

the liberal arts at work

**A&S**

a newsletter from  
the College of  
Arts & Sciences

2015

Living and loving  
geology, alum Erin  
Ramaker at ancient  
lava flows in Thingvellir  
National Park, Iceland



# A letter from the dean

This year's newsletter is focused on the most important element of every university: the student. Assembled in this newsletter are stories about students who have accomplished great things, both in and beyond the classroom.

The overall goal of this year's newsletter is to highlight the tremendous value of our College, with its focus on the liberal arts. Many national surveys of employers reveal their strong recognition of the value of a well-rounded employee who possesses many of the skills and qualities of students who major in an Arts and Sciences major. It is unfortunate, in some ways, that the focus of attaining a college education has turned so closely to align with career preparation. But it has. Therefore, those of us working on behalf of the values of the College are often challenged to explain to prospective students and their parents that one of the most important decisions a college student can make—the selection of a major—should be based on the student's passion for a subject, not just on prospective career opportunities. Our College's urge to students, then, is "LOVE YOUR MAJOR." Our responsibility to our students then is to help them "TURN THEIR PASSIONS INTO POSSIBILITIES."

Our story begins with a profile of the College of Arts and Sciences' Distinguished Alum, Mary Lou Chapek, whose inspiring story of overcoming obstacles and failures captivated the May 2015 graduating class. What follows are inspiring stories of student accomplishments in research and community service.

By its very nature, the stories presented here are merely representative of the outstanding work being done by students and faculty in our College. AND WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR STORY. To that end, we have created an easy way for you to tell us your story: [cas.unomaha.edu/alumni](http://cas.unomaha.edu/alumni). Let us hear from you and we may include your story in our next newsletter, or connect with us via facebook by searching "UNO Arts and Sciences Alumni."

Finally, I want to recognize the contributions of two individuals who helped lead and shape the College in recent years. Eric Manley served as Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for many years. Eric cared deeply about students, and his firm commitment to students and their success helped thousands of students complete their major programs. I don't know how many times I heard him congratulate a graduating student and follow up with, "what are your plans now?"

Mary Bernier, who served as our College's chief Development Officer, has retired. Mary cared deeply about our College, shared our vision for its purpose. She quite literally helped transform our College with the dollars she helped raise.

But the silver lining in our losses comes in the person of Randall Roberts, our new Development Officer. She comes to Omaha from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she managed alumni relations and giving for the pharmacy school. She previously worked in integrated marketing at a firm in Des Moines, Iowa. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication and Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design from Drake University, and she will complete a Master of Arts in Technology and Communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in December 2015.

Randall believes higher education should be affordable and accessible and is passionate about connecting donor passion with faculty and student needs. If you wish to make a donation or have questions about establishing a new fund or scholarship, please contact her.

*David Boocker*



Dean David Booker  
UNO College of Arts & Sciences



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### **A&S 2015**

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The University of Nebraska at Omaha shall not discriminate based upon age, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender-identity, sex, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran's status, marital status, religion, or political affiliation.

## Mary Lou Chapek receives Outstanding Alum Award



Mary Lou Chapek is the 2015 recipient of the College of Arts & Sciences Outstanding Alum Award. The award was presented at this May's commencement for which Chapek also delivered the Charge to Graduates. Titled "Persistence: Your Key to Success," the message to the graduating class drew on

Chapek's own life's experiences with revising her dreams in the face of gender barriers.

Repeatedly faced with discrimination, even after leading the team that developed the first licensed Canine Parvovirus vaccine, Chapek explains, "I co-founded my own company, MVP Laboratories, in the basement of my small home in South Omaha...Funds were scarce, so we adapted old refrigerators and clothes dryers as laboratory equipment . . . I was determined to make the business a success, not only financially but on a personal basis as well. Dedicated to treating people fairly and with respect, I attracted a staff of well qualified and very devoted employees."

Chapek is currently president and CEO of the Omaha-based company that has grown to serve clients throughout the United States and in 45 countries around the globe. Among their many licensed products are EMULSIGEN®, the first oil-in-water adjuvant in the industry approved by the USDA for swine and CHOLODIN®, a supplement formulated to extend the quality of life for the geriatric dog.

Ms. Chapek received her BA from Creighton University, a Medical Technology degree from Methodist Hospital and the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and her Masters of Science in Biology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

She has received the Majon Huff Award, the U.S. veterinary vaccine industry's highest award, and sits on the Board of Directors for the Animal Health Institute. Her efforts have been instrumental in bringing about more humane treatment of test animals in the manufacture and testing of veterinary vaccines.

Her contributions in support of local wildlife preservation are further evidence of her enduring passion for both animals and the community.

## Study on dog-human bond hits national news

by Nolan Searl

Evidence for a synchronization of hormonal states between humans and dogs during competition was recently published in the journal of *Physiology and Behavior*. *Fox News*, *Discovery News*, and the *Wall Street Journal* have since posted articles citing the study.

Psychology graduate student Alicia Phillips Buttner and Sociology graduate student Breanna Thompson teamed up with professors Rosemary Strasser and Jonathan Santo for the research.

The researchers followed 58 handlers and 58 dogs through a series of dog agility competitions. The competitions were meant to be stressful and were to be completed as quickly as possible without error.

Saliva samples were collected from handlers and dogs before and after the trial. The samples were analyzed for cortisol in dogs and testosterone in handlers.

Men and their dogs recorded levels significantly higher post-competition. By contrast, levels increased only slightly in women and did not change in their dogs. The sex of the dog did not matter.

The researchers say that the dogs may have picked up odors or behavioral cues from handlers, which transmit physiological states between humans and dogs. They were able to conclude that hormone levels in the dogs' saliva mirrored the levels of their handlers.

## Strasser, students bring the passion full circle

**Rose Strasser** always loved animals. She remembers as a child watching *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* with her father "because it was the only thing we could agree on to watch on Sunday mornings." As a college freshman, she begged her professor to let her into a 4000 level animal behavior class. "I loved it. I began working in my professor's lab shortly after and changed my major to psychbiology."

According to Strasser, at that time domesticated animals weren't considered worthy of





Photo by CoreyLe

Dr. Rose Strasser and Ariel

study because they were bred, not evolved through natural selection. In the late 1990s she started to see studies in applied animal behavior that included domesticated animals.

“Applied animal behavior research involving companion animals in shelters or zoo environments interests me both as a behavioral scientist seeking interesting comparative questions and as an instructor who sees the opportunity to have students work on animal related issues beneficial to their research training as well as the welfare of the animals,” explains Strasser.

In her personal life, Strasser got involved in domestic animal behavior when her first foster dog from a shelter, Chi Chi, who was in 6 different homes before she was 6 months, came to live with her. Chi Chi flunked her first obedience class and Strasser was told Chi Chi would never be a “normal dog.” Strasser discovered that agility training was the perfect outlet for Chi Chi’s energy and she and her not-normal dog earned over 20 titles before Chi Chi retired.

Currently, Strasser and her four dogs compete in agility, flyball, obedience and rally obedience. Strasser adds, “Satori, my registered therapy dog, also loves doing the reading dog program at Holy Name that the UNO school psychology graduate students run every summer.” Strasser also serves as one of the experts at Omaha’s BonaFide Dog Academy.

“Strasser is grateful to UNO for the opportunity to pursue her passions and particularly grateful to her “AMAZING” undergraduate and graduate students.



Alicia Phillips Buttner with her dog Leia

**Ali Phillips Buttner**, whose Master’s theses were in this new field, has two manuscripts involving dog cognition. “I had always loved animals and I enjoyed psychology as my major as an undergrad, but I never realized I could make a career out of combining these interests until I met Dr. Strasser. I didn’t expect to go into psychology and end up working with dogs, but it turns out there is a whole field of study devoted to understanding human-animal interactions.” She writes, “Part of what drew me to work with Dr. Strasser was how she incorporates psychological principles with applied projects that benefit her students and animals in need of positive interaction.”

Buttner describes the research in support of their recent publication as a great learning experience and a team effort. “We found some interesting relationships that we’re exploring further in a follow up to this study.”




Breanna Thompson and bff Saber

Although **Bre Thompson** did her undergraduate work in psychology, she decided to go for her Master’s in Sociology. She writes, “I wanted to take my undergraduate knowledge and further expand it by adding yet another lens. My goal is to intertwine the different disciplines and research methodologies to create a more holistic understanding.” She describes her passion as seeking to understand human behavior and what drives human interaction.

Thompson is grateful to both Strasser and Buttner as her mentors in the research process. She adds, “I will be the first to admit that this experience also taught me a few of the hard knocks of conducting research in the real world. Finding that things don’t always work out the way you thought was discouraging at first but only helped develop the patience to solve problems.”

According to Thompson, her friend Saber (left) was adopted from the Midwestern Dog Rescue Network, one of the agencies Strasser works with. “She not only mentored, inspired, and supported my research ideas, she also brought Saber and me together!”





## Meet three alums pursuing their passions

# ERIN RAMAKER

You might say Erin Ramaker chose the rocky road. She came to UNO thinking that she wanted to be a high school science teacher, but when she took an entry level Geology course, she fell in love ...with Geology.

*Changing my major was not an easy decision. In order to successfully achieve a BS in Geology, I would need to take Calculus I & II and Calculus based Physics I & II AND write a senior thesis. I will always remember telling my mother that I wanted to change my major to Geology. She was probably thinking 'what are you going to do with that?' but she encouraged me to follow my passion.*

After graduating from UNO Ramaker went to the University of Kansas (KU) for an MS in Geology. She had regular opportunities to talk to recruiters from oil and gas companies while at KU and

describes her job search as “rather painless.” She presently works for Anadarko where she is a member of a team that explores the continental United States looking for new oil and gas reservoirs. “My work is fulfilling because I am supplying energy to the United States. My contributions help us enjoy the benefits of modern society like heating our homes, transportation and technology,” explains Ramaker.

Ramaker met her husband, also a geologist, while attending KU. Guess what they do to get away from it all? Ramaker says, “We both share a love for traveling and adventure. And yes, we do look at rocks while we’re traveling.”

Her advice-- “If you find something that you are genuinely interested in, then it will make learning that much easier. You never stop learning, even after school. If you love what you do, you’ll be really great at your job.”

# MONICA BASILE

Meet Monica Basile, the first graduate of the Women's Studies Program (now Women's and Gender Studies). She came to UNO intending to major in art but discovered that a major in Women's Studies would allow her to incorporate all her passions: art, feminism, and making the world a better place.



*"I took Introduction to Women's Studies with Karen Falconer Al-Hindi and I was delighted to find out that my previous activism was considered to be an asset in that class and not a distraction. . . I really felt like I was being encouraged to incorporate my life's work into my academic work."*

"Women's Studies really fostered my commitment to interdisciplinary and hands-on feminist work in the community," adds Basile. As an undergraduate, Basile teamed up with an Education professor to create a class at Blackburn High with a focus on theoretical and practical tools for helping women to be activists in their own lives. She also worked with a Sociology professor to design a prototype for a child birth education class for Sudanese women in the community.

She has gone on to earn a PhD in Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies. She is also a Certified Professional Midwife, Licensed Massage Therapist, Certified Child-birth Educator, and Certified Birth Doula.

"I am passionate about the transformative power of pregnancy and birth, joyful embodiedness, and facilitating optimal well-being in mind and body....I believe that everyone deserves access to information, culturally appropriate care, and the opportunity to make informed choices," explains Basile.

# HUMAIRA QASIMYAR

Humaira Qasimyar graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies and a Bachelor of Science in Biology and is now in her third year of pediatric residency. Although the Biology degree is the more traditional pre-med path, Qasimyar finds that she draws on her Religious Studies major on a daily basis in her residency.



*"As physicians, we are regularly faced with the task of explaining the unexplainable to families, to students, and to each other. Where others sometimes struggle with this, I have found that my education from the religious studies department has helped me think about abstractions and formulate those thoughts into something others can understand."*

Qasimyar adds, "As healthcare providers, we make a commitment to do just that--care. Ultimately, caring for a patient means learning what motivates people to do what they do and aligning goals to be able to work towards that end together with the child and his or her family. This is not always a straight-forward task. Not uncommonly, these discussions remind me of classroom discussions I had in religious studies courses--what motivated a certain movement? what are the words on this page really trying to say? can you distance yourself enough from your own experiences enough to understand what this person's perspective must have been, and why? why does it matter?"

Qasimyar's long-term plans include working on an international level in underserved areas.



## Student Organizations

### NE STEM 4U

NE STEM 4U is the largest after-school Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) program in the area. It is a student-run, faculty-directed organization with over 50 student members. Since 2013, these students have volunteered more than 5,000 hours toward providing after-school science programs at 11 Omaha Public Schools (OPS). The graduate and undergraduate student members gain marketable skills and experience as they organize and deliver hands-on lessons --for free-- to OPS students on free or reduced lunches.

Each lesson is designed and practiced under the direction of Drs. Christine Cutucache (Biology), William Tapprich (Biology) and Neal Grandgenett (Education). The effectiveness of the program is carefully tracked. On-site evaluations are conducted. Pre-tests and post-tests are administered and analyzed.

#### Real-world practice adds up to skills:


**Communication:** Coordinating efforts with faculty mentors, other undergraduate mentors in the program, youth of differing ages, and after school directors

**Problem solving:** Adapting to unexpected circumstances in the classroom

**Leadership:** Working within a leadership structure-- president, vice president, treasurer, etc. with officers receiving additional, small group training

*"Being involved in NE STEM has been a truly fulfilling and valuable experience for me...As an NE STEM mentor, I am constantly interfacing with UNO faculty, Omaha Public School program directors, K-8 students participating in the program, and other mentors within the organization. As a result, I feel my ability to relay key information to a variety of different audiences (i.e. explaining the daily lessons to NE STEM mentors as opposed to the student participants) has been strengthened."*

---Tyler Herek



Christine Cutucache, Haddix Community Chair in Science (center) with NE STEM 4U mentors at *Lights On after School*, one of a number of community projects in which the organization participates.

**Overall, 69% of Nebraska students are proficient in STEM education. Students from low socioeconomic households and those of migratory families show proficiencies of only 13% (Nebraska Department of Education, 2013).**



## at Work in the Community

into POSSIBILITIES

### VPA-UNO

Faculty and students of University of Nebraska at Omaha Volunteer Program Assessment (VPA-UNO) are dedicated to helping community agencies assess the experiences of volunteers to improve volunteer satisfaction, performance and retention. Since June of 2013, VPA-UNO faculty and students have donated 3,735 hours to helping 20 nonprofit partners throughout the community, benefitting over 33,000 volunteers. VPA-UNO clients include Capital Humane Society, CASA Omaha, Food Bank for the Heartland, Youth Emergency Services, and Heartland Family Service.

Under direction from Dr. Lisa Scherer, students learn about issues facing nonprofit and governmental organizations utilizing volunteers, challenges and opportunities associated with recruiting, developing, and retaining volunteers, and relevant theories of Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Social Psychology, and Management.



Emily Dalen, Volunteer Coordinator from Heartland Family Service (left) meets with VPA student members Sheridan Trent, Albert Blanco, and Victoria Graeve-Cunningham,

### Skills to fill out the resume:

**Communication:** Solicit clients, give presentations to potential clients, create written reports of the quantitative and qualitative data, present the results of the assessment

**Problem Solving:** In addition to analyzing data collected from volunteers, the VPA team provides recommendations for improvements to each program.

**Leadership:** All senior analysts help train and supervise the junior analysts in the skill sets needed to perform the assessment and consulting process

*“Working as an Assistant Director has allowed me to further develop as a leader. While interviewing for my I-O Psychology doctoral practicum, I realized that situational leadership is a hot commodity, or at the very least, a valuable talent for managing a diverse workforce. In my role with VPA-UNO, I am lucky to have various opportunities to tailor and adapt my leadership style to individual analyst needs. Fortunately, when working at a Fortune 500 company this past year, I was asked to facilitate and train employees to be adaptive leaders via a situational leadership program. In my opinion, this promotion can be directly attributed to the knowledge and skills I gained from my experience with VPA-UNO and the immense support and mentoring I have received from Dr. Lisa Scherer.”*

*--Victoria Graeve-Cunningham*

***Newsweek (9/2014) reported, “With volunteering on the decline, perhaps it’s time to pay attention to an area of the economy we usually take for granted. By one estimate, all those volunteer hours add up to around \$175 billion worth of services, an important benefit to society as a whole.... ”***

## turning PASSION

"I learned a lot and I made a difference."

"Those sixth graders taught me something today!"

"I felt like a teacher and mentor on our team...and really liked it!"

--UNO students on the rain garden project

"This project enhanced my understanding of how psychology works in schools by giving me a taste of what school psychologists do on a regular basis. Applying the problem solving process to a student was helpful in gaining real life experiences that are far different than reading about it in a text."

--UNO student on the Boys and Girls Club project

**"Classes that take you out into your community allow your capacity for compassion and understanding to grow tenfold and teach you how to positively engage with others in a way that challenges and strengthens you."**

--Amber Johnson, UNO student, on the sustained dialogue project

## Service Learning: a win-win-win



In Service Learning, UNO is the most highly decorated institution in the State of Nebraska, having been named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for seven years straight. In 2014, UNO received the Presidential Award for Economic Opportunity, the top honor for programs that build economic independence, increase family stability, and create more sustainable and resilient communities.

In the College of Arts & Sciences, not only are our students working in the community through organizations such as VPA-UNO and NE STEM 4U (pages 8-9) and independent research projects under the mentorship of faculty like Rose Strasser (pages 4-5) but also a significant number get to experience that same excitement through service learning courses. Over 500 students are enrolled in Arts & Sciences service learning courses this fall semester.

Courses range from first year to graduate level. Participating disciplines include Anthropology, Biology, Black Studies, Chemistry, English, Environmental Studies, French, Geography, Geology, History, Latino/Latin American Studies, Mathematics, Native American Studies, Neuroscience, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Religious Studies, Spanish, and Women's and Gender Studies.

Scholars agree that successful service learning experiences benefit both the community and the college students. "An important task of the faculty member and community partners is to build choice and competency into the design of projects, to treat participants in empowering ways, and teach students how to empower others," according to Werner, *et al* in "Designing Service-Learning to Empower Students and Community," *Journal of Social Issues*

In the photo above, Biology Professor Steve Rodie is working along side UNO students and Benson West students planting the rain garden they designed as a service-learning project. "Projects such as the Benson West rain garden provide hands-on opportunities for UNO students to expand not only their academic knowledge and skills, but their leadership abili-



# n-win-win-win-win-win venture

ties and commitment to community engagement and quality-of-life enhancement... I think we're on the right track to graduating students who will be successful in whatever career field they choose."

Service Learning projects may include an obvious application of the theories and concepts learned in the classroom, as in the Boys and Girls Club project that was part of Dr. Brian McKevitt's Psychology in the Schools class.

Students from McKevitt's course met at the Westside Boys and Girls Club throughout the semester. The UNO students served as reading mentors and had the opportunity to provide reading assessment and intervention support to the youth at the Club.

A less obvious example might be a collaboration among Northwest High School's student council, students from Dr. Patrick McNamara's Introduction to Political Science course and the Anti-Defamation League to facilitate a "Sustained Dialogue Workshop" for over 100 high school students from around Omaha. This semester-long project focused on starting conversations around issues impacting Omaha youth today.

Another example of a project designed to open students' minds to new ways of looking at things is "The Lord of the Rocks" project, a joint effort among 7th graders from Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL), Dr. Harmon Maher's Geology students, and the Joslyn Art Museum.

The college and middle school students created educational tools for future students and visitors by researching the geology behind the architecture of the Joslyn Art Museum. An OLL student, reflected, "I learned that the Joslyn building is art itself with all the different rocks."

"Through the development of self-efficacy, teamwork, and civic engagement, the project has already had an impact," said Dr. Maher (photo below), "and through their efforts the eyes of visitors to this magnificent Joslyn Art Museum can be further opened to the both the science and beauty of this small bit of the earth."



## into POSSIBILITIES

"...the most important qualities employers seek are basic teamwork, problem-solving and the ability to plan and prioritize."

--Forbes 2015

Here are the 10 skills employers say they seek, in order of importance:

1. Ability to work in a team
2. Ability to make decisions and solve problems
3. Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work
4. Ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell and influence others

The good news for grads: No matter what you have studied in school, whether anthropology or French or computer science, you will have had to learn the top five skills on the list. The trick is to demonstrate that you have those skills through your cover letter, résumé and interview. Think about class projects where you have been a team member or leader and jobs where you have had to plan and prioritize. Describe those skills specifically in your résumé and cover letter.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/10/11/the-10-skills-employers-most-want-in-20-something-employees/>

## Student Award and Achievement Highlights for 2015

**Heather Hannaford** is one of two UNO graduate students to receive a **University of Nebraska** Presidential Fellowship. She is working on her Master of Arts in **English** and will spend her fellowship preparing publications, including research on Irish and English literature and 18th-century female engagement with empiricism.

**Geology** major **Liz Olree** presented her research poster on Stratigraphic Analysis of Half-Grabens in the White River Group of NW South Dakota at the 49th Annual **Geological Society of America** North-Central Section Meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, in May and was awarded the Best Undergraduate Student Poster award by The Great Lake Section of the Society for Sedimentary Geology.

**Geography** graduate student **Sam Nath** received a grant and Outstanding Mention in the 2015 **Geological Society of America** competition. Out of the 784 grant proposals submitted from all over North America, his was deemed one of the top ten. Nath's research aims to understand the soil conditions that support *Bacillus anthracis* spores in northwest Minnesota where anthrax has been a recurring problem for cattle in several counties.

**Neuroscience** major **Shauna Kister** is one of 10 students world-wide to earn an all-expenses-paid visit to an international neuroscience conference in Munich. Last year a senior in the program as well as a graduate of the program were awarded the scholarships from **Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich**. "By any stretch, Shauna is in an exclusive group," explained Dr. Suzanne Sollars, associate professor of neuroscience and behavior. "To have three students attend in the past two years sends a strong statement about the quality of our program."

**Jack Taylor**, a student in the **Neuroscience and Behavior** PhD program is the lead author on a paper published in the July issue of *Psychoneuroendocrinology* (Impact Factor 5.6). Co-authors include PhD student **Aaryn Mustoe**, undergraduate neuroscience major **Benjamin Hochfelder**, and Dr. Jeffrey French, Director of UNO's Callitrichid Research Center explored how interactions with the family can affect and be affected by physiological reactions to stressful experiences, using a nonhuman primate model of the nuclear family, the marmoset.

**Louis Martin**, a student in the **Neuroscience and Behavior** PhD program at UNO, was recently lead author on a paper published in the journal *Chemical Senses* (February 2015). Dr. Suzanne Sollars is senior author on the paper. The results of this study provide insight into potential mechanisms behind long-term taste alterations that can occur after chorda tympani nerve injury.

## Herek awarded NSF Research Fellowship



Tyler Herek, Biology graduate student, has been awarded a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship.

Approximately 16,500 applicants competed for the award and Herek is one of 2,000 selected. The Fellowship supports individuals early in their graduate careers who demonstrate potential for significant achievements in science and engineering. It includes a monthly stipend in addition to \$12,000 per year for tuition and fees.

Herek's application included a research proposal and a background and personal statement aligning his research and community service with NSF priorities for "intellectual merit" and "broader impacts."

"The research project investigates how the protein, Caveolin-1, impacts the differentiation of T-helper cells (a type of white blood cell) using next-generation RNA-sequencing techniques," explains Herek. He has been a member of Christine Cutucache's lab since 2013. Her lab focuses on tumor-induced immunosuppression and immunomodulation as regulated by Caveolin-1 as well as STEM Pedagogy and Discipline-based Educational Research.

Among Herek's community service roles is graduate adviser to NE STEM 4U (see story page 8).



### Senior Vice Chancellor's Award 2015

Savannah Hunter  
Foreign Languages-Spanish  
Psychology BS

### Outstanding Undergraduate Achievement Awards 2015

Mariela Bahena	Sociology Latino/Latin American Studies
Kasey Davis	Religious Studies
Ashley Dorn	History
Yasmine Farhat	Biology, Chemistry
Delaney Farnsworth	English-American Literature
Sarah Ferguson	Geology
Emily Galas	International Studies
Savannah Hunter	Foreign Languages-Spanish Psychology BS
Tanner Johnson	Biotechnology
Evan Kenkel	English-Language Studies
Patrick Reilly	Philosophy
Carlos Rincon	Political Science
David Sellers	English-Creative Nonfiction
Katelyn Wanek	Mathematics
Sarah White	Women's and Gender Studies
Alex Wiesman	Psychology BA
Zoe Yohn	English- British Literature

### Arts & Sciences students awarded for academic excel- lence and community service



Savannah Hunter, a double major and achievement award recipient from both the Foreign Languages Spanish program and the Psychology Bachelor of Sciences program, was selected as this year's recipient of the Dean's Award and the Senior Vice Chancellor's Award—the university's highest undergraduate academic honor.

Savannah's academic achievements include a perfect 4.0 GPA, 10 scholarships, and a 2014 FUSE Grant.

Her community service includes work for UNO's Volunteer Program Assessment organization, Food Bank for the Heartland, the Juan Diego Center Food Pantry, the Olson Center for Women's Health at UNMC, and the South Omaha Boys and Girls Club.

Her long term plans include graduate work in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.

Savannah is in excellent company among all of our awardees at left. They will make the world a better place and are a tremendous source of inspiration to us all.

# Stasiak earns A&S Outstanding Teacher Award

Biology Professor Rick Stasiak received the College of Arts & Sciences Outstanding Teacher Award in April, honoring a career of 43 years that impacted roughly 25,000 students. He mentored more than 20 master's thesis students and more than 25 master's non-thesis students.

"Dr. Stasiak is part of a generation of classically trained biologists that are currently coming into retirement and will be very difficult to replace," explains former student Dr. Marian Borgmann Ingwersen, Director of the Wesleyan Honors Academy. "As they walk out of our University science halls, one can almost sense the rush of wind as their broad and deep knowledge base goes with them."

Katherine Lawry, currently a graduate student in Aquatic Ecology adds, "I can only hope that I will one day bring the same expertise, excitement, and attentiveness to my students that Dr. Stasiak brought to all of us."

Before recently retiring, Stasiak's primary research area was the ecology of fishes and aquatic communities in central North America. He taught a variety of courses in Zoology and Aquatic Ecology, published more than 25 papers and recently authored a book, "A Field Guide to the Fishes of Nebraska." Stasiak received grants from the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and the Corps of Engineers during his career.

Stasiak's wife, Diane, also a teacher, shared his passions for science and adventure. Until her recent passing, the couple were globetrotters, exploring exotic locations spanning both hemispheres. From African safaris to deep sea diving, they loved getting out into nature; and these exotic locations became the inspiration for many of Diane's paintings, recently on display at Criss Library. A portion of one is below.

Rick Stasiak drew on these adventures for inspiration as well. Former student, George Cunningham, writes that Stasiak was like the great early twentieth century professors, "Their passion for biology came from using the field as their learn-



ing and teaching laboratory... And with all great early twentieth century University professors, you had to have a bold and charismatic personality!

"Surely Indiana Jones only existed in fiction! Let me tell you, the stories Dr. Stasiak would spin with confidence about wilderness adventures, diving excursions, and encounters with oddities of the natural world seemed too good to be true!

"His tales made for great storytelling that reinforced the principles he presented to us in class lectures and labs."





# Faculty Award Highlights



Congratulations to Arts & Sciences faculty who garnered a variety of accolades this year, from named chairs and professorships to special recognition for excellence in mentoring, service-learning, research, service, and teaching.

*The photo at left features just some of our award winning faculty with Dean David Bookter and Chancellor John Christensen. From left to right, Jeff French, Bill Tapprich, Alan Kolok, Christine Cutucache, Alan Gift, Paul Landow, Dean Bookter, Owen Mordaunt, Arturo Miranda and Chancellor Christensen.*

This year's awardees in alphabetical order:

Rich Cupich	English	A&S Excellence in Teaching Award
Christine Cutucache	Biology	Haddix Community Chair in Science
Jeff French	Psychology/Neuroscience	UNO Outstanding Graduate Mentor
Alan Gift	Chemistry	Alumni Outstanding Teacher Award
Erin Hart-Johnston	Foreign Languages	A&S Excellence in Teaching Award
Angie Hodge	Mathematics	Alumni Outstanding Teacher Award
Marsha Kruger	English	A&S Excellence in Teaching Award
Paul Landow	Political Science	Alumni Outstanding Teacher Award
Arturo Miranda	Foreign Languages	Outstanding Service-Learning Faculty Award
Owen Mordaunt	English	Jefferis Chair
John Price	English	A&S Excellence in Research or Creative Activity Award
Janice Rech	Mathematics	A&S Excellence in Service Award
Andrzej Roslanowski	Mathematics	A&S Excellence in Research or Creative Activity Award
Rick Stasiak	Biology	A&S Outstanding Teacher Award
Bill Tapprich	Biology	Sophie and Feodora Kahn Professorship in Biology

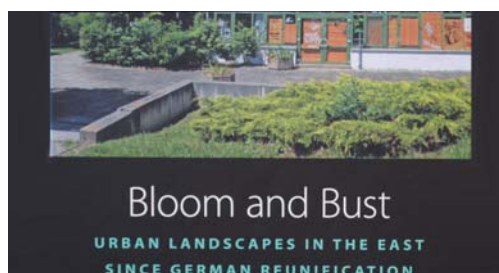
# Spotlight on Faculty Publications



*Gender Integration in NATO Military Forces* was recognized by The European Research Group on Military and Society as Winner of the 2015 Best Book Award. "I have long recommended Lana Obradovic's careful and comprehensive work on women in NATO military forces. Now her book brings it all together - combining history, theory, statistical analysis, and well-designed comparative case studies to trace the different causes and speeds of women's military integration in older and newer NATO members. The book instantly becomes the definitive work on the topic,"--Joshua S. Goldstein, American University. Before coming to UNO, author Lana Obradovic, Assistant Professor of Political Science, headed Mercy College International Relations and Diplomacy program in New York and led the award-winning Model UN team.



*The Journal of Religion & Film* is a peer reviewed journal committed to the study of connections between the medium of film and the phenomena of religion, however those are defined. Multiple approaches include the analysis of how religious traditions are portrayed in films; the religious concepts that may be found or utilized in the interpretation of films; how the religious ideals and background of the filmmakers may have influenced them; and how films themselves may operate "religiously" for viewers. The journal seeks to create better understandings of both religion and film through the study of their mutual encounter and interactions. Founding editor, William L. Blizek is Professor of Philosophy and Religion and first published the *Journal of Religion & Film* along with colleague Ron Burke in 1997. Bill also is editor of *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*.



*Bloom and Bust* covers more than two decades of deconstruction, renovation, and reconstruction that have left the urban environments in the former German Democratic Republic completely transformed. "The essays in this collection resolutely de-center Berlin as a privileged subject of cultural studies, reconstructing the social histories, architectural rebuilding efforts, and other issues marking the transition from the former GDR to postunification in Dresden, Erfurt, Hoyerswerda, Frankfurt (Oder), and elsewhere . . . Fascinating and insightful."--Rolf J. Goebel, from the *Afterword*. Editor Gwyneth Cliver is Assistant Professor of German at UNO. She has also taught at Guilford College in North Carolina and Ball State University. Her co-editor is Carrie Smith-Prei, Associate Professor of German Studies at the University of Alberta.



*"Rights in the Balance: Free Press, Fair Trial, & Nebraska Press Association v. Stuart* explores the public's right to attend criminal trials and the right of the press to attend on behalf of the public... There shall be no Star Chamber in the United States...Mark Scherer has succeeded in making this narrative of constitutional brainstorming, brief writing, and appellate arguing most exciting. It is a story well told. My hope is that he's sitting at a desk somewhere right now working on another book,"--G. Michael Fenner, Creighton University. A C-SPAN BookTV interview can be found at <http://www.c-span.org/video/?326501-1/book-discussion-rights-balance>. A former practicing attorney, Mark Scherer is also the author of *Imperfect Victories: The Legal Tenacity of the Omaha Tribe, 1945-1995*, along with various works related to U.S., Great Plains, and Native American legal and political history.



*The Tallgrass Prairie Reader* will transport the reader back to the days of buffalo and immense prairies of history and forward into present-day writings that emphasize the continuing importance of the prairies in our lives. A must-read for anyone concerned with the history and preservation of America's unique ecosystems,"--Diane D. Quantic, editor, *A Great Plains Reader*. CSPAN BookTV interview with John Price can be found at <http://www.c-span.org/video/?326500-1/book-discussion-tallgrass-prairie-reader>. Director of the Creative Nonfiction Writing program, John Price has authored three other books and has published in many journals, magazines and anthologies, including *Orion*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Iowa Review*, and *Best Spiritual Writing 2000*.



# Spotlight on Curriculum

## Master of Arts in Critical and Creative Thinking, graduate study for real life

The new Master of Arts in Critical and Creative Thinking (MA CCT) program began admitting students for fall 2015 classes. It is designed to fit the needs of both lifelong learners and those individuals in mid-career looking to retool their skills for the workplace.

This course of study addresses needs regularly identified by business leaders as necessary for professional success across a wide number of fields. A 2010 survey conducted by IBM revealed that more than 1,500 CEOs across 60 countries and from more than 30 industries believed creativity would be an increasingly necessary skill for job seekers, more than rigor, management discipline, integrity, and even vision.

Additionally, according to a 2013 survey conducted by Hart Research Associates on behalf of The Association of American Colleges and Universities, more than 80 percent of employers agreed that critical thinking, analytical reasoning and complex problem solving are where future job seekers should be focusing their energy.

Students in the 30 hour program choose one of six interdisciplinary concentrations with the opportunity to take electives from the other five areas or choose a secondary concentration. Over 30 faculty from 13 different departments and programs in Arts and Sciences contribute to each of the following concentrations:

- Cultural and Global Analysis
- Ethics and Values
- Health and the Environment
- International Migration, Development and Citizenship
- Organizational Science and Leadership
- Writing and Critical Reflection.

Dean of Arts & Sciences, David Boocker who first conceived of this innovative approach to graduate

studies adds that “Challenging problems often call for challenging traditional disciplinary responses. Our six concentrations allow students to focus on issues important to them and our world.”

“Even though students had little time to apply for the program between its approval in late June and its cut off in early August, the program’s introductory course, ‘Introduction to Critical and Creative Thinking’ is nearly full,” said Dr. Joseph Price, Special Projects Director for the College and administrative coordinator for the MA CCT. “Hopefully, this bodes well for the need and popularity of the program.”

Faculty were very purposeful in crafting not only the coursework for the program, but also the program’s entrance requirements. MA CCT faculty decided to forego traditional graduate entrance requirements like

the GRE or MAT, perceived by some prospective students as barriers to graduate school. Students need only to make application, have a suitable undergraduate grade point average, and possess a desire to thrive in the program.

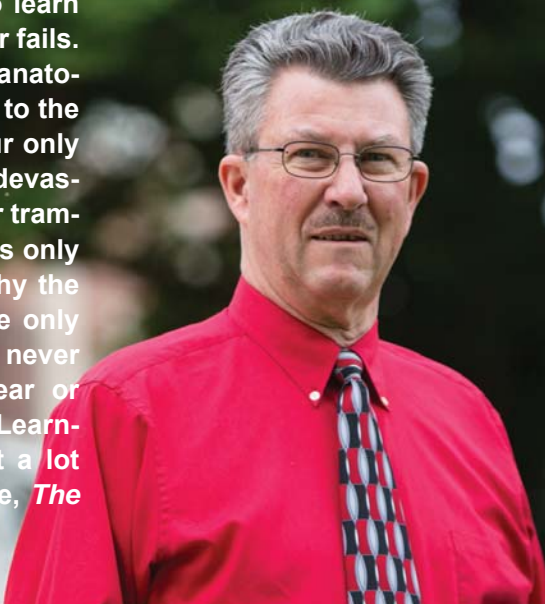
“This first group of students is incredibly diverse and of high caliber,” said Price. They come from a wide

variety of undergraduate backgrounds and life experiences. “Some,” Price said, “even hold graduate degrees from other programs and institutions.”

The Master of Arts in Critical and Creative Thinking gets support not only from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate Studies Office at UNO, but since it is totally online, it is also supported by and collaborates with NU Online Worldwide, an NU system-wide clearinghouse for all online programs. Plans are being made for future collaborations with other UNO and NU System programs. Persons interested in the MA CCT can contact Dr. Price directly at 402-554-4484, Graduate Studies at <http://www.unomaha.edu/graduate-studies>, or University of Nebraska Online Worldwide, <http://online.nebraska.edu>.



"The best thing for being sad," replied Merlin, beginning to puff and blow, "is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn." — T.H. White, *The Once and Future King*



## Manley retires

As Eric Manley retires after 34 years at UNO, 11 in Chemistry, 23 in the Dean's office, and roughly 20 in his unofficial position of college sage, we celebrate his "holy curiosity," his drive to learn "why the world wags and what wags it."

At a young age, Manley's curiosity was piqued by algorithms, such as those employed in chemistry. He excelled at chemistry in high school, going on to earn a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from UNL in 1969 and a Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico in 1976.

While at Oklahoma State, Manley's curiosity about the algorithms of technology led him to develop an interface between a spectrometer and a computer and the software to analyze the kinetic data. While at Iowa State, he programmed simulations and drills on a Vax computer. He was offered an Assistant Professor position with the Chemistry Department at UNO in 1981, in part because of his work in computer assisted instruction. According to plan, or perhaps an algorithm, he earned tenure and promotion to Associate Professor in 1986.

In 1988, Manley answered a call to apply his problem solving skills to university governance. Dr. James Carroll, Emeritus Professor and Chemistry Chair, remarks that he suspects that Manley is the youngest faculty member to have served as Faculty Senate President. Carroll adds, "Eric's enthusiasm is too great and his interests so broad that Eric never fit in the Chemistry Department. It was just his home base... The pull to a broader vision was apparent early in his career, and served as a prelude to the invitation to join the Dean's office as an associate there."

Working in the Dean's office might be the perfect assignment for a person curious about nearly everything--allowing him to dabble in the entire spectrum of the liberal arts. As assistant and then associate dean, Manley worked on the highest order business of the college, counseling faculty and administrators in the development and implementation of degree programs and advising students in completion of those degree programs, THOUSANDS of students.

His genuine curiosity about those students' studies and lives often led to wide-ranging discussions, not uncommonly stretching beyond the scheduled appointment time. It wasn't the least bit strange to find the entire dean's suite dark with the exception of one office, after 5 p.m., and Dean Manley deep into animated discussion with a student on the mechanics of this or the science of that. Manley invested heavily in "engaging" students long before it became a buzzword in pedagogy.

Manley's curiosity about technology also made him a tremendous asset to the college and UNO, preparing him to take the lead in moving the college into the computer age, at all levels, from helping staff to learn to use a mouse to complex programming of college requirements.

Dan Kenny, a UNO programmer/analyst, began working with Manley on the student records system in 1993. "I got to know Eric as a colleague... He took to the computer language FOCUS better than anyone else at UNO," says Kenny. "Later I had the pleasure to work with him on Degree Works. As he always has been, Dr. Manley took to the technical details of scribing the catalog rules with the gusto that he applied to everything. To this day, he has deep curiosity in understanding how things are put together with software systems."

Charlene Wilcox, Coordinator of Records and Registration, adds, "Eric relished the chance to experiment with what would happen if he did this or changed that -- he looked at tables and values, figuring out their relationships to each other. Oh, how he loved to explore!"

Dean Manley, thank you for 34 years of taking an enthusiastic interest in our lives and our mission, and what Rich said.

"Eric has been a great colleague, mentor and friend, as well as a wonderful resource for all kinds of information that I have needed to know along with even more information I didn't realize I needed to know."

--- Rich Lomneth, Chemistry Chair



# Menard's Legacy: Teaching from the Heart

As a professor of political science, Orville Menard became muse and mentor to his students, inspiring and supporting them far beyond the last day of class and indeed beyond his own lifetime. In an interview for the *Omaha World Herald* (1/14/2014), former student and long-time friend, Chuck Hagel explained Menard's extraordinary impact as a teacher: "There are a lot of smart people in the world, but all of them aren't necessarily equipped with a certain humanity he had."

Dr. Melvin Cohen, who received his BA and MA in political science at UNO, says Menard changed his life. As a graduate student, when Cohen was looking for a study abroad opportunity in France, Orv and Darlene Menard invited him to travel through France with them. From there, Cohen went on to research and publish in the area of French politics and later used his knowledge of comparative politics to develop expertise in African politics. He is now a professor of political science at Miami University Middletown in Ohio. "Orv has been a mentor to me in so many ways," Cohen says. "He embodies integrity, self-confidence, and humility. I would hope I have learned from him."

As she did in France, Darlene Menard, Orv's wife of 60 years, supported her husband in all his endeavors to raise up his students to higher levels of achievement and self-confidence. Before meeting Orv and Darlene Menard, Teresa Houser saw herself as an average student. "Probably the most significant contribution the Menards gave me is that they believed in me," Houser says. "Time after time, they helped me to see my potential and to reach it. Their confidence in students is so contagious that we cannot help but believe in ourselves."

Houser graduated from UNO with a BA in political science, spent 10 years working in Washington, D.C., in various government positions and as a lobbyist.

Today she is an instructor at Midland University. She adds, "My professional success and achievements can be traced directly to the lessons learned in his classroom and the limitless moral support and encouragement Dr. and Mrs. Menard so generously provided outside the classroom."

Students might choose to honor mentors in a number of ways. One of the most unique might be an invitation from Vice President Joe Biden to attend the ceremonial swearing in of the United States Secretary of Defense. In the photo below are Lilibet Hagel, Orville Menard, Darlene Menard, and Chuck Hagel at the event.

Houser and Cohen along with others are contributors to the Darlene and Orville D. Menard Scholarship, awarded each year to an undergraduate political science major.

In Orv Menard's 34 years at UNO, he received the UNO Outstanding Teacher Award, the Chancellor's Medal, and a Ralph Wardle Professorship for distinction in teaching and research. He initiated the European Studies Conference, the Arts and Sciences Honors Program, and was instrumental in the creation of the International Studies program. He published regularly in Nebraska politics, earning local notariety for his book *River City Empire: Tom Dennison's Omaha*.

His colleague Dr. Harl Dalstrom knew what mattered most to Orv.

His great natural ability, his strong individualism, and a steadfast drive to achieve his goals did much to bring him distinction in his career. Yet he knew that his family, especially his wife, Darlene, and his teachers had done much to bring him a fulfilling life, and he gave to others spontaneously. Professor Menard helped two generations of students discover that joyful experience of learning which teachers at all levels had helped him to find.

## The Legacy Series is dedicated in memory of John M. Newton (1929 – 2011).



From 1974 to 1994, Jack Newton was Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and shepherded UNO's largest and oldest college through critical times and transformations. His leadership affected students numbering in the tens of thousands over those 20 years and his passions for learning, teaching and serving the community have helped to

map our course for many years into the future.



# You can make a difference!

Help the UNO College of Arts and Sciences fulfill its mission by giving today. We rely on private giving to provide necessary support to better the college, uphold the value of your liberal arts degree, engage the community, and transform lives. No matter the size of your gift, you can make a difference.

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