The University of Northern Iowa is now home to one of only three college-level inclusive cheerleading squads in the nation. It features two boys and nine girls who love to cheer and just happen to have disabilities ranging from Down syndrome to autism.

The squad was formed fall semester by LeClaire, Iowa, native Samantha Swanson, a sophomore elementary education major with a minor in special education who serves as the squad’s captain. “The Sparkles send the message that anyone can be a cheerleader or do anything they put their mind to,” said Swanson.

Participants range in age from 5 to 17. There is no try out and, thanks to a grant, no cost to participate. UNI student volunteers mentor the squad, helping them learn cheers, stunts and jumps.

“Being a Sparkle changes these kids. They come out of their shell,” said Swanson. “They have an opportunity to be involved in an activity, just like other students.”

Swanson was a cheerleader at Pleasant Valley High School in Bettendorf, which also has an inclusive cheerleading squad. She brought this life-changing program, her love of cheerleading and passion for working with children with disabilities with her to UNI. To learn more about becoming a UNI Sparkle or mentor, contact Samantha Swanson at 563-370-6821 or smswanson@uni.edu.

The National Program for Playground Safety is working to protect the families of those keeping America safe.

Working under a contract with the U.S. Department of Defense, NPPS will provide online playground safety training to personnel in the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps. The initial two-year contract allows for up to $500,000 in funding to train up to 1,210 individuals, with contract renewals available in the future.

“The training programs will provide knowledge on how to create and maintain safe and developmentally appropriate outdoor play environments,” said Heather Olsen, associate professor in the School of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services and assistant director of NPPS. “The course topics will highlight inspections, supervision and best practices for outdoor environments. The training programs are highly informative, practical and based on well-researched best practices.” Trainings include Early Childhood Outdoor Play Inspector, Playground Inspection Course for Elementary School and Youth/Community Programs and Certified Supervisor for Outdoor Environments.

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Ariel Aloe, educational psychology and foundations, has received a $136,000 grant through the National Science Foundation’s Research on Education and Learning (REAL) program to research new ways to compare and combine complex research results from various studies.

“We play detective,” Aloe said of the work he’ll be doing. With a background as a statistician, Aloe specializes in research synthesis and meta-analysis, or bringing together statistics and summaries of other studies’ findings to determine common ground and establish why studies of the same subject reached different conclusions.

With primary studies using increasingly complex methods of research, it is necessary for the field of meta-analysis to evolve, as well. Through the grant, Aloe will work with Betsy Becker at Florida State University to develop new statistical techniques to apply in the field of meta-analysis. The grant will last for three years.

Ariel Aloe receives grant from NSF

Education Graduate Program ranked by US News & World Report
UNI’s Education Graduate Program was recently ranked 112 among the best such programs in the country at US News & World Report.

The rankings were compiled based on surveys of administrators at 1,350 programs and more than 13,400 academics and professionals. This year, the publication asked eligible programs to supply the names of working professionals and employers who hire graduates. Some of those individuals were also surveyed to contribute to the rankings.

Ed Leadership announces new Legacy Award, seeks nominations
The Educational Leadership and Postsecondary Education Department is seeking nominations for its new UNI Education Leadership Legacy Award which will honor outstanding principalship, superintendency or doctoral program graduates.

The UNI College of Education developed the award earlier to honor alumni from its educational leadership program. It will recognize alumni who demonstrate they are leaders of learning, service and/or change in their community, which exemplify the UNI educational leadership core values.

Recipients will be awarded based on nomination letters received from qualified individuals who are able to speak on the nominee’s performance related to the UNI educational leadership core values. This may include school board members, teachers, students, parents and community members. The review committee consider up to three nominations for a single candidate. The nominations deadline is Friday, May 16.

For more information about the UNI Educational Leadership Legacy Award, please contact Dr. Nicholas J. Pace at Nick.Pace@uni.edu.

UNI Day at the Iowa Capitol
Faculty, staff and students from UNI’s College of Education and School of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services joined with others from across UNI to travel to Des Moines Feb. 24 for the second UNI Day at the Iowa State Capitol.
The University of Northern Iowa’s College of Education will be noted nationally and internationally as the premier professional college of education. We value leadership and excellence in the preparation of educational and human service professionals, innovations in best professional practice, and strong collaborative relationships with the professions and communities we serve.

STEP Program looks at Des Moines Parks and Rec

A group of more than 20 graduate and undergraduate students in the School of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services joined faculty members Jill Lankford, Oksana Grybovych and Sam Lankford, all from leisure, youth and human services, to complete a study of the Des Moines Department of Parks and Recreation to help quantify the benefits of the programs to the city and its residents.

Under the direction of Jill Lankford, research coordinator of STEP and R2S, the students and faculty completed the study “Economic Impacts and Value of the Des Moines Department of Parks and Recreation.” The study documented the direct use value, tourism expenditures, storm water savings, property values and other cost savings from programs and service delivery by the department.

The study found substantial savings and revenue to the city and its citizens. They found revenue to the city to be $2,190,754 while revenue to residents and businesses was $66,190,517. Cost savings were also high, with savings to the city of $2,181,642 and savings to residents of $21,399,331. This results in a value of $441 per homeowner in Des Moines and $219 per non-homeowner Des Moines resident.

The results were presented to the Des Moines Department of Parks and Recreation Commission. The full report is available at www.uni.edu/step.

T2PAL Reads Across America

The UNI School of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services has been chosen as one of only 25 sites across the nation to host a workshop for schools interested in implementing the Presidential Youth Fitness Program.

The workshop, which will be presented at no cost to participants, will be April 29 on the UNI campus. Participants will learn how to assess, track and recognize youth fitness and physical activity as well as strategies for incorporating the program into existing curriculum.

For more information, contact Rip Marston at 319-273-6882 or ripley.marston@uni.edu
The College of Education hosted the second African-American Read-In with area school children on Thursday, Feb. 27. About 350 first-through third-grade students traveled to campus to participate in workshops, meet TC and TK, hear stories and meet special guest Elmo. The next day, community leaders gathered for the eighth African-American Children and Families Conference.
Awards and Service

Ariel Aloe, educational psychology and foundations, participated in an event at Harvard University on developing statistical methods for synthesizing the results of quasi experiments. He was one of approximately 50 invited guests from around the world.

Michelle Czarnecki and Ellie Hail, postsecondary education: student affairs students, won the case study competition at the 2013 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators IV-East Regional Conference. Their case study focused on the transition of a student back to a small liberal arts college following a tour of duty for military service.

Jean Donham, curriculum and instruction, was named the Iowa Library Association Member of the Year award by the Iowa Library Association.

Emily Guetzlaff received the UNI Graduate College Outstanding Master’s Research Paper Award for her research paper, “The Effects of Peer-Conferencing on Writing Revisions in a Second Grade Classroom.”

Ann Marie Horrigan, Kayleen Mahlstede and Carly Wolf, health, physical education and leisure services students, took second place in the Society for Public Health Education’s National Health Education Case Study Competition.

Sarah Montgomery, curriculum and instruction, was named the Iowa Technology and Education Connection’s (ITEC) 2013 Post Secondary Educator of the Year for her work at UNI and with local schools.

Sarah Vander Zanden, curriculum and instruction, received the Outstanding Teaching Award from University Book and Supply for pre-tenured faculty.

Jennifer Waldron and Catherine Zeman, health, physical education and leisure services, each received the 2013 Regents Award for Faculty Excellence.

Presentations

Ariel Aloe, educational psychology and foundations, conducted a workshop on meta-analysis at the University of Cologne in Germany. He also presented about effect size to an invited group of participants at Harvard University focused on developing statistical methods for synthesizing the results of quasi experiments.

Neil Clopton, instructional resources and technology services, presented “Musical Software for Real Musicians: Ten Musical Things You Can Do with a Computer, Even If You Hate Computer Music” at the Ohio Linux Fest.

Chris Curran, Bette Nee, and Kim Miller, special education; Brittany Sikora, Chen Kong, Leah Cooper and Lydia Sink, graduate assistants in the Technology and Teachers: Promoting Accessible Learning (T2PAL), conducted “Technology Tools for Literacy and Learning” at the Iowa Learning Disabilities Spring Teacher Workshop.


Christopher Edginton, health, physical education and leisure services, presented at a number of conferences, workshops and forums, including “Leisure for Children and Youth – A Global Perspective,” a keynote presentation at the 6th Asian Pacific Conference on Exercise and Sports Science; “Leisure in Transition,” a keynote presentation at the 2013 China Leisure Development International Forum; “Camp Adventure Child and Youth Service” and “Leisure in Transformation – Meta-trends that are Changing Our World” at the Leisure and Recreation Association of South Africa Congress, the second of which was a keynote presentation; and “The World Leisure Organization” at Zhejiang University.

Micahel Fanelli, educational psychology and foundations, presented a series of lectures on
the teaching methods of gestalt and constructivist Hungarian-American psychologist and pedagogue Paul Rolland at George Mason University.

Kevin Finn, health, physical education and leisure services, presented on factors associated with obesity in adults and intervention strategies to prevent obesity, research he conducted in association with being a Fulbright Scholar, at the Iowa Board of Regents meeting.

Becky Hawbaker, department of teaching; Curt Nielsen, department of teaching; Debbie Lee, Debra Beving and Jarith Witt, partners from area schools; and Jessie Hutcheson, Shawna Becker and Julia North, education students, presented “Restructuring Field Experiences in Teacher Education and Expanding Professional Development School Partnerships” to the Iowa Board of Regents.

Mary Herring, associate dean, presented “Technology Integration Overview” at Fujan Normal University and Minnan Normal University. Herring also presented “Transformational Leadership to Develop TPACK-Ready Teacher Candidates” and “Intel Teach Pilot” and facilitated the roundtable discussion “Leading Up! Advocating and Implementing Change as Associate Deans” during the 2014 Annual Meeting for the American Association of Colleges of Education.

Amy Lockhart and Nielsen, department of teaching, presented “Perspectives on Effective Clinical Field Experiences” at the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AATE) and at the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education (AILACTE) conferences in Indianapolis.

Lockhart, department of teaching, and Miller, special education, presented “You Snooze, You Lose: Active Engagement in Literacy” at the International Learning Disabilities Association conference in Anaheim, Calif.

Sarah Montgomery, curriculum and instruction, and Jessica Staudt presented at the National Council for the Social Studies Conference. Their presentation was titled, “Beyond Bibliography: Rethinking Women’s History Month to Inspire Civic Action.” (photo)

Nielsen and Matthew Switzer presented “Co-teaching to the Core in Early Field Experiences” at the National Association of Professional Development Schools conference in Las Vegas.

Clare Struck, department of teaching; Denise Tallakson, curriculum and instruction; and Maria Howard, student, presented “Community Service: A Higher Education Priority” at the 2014 ASCD Annual Conference in Los Angeles.

Beth Van Meeteren, curriculum and instruction, presented “Ramps and Pathways: A fun integration of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics” at the National Association for the Education of Young Children in Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Waldron, health, physical education and leisure services, was a guest on Iowa Public Radio’s program “Talk of Iowa” where she discussed competition and specialization in youth sport.

Dwight C. Watson, dean, and Herring, associate dean, presented on “Creating Culturally Competent and Confident Teachers” at the 2014 Annual Meeting for the American Association of Colleges of Education.

Publications

Ariel Aloe, educational psychology and foundations, published four manuscripts including “A multivariate

Jean Donham and Karla Krueger, curriculum and instruction, published “Professional Staffing Levels and Fourth-Grade Student Research in Rural Schools with High-Poverty Levels” in the School Library Research.


Mary Herring, associate dean; J. Michael Spector; Barbara B. Lockee and Sharon Smaldino edited Learning, Problem Solving, and Mindtools: Essays in Honor of David H. Jonassen.

Elana Joram, educational psychology and foundations; Susan Roberts-Dobie, Michelle Devlin, health, physical education and leisure services; D. Ambroson; and J. Chen published “Differences in beliefs about the causes of health disparities in African American and White nurses” in Nursing Forum.

Peter Neibert and Windee Wiess, health, physical education and leisure services, published “Predictors of Commitment to Athletic Training” in the Athletic Training Education Journal.

Kathleen Scholl and Heather Olsen, health, physical education and leisure services, published “Measuring Student Learning Outcomes Using the SALG Instrument” in SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Students and Recreation Education. It was included in a special issue on the scholarship on teaching and learning: measuring student learning outcomes.

Rick Traw and Salli Forbes, curriculum and instruction; Rick Seeley and Maryilyn Drury wrote the article “Using Multimedia Conferencing to Connect Literacy Educators,” which was published in the EDUCAUSE Review.


Leigh Zeitz, curriculum and instruction, was quoted as an expert in three Des Moines Register articles: “Six Experts Offer Digital Suggestions,” “Dealing with the Threat of Cyberbullying” and “Iowa Kids: Peril, Wonder in the Digital Age.”

Elizabeth Zwanziger, department of teaching and B. Selden published the French textbook APprenons, which focuses on French AP language and culture exam preparation.

Zwanziger also published “En Parlant” with Joe Scott, which is a framework for exercising interpersonal communication.