science teacher and baseball coach, Nashua-Plainfield School District
- / **Molly Dabroski** (*MD*), literacy consultant, Grant Wood AEA
- / **Tim Hopper** (*TH*), 7th grade social studies teacher and athletic advisor, Waterloo School District
- / **Andrew Kim** (*AK*), special programs teacher, Dubuque School District
- / **Kelly Moeller** (*KM*), school counselor, Cedar Falls School District.

Principalship: Gaining a foundation

A powerful partnership: the online evolution

## Life as a principalship candidate: Q& A



Levi Miller

**What led you to seek a principalship degree? And why UNI? What made this degree program**

## **attractive to you?**

**LM:** I think it was just time. After 10 years of teaching in the profession, I felt a call to the next step. There's the track record of UNI and its reputation throughout the state. I grew up in central Iowa, did my undergrad in northwest Iowa, and word spreads quickly that UNI is an education college.

**MD:** I'm a UNI undergrad, so obviously, there was no question on where I was going to go, but last year I had several people kind of nudge me, like, "Why aren't you a principal?" I had a lot of people believing in me and that empowered me to go back to school. I'm a little bit later in life and I just decided to take the challenge. I'm so happy I did.

**TH:** I was led into the principalship cohort because all students can benefit from a teacher of color. I wanted to extend my reach. And UNI was just right in my backyard.

**AK:** When I was first looking, I wasn't looking for a specific program or anything. I just knew that I wanted a master's degree and I needed to get a master's degree. And a lot of people recommended UNI. They really liked the program, the flexibility of being online and having the ability to work from home. So I looked at all those factors and it just fit into my schedule really well.

**KM:** I would consider myself a lifelong learner, and I am always looking at ways to better myself. I love challenges, and it seemed that leadership classes would be the next step, so that way I can better serve my students and the teams that I work with at school. After speaking with two professors here, the communication was super fast, they were very prompt, very detailed, very passionate about the program. It just seemed like a very good fit.

## **Have you experienced an online degree program before? What has surprised you?**

**LM:** I did not experience anything online before this. I didn't know what to expect, but it was a very seamless transition from having no experience learning online to learning online a lot. And the professors, the support staff make you feel very comfortable asking questions.

I've got two little girls, Brinley and Blake. Brinley is two and a half. Blake is about to be a year old. And then teaching and coaching... Like any adult with a family, you have a lot of responsibilities. And with the support of my wife, I really haven't had any problem keeping up. (The faculty and staff) work with you to give you assignments, projects and learning experiences that actually matter.



Molly Dabroski

**MD:** I've only taken a few online classes here and there just for research credit, but never a full program. What surprised me is how manageable it was. I was kind of nervous. I didn't know what to expect. But the professors and the materials are all easily accessible. It's been a wonderful experience so far.

It's the only way really for me. I have two daughters, 15 and 12, and it's just the three of us in our home. So they're busy running around and doing their thing. It was nice to be home and have class and still have a pulse on what was going on at home.

**TH:** The distance education model works with my home life balance by having class one night a week. I always look forward to the Monday nights where I have class. I can schedule this with my wife and kids and say, hey, this is my time to do what I need to do. And then the rest of the weekend, just take care of my family.

**AK:** The one thing that surprised me was how quickly you build a connection over an online platform with your professors, with your fellow peers and classmates, and how interactive some of the classes really are, even though you're several miles away from them.

At first it was very difficult, just figuring out when I have to log in, what needs to be done, but once you get organized and you understand the schedule, and you keep on top of your assignments, it becomes very routine.

**KM:** So I've taken online classes before—quite a few—but I have never had a continuous program per se. I

have a very busy home life schedule. I have three small children. I work full time and I actually have a business outside of the school that I own. (The online program) actually fits in really well.

### **What's a typical week like for you as an online student?**

**LM:** My classes are on Monday nights, typically from 6 to 9. Every single Monday. Then you kind of have your outlook for the rest of the week, kind of your checklist, right? What needs to get done, your readings, and then you're prepared for class that following Monday. And it's just kind of that, rinse and repeat. I wouldn't say that it's an overwhelming workload because they understand that these are people that are leading adult lives, have families, but they also push you in a way that is going to further your education to prepare you for that leadership role.

**MD:** I have class on Wednesdays from 6 to 9. We would sometimes have meetings with our group throughout the week if we had a presentation, but there would be readings outside of that, maybe some papers to write, interviews with other colleagues, and then some internship experience also. It has been very manageable, and the professors have been amazing to work with.

**TH:** I have classes on Monday nights, and the rest of the week, after I get done teaching, I get to go home, I enjoy my kids, enjoy my wife, enjoy myself. Of course there are papers and projects that I have to do, but I can always fit them in periodically throughout the week. So it's been a really good model for us.

**AK:** Depending on which part of the year you catch me, it would be work, coaching, coming home, trying to spend a little time with my family as I can. And then logging on to class time. But any other time, it's trying to just find the balance of when to do the classwork. You still find the time to do the things that are part of your life, like your family.

**KM:** We consistently meet on Monday nights for Zoom. I stay after school until the 6 p.m. Zoom. That gives me an hour and a half to wrap up any homework and get a look at what's expected for the week and get a jumpstart. I do the Zoom in my office and then I go home. Over the course of the next week in the evening after the kids go to bed, I do some reading.

It's not too heavy of a load, you can get it done if you chip at it a half an hour each evening. It's not too much work, but enough to really give you a great experience.



Andrew Kim

**How have you felt supported as you work to complete this program?**

**LM:** I'm a head baseball coach in the middle of our season. I brought up that concern last year during orientation. They have been very flexible with me, still holding me accountable by all means. They say, "Hey, we're going to work with you to make sure that we're going to get you through this in the right way."

During zoom class, Brinley runs up to me and wants to see everybody on camera. All I see back from the professors and the classmates are smiles. That's just a sign of the welcoming environment that they've established for the program.

**TH:** A family member recently passed away, and Dr. Theo, Dr. Townsley, Dr. Hayes all reached out to me. Asking me how I was doing, was I okay and how they could help out and gave me their sincere condolences.

**AK:** The professors here are awesome, very communicative, not hesitant to help you out at all. As far as your peers go, I have people within my school district that are doing the program with me. But I feel like even if I didn't have peers from the same city, I would still get the help and support I needed from the other peers in different cities and across the program.

**KM:** They are so dedicated to their jobs, and they're very detail oriented, and they're very quick with their responses. And if they're not sure, they will look for resources for you. I've even had experiences where

I've had some questions and the professor says, "Hey, let's zoom this week and talk about this so we can get this hashed out and make sure you have clarity."

### **How have you felt connected with your cohort and UNI, since you're primarily online?**



**LM:** At our first orientation activity, we were throwing a tennis ball around, learning each other's names. Now we've finally come back almost a year later, and we're on campus again, and you just feel connected. It's "Hey, Tim," "Hey, Laura..." Even though it's primarily through Zoom, and we have people in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, all over, you still feel connected because of the personal bond that you've created through the cohort.

**MD:** We see each other on zoom all year long. When we got here the other day for the first on campus, it was like a little reunion. We actually only met each other one other time a year ago, face to face. So it's amazing how you can still connect with people online and just.

We'd go in breakout rooms throughout, and then just having group presentations and partners throughout the assignments does help with that connecting, too.

**TH:** So I felt connected with my cohort. And so we see each other as a lot of camaraderie that's going on and man, it's just been an awesome time. Wow.

There's a group of us that are specific here to the area, Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and so sometimes we can either meet after school or during the week. Here on campus, we've all just got together. It was great to put a face to what's happening there online.

**AK:** Even though primarily online, you still get connected through that weekly meeting. And some of the projects and assignments that we have to do require us to work in smaller groups. That helps build that bond and relationship, knowing that we're going to work towards a common goal.

**KM:** The classes have made it pretty easy to get connected. There are group projects. Even though it's online, during class, they'll put us in breakout sessions. So you're working with a smaller number of classmates. And then we also have some group text message communication outside of class. Then the program provides us with two weeks on campus where we're face-to-face-for both summers of the program.

### **Describe your relationship with your professors.**

**LM:** The professors want to establish a relationship and they have such an authenticity because they have been in the profession. You cannot argue with experience, especially with the staff that they have

accumulated here – renowned names, published authors, people that have a reputation in all different parts of Iowa, being a premier former academic principal or superintendent.

And when you're coming and learning from those renowned names, you know that you're going to get something that is incredibly high quality.

**MD:** I've had a lot of great professors when I was in my undergrad, and then obviously this program, too. They've always been responsive. They've pointed out strengths that I have. They ask lots of reflective questions that really helped me learn about myself. And I would say that's one of the biggest things I've learned. They have helped me dig into who I am as a person and as a leader. And I appreciate that.

**KM:** They definitely have motivated me. I think their passion has radiated on us, which makes us excited for the profession. Some of us probably went into this not sure if being a principal is really what we want to do with our leadership or principalship certificate. They make it sound so awesome, that it's such an opportunity to be able to serve students and other adults. They're very motivating, but yet they're also upfront and honest.

### **What are the highlights and benefits of the two weeks on campus in the summer?**

**LM:** The highlight happened today...the day in the office activity, throwing real life scenarios at you, not knowing what's going to come walking through the door.

That's part of being a principal. You're going to have real life scenarios thrown at you and you have to be able to think on your feet. I've talked about authentic learning—you can't get more authentic than that. I love learning when it's something tangible and you're going to use this.

**MD:** These days are by far the best. I mean, the online version of the program is great for managing work and home, but these days are very meaningful and authentic and genuine. They bring in lots of speakers and administrators from around the state. I've really enjoyed networking with them and learning from them.

**TH:** We not only work with educators, but people that are in the AEA. We also get to meet our professors and put that face to that picture that's on the screen that you see every Monday night. So it's just been an awesome time being here on campus.

**AK:** The benefits are finally meeting professors and your cohort face-to-face. Me, personally, I'm a huge face-to-face guy. This just brings our cohort and our bond with our teachers, professors, and our cohort that much closer.

The highlight would have to be the day in the office. The scenario day where you get a couple minutes to run through a scenario. I think that in-person, fast-paced quick real life experiences from all these different leaders across Iowa was and is the greatest experience.

**KM:** I think they really prepare their leaders for what reality will hold once you finally settle with that job that you want. We've had a lot of guest speakers who have come and shared information...this is a free

opportunity for us to get a wealth of knowledge in a short amount of time.

And it's the opportunity to have side conversations with the professors or classmates on experiences. You're able to have real conversations and get to know people on a more personal level. And those stories that they share are priceless.



Tim Hopper

**What would you tell others about getting an online education at UNI?**

**LM:** It has all been things that I'm going to be able to use in the future as a principal. They're going to work with you. They're going to push you and challenge you in a way that you weren't, you're not used to yet and that's okay. You know you're going to get challenged here to grow, to learn new things, to become the leader that you need to be. So again, it's just the good challenges that they face you with every day. And giving me flexibility to take that next step as a leader.

**MD:** I've connected with multiple people—the program casts a wide net among educators in the state. I would highly recommend it, especially if it's one of the educational leadership programs because the professors are top of the line and they work hard to make sure that you're getting the best out of the program. They will push you and ask you questions that really make you dig into what you want out of the program and the goals for yourself.

**TH:** I was a non-traditional student and I preferred to be in front of the classroom, so I can be personal with my professor and with my peers. But it actually hasn't been that bad. I have enjoyed having the freedom to be at home or wherever the internet is to access my classes online. I can work with my cohort and I can work with my peers across the state or across the region, wherever they are. I would tell other people, go after it.



**AK:** I would say that if you're hesitant about the online experience at UNI, don't be. They're going to be super supportive. They're going to help you out in whatever you need. They're super accommodating and it's just a great program overall. Earning this degree will definitely help with different opportunities that are available.

**KM:** I actually have a master's degree in a different area, and that was done completely in person. I don't think that either education is better than the other. I don't think I learned anything more in depth because I was in person. If anything, (learning online) helps you stay a bit more in tune to what you need to learn because your face is on the screen and everybody can see what you're doing. There's just different expectations. Learning online is an effective and efficient way to advance your learning and it also is cost-effective.

### **How do you expect earning this degree will impact your career?**

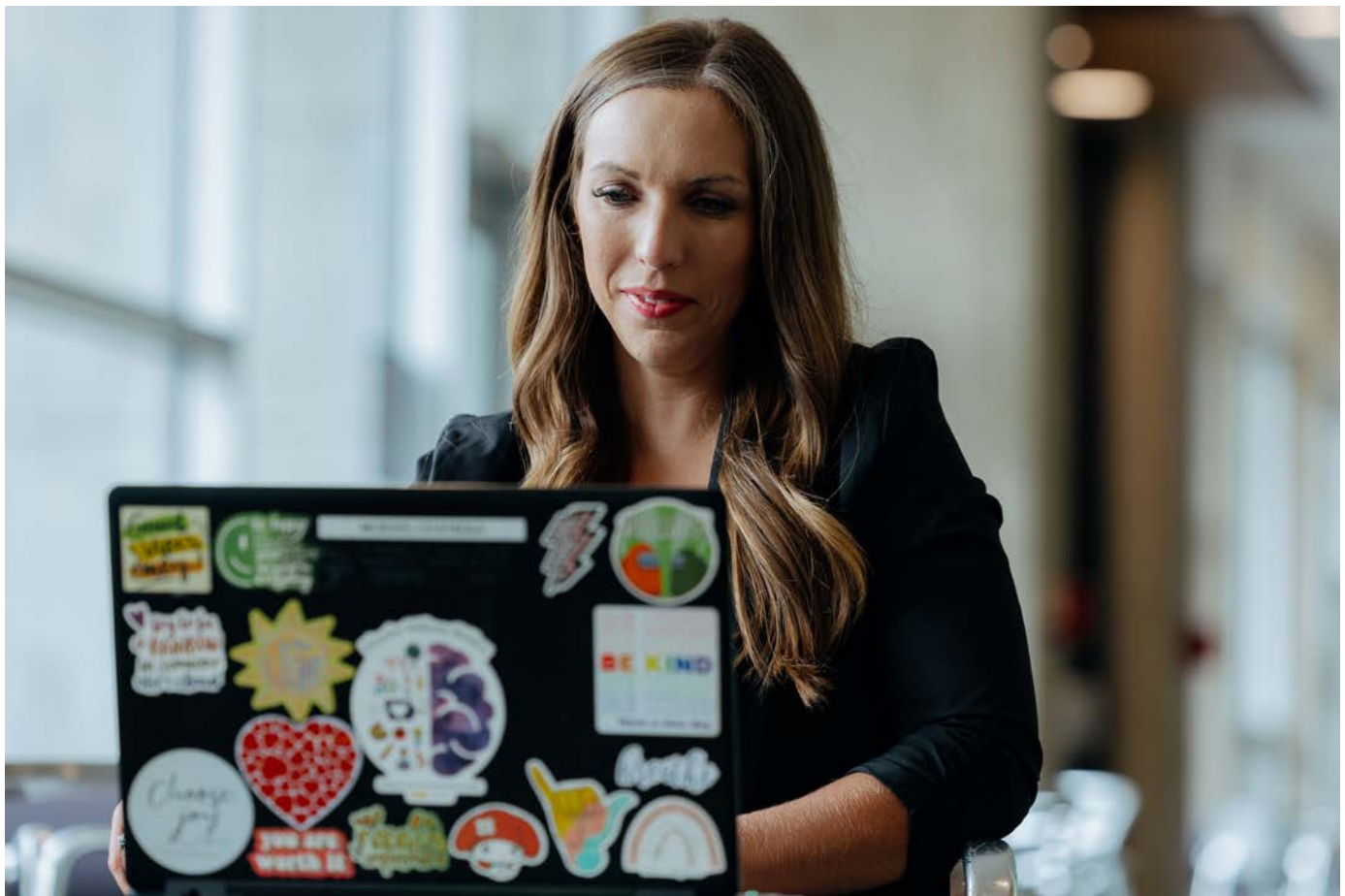
**LM:** I love my current job and my current role right now. I love the school district I'm at, but I've felt a calling towards a leadership position. I know that earning this degree is going to give me that flexibility to be able to pursue that once I see an opening that is right for me.

**MD:** I plan to be a principal or some sort of an administrator. I have maybe 15 years left in education and I want to make a difference in children and in staff. I know that I can bring my core values that (this program) really helps you expand on into the principal job that I would obtain.

**TH:** I expect that earning this degree is going to impact me by ultimately getting in some leadership position here within the district or outside of the district, wherever a position opens up for me.

**AK:** It will open different doors. I realized that the program really helps you make those connections early on with all sorts of leaders across Iowa even before you graduate. That and being able to get that degree opens a lot of doors for you.

**KM:** Whether or not I decide to utilize my principalship certificate or not, the classes on leadership have already helped me grow into a better counselor. I feel more confident in working with other adult leaders in the building and sharing some of my ideas. I feel better about being able to handle more responsibility. It also has given me a different perspective of how schools function, the roles of the leaders within the school, how to work with other colleagues. Really, the main focus is student achievement. These classes have brought some valuable information and knowledge so that way we can better serve our youth.



Kelly Moeller

**What do you look forward to most after you've completed this degree?**

**LM:** I look forward to looking at things through a different lens. You're educated for a degree as a principal, and you're trained as a principal. And looking at things through that scope, even if I'm still a teacher for a couple years, is still going to make me better at what I do in education as a lifelong educator in the state of Iowa.

**MD:** I want to be one of the people that comes back to speak to the cohorts on these three days. I just really look up to (the speakers) and I think they have a high, high respect among the professors here. I hope to be one of those people to help others.

**TH:** I look forward to giving back to my community. The reason why I went into leadership was so that I could extend my reach. I love my community, I love Waterloo, and I love just being a positive influence on the youth that are in our city.

**AK:** I look forward to celebrating with my family and friends. That support system that helped me throughout this whole thing. Without them, I wouldn't be where I'm at. So, celebrating with them and honestly just seeing what the next chapter of life has for me.

**KM:** Just having opportunities. It's something that I can utilize if I want to, but it's not something that I have to use. I love my job, and this has helped me be better at my job. But also, if an opportunity comes up that seems like the perfect fit or is within the district that I'm currently working at, I don't have to move or

relocate my family. I'm prepared.



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## A foundation for growth

When educators are ready to transition into administrative roles, the flexible [online UNI principalship program](#) leading to a master's in education and/or an advanced studies certificate (ASC) provides the necessary foundation.

This primarily online program attracts 40 to 60 students per cohort. Upon completion, graduates are prepared for licensure for roles such as dean of students, a head principal, assistant principal, a curriculum director, a special education director or director of education.

“Our role is to support and to equip these aspiring administrators to be able to do the job well,”

says **Kenneth Hayes**, principalship program coordinator and instructor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies. “We know that if we don't have connections with our students, they're not going to be as successful in our program, but also in leadership positions. So we work hard at developing relationships with our students.”



The faculty focus on being accessible, being empathetic to the world of the adult learner, ensuring a rich experience and staying in contact with educational leaders across Iowa—and bringing those connections to the classroom, whether online or on campus.

While the trend is toward asynchronous learning, where you have little face-to-face-interaction with professors, Hayes says the blended approach which UNI applies sets this program apart. Instruction includes both asynchronous and synchronous elements, where students and professors interact online, as well as some face-to-face sessions during summer classes.

The summer offerings, which Hayes considers a unique part of the programs, brings students on campus between the first and second year for six days for a seminar and law class.



“Both cohorts come together and they get to interact with our professors face-to-face. We also bring in a lot of experts in the field for guest lecturing and provide resources around leadership in general. The highlight of our summer course is Day in the Office, where we do role playing,” he adds.

This primarily online approach yields results for educational leadership studies at UNI, which also includes a superintendency ASC and master’s in international teacher leader education. About 4 in 10 school leaders across Iowa are UNI alumni.

“If you really just want to be a dynamic leader, no matter where you’re at, our program prepares you,” Hayes says. “Whether that’s in a classroom or in a building or in a district, you’re going to get a quality experience with UNI.”



## Centers in action

The College of Education currently has four centers of excellence in operation which serve multiple audiences externally and internally:

- / Richard O. Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy**
- / Child Development Center**
- / Iowa Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education**
- / National Program for Playground Safety**

Though each center operates with a specific, different purpose, brief updates from three of the centers

demonstrates the continuing reach and impact each has, whether providing a learning opportunity for pre-service early childhood education teachers, strengthening the teaching of literacy in the classroom or engaging the youngest of our learners — and their teachers – in STEM education.

Premier Magazine

Menu

# Richard O. Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy (JCCL)

## Lori Norton-Meier, Director

**Mission:** The JCCL’s mission is to promote comprehensive literacy of all learners by transforming literacy education through expanding pre-service and in-service teachers’ literacy knowledge and instructional expertise in professional learning communities.

### **Most significant accomplishment of the past year:**

We are in the second year of the UNI Literacy Initiative (ULI) where we bring 15 teachers to campus each summer for two weeks followed by a trip to the Iowa Reading Conference in Ames, Iowa, where the teachers present roundtables about what they are thinking about in relation to the teaching and learning of literacy. During the school year, they carry out a research project that is shared at the annual Share Fair in April.

This year four teachers from Year 1 are joining us as literacy coaches in Year 2. Teachers received three graduate credits, a mix of children's, adolescent, and professional literature, all expenses related to travel, and a \$200 stipend at the completion of the experience.



### **Two additional highlights/efforts for the center this past year:**

The Young Readers and Writers Conference was held on campus in November 2022. This brought over 100 4th and 5th graders to campus to hear the children's book author Renee Watson speak, followed by break out sessions with faculty members and with the help of 60 UNI student volunteers, the children received a walking tour of campus. Students who attended were from two of our partnership schools:



North Cedar in Cedar Falls and Irving Elementary in Waterloo.

The JCCL continues to provide support to the UNI Literacy Clinic that provides the opportunity for UNI students who are working on their literacy endorsement to have one-on-one tutoring experience in one of our partnership schools. The UNI tutors are paired with one elementary student and they prepare literacy lessons to expand their understanding of literacy teaching and learning. The semester-long experience ends with a family night and the sharing of an anthology where each student/tutor contributes one piece of writing.

### **What key initiatives are planned this next year?**

We will begin taking applications for the third cohort of the UNI Literacy Initiative on November 1st. Watch our social media accounts for links to the application. The second Young Readers and Writers Project will take place in 2024. The UNI Literacy Clinic will continue with a section at Irving Elementary in the fall and North Cedar Elementary in the spring. We also have several research studies that are gearing up. One study is a collaboration between Iowa, Kentucky and Washington state to grow K-3 teacher leaders in science and literacy.

### **Estimate of how many people the center has touched in the past year:**

- / 513 university students
- / 172 University Faculty
- / 1299 PK-12 Students
- / 1179 PK-12 Teachers
- / 52 PK-12 Administrators
- / 425 Community Members

### **Any interactions with alumni recently?**

We interact with so many alumni at the Iowa Reading Conference! We have a booth and so many people just come over to share wonderful stories about their time at UNI. Next year we hope to capture some of those stories. If we could feature one very new alumni, it would be our former undergraduate research assistant, Keaton Wessel. She came back this summer AFTER graduation to help us with ULI and many other initiatives. She is now a 2nd grade teacher at Audubon.

### **Final thoughts?**

If alumni could get the word out about ULI—that would be helpful!

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# **Child Development Center (CDC)**

**Maria Ackerson, Director**

**Mission:** Our mission is to provide a safe and nurturing environment to support learning for the families and students of the University.



**Most significant accomplishment this past year:**

We recently had a visit from a NAEYC assessor and we are anticipating a successful renewal of our accreditation. Our accreditation will continue to equip our program with the tools to provide the best learning experiences for young children and provide the highest quality professional preparation of educators by meeting national standards of quality.

**Additional highlights for the center this past year:**

We strive to create a community focused on the importance of relationships between our families and staff. The main purpose is to advance and promote the educational experience of young children. Parents are encouraged to participate in family involvement opportunities throughout the school year. We invited families for a homecoming playground party followed by a picnic, we asked parents to come read to their child's classroom, lunch time slots were opened for parents to join their child for a meal, and families helped provide snacks/drinks to student staff during finals week.

**What key initiatives are planned this next year?**

Staff will be attending the Iowa AEYC Early Learning Fall Institute to learn, grow, and collaborate with other educators across the state to gain new skills that will further advance the CDC.

**Estimated number of people whom your work has touched in the past year:**

We currently have 62 children we care for and benefit from the involvement of 50 student staff in addition to our 10 lead teachers.

**What interactions with alumni do you have?**

Ten of our 11 lead staff are UNI alumni. We have a volunteer who is a UNI alumni: Barb Gregerson ('68, BA, early childhood education). She comes to the CDC monthly to interact with the children. She brings six puppets that correspond to the 6 Pillars of Character (Trustworthiness, Caring, Fairness, Responsibility, Respect, and Citizenship). This alumni creates a positive learning environment and children look forward to her visits!

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# Iowa Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education (RCEDE)

## Beth VanMeeteren, Director

**Mission:** The Iowa Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education is a source for groundbreaking, early childhood curriculum and resources for educators of children from birth through age 8. Through its activities, the Regents' Center aims to accomplish the following:

- / Develop research-based programs and curriculum materials that respect the unique developmental needs of young children and their families.
- / Promote applied and interdisciplinary research in early education.
- / Disseminate information about developmentally appropriate early education to educators, parents, and the public at state, national, and international levels through workshops, conferences, and publications.
- / Assist in developing early education programs for at-risk children and their families.
- / Inform policy makers about the developmental and educational needs of young children and their families.
- / Promote inter institutional collaboration among the three State Regents' universities, other educational agencies and government agencies.

### **Most significant accomplishment this past year:**

We provided classroom kits and professional learning to 250 Iowa educators across the state through the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council's Scale Up. Materials in the WaterWorks classroom kit allows children to engineer the movement of water and construct an understanding of the properties of water at the same time. Photos and vignettes of Iowa teachers were highlighted in the book "Investigating Water



With Young Children" published by Teachers College Press. The book is written for educators of children ages three to eight and provides a framework to enable K-2 children to engage in STEM every day during small-group reading instruction.

### **Additional highlights/efforts for the center this past year:**

Our work in infant toddler STEM is gaining national attention. Our program coordinator, Sherri Peterson, just completed trainings on infant toddler STEM for the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance and finished up with a book study using our book, Investigating STEM With Infants and Toddlers, published by Teachers College Press. She served on a national panel alongside Doug Clements to discuss early STEM at the Region IX Head Start's Early STEM Institute in San Jose, California.

### **What key initiatives are planned this next year?**

First, we are laying the groundwork to offer an early childhood STEM minor at UNI beginning fall 2024. This minor will enhance the preparation of early childhood majors and elementary education majors who wish to teach children from birth through third grade.

We are also collaborating with HighScope to write a proposal for National Science Foundation (NSF) funding to study how HighScope's Plan-Do-Review process works with our open-ended STEM investigations. HighScope is a renowned education foundation that conducted the longitudinal landmark study, The Perry Preschool Project, that followed children from preschool into their 40s. We are pleased to partner with them as our approaches to early learning closely align.

According to their website, children with risk factors with access to a high quality preschool program were more likely to graduate from high school, hold a job, have higher earnings, own their own home and more. The difference between the program cost and savings (e.g., from less welfare) was a return of \$12.90 per dollar spent. This Plan-Do-Review process is a trademark of the HighScope approach and the strategic backbone for children and adults moving successfully through life. This unique dynamic of shared control between the child and adult lays the groundwork to actively engage young children in learning and helps children build essential school readiness skills.

**Estimated number of people the center has touched in the past year: 7,680.**

### **Any interactions with alumni in the past year? Anything you encourage alumni to do to connect with your center?**

If you are a UNI alumni that is serving as an elementary principal, superintendent, STEM coach, child care director, preschool, kindergarten, first, or second grade teacher, please check out our free STEM resources on our website and take a look at our early STEM books. Consider our professional learning on how to provide PK-2 children access to STEM every day using our STEM experiences. If you are a UNI alumni that employs people with young children, consider investing in high quality childcare with a focus on early STEM. If you are a high school industrial arts educator, consider working with Panther Products, who produce our early STEM materials, to have your high school students produce these same materials for your district's preschool through second grade classrooms.

### **Final thoughts?**

Explore [our site](#) and discover STEM resources, curriculum materials for educators, videos, the latest in Iowa Regents' Center news and professional learning and more.

## **Updates on CET and NPPS**

# Center for Educational Transformation Closes

After a decade of contributions to the field of education, Dean Colleen Mulholland announced in July 2023 that the Center for Educational Transformation had ceased operation.

The CET began as a Board of Regents, State of Iowa, initiative to inform educational practices, policies and procedures, with initial support of the Carver Charitable Trust. Since 2019, a diminishing pool of educational research funding supported a renewed effort to engage, facilitate and inform culturally responsive policy and practice. Upon departure of the center director, the dean conducted listening sessions with both internal and external stakeholders.

Based on feedback, the college has chosen to fold remaining resources into ongoing programming to support future and current teachers' needs.

Dean Mulholland noted the impact of the CET and the many contributions of its leadership, faculty, fellows, graduate students, staff and partners through its research projects and educational summits. "Most recently, CET concluded its Parent PARTNER Project to create a culturally tailored, trauma-informed program aimed at decreasing adverse childhood experiences – a fitting representation of the intersection of education, health and culture."

# National Program for Playground Safety

The National Program for Playground Safety's mission is to raise awareness about playground safety and the necessity for appropriate, healthy spaces to support child development and well-being. It helps educate communities on safe, quality and fun play areas, advocating at the local, state and national level.

The NPPS was initially funded with grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention, with the goal of raising awareness on playground safety. Recently, the program has conducted investigations to understand child injury rates and epidemiology, as well as field testing and observations, to gain a broader understanding of environmental and other issues that affect the design of playgrounds and the health of the child.

The program has received funding from various sources, including the U.S. Department of Defense and Canadian Standards Council, and undertaken statewide, national and international educational efforts. This includes a toolkit which has been distributed to more than 150,000 schools, after-school and child care programs, and online safety training programs.

Heather Olsen, EdD, a professor in Health, Recreation and Community Services, has served with NPPS for 24 years and will rejoin her colleagues in full-time teaching status next semester, January 2024. A national search is currently underway for the next director of NPPS.

# Perspectives: Forgiveness education



Among the areas of scholarly study by [Suzanne Freedman, PhD](#), professor, Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies, is a focus on the psychology of interpersonal forgiveness, forgiveness education and the role of anger in forgiveness education. In this Perspective, she shares her thoughts on the importance of forgiveness education.

## The importance and benefit of educating elementary school children about forgiveness

*How children navigate their emotional world is critical to their life long success.*

*-- Susan David Emotional Agility (2016)*



## **What does forgiveness mean to you?**

I often begin my presentations on interpersonal forgiveness by asking the audience to think of a situation in which they have needed to forgive someone, someone has needed to forgive them, or they have needed to forgive themselves. I ask them to reflect on what the process was like for them, whether they were able to forgive, and what the consequences were of forgiving or being forgiven.

Many participants comment on how they were never taught about forgiveness as a process or that it was okay to feel angry after experiencing a deep hurt or conflict. Although we hear a lot about the need to forgive from society, specifically teachers, parents, and/or religious leaders, we are rarely given information about how to forgive or what forgiveness looks like. Messages of forgiveness are passed down to children without any real education or discussion about the process of forgiveness and benefits of forgiving.

## **What is forgiveness education?**

Forgiveness education is one form of social-emotional learning that has proven effective in reducing anger and increasing well-being in children and adolescents (Rapp et al, 2022; Freedman & Chen, 2023). Forgiveness education includes content on what forgiveness is and is not, how to forgive and the benefits



of forgiveness. As humans, we all make mistakes and, at some point, during our lifetime, we will either need forgiveness from someone or be in the position to offer forgiveness to another person. Learning about forgiveness gives students the knowledge and power needed to ask for forgiveness or grant it.

## **Benefits of forgiveness education**

Research demonstrates that increases in forgiveness are associated with increases in empathy, compassion and perspective taking (McCullough et al., 1997; Yuan, Liu, & Genden, 2022). Learning about forgiveness during childhood and adolescence can lead to improved psychological well-being, and improvement in academics and relationships (Enright et al., 2007; Freedman, 2018; Rapp, Wang Xu, & Enright, 2022). Research illustrates that children's anger is increasing, along with anxiety and depression (Brackett, 2019). Angry and hurt children who cannot understand and express their feelings often inflict anger upon others or deny it until it erupts (Blake & Hamrin, 2007). Practicing the virtue of forgiveness rewards the forgiver, the forgiven, and society at large.

In a recent study evaluating forgiveness education that I conducted with my University of Northern Iowa colleague Eva Chen and published in 2023, two classes of fifth-graders at Lowell Elementary School, in Waterloo, Iowa, received a 10-week forgiveness education curriculum that I developed and then expanded and published in 2021 with Professor Robert Enright. The curriculum focuses on children's literature to illustrate forgiveness and related concepts. Educating these students about the psychological process of forgiveness included teaching them healthy ways to express anger and other feelings, understand the perspective of others and practice empathy and kindness.

Results from this study illustrate that students showed increased forgiveness toward a specific offender and increased knowledge about forgiveness after receiving the education. Students' verbal reports also illustrate that they enjoyed and benefited from this specific curriculum using children's literature. As reported by one student:

“I've learned that anger is a natural feeling. It takes time to forgive. You don't have to forgive right away. They don't always apologize. Forgiveness is one step closer to healing. When you forgive you can put it in the past. You don't have to be friends with the offender after. Apologies make forgiving easier. Forgiveness is made by the person who was hurt. If you want revenge, then you haven't forgiven in your heart.”

## **What is forgiveness?**

Forgiveness is more complicated than people realize. It may not be the same notion of forgiveness preached by one's parents or religious leader. It goes beyond just saying the words, “I'm sorry” or “I forgive you.”

One popular definition of forgiveness states: “When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence and love; as we give these, we as forgivers realize

that the offender does not necessarily have a right to such gifts.” (Enright et al., 1991).

What’s important to note is that one has a right to feel pain, hurt, and anger when hurt. When we forgive we give up our anger and desire for revenge and show mercy to the offender. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, excusing, condoning, pardoning, or automatic reconciliation, and it is not mutually exclusive with justice.

A school psychology graduate student who took my interpersonal forgiveness class learned that forgiving does not mean that one is weak and powerless. Specifically, she wrote,

*“Another insight that I took away from these readings was the power you give to yourself when you choose to forgive. This concept is counterintuitive since I grew up believing that the power was held by the one who showed the anger. Those who hold resentment are typically only hurting themselves. Forgiving does not mean you are giving up power. By forgiving, you can emPOWER yourself to move forward from the anger and resentment to be a better version of yourself.” (Shyanne Sporrer, 2021).*

Many students in my college class on interpersonal forgiveness discuss how they wish they had the opportunity to learn about forgiveness at a younger age. Messages from society often focus on “an eye for an eye” or alternately, “to get over interpersonal hurt quickly with no discussion of one’s pain and hurt feelings.”

In addition, offenders are often forced to apologize before they have had time to reflect upon their actions, why they were hurtful and/or feel truly remorseful. Children who have hurt others need to be given time to reflect on their harmful actions and then be encouraged to apologize when they feel truly remorseful. Children who have been hurt benefit when they know that forgiveness is an option, and are able to forgive on their own timeline, when they feel ready and not just because the offender offered a forced apology.

### **Why is forgiveness education and research on forgiveness important?**

I am often asked “why forgive,” and my response is always the same, “What’s the alternative?” Although forgiveness cannot undo the injury or damage caused by the injury, it allows us to move forward in our lives free from the negative effects of all consuming anger, hatred and resentment. It offers us a way to heal and hope for the future, while still acknowledging that what happened to us was wrong, unfair and extremely hurtful. As stated by an incest survivor in my dissertation study 10 years post intervention:

“It (the study) changed my life. “It changed what I thought forgiveness meant. I realized it wasn’t pardoning someone but relinquishing the anger and how it had controlled me.”

Educating students about forgiveness and related concepts when they are young serves as a form of prevention for many of the negative consequences that result from holding onto anger. Unless students learn about forgiveness and see it modeled in different situations, it will be difficult for them to choose to forgive and develop a forgiving disposition.

Forgiveness education teaches students to recognize the inherent worth of each person. Research on forgiveness, like our 2023 study, is important. It introduces educators and counselors to the idea of

forgiveness education as a form of social-emotional learning that helps to decrease anger and increase well-being in students. There are many misconceptions of what forgiveness is, is not, and what forgiveness and forgiveness education looks like. The prevention of emotional and physical health problems, including long-standing anger, is critical for the overall well-being and success of both individuals and society.



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# Alumni Focus

## **A family affair for Clinton educators**

Examples of generations of Panther teachers in families abound across Iowa. For the Schneeberger family, one generation alone is making its impact – all in one district.

Across four classrooms, students in the Clinton (Iowa) Community School District encounter two College of Education grads and their UNI-educated siblings:

- Karly Schneeberger Ryder ('17, BA, elementary education), teaching third grade
- / Marcus Schneeberger ('08, BA, elementary education), teaching 7th grade science and coaching
- / Kellen Schneeberger ('05, English teaching) teaching high school and AP English
- / Dylan Schneeberger ('11, BA, criminology), later earning his teaching degree from Morningside College and teaching high school history and coaching

Their stories were shared in a recent InsideUNI feature. And there is more: sister-in-law Maddy Schneeberger ('12, BA, elementary education) also substitute teaches in Clinton. A great reflection of the UNI Teacher Education legacy that remains strong!

Read the full story: [UNI tradition runs deep for Schneeberger family of educators](#)

## Finding their niche in the recreation profession

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### Hannah Lang

A love of the outdoors led to two alums of the leisure, youth and human services program (now recreation, tourism and nonprofit leadership) to find their niche. And it's working out well.

"The thing that attracted me to this line of work is everyone has an innate ability to do good work," says **Hannah Lang** ('09, BA; '11, MA), whose focus in recreational therapy – and her love of Colorado thanks to family trips growing up – has led to her work at the Adaptive Sports Center in Crested Butte, Colorado.

Read the full story: [From the WRC's climbing wall to the Rocky Mountains: Hannah Lang's journey in adaptive sports.](#)



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## Ryan Penning

**Ryan Penning** ('06, BA), from small town Jewel, Iowa, didn't even know what a parks and recreation department was before starting college. After initially considering elementary education, he discovered leisure, youth and human services. He saw opportunity in combining a love of sports with a degree where he could make a community impact.

"That's the part that I absolutely love," says the current recreation superintendent for the City of West Des Moines. "We create fun. We create experiences for our residents. Whether they are a two-year-old or a 92-year-old, we're programming for people of all ages and all abilities."

Read the full story: [\*\*How UNI helped Ryan Penning bring communities together\*\*](#)





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# Class Notes

Class Notes are compiled from information sent in personally by alumni and from news releases. If you would like to share your news, go to [unialum.org/submit\\_class\\_notes](http://unialum.org/submit_class_notes) or mail to UNI Alumni Association, 304 Commons, Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0284.

Have you moved and need to update your mailing address? Send an email to [alumni@uni.edu](mailto:alumni@uni.edu) or call 319-273-2355 to update your information.

From July 23, 2022, to August 19, 2023

## 1960s

**'65 Calvin Irons, BA, MA '67**, Queensland, Australia, remains very active after retirement from Queensland University of Technology after 39 years. He co-founded ORIGO Education, a publisher of mathematics books and founded OceanView Estates Winery and Restaurant. A new venture will build a mathematics gallery near the winery.

**'66 Joy (Neal) Kidney, BA**, West Des Moines, published her third book in the "Leora's Stories" series titled "Leora's Early Years: Guthrie County Roots." The others are "Leora's Dexter Stories: The Scarcity Years of the Great Depression" and "Leora's Letters: The Story of Love and Loss for an Iowa Family During World War II." All five of her sons served, but only two came home. They are remembered on the Dallas County Freedom Rock at Minburn. One of the brothers was stationed at ISTC at the beginning of his cadet training in the spring of 1943.

**'67 Daniel Macy, BA**, Wills Point, TX, retired from operating an education research consulting business and serves on the board of directors for Holy Family Academy of Van Zandt County Texas.

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## 1970s

'70 **Steve Speth, BA, MA '79**, Lebanon, OR, is a featured guest on a PBS series "America Outdoors." The episode filmed in the Chaco Cultural National Park in New Mexico is scheduled to air fall 2023.

'72 **Dennis Wenthold, BA**, Miami, FL, was a teacher for 14 years and school administrator for 24 years before retiring in Panama and running a bed and breakfast called Cabanas Potosi in El Valle de Anton.

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## 1980s

'82 **Stacy (Roberts) Ingraham, BA, MA '92**, Carver, MN, published a memoir titled "The Untold Toll of a Wrongful Conviction" on 5/26/2023.

'86 **Deb Vangellow, BA**, Sugar Land, TX, received the 2023 Nancy Lopez Golf Achievement Award from the Ladies Professional Golf Association.

'87 **Ann (Gutknecht) Schreck, BA, MA '95**, Cedar Falls, received the 2023 Gold Star Award for Outstanding Teaching. She is a literacy strategist at Irving Elementary School in Waterloo.

'89 **Jane (Brandt) Lindaman, BA, MA '95, ASC '05, EdD '05**, Waterloo, received the 2023 Legacy Award from Grow Cedar Valley.

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## 1990s

'93 **Amy Van Polen, BA**, Wheaton, IL, was appointed CEO of Bridge Communities.

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## 2000s

'00 **Kenneth Rigdon, EdD**, Winston Salem, NC, worked in Kansas, North Carolina, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kazakhstan before retiring in 2012.

'01 **Rita Koontz, MA**, Wellston, OK, earned a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Oklahoma in 2005. She is writing full time and developing a business plan for private practice.

'02 **Amy Phillips, MA**, Marshalltown, was a finalist for the 2023 Iowa Teacher of the Year Award. She is a kindergarten teacher in the Marshalltown Community School District.

'02 **Erin (Kleis) Schmitz, BA**, Jesup, was named convention director for the National Down Syndrome Congress. She is the owner of E&B Management and co-founder of the FIRE Foundation of Northeast

Iowa.

'03 **Melissa Matz, BA**, Jacksonville, FL, was named the 2021-2022 Florida Teacher of the Year. She is a seventh grade math teacher at Lakeside Junior High.

'04 **Ashley (Atherton) Thompson, BA**, Ames, was named to the United Way of Story County Board of Directors.

'05 **JoEllen (Schwab) Pruis, MA**, Waterloo, received the 2023 Gold Star Award for Outstanding Teaching. She is a 6th grade teacher at Hoover Middle School.

'05 **Laura (Cox) Wittnebel, BA**, Bettendorf, was named one of the Quad Cities Business Journal's inaugural Forty Under 40. She is assistant race director for TBK Bank Quad Cities Marathon and business development coordinator for Mel Foster Co.

'07 **Tylor Burke, BA**, Waverly, was named one of the Cedar Valley's 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2022. He is a partner and business solutions advisor with The Accel Group.

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## 2010s

'10 **Christina (McDonough) McDonough, BA**, Princeton, was named one of the Quad Cities Business Journal's inaugural Forty Under 40. She is a community transformation consultant for Scott County and city council member for the city of Princeton.

'12 **Maria (Schreiber) Sulentic, MA**, Algona, was elected K-12 vice president for the Iowa School Counselor Association. She is a school counselor with the West Bend-Mallard Community School District.

'13 **Bryce Lobdell, BA**, Ankeny, was promoted to buyer and planner for LeMar Industries.

'14 **Nathan Dobbels, MA**, Bondurant, received the 2023 Professional and Scientific Learning Community Coordinator Award from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University. He is an academic advisor in agricultural education and studies.

'15 **Alex Rebling, BA, MA '21**, Fairfield, is the activities director and dean of students for the Pekin Community School District and serves as Second Lieutenant for the 109th HHC Medical Battalion for the Iowa Army National Guard.

'17 **Meghan (Runyan) Bruns, BA**, Waterloo, received the 2023 Gold Star Award for Outstanding Teaching. She is a 2nd grade teacher at Cedar Heights Elementary in Cedar Falls.

'17 **Mikayla Montgomery, MA**, Waterloo, was named one of the Cedar Valley's 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2022. She is assistant principal at the Dr. Walter Cunningham School for Excellence.

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# 2020s

'21 **Jake Cash, BA**, Cedar Falls, teaches 6-8th grade project Lead the Way at Bunger Middle School in Evansdale. Courses include medical detectives, human services and business/career exploration.

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# Celebrating Excellence

Celebrating the accomplishments of faculty, students, staff and alumni from August 2022 to November 2023.

Premier Magazine

Menu

## Hall of Excellence inductees include COE faculty



**Julianne Gassman**, ('92, BA, '96, MA), UNI director of community engagement, Health, Recreation and Community Services, and **James G. Hall**, ('13, EdD) previously with the college in Kinesiology, were among the four honorees who were inducted in October to the **Elinor A. Crawford and William R. Thrall Hall of Excellence**. Joining them in the festivities at the McLeod Alumni Suite prior to formal installation were inductees **Connie J. Shafar**, ('69, BA), a physical education graduate now living in Bettendorf, Iowa, and holder of multiple coaching honors, and **John Robbins**, ('76, BA, '81, MAE), Cedar

Rapids, Iowa, currently president of the Iowa State Board of Education and former teacher, coach, principal and superintendent. [Read full release.](#)

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## Finkelstein receives distinguished alumni award



**Judith Finkelstein** ('68) received the Alumni Service award as part of the Distinguished Awards Celebration honoring notable UNI alumni and friends in November 2022. The retired professor, formerly with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, began her career as an instructor at Malcolm Price Laboratory School. She later taught in the curriculum and instruction department and served as interim director of the Iowa Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education, which includes the integrative model classroom studio which now bears the name of Drs. Melville and Judith Finkelstein due to the couple's generous donation to the UNI

Foundation. More recently, Finkelstein served as the grand marshal for the 2023 UNI Homecoming Parade.

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## Ed Lead team honors Speer, Pino as Legacy Award recipients

Members of the educational leadership team traveled to Lisbon, Iowa, on September 27, 2022, to award the 2022 UNI Educational Leadership Legacy Award to **Autumn Pino**. This past spring, they traveled to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to bestow the 2023 award upon **John Speer**.

Both lifelong educators have demonstrated exemplary educational leadership and core values as leaders of learning, service and/or change. These values are the foundation of educational leadership studies in principalship, superintendency and the doctoral program intensive study area in educational leadership at the College of Education.



Speer holds multiple degrees from UNI, from English teaching ('94) through to his Doctor of Education (EdD, '17). After initially teaching, he moved into administration as a high school principal, and then served in superintendent positions with the College Community, Ballard and Allamakee school districts before becoming the Grant Wood Area Education Agency chief administrator.

Pino serves as superintendent of the Lisbon and

Springville Community School Districts. A '21 alum of the advanced studies certificate program in superintendency, she has served at all levels of K-12 education in her 20-year career. She previously served as administrator at Roosevelt Creative Corridor Business Academy in Cedar Rapids.



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## Faculty and Staff Honors

### UNI faculty awards bestowed upon Muhayimana, Edwards & Gilson

Among the recipients of 2022-23 University of Northern Iowa awards honoring teaching and service this year were:

- / 2022-23 UNI Outstanding Teaching Award: **Laura Edwards**, Curriculum and Instruction, and **Theophile Muhayimana**, Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies
- / Class of 1943 Award for Excellence in Teaching: **Tim Gilson**, EPFLS.
- / Ross A. Nielsen Professional Service Award: **Leigh Zeitz**, C&I.
- / Outstanding Graduate Coordinator, Graduate College: **David Schmid**, EPFLS.

### Faculty and staff earn recognition of peers

#### *COE Faculty Awards*

Annual COE Faculty Senate awards for 2022-23 were announced at the All Staff Retreat held August 18. They included:

- / COE Teaching Award: **Morgan Anderson**, EPFLS
- / COE Service Award: **Kim Hurley**, Department of Kinesiology
- / COE Scholarship Award: **Matt Townsley**, EPFLS

This year's honors followed resumption of the awards, post-COVID 19, in August 2022. Those honorees included:

- / COE Teaching Award for 2020-21: **David Schmid**, EPFLS, and **Karla Krueger**, C&I
- / COE Teaching Award for 2021-22: **Magda Galloway**, C&I
- / COE Service Award: **Susan Roberts-Dobie**, Health, Recreation and Community Services

/ COE Dean's Diversity and Equity Award: **Theo Muhayimana**, EPFLS

### *Inaugural Staff Excellence Award*

**Yin Yee**, secretary III, Iowa Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education (RCEDE) was named the recipient of the new College of Education Staff Excellence Award in August. The honor was based on selection criteria including support, initiative, engagement and collaboration.

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## **KDP celebrates centennial, Hawbaker, chapter earn national awards**



Homecoming 2023 meant even more to **Becky Hawbaker**, current chapter counselor, and members of the Psi Chapter of the Kappa Delta Pi international education honorary as current and past members and alumni celebrated the centennial for the chapter. Among the many joining in were **Stephen Fortgang**, who taught in the Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations. He served as the longstanding chapter counselor from 1975-2013 and counselor emeritus since then and is credited with transforming the chapter into one of the top in the nation.

In November, the chapter formally received the Achieving Chapter Excellence (ACE) award at the national KDP conference, Hawbaker received the national Lucinda Rose Outstanding Counselor of the Biennium award.

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## **Focus on data visualization and artificial intelligence research earns funding**

**Taraneh Matloob Haghanikar**, curriculum and instruction, was among four recipients who received a \$500 prize and university support to move forward with a research project as part of the Intellectual Property (IP) and Innovation Disclosure Competition at UNI. Haghanikar has proposed a system using data visualization and artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze fictional diverse characters. It will inform users on diversity features and improve information from end-users. Her goal is to help teachers and librarians promote diversity and overcome biases instead of perpetuating them. [Full story here.](#)

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## **Volunteer efforts with Leader Valley lead to award**

**Amy Lockhart**, Teaching, was named Leader Valley Volunteer of the Year earlier this year. Leader Valley is the umbrella over the Leader in Me initiative that is part of the Cedar Valley.

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## Online and graduate education programs ranked by US News

When the year's rankings from *U.S. News and World Report* were revealed, graduate education programs in the College of Education were once again acknowledged for quality programming.

In January 2023, the online master's in education programs ranked in the top 15% for the 2023 rankings, climbing 10 places to rank 43rd among 329 schools. Included in the programs reviewed for this ranking were:



- / Early Childhood Education Master of Arts in Education
- / Elementary Education Master of Arts in Education
- / Literacy Education Master of Arts in Education
- / Art Education Master of Arts
- / Teacher Leadership for International Educators Master of Arts
- / Principalship Master of Arts in Education / Advanced Studies Certificate
- / Superintendent Advanced Studies Certificate
- / Physical Education-Pedagogy Master of Arts
- / School Library Studies Master of Arts
- / Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Master of Arts
- / Special Education: Consultant emphasis Master of Arts in Education
- / Special Education: Instructional emphasis Master of Arts in Education
- / Learning Technologies and Instructional Design Master of Arts



In March 2023, 10 College of Education master's programs as well as the Doctor of Education program were among those included in the submission reflected in this year's U.S. News and World Report's 2023–24 ranking of University of Northern Iowa as among the nation's **“Best Graduate Schools: Education.”**

All the programs are led by COE faculty, with recruitment and management of admissions handled in partnership with Online & Distance Education and the Graduate College.

“This ongoing recognition speaks to the quality of our faculty, curriculum, students and alumni from across campus,” said **Colleen Mulholland**, COE dean. “Through these programs, we advance the expertise of teachers, principals, superintendents, teacher librarians, learning technologists and school psychologists in classrooms, school districts and area education agencies across the state and beyond.”

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## Summer fellowships let faculty explore, build expertise



Nine faculty were awarded up to \$4,000 in Dean's Summer Fellowship for summer 2023. Curriculum and Instruction: **Laura Edwards, Taraneh Matloob Haghanikar, Sohyun Meacham and Carolyn Weber**; Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies: **Gregory Bourassa, Eva Chen, Suzanne Freedman**; Kinesiology: **Kelsey Bourbeau, Terence Moriarty**.

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## Student Honors

### Doctoral students Weiland, Fisher earn top dissertation honors

Taking the top spots in the 2022-23 Graduate College Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation awards were:

- / First place: Abby Weiland, EdD, (degree listings), for "**Exploring the experiences of one team of teachers: Well-being and navigating the demands of the education profession**"; advised by Sarah Vander Zanden, Curriculum and Instruction
- / Second place: Michael Fisher, EdD, (degree listings), for "**Teacher Hiring and Selection Processes in Iowa Schools**;" advised by Timothy Gilson, EPFLS.

Among master's students, Kenzie Heusinkvelt, EdS, school psychology, placed first with "**Training for Challenging Behaviors in the School Setting**;" advised by Nicole Skaar.

### COE students among student leadership award designees

Among the student leaders honored at the 2023 Student Leadership Awards ceremony this year were these COE students:

- / Drake Martin Gold Star Award, **Bailey Leitner**, elementary education; and **Kylie Rink**, postsecondary education: student affairs
- / Outstanding Student Leader Award: **Jeremy Charles**, kinesiology and exercise science; and **Luigi Lopez**, postsecondary education: student affairs
- / Rising Global Star Leader Award: **Ava Deitrich**, postsecondary education: student affairs

### Students recognized for Koob Fund student community engagement

Public health graduates-to-be **Ainsley Oldenburger**, intern at Allen Women's Health, **Kassidy Lovig**, intern at Friends of the Family, and **Ayanna Rost**, intern at Black Hawk County Public Health, were recognized for receiving the Koob Fund for Student Community Engagement at the spring 2023 Community Engagement Celebration Day.

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### Alums named to Cedar Valley '20 Under 40' Class

Three College of Education alumni were among those honored in 2023 as part of the "**20 Under 40**" class selected by the Waterloo Courier. They included: **Alicia Rogers** ('13 BA, elementary and early childhood

education), director of training and development, Goodwill Industries of Northeast Iowa; **Hannah Luce** ('21, BA, leisure, youth and human services), executive director, Waterloo Schools Foundation; and **Sarah Helleso** ('15, leisure, youth and human services), director, Try Pie Bakery.



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1227 W 27th St  
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614  
319.273.2311

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# College News & Notes

A review of selected highlights of activity within and at the College of Education since August 2022.

## COE leadership expands

A full complement of associate deans and department heads greeted faculty and staff upon their return in fall 2023. Newly announced members of the team over the past year include:

- / **Amy Nielsen, EdD**, interim associate dean, graduate studies, and professor, special education. She will support more than 12 graduate programs and liaise with the Graduate College and Online & Distance Education. .
  - / **Sohyun Meacham, PhD**, interim associate dean, research, scholarship and faculty excellence and associate professor, literacy education. Her duties include oversight of the four Centers of Excellence (Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy, Iowa Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education, Child Development Center and National Program for Playground Safety) as well as elevating scholarship and external funding.
  - / **Ron Rinehart, PhD**, head, Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies, and associate professor. He replaces former interim head **Robert Boody**, PhD, professor, who continues as associate head of EPFLS and coordinator of the Doctor of Education (EdD) program.
  - / **Curt Nielsen, EdD**, head and associate professor, Teaching, replacing the retiring Lyn Countryman.
  - / **Benjamin Forsyth, PhD**, will continue to serve the college in a redefined associate dean role for undergraduate studies and teacher education, including his role as the campus point person for teacher education and supervising the COE Advising & Teacher Education Success (CATS) Office.
-

## Health departments join new school

With a newly named **School of Health and Human Sciences** in place as the new academic year started, several long standing programs within the College of Education transitioned to a new home within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. New departments with previous COE programming include:

- / The Department of Kinesiology and Athletic Training, which includes the former kinesiology department and its undergraduate and graduate programs, including the renamed kinesiology and exercise science degree (replacing movement and exercise science); and programming of the athletic training section of the College of Education's Department of Health, Recreation and Community Services (HRCS). This included programs and faculty associated with: the athletic training and rehabilitation studies undergraduate major, the Master of Athletic Training (MATR) degree, and Athletic Training Services, whose faculty includes licensed athletic trainers who both teach and support UNI Athletics.
- / The Department of Nursing and Public Health, including the undergraduate public health degree, the school health education minor and faculty.

HRCS remains a COE department with undergraduate and graduate programs in recreation, tourism and nonprofit leadership. This programming continues to extend nonformal education to the outdoors and the community.

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## \$2.5 million grant further boosts school psychology/AEA 'grow your own' effort

**Nicole Skaar**, Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies, and her School Psychology team were awarded a \$2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to further advance a major "grow your own" effort to increase school psychologists in Iowa in partnership with several Iowa area education agencies.

This is a second influx of funding following an initial grant secured by Green Hills Area Education Agency in 2019 to develop the initial phase of the program, in collaboration and consultation with the UNI School Psychology Program. The new funding – this time submitted by Skaar on behalf of the AEA partners – supports three new cohorts over the next five years of five students each (total 15) in collaboration with Central Rivers, Northwest Iowa and Great Prairie AEAs. The first of the new cohorts started in summer 2023.

Since the beginning of the grant program, four students have completed their studies and five more are in progress, Skaar says.

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## TEACH Project for a 'new IRTS' presses forward

Planning is near completion for a new hub for teacher preparation and classroom experimentation within the Information Resources and Technology Services space on second floor of Schindler Education Center

The project, dubbed TEACH for “Teacher Education and Collaboration Hub” is a partnership of IRTS, Rod Library and the College of Education to eliminate duplication within the Youth Collection, maintain a unified space for teacher preparation faculty and students who engage with the collection, and ensure a flexible and contemporary school library media center. Efforts have focused on merging the youth collections, adding new materials in the Enrichment section while keeping curricula and teacher-led materials available in IRTS during this transition.

As part of these efforts, faculty, staff, students and local K-12 educators purchased hundreds of children’s and young adult books, plus LP records, CDs and music scores during a special book and media sale in December at Schindler Education Center.

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## Teacher referral program launches



A new teacher referral program kicked off during National Teacher Appreciation Week in May. For alumni and all other friends of UNI, the effort is intended to grow the pipeline of future Panther teachers. Anyone submitting a referral will receive a thank you and memento, with teaching alumni receiving special mementos of a Panther t-shirt and teacher education lunch tote. In addition to social media, groups of

alumni are receiving direct mail postcard reminders until the end of May. Know someone made to teach? [Refer today!](#)

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## Nearly 800 attend teacher education convocation



In a first for the tradition of the [Teacher Education Convocation and Celebration](#), students newly admitted to UNI Teacher Education were honored during induction ceremonies held during Family Weekend on September 30.

With Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center unavailable, this year’s celebration featured two induction sessions Saturday morning in the Lang Hall auditorium. An estimated 800 attended the two sessions,

with about 210 students participating along with family and faculty. **Dean Colleen Mulholland** served as this year’s guest speaker.

## 2+2 convocation held in fall 2022

Last October, a special, smaller convocation was held at the UNI@DMACC (Des Moines Area Community College Urban Campus) to celebrate the induction of elementary education students in the 2+2 program. About 70 students and family members participated in person and online.



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## Made to Teach visit days draw prospective teachers



UNI Teacher Education is consistently drawing future teachers to UNI and its Made to Teach visit days. On October 27, 2023, 224 students and a total of 430 guests joined in this special day to explore UNI and teacher education. That was a slight uptick from the prospects and family members who were on campus in October 2022.

"It's always exciting to see the passion that the next generation of teachers will bring to the profession, and I'm confident that UNI will be

the best place for them to start their fulfilling careers as educators," says **Benjamin Forsyth**, associate dean for undergraduate studies and teacher education.

Among the 2022 registrants, about 30 percent were elementary education majors and another 25 percent self-identified as potential early childhood education majors. Nearly 20 were transfer student prospects. In total, students interested in 18 different areas of teaching, along with exploratory majors, participated in the day's events. While the majority were from Iowa, registrants also came from Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

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## International student teaching returns

Fall 2022 saw the first two students in an international student teaching placement since COVID-19. They learned and lived in Ecuador, says **Carrie Elser**, out-of-state and international student teaching coordinator.

**Cassey Bly**, a TESOL/Spanish teaching major, and **Emmalee Fannon**, an elementary education and

communication disorders major, landed in Ecuador on August 1. After a trip to the Galapagos Islands before reporting to school, they prepared for the start of the school year at the Interamerican Academy in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

“That was the first time we had student teachers at this school and I was so impressed with how welcoming the entire staff has been for our students. They have treated them like family,” Elser says.

Additional students were placed last spring in Guayaquil and for the fall, new students are in Ecuador as well as Bangkok, Thailand.

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## RTNL graduate students take the lead with outdoor adventures

A newly re-focused [Outdoor Adventures](#) program – now part of the recreation, tourism and nonprofit leadership programming within the Department of Health, Recreation and Community Services– brings learning and healthy engagement with the outdoors together. The trips provide built-in opportunities for graduate students to coordinate and lead the adventures which attract students from across campus.

In the first year of stewardship by RTNL graduate assistant **Drew Abrams** ('23, MA), six trips included cross country skiing, ice climbing and rock climbing in Iowa and Wisconsin. This fall, graduate assistant **Courtney Johnson** is leading the effort, coordinating trips to locations in Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kentucky and Arizona (Grand Canyon) for canoeing, biking, hiking, rock climbing and backpacking adventures. [Read more.](#)

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## Past year brings new faces, expertise to COE faculty and staff

Since the last Premier e-news, these full-time faculty and instructional staff have joined the College of Education:

- / *Special Education:* [Sherry Petty](#), assistant professor; [Terre Hirst](#), instructor; [Kris Donnelly](#), instructor.
- / *Curriculum and Instruction:* [Audra Hootman](#), instructor; [Monaliza Maximo Chian](#), instructor and 2+2 elementary education program coordinator, UNI@WITCC; [Allison Pattee](#), instructor, early childhood education.
- / *Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies:* [Roark Horn](#), instructor and Pomerantz Endowed Professorship in Educational Excellence; [Amanda Schmidt](#), Institute for Educational Leadership coordinator; [David VanHorn](#), instructor, school psychology

Other key staff additions have included:

- / *College of Education Advising and Teacher Education Success (CATS) Office:* [Jenny Connolly](#), director of advising; [Tami Powers](#), clinical placement administrators and licensing advisor, [Mike Tate](#), academic advisor.

/ *Child Development Center:* **Maria Ackerson**, director; **Stephanie Wallen**, child development specialist.

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## Faculty welcome new journeys upon retirement

By the end of the 2022-23 academic year, six UNI College of Education faculty with nearly 170 years of experience, memories and impact upon COE undergraduate and graduate students said good-bye to UNI and hello to retirement. Best to all!

- / **Lyn Countryman**, professor and head of the Department of Teaching, 32 years
  - / **Nadene Davidson**, associate professor, teaching, 42 years
  - / **Deb Deemer**, associate professor, educational psychology, foundations and leadership studies, 28 years
  - / **Michele Devlin**, professor, global public health, 27 years
  - / **Susan Etscheidt**, professor, special education, 38 years
  - / **Sarah Bryans-Bongey**, associate professor, instructional technology, curriculum and instruction
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## A year of passages

### Landri Burgart, student, Recreation, Tourism and Nonprofit Leadership



The College of Education and UNI community mourned the loss of **Landri Burgart**, a senior-to-be recreation, tourism and nonprofit leadership major who was killed in an accident in Arizona on August 4. “She was a scholar, friend, mentor, leader; she made the COE Dean’s List for spring 2023 (after transferring to UNI in fall 2022), and was a rising star in UNI’s nationally recognized organization Nonprofit Leadership Alliance,” Dean Colleen Mulholland shared at the all staff retreat in August.

Through the efforts of COE faculty and staff, Burgart was honored with a posthumous degree which was delivered to her parents in time for her visitation services.

### Gloria Kirkland-Holmes, professor emeritus, Curriculum and Instruction



Known for her advocacy regarding young children and African American children and families, the COE community remembered Gloria Kirkland-Holmes’ passion in her 41 years with UN upon her passing in December 2022. She left her mark in classrooms at the Malcolm Price Laboratory School, with UNI teacher education students in curriculum and instruction, and in the inception and ongoing coordination of the African American Read-In and the African American Children and Families Conference.



## **Marcia Klinefelter, adjunct faculty, Curriculum and Instruction**

Marcia Klinefelter was a long-time K-12 educator and literacy advocate with a master's in literacy from UNI who joined COE as adjunct faculty. A knowledgeable literacy educator, she taught content literacy, literacy assessment and supported the UNI Literacy Clinic for many years. She was active in the Alpha Upsilon Alpha chapter of the ILA honor society and organized professional book clubs for over a decade.

## **Ripley “Rip” Marston, professor emeritus, Kinesiology**

Ripley Marston – or “Rip” – coordinated the physical education teaching major and started and oversaw the Panther Play program. He also was a member of the Eleanor A. Crawford and William R. Thrall Hall of Excellence selection and production committee.

## **Don Carver, former dean, College of Education**

Don Carver, dean of the College of Education from 1981 to 1987, passed away in Florida on August 15, 2022, at age 85. He spent his career in teaching and higher education. An Aurora College graduate, he went on to earn his master's and PhD from the University of Wisconsin after beginning as a junior high teacher and principal. In addition to his tenure at UNI, he served as dean of the College of Education at Southern Illinois University and head of the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Georgia.

# Events draw from across the region

Numerous events again demonstrated the capacity of the College of Education to serve as a critical resource for professional development and education for both internal and external student, professional and community audiences. Among notable highlights:

## **African American Children & Families Conference, 2/17/23**

The late **Gloria Kirkland Holmes'** spirit was evident at the [African American Children & Families Conference](#) on February 17, 2023. **Dean Colleen Mulholland** began with a welcome, her own memories and introduction of a video tribute from UNI colleagues, planning



committee members and former dean **Dwight Watson**, with a final “thank you” from her son (and conference panelist),

Corey Holmes. All day, guest speakers and panelists acknowledged Dr. Holmes’ leadership in initiating and maintaining this community-connected conference. Nearly 400 attended at least one session.

Keynote Kenneth B. Morris Jr. shared how he came to know, value and, in turn, share his lineage that connects the families of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. Morris related how Douglass’ belief that “education is the path to freedom” reflected his journey from slave to free man (and anti-slavery advocate), a philosophy shared by Washington.

Other presenters included COE faculty **Kathy Scholl**, Health, Recreation and Community Services, and **Oksana Grybovych Hafermann** (now UNI Chief of Staff), who shared the work of UNI students who researched and developed 13 narratives of UNI’s African American history and activism. The narratives can be read as short stories or experienced as a [digital UNI campus tour](#) and will become part of the African American Heritage Trail Project in the Cedar Valley.

Also presenting were **Sarah Montgomery**, C&I, who addressed “Trauma-Sensitive Social and Emotional Learning Practices for Racial Justice,” and **Shuaib Meacham**, C&I, who moderated a Black Men’s Panel on “Decisions Black Men Make.”

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## Expanded African American Read-In, 2/16/23



With invitations extended fully statewide for the first time, a record-breaking 3,000 students were registered in classrooms across Iowa to hear and learn from African American children’s book authors and illustrators. Unfortunately, a winter storm that enveloped the state led to 80 classrooms withdrawing, but an estimated 2,000 first graders still enjoyed the opportunity to listen and learn from Dinah Johnson, author of “Black Magic;” Angela Johnson, author of “Lily Brown’s Paintings;” and Don Tate, illustrator of “Carter Reads the Newspaper.”

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## Social and Emotional Learning Conference, 4/7/23



Nationally known speakers Marc Brackett and Gina McGovern combined with local and state leaders in social and emotional learning at the annual conference on topics meant to support inclusive, responsive and trauma-sensitive classrooms and promote educator self-care.

Brackett, Yale professor and lead developer of RULER, an approach to social and emotional learning, and Gina McGovern, known for her studies that support the development of youth's social emotional skills and ethnic-racial identity led the day-long conference which saw more than 750 registrants. Outside of a special online track for the two keynote speakers and one breakout session, the day-long conference was again an on-campus event in its second year.

Cortez Watson, MEd, LSMA, founder and president of The Hip-Hop F.I.R.M., joined keynote speaker McGovern and conducted a breakout session. Also speaking was children's author Pat Zeitlow Miller.

COE faculty were among those presenting at more than 20 keynote and breakout sessions:

- / **Sarah Montgomery**, curriculum and instruction (C&I), "The Power of Joy in SEL"
- / **Kerri Clopton**, Educational Psychology, Foundations and Leadership Studies (EPFLS), with Darcie Davis-Gage, CSBS, "Educator Wellness: A Necessary Component of SEL Initiatives"
- / **Nicole Skaar**, EPFLS, "Advocating for Social Emotional Learning and School-Based Mental Health"
- / **Stephanie Schmitz**, EPFLS, "Mental Health in Early Childhood: Prevention and Early Intervention"
- / **Suzanne Freedman**, EPFLS, "The Impact of Forgiveness Education on Students' Social Emotional Well-being"

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## Return of Carlton-Mellichamp Lecture in Education, 4/26/23

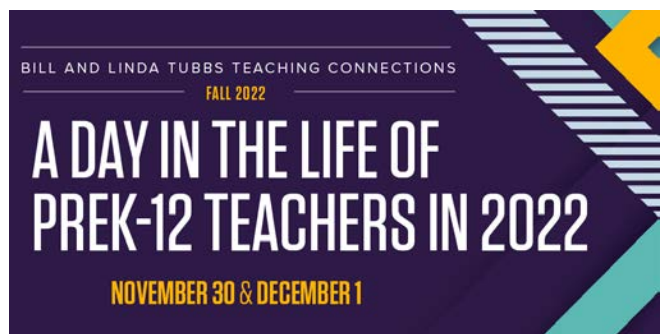


The [Carlton-Mellichamp Lecture in Education](#) returned in April 2023 with featured speaker Eboney Johnson, an assistant professor with the University of Iowa College of Public Health. She spoke on "Utilizing Community-Engaged Research to Build Capacity in Stakeholders to Address Youth

Mental Health." This was the fourth event in the series, sponsored by COE and an ongoing donation from Suzanne and Carlton Mellichamp. The next lecture is planned for March 2024.

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## Tubbs Teaching Connections, 11/30 & 12/1/22



Virtual attendees at the fifth Bill and Linda Tubbs Teaching Connections examined “A Day in the Life of PreK-12 Teachers in 2022.” Participants came away with true insights for themselves both professionally and personally, as educators, their students and communities continue to emerge from COVID-19. Keynote speakers Renee Heiberger and Vanessa Hardaway shared both serious and humorous perspectives on teacher

burnout on Day 1. Day 2 brought a series of guest speakers and panelists -- Iowa Teacher of the Year **Sara Russell**, Hudson superintendent **Tony Voss** and several practicing teachers from Iowa, Virginia and Indiana -- who spoke passionately about the impact and learnings on teaching practice, teachers and students.

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## Leader in Me, 4/15/23

Pre-service teachers honed leadership skills and earned a certificate with the Leader In Me Workshop planned. Led by Leader Valley, part of Grow Cedar Valley, and hosted by COE, the workshop gave future educators a look into what it means to be a leader in school and an effective teacher. There are currently 26 Leader in Me K-12 schools in the Cedar Valley.

## ACT Hybrid Conference, 10/21-22/22

COE was the on-site host for the Association for Constructivist Teaching hybrid conference, with planning coordinated by **Beth Van Meeteren** with the Iowa Regents’ Center for Early Developmental Education. The event included a special pre-conference honoring **Rheta DeVries** and her work as director of the IRCEDE. In addition, **Judith Finkelstein** provided an introduction to the Drs. Melville and Judith Finkelstein Integrative Classroom Studio.

Keynote speaker was Dor Abrahamson, PhD, a professor at the Graduate School of Education at University of California Berkeley. Presenters included **Stephanie Schmitz**, EPFLS, “Classroom Management Using a Constructivist Approach;” and **VanMeeteren**, “A Constructivist Approach to STEM Learning and Teaching: Stories from the Classroom.”



## Foundation News

As the public phase of the *Our Tomorrow* fundraising campaign launched in October 2022, contributions large and small continued to make a difference for the faculty, staff and students of the College of Education.

Pre-service, in-service and interested community members benefitted from several sponsored events, including:

- / the return of an on-campus Carlton-Mellichamp Lecture in Education, supported by Suzanne Carlton and Douglas Mellichamp;

- / the Bill and Linda Tubbs Teaching Connections;
- / the second Social and Emotional Learning Conference, attracting nearly 800 registrants, with support from Ken Budke, DDS; and,
- / the African American Read-In and African American Children and Families Conference, which included a tribute to the late Gloria Kirkland Holmes, professor emerita, who led these events for nearly two decades.

Fall 2022 kicked off with the addition of Sunni Kegebein as development director. With the final phase of the *Our Tomorrow* campaign commencing in fall 2023, the College of Education thanks each individual donor who helps ensure our success and continued legacy.

Give Back

## Kegebein listens, learns, finds connections in first year as development director



**Sunni Kegebein**'s first year as chief fundraiser and donor liaison for the College of Education just happened to coincide with the launch of the public phase of the *Our Tomorrow* campaign.

It's safe to say it's been an eventful year for Kegebein, who officially joined the UNI Foundation and the College of Education on August 30, 2022. She has found herself from east coast to west coast, south, north and in between over the past year, often accompanied by Dean Colleen Mulholland.

"What I have enjoyed most is getting to meet so many of our wonderful alumni and hearing their UNI stories. As they share their stories, it takes them back to their time on campus and all the

memories that were made as a Panther," she says. "They share how UNI and its donors helped shape them

into who they are today. Many share that this is the reason they choose to give back and support our future generations of UNI students. A theme I have found during my visits has been, without the academic and financial support our alumni received at UNI, they would not have been able to go to college.”

The College of Education has received several generous gifts over the past year. “COE is incredibly grateful to its donors who support our students, faculty/staff and programs. Several new funds have been created to support student scholarships and educational programs,” she says.

An example of the commitment and support Kegebein encountered is found in the story of an anonymous donor who has chosen to leave her estate to support the College of Education and Rod Library initiatives.

“She stated, “I love what UNI provided for me and this is my way of saying thank you. I just want my gift to be used to create an impact in the areas of greatest need. I trust the dean and know it will be used to impact future students in the best way possible,”” Kegebein shared.

As the campaign begins its final year, the college is focusing on two specific pillars within the campaign platform: 1) engaged learning; and 2) academic and faculty support through partnerships with the colleges and academic deans.

In this first year, Kegebein has found COE alumni to be passionate, caring and supportive. “Our alumni have an incredible vision for UNI and COE and what they both can become over time. I have seen an indescribable commitment to the College of Education,” she says.

“One of the most important things I have learned to do is to listen. Listen to the stories and find the connection between our alumni’s passions and what needs we have as a college. Then connect the two to create magical things for students, faculty/staff and our institution as a whole.”

For current and future donors and friends, Kegebein offers this counsel: “Think about how your UNI experience helped you develop into who you are today. How can you support our College of Education students in their academic adventure here at UNI?” she says. “Collectively, we are all making a difference in UNI’s ‘Our Tomorrow’ Campaign. Every dollar matters and makes a tremendous impact on everything we do.

The new development officer previously served as director of marketing, recruitment and fundraising for Imagine the Possibilities, a nonprofit organization located in Maquoketa, Iowa. She has also worked with the UNI Center for Urban Education, the UNI Foundation and the Northeast Iowa Food Bank in past roles. She is a graduate of Upper Iowa University with a BA in marketing and an MBA.

*Have a question on how to support the College of Education? Reach out to Sunni at [sunni.kegebein@uni.edu](mailto:sunni.kegebein@uni.edu) or 319-273-7319.*

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## **Our Tomorrow Campaign Kicks Off, Final Push Begins**

It was just a year ago, coinciding with Homecoming

2022, that the UNI Foundation launched the public phase of its most ambitious fundraising campaign in UNI history, with a goal of \$250 million.

The casting of new Campanile bells and the chance to stroll by existing Campanile bells at ground level—including the original bell honoring “Iowa State Teachers College”—was a highlight for many during the week. Thousands attended Friday’s celebration kick-off and live concert on central campus, including many who stopped for



camaraderie, treats and a memento at a special college alumni tent. Adding to the evening’s ambience were projections onto the Campanile, including images of COE students **Abe Silva Cortes**, kinesiology and exercise science, and **Alexandria Powell**, early childhood education.

A year later, the campaign is moving into its final phase—bolstered by the major news on October 20 of a record \$25 million gift which will lead to the naming of the David W. Wilson College of Business.

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## #LPGG contributions help exceed goals with 1,876+ donations

Contributors to the College of Education were among the more than 1,891 (and counting) donations to #LivePurpleGiveGold annual day of giving held for 24 hours on March 30, 2023. Just over \$9,000 was raised for the Dean’s Fund for Excellence, which helps ensure opportunities for faculty, students and staff. “Let me offer my sincere appreciation to anyone who was able to give in some way to #LPGG. Every gesture has an impact, I assure you,” says Dean Colleen Mulholland.

## 2022-2023 Donor Roll

Thank you to the following donors who made cash contributions to the college between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. Names with (\*) indicate Dean’s Inner Circle members, who gave \$1,000 or more to the Dean’s Fund for Excellence. Names in bold indicate UNI Legacy Society members.

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Cedar Valley Medical Specialist

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## **\$10,000- \$49,999**

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1227 W 27th St  
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614  
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