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Student Engagement Spotlights

UNO Office of Academic and Student Affairs
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHTS

Community engagement and service are fundamental components of UNO's identity. The following students exemplify commitment to community engagement. Their work represents the breadth of UNO's involvement in various causes.

To learn more about these students and others, visit the UNO Campus Commitment website (to be published soon).



ART AND CULTURE

ALMA BECERRIL SALAS | ART HISTORY | STUDIO ART | LATIN/LATINO AMERICAN STUDIES

Through the Office of Latin/Latino American Studies (OLLAS), Alma Becerril Salas helped create the Latino art exhibition 'Latino-Latin American Artists: Exhibition & Conversations'. This art exhibit is the first of its kind to feature solely Latino artists from the Omaha metro area. "To see yourself represented makes students think they can do it too. It is an opportunity to see their culture outside of their homes and it expands other people's minds." Community engagement is a very important aspect of Alma's time at UNO. This project gave her firsthand experience of cultivating a collection and curating an exhibit. Upon graduating, she wants to continue her studies and work within the Latino arts community.



NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHTS

CARLY CONRAD AND YVONNE MILLER | SOCIAL WORK

Carly Conrad and Yvonne Miller were the recipients of the 2015 Outstanding Student Service Learning Award. They raised awareness about Native Americans living in Whiteclay, NE through showing the documentary, *Sober Indian / Dangerous Indian*. Carly explained that "Whiteclay is an unincorporated town in Nebraska with 14 residents and 4 liquor stores 100 feet from the Pine Ridge Reservation." The showing in October 2015 brought awareness to over 250 attendees. "The project really motivated us to continue beyond the assignment," said Yvonne. Yvonne and Carly are still deeply involved in creating awareness about Whiteclay, NE.



CAPACITY BUILDING AND HEALTH CARE

MATT VAN ORMER | PRE-MEDICINE | BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Matthew Van Ormer is a Special Project Manager at The Collaborative. The Collaborative is part of the Office of Civic and Social Responsibility, and connects student workers with various nonprofits. "The student gets to be immersed in the nonprofit field by working with the assigned nonprofit, and the nonprofit gets the benefit of an employee that they don't have to find a budget for." Matt is also the co-founder of UNO Be The Match, a student organization aimed at adding individuals to the national bone marrow registry. "I spend a large chunk of my week engaging with the community and making a positive impact."



STEM OUTREACH AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

AMELIA SQUIRES | EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Amelia Squires is the UNO STEM Outreach Coordinator. Eureka! STEM, one of several successful STEM programs, empowers young women to engage in STEM activities and careers. "These youths come from underrepresented areas so bringing them here really helps them succeed." Participants take part in STEM activities, engage with college students and professors, and do internships. Amelia's hope is that "through exposure to college students, and STEM careers and majors, students will have more confidence and be more open to pursuing STEM in college, and hopefully coming to UNO." Amelia is a doctoral candidate at UNO, and applies her knowledge to track the success of Eureka! STEM participants.



SOCIAL JUSTICE: HUNGER

JACQUES MUSAVYIMANA | POLITICAL SCIENCE

Jacques Musavyimana is the president of UNO Students Against Hunger. Jacques founded the organization in fall 2015 with the aim to educate people about food insecurity and eradicate hunger. Jacques' desire to help others originates from the example set by his parents and background. Jacques' family is originally from Burundi, but he was born in Rwanda and lived in Tanzania before moving here in 2009. "I grew up in a harsh environment. As a former refugee, I know how hard it is not to have food. I used to eat once a day." Jacques believes that eradicating hunger starts with education at a young age.



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FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAM

ADRIENNE CAVILL | BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Adrienne Cavill is one of the creators of the Marris Magnet Middle School Financial Literacy Class. Adrienne planned and developed the curriculum for each grade level, while also helping teach the classes. Students learned about banking, using credit versus debit, federal and state taxes, and how to prepare and save money for college. "We wanted to show that we are leaders and that we give back." Overall, the service learning class project served over 1,300 elementary students, and showed Adrienne that, "as an incoming freshman taking on that huge role, I was able to get connected and really see why I chose UNO."



INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, AND SAFE SPACES

ANTHONY HUGHES | HISTORY | POLITICAL SCIENCE

Honors student Anthony Hughes joined the Queer Nebraska Youth Network (QNYN) in 2012, and was president of the QNYN from January 2014 until May 2015. QNYN is the only youth-focused, peer-led LGBTQ+ group in Nebraska. Under Anthony's leadership, QNYN's focus extended to rural Nebraska, transgender people and people of color. Anthony visited schools in rural Nebraska with the goal of cultivating safe spaces by starting dialogue and raising awareness for queer youth. Anthony hopes that one day queer people can exist without any stigma. "I will always emphasize the need to continue to advocate for all facets of our community who still continue to be underrepresented."



MENTORSHIP

BREANNA BROWN | EXERCISE SCIENCE

Breanna Brown is a member of the UNO Swim Team. Breanna participates in the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program. The program provides her with great experiences to see and learn new things, and become familiar with a different part of the community while being a mentor to someone. "I have seen a different perspective of different life styles. Seeing different ethnicities and different cultures has broadened my horizons on what community is about." Upon graduating, Breanna plans to attend physical therapy school. She also wants to continue serving as a Big Sister to other youth and hopes to maintain the strong relationship she has with her 'Little' mentee.



INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

ALYSSA CARDONA | SOCIAL WORK

During a class trip to Nicaragua, Alyssa Cardona visited the Los Chavalitos maternal and child health clinic, and learned it was in danger of closing. "The village the health clinic was in, was in extreme poverty. If that health clinic had shut down, the families that lived in those areas would no longer receive health services." Upon returning to the United States, Aly worked with her church to raise funds to keep the clinic open. "It made me realize that it didn't take a lot to do a lot. I saw that there was a need, and I did what I could. At the time, I didn't feel I had very much power or control over what I could do to help them. But I did what I could, and it didn't seem like very much at the time, but it ended up impacting them greatly."



SOCIAL JUSTICE: HOUSING

KATHERINE ESQUIVEL | AVIATION | FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Katherine Esquivel cares deeply about serving others. Katherine helped to establish the Habitat for Humanity UNO Student Chapter and served as its founding president. Since its inception, nearly two years ago, the Chapter has helped build seven homes and continues to work on three to four houses a year. The organization has raised over \$1,000 and volunteered approximately 2,500 hours in support of the Habitat for Humanity cause. "Getting involved as a student has a lot of benefits. We are more committed to things at school and in the community, and are just overall more responsible." For her, giving back is an obligation and something to be proud of.