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## The Update, March-May 2016

University of Northern Iowa. College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences.

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**2015 – 2016**

MARCH — MAY NO. 4

# THE UPDATE

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SCIENCES

## FEATURED STORY: **ECO+HOUSE ART EXHIBITION** P. 8 – 9



### **MUSIC**

Women's chorus  
tours Ireland  
Over spring break, the UNI  
Women's Chorus traveled to  
Ireland to perform concerts  
in four cities. This marks the  
first international tour for the  
Women's Chorus.

P.6

### **CHEMISTRY**

Cassara Higgins  
Current Chemistry and  
Physics major's experience  
at UNI and plans to continue  
research to improve nuclear  
energy cycle.

P.7

### **COMM. SCIENCE AND DISORDERS**

ICCD Conference  
The UNI Communication  
Sciences and Disorders  
Department hosted the 25th  
annual conference, providing  
education on a wide-variety  
of topics within the field  
of speech and language  
pathology.

P.10



# CONTENTS

## MARCH – MAY VOL.4

3

### CHAS BRIEFS

4

### SPOTLIGHT – ALUMNI KATY SLAVEN

5

### SPOTLIGHT – FACULTY DR. RUI HE

6

### SCHOOL OF MUSIC WOMEN’S CHOIR TOURS IRELAND

7

### SPOTLIGHT – STUDENT CASSARA HIGGINS

8–9

### FEATURED STORY ECO+HOUSE ART EXHIBITION

10

### COMMUNICATION SCIENCES & DISORDERS ICCD CONFERENCE

11

### SPOTLIGHT – STUDENT BOB SPIELBAUER

12

### SPOTLIGHT – STUDENT LISA DIERCKS

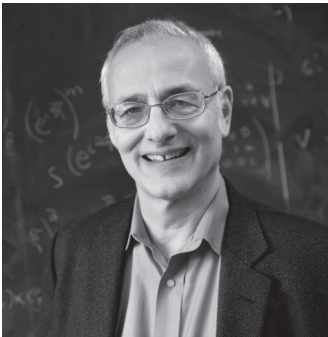


UNI Women's Choir in Ireland p. 6



ICCD Conference Team p. 10

# CHAS BRIEFS



### HARI SHANKAR LECTURE

Phil Kutzko is a Professor of Mathematics and CLAS Collegiate Fellow at the University of Iowa. He has served as the Director of the National Alliance for Doctoral Studies in the Mathematical Sciences since its inception in 2006 and serves as PI and Senior Advisor to the Alfred E. Sloan Foundation/University of Iowa Center for Excellent Mentoring. His work in broadening participation in the mathematical sciences has been recognized by the 2014 American Mathematical Society Award for Distinguished Public Service. Kutzko will argue that an understanding of this context can lead to new strategies, strategies which, in our case, have transformed a traditional mathematics department in the ethnically homogeneous state of Iowa into what some have called a model for what an American math department should look like in the twenty-first century.



### 9TH ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

The Ninth Annual Graduate Student Symposium held on Wednesday, April 6 offered a unique opportunity for Spanish speakers on campus. For the first time, the Symposium included an entire panel of Oral Presentations in Spanish. The presenters were students from the Spanish and TESOL/Spanish Master's programs, many of whom participated as part of Dr. Heather Jerónimo's Research Methods class. Presentations covered a diverse range of topics from the fields of linguistics and literature, including analyses of immigration rhetoric in the 2016 presidential election and the representation of Latino identity in popular sitcoms. Many of the presentations were the culmination of research completed in Dr. Elise DuBord's Language and Nationalism Class in the fall of 2015. Congratulations to the presenters of this well-attended panel. ¡Enhorabuena!

### PRINTMAKING AWARDS

Dana Potter, a recent graduate from the UNI Dept. of Art, will receive the prestigious 2016 SGCI Undergraduate Student Fellowship Award. The Southern Graphics International organization is the largest professional organization for Fine Art Printmaking in the United States. Only one undergraduate award and one graduate level award are given each year on a nationally competitive basis. Dana will receive a cash award along with a solo exhibition at next year's SGCI conference. The exhibition will introduce Dana's work to well over one thousand professionals, educators, and students in the printmaking field.

Also this year's Graduate Fellowship Solo Exhibition at the 2016 SGCI conference in Portland Oregon was awarded to BJ Alumbaugh who is also a graduate of the UNI Dept. of Art in 2008. BJ is currently earning his MFA at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## KATY SLAVEN

### THEATRE

BY UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

Katy Slaven stood on stage in the Great Hall at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center the morning of February 23, as an audience of 1,500 exuberant middle school students sang “Happy Birthday” to her.

It happened to be her birthday, but both Katy and the children in the audience were gathered there for reasons other than a simple celebration.

For the students and their teachers, it was the chance to see “Out of Bounds,” a play about bullying that tackles the issue from a variety of different perspectives.

For Katy, it was a chance to perform as a member of “Out of Bounds” at her alma mater, after graduating from UNI in 2010 with a B.A. in Theatre.

“I never dreamed that, so soon after graduating from here, I’d be coming back as a professional actor and performing on this stage,” Katy said, after the performance. “It is a dream come true in a lot of ways.” Not long after graduation, Katy continued her education at Florida Atlantic University, where she graduated with an M.F.A. in Acting. Her dream is to teach at the university level, and she credits her professors at UNI for inspiring her.

“I’ve always loved theatre, but the education that I got at the Strayer-Wood Theatre [at UNI], it really cemented for me that this is what I want to spend my lifetime doing. This is what I want my life to be.”

“Out of Bounds” is the brainchild of the Working Group Theatre, an organization based out of Iowa City. The group recruited Katy over a year ago to be a part of the play, which is now halfway through a national tour after previously performing at various schools across the state of Iowa.

There are two different versions of the play, one tailored for a middle school audience and the other more targeted at adults. Katy is hopeful that both versions will inspire change in their intended audiences.

“We are hoping that the youth show will inspire children to be ‘upstanders,’ as opposed to just bystanders. And the adult show will inspire parents to better understand this complex issue and give them better ideas on how to deal with it when they find themselves involved with it.”

More than anything, Katy was grateful for the chance to return to UNI.

“It is so good to be back. It brings back a lot of really great memories.”

<https://www.uni.edu/resources/features/curtain-call-theatre-alum>



Katy Slaven

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

## DR. RUI HE

### PHYSICS

BY CHRISTINE EFFERDING

Dr. Rui He joined the UNI Physics Department in 2011. Dr. He performed her undergraduate work at Fudan University in Shanghai China. She then moved to the U.S. to receive her Ph.D. in applied physics from Columbia University in New York City in 2006. After her graduation from Columbia, she went back to China and joined the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology as a postdoc in the physics department and as a research assistant in the mathematics department. In 2009 she returned to Columbia University where she worked as a postdoctoral research scientist.

Since coming to UNI, Dr. He has been very pleased with the staff and students. She says the Physics department head Paul Shand and her other colleagues have been very helpful and encouraging when it comes to developing research that impacts the Physics field, as well as provide educational value to students.

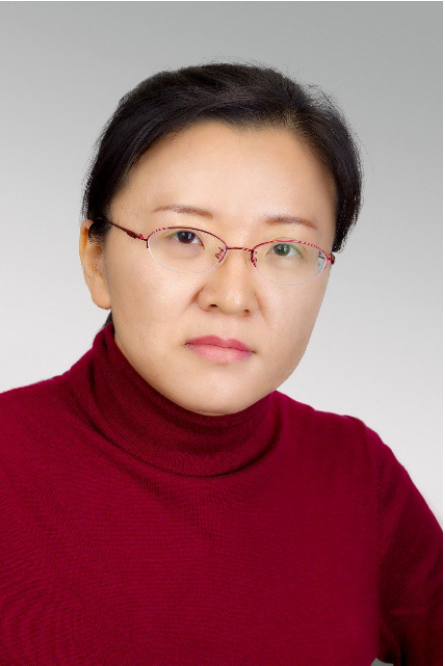
This semester, Dr. He has received a \$518,000 CAREER research grant from the National Science Foundation. The CAREER Grant is awarded to junior faculty who exemplify the role of teacher-scholars through outstanding research, excellent education and the integration of education and research within the context of the mission of their organizations. She is the first UNI faculty member in any department to receive the grant.

With this grant, Dr. He plans to research the interlayer interactions between atomic layers of two-dimensional materials. Her research includes looking at how atomic layers interact when they stack vertically and how those interactions would impact the electronic and

optical properties of the materials. She says the materials are promising for future electronic and optoelectronic applications.

In her time at UNI, Dr. Rui He has also spearheaded the Women in Physics Club, a group that meets regularly for social events and to create a supportive environment for women in Physics. Recently, the group has been involved in visiting labs on campus, scheduling activities for next fall, and trying to invite more women to speak to the club. “Being the faculty member provides me with the opportunity to interact with female students, and recruit more women to help with my research,” she added.

Recently, UNI has developed a program that reaches out to students from China to recruit them to attend our university stateside. Dr. He has helped with the development of the program, using her personal connections in China to reach out to Chinese students.



Dr. Rui He

# SCHOOL OF MUSIC

## WOMEN’S CHORUS TOURS IRELAND

BY AMY KOTSONIS

Over spring break, the UNI Women’s Chorus traveled to Ireland to perform concerts in four cities. This marks the first international tour for the Women’s Chorus, which holds the distinction as being the oldest ensemble on campus, since its inception in 1888. The chorus is comprised of students from across all disciplines and years, and this trip included firsts for many of our singers: first time out of Iowa, first plane ride, first time seeing the ocean, and first international travel. Most performances were held in cathedrals, the oldest dating back to the 13th century. Being surrounded by both the history and acoustics of these venues was unlike anything the students had experienced before. Concerts were held in Killarney, Waterford, Bray and Dublin, and the chorus also marched in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Bray. In addition to concerts, the Women’s Chorus was able to visit many important landmarks: the Cliffs of Moher, the Ring of Kerry, Blarney Castle and the Blarney Stone, Dublin Castle, Kilkenny Castle, and many more historic sites. For the students, the trip was the opportunity of a lifetime, and exposed them to the incredible culture, history and people of Ireland. The people were incredibly kind, and the chorus received a warm reception at every concert where people stayed after to talk to the students each time.

Nicole Schmitt, a sophomore Communication major from Fort Atkinson, shared her story. “Traveling to Ireland with the Women’s Chorus was by far the most amazing opportunity that I have ever been offered. Traveling to another country was a fantastic experience and really opened my eyes to the diversity of the world in which we live. I got to see different landscapes, foods, culture, people, and history like I’d never experienced. Touring such an old country really helped me appreciate how young our nation is and how much we have to learn from other countries outside of our own. Experiencing all of this newness independently from my family was a great experience for me, and it really allowed me to grow in my independence and responsibility as well as helped me to discover a new found love for traveling.

Not only was I given the opportunity to travel to a new country, but I was given the privilege to perform music while doing so. I can honestly say that touring with the Women’s Chorus changed the way that I think about music. Previously I had thought of music as just something that was nice to listen to, but as we traveled around Ireland performing our pieces, I realized that music is more than just the sounds. It is even more so about the meaning. I experienced so many magical moments that we created with our music and the words came to mean more to me personally. It is truly incredible what a group of women is capable of doing with just our voices.

Finally, my trip to Ireland was an amazing opportunity to make some new lifelong friends. Being in such a large choir makes it hard to get very close to many of the women with whom I sing. Through the course of our tour of Ireland, however, I got to know each and every one of these amazing women on a personal level. I became fast friends with many people I had never even spoken to before. Being in close quarters, experiencing new things, and making beautiful music helps to form an unbreakable bond like I have never experienced anywhere else. This trip was truly a blessing and the experiences, magical music, and fantastic friends that I made during just one short week will affect me for the rest of my life.”

Editor’s note: thank you to Amy Kotsonis for her contribution of this article.



UNI Women’s Choir, mountain side of Ireland

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## CASSARA HIGGINS

### CHEMISTRY

BY CHRISTINE EFFERDING

Cassara Higgins, a senior from Brandon, IA, will be graduating at the end of this semester with two bachelors of science degrees in Chemistry and Physics. She decided to come to UNI because of how small the community feels. Higgins graduated high school in a class with less than 100 students, so a small feel was one of the most important factors in her college decision.

Originally, UNI wasn’t Higgins’s first choice because she had spent some summers on campus and didn’t know if UNI was the right fit for her. But after her last four years, Higgins says she couldn’t be happier with her decision. As a first generation college student, Higgins said her biggest challenge was no knowing what to expect. Always an “A” student in high school, she struggled to learn to let go of GPA a little and learn to balance the social aspects of college with class obligations. She enjoys the smaller classes and push for discussion in the classroom. “It has always felt safe to share my opinion at UNI,” she says.

Over her four years, Higgins has been involved in a multitude of research opportunities. To name a few, she was involved in two National American Chemical Society Meetings, and has represented the state of Iowa at the USA Engineering Festival in Washington D.C. While being a student, Higgins worked as student staff at the Iowa Governor’s STEM Advisory Council. She says, “This has been the best job I think I could have had at UNI. With it I have had great experiences networking with business and education leadership in the state of Iowa.”

Higgins has also been involved with many clubs on campus, including the UNI Physics Club, the UNI Student Affiliates of the

American Chemical Society, and has played all four years on UNI Women’s Ultimate Frisbee team. In her free time, Higgins enjoys spending time in the tall grass prairies and around the campanile. She says, “UNI has a beautiful campus and I love being outside.” She also enjoys walking through the shops on Main Street and trying different restaurants in the area.

After graduation, Higgins plans to continue her education at the University of Nevada – Las Vegas. She has accepted a place in the Radiochemistry Ph.D. program for this fall. After graduate school she hopes to get a job in a national lab doing research. She wants to continue to work on the nuclear fuel cycle and says her goal is to “continue to improve nuclear energy in hopes of making it a larger part of the US energy economy.”



Cassara Higgins



# UNI CARES

## ECO+HOUSE ART EXHIBITION

BY JANEY GRAVEMAN



Just last week, Rod Library, in partnership with the UNI Museum, hosted the opening of its newest Art Exhibition, Eco+House. Eco+House is a collection of works including photography, performance (some live), print-making, painting, sculpture and installation, and some pieces from the museum’s collection as well. The exhibition is a result of the Eco+House art course taught by Angela Waseskuk. The course is an advanced performance art course being taught experimentally as an eco-art emphasis this semester.

The process for creating the Eco+House Exhibition started when Waseskuk thought about how the class would present artwork for the UNI CARES event planned for March 30. The inspiration for the exhibition is a result of other mentors teaching eco-art classes at other universities, and the students’ works sparked an interest for Waseskuk. However, the most significant inspiration came drawn from Dr. Elizabeth Sutton’s art history course, *Art, Ecology and Empire*, which was taught last semester. This course sparked anger in some of Waseskuk’s students, as they learned about

society’s lack of regard toward the environment. As a result, Waseskuk and Sutton decided to collaborate on Eco+House as an extension of *Art, Ecology, and Empire*.

The name Eco+House comes from Judy Chicago’s installation *Woman House* from the 70’s. This large-scale installation encompassed an entire domestic house, with an immersive installation and experience that evolved over time. Inspired by the installation, Waseskuk wanted to create a space that students could alter and evolve, which also coincides with the idea of humans on a changing and evolving planet. Though it comes with reasonable restrictions on how the space can be used, the museum was generous to offer their space, and became a wonderful alternative. Nathan Arndt, the museum’s curator, and Jess Cruz, the exhibit preparator, have been supportive since the beginning stages of creating the exhibition. Cruz worked very closely with all of the students, and the exhibition could not have happened in the same way without her assistance.

The students involved with the exhibition were both self-motivated and self-directed. They also had the responsibilities of ideation, research and execution, much like a graduate course. Each student chose a topic related to local ecology at the beginning of the semester. They then conducted their own research by doing interviews, reading, and developing their artwork throughout the course. Visiting artists also came throughout the semester, such as Dr. Kamyar Enshayan from the CEEE, who spoke about what needs we have



and what we can change in our community to help the environment. Margaret Whiting, another guest speaker, spoke about the power of artists and how they can be activists for the good of the environment. The visiting artists became an inspiration for the students and helped them solidify their topics and realize that their work can leave an impact.

As an art exhibition, the students have talked about how Eco+House will influence its audience. There is usually a misconception that art students, especially performance students, use their time to create strange things that are difficult for others to understand or connect with. In addition to this misconception, it is usually assumed that art students must “dumb down” their work to reach out to non-artists.

However, art is a strong communicative power that can be essential for creating change. It is a way to give people a new perspective on something that they may already think they know all about. Humans all learn differently, but sometimes art is the thing that is more relatable, tangible, and emotional. Although it is true that some strange things are created in UNI’s art department, Eco+House is an example of how powerful art can be, as it is an accessible and provocative exhibition that its viewers can understand.

It is Waseskuk’s hope that Eco+House will help the people of UNI realize that they have a voice to motivate change in a variety of ways, and we all have ways to contribute to help support the environment in positive ways.





# COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORRRDERS ICCD CONFERENCE

BY CHRISTINE EFFERDING

On April 7 and 8, the UNI Communications Science and Disorders Department hosted the 25th annual Iowa Conference on Communicative Disorders (ICCD). The conference provides continuing education on a wide-variety of topics within the field of speech and language pathology. Suzanne Dripps, faculty advisor for ICCD, says, “The goal of this conference is to present leadership experiences to students in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders and to provide professionals in the field of speech-language pathology valuable and relevant continuing education units (CEU) at an affordable rate for their professional licensure.”

Not only do the professional attendees get to obtain CEU hours, but they also have the opportunity to visit with vendors for additional resources. The conference also gives Communication Disorders students time to meet with vendors and possibly learn more about future employers. The conference allows those completing their research within the graduate program in Speech-Language Pathology a time to present their research to their peers and professionals in attendance.

This year the ICCD Conference was host to 8 speakers, including Dr. Carlin Hageman, former head of UNI’s Communication Sciences and Disorders Department, and Dr. Julie Stierwalt. Hageman presented on the diagnosis and treatment of childhood apraxia of speech (CAS), a motor speech disorder that causes children to have difficulty saying sounds, syllables, and words due to the brains inability to communicate with parts of the body needed for speech.

Stierwalt, who received her bachelors and masters degrees from UNI, presented on the “Differential Diagnosis of Motor Speech Disorders.” She is a Senior Associate Consultant in the Division of Speech Pathology, Department of Neurology at the Mayo clinic in Rochester Minnesota where she serves as a consultant for individuals with a wide range of speech, language, and cognitive disturbances.

The ICCD conference started 25 years ago with Hageman, and a handful of students that had a vision of providing continuing education to professionals within our area. Since the conception of ICCD, attendance at the event has been on a steady incline. This year a record breaking 264 people attended the conference. Dripps attributes the success of the conference to Co-Chairs of this year’s conference, Cassie Fettkether and Ross Westemeyer, and the rest of the planning committee.

Dripps first got involved with the conference as an undergraduate student, and she continued to volunteer her time through her graduate student years. After graduation, she attended the conference and is now the faculty advisor. She enjoys the opportunity to advise students as they gain experience in the field, and watching them take on leadership roles. “It is most rewarding to watch them gain confidence as they advance to becoming professionals in the field of speech and language pathology,” Dripps says.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT EARTH SCIENCE BOB SPIELBAUER

BY CHRISTINE EFFERDING

Bob Spielbauer is a senior from Volga, Iowa, triple majoring in Earth Science, Environmental Science with an emphasis in Geoscience, and Biology with an emphasis in Ecology and Evolution. His love for science was encouraged early on, when he would go fossil hunting with his siblings at a creek near their house. Spielbauer says “this connection with the natural world at a young age is what led to continue my education in the sciences at the University of Northern Iowa.”

Spielbauer is very involved on campus, and says UNI has always felt very welcoming. On his visit to UNI Spielbauer says everyone he met was nice, and the campus was the perfect size. Spielbauer is the current president of Sigma Gamma Epsilon, the Earth Science Honor Society, and the UNI Sword fighting/Belegarth MCS. “I have made many of my closest friends by meeting twice a week to hit each other with foam weapons,” he said. Spielbauer is graduating in summer of this year, and has made a lot of valuable friendships during that time. “I feel like I’ve known the people that I met here for my entire life,” he says.

In his time in the science program, Spielbauer has had the opportunity to participate in lab work and research. He performed water quality research on storm water runoff along road construction sites through a grant from the Department of Transportation, and presented the research with a grad student at the Iowa Water Conference in Ames. He also got to help with the lab work for another project studying

strontium-isotope levels in rocks from the End Permian Mass Extinction, which involved traveling to Columbus, Ohio. Spielbauer says “these research opportunities were amazing experiences that helped me grow immensely as a researcher, which is my ultimate career goal.”

Spielbauer says his greatest challenge as a student at UNI was graduating in four years with three majors. “It takes a lot of planning and busy semesters to make it work. I took 23 credits in the Fall 2015 semester, which I thoroughly regret. I somehow managed to pull off a 4.0, but it was extremely mentally draining.”

When he’s not studying, researching, or going to class, Spielbauer likes to play Legend of Zelda, write fiction, and spend time hiking or in the woods. This summer, he will be working as a Seasonal Naturalist through the Clayton County Conservation at Osborne Park. In the fall he will be returning to UNI to begin work on a masters in Biology and research evolutionary biology with Dr. Jim Demastes. After receiving his masters, he intends to pursue a Ph.D. in either paleontology or evolutionary biology.



Bob Spielbauer

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## COMPUTER SCIENCE

### LISA DIERCKS

BY CHRISTINE EFFERDING

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Lisa Diercks is a senior from Denver, IA, double majoring in Computer Science and Criminology with a minor in Mathematics. She originally came to UNI to study Secondary Math Education, but after dabbling in both secondary and elementary education, Diercks decided to check out her passion for computers.

"I've always had a knack for computers, but had no programming experience, so I decided to try a couple Computer Science classes. I immediately loved the work we were doing in those classes; they were challenging, engaging and hands on," Diercks says. One of her favorite things about the Computer Science Department is how close knit it is. "It isn't a very large department, so all of the professors know the students, and even better, the students know each other," she says.

In her time at UNI, Diercks has been involved with the Women in Computing Club. Through this involvement she had the opportunity to go to Texas for the Grace Hopper Celebration, a nationwide celebration of women in technology fields. At the conference, Diercks says she "was able to meet lots of new people and even interview with potential employers through their incredible career fair." Diercks also says that being involved in the Women in Computing Club has been a great opportunity for the female community to bond in a fairly male-dominated major.

Along with her school accomplishments, Diercks has also gained a lot of practical experience during her time at UNI. She worked at John Deere as a part-time student for 2 years, interned with the Cedar Falls Police Department (CFPD), and eventually worked for the CFPD as a Community Service Officer. Those experiences led her to intern at the FBI last summer, and has continued to do so throughout this school year. After graduation, Diercks hopes to gain a full-time position with the FBI. Eventually she would like to end up in Denver, CO, but says it might be a few years before she can transfer there.



Lisa Diercks