Making an Imprint Through Communication and Community Service

Communication is essential to solving any problem. For this reason, University of Nebraska at Omaha’s School of Communication students are taught to take classroom knowledge and apply it to real-world situations.

The service-learning courses offered by the School of Communication give students the opportunity to partner with community organizations and use classroom knowledge to better serve Greater Omaha.

Each year, the School of Communication chooses a theme for the CommUNO publication.

The theme of this publication is “Making an Imprint Through Communication and Community Service.” The cover thumbprint is used to represent the unique imprint left by those who use their communication skills to serve the community.

Liz Stevens, director of Capstone Communication, fall 2017. Photo by Cassidy Conrad.
Director’s Report
2017-2018

It’s been 42 years since the faculties of the Department of Speech and the Department of Journalism at the University of Nebraska at Omaha decided to merge and form the Department of Communication.

Some of you reading this may have been either students or faculty when this momentous event occurred.

Some of you had not yet been born.

As a student at UNO in 1975, I had recently declared my major as broadcast journalism. Nixon resigned the year before, and there was a surge of interest in communication because of Watergate and the renewed power of the media.

Those same media are now under an attack more severe than anything since those troubled times. As faculty members, it is our responsibility and our passion, to help train these young women and men for what lies ahead. Technology has changed communication dramatically in the last four decades, but the core principles still apply. I am pleased to tell you UNO’s School of Communication has not only kept pace, it has excelled.

In 2017, Dr. Jeremy Lipschultz was honored as the College Tech Educator of the Year by The AIM Institute, “an innovative not-for-profit that grows, connects and inspires the tech talent ecosystem through career development and educational programs,” according to its website. In addition, Dr. David Ogden, who retired in the spring of 2017, was named the Journalism Educator of the Year by the Omaha Press Club.

Not to be outdone, our students have had a banner year as well:

• Our championship forensics team finished sixth in the nation in 2017, continuing an impressive string of top 10 finishes. They also won state for the fourth year in a row.

A notable accomplishment considering that four of the top 16 forensics teams in the nation reside in Nebraska.

• Our PRSSA chapter won several F.H. Teahan National awards for 2017 including Outstanding Student Firm, Outstanding Community Service and Outstanding Chapter Newsletter Award. It was an unprecedented sweep by our students!

• Our MaverickPR students also won two 2017 regional PRSA Paper Anvil awards and our Capstone Communication students won three Paper Anvil Awards, including the top award in the professional category for their School of Communication video.

• Competing against nearly 1,500 other entries, our journalism and creative media students won three 2018 national awards from the Broadcast Education Association, including two first in the nation finishes.

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For Mary Ann Danielson, community service goes beyond volunteering in soup kitchens or animal rescue centers—service is her way of life. “At the heart of it, service is sharing your talents, sharing your God-given talents, to enable a better world,” Danielson says.

For 30 years, Danielson, a University of Nebraska at Omaha alumna, has worked diligently to maximize the educational experience of students and educators. She serves as the associate vice provost for academic excellence and assessment at Creighton University.

From an early age, Danielson says she felt a need to serve. She gives her German grandmother credit for instilling her with strong community values and work ethic. “I think I’ve just viewed service as opportunity and engagement, so I was just drawn to them,” Danielson says. “Maybe it was the means to feel more engaged or connected or this higher purpose that energized me.”

Danielson says she served her community through Girl Scouts and volunteering as a teacher’s aide during her primary school years. She says she always understood the value of service in education. “When I was younger, I wanted to be a teacher,” Danielson says. “I was one of those kids at my grandparents’ house in the summer. I had a little chalkboard in the basement with my own little classroom.”

In high school, Danielson says her teachers told her she was “too smart” to be an educator. One teacher went so far as to tape articles to Danielson’s desk about teacher burnout rates and low pay.

Heeding their advice, Danielson graduated from UNO magna cum laude in 1985 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with majoring in accounting. Though, the opportunity to teach would arise again.

Mentor and former UNO professor Dr. Robert Carlson encouraged Danielson to apply for graduate school at UNO, she says. He felt Danielson should change her path and focus on communication because of her experience with the UNO speech and debate team.

“Sometimes opportunities are presented to you when people become aware of you,” Danielson says. “Part of my success has been opportunities. I’ve had some really great colleagues and bosses who have seen something in me, encouraged me in those opportunities.”

Danielson says graduate school was exactly what she needed. She loved being in the classroom as a teaching assistant and helping her students find themselves.

In 1989, Danielson graduated with a Master of Arts degree, specializing in organizational communication. That year, she received her first teaching honor, UNO’s Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant award, as well as the Outstanding Graduate Student award. She was the first student to receive both awards in the same year.

(Continued on page 5)
Throughout her career, Danielson has continuously held multiple positions with Creighton University, as she says her faith is just as important to her as education and service.

Danielson also participates in several service organizations both on and off campus including the Center for Service and Justice. The CSJ engages students in a variety of community services, local and worldwide, in conjunction with self-reflection.

“I think it starts with volunteerism and community service.”

- Mary Ann Danielson

Danielson says community service and volunteerism play a large role in the lives of her students, who are required to log 100 service hours before graduation, but most do more.

“I’m a fan of the full continuum, which is probably a little loosy-goosy for some academics,” Danielson says. “I think it starts with volunteerism and community service. Students need to have different doorways to walk into to engage and then decide how they need to navigate.”

Danielson says she feels her career is at a crossroads. But, she does know her next chapter must continue to motivate her and bring happiness. She wants to continue to work with good people to impart meaningful change.

“I can guarantee I will be doing something that my interests, passion and skills can make a difference in,” Danielson says. “That may be in the classroom; it may be somewhere else. But if that’s not true, then I’m not going to be doing it for very long.”

“Students need to have different doorways to walk into to engage and then decide how they need to navigate.”

- Mary Ann Danielson
At 17 years old, sisters Brett Hicks and Chase Vanderveen had lived in seven states and eight major cities before calling Omaha home.

Hicks spent her first two years of college at Metropolitan Community College before making the transition to the University of Nebraska at Omaha for her last two years of coursework.

“I remember going to Metro and thinking, ‘I can’t wait to get to UNO,’” Hicks says. “It just felt like the natural next step.”

During that time, Vanderveen studied education at UNO. After watching her sister thrive in the School of Communication, Vanderveen joined her, working toward the same degree.

“We have done most everything together our whole lives, so getting our degrees in the same field, taking certain classes together and helping each other study felt so natural,” Vanderveen says. “She’s my biggest fan, and I’m hers. Her success is my success.”

The sisters flourished in the School of Communication by creating connections that allowed them to be successful off campus as well.

Hicks says she took courses in corporate training and found a passion for it. (Continued on page 7)
“I loved that there was a technical side to it, but then there’s also a really creative side to it,” Hicks says. “I got to write. I got to speak. I got to be creative, and it included all of the things I really enjoy.”

Most recently, Hicks won the 2016 Rising Star award from the School of Communication, which recognizes recent graduates in their young careers.

Like her sister, Vanderveen has experienced just as much success since her time in school. Immediately after graduation, she began her first full-time job working for a nonprofit brain injury rehabilitation center in Omaha.

“This position was extremely team-oriented, required high organization and writing skills, people-skills and creativity,” Vanderveen says. “The classes I took at UNO definitely helped instill these valuable qualities in me and prepared me well for the year and a half I worked there.”

Active in their careers, Hicks and Vanderveen also serve many different communities, most notably, Citylight Benson Church.

“We (Vanderveen and her husband) host a community of people each week, sharing meals and sharing life,” Vanderveen says. “It’s so important to us that our home is a welcome and safe space for anyone to come and be vulnerable, no matter what life has thrown at them.”

Vanderveen and her husband are also involved with local Karen refugees. With her ability to set her own schedule, she has the flexibility to take refugees to doctors appointments, get their state I.D.’s or simply meet for coffee, she says.

“What an incredibly humbling and beautiful experience this has been. We still meet each Sunday, but now it’s grown enough that we meet in our church basement and also share a meal we cook with them each week as well,” Vanderveen says. “Developing relationships with this group of people has been inspiring and has completely changed our lives.”

For Vanderveen, serving the community is “non-negotiable,” she says. To her, being active in the community means being a part of making Omaha better – a small something to have control over when it feels like the world is more chaotic than ever.

Hicks says she believes in those same values. Being a part of the same church and working in the community, she understands the importance of being inclusive.

“I think being involved in things that open your eyes to other demographics, whether that be age, socioeconomic class or race, it gives us empathy and compassion and a softer heart,” Hicks says. “Those aspects make us work better and be more inclusive, and care more for people around us.”

The sisters agree their time at UNO provided them opportunities to not only learn but how to be strong community members through service.

“Service means loving people well, giving your time even when you’re tired, getting your hands dirty and joyfully seeing lives change for the better,” Vanderveen says. “People are always taken aback when you do something for them, not for something in return, but because you genuinely cared.”
Creating a cycle of opportunity and encouragement
By Sarah Norman

Thinking she would work at Omaha Public Schools forever, University of Nebraska alumna Martha Bruckner, instead, spent her career teaching in different school districts with a focus on creating opportunities for others.

Today, Bruckner is the executive director of the Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium, a collective impact initiative dedicated to public education and bringing metropolitan area educators together. She says she intends to serve the community for as long as she can and uses the words “opportunity” and “encouragement” to describe her journey.

Bruckner says her father convinced her to “get out into the real world” when she was choosing colleges. She was eager to enroll at a college that was growing.

During her undergraduate years at UNO, Bruckner joined the speech and debate teams. Her team traveled the country bringing home honors, and, in her junior year, she turned her attention to education.

While student-teaching at Burke High School and McMillan Magnet Middle School, Bruckner’s mother told her to apply to other districts. Bruckner applied and was quickly hired by the Ralston school district. She spent the next 22 years at Ralston coaching speech, debate and dance.

After spending time as Ralston High School’s assistant principal and then principal, Bruckner was invited back to UNO as an assistant professor in the educational administration department.

Along the way, Bruckner earned her Master of Arts degree in speech communication and her administrator’s certificate at UNO. She went on to earn her doctorate at the University of Nebraska Lincoln because it wasn’t offered at UNO at the time, she says.

After eight years at UNO, Bruckner says she felt as though she was in the final phase of her career. Then, someone from Millard Public Schools wrote her about a job opening.

“I had the perfect job. I had the job everyone wants,” Bruckner says. “I loved being here, but I got a call to come back to public education and that is where my heart is.”

Bruckner took on the position of associate superintendent in Millard for five years. In 2007, she became superintendent with Council Bluffs Public Schools.

Bruckner was named the College of Education Distinguished Alumna and Superintendent of the Year in 2015-16 for outstanding leadership, increasing enrollment numbers and community engagement.

After retiring from her role as superintendent in 2017, Bruckner returned to UNO as the executive director for MOEC’s Collective Impact Initiative.

“So many people have done good things for me, whether it was to help me get ready for my career or to expand my opportunities.”

- Martha Bruckner

“I keep coming back,” Bruckner says. “This is the fourth or fifth time I’ve been back here in some capacity, so it must be in my blood.”

During the 15 years she was away, Bruckner drove by the university and attended meetings on the campus. She says UNO’s growth was evident. (Continued on page 9)
Nearly two years ago, community members suggested an expansion for MOEC that would change education in the community, Bruckner says. Her team worked to create a new vision ensuring all students in the Omaha and Council Bluffs area received exceptional education. Metropolitan Community College and Iowa Western Community College joined UNO as postsecondary partners to collaborate on best education practices.

MOEC wants to prepare students of all ages to further their academic careers and transition into the workplace. The goals are consistent with Bruckner’s previous service work.

Bruckner says she formerly worked on a campaign for grade-level reading that focused on getting students ready for preschool, school attendance and summer learning.

“It is easy to prove that children who come from homes of poverty have fewer opportunities in the summer to engage, grow and learn, so they fall behind,” Bruckner says. “The campaign wants every child to be ready, encourage them to come to school and create learning opportunities.”

She says communities need to come together to solve this problem.

Another challenge Bruckner faces in her service efforts is to find time and patience. Regardless of status as a student, teacher or superintendent, finding time to get the job done is a problem faced by all. She understands the demands of their jobs and tries to be cognizant of their time.

“Bruckner’s career has come far since her student-teaching days, but education and service remain a part of every transition.

“So many people have done good things for me, whether it was to help me get ready for my career or to expand my opportunities,” Bruckner says. “I think service is the reason to get up in the morning.”

- Martha Bruckner
University of Nebraska at Omaha alumnus Scott Wike says he has known he wanted to be a teacher since his sophomore year of high school.

The Elkhorn South High School history teacher credits his own high school history teacher and debate coach for inspiring his love of the subject.

That love led him to study at UNO both as an undergraduate and graduate student, which resulted in Wike becoming the first Maverick to receive the Outstanding Master’s Thesis award from the Master’s Education Division of the National Communication Association in 2015.

After graduating from Millard South High School in 1999, Wike enrolled at UNO to pursue a bachelor’s degree in secondary education with endorsements in speech and history.

Wike says he chose UNO for its accessibility to staff and its ties to the community. He also says UNO doesn’t get enough credit as an academic institution.

“I felt like I could always go in and speak to any of the professors, regardless if it was in the area of my major,” Wike says. “I had friends that went to bigger universities, and that was harder for them to do.”

While balancing his coursework and eventual student-teaching responsibilities, Wike volunteered as a debate coach at Millard South for three years and then Westside High School for two years.

Every summer since 1996, he has volunteered with the Nebraska Debate Institute as a coach for summer debate camps.

After graduating in 2004, Wike began teaching history and social studies at Millard South where he remained until transferring to Elkhorn South for the 2017-2018 school year.

Wike returned to UNO in 2010 to pursue his master’s degree in political communication. He says he always planned on heading back to school but waited until his career was settled and his three children were older.

He chose UNO for his master’s degree, he says, because of the experiences he had with the staff during his undergraduate tenure.

“I thought that the love of the content that I ended up going over was really able to translate well into the social studies classes that I’m still teaching,” Wike says.

Wike says he felt a connection with his professors Dr. Barbara Pickering and Dr. Adam Tyma because they also had a background of debate and understood his service work with the Nebraska Debate Institute.

Wike says he enjoyed the challenge and educational freedom his graduate classes offered.

“Just the ability to explore whatever I wanted to explore as long as it was in the bounds of whatever the class was,” Wike says. “Every one of my professors was very encouraging of that fact.”

He says his professors encouraged him to work hard and to pursue different avenues within the communication field. (Continued on page 11)
Wike’s award-winning graduate thesis explores conspiracy theory and rhetoric during President Barack Obama’s tenure as found within the documentary “2016: Obama’s America” by Dinesh D’Souza.

“I was actually at swim lessons with my kids when I got the email from Dr. Pickering telling me congratulations,” Wike says. “I had to read the email a couple of times to make sure I was reading it right.”

In addition to the master’s thesis award, Wike also won UNO’s School of Communication’s Outstanding Thesis award for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Throughout his graduate studies, Wike continued volunteering on debate teams. Though he no longer serves as head coach due to family commitments. Wike says the skills he learned in debate made him a successful student, which is something he tries to teach to his own students.

“‘I can give out A’s all day, but hearing that I’ve made that kind of long-term impact... that’s what makes it worth it.”

- Scott Wike

He says he feels validated when contacted by former students who may be getting ready to graduate from high school or are already enrolled in college who remember his history lessons or tell him they want to be a teacher because of him.

“‘I can give out A’s all day,” Wike says, “but hearing that I’ve made that kind of long-term impact...that’s what makes it worth it.”
Mother and daughter alumnae serve through communication

By Sydney Edens

Kate Baxley and daughter Nicole Baxley have two unique perspectives on service thanks to the University of Nebraska at Omaha’s School of Communication.

When Kate Baxley graduated from UNO with her bachelor’s degree, she entered the School of Communication’s graduate program rather than entering a new job, having long worked in the corporate world.

Kate Baxley’s graduate education inspired her ambition for service. By allowing her to study what “feeds the soul,” Kate Baxley says the graduate program gave her the freedom to study what she was passionate about.

“I wasn’t looking to go to grad school, but I will tell you that it was the best thing,” she says. “I loved my grad school education. It was a lot more fulfilling.”

After graduating from UNO with her bachelor’s degree, Kate Baxley’s daughter, Nicole Baxley also went straight into a full time graduate program. Nicole Baxley says she felt free to immerse herself in her education.

“You’re never going to have the chance to sit in a room with 20 people and talk about the theories of communication and philosophy and how they work together like you are in grad school,” she says, “It’s a very unique experience.” (Continued on page 13)
Nicole Baxley says getting two degrees in communication can give people an edge. For her, she saw many people in the nonprofit world start off in a different field and end up in communication.

“Having a degree (in communication) and then adding a master’s level degree really makes up for what you don’t have in experience when you’re first entering the job market,” Nicole Baxley says.

Today, Nicole Baxley is director of communications for the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, a position she has held for three years.

Nicole Baxley says the opportunity to work for the diocese is a service in and of itself for her. She is able to serve through each task she carries out and every project she works on.

“I feel like I’m using that knowledge to make some sort of positive impact on the world.”

- Kate Baxley

“Everything I’m doing is based off of mission, ministry and the goals of the diocese, so it’s all really service oriented.”

- Nicole Baxley

Kate Baxley had the opportunity to give back by teaching a business and speech communication class at UNO in the fall of 2016.

“The School of Business requires graduating students to have six to 12 credit hours of business speech communication classes,” Kate Baxley says. “but the local businesses in Omaha and Lincoln who would hire a lot of the graduates were complaining because they were not getting good communicators.”

By treating the class as a workshop, Kate Baxley gave students the hands-on experience they would need after graduation. She says the class covered subjects including how to run a meeting, how to problem solve and how to give presentations.

Nicole Baxley has primarily worked with nonprofit organizations throughout her career. The call to nonprofit work stemmed from her desire to serve.

“Everything I’m doing is based off of mission, ministry and the goals of the diocese, so it’s all really service oriented,” Nicole Baxley says.

Nicole Baxley says the opportunity to work for the diocese is a service in and of itself for her. She is able to serve through each task she carries out and every project she works on.

“If I can use the gifts and skills and knowledge I have in communication, and use that to promote or further a mission that I can believe in, whatever that mission might be, because there’s all kinds of worthy nonprofits in the world,” Nicole Baxley says, “then I feel like I’m using that knowledge to make some sort of positive impact on the world.”

“I feel like I’m using that knowledge to make some sort of positive impact on the world.”

- Kate Baxley
Alumni Profiles

Quinn Texmo’s calling to empower women and improve the workplace

By Opie Russell

“I’m a huge advocate of, if you’ve made it to the top, you have to send the elevator back down so other people can come up, too.”

- Quinn Texmo

Quinn Texmo uses the communication skills she learned at the University of Nebraska at Omaha to empower women globally.

Through her involvement in Commercial Real Estate Women, an organization that advocates for women doing business with other women, Texmo discovered her passion for supporting others. She has served as president of the organization since 2015.

As part of her role, Texmo delivers speeches to women of all ages. She says she gets excited to remind attendees, such as the Big Brothers Big Sisters members, of their power. (Continued on page 15)
“You can be whatever you want to be,” Texmo says. “You are important. You just be you. Beauty comes in all different ways. Just don’t listen to society. Don’t let them put you in this box.”

Texmo says she enjoys speaking about conflict management in the workplace and women in male-dominated industries.

Her current goal is to make a level playing field for women and men by educating people on topics like female leadership and communication to break down barriers and advance women.

Texmo now works at JEO Consulting Group, which specializes in engineering consulting. It’s Texmo’s duty to oversee the departments of architecture, electrical engineering, community organizational planning and community engagement.

She says she takes pride when her department managers grow. Texmo describes herself as a “mama bear” who can be a little overprotective of her staff but has learned that a lack of communication is the root issue of all problems.

Texmo first experienced engineering consulting as a UNO student. She created a team project marketing plan for Hawkins Construction, and each member of the marketing team won $1,500 for his or her efforts.

In 2007, Texmo earned a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism with a concentration in public relations and advertising and a minor in speech communication. She went on to earn a Master of Arts degree in communication, specializing in organizational communication in 2014.

After graduation, she applied for a marketing coordinator position at Kiewit because the job description was similar to her class project. At first, Texmo says she was more interested in advertising and wanted to start her own advertising agency. But with her construction experience at Kiewit, Texmo fell in love with the environment.

In her second month at Kiewit, Texmo joined the Society for Marketing Professional Services Nebraska, which is dedicated to educating business and marketing developers in the construction industry, enhancing marketing skills and providing networking opportunities.

For the past 10 years, Texmo served as president of SMPS where she oversaw the Omaha chapter board of directors and networking opportunities for members. Now, she is an adviser for current SMPS leadership.

“I work with small-business owners on the importance of networking, the right way to do it and places where businesses should be going to get in front of the right people,” she says.

Currently, Texmo teaches a Construction Management capstone course with Stuart Bernstein, a professor at the Peter Kiewit Institute, and gives professional tips to students in the UNO School of Communication and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Engineering.

Texmo says anyone can be successful if he or she knows how to communicate.

Whether speaking with boards, legislatures, business owners or engineers, Texmo remains active across the Omaha community to promote equality for women.

“I’m a huge advocate of, if you’ve made it to the top, you have to send the elevator back down so other people can come up, too,” Texmo says.

- Quinn Texmo
UNO alumna uses communication to make Omaha a better place
By Zach Dinslage

The drive to use effective communication to serve people in the Omaha community is a strong theme in Kelsey Bugjo’s career and personal life.

Alongside service, Bugjo, a University of Nebraska at Omaha alumna, says she’s loved communication since she was a little girl. Bugjo went to Millard West High School and actively participated in its writing programs, even serving as editor of the school newspaper.

Bugjo received the Gunnar Horn Journalism Talent scholarship, which led her to UNO to pursue a major in journalism and communication studies with an emphasis in public relations and advertising and a minor in speech communication.

Bugjo was extremely involved at UNO. She says she served as president of UNO Public Relations Student Society of America and treasurer and Miss Manners chair of Chi Omega sorority.

“Through those organizations, I gained a lot of experience while also serving in the community,” Bugjo says.

While planning events with Chi Omega, Bugjo says she remembers a particular Easter event campus where people came with their families to hunt for eggs.

Bugjo says she helped out with community service projects as a part of PRSSA. The team worked on the Bateman National Case Study Competition and with other community service-based clients such as Nebraska Organ Recovery.

While attending UNO, Bugjo worked full time at Sitel Corporation where she enhanced her communication skills and got her feet wet in the business world. With these experiences, Bugjo landed a full-time job before she graduated as the marketing and public relations coordinator at Oriental Trading Company.

At Oriental Trading Company, Bugjo worked on catalogs, pitched trade publications and promoted the newest trinkets and prizes for fast-food meals and redemption centers. She also joined the Omaha Press Club, serving as the communications chair.

“My boss at Oriental Trading is the reason I got involved with a lot of volunteer organizations over the years,” Bugjo says. (Continued on page 17)
As her career and skills developed, Bugjo accepted a position at Clarkson College, a part of the Nebraska Medical Center, in marketing development before becoming the assistant director of marketing and public relations position for the college. In this role, she says she had the opportunity to help the college work on developing a service-learning component in its curriculum. Bugjo says service was a big part of student culture.

“Through service, it’s a learning opportunity,” Bugjo says. “You are able to gain some experience and exposure to things you don’t do in your day-to-day work.”

Following her position at Clarkson College, she says she became interested in health care and joined the Creighton University Medical Center where she oversaw marketing and public relations on the “hospital side of things.”

Today, Bugjo works with Omaha Steaks, starting as a corporate communications and events manager. She was promoted to public relations and corporate communications director in 2015.

Omaha Steaks is a fifth-generation family-owned company, Bugjo says, and the owners are big supporters of the community. One of Bugjo’s tasks is to find sponsorships. She says she loves being able to work and communicate with the organizations the company helps.

Omaha Steaks supports several artistic organizations in the Omaha community including the Omaha Community Playhouse, the Omaha Performing Arts, Opera Omaha, the Omaha Symphony and the Blue Barn Theater.

Operating in 70 stores across the country, Omaha Steaks sponsors events and “leaves a footprint” in those communities, as well, she says. The company shows its support for the arts in other states by collaborating with organizations such as the Santa Fe Opera.

Omaha Steaks also takes part in service initiatives including Steaks overseas, where it ships steaks to the military, Bugjo says.

“Omaha is part of our name,” Bugjo says. “We want to make Omaha a great place to live and work and try to attract and retain top talent.”

Through collaboration with such organizations, she says, the company is able to build and nourish a relationship with the community directly through its events.

In the past five years, Bugjo says she has seen community service initiatives grow within the company.

“Through service, it’s a learning opportunity. You are able to gain some experience and exposure to things you don’t do in your day-to-day-work.”

- Kelsey Bugjo

“As the company grows, that gives us more opportunity to do even more,” Bugjo says.

Omaha Steaks also gives employees the opportunity to volunteer four hours of the day while on the clock. Bugjo helps find organizations where employees can volunteer.

“I’ve had the opportunity to go with a team to the food bank and help sort and organize food,” Bugjo says.

Bugjo continually works to remain active in the Omaha community. She joined the Junior League of Omaha, an organization of women committed to promoting volunteers, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers, she says. She has also served as president of Public Relations Society of America Nebraska.

“Service still continues to be important,” Bugjo says. “I would always volunteer, but when my boss first got me involved in Omaha Press Club my personal service continued to evolve, too.”
Agency president finds her niche in Omaha’s service community

By Sarah Norman

With success she describes as almost effortless, University of Nebraska at Omaha alumna Melanie Morrissey Clark has extended her good fortune to others through service the past 25 years.

In addition to raising triplets and starting Clark Creative Group, Morrissey Clark serves on four boards, fulfilling her call to service.

Morrissey Clark and her husband, Fred Clark, have served on many boards over the past 25 years. While Morrissey Clark participates in the Women’s Fund of Omaha, he works with the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts. In the past, she also worked with the Women’s Center for Advancement and Girls Inc.

“We have made that part of our culture here,” Morrissey Clark says of the company she runs with her husband. “We get involved in the community, and we encourage our staff to do the same.”

Morrissey Clark says she learned about the Women’s Fund of Omaha, a nonprofit organization that zeroes in on issues that impact women and its work on policy changes at a community forum on domestic violence when she covered a story for Kidz Magazine.

“I was sitting in the audience, and they were talking about forming the Women’s Fund and I got chills,” Morrissey Clark says. “I’m intuitive, and I had a strong feeling it was going to be life changing.”

Feeling a personal connection to the cause also drew Morrissey Clark to the board at Phoenix Academy, a school for children falling behind in school.

Morrissey Clark says she was drawn to the nonprofit when one of her children struggled in math and reading, and she didn’t want to split up her triplets.

“Math and reading are subjects we have taught the same way for forever,” Morrissey Clark says. “Phoenix Academy teaches in a unique way.”

With its different approach, kids will jump two to three grade levels in a year, Morrissey Clark says.

Morrissey Clark’s trajectory can be traced back to UNO, where she says she found her college fit. She spent her first two years of college at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, but the school was too big and she felt lost. She came back to Omaha during the summer, and a co-worker convinced her to transfer to UNO and study public relations.

“When I started at UNO, I really found my niche,” Morrissey Clark says. “For the first time, I really felt like I found something I could do well.”

Morrissey Clark preferred UNO’s smaller campus. While it’s not a private college, she says, once you get into your major, professors know you.

“If you try to shoehorn into a place that doesn’t fit, you will not be successful,” Morrissey Clark says. “The fit is key.”

At UNO, she joined the Public Relations Student Society of America and became editor-in-chief of The Gateway newspaper.

Morrissey Clark says her favorite professor and mentor, (Continued on page 19)
Dr. Warren Francke, advised her to switch from public relations to journalism and helped her compete for internships before she graduated in 1989.

One of the internships was for a new magazine called, Kids Kids Kids (now Kidz Magazine). It was the first time Morrissey Clark would help start a magazine from scratch, and the owners hired her as its editor.

In 1992, a year after marriage, Morrissey Clark and her husband started Clark Creative Group.

“It was just the two of us starting a company in our sunporch in our home in Dundee,” Morrissey Clark says. “We started the business from scratch with $1,000 in the bank after buying a house and a dog. We had no business starting a business, but it’s been nearly effortless.”

After quitting his job at an advertising agency, Fred Clark worked at their business full-time. She continued her full-time editing position and helped out at night until she was pregnant with triplets.

While she never took an advertising or marketing class, she has picked up her knowledge on the job. Being president is a “24-hour, seven-days-a-week job for both of them,” she says.

Morrissey Clark says her biggest challenges are balancing work while raising children and bringing in business.

“It’s still very hard for women because we do end up carrying most of the load at home,” Morrissey Clark says. “I know how hard it can be to balance work and family, but I had flexibility because I owned the business and I could take off to do what I needed to do.”

Today, Clark Creative Group makes an effort to be flexible for its workers, whether they are parents or not, because everyone needs quality of life and flexibility, Morrissey Clark says.

“We have been very fortunate and have had great clients, employees, and the opportunity to meet a ton of wonderful people,” Morrissey Clark says. “We’ve felt a need to give back from the beginning.”
The dread of speaking in front of others can intimidate many, whether it’s an encounter with one person, a small-group presentation or a lecture in front of a large audience.

Seventy-four percent of Americans suffer from speech anxiety according to a 2016 study by the National Institute of Mental Health. This widespread fear equally affects men and women with 75 percent of women and 73 percent of men experiencing some type of anxiety related to public speaking.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha offers a program for those ready to eliminate this career-crippling trait, and Courtney Gillotte is someone who can help.

“It’s a legitimate fear,” Gillotte says. “One of the ways we help people is by reframing their beliefs because it’s not the event itself causing the anxiety. It’s their beliefs about the event.”

Gillotte, a lecturer in the School of Communication, helps future Mavericks conquer this fear before they even step foot on campus, all with the help of UNO students. Gillotte works with students from the university’s Thompson Learning Community in her Public Speaking Fundamentals class to help sixth- to eighth-grade students involved in Peter Kiewit Middle School’s student leadership program conquer these fears.

“We help them develop presentations because they take those presentations and deliver them to their student body as part of their leadership team,” Gillotte says. “The way it benefits UNO students is, as they’re learning this information, they’re also teaching it and helping the Kiewit students to better understand,” she says.

Two UNO students from Gillotte’s class pair with a group of five or six students intermixed from sixth through eighth grade. The total group of middle school students tends to range from 30 to 50 each year.

Gillotte says the service learning program teaches Kiewit students to develop an efficient presentation and deliver an important message. Concepts include creating a solid introduction and good conclusion, making all the main points of the message clear and incorporating supporting materials to back up the intended message.

Gillotte’s students meet with the middle schoolers three to four times a semester, the first being an introductory meeting. At the second meeting, the UNO students and professors help the Kiewit students develop an introduction, conclusion and the main points of their presentation. However, the best part, according to the (Continued on page 21)
students, is being able to spend time on campus, eat lunch and experience UNO’s facilities first hand, Gillotte says.

“It exposes them to the university and lets them see how great UNO is, while also giving them a chance to work on their presentation outside of school in a college atmosphere,” Gillotte says.

At the third meeting, the students deliver their presentations to Gillotte, faculty members and UNO students. Then, faculty and UNO students provide critiques of their presentations.

Each year, the class gets a topic they will center their presentation on to show a positive message to their peers.

“It’s been a really fun project, which is why we pretty much do it every fall because with each fall is a new focus,” Gillotte says. “Generally, a lot of times the focus is on bullying, but in some different aspect or some different way that we look at it.”

Gillotte says the theme, “Bringing back basics KINDergarten,” focuses on traits such as accepting others for who they are; staying positive and true to yourself; being aware of other people’s feelings; taking personal responsibility for your actions; including others; thinking before you speak; and showing empathy.

Small books presented to the middle school classes earlier in the year introduce the main points of the topic. The Kiewit leadership students then go to their middle school classes and give a presentation coinciding with the books.

“Over time, the UNO students are learning how to hone their skills in the speech-making process, but the Kiewit students are also learning from the UNO students and the faculty,” Gillotte says. “The Kiewit students love coming here because it’s fun, but they also really look up to UNO students and appreciate what they have to say.”

How public speaking led to life coaching

By Andrew Nelson

Courtney Gillotte searched for a way to translate her ambition for helping people conquer fears, accomplish goals and reach new heights outside of the public speaking realm. That’s when a friend of Gillotte’s suggested life coaching.

“What a life coach does is similar to what I do here as a lecturer in my classes,” Gillotte says. “It’s very similar to what I help people do in the high anxiety class—helping them get from one point to a worthwhile goal.”

Gillotte received her life coaching certification from Life Breakthrough Academy and has been a certified life coach since 2016.

“Life coaching is about asking questions, and as a life coach, you don’t come up with the answers,” Gillotte says. “The answers are within each client, and a life coach and client work together to achieve amazing outcomes by unlocking those answers.”

The best way to think about a life coach is to compare them to an athletic coach, Gillotte says. Someone is there to help you decipher a game plan to defeat a challenge or hurdle in life and ultimately provide motivation to keep moving forward in the process.

“There are a lot of people who have great ideas, and they have amazing things that they want to do,” Gillotte says. “But, they don’t know how to take the next step.”

Another way to think of the life coach is as a gatekeeper, a person who can help you discover the keys you need to unlock the locked doors of potential in your life, Gillotte says.

“Certainly, we provide suggestions as a life coach, but we’re not telling people what to do,” Gillotte says. “It’s a partnership, really. Someone hires a life coach because they want help getting from where they are to where they want to be.”
Advocacy campaign: Generating change at UNO
By Hannah Whaley

William Faulkner, American writer and Nobel Prize winner, once said: “Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world would do this, it would change the earth.”

Abbie Syrek, University of Nebraska at Omaha lecturer and director of forensics, started an advocacy campaign program for her Argumentation and Debate course’s honors students.

“Advocacy is when you defend or oppose an idea in a public setting, with the goal to influence some kind of change or meaningful action,” Syrek says.

For three consecutive semesters, Syrek taught an advocacy campaign in the course. It’s offered to first-year students involved in the UNO honors program. Syrek says the campaign not only teaches students how to debate and advocate in front of each other, but also how to envision, create, coordinate and implement an advocacy campaign on campus.

“It teaches you about real life,” says Brady Semm, first-year UNO advocacy and campaign student. “It gives you a real in-depth look into argumentation and debate and how it isn’t about winning the argument; it’s about making a compromise between two opposing forces.”

In fall 2017, the class consisted of five campaign groups, and each campaign has four to five students. Each group must identify a different issue facing UNO students. The topics can range from big problems, such as poverty, homelessness, racism, mental illness, sexism and low education, to smaller problems, such as not having recycle bins in a classroom.

Semm and his group brought awareness about light-emitting diode lights and the benefit to using LED versus halogen and florescent lightbulbs.

The advocacy campaign starts with research, Syrek says. Students find an area or topic they’re interested in and then they prove to Syrek why it’s problematic.

Christian Deepe, involved first-year UNO student, was also in a campaign last fall. His group chose to advocate for mental health awareness because it affects each member of his group in one form or another, Deepe says. His group took a broad outlook on mental illness and focused on attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism and bipolar disorder.

“I have ADHD, and it really bugs me when I hear misconceptions about it,” Deepe says. “I want that to stop, so that’s why I’m doing it.”

The only way to put a stop to the assumptions, Deepe says, is to educate and raise awareness about the topic. Part of his campaign was simply introducing thought-provoking ideas that will start a conversation.

The next step in developing the advocacy campaign is more detailed research, Syrek says. Students contact specific professionals at UNO and gather statistics and data based on their topics. They compile national and global data and compare it to UNO’s. (Continued on page 23)
Many UNO resources exist to help students who struggle with mental illnesses, but a lot of students don’t know about the resources available to them, Deepe says.

“Every single person who gets more educated helps,” Deepe says. “At the bare minimum, if we’re able to educate one person, I’ll be happy, but obviously, we’d like it to be many more.”

Some students don’t know how to describe their depression or anxiety, Syrek says. A big part of an advocacy campaign is also helping students seek the help they need.

The next step in an advocacy campaign is action. Students host an event, have a discussion in a public forum or hand out information about their topic on campus.

Deepe says he and his team held an event in the Milo Bail Student Center in December to raise awareness about anxiety and mental health conditions.

“People always fear what they don’t understand,” Deepe says. “But people never seem to get that to remove that fear they need to try and understand.”

The final step in the campaign is assessing the event.

“The goal is to not only teach students how to identify problems and how to substantiate those problems with research and evidence,” Syrek says, “but how to solve them and how to look back at their solvency plan and see: did it work, did it fail, why did it work, why did it fail?”

Deepe’s two-hour event brought in students from many majors and backgrounds. A corkboard with sticky notes was filled with words of encouragement for students suffering with mental illness, stress and anxiety.

“How can we advocate in a way that builds the society that we want to have?” Syrek says. “If we don’t teach our young people how to do that, then we’re at risk that somebody will do it better with dangerous or poor intentions.”

“If we don’t teach our young people how to do that, then we’re at risk that somebody will do it better with dangerous or poor intentions.”

- Abbie Syrek
Many students can expect to experience different learning styles as they advance through the education system.

At the University of Nebraska at Omaha, the Service Learning Academy offers impactful, hands-on learning experiences for students.

The service-learning method of teaching connects learning outcomes to identified community needs. This method relies heavily on the student’s ability to think critically, and helps connect course content with real-world experiences.

In the fall of 2017, Don Bowen, instructor in the UNO School of Communication, taught Photography with a service-learning component.

“I teach them the fundamentals of photography,” Bowen says. “The service-learning component is a way they can express what they learn,” Bowen says.

Students in Bowen’s class experienced service learning through a partnership with the Montessori Co-op School and the Intercultural Senior Center.

“The service-learning component is all about creating interactions for the students with people not like themselves, and people they don’t see all of the time,” says McKenna Methe, Montessori elementary teacher.

“Whether they have different backgrounds, ages, even the intercultural and intergenerational interactions; it’s the life of the project.”

Bowen’s students visited Montessori Co-op School and the Intercultural Senior Center twice before applying their classroom knowledge taking photographs to be used as promotional materials. Bowen says he structured the class this way intentionally.

“I like to let them get their hands dirty before letting them get into whatever project they’re doing, so they can have a better understanding of what they need to do,” Bowen says.

During the first visit, the UNO students learned about what each organization does and toured the school. On the next visit, the UNO students went to the Intercultural Senior Center to see the Montessori students playing board games with the seniors. Bowen’s students joined the fun and played games as the elementary students taught the rules of the games through interpreters.

“It’s always good when the students are excited and ask, ‘When do we get to do this again?’” Bowen says. “That’s the way that it is the entire semester.”
Del Weber: A life of service to the UNO community
By Logan Back

The journey taken in life is the most satisfying thing you will ever do, Del Weber says.

In 2016, Weber, former University of Nebraska at Omaha chancellor, spoke to Lecturer Rita Shaughnessy’s honors public speaking class about his life story, which was captured on video. Shaughnessy says his story can now be inspiring to others.

He was a “B” student in high school with no intention of going to college, Weber says, however, he went on to receive an undergraduate degree from Midland Lutheran University and a master’s and doctorate degrees from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He retired as the chancellor emeritus of UNO in 1997 after 20 years at the university.

At first, Weber could afford only one semester, so before second semester began, he made a deal with the financial adviser’s office that if they let him finish out the year, he would pay the school back with all of the money he made that summer. And he did.

Weber says he wanted to teach in a small school close to his hometown after graduation. One of Weber’s teachers saw something in him and urged him to get his master’s and continue on in the doctorate program. So he did.

Weber worked at many schools prior to coming to UNO including Arizona State, Cleveland University and the University of Las Vegas.

Shaughnessy, a colleague of Weber’s, says he helped expand UNO’s space, students and resources. He ensured the Aksarben Village expansion, the addition of the Peter Kiewit Institute and the leap to a Division I hockey team that eventually turned into a full Division I athletic department. Weber also put the smoking ban and beautification initiative into action.

The goal was to make Omaha and UNO feel like a community within a community, Weber says.

Weber also spent time working for the Omaha Community Foundation, to help people give back to Omaha.

“Helping people to give more is a real art. The challenge is to help people to donate in ways helpful to the community,” Weber says in a 2013 interview with the Omaha World-Herald.

While Weber can be seen as one of the building blocks of UNO, and Omaha as a city, he says his greatest achievement is the family he has built.

“It becomes less about money and more about love,” Weber says to Shaughnessy’s students. “You need to live your life so that you stand for something. You might not know what that is yet, but the journey is figuring it out.”
Holly Miller: Helping others find their love for communication

By Morgan Wright

For the past 23 years, Lecturer Holly Miller has taught in the University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication helping students find their love for communication.

Miller’s communication career began when she received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in speech communication in 1975. After graduating, Miller entered the workforce before deciding to pursue her master’s degree in 1996 at UNO.

Miller is a part of UNO’s Thompson Learning Community, an organization that provides support to students who received the Susan T. Buffett Foundation scholarship. As one of TLC’s founding faculty members, Miller says TLC has high standards for its students and operates similar to a business. When Miller began, the program had 63 students, but throughout her time with TLC, it reached more than 2,000.

Most recently, Miller has taught introduction to communication/public speaking fundamentals for TLC. She received the College of Communication Fine Arts and Media Alumni Outstanding Teaching Award in 2015 for her distinguished teaching.

“This program is so gratifying because it’s a little bit different approach,” Miller says. “The faculty member usually has four to five less students in the class, but if we agree to teach a Thompson class, we agree to spend additional one-on-one meetings with those students.”

As a faculty fellow with the Center of Faculty Excellence, Miller also coordinates faculty orientations, workshops, training sessions and book discussions.

Business and Professional Communication is one of Miller’s favorite classes to teach. Students closer to graduating learn about skills pertaining to business etiquette so they can sharpen their skills before entering the workforce.

With Miller’s 18 years of leadership experience prior to becoming a professor, she says she is able to give anecdotal examples including how to fire someone, write business memos and give proper presentations.

“UNO is so unique in the way that a large amount of UNO students work, whether to pay for school or to complete an internship program,” Miller says. “It’s just a fun class to be able to talk about those experiences, but making sure that it is directed at things that will be useful for them.”

Miller says she enjoys seeing students powering through difficulties. Some, who struggle during their time at UNO, become successful and go on to have great careers.
Dr. Andrea Weare: An unexpected career in learning and service

By Dafnis Delgado

At the beginning of the fall semester, public relations and advertising capstone students at the University of Nebraska at Omaha anticipated meeting their new professor.

Students were greeted with a kind smile and soft voice of help and support in a time of chaos for those preparing to graduate.

UNO Assistant Professor Andrea Weare holds a doctorate in mass communication from the University of Iowa. In 2017, she started her first year as an assistant professor of communication, public relations and advertising. She’s teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses and is co-adviser for the UNO Advertising Club.

“To get the opportunity to teach at a school that is very committed to service as a part of its metropolitan mission, it just made a lot of sense,” Weare says. “I feel like I’m in just the kind of school I should be in.”

In between degrees, Weare had the opportunity to teach for the first time as an adjunct instructor in Minneapolis, which inspired her to apply for her doctorate. During the gap year before beginning her studies, she completed a year of service through AmeriCorps working with the large Minneapolis nonprofit Project for Pride in Living.

As an employment service coach with PPL, Weare taught computer and job-search classes several times a week. Weare says her students were mostly people of color who were homeless in the neediest neighborhoods, students living HIV-positive, and those who had just left the prison system and were trying to navigate life again.

“It was like a master’s in social work in one year,” Weare says. “Getting that kind of hands-on experience was key. Doing service again really inspired how I wanted to study some things in my doctorate.”

Weare enlisted the help of mentors and supervisors to continue to be a resource for change.

With one full year of service at AmeriCorps and four years of doctoral studies under her belt, Weare says she is looking forward to applying her knowledge.

More than anything, Weare says she is excited about getting her students thinking about the role of nonprofits and communication, getting involved in their cities and working with people of all walks of life.

Weare says: “Your career will take you wherever it happens to take you. But if you know the skills, you can use them in any context. Keep your mind open and focus on what you find interesting. Follow your curiosity and where you can lose track of time because you’re sucked into it. Focus on that and the rest will take care of itself.”

Andrea Weare, assistant professor in the UNO School of Communication, teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses while co-advising the UNO Advertising Club. Photo by Emma Steeve.
Engaging Others

The UNO School of Communication Presents keeps students engaged

By Amy Nielsen

On March 27, nationally ranked MavForensics competitive speech team held its annual Night Before Nationals performance. The event celebrated the achievements of the 17 team members who went on to compete in the American Forensics Association National Individual Events Tournament in Colorado April 6 to 9.

Also in March, the School of Communication sponsored social media workshops led by Dr. Marc A. Smith, chief social scientist at Connected Action Consulting Group. On March 28 and 29, students and community members participated in the workshops at the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center.

The UNO Public Relations Student Society of America hosted students from six states at Big Events in the Big O! Regional Conference bringing in speakers from the College World Series Inc., Omaha Fashion Week and Berkshire Hathaway, among others.

To find out more about upcoming events, follow the UNO School of Communication on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/CommUNO/.

Each year, the University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication Presents holds events aimed at entertaining, educating and enriching the lives of students bringing alumni and the larger community together.

The first event, Student Involvement Day, was held Sept. 28 in Arts and Sciences Hall, offered students a chance to visit with School of Communication organization members, request more information or even join an organization.

The remaining events took place in spring beginning with Comedy Night held Jan. 25 in the Milo Bail Student Center. The free event featured national headliner, Gibran Saleem and area standup comedians, including School of Communication instructors Don Bowen and Cameron Logsdon.

Following Super Bowl LII in February, UNO Advertising Club, MaverickPR, UNO PRSSA and Capstone Communication co-hosted the Best and Worst Super Bowl LII Commercials Panel featuring five area public relations and marketing experts.

UNO Instructor and Assistant Director of Forensics Cameron Logsdon performs at the School of Communication Presents Comedy Night. Photo by Dafnis Delgado.

UNO Professor Hugh Reilly (left), UNO alumnae Christine Dunn and Melanie Morrissey Clark and advertising professionals Michael Johnson and David Moore were panelists for the Best and Worst Super Bowl LII Commercials event. Photo by Dafnis Delgado.
Capstone course serves to boost awareness for nonprofit

By Andrew Nelson

Victory Riding Academy of Omaha takes a hands-off approach to the equine therapy process.

“We don’t ask any questions,” says Tony Barnes, co-founder of Victory Riding Academy says.

Veterans, children with disabilities, police and fire personnel all benefit from services offered by the local nonprofit.

Barnes and his wife opened Victory Riding Academy in 2010 with a mission to help individuals and families work through unique problems with horseback riding. The process benefits people with experiences including post traumatic stress disorder, physical handicaps and more. Victory Riding Academy aims to provide comfort to those who are without such resources.

“You can see the stress roll off people’s shoulders,” Barnes says about the impact horses have on riders.

Students in the UNO public relations and advertising capstone course, have been working pro-bono for Barnes’ team during the last year to create branding materials and a social media presence.

In day-to-day life, Barnes says, there are pressures to set and accomplish goals and expectations. When it comes to horseback riding, that isn’t the case. Barnes says horses don’t have expectations for their riders and that makes riders feel free.

Barnes wants riders’ therapeutic experiences to involve their whole family. With the help of volunteers, sessions allow families to work together and get the horses ready to ride.

“You can see the stress roll off people’s shoulders.”
- Tony Barnes

The intent is for the family to “reintegrate” with one another, a process that can be especially rewarding for families with a deployed military parent.

The horses do the healing work, Barnes says, and he loves to watch the effect on riders as they work through stresses on their minds.

An unimaginable amount of volunteer work happens behind the scenes to help the organization create an impact, Barnes says.

No one involved in Victory Riding Academy receives a salary, Barnes says. Victory Riding Academy operates entirely off donations and volunteerism.

While the Barnes family doesn’t receive any compensation for the work it does with Victory Riding Academy, for Barnes, seeing the smiles on riders’ faces is payment enough.

Visit Victory Riding Academy at http://victoryride.org/
Alice Fanari serves through public speaking

By Katherine Hartner

Alice Fanari, the 2018 School of Communication Outstanding Graduate Student, teaches public speaking with a focus on helping English as a Second Language students.

Fanari first came to the United States from Sardinia, Italy in 2009 as a high school study abroad student at Papillion La Vista South High School and says she uses her own language experiences to help her students.

“English is the hardest language to learn,” Fanari says. “The key is to be patient. I have been an ESL student myself. I know what they’re going through.”

Fanari says she speaks slowly and uses visual aids to help ESL students learn and take notes.

Teaching public speaking is just one way Fanari serves the Omaha community. She also volunteers.

Volunteering for Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service “was one of my favorite things to do,” Fanari says. “Omaha is so big, and there’s so much stuff that can be done even in, let’s say, 60 minutes, like the 60 Minutes of Service. I got addicted to it. I was blessed enough to have an amazing and welcoming experience,” Fanari says.

Borin Chep makes a difference for students

By San Juana Paramo

Borin Chep, the 2018 School of Communication Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant, says he is proud of his work as an instructor, with or without the recognition.

“It goes back to my philosophy of, if I want to do a good thing, I want to continue doing it, I don’t necessarily need acknowledgment,” Chep says. “I just want to continue being a good instructor. That’s what I want.”

Chep says he’s had his share of memorable experiences in the classroom. He works with the media writing program in the school.

Chep says, “A student came up to me once in class and said, ‘I’ve never had an Asian-American as an instructor before; I enjoy the fact that I can look at you, and you look like me.’”

In that moment, Chep says he realized the importance of representation in the classroom. He also says he enjoys watching his students grow academically.

“When you help a student who is really struggling in class, and after you work with them for so long, you see their hard work begin to show,” Chep says.
School of Communication graduates awarded for research and project work

By Amy Nielsen

Each year, the University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication awards two graduate students research awards for Outstanding Graduate Thesis and Outstanding Graduate Project.

Karlee Currin received the award for Outstanding Graduate Thesis for her qualitative study on children of alcoholic parents and whether, as adults, the children forgave their parents for “any transgressions that occurred during the parent’s alcoholism,” Currin says.

“It is always special to feel recognized for something you worked hard on and loved so much,” Currin says. “I had a lot of people guiding me along, so in a way, winning this award makes me feel like I did right by the people who helped me.”

Jaime Melton received the award for Outstanding Graduate Project for her project “Facilitating Teamwork and Cohesion,” which focused on training participants on how to work in teams with those who have different personality types.

Melton learned of her award while in the hospital with her mother who had breast cancer. Though her mother recently passed, Melton says she was glad she could share that moment with her.

“It was a moment of happiness and pride for both of us during a week of grief and pain, to be honest,” Melton says. “She was so happy and proud when I read her the message from Dr. (Adam) Tyma. I will be wearing a small pin in her honor at the banquet.”

Melton and Currin both received their master’s degrees from UNO in May 2017. Currin works as a business analyst in a management training program at First Data, while also volunteering as a coach for UNO’s MavForensics team.

“This organization is the reason I got through college, decided to go to graduate school and am gainfully employed today,” Currin says. “I figured the least I could do is try to pay back even a fraction of what this group gave me.”

Melton works for Valley Irrigation, part of Valmont Industries, where she helps with the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to create a program that educates rural farmers in Africa.

“My role thus far has been organizing and gathering information that can be used as educational tools,” Melton says. “The end goal is to be able to teach people in these regions about these important topics, while also teaching them about irrigation methods for their communities.”

Melton has also recently raised more than $600 for the Triple Negative Breast Cancer Research Foundation in honor of her mother.
**Outstanding JMC Undergraduate student: Lyle Kwiatkowski builds connections**

By Kerrigan Flynn

Lyle Kwiatkowski, the 2018 School of Communication Outstanding Journalism and Media Communication Undergraduate, found his way to UNO through an unexpected connection.

After hearing a speech about passion at a youth leadership conference from a speaker who worked as a UNO admissions counselor, Kwiatkowski reached out to learn more about his options. After attending a personal campus tour, UNO felt like the right fit.

With his major undeclared, Kwiatkowski received the Goodrich scholarship as a sophomore. As one of his first jobs on campus, he gave campus tours to prospective students.

“I remember telling students that it’s okay to not know what you want to study, but then the timeline for me kept getting shorter and shorter,” he says. “I thought, ‘It might be time to start rubbing elbows with the right person.’”

Kwiatkowski says he used his connections to learn about different majors and met a student studying public relations and advertising with aspirations similar to his own.

“I thought that PR and advertising was a really good place to be,” Kwiatkowski says. “I’m good at communication. I can write a news story. Let’s go for it.”

From his start at UNO, Kwiatkowski says he understood the importance of getting involved on campus and in the community. He joined MavRadio as a freshman, and his radio show is now five years old. He also works with the UNO video department doing social media and videography for UNO sports.

Through the Goodrich scholarship, Kwiatkowski volunteers with Partnership for Kids to help seventh- and eighth-grade students learn about possible careers. He also works as a media coordinator with Cornhusker Boys’ State through the American Legion.

“I’m very much someone who works and thrives better in a group setting,” Kwiatkowski says. “I like to see everyone’s talents come alive, and I push myself to encourage others.”

Kwiatkowski says the connections he’s made along his journey are why he is being honored as the Outstanding JMC Undergraduate.

“It just goes to show that with positive reinforcement and strong will power, things do pay off,” Kwiatkowski says. “I’m looking forward to giving it back to the next student who wants to be the very best.”
Chloe Kuehner smiles upon her success and is making an impact at UNO. Photo by Maren Rincon.

Outstanding CMST Undergraduate student: Chloe Kuehner determined to succeed

By Christian Rush and Olivia McLain

Many things can define a college experience. Some focus their efforts on academics or involvement in school organizations, while others may dedicate themselves to a particular sport.

Chloe Kuehner, in her four years at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, has managed to succeed in all three.

Kuehner, 2018 School of Communication Outstanding Communication Studies Undergraduate, is also a swimmer for UNO. She has also taken on multiple leadership positions within the team. It’s the camaraderie and team bonding that made her experience at UNO so worthwhile, Kuehner says.

“The most memorable moments that stick out in my mind include surviving tough practices with my teammates, road trips and cheering each other on at meets,” Kuehner says. “Being on a collegiate team was an incredible opportunity, and the memories will stick with me forever.”

Along with being on the swim team, her resume boasts involvement in the NCAA student athlete advisory committee, Mav2Mav mentoring program, the College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media’s Student Advisory Committee and UNO Ad Club.

In addition to service, her accolades include making The Chancellor’s list since 2014, the athletic department distinguished scholar’s list and Summit League academic honor roll since 2015. She received the 2017 Virginia Allen McIntire Scholarship.

Kuehner says the determination to juggle and succeed in these aspects of her life has allowed her to develop important skills such as diligence and time-management.

“Perseverance,” Kuehner says. “It took a lot to juggle my full-time job of swimming, making sure my academics were in check and balancing my friends and family.”

Kuehner is completing minors in human rights and English, and is looking past graduation to pursue law school. She took the LSAT in September. As she looks ahead, she reflects on her experiences at UNO.

“The faculty is always willing to go the extra mile to provide support, and I look forward to seeing what the school looks like in 10 years”

- Chloe Kuehner
Allegra Hardin commits to service
By Maren Rincon

Senior and Communication Studies student Allegra Hardin of University of Nebraska at Omaha envisions academic success, involvement, service and dedication.

From David City, Nebraska, Hardin came to UNO with the goal of broadening her horizons academically and socially. Most notably, she spent the last two years working with the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center and Service Learning Academy as a graphic designer.

“Working with the Service Learning Academy has showed me how empowering UNO is and all the resources available to students,” Hardin says.

Applying her graphic design skills to create fliers, promotional materials, pamphlets, handouts and programs, Hardin connects students to the Service Learning Academy events and manages its online presence.

Along with her commitment to the Service Learning Academy, Hardin works with First Christian Church as a visual technician. She also makes time to volunteer for the Masonic Youth Organization, the David City High School speech team and theater team, and the Hearing Impaired Kids Endowment.

Directors Report
(Continued from page 3)

• Our School of Communication Presents continues to grow. This academic year we’ll sponsor seven events including the Forensics’ Night before Nationals, the High School Media Conference and a regional PRSSA conference.

• Several of our faculty, notably Chris Allen, Ana Cruz, Abbie Syrek and Cameron Logsdon, traveled to India multiple times. They traveled as part of our grant from the State Department to help Kabul University and the Balkh University in Afghanistan create communication studies departments. When up and running, we believe they will be the first communication studies programs in all of Asia!

• In August, we welcomed Dr. Andrea Weare to our faculty. She has been teaching public relations and journalism classes. In March, she traveled to India with professors Allen, Tyma, Cruz and Reilly to work with our Afghan colleagues (See photo on page 39).

• In May, we were sorry to see the College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media’s founding dean, Dr. Gail Baker, move on to new challenges as provost and vice president of academic affairs at the University of San Diego. Thanks for everything you did for us, Dean Baker! A search for her replacement is underway, and we hope to have a new dean appointed by fall 2018.

So, one more year is in the books. I wonder if those pioneers of 1975 would recognize the School of Communication of 2018. One thing I know for sure, they would be proud of how far we have come!
2018-19 School of Communication Award Winners

School of Communication faculty and students attended the 63rd annual Communication Awards Reception on April 13 at the Milo Bail Student Center. Awards and scholarships were presented to outstanding students, alumni and communication professionals to celebrate accomplishments of students and faculty during the past year. In addition to scholarship recipients listed on this page, awards were presented to:

**Rising Star Award**
Megan Rieder, On-Air Talent, the E.W. Scripps Company

**Alumni Achievement Award**
Gina Melton, Co-Host, KAT 103.7 Morning Show

**Lifetime Achievement Award**
Joanne Stewart, Assistant Managing Editor (Retired), Omaha World-Herald

**Albers Communications Group UNO Scholarship**
Claire Bromm (fall) and Ashley Quintela (spring)

**Fred and Mary Jo Peterson Communication Scholarship**
Kimberly Gau

**Gunnar Horn Communication Scholarship**
Mandy Boyle, Madison Kleinschmit and Seth Nelsen

**Gunnar Horn Talent Scholarship**
Sophie Ridder

**Hartman Memorial Talent Scholarship**
Kelani Kennedy

**Hugh P. & Juliette L. Cowdin Communication Scholarship**
Josiah Navarro

**Helene Quigley Memorial Scholarship**
Andrew Schnitker

**Joe Henry Baker Memorial Scholarship**
Anna Rodriguez

**Kim Jones Passion Scholarship**
Courtney Smith

**Marcus Family Scholarship**
Jessica Wade

**O.P.C. Floyd Kalber Scholarship**
Jurge Cruz-Alvarez

**O.P.C. Howard Silber Scholarship**
Kamrin Baker

**O.P.C. John Davis Scholarship**
Abbie Perry and Charlotte Reilly

**O.P.C. Panko Roberts/President’s Memorial Scholarship**
Kathy Nguyen

**O.P.C. Paul N. Williams Scholarship**
Christian Rush

**Paisley Family Scholarship**
Leta Lohmeyer

**Paul & Fern Borge Communications Scholarship**
Nyamal Ruot

**PRSA Nebraska Scholarship**
Christian Rush

**Raf Czarnecki Legacy Scholarship**
Jessica Wade

**Sue Francke Memorial Scholarship**
Samantha Chaney

**Virginia Allen McIntire Scholarship**
Ameres Groves, Katherine Hartner, Maria Holloway, Matt Kirkle, Kathryn Nizzi, Daylee Olson, Okina Tran and Jordan York
As corporate responsibility becomes increasingly important in the business world, senior and communication studies minor student Mandy Boyle says she wants to do her part to improve the Omaha metro community.

As president of the Human Resource Association at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Boyle organized three service activities during fall semester.

Operating a coat drive for children through Human Resource of the Midlands, the HRA was able to bring in 25 coats. They also served a day with Habitat for Humanity and participated in gift-wrapping for Adopt-a-Family Omaha.

“My motto going into human resources is that people are our greatest asset,” Boyle says. “Even more, great people are our greatest asset. So, the more we can give back, the better for ourselves and others.”

Boyle also wants students to know that HRA is affiliated with both the School of Communication and the School of Business Administration.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha Advertising Club, affiliated with the American Advertising Federation, is giving students the opportunity to network and hone their skills.

“UNO Ad Club is really just a place for students to come and learn more about the advertising industry, gain professional development opportunities and network with people,” says Kerrigan Flynn, Club president.

As an organization entirely run by students, Ad Club serves to motivate students to learn more about the advertising industry, Flynn says. Students have the chance to tour local advertising agencies and attend professional development opportunities each month.

UNO Ad Club gives students the chance to be involved in on- and off-campus activities, Flynn says. The organization allows students to explore public relations, advertising, graphic design, creative media and writing.

“UNO Ad Club is a great way to find jobs.” Flynn says. “If you do not know how to network, you will learn how to build connections and meet people.”
MavRadio serves in a new way

By Kerrigan Flynn

MavRadio is set on reaching its goals by helping other student organizations give back to the community.

As the University of Nebraska at Omaha student-run radio station, MavRadio ranges from playing Top 100 music to covering sports and news.

Gabby Kesterson, MavRadio general manager, says she stepped into her role ready to grow the organization.

As General Manager, Kesterson says she keeps MavRadio members accountable by employing a points system. This system keeps members engaged and allows them to earn the perks of being in the club.

Kesterson, a psychology major, says she proves anyone at UNO has the opportunity to be a part of the organization.

This year, MavRadio works to do service in a different way than most organizations. Instead of doing its own service work, it uses its resources to help other student organizations spread the word about events and projects across campus.

MavForensics focuses on public speaking

By Karlee Reistroffer

Many students at the University of Nebraska at Omaha may not be aware of the MavForensics team, a nationally-ranked competitive speech team.

Students involved in MavForensics spend their time developing research, and working on critical thinking, public speaking and performance skills.

Dominic Hernandez, a member of MavForensics says, through MavForensics students learn to become great public speakers, be more aware of what’s going on in the world and grow as individuals.

“MavForensics, to me, means stepping outside of your comfort zone and being exposed to different walks of life and ideas you wouldn’t hear anywhere else,” Hernandez says.

Students travel to colleges throughout the country to compete in various speaking forms including: informative, persuasive, after dinner, extemporaneous and impromptu. They may also perform oral interpretations of literature, which include poetry, drama and prose.
MaverickPR works to benefit nonprofits
By Carlie Stevens

MaverickPR works with nonprofits in Omaha to help grow and develop their organizations. “It’s a combination of networking and real-world experience. That’s what the employers are looking for,” Amy Nielsen, MaverickPR firm director, says.

MaverickPR is a student-run professional development organization that acts as a public relations firm within the University of Nebraska at Omaha. All students are welcome to join if they fit the requirements. MaverickPR is nationally affiliated with the Public Relations Student Society of America.

The organization prepares UNO students for their dream job by providing real-work experience, materials for portfolios and great networking opportunities, Nielsen says.

MaverickPR largely assists nonprofits in the community. By providing a quality service at 50 percent off standard PR prices for nonprofits, the firm seeks to raise awareness for organizations, Nielsen says.

PRSSA makes impact in Omaha
By Cassandra Jahn

The University of Nebraska at Omaha Public Relations Student Society of America makes an impact in the Omaha community as one of the top-ranked programs in the nation.

UNO PRSSA, a pre-professional organization, provides its members with professional development through service in the community. It also compete in national public relations campaign competitions with other university chapters.

For the 2017 competition, chapters worked with the Campaign to Change Direction brought awareness to the five signs of emotional suffering.

Fall 2017 UNO PRSSA Chapter President and Alumna Bryonna Johnson says the team focused its campaign on college students and mental health, something often ignored on college campuses.

UNO PRSSA members also volunteer their time and resources to organizations in Omaha. Johnson says they stay active looking for local organizations that have a specific need and propose how the chapter can help.
News Briefs


2. Jordan Wright, Daylee Olson, Connor Brandt, Kylie Holman and Opie Russell attended the Best and Worst Super Bowl LII Commercials event in February, sponsored by various UNO School of Communication organizations. Photo by Dafnis Delgado.


4. UNO School of Communication professors Dr. Andrea Weare and Adam Tyma work with professors from Afghanistan’s Balkh University while on a trip to Mumbai, India in March, funded through a U.S. State Department grant in collaboration with UNO’s Center for Afghanistan Studies. Photo submitted.

5. Students from MaverickPR and Capstone Communication show off their awards from the 2017 PRSA Paper Anvil Awards night in December. Photo submitted.
The School of Communication provides a student-centered, dynamic environment designed to elevate, empower and engage students to become skilled, ethical citizens and professionals who can excel in diverse local and global communities.

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