FACULTY HONORS

CONVOCATION  OCTOBER 6, 2022
## PROGRAM

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Danielle Battisti, Ph.D. is an associate professor of history in the College of Arts and Sciences. She previously served as the Graduate Program Chair and is the current Chair for the Department of History. She was instrumental in the creation of an online MA degree in history and government. Battisti also has helped place successful graduate students in history-related professions or Ph.D. programs.

P. Roxanne Kellar, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Biology. As a botanist, she encourages students to explore the natural world to find the interesting plant species and morphological characters that may not be obvious at first glance. She teaches a variety of courses that appeal to students with a broad range of interests. In her research lab, she mentors both undergraduate and graduate students in the field, the lab, and the herbarium. Her research places plant species on the tree of life to aid in conservation, biodiversity studies, and invasive species management.

Adam Weaver, Ph.D. is an associate professor in the UNO School Psychology graduate training program, helping to prepare graduates to meet the needs of PK-12 students with academic, social-emotional, or behavioral concerns in our public schools. He teaches the behavioral sequence of courses in the School Psychology program of study.

Sandra Rodriguez-Arroyo, D.Ed., is an associate professor in Teacher Education. She focuses on English as a Second Language (ESL) and Bilingual Education and directs UNO’s undergraduate and graduate ESL and Bilingual teacher education programs. Rodríguez-Arroyo collaborates with Omaha Public Schools Dual Language program to prepare teachers with the latest research and practices in the field. She is the faculty liaison for Metro Area Teachers of English Language Learners (MATELLS). This professional network provides learning and collaboration opportunities for ESL educators in the Omaha Metro Area.

Erin Bass, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Management and the James R. Schumacher Chair of Ethics. Bass’ teaching and research interests center on the intersection of strategy, leadership, and ethics, having published numerous research articles and case studies in this area. Many of her classes involve service learning projects, and she and her students have collaborated with several local and national organizations including Heart Heroes, Omaha Home for Boys, and No More Empty Pots. She teaches undergraduate, graduate, and executive programs in the College of Business Administration and co-leads the award-winning Capstone Cup, a semester-long case competition among UNO business students.
Steven L. Williams, MFA, is a professor in the School of the Arts and is coordinator of the theatre program. His primary focus is on advanced technology in theatre, including automated lighting, digital rendering and modeling, and the impact of theatrical design in non-theatrical venues. Williams is the Coordinator of Theatre and the Head of Design and Production.

Bede A. Bolin, LTC(R), MS, MA, is a lecturer in the Department of Gerontology. His primary focus is the gerontological education of students, and is the faculty advisor to those students. Bolin also focuses on the marketing and recruitment of students for the gerontology minor and/or certificate programs. Additionally, Bolin is the program coordinator for the gerontology practicum and the faculty advisor for the gerontology club.

Kathryn (Kate) M. Cooper, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the School of Interdisciplinary Informatics in the College of Information Science & Technology. She is a member of the UNO Bioinformatics Research group. Her research has focused on the application of network science to biomedical data; including how the network modeling of gene expression data can be functionally interpreted to further understand cellular systems. She has also worked on developing structural filters in high performance computing environments for analysis of large biological networks; this work explores the relationship between known graph theoretic properties and potential function in protein-protein interaction networks as well as correlation networks. Her current research interests are exploring the impact of diet on the microbiome for prevention of disease using bioinformatics and consumer health informatics approaches.

Steven L. Williams, MFA, is a professor in the School of the Arts and is coordinator of the theatre program. His primary focus is on advanced technology in theatre, including automated lighting, digital rendering and modeling, and the impact of theatrical design in non-theatrical venues. Williams is the Coordinator of Theatre and the Head of Design and Production.

George A. Hunt, Ph.D., is an associate professor of practice in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and is a licensed professional engineer in Nebraska and Iowa. Hunt teaches several classes including the first-year introductory course, the senior capstone course, and water resources courses. He uses project-based and serviced-based learning in the courses he teaches. He also advises undergraduate students, is active in many professional organizations, and is president-elect of the Nebraska Water Environmental Association.
**DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH OR CREATIVE ACTIVITY AWARD**

Derrick Fox, DMA, is the Director of Choral Activities and Distinguished Associate Professor of Music at UNO. He has conducted all-state choirs, led international, national, and regional choral concerts/residencies and presented professional development workshops across the United States and internationally. His research focuses on assessment in the choral classroom, building classroom community, rehearsal strategies, choral conducting techniques, DEAIB implementation in music learning spaces and shape note singing in the African American community. He created the Professional Choral Collective (PCC) to collect and create learning activities and teaching strategies for choral music educators around the world to use during the COVID pandemic and beyond. He also partnered with the Country Music Association Foundation to create the Unified Voices for Music Education Initiative, which provides learning activities for instrumental and elementary music educators. He will make his conducting debut at Carnegie Hall in March of 2023.

**DERRICK FOX, DMA**  
Music

**OUTSTANDING GRADUATE MENTOR AWARD**

Kay A. Keiser, Ed.D, is associate professor and former chair of the Department of Educational Leadership. She teaches and researches in educational leadership and school administration. She serves as Graduate Program Chair for the master’s and doctoral program in educational administration. In 2014, she received the Outstanding Teaching Award from the UNO College of Education. She is the coauthor of Prepare to Chair: Leading the Dissertation and Thesis Process and coeditor of Women in Educational Leadership: A Practitioner’s Handbook. Keiser has served as dissertation chair for 57 Ed.D. graduates and on over 100 other doctoral committees. She earned her BS in elementary education, MS in literacy, and Ed.D in educational administration at UNO. She worked as teacher and administrator in the Omaha Public Schools for 25 years and is recipient of the Alice Buffett Outstanding Teaching Award.

**KAY A. KEISER, Ed.D.**  
Educational Leadership

**OUTSTANDING FACULTY SERVICE LEARNING AWARD**

Ramazan Kılınç, Ph.D., is a professor of political science in the College of Arts and Sciences. He finds this award meaningful since his teaching philosophy is based on the premise of fostering student engagement in politics as responsible and thoughtful citizens. His research centers on religion and politics with a focus on the Middle East. He is the author of the book Alien Citizens: State and Religious Minorities in Turkey and France and a co-author of Generating Generosity in Catholicism and Islam: Beliefs, Institutions and Public Goods Provision. He is the recipient of 2021 NU Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity Award, 2021 College of Arts and Sciences Excellence in Research and Creative Activity Award, 2020 UNO Excellence in Teaching Award, and 2018 UNO Alumni Outstanding Teacher Award.

**RAMAZAN KILINÇ, Ph.D.**  
Political Science
FACULTY EXCELLENCE IN ENGAGEMENT AWARD

Sofia Jawed-Wessel, Ph.D., MPH, teaches and generates new knowledge in the area of public health as an associate professor of health and kinesiology and as the Director of the Midlands Sexual Health Research Collaborative. Her work centers broad philosophical, cultural, and political implications of existing in a gendered and sexist world. Community engagement is crucial to her pedagogical and scholarly work; receiving this award is both affirming and motivating. Dr. Jawed-Wessel is a social justice advocate who has provided expert testimony for the Nebraska Unicameral, the Nebraska School Board of Education, and the Omaha Public School Board of Education. She was recognized in 2017 with a Ten Outstanding Young Omahans (TOYO) award and has also been honored by her colleagues with the 2017 Outstanding Achievement Award and the 2015 Mary Ann Lamanna Award for Excellence in Women and Gender Studies.

SOFIA JAWED-WESSEL, Ph.D., MPH
Health and Kinesiology

CAMPUS-WIDE AWARDS

CAMPUS-WIDE NAMED CHAIRS AND PROFESSORSHIPS

PETER KIEWIT DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

Christina Dando, Ph.D., is a professor of geography and Chair of the Department of Geography and Geology. Her research and teaching interests are at the intersections of Plains landscape, media, race, and gender, with current projects on social construction of the Plains, women’s counter-mapping, and spatial justice in Omaha. Her work on women and mapping has gained international recognition. Dando is co-PI on the Omaha Spatial Justice Project (OSJP), funded by UNO’s Strategic Investment in Social Justice, Inequality, Race, and Class. Working with co-PIs Jeannette Gabriel and Jennifer Harbour, OSJP is constructing a database of Omaha’s racially restrictive covenants, accessible to the UNO and Omaha communities, to advance our understanding of how historic racially restrictive housing practices impact today’s lived realities.

CHRISTINA DANDO, Ph.D.
Geography and Geology
PETER KIEWIT DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

Peter Szto, Ph.D., is a professor in the Grace Abbott School of Social Work. Prior to his academic career, he provided mental health care in various psychiatric programs. His research uses photography as a tool to visualize social welfare. He has published and exhibited visual studies on mass internal migration in China and mental health stigma. His current projects involve visualizing the color of cows, showing what psychiatric space looks like, and portraiture to reframe mental illness. In Fall 2022, he is teaching and researching mental health in Singapore as a Fulbright Distinguished Chair of the Social Sciences. On the Peter Kiewit Professorship, he is deeply grateful to his colleagues for their support over the years – the Kiewit Professorship is as much theirs as his.

PETER SZTO, Ph.D.
Social Work

REGENTS/FOUNDATION PROFESSOR

Paul H. Davis, Ph.D., is a professor of biology, where he focuses his biomedical research on the discovery and development of anti-infective drugs and other therapeutics mainly targeting parasitic diseases. His work is supported by the National Institutes of Health, the US Department of Defense, and international pharmaceutical enterprises. In addition to teaching immunology and health-related coursework, he serves as the director of the Health Careers Resource Center, advising UNO’s nearly 3,000 pre-health care career students. As an award recipient, he is deeply honored, and is committed to continuing to work closely with UNO students in an effort to find cures for neglected diseases of global impact.

PAUL H. DAVIS, Ph.D.
Biology

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF INFORMATION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Dhundy Bastola, Ph.D., is professor in the School of Interdisciplinary Informatics. His current research focuses on understanding the details of tumorigenesis (especially in colon cancer) and using information technology to improve colon health, health outcomes through early detection, and prevention. His vision and focus has centered on leveraging technology (both computational and biological) to improve health outcomes. Bastola contributes actively in data analytics relating to chronic diseases including cancer, microbiome, consumer and public health informatics, and the regulation of gene expression in a variety of living systems. He currently serves as the chair of the doctoral program in biomedical informatics. He is the recipient of the Outstanding Teaching Award, the Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award, and the Charles W. and Margre H. Durham Distinguished Professor of Information Science & Technology. Bastola is greatly honored by the recognition of his work.

DHUNDY BASTOLA, Ph.D.
Interdisciplinary Informatics
COLLEGE-SPECIFIC NAMED CHAIRS AND PROFESSORSHIPS

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF INFORMATION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ann Fruhling, Ph.D., is a professor of interdisciplinary informatics and the Union Pacific Distinguished Professor of College of Information Science & Technology. She serves as a co-director for the Nebraska University Center for Biomedical Informatics Research and Innovation and is the director of the Health Informatics Research lab. Her research focuses on evaluating and improving human-computer interaction efficiency and effectiveness in the healthcare and public health domains. She has published over 100 articles and received more than $8.5M in research-related funding. She is the PI for a Department of Transportation grant to conduct research and develop applications to minimize the health impacts to first responders in the case of a HAZMAT transportation incident using internet of things technologies.

ANN FRUHLING, Ph.D., MBA
Interdisciplinary Informatics

MARTI ROSEN-ATHERTON AND JOHN ATHERTON PROFESSOR OF CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

Abby Bjornsen-Ramig, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Counseling. Her research includes career development and wellness in college students. She has published numerous manuscripts and regularly presents at professional conferences. She teaches many courses and serves as the Clinical Training Director, coordinating field placements for clinical students. She oversees the Community Counseling Clinic, and provides administrative supervision to the Clinic Coordinator and the Clinic GA, as well as clinical supervision of clinic practicum students. She is honored to receive this award, which enables her to optimize her focus as Clinical Training Director.

ABBY BJORNSEN-RAMIG, Ph.D.
Counseling

LOUIS AND FRANCES BLUMKIN PROFESSOR OF HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE STUDIES

Mark Celinscak, Ph.D., is associate professor and the Louis and Frances Blumkin Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies in the Department of History. He is a historian of twentieth century Britain and Europe, specializing in war, Holocaust, and genocide studies. He is the author of Distance from the Belsen Heap: Allied Forces and the Liberation of a Nazi Concentration Camp, winner of the Vine Award for Non-Fiction, and Kingdom of Night: Witnesses to the Holocaust. He is an elected Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and currently serves as co-chair of the Consortium of Higher Education Centers for Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Studies. He is principal investigator of the Samuel Bak Museum and Academic Learning Center.

MARK CELINSCAK, Ph.D.
History
JULIE HEFFLINGER PROFESSOR OF COUNSELING

Christine “Tina” Chasek, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. She is the Julie Hefflinger Professor of Counseling and serves as the chair of the UNO Counseling Department. Additionally, she is the associate director of Rural Development for UNMC’s Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska. Her teaching and research centers on behavioral health care workforce development and specialized treatment of substance use disorders. She also serves on the Nebraska Alcohol and Drug Licensing Board, is past president of the International Association of Alcohol and Drug Counselors, and a reviewer for the Journal of Addiction and Offender Counseling.

CHRISTINE “TINA” CHASEK, Ph.D.
Counseling

DEAN’S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE PROFESSOR

Jason D. Coleman, Ph.D., is a professor and director of the School of Health and Kinesiology. In addition to leading the School, he remains highly engaged in community-based research and service focused on the prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. He collaborates with federal, state, local, and community organizations to understand and address health disparities and promote health equity. He serves as a counselor for the Council on Education for Public Health, which accredits schools and programs in public health. Coleman is also a member of the inaugural cohort of the University of Nebraska Developing Excellence in Academic Leadership (NU DEAL) program, a system level initiative geared toward cultivating academic leaders across all four campuses of the University of Nebraska.

JASON COLEMAN, Ph.D., MSPH
Health & Kinesiology

NATAN & HANNAH SCHWALB CENTER FOR ISRAEL AND JEWISH STUDIES DIRECTOR

Jeannette Gabriel, Ph.D, is the director of the Schwalb Center for Israel and Jewish Studies at the University of Nebraska Omaha. She received her Ph.D. in social studies education from the University of Iowa. She is a public humanities scholar examining the intersectional histories of marginalized groups. A modern Jewish historian, she has uncovered unknown Jewish experiences in the hinterlands through curated exhibits and publications. Gabriel is part of the Omaha Spatial Justice Project, a Strategic Investment of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, which is documenting and mapping the history of racially restrictive housing practices.
LYN M. HOLLEY, Ph.D.
Gerontology

ORVILLE D. MENARD DISTINGUISHED FACULTY FELLOW

RAMAZAN KILINÇ, Ph.D.
Political Science

MAJOR THOMAS A. AND BEVERLY WARD SPENCER TEACHING FELLOW OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTING

AARON KNAPE, CPA
Accounting
COLLEGE-SPECIFIC NAMED CHAIRS AND PROFESSORSHIPS

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR IN AVIATION

Becky Lutte, Ph.D., is the Distinguished Professor of Aviation. She is an active pilot and teaches in the areas of aviation safety and operations. Her research focuses on subjects including air transport sustainability and workforce development. Her primary focus is the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women and underrepresented groups in aviation. Lutte was appointed by the Secretary of the US Department of Transportation to serve on the FAA Women in Aviation Advisory Board and has testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Aviation Subcommittee on the topic of improving diversity and inclusion in the U.S. aviation workforce. She has over 25 publications in academic journals, magazines, and book submissions and has received awards for research and contributions to aviation.

Becky Lutte, Ph.D., MEI
Public Administration/Aviation

DR. GEORGE HADDIX COMMUNITY CHAIR IN MATHEMATICS

Michael Edward Matthews, Ph.D., is a professor of mathematics specializing in K-12 mathematics education. The NSF-funded Noyce team he leads has brought in over $3M in funding, resulting in more than quadrupling the number of highly qualified high school math teachers produced at UNO. He regularly presents with former and current students on innovative research and creative activity. Presentations this year include a Family Math Night, invited presentations at regional conferences, and a student-led workshop at the Noyce Summit in DC. This award will allow Matthews and his team to expand these efforts and produce leaders in mathematics education.

Michael Matthews, Ph.D.
Mathematical and Statistical Sciences

RABBI SIDNEY AND JANE BROOKS PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RELIGION

Bharat Ranganathan, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of religious studies and the inaugural Rabbi Sidney and Jane Brooks Professor of Social Justice and Religion. He is also a Clinical Ethics Fellow at the MacLean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics and assistant director of the Program on Medicine and Religion, both at the University of Chicago. Ranganathan’s research and teaching interests focus on how religious ethics and moral and political philosophy bear on problems in clinical ethics, global health, and public bioethics. His interests include the philosophy of religion, methods and theories in the study of religion, and theology. Ranganathan has held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study, and the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture.

Bharat Ranganathan, Ph.D.
Religious Studies
NEBRASKA BANKERS ASSOCIATION PROFESSOR

Wei Rowe, Ph.D., is a full professor of finance and Nebraska Bankers Association Endowed professor of banking for twelve years. She also serves as the faculty advisor for Maverick Banking Association, a club for students who pursue a career in banking. She teaches commercial bank management at the undergraduate level and strategic financial management at the graduate level. Her research interests and publications have focused on corporate governance, bank performance, and mutual fund investments. Her current research is in the area of behavior finance, examining investor behavior using biometric research tools. She serves as the associate editor for four academic finance journals. She is a member of Suburban Rotary Club and a member of the dance team for Nebraska Chinese Association.

HEIDI RUEDA, MSW, Ph.D.
Social Work

JOHN E. CHRISTENSEN COMMUNITY CHAIR IN CHILD WELFARE

Heidi Rueda, MSW, Ph.D., is an UNO alumna and earned her doctorate from Arizona State University. Her research focuses on adolescent dating and sexual relationships within ecodevelopment contexts, particularly among understudied youth populations including Mexican American youth, pregnant and parenting youth in foster care, and among adolescents with disabilities. Her research has been cited over 500 times in peer-reviewed outlets, and she was the featured keynote speaker for PREVnet Canada’s Community of Practice in 2021. Her teaching interests include human development, program evaluation, and topics pertaining to adolescent welfare. She is honored to be recognized as the John E. Christensen Community Chair in Child Welfare at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work.

MILO BAIL CHAIR IN PHYSICS

Renat Sabirianov, Ph.D., is Milo Bail Professor of Physics in the UNO Physics Department. The Milo Bail Professorship is held by an outstanding member of the department. Professor Sabirianov has been faculty at UNO for 20 years (7 years as chair) and has published over 120 peer-reviewed articles. His research focuses on quantum materials, materials for energy, and electronic applications. It has been supported by the National Science Foundation, AFOSR, and Department of Defense. Professor Sabirianov serves as an Editor of the Journal of Magnetism and Magnetic Materials.

RENT SABIRIANOV, Ph.D.
Physics
Roopa Venkatesh, Ph.D., is the director of the School of Accounting, and a professor of accounting. She is the recipient of the 2020 IMA R. Lee Brummet Award, the 2020 IMA Champion Award, and the IMA Faculty leadership Award in 2017. She serves on the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) Global Board, in addition to two of IMA’s Standing Advisory Committees, and is a founding board member of the IMA Platte Valley Chapter, Nebraska. Her teaching and research interests are in the area of managerial accounting. Her research has been published in reputed journals such as The Journal of Management Accounting Research, Issues in Accounting Education, and the Journal of Emerging Technologies in Accounting.

Roopa Venkatesh, Ph.D., CMA
Accounting

Jamie Wagner, Ph.D., is an associate professor of economics and Director of the Center for Economic Education. She teaches undergraduate economics courses, and also directs the Center for Economic Education which works with pre-service and K-12 teachers in the Omaha area to assist economic and personal finance instruction. Her research interests include economic education, economic pedagogy, and financial literacy. Her research has been published in many journals, including the Journal for Economic Education and the Journal of Consumer Affairs. Wagner also writes curriculum for K-12 teachers and was nationally recognized with a National Association of Economic Educators award for her entrepreneurship curriculum for middle and high school students entitled.

JAMIE WAGNER, Ph.D.
Economics

Mark Wohar received his Ph.D. in economics from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. He taught at the University of Miami before moving to UNO. Professor Wohar is the UNO CBA Distinguished Professor and holds a courtesy appointment in the Department of Finance. He teaches a wide variety of courses at both the graduate, undergraduate and executive levels. His teaching interests include macroeconomics, international finance, monetary theory, central bank behavior, fiscal theory and statistical analysis. Dr. Wohar has been a visiting professor of international finance at Loughborough University in England. With more than 270 peer-reviewed publications, Wohar is a leading scholar with both a national and international reputation. His research has been cited by more than 9,900 papers of other authors.

MARK WOHAR, Ph.D.
Economics
University of Nebraska at Omaha Administration
Joanne Li, Ph.D., CFA, Chancellor
Deborah Smith-Howell, Ph.D., Interim Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Adrian Dowell, M.B.A., M.S.S.M., Vice Chancellor of Athletics
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Michelle Trawick, Ph.D., Dean, College of Business Administration
John Bartle, Ph.D., Dean, College of Public Affairs and Community Service
Martha Garcia-Murillo, Ph.D., Dean, College of Information Science & Technology
Michael Hilt, Ph.D., Dean, College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media
David Richards, M.A., M.L.I.S., Dean, Criss Library

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Academic Programs
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