

2023-2024

# ANNUAL REPORT





## STRENGTH IN COLLABORATION

It is a true honor and pleasure to take the helm as the ninth dean of CEHHS, following in the footsteps of such esteemed past deans as Dr. Nancy Edick, Dr. John Langan, and Dr. John Christensen. As both an alumnus and a long-term faculty member of this college, this is also a deeply personal journey for me, where I have witnessed our collective impact on countless students, community members, and partners. Truly, our college makes a positive difference for others every day.

As I officially assume this role, I am also so very appreciative to Associate Dean Kris Swain, Associate Dean Jason Coleman, and Assistant Dean Nick Stergiou, as they continue to help to advance the college forward with their co-leadership and within their respective areas of expertise. I could also not be more appreciative to our highly skilled and committed Dean's Office team, which includes Leslie Noecker, Ryan Klatt, Mimi Boswell, Charlene Tate Vinson, and Jarod Fisher. A special thanks to Mimi for her extensive work and creativity on yet another excellent CEHHS Annual Report.

In the pages of our Annual Report (and it is certainly an emphasis on the word "our"), you will find examples of outstanding work—ongoing projects from previous years, recent achievements from the last academic year, and new initiatives poised for the future. Last year posed significant challenges for higher education, but I am proud to report that CEHHS met these challenges head-on. We maintained strong enrollments and secured robust external funding, forged solid partnerships, and pushed forward with innovative, creative initiatives led by our dedicated faculty and staff, often in collaboration with our dedicated students.



IF YOU WANT TO GO QUICKLY, GO ALONE. IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER.

-African proverb

This report showcases stories of those CEHHS students deeply engaged in learning activities, research, and community service. The articles and visuals highlight their role as active partners in their education, embodying our hands-on learning philosophy. You will also see that our students, faculty, and staff not only excel in their pursuits but also enjoy the process of learning and making a difference in the community.

As we look toward the future, we see tremendous opportunities for metropolitan universities and colleges like ours, where thriving collaborations propel us forward in our shared missions of teaching, research, and service. Enjoy this report and the glimpse it offers of everything we are accomplishing, with a special emphasis on "we." As a well-known African proverb says, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." In CEHHS, we are certainly going far, and it is a joy to journey together.

Gratefully and sincerely,

Neal

**Neal Grandgenett, Ph.D.**  
**Lois G. Roskens Dean**





## COUNSELING FACULTY LAUNCH TRAUMA-INFORMED PEER ADVOCATE PROGRAM

**In response to the rising mental health needs in K-12 schools, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers in the Department of Counseling have introduced a groundbreaking Trauma-Informed Peer Advocate (TIPA) program, which was recently piloted with local high school students.**

Supported by a grant from UNO's Office of Research and Creative Activity, this initiative aims to equip high school students with essential counseling, intervention, and advocacy skills. In April, 24 students from Bryan High School participated in the inaugural two-day experience.

The program, developed by Isak Kim, Ph.D., and Thang Tran, Ph.D., with assistance from graduate students Nate McQueen and Taylor Trainor, trains high schoolers as trauma-informed peer advocates and introduces them to behavioral health careers. The curriculum includes mental health literacy, basic counseling skills, trauma-informed approaches, crisis intervention strategies, and multicultural and social justice advocacy. The TIPA program also emphasizes a crucial referral protocol, training students to recognize situations beyond their capabilities and promptly and confidentially connecting peers with professional school counselors or appropriate mental health resources when necessary. Participants in the April pilot received certificates at a celebratory event marking their completion.

"With half of all mental health disorders beginning by age 14, it's crucial that we empower students to take an active role in supporting their peers," says Dr. Kim. "Peer support programs provide a foundation for early intervention and promote positive youth development. By training students as trauma-informed peer advocates, we can more effectively address mental health issues in schools and ensure help is available when needed most."

With the increasing prevalence of mental health issues among youth and the limited capacity of school counselors, peer support programs are becoming more important in addressing these needs. Statistics show that two-thirds of children experience at least one traumatic event by the age of 16, and 1 in 5 high school students report being bullied on school property. The American School Counselors Association recommends a ratio of one counselor for every 250 students, but in Nebraska, recent data from 2022 indicates a ratio of one counselor for every 369 students. This gap underscores the importance of peer support models in providing immediate support and connecting students in need with mental health services.

"We are very excited to continue to partner with schools and school districts, but most importantly with students in building and maintaining their resilience while equipping them to enhance the well-being of

their peers," says Dr. Tran. "As peer advocates work to serve and build up their peers, they will also be improving school climate and strengthening their communities."

By empowering students to support their classmates, the program aims to foster a supportive school environment, promote positive youth development, and introduce students to behavioral health careers. The TIPA program aligns with recommendations from leading mental health organizations to enhance community-driven mental health resources and peer support.



**"THE MOST IMPACTFUL ACTIVITY WAS THE ROLE PLAYING BECAUSE IT KIND OF SHOWED WHAT MY FUTURE MIGHT LOOK LIKE."**

**"I FEEL LIKE I LEARNED MORE ABOUT MY OWN FEELINGS"**

Dr. Thang Tran, Taylor Trainor, Nate McQueen, and Dr. Isak Kim developed and facilitated the two-day event



## MEETING THE DEMAND: BRIDGE PROGRAM PLAYS ROLE IN SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

The growing demand for mental health professionals in schools has led to an innovative program from the Department of Counseling. The Bridge Program offers an 18+ credit hour pathway for education professionals seeking advanced training and licensure as Provisional Licensed Mental Health Practitioners (PLMHP) in Nebraska.

This flexible program is designed for school counselors and professionals with master's degrees in behavioral health, providing clinical coursework and experience for licensure. The program also supports out-of-state professionals with Nebraska-specific coursework and internships. Delivered entirely online, the program includes key courses in diagnosis and treatment planning, advanced counseling techniques, and substance use disorder treatment, while a rigorous 700-hour clinical internship provides hands-on experience in settings such as inpatient facilities and private practices.

According to Department Chair Tina Chasek, PhD, LIMHP, LADC, "Many of our participants want to deepen their understanding of trauma, develop effective interventions, and enhance their support for students' mental health. This program equips them with the tools to make a meaningful impact."

A partnership with Educational Service Unit 2 (ESU2), which includes 16 public school districts and 9 private schools in Burt, Cuming, Dodge, and Saunders counties, ensures dedicated placement opportunities for professionals from these districts. Dr. Chasek noted that this collaboration highlights the department's commitment to addressing mental health needs in schools and enhancing support for students beyond Omaha and in rural areas.

By offering a flexible and comprehensive pathway to licensure, the Bridge Program empowers educators and mental health professionals to significantly impact student well-being and academic success.



## UNO'S COMMUNITY COUNSELING CLINIC EXPANDS SUPPORT

The Community Counseling Clinic at UNO has recently expanded, with services provided each semester by 12 advanced graduate students, supervised by licensed faculty. This expansion enhances the clinic's ability to serve the community with confidential and affordable counseling services.

The clinic provides individual and group counseling for adolescents, adults, couples, and families, addressing a wide range of concerns such as anxiety, depression, relationship issues, and more. With this growth, the clinic continues to be a vital resource for those seeking support and guidance who otherwise might not be able to access affordable mental health services.

*If you or someone you know is seeking help, the Community Counseling Clinic at UNO is here to assist with compassionate care and professional guidance.*

[cehhs.unomaha.edu/clinic](http://cehhs.unomaha.edu/clinic)





## EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP HOSTS SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT, WELCOMES FIRST MID-STATE SUPERINTENDENT ACADEMY COHORT

In July, the Department of Educational Leadership (EDL) co-hosted the inaugural Community Leadership & Education Summit at Baxter Arena. This two-day event, in collaboration with the UNO Chancellor’s Office and Humanex Ventures, brought together over 1,000 participants from the education and business sectors. The Summit featured inspiring keynote speakers, breakout sessions, and an evening of networking at the Kiewit Luminarium, one of UNO’s newest community partners.

EDL Chair Tami Williams, Ed.D., noted the event’s success in supporting workforce development and leadership development, creating a powerful environment for collaborative growth. “When we can be together in one space, the collective energy and shared learning are exceptional,” she said.

The Summit also marked the official launch of the Mid-State Superintendent Academy, with participants from the first cohort in attendance. This initiative is aimed at upskilling future superintendents in Nebraska and neighboring states, addressing the superintendent shortage and fostering diverse, ready-to-lead talent in the region.

Looking ahead, the Summit will amplify Omaha’s role as a hub for leadership development and collaborative learning, with a promising future for expanding these impactful conversations.



Educational professionals from across Omaha attended the summit, including this team of teacher leaders and administrators from Westside Community Schools.

## UNO PARTNERS WITH NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO LAUNCH STATEWIDE LEARNING HUB FOR EDUCATORS

EDL is set to launch the Nebraska Collaborative Learning Network (NCLN) for the 2024-25 school year in collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and UNO’s Division of Innovative and Learning-Centric Initiatives. NCLN aims to provide Nebraska educators and educational leaders with free professional development, allowing participants to engage in learning tailored specifically for Nebraska’s educational context, offering a unique opportunity to upskill without financial barriers.

NCLN will feature a diverse range of content created by experts across the state, including topics such as hope-based leadership, education policy advocacy, and K-3 early literacy. Participants can take online courses to earn microcredentials and badges that document their learning, which will be housed within UNO’s microcredential system. The program also plans to introduce networking and mentoring components, as well as a resource hub, allowing learners to continue their development at their own pace.

The NCLN represents a significant step toward making high-quality professional learning accessible to all educators in Nebraska, fostering collaboration and innovation across the state’s educational community. For those interested in contributing content or engaging in this learning network, NCLN is open to collaboration and new ideas, ensuring that the program remains responsive to the needs of Nebraska’s educators.



## OUR ALUMNI: INSPIRING THE OMAHA EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

**DR. KANYON CHISM**  
**ED.D. IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION ‘20**  
**CHIEF OF STAFF FOR OPS**

Kanyon Chism, Ed.D., has dedicated her career to Omaha Public Schools (OPS), beginning as a student and progressing through roles such as instructional paraprofessional, elementary teacher, assistant principal, and executive director of ESU 19 and Professional Learning and Development. In June, Dr. Chism stepped into the Chief of Staff role, supporting strategic projects and ensuring coherence across district priorities.

After earning a master’s degree in Elementary Education and a PK-12 Educational Leadership endorsement from UNO, returning to the Department of Educational Leadership for doctoral studies felt like coming home. “I was familiar with and felt comfortable with the department’s demonstrated culture of learning as well as care for each student,” Dr. Chism explains. “I knew I

would engage in courses that maintained a rigorous and scholarly focus while also balancing that with practical, real-life leadership experiences.”

Throughout her time at UNO, Dr. Chism engaged with influential leaders, learning the skills and qualities necessary for advanced leadership. “I was able to glean a better understanding of the individuals behind the leadership roles. These leaders helped me understand that there are no secrets or magic tricks involved in leadership—only hard work, commitment to a purpose, and a care for the customer and those you are working with.”

Beyond professional roles, Dr. Chism is actively involved in the community, serving on boards including The Rose Theater and Phi Delta Kappa (UNO). She and her spouse, Dwayne Chism, Ed.D., are parents to three children: Tia, Braylon, and Zevin. Her journey reflects a deep commitment to education and community, making her an inspiring figure in the Omaha educational landscape.





## HEALTH SCIENCE COLLABORATIVE: A TRANSFORMATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR UNO

The new Health Science Collaborative, a project of the School of Health and Kinesiology (H&K), is a transformational opportunity not only to advance the school into the future but also to change the way people see and access the UNO campus. Originating from a vision in the underutilized squash and racquetball corridor of the Health and Kinesiology Building, this initiative aims to revolutionize the school by providing advanced research facilities, innovative teaching spaces, and community-focused engagement areas.

Slated for an official grand opening in Spring 2025, the Health Science Collaborative will encompass approximately 30,000 square feet of renovated space. It will house state-of-the-art laboratories supporting research in Exercise and Vascular Physiology, Physical and Intellectual Disabilities, Sports Medicine and Biomechanics, Early Childhood Development, and Sexual and Reproductive Health.



This initiative emphasizes student-centered research, preparing future clinicians, researchers, and practitioners. H&K faculty, renowned for their expertise in STEM, public health, and healthcare fields, will guide students through experiential learning and research. Current projects include collaborations with the Department of Defense, NIH-funded health research, and partnerships with the National Strategic Research Institute and a growing number of community organizations. These efforts enhance the capacity for securing external funding and provide invaluable hands-on experience for students.

“It’s been exhilarating to see the construction progress and for the dream of the Health Science Collaborative to become a reality,” said H&K Interim Director Adam B. Rosen, Ph.D., ATC. “The Health Science Collaborative is an exciting opportunity for the School of Health and Kinesiology to expand our broad research portfolio into a unified space and vision.”

The Health Science Collaborative will provide essential space for expanding H&K’s teaching, research, and practice capabilities. The new facility will attract and retain talented faculty and students, aligning with UNO’s values of excellence, engagement, inclusion, discovery, integrity, and Maverick spirit. This transformative initiative promises to enhance the university’s capacity and competitiveness, fostering a brighter future for all.



Artist Lori Hepner collaborated with the H&K community to create light-painting digital portraits for the Health Science Collaborative facility. This vibrant artwork, “Run, Throw, Glide, Roll, Breathe: The Kinesthetic Dynamics of UNO,” will highlight the diverse movements of the UNO community.



Tom Rapaich completed his undergraduate degree in Kinesiology this summer with hands-on experience through an internship in the UNO Young Athletes program.

## BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES THROUGH PLAY

The School of Health & Kinesiology (H&K) recently made a meaningful impact on children in the community by partnering with Special Olympics Nebraska to pilot the UNO Young Athletes program on campus. Designed for children ages 3-5, this

inclusive program created a supportive environment where kids, regardless of ability, could develop motor skills, socialize, and enjoy physical activity. Held over eight weeks during the summer at the H&K Building, the program was free for Omaha-area families.

Young Athletes, a signature initiative of Special Olympics, is adaptable to various community settings, allowing coaches to tailor activities to each child’s needs. H&K Associate Professor Michaela Schenkelberg, Ph.D., MPH, whose passion for working with individuals with disabilities has shaped her career, was instrumental in bringing the program to UNO.

“Early childhood is a critical period of development. Establishing healthy habits and fundamental motor skills early on greatly impacts a child’s health and well-being as they grow,” Dr. Schenkelberg said. “Creating spaces where every child feels welcomed and supported is essential. Even programs labeled as inclusive can sometimes overlook children with

disabilities. Supporting all children strengthens families and fosters a true sense of belonging.”

During each session, Dr. Schenkelberg was assisted by Special Olympics staff, volunteers, and H&K faculty, including Assistant Professor Jessica Baldwin, Ph.D. “Dr. Baldwin’s extensive experience with unified fitness has been invaluable. Her expertise in fitness programming, adaptations, and modifications ensures that all activities are engaging and accessible,” said Dr. Schenkelberg.

Additionally, the team collaborated with researchers at the UNO Biomechanics Research Building, using technology in the Gait Lab to assess the progress of the children’s motor skills, setting the stage for future research.

Kinesiology undergraduate student Tom Rapaich completed his internship through the program in his final semester, gaining firsthand experience with children and sparking his interest in specializing in pediatric physical therapy as he enters graduate school this fall.

“It was my first time being a primary coach, and the layout provided by the Young Athletes guide, along with feedback from faculty, made the experience both straightforward and fulfilling,” Tom said. “Seeing the children’s enthusiasm, the friendships they developed, and their improvement over time was incredibly rewarding. I learned to think outside the box to make activities engaging and fun.”

UNO Young Athletes has not only influenced Tom’s future career but also left a lasting, positive impact on the children. Dr. Schenkelberg fondly noted, “After the program, one of the participant’s parents sent me a picture of her son setting up their living room, pretending to be Coach Tom.”



## OUR ALUMNI: UNO GRAD TO NFL INTERN

### JULYAH WILSON MASTER OF ARTS IN ATHLETIC TRAINING, '24

Julyah Wilson, a recent graduate of the UNO Athletic Training Program, gained valuable experience over the summer through an internship experience with the New England Patriots, made possible by a Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society (PFATS) Scholarship. This prestigious award supports female athletic training students pursuing NFL careers.

Julyah’s passion for athletic training was sparked by her early experiences. “Growing up, I had a love for sports and always wanted to be connected somehow with sports. While playing, I had a couple injuries that

intrigued my interest in how the body works, why do we get injured, and how to heal from an injury. Going to UNO prepared me for a career by giving me the exact answers to the questions I had, and more. I know how the body hurts, what causes an injury, and the multiple and different ways to heal and build strength back after an injury,” explains Julyah. “UNO helped me become more confident in building relationships with my athletes as well.”

Julyah’s time with the Patriots has been unforgettable, especially the thrill of experiencing an NFL game from the sideline and field. “Being in front of a large crowd, hearing all the screams and seeing all the lights is so much better than what is shown on TV.”





Marilyn "Lyno" Griffith and Marilyn "Babe" Raupe



## FRIENDSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

### How an Enduring 70-year Friendship Led to Student Scholarships at CEHHS

Roman philosopher Cicero once said that "life is nothing without friendship."

This is the story of how a 70-year friendship between two women with the same name ultimately resulted in two student scholarships and planned gifts at the University of Nebraska at Omaha College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences.

Marilyn "Lyno" Raupe Klein Griffith and Marilyn "Babe" Rogers Raupe met while attending Omaha Central High School. A year apart in school, their friendship later blossomed as sorority sisters at Omaha University, now UNO. As graduates of the College of Education, Lyno went into early education while Babe, a year older, spent 36 years in the Westside Community Schools as a physical education teacher and department chair.

Lyno and Babe not only shared an interest in education, but also had many mutual friends and enjoyed traveling, journeying together to destinations like Egypt and Canada. Lyno and Babe also met up yearly with sorority sisters and their families in Wisconsin and northern Michigan.

Both women married and had children born just three days apart. Lyno's daughter, Jan Klein, and Babe's son, Doug Paulsen, remain close to this day even though Jan's family moved to Detroit when they were just three years old.

In 2020, Lyno and Babe passed away just eight weeks apart at the ages of 88 and 89.

Jan and Doug, both retired, were researching ways to best utilize their mothers' estates to honor their memories. After conferring with each other, they worked with the University of Nebraska Foundation and UNO's College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences to establish the Marilyn Raupe Klein Griffith Endowed Scholarship Fund and the J. Marilyn Rogers Raupe Endowed Scholarship Fund to honor their mothers' legacies in education. Both are need-based scholarships for students pursuing degrees in the college.

"I had heard of endowments, but I didn't know much about them," Jan said. "I felt that some of that money should go to the endowment as kind of a full-circle donation. At my age, I have most of what I need. So, turning that money into something that would benefit future educators and make my mom proud was the perfect solution."

Doug, also a UNO alum, was working with another organization to create a nursing and allied health scholarship when Janet mentioned that she wanted to establish a scholarship for her mother at UNO.

"I liked the idea, especially because of my mother's professional career with District 66," Doug said. "Knowing that these two friends would be extremely pleased with the establishment of these two scholarships was just icing on the cake."

Doug added that philanthropy was a very therapeutic way to deal with the loss of his mother. "I was raised to know the value of a dollar. Being given the honor to do charitable giving on my mother's behalf is the most productive use of a significant portion of her estate. I'm managing my mother's legacy through two scholarships and other charitable acts."

Jan called the decision to make her gift to UNO a no-brainer.

"Omaha and UNO meant so much to my mother," she said. "I would just tell others that giving to others is the greatest gift you can give to yourself, as well. Setting up this endowment is probably the greatest thing I've ever done in my life, and that's what it's all about."



## ONLY IN NEBRASKA: A CAMPAIGN FOR OUR UNIVERSITY'S FUTURE

In November 2022, the University of Nebraska announced the public launch of Only in Nebraska: A Campaign for Our University's Future.

The campaign, which includes the UNO College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences, has three priorities which mirror those of UNO and the university system:

1. Relentless focus on student access and success;
2. Enhancing faculty, academic and clinical excellence; and
3. Transformational research and innovation.

Student scholarships and support will expand opportunities for life-changing educational experiences and professional opportunities that contribute to a better quality of life for graduates and the communities in which they live and work. The college offers affordable, inclusive and dynamic learning opportunities that place students at the center, provide high-quality educational programs and actively engage in the community.

Increased funding for endowed chairs and professorships, faculty recruitment and retention will elevate the excellence of CEHHS and the university. Faculty members play a critical role in the success of UNO's students and overall research and engagement enterprise.

Expansion and renovation of existing facilities on campus will accommodate innovative research and community outreach in areas such as cardiovascular biomechanics and the Health Science Collaborative. Enhancing the college's facilities will help grow and diversify scholarly activity and benefit our community, fulfilling the metropolitan mission of CEHHS and UNO.

As of July 31, 2024, a little more than \$13,818,000 of the CEHHS overall goal of \$20,000,000 had been raised from 2,027 unique donors. While the CEHHS campaign goal is in sight, there is still a long way to go.

To become part of this historic campaign through a gift that will benefit CEHHS, please contact Shane Bumsted at 402-502-4105 or at [shane.bumsted@nufoundation.org](mailto:shane.bumsted@nufoundation.org). Or, scan the QR code to give now.



## CEHHS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

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The CEHHS Annual Report is published by the Office of the Dean, College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences, at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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## AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE MINOR THRIVES IN FIRST YEAR

The Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders recently celebrated the launch of its new American Sign Language (ASL) minor. The first three students to add the ASL minor to their respective degrees graduated in May 2024.

The new minor was developed in response to growing interest from students who were taking ASL to fulfill their World Language requirement and wanted to continue their studies. According to Associate Professor Julie Delkamiller, Ed.D., one of the program’s founding faculty members, “Many students were eager to keep learning and engaging with the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (D/HH) community, but existing pathways like becoming an interpreter or a teacher of the D/HH did not fit everyone’s goals.” She and faculty member Jonathan Scherling worked together to create the minor in order to offer students a way to add ASL to their degree plans. Students following any career path could benefit from learning American Sign Language.

The curriculum includes five courses of ASL, a Deaf Studies class, and a semester of the Linguistics of ASL, all taught by Deaf instructors. Students explore the sociological and linguistic aspects within the context of Deaf history and culture, complementing a wide range of majors and career paths. The program’s approach ensures students not only learn the language but also appreciate the cultural context in which it exists. Extracurricular activities, such as those organized by the student group Allies for Sign Language, provide hands-on experience and meaningful engagement with the D/HH community.

While the ASL minor does not prepare students to become teachers or interpreters, it equips them with a deeper understanding of linguistic diversity and challenges their existing perceptions of communication. As Dr. Delkamiller noted, “It’s exciting to see how this awareness creates a ripple effect, influencing not just the students but also their families, friends, clients, and co-workers.”

With its dedicated faculty, diverse student body, and rich extracurricular offerings, the ASL minor is helping to foster an inclusive and supportive environment where students can develop the skills to communicate effectively with Deaf individuals.



## WHAT OUR STUDENTS ARE SAYING

“I chose to get a minor in ASL because I will use ASL in my future career as a speech-language pathologist. ASL has always been my favorite class each semester, so I wanted to immerse myself more in learning the history and culture as well. My goal is to work with Deaf individuals with language disorders in ASL rather than pushing for speech-only. Language exposure is the most important part overall.”

**Brynn Golden, BS in Communication Disorders, '24**

“Learning ASL has exposed me to a perspective I didn’t know much about before and has strengthened my communication skills in a unique way. It would be wonderful if the skill becomes beneficial in my future as a law student and beyond.”

**Abigail Williamson, BA in Philosophy and English, '24**



## STRENGTHENING AUTISM AWARENESS

The Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Program continues to strengthen its partnership with the Autism Society of Nebraska through meaningful service learning opportunities. This past April, graduate students from the SLP program, alongside Creighton University’s Occupational Therapy students, participated in the annual FunFest, enriching the lives of elementary-aged children with autism. This collaboration is rooted in a highly interactive course, Autism Spectrum Disorder, developed by Associate Professor Mitzi Ritzman, PhD. Since its inception in 2010, this interprofessional project has been integral to the student experience, offering hands-on learning and fostering community engagement. Members of the UNO Chapter of the National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA)/Collegiate Sertoma also volunteered at the event, further demonstrating the UNO student organization’s commitment to community service.



## UNO AND OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS COLLABORATE TO SUPPORT FUTURE EDUCATORS THROUGH TEACHER SCHOLARS ACADEMY

This fall, UNO and Omaha Public Schools (OPS) are continuing their successful partnership through the Teacher Scholars Academy (TSA). Established in 2019, this innovative program is designed to cultivate a new generation of educators by providing comprehensive support and substantial financial assistance to high-achieving students committed to teaching.

Each participant in the TSA program is part of a select cohort, receiving \$5,000 per semester, amounting to a total of \$40k in funding over four years. Upon completing their education at UNO,

### TSA PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

**92%**  
OF GRADUATES  
CURRENTLY  
TEACHING  
AND/OR PURSUING  
A MASTER'S  
DEGREE

**59**  
SCHOLARS  
ACTIVE  
IN PROGRAM

**83%**  
OVERALL  
RETENTION  
RATE

**36** GRADUATES  
TO DATE

these scholars transition directly into full-time teaching positions within OPS, Omaha's largest school district, helping to address the need for skilled and passionate educators.

The Teacher Scholars Academy is more than just a scholarship program. TSA offers a holistic educational experience that includes seminars, retreats, specialized coursework, mentoring, and professional development opportunities. These activities focus on key aspects of teaching, such as classroom management and curriculum design, while also fostering a strong sense of community among scholars. Graduates of the program leave with not only a degree but also a robust network of professional peers.

A shining example of the program's success is Andrea Reyes, a member of Cohort Two who graduated in May and now teaches high school English for OPS. Reflecting on her experience, Reyes shared, "The TSA program has been an amazing experience as I navigated my way through the education program. It went beyond the standard curriculum by offering honors and service-learning courses, volunteer opportunities, and interactions with other cohorts. Overall, I had an incredible time, and I am so grateful to have had this opportunity."

According to TSA Director Justin Andersson, Ph.D., the primary goal of the program is to attract and retain aspiring teachers. "This initiative is designed to draw talented high school students into the education field and build a sustainable teacher workforce. We aim to create a long-term network of support among future and current OPS teachers," said Andersson.

UNO Chancellor Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA, expressed her enthusiasm for the ongoing collaboration, noting that the partnership ensures these students are well-prepared to become future educators in OPS. Dean Neal Grandgenett, Ph.D., echoed this sentiment.

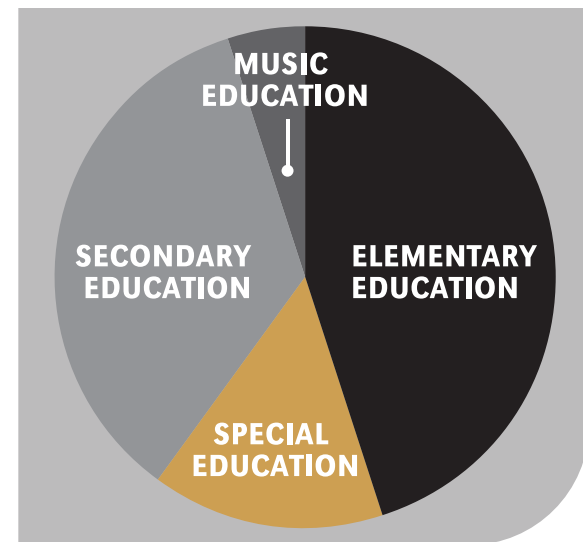
### OPS COHORT FIVE

**14** HIGH SCHOOLS  
REPRESENTED

**22**  
AVERAGE  
ACT SCORE

**3.67**  
AVERAGE  
GPA

**20**  
STUDENTS



As an OPS alumnus, Dean Grandgenett takes great pride in the program's ability to contribute exceptional teachers to the district.

The UNO/OPS partnership, a cornerstone of the TSA initiative, is set to continue at least through the 2027-2028 academic year, promising ongoing support and development for future educators in the community.



### EDUCATION STUDENTS EXPERIENCE GLOBAL LEARNING IN KENYA

In June, a group of Education students and faculty embarked on a transformative journey as part of a study abroad experience, Education in Kenya: Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa. This opportunity was offered as an immersive international component of a required course for aspiring educators at UNO, Human Relations for Bias-Free Classrooms.

The students, including nine Teacher Scholars, sought to gain insights into global education through visits to various Kenyan cities and educational institutions. The course aimed to enhance multicultural understanding and develop the diversity disposition of future teacher candidates. By immersing themselves in Kenyan classrooms, students examined their own attitudes toward various social groups and gained practical experience in an international educational setting. This experience was designed to help future educators motivate and positively impact the increasingly diverse student populations they will encounter in their careers.

Associate Professor Ferial Pearson, Ed.D., hopes this experience will encourage students to bring

cultural humility into their own classrooms, fostering environments where they continue to learn alongside their students.

"When planning the trip, I was excited to introduce the students to my homeland, because it is a beautiful place of such rich diversity in terms of languages, cultures, ethnicities, faith systems, ecological systems, and traditions," said Dr. Pearson. "I wanted them to learn with and from the people of Kenya and to understand that there are many ways of knowing, doing, and learning that are just as valuable as how things are done here."

Marlaney, one of the participating students, expressed her gratitude for the opportunity, noting how the experience allowed her to observe preschool classrooms in Kenya. As someone who works in a preschool in Omaha, she found it fascinating to compare the different approaches to early childhood education. "I learned a lot about the culture in Kenya and am excited to share that with the kids I work with," she said.

Isabella described the trip as "the most valuable class" they had taken, appreciating the chance to conduct qualitative research, teach in various classrooms, and critically reflect on the education systems in both Kenya and the U.S. They emphasized how the experience not only enhanced their teaching



Students traveled with Teacher Education faculty members Dr. Justin Andersson, Dr. Ferial Pearson, and Dr. Gabriel Gutiérrez

skills but also deepened their cultural competence and professional connections.

Jacqueline, another participant, highlighted the profound impact of cross-cultural interactions that will influence her teaching. "I learned about Kenya's rich culture, other people's way of living, and the multilingual education and curriculum in their schools. I also have so many great memories of Kenya's incredible scenery and wildlife," she said.

This study abroad program offered a unique experience that will have a lasting impact on these future educators, shaping their approach to teaching in a multicultural world.





## UNO BIOMECHANICS RECEIVES \$11 MILLION NIH GRANT TO COMBAT CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES

UNO Biomechanics has achieved a significant milestone in cardiovascular disease research, securing an \$11 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This funding establishes the Center for Cardiovascular Research in Biomechanics (CRiB), aimed at pioneering materials and devices to combat vascular diseases, a leading cause of death and disability worldwide.

Under the leadership of Alexey Kamenskiy, Ph.D., Chair of the Department of Biomechanics, CRiB will revolutionize cardiovascular treatment through advanced arterial biomechanics research. Utilizing human tissues, preclinical animal models, and extensive collaborations, the Center aims to translate laboratory innovations into clinical applications. This initiative will bolster research among faculty and graduate students and foster partnerships with industry leaders.

“I am immensely excited to begin this important work that stands to improve clinical outcomes for millions of patients worldwide. The opportunity to develop better materials and devices for cardiovascular

disease treatment is both stimulating and deeply rewarding,” said Dr. Kamenskiy.

A crucial element of CRiB is the Tissue Analysis Core (TAC), led by Anastasia Desyatova, Ph.D. TAC will provide specialized mechanical and structural soft tissue analyses, supporting pioneering research projects within the Center. Initial projects focusing on Peripheral Artery Disease include work by Majid Jadidi, Ph.D., on elastin regeneration, Kaspars Maleckis, Ph.D., on an elastomeric bypass graft, and Yury Salkovskiy, Ph.D., on a biodegradable wound dressing for ischemic ulcers.

To bridge the gap between academic research and commercial application, CRiB will collaborate with the biomedical device industry through UNeMed, UNO’s technology transfer office. Michael Dixon, President and CEO of UNeMed, emphasized the importance of this collaboration in advancing the Center’s innovations to the next development stage.

Sara Myers, Ph.D., Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Creative Activity, highlighted the grant’s significance in advancing cardiovascular disease treatment and solidifying UNO’s global leadership in biomechanics research. Chancellor Joanne Li commended the Department of Biomechanics for its transformative efforts, emphasizing the profound impact on both the university and broader community.

This NIH grant, awarded through the competitive Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) program, underscores UNO’s commitment to innovation and addressing critical health challenges. As the second COBRE grant received by UNO, CRiB is set to make a substantial impact on cardiovascular health, benefiting communities locally and globally.

“UNO BIOMECHANICS HAS PROVIDED ANOTHER TREMENDOUS SUCCESS, A SECOND COBRE AWARD, FOR OUR UNIVERSITY AND THE STATE OF NEBRASKA. THIS MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR FEDERAL AWARD IS THE RESULT OF YEARS OF METHODOLOGICAL AND SYSTEMATIC EFFORTS BY OUR FACULTY AND STUDENTS THAT IS FUELED WITH INNOVATION AND INCREDIBLE HARD WORK AND WILL FURTHER SOLIDIFY UNO’S REPUTATION AS AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH EPICENTER IN BIOMECHANICS, ACHIEVING EVEN GREATER HEIGHTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN OUR STATE.”

-Nikolaos Stergiou, Ph.D.  
Assistant Dean and Director  
Division of Biomechanics and Research Development



## KIEWIT LUMINARIUM PARTNERS WITH SPORTS MEDICINE AND BIOMECHANICS LAB

In June, the Sports Medicine and Biomechanics Lab partnered with the Kiewit Luminarium to host a Science of Baseball event, an interactive experience that explored the physics and kinesiology behind baseball and softball. Held on June 13 and 15 to coincide with the annual College World Series games in downtown Omaha, the Luminarium events allowed attendees to step into the world of biomechanics through demonstrations like musculoskeletal ultrasounds and pitching analysis with state-of-the-art equipment. Participants of all ages tested their skills with a Rapsodo baseball flight monitor and explored the science that powers the game, blending sports and research in a fun, hands-on environment.



## STUDENT PROFILE

### LIBBY CALDWELL

Libby Caldwell has found her calling in biomedical research after transferring to UNO to study Biomechanics from the University of Pennsylvania. At UNO, Libby has worked alongside researchers like Jorge Zuniga, Ph.D., on innovative projects, including developing low-cost 3D-printed prostheses, creating antimicrobial materials, and studying noninvasive sensory feedback in prosthetics.

As a cardiovascular biomechanics research assistant to Kaspars Maleckis, Ph.D., Libby is focused on creating biomimetic vascular repair materials. Her research, supported by the Fund for Undergraduate Scholarly Experience (FUSE) grant and the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, aims to improve treatment for arterial calcification.

Libby’s journey from biology major to pioneering student researcher highlights her dedication and the impact of collaborative mentorship. She is continuing her studies this fall in the Ph.D. in Biomechanics and Kinesiology program, where she will tackle critical challenges in vascular biomechanics.

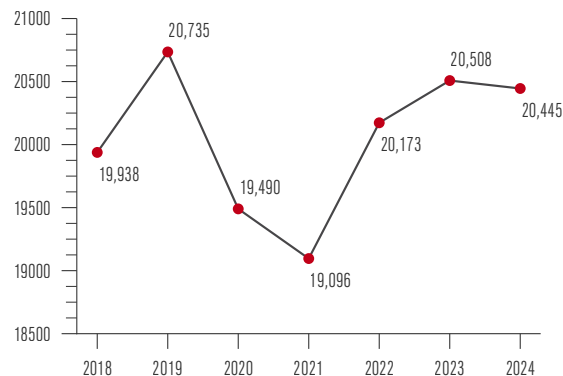




## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- **Dr. Marcia Adler** received the Chancellor’s Medal during Fall Commencement.
- **Dr. Abby Bjornsen-Ramig** awarded the 2023-2024 UNO Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award.
- **Dr. Ashley Blount** received an Alumni Outstanding Teaching Award.
- **Huai-Mei Furman** received a KUDOS Award from the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.
- **Dr. Janice Garnett** was a Women’s Center for Advancement Tribute to Women Honoree.
- **Dr. Alexey Kamenskiy, Dr. Anastasia Desyatova, and Ali Akbar Ahmadi** received Most Promising New Invention at the 2023 UNeMed Innovation Awards.
- **Dr. Kieren “Ren” Rende Mendoza** received the 2024 Outstanding Doctoral Research Award from the National Association for Research in Science Teaching (NARST).
- **Dr. Sara Myers** appointed Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Creative Activity.
- **Dr. Song-young Park** received a UNO Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award.
- **Dr. Mitzi Ritzman** received the Outstanding Leader in Experiential Education: Higher Education Award from Society for Experiential Education.
- **Dr. Adam Rosen** honored with the 2023 Distinguished Partner Award for Nebraska Career and Technical Education by the Nebraska Department of Education.
- **Dr. Sandra Shillingstad** received the 2023 UNO Honors Program Faculty Award.
- **Dr. Kristina M. Stamatis** selected as a Campus Compact Engaged Scholar.
- **Dr. Sam Wilkins** selected as the 2024 Athletic Trainer Educator of the Year by MAATA, the Mid-America Athletic Trainers’ Association.
- **Metro-Omaha Raise Me To Read** received a 2023 Pacesetter Award from the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

### STUDENT CREDIT HOURS PRODUCED

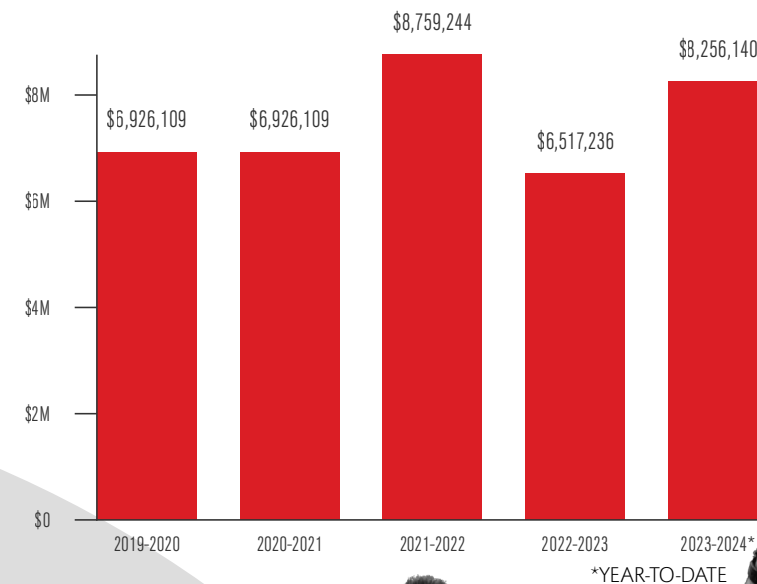


### NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED PER UNIT FALL 2024

Biomechanics	248
Counseling	358
Educational Leadership	229
Health and Kinesiology	1,356
Special Education & Communication Disorders	638
Teacher Education	1,092

**\$74+**  
**MILLION**  
**GRANT PROPOSALS**  
**SUBMITTED IN 23-24**

### GRANTS AWARDED



**85%**

OF STUDENTS WERE SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENT AND FACULTY INTERACTIONS

**86%**

OF STUDENTS WERE SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

**86%**

OF STUDENTS WERE SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF THEIR PROGRAM

Data compiled from the UNO Graduation Survey done by OIE – this includes all CEHHS graduates (N = 413, Fall 2023, Spring 2024)

**1,289**  
**UNDERGRADUATE**  
**STUDENTS**  
FALL 2024

**989**  
**GRADUATE**  
**STUDENTS**  
FALL 2024

**\$251,112**

**STUDENT RESEARCH FUNDING**  
**2023-2024**

This number represents internal awards from UNO (e.g. FUSE, GRACA, UCRCA) to students. Excludes the amount allocated to mentors



# HIGHLIGHTS

## BIOMECHANICS

Celebrated the 10th anniversary of the grand opening of the Biomechanics Research Building, the world's largest free-standing biomechanics facility.

Antimicrobial, recyclable materials developed for NASA by Dr. Jorge Zuniga's research team arrived at the International Space Station.

Held the 9th Annual Human Movement Variability and the 5th Annual Great Plains Biomechanics conferences, welcoming attendees and presenters from around the world.



## COUNSELING

Since Spring 2020, applicants to the programs have increased over 800%.

Funded research for 2023-24 totaled \$1.8M. Every faculty member is working on a grant funded project.

Twenty-four practicum students were placed in the Community Counseling Clinic, providing 1,817 clinical hours to the community.

## EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

200 educational leaders and educators attended the Fall Leadership Dinner with keynote about creating a thriving culture from Stephen Mackey.

Hosted the annual Topics In Education Symposium with NCSA Executive Director Dr. Mike Dulaney discussing advocacy in the current political context of education and leadership.

Collaborated with UNO ILCI and NDE SEED to establish the Nebraska Collaborative Learning Network, set to launch in Summer 2025 for Nebraska educators and leaders at no cost.



## HEALTH & KINESIOLOGY

The Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) re-accredited the Master of Arts in Athletic Training and the Council on Education for Public Health re-accredited the Bachelor of Science in Public Health.

Ph.D. candidate Priyanka Chaudhary selected as a '23-24 Graduate Scholar by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute.

Ph.D. candidate Ji Yeon Choi received a '23-24 Presidential Graduate Fellowship from the University of Nebraska President's Office.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

The UNO Speech-Language Clinic was designated as the only SPEAK OUT!® Therapy & Research Center in Nebraska through a 5-year grant from the Parkinson Voice Project.

Dr. Apryl Poch and UNO colleagues launched Project FEET to foster family-school partnerships and enhance collaboration to improve child outcomes in special education.

Speech-Language Pathology graduate students participated in several Interprofessional Education events with collaborators from the UNO Athletic Training Program, Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, the Creighton University Occupational Therapy Program, College of Saint Mary, and UNMC.



## TEACHER EDUCATION

MATELLS (Metro Area Teachers of English Language Learners) celebrated 10 years of supporting and welcoming Omaha-area educators to UNO's campus, with Dr. Sandra Rodríguez-Arroyo as faculty liaison.

The Educator Prep Program earned an "A" letter grade in the National Council on Teacher Quality for Science of Reading preparation.

The Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) awarded full 7-year accreditation to the initial Educator Preparation Programs.





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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,  
HEALTH, AND HUMAN SCIENCES

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