



# NEWSLETTER

Celebrating 25 years of service learning.

**CultureFest 2011**  
By Melissa Hoverson

On February 27th over 400 people attended CultureFest at the Millie B. Student Center at UNO. The school's first pre-school, elementary, middle, high school, and college students and families from all over the Omaha metro area.

They came to watch student performances celebrating the rich cultural diversity of the metro area which included Mexican folk dancing, African drumming, Latin folk band jumping, an international fashion show, and Chinese lanterns. During reflection one student enthusiastically yelled "I wanted to be a course in Chinese!"

Students had the opportunity to learn about different cultures through interactive activities and displays. One student commented "Omaha has so many talented kids and activities for them. It was a great event and a new variety of activities and demonstrations." Omaha Public Schools' diversity coalition organizations participated in the event by performing and offering educational information.

The UNO Service Learning Academy and Omaha Public Schools have learned March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012 as the date of their second annual CultureFest.

games, photos, and other fun of their cultures with classrooms of eager students. Many comments from the International Market Festival schools' students participating in the event were "I loved the Service Learning Academy and Omaha Public Schools have learned March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012 as the date of their second annual CultureFest."

**Oak Park Revitalization**  
By Helen Boush

This semester, Ms. Beverly Van Daele's Design Project team at the high school and Professor Robert L. and Dr. Phyllis E. Boush worked together to improve the design of the Oak Park Recreation Center. The students used their Project and Leadership classes to research and design a center for the community.

They held a public hearing and made a presentation to the city council. They were very excited and proud to be a part of the project.

**Senior Words Of Wisdom**  
By Mrs. Doreen's Fortinelle & Craden

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of June we had our Senior Words of Wisdom. The students shared their thoughts and experiences with the community. It was a wonderful event and we are proud to have our seniors be a part of it.

**Aquaponics**  
By John D. Agallo

In a recent introduction to the aquaponics system, the students learned about the benefits of this sustainable food production system. The system combines aquaculture and hydroponics to create a self-sustaining ecosystem.

**Senior Citizen Prom**  
By Tom Hoverson

The Senior Citizen Prom was a wonderful event that brought together the seniors and the community. The students performed and socialized with the seniors, creating a memorable evening.

**Lord of the Rocks: A Geological Journey**  
By Denise Walsh

A group of students embarked on a geological journey through the state of Nebraska. They explored the diverse geological features and learned about the state's rich geological history.

The students became the geologists. They explored the state's geological features and learned about the state's rich geological history.

**P-16 INITIATIVE**  
VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2016

**P-16 INITIATIVE**  
VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 1 | FALL 2016

**P-16 INITIATIVE**  
VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 2 | SPRING 2017

**NEWSLETTER**  
VOLUME 8 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2018

**NEWSLETTER**  
VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2019

VALUING OUR COMMUNITY ASSETS

**NEWSLETTER**  
VOLUME 11 | ISSUE 1 | FALL 2020

LEADING AND LEARNING VIRTUALLY

**NEWSLETTER**  
VOLUME 12 | ISSUE 1 | FALL 2021

STRONGER TOGETHER

**NEWSLETTER**  
VOLUME 13 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2023

IN CONCERT WITH COMMUNITY

# SERVICE LEARNING AT UNO

Together we reflect on how special it has been to share this history; the pages in this newsletter outline both the past and present of service learning at UNO.

In 1998, the dream was to create service learning course designations and fund support for development. As the work developed, UNO and our partners have innovated in truly exceptional ways that started with, "What if...?" **Together, each stakeholder's contributions have made the "what ifs?" reality. We have had the honor of supporting the growth and development of service learning at UNO for the past 25 years. However, this would not have been possible without:**

- The tireless efforts of hundreds of faculty members who have gone above and beyond to create rigorous, experiential learning opportunities for students through service learning
- The hundreds of community partners who served as co-teachers in service learning courses and opened their organizations to the UNO community
- The thousands of students who enrolled in service learning courses with an open mind to try a unique style of teaching and were excited about their experiences and what they learned
- Marilyn Leach working with administration and early adopters to carve out resources and support for service learning at UNO
- The nearly 100 professional staff, graduate assistants, and student employees that have made up the Service Learning Academy team over the years, who diligently provided training, implementation support, problem-solving, and relationship building
- The donors and grantmakers that believed in the work and the impact that we could make on student learning and community capacity.

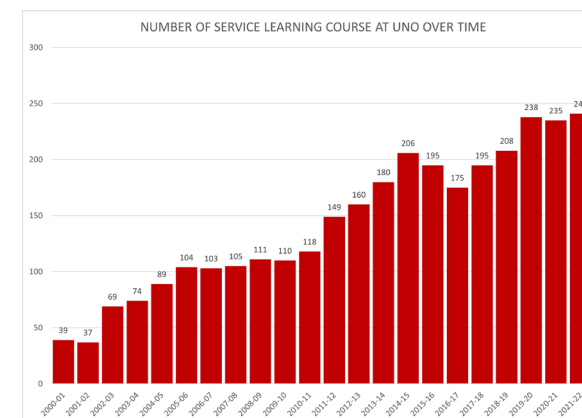
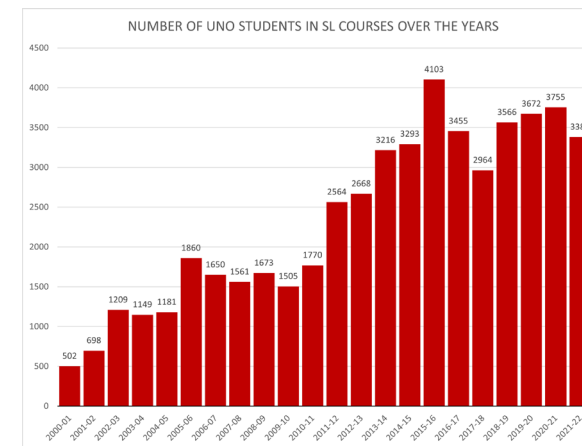
We hope you continue to partner with us as we embark on the next 25 years of service learning at UNO. We know service learning has such a huge impact on shaping both the leaders we need for the future, and the healthiest communities for all. Collectively we look back and honor the past and remember how we got here—by leading with values of reciprocity, collaboration, asset-based engagement, equity, and rigor. In the future you can count on those values leading service learning at UNO into the next phase of innovation to meet our metropolitan mission to improve life locally, nationally, and globally.

Thank you for walking next to us. We invite you to join us in the future of this work as we ask, "What's Next...?"

Julie Dierberger, PhD, Paul Sather  
Distinguished Director

Paul Sather, Director Emeritus, Service  
Learning Academy

1617 STUDENT PHILANTHROPISTS  
HAVE ALLOCATED MORE THAN  
**\$70,000** IN UNRESTRICTED  
GRANTS TO LOCAL NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATIONS.



UNO has always been an innovative, metropolitan institution. Since 1998 faculty members have used service learning as a way to teach students while increasing the capacity for community partners. When service learning became more official at UNO, a **traditional approach** to service learning met the course learning goals for students by completing an identified service in the community. In 2001, UNO created an advisory group to facilitate the development of interdisciplinary service learning activities that engaged disciplines across the campus to meet a community objective with partners: address housing insecurity. **Over the years all service learning courses grew from 8 to last year's official count of 241, the highest number to date. Currently, the total number of UNO students who take a service learning course each year averages around 3500.**

As service learning gained momentum, in the 2000s faculty members started collaborating with P-12 schools and teachers in service learning courses, and in 2009 solidified **P-16 service learning**, or courses in which UNO and P-12 students meet their course learning goals as well as identified community needs. In this approach, UNO and P-12 students serve and learn as peers and collaborators; P-12 students begin to see themselves at college.

In 2019 the newest form of service learning, the **Maverick Philanthropy Initiative (MPI)**, was created. The MPI is an experiential, interdisciplinary service learning approach that increases community organizations' capacity while allowing students to learn course content and practice philanthropic giving. MPI courses are service learning courses that contribute an identified service to the organization partner(s) and add philanthropic giving to the course.



# SERVICE LEARNING OVER THE YEARS

## BEGINNINGS

**BEFORE 1998**

service learning courses were taught informally at UNO

**1999**

Marilyn Leach, Director of the Center for Faculty Development, formalizes service learning at UNO with faculty and administrative buy-in



**8**

service learning courses were offered at UNO

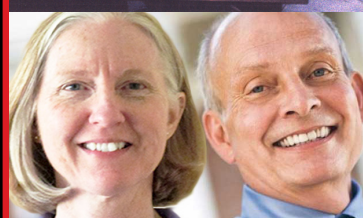
Cathy Pettid hired as first Community Liaison

Nora Bacon and Paul Sather co-lead Service Learning Academy



**2002**

Pilot interdisciplinary service learning project launched in Social Work, Political Science, Communication Studies, Sociology, and Engineering



Paul Sather receives the Chancellor's first Outstanding Service Learning Faculty award



Nebraska Consortium for Service Learning in Higher Education startup grant establishes the Service Learning Academy

Startup funds expired; UNO hardlined resources for the Service Learning Academy

**2001**

Collaborative Design Team develops interdisciplinary service learning approach

Signature Service Days engage UNO students in service learning and volunteering

**2003**

Carlynn Hartman-Kurtz hired as Community Liaison

## GAINING MOMENTUM

**2004**

Service Learning Academy moves to Allwine Hall

69 service learning courses recorded



UNO reaches out to south O



**2006**

UNO is among the first round of higher education institutions to earn the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification



**2010**

Building Bright Futures grant establishes the P-16 Initiative; Julie Dierberger is hired as P-16 Coordinator



**2005**

Paul Sather named first full-time Service Learning Academy Director

**2009**

First service learning seminar with P-12 and UNO faculty members facilitated by Shelley Henderson, the P-16 Initiative Coordinator

SLA moves to Milo Bail Student Center lower level

## ESTABLISHING PROGRAMS

**2011**

P-16 service learning projects take off: 72 projects; 2 service learning seminars held this year

CultureFest begins in partnership with Crestridge Elementary, Beveridge Middle, and South High



First Service Learning Seminar Alumni/Showcase event occurs



Faculty Fellows Program Developed



**2014**

Paul Sather Distinguished Directorship Endowment established



President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Presidential Award for Economic Opportunity bestowed upon UNO



**180**

service learning courses taught

## LEADING AND INNOVATING

**2017**

Service Learning Academy priorities identified: Asset based community engagement, social mobility, addressing redlining, and avoiding microaggressions



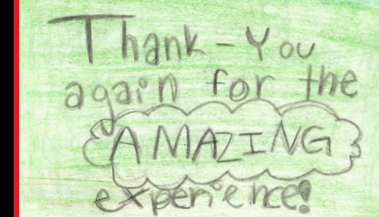
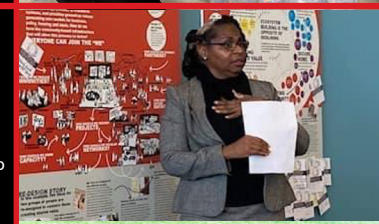
**2019**

P-16 Initiative and Omaha Public Schools receive the Excellence in Community Partner Engagement Award from the Engagement Scholarship Consortium



**2021**

Community Fellow, Terri Crawford, hired to lead Community Board and facilitate Redesign the Redline exhibit hosted at UNO



Paul Sather retires; Julie Dierberger named Paul Sather Distinguished Director

**2018**

Data indicates students practice critical thinking, leadership, problem solving, and public speaking in service learning courses; student retention in service learning courses is higher

Maverick Philanthropy Initiative launched to teach philanthropic giving in service learning courses, increasing the scope of service learning courses

UNO establishes the first Office of Engagement and Chief Engagement Officer Sara Woods

**2023**



# IMPACTS AND DATA

## STUDENT SUCCESS

Students who enroll in a UNO service learning class have a **10%** higher student success (retention and graduation) rate.

2022-23 student data from service learning courses indicated **83%** stated an increase in community connectedness, and **86%** expressed an interest in continuing community engagement.

## SHOWCASING PARTNERSHIPS

In 2016, the UNO SLA and other departments and colleges collaborated to document and showcase community partnerships within UNO's online tool, the Community Engagement Partnership Initiative (CEPI). This partnership data tells a portion of the impact of service learning at UNO since 2016.

**350+** Total number of community organizations, businesses, and school districts that have partnered with the UNO Service Learning Academy.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### SKILLS

Research on student workforce skill development in service learning courses indicates that students developed the following skills:

- Public speaking (90.3%);
- Teamwork (97%);
- Problem-solving (98.2%);
- Critical thinking (98.2%);
- Leadership (98.1%)

### COURSE ENGAGEMENT

80% of UNO students believed the service learning course was more engaging than traditional courses.

### EXPERIENCES

The SLA also facilitates the Stephenson-Harrington Internship for Goodrich Program students. These students receive a paid internship in a local nonprofit organization based on their career interests; over the past 30 years, nearly 250 students have engaged with this program.

**11,000+**

Total service learning courses with community organizations, businesses, and school districts.

**20,000+**

Total UNO students involved in more than 11,000 service learning projects.

**38,000+**

Total hours served by UNO students during service learning projects.

## ACCESS

The 2022 National Survey of Student Engagement asked UNO seniors how many of their courses they took were service learning courses and 67% indicated "some" or "most or all", which was the highest level of our Summit League (60%), CUMU Institutions (54%), or Board of Regent (51%) peers.

### SOURCES:

1. Ahmed, S., Reiter-Palmon, R., & Kramer, W. (2020, May). Academic Year 2019-2020, Report: Impact of Service Learning on University, Secondary, and Elementary Students, Omaha, NE.
3. UNO Community Engagement Partnership Initiative (CEPI) Partners Report.
4. National Survey of Student Engagement, "NSSE 2022 High-Impact Practices" (2022). NSSE. 29. <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/oienesse/29>



# IMPACTS AND DATA

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

Without community partners, service learning courses would be impossible. These collaborations create opportunities for innovation and real change in Omaha and beyond.

### PIPELINE PROGRAMS

Through the P-16 service learning program and other engagement activities, the UNO Service Learning Academy (SLA) has facilitated the connection between UNO and thousands of P-12 students so they could see themselves on a college campus and connect to their community.

### CHANGE

With our partners, service learning courses have had long-term impacts that have truly changed the landscape of our community. Some highlights include:

- Supporting the development of a senior center and food program
- Advocating the city for a reduced speed limit in a school zone
- Murals and art pieces that showcase the vibrancy of the community
- Musical performances at a hospital or with veterans
- Data analysis of access to COVID resources
- And so much more!



## FACULTY FELLOWS

Initiated in 2014 and expanded in 2020, the SLA Faculty Fellows program includes dedicated faculty members from each college who enhance service learning course offerings, research, and creative activity efforts. Faculty Fellows are a critical component of the work done by the SLA. They identify college-specific goals to increase service learning and community engagement in teaching and research efforts within their respective colleges.

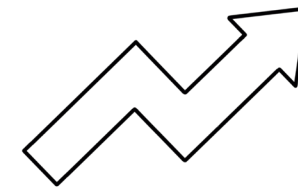
Faculty Fellows have been key teammates in improving bidirectional connections between colleges, the SLA, and community engagement efforts. Over the years, their projects have been diverse and reflect the individuals and priorities of their discipline and college. Some examples include serving as a peer facilitator to increase experiential learning and community engagement opportunities within each academic college, mentoring and recruiting diverse new faculty to service learning teaching, identifying missing service learning and community-based learning courses, as well as increasing communication within the college, and communicating student engagement and successes.



# PRIORITY AREAS

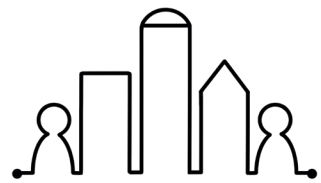
The UNO Service Learning Academy (SLA) has four priority areas that guide how and where service learning and community engagement efforts occur. These are topics that the Service Learning Academy intentionally encourages partners to incorporate as they consider future service learning courses. Further, the SLA actively works to address the four priority areas through workshops and research.

## SOCIAL MOBILITY



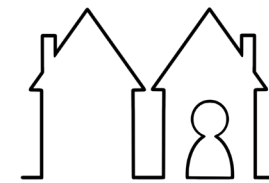
The social mobility priority area allows UNO students to gain essential experiential experiences in service learning courses that will increase their social mobility. Additionally, the service provided through service learning in the Omaha community can impact poverty. This priority area identifies ways to engage in service learning to recognize how poverty affects Omaha, increase student engagement, raise awareness of needs identified by people experiencing poverty, and foster collaborative relationships with local organizations.

## ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



The SLA applies an asset-based lens to service learning and community engagement work. Faculty, students, and community partners collaborating with SLA are encouraged to be mindful of asset-based approaches to service learning partnerships, such as valuing existing assets and strengths of the community, cultivating cultural effectiveness to promote positive interactions with diverse communities, building reciprocal relationships, and embrace all participants as capable of making valuable contributions.

## ADDRESSING REDLINING



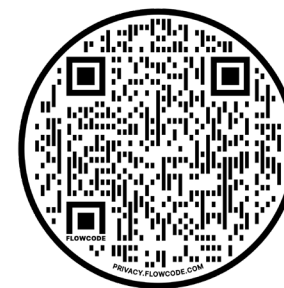
Investing in disinvested, redlined spaces in Omaha through service learning has been a priority since 2019. The SLA is dedicated to educating the campus and community about the historical impacts of redlining and identifying asset-based, interdisciplinary solutions. As the host of the Undesign the Redline exhibit in the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center and facilitator of a Community Board from the redlined pilot area of North Omaha, the SLA brings together collaborators to meet community-identified opportunities to invest time, talent, and treasure through service learning and community engagement.

## AVOIDING MICROAGGRESSIONS



Creating positive educational environments for learning is crucial to service learning and community engagement, whether the classroom is on or off campus. The SLA has facilitated training about implicit bias and microaggressions and trains faculty members, community partners, and students to employ microresistance strategies in service learning and community engagement.

## UNDESIGN THE REDLINE EXHIBIT



Scan the code to learn more or to schedule a guided tour.

This exhibit is on display for the next two years at the UNO Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center (CEC), room 218. The public can view the exhibition without an appointment on Thursdays or schedule a tour on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.



# UNO SERVICE LEARNING ACADEMY

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) Service Learning Academy (SLA) works to support UNO faculty members to develop service learning courses in collaboration with community organizations, governmental agencies, businesses, and P-12 faculty.

## CONNECT / VISIT

### LOCATION:

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### PHONE:

402.554.6019

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## FIND US ON SOCIAL



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## UNO OFFICE OF ENGAGEMENT

SLA is one of several units, programs, and initiatives within the UNO Office of Engagement (OE).

The Office of Engagement is a bridge between our faculty, staff, students, and campus units to individuals, families, and neighborhoods, as well as the business, government, educational, and nonprofit sectors. The OE connects UNO's "Maverick Spirit"- the abundant knowledge, talent, and energy found on our campus - to the most challenging problems, shared interests, and untapped potential of the communities we serve. As a Metropolitan University, meaningful and impactful community engagement and partnerships are central to UNO's mission.

**LEARN MORE OR CONTACT THE OE AT [ENGAGE.UNOMAHA.EDU](https://engage.unomaha.edu).**

