



P-16 INITIATIVE

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Sustained Dialogue

By Rachel Johnson

Student council members from Omaha Northwest Magnet High School (NWHS) brought P-16 service learning experiences to a new level this fall through a unique partnership with the Anti-Defamation League of Omaha (ADL) and UNO. As NWHS student council sponsor Mr. John Nguyen acknowledged, working with UNO Professor Dr. Patrick McNamara's *Intro to Political Science* class gave his students the opportunity to "do more" in the community, as well as a chance to learn lessons that are hard to teach in a classroom setting.

Through their P-16 collaboration, NWHS and UNO students learned to facilitate dialogue around issues impacting Omaha youth such as biases and stereotypes. Under the guidance of the ADL's Educational Project Associate, Susan Wallis, alongside Mr. Nguyen and Dr. McNamara, the students engaged in their own peer-to-peer facilitation. The collaboration culminated with the UNO and NWHS students guiding fellow youth from various Omaha high schools in conducting their own powerful conversations.

"This project has been nerve racking, exciting, and inspiring all at the same time," said UNO student Samantha Brown. "I know we only held dialogues with the students for about 30 minutes but I feel like just planting that small little seed in the back of their minds will make them stop and think next time they start to stereotype someone." All three partners hope these dialogues will foster a deeper appreciation of respect in all communities and build courage to stand up for others.

Service Learning is an experiential, collaborative method of teaching using projects that promote academic learning and are tightly linked to course content while meeting the need of the community.

CONTACT US:

Paul Sather
Director, 554-6019

Julie Dierberger
P-16 Coordinator, 554-3268

Laura Krueger
Service Learning Associate,
554-2712

Lucy Garza Westbrook
Community Liaison,
554-3055

Pamela Ashley
Program Eval. & Assessment,
554-3656

Brandy Klipfel
Administrative Technician,
554-2427

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS:

Ali Baum 554-4461
Rachel Johnson, 554-4464
Tiffany Kelly, 554-4466
Jodi Korth, 554-4467
Carol Redwing, 554-4463
Angeela Shrestha, 554-4462
Deibi Sibrian, 554-4470
Olivia Tarry, 554-4465
Daniel Walsh, 554-4468
Olga Zeisler, 554-4469

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Bully Breeds: Tough Pups, Kind Hearts

By Angeela Shrestha & Carol Redwing



German Shepherds, Pit Bulls, Rottweilers, and Doberman Pinschers, otherwise known as “bully breeds,” are often stereotyped as dangerous and unadoptable. Students from Dr. Dave Ogden’s *Principles of Public Relations* class and Ms. Kristine Bielenberg’s 3rd grade students at Field Club Elementary worked on a P-16 service learning project with the Nebraska Humane Society (NHS) to raise awareness about these commonly misunderstood and feared dog breeds. In addition, the students hoped to raise money for NHS, while also dispelling myths about the animals along the way.

The students also worked together to research the bully breeds, then created mini books and informational posters about the different breeds. To enhance learning, a guest speaker from a breed-specific rescue group gave

a live dog presentation during a visit to Field Club. The Field Club students made dog treats to sell during various school events with proceeds benefitting NHS.

Ms. Bielenberg shared, “This project has taught my class to be more compassionate towards animals and each other. It has also increased their engagement in several subject areas.” Through the integration of public relations concepts with genuine concern for our canine friends, the UNO and elementary students worked together with NHS to educate the community about not only the importance of training powerful breeds, but also treating them with kindness.

Start with a Story, End with a Community

By Ali Baum

In order to learn how photographic images can “tell the story” of homelessness in Omaha, students from Professor Tanya Seina’s *Social Work and Civic Engagement* class collaborated with guests of Siena Francis House (SFH) and students from Monroe Middle School in an illuminating P-16 service learning project.

To begin the project, storyteller Rita Paskowitz met with Monroe Art Club students and challenged them to reflect on existing stereotypes of homelessness and inspired them to see homelessness from varying perspectives. UNO and Monroe students then visited Siena Francis House and explored the idea of “home” by engaging in dialogues with residents about their experiences. Later, both student groups and SFH residents visited Joslyn Art Museum to explore various artistic components and feelings involving portraits. At the final celebration, Dr. Peter Szto, Associate Professor of Social Work at UNO, presented on how photographers and artists express stories through their art.

The Monroe students will bring voices of the community to life next semester by transforming stories written by SFH guests into pieces of art, explored in one or two mediums (e.g., painting, photography, graphic novel). “I want to do this again next semester. I’d really like to follow up with the project and see how all of the pictures turn out,” said Andrew Kappel, a sophomore majoring in Social Work.

Intercultural Senior Center Olympics

By Angeela Shrestha & Carol Redwing

As a part of their P-16 service learning project, students from Dr. Lyn Holley's *Programs and Services for the Elderly* class and Omaha South High Magnet School's "Characters in Action" students teamed up to organize an afternoon of Olympics for the elders at the Intercultural Senior Center (ISC) in November. The Intercultural Senior Center provides services to a diverse elderly population in Omaha, representing seniors from at least 12 different countries around the world. Laura Komenda, a UNO Gerontology student said, "It was great to see how much fun the high school and the older adults had together. I feel that it is important for us to be involved in the community and to work together for the good of everybody. I enjoyed planning and attending the events."

The students first met with the seniors to make flags of the countries represented at the center. The seniors guided the students in the craft work. The flag activity served as a meaningful opportunity for the students to interact with the seniors and learn more about their home country and culture. On the day of the Olympics event, the seniors set up an information booth showcasing traditional items that they brought from their home countries. The flags that they made earlier were displayed in those booths. The national anthems of each country played at the beginning of the Olympic games. The seniors joined students for lunch and a series of games such as bowling, bean bag toss, cup stacking, bottle ring toss, bingo, musical chairs, and



much more. The highlight of the event was when Bhutanese seniors took up a traditional bamboo flute "Bansuri" and hand drum "Madal," popular back in their home country, and shared traditional folk music. The Olympics brought different cultures and generations

together. The seniors were happy and excited for getting to participate in the games organized by the students, who in turn were able to enrich their knowledge about the seniors and their different cultures and traditions.

Storm Water Sustainability

By Daniel Walsh



In an effort to enhance public awareness and understanding of storm water issues in Omaha, Professor Steven Rodie's

Landscape & Environmental Appreciation course teamed up with Ms. Julie Lassley's 6th grade science students from Benson

West Elementary to conceptually design a rain garden on the school's property. The goals of the P-16 project were to increase intergenerational public awareness and understanding of the quality, conservation and proper management of groundwater, habitat conservation, and urban soils in Nebraska.

This project aimed at capturing curriculum directives from STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) in a creative way. Students incorporated artwork through the design of a functioning rain garden, as well as by incorporating Benson West student insights about their school's history and place in the neighborhood. In a final meeting of the semester, UNO and

Benson West students shared their rain garden designs on UNO's campus.

Reflection was an integral component to the project, with the students reflecting on what sustainability has to do with core science concepts in the context of urban environments. Looking ahead, the project hopes to partner with a community group, such as a Benson retirement community, to help foster community buy-in, as well as to maintain the garden once it is completed in the spring of 2015. "I feel the students gained an unforgettable experience," said Ms. Lassley. "I look forward to seeing their growth in learning this spring as they complete the rain garden. It will be a memorable experience for all, I'm sure!"

Día de los Muertos Celebration

By Deibi Sibrian



"The Día de los Muertos celebration was one of the most unique cultural experiences of my life!" said Daniel, a UNO student in Dr. Maria Arbelaez's *Intro to Chicano/Latino Studies* class. Día de los Muertos is a celebration of life and the remembrance of loved ones that have passed away. This P-16 service learning project was hosted on October 30th by the Intercultural Senior Center, Bryan High School and Omaha South High Magnet School students, Millard West students, and the UNO *Chicano/Latino Studies* classes at the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center.

In addition, Ms. Melanie Caudillo's Mixed Media Accelerate Program students and UNO Professor Bart Vargas' *Drawing and Design 2D/3D* students were also involved; they collected

recyclable materials to make art themed after the "Día de los Muertos." The art was exhibited for the entire event.

During the celebration there was live music performed by the UNO jazz band, delicious food, and fun, culturally engaging activities. In all, about 300 people attended the lively celebration.

"I really enjoyed the Día de los Muertos and how we were warmly welcomed with the little Mexican band," said a Bryan High school student. "I honestly enjoyed the decorations and the ceremonial dances by the elders. It made me want to learn and experience the actual tradition held in Mexico, since in my family the cultural traditions weren't exposed on my siblings and me," said Yesenia, one of Dr. Arbelaez's students.



Bringing North Omaha's History to Life

By Stasia Most

The Living Histories: North High project spent the fall semester exploring North Omaha from a historical perspective. North

High Magnet School *African American History* students, taught by Ms. Bridget Murphy, and Dr. Manfred Wogugu's

Introduction to Black Studies students had the opportunity to bring stories from the past to light. Located on North 36th Street, North High Magnet School can be found right in the heart of some of North Omaha's most historically rich sites.

After visiting Love's Jazz and Art Center, Omaha Star Newspaper and the Great Plains Black History Museum, students began to conduct interviews, take pictures, and record data of the various sites' vast histories. One high school student reflected, "It's important for our community and schools to keep African American history alive and to remember the trials Omaha's African Americans had to go through for equality."

North High students were mentored throughout the P-16 project by UNO students as they prepared their presentations. Colette Minniefield got to know her mentees on a personal level. "I really enjoyed working with the students at North High. I like that I got to know all of them and what their plans are after they graduate high school. They were a great group to work with and this was a great experience!" Student presentations were shared with Omaha Public School educators in conjunction with the "Making Invisible Histories Visible" project. As a result of the project, educators and students alike were able to see that everyone has a story to share and a lesson to learn from history.

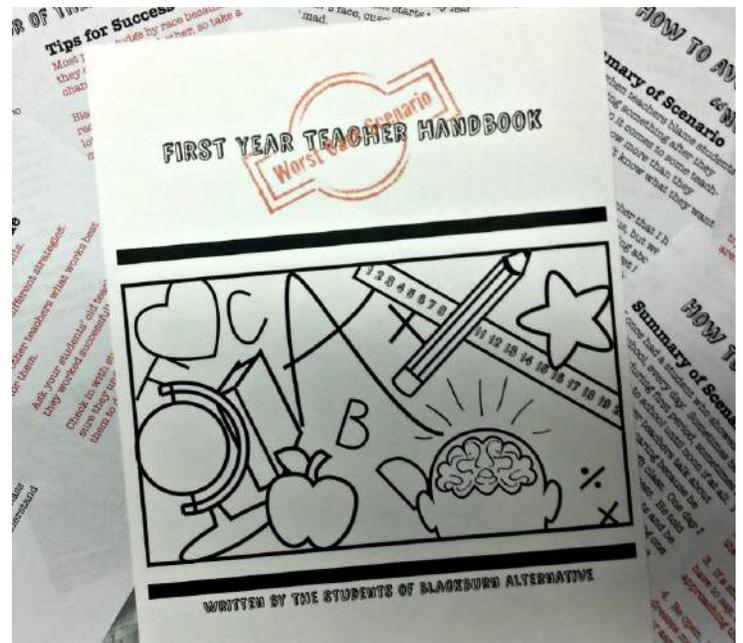
Worst Case Scenarios Lead to Best Practices

By Tiffany Kelly

Engaging students in course curriculum can be a challenge for new educators. In December, students from Dr. William Austin's *Multicultural Education* class and Blackburn Alternative Program *Life Skills* class, taught by Mrs. Cathy Nelson and Mrs. Hillary George, co-presented their "Worst Case Scenario" manual for first-year teachers. This manual was the result of a six-week long P-16 Service Learning project that highlighted common classroom behavioral occurrences and how these occurrences should be handled by the educator

from the students' perspective. "Teachers must understand that they may not get the students that they want but receive the students that come to school. The question then becomes, how to get students excited for class?" said Mrs. Nelson.

Over the course of the semester, the students collaboratively worked with UNO students as they explored and reflected upon their educational journeys. Using the Blackburn students' perspectives, UNO students identified characteristics that make an educator positive



and effective. The Worst Case Scenario manual was later presented to other Blackburn students, future educators, and other community members. A

Blackburn student book signing occurred after the presentation to recognize their contributions to building stronger educators in the future.

Making the Grade to End Hunger

By Olga Zeisler

Mr. Craig Howell, director of Omaha's Hunger Collaborative, has a life-long dream: ending hunger in Omaha. With the help of Partnership 4 Kids, students from Lewis & Clark, McMillan, Marrs, Monroe and Norris Middle schools, and UNO Thompson Learning Community sophomore students, Mr. Howell may be closer to realizing this dream.



This semester, the student groups collaborated on several P-16 service learning activities to gain insights about and address hunger in Omaha. They visited Together Inc., Heartland Hope Mission, and Heart Ministry, all partners in the Hunger Collaborative. After taking a *StrengthsFinder* assessment, the students integrated

their personal strengths into brainstorming meaningful plans of action to address hunger and homelessness in Omaha, which was formally presented to staff at each Hunger Collaborative site. "It was a bit of challenging to visit a place like this at first," said UNO student Maria Lizardi. "It was an even bigger challenge to see how we can use all such

different strengths, but we felt committed to this issue."

The students proposed a wide range of ideas on combatting hunger in Omaha, including raising community awareness of hunger through social media, research and advocacy, conducting a food-drive, and installing an Aquaponics

system. These proposals will be implemented on Martin Luther King Day, 2015. With no concrete guarantee of success or knowing the final impact, the students have at least found that the strength of a united community is greater than the sum of its individual parts.

Letter from the Program Coordinator

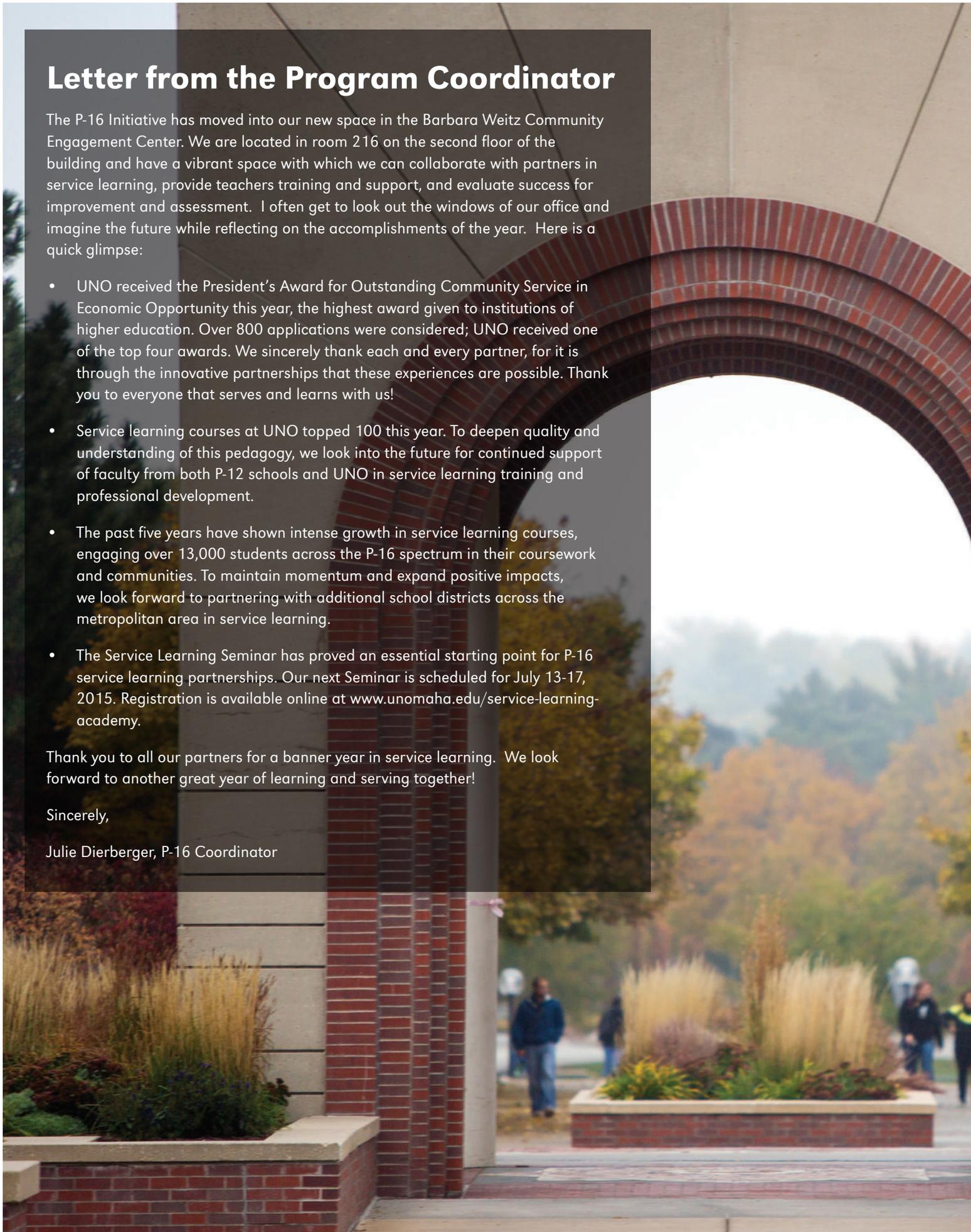
The P-16 Initiative has moved into our new space in the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center. We are located in room 216 on the second floor of the building and have a vibrant space with which we can collaborate with partners in service learning, provide teachers training and support, and evaluate success for improvement and assessment. I often get to look out the windows of our office and imagine the future while reflecting on the accomplishments of the year. Here is a quick glimpse:

- UNO received the President's Award for Outstanding Community Service in Economic Opportunity this year, the highest award given to institutions of higher education. Over 800 applications were considered; UNO received one of the top four awards. We sincerely thank each and every partner, for it is through the innovative partnerships that these experiences are possible. Thank you to everyone that serves and learns with us!
- Service learning courses at UNO topped 100 this year. To deepen quality and understanding of this pedagogy, we look into the future for continued support of faculty from both P-12 schools and UNO in service learning training and professional development.
- The past five years have shown intense growth in service learning courses, engaging over 13,000 students across the P-16 spectrum in their coursework and communities. To maintain momentum and expand positive impacts, we look forward to partnering with additional school districts across the metropolitan area in service learning.
- The Service Learning Seminar has proved an essential starting point for P-16 service learning partnerships. Our next Seminar is scheduled for July 13-17, 2015. Registration is available online at www.unomaha.edu/service-learning-academy.

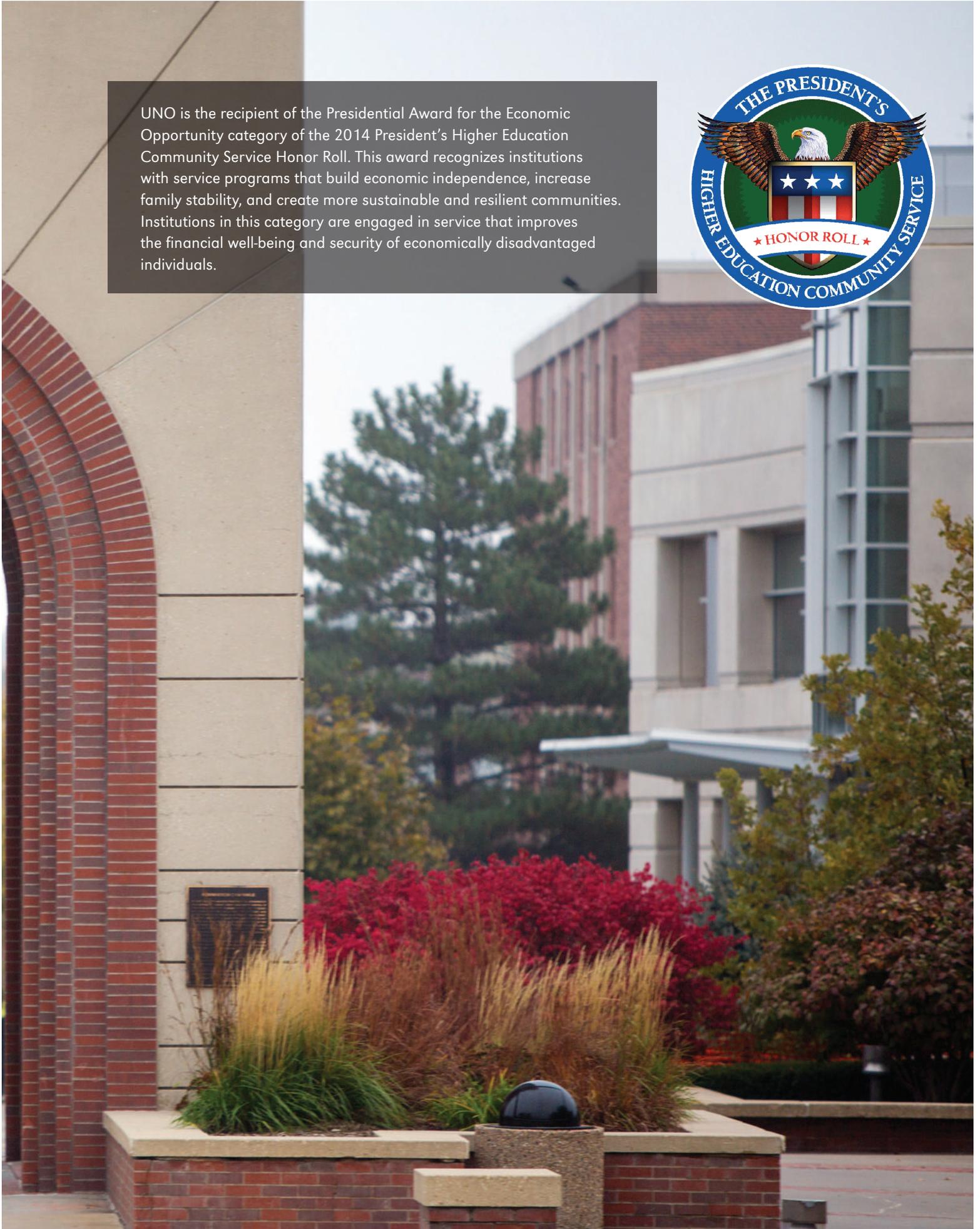
Thank you to all our partners for a banner year in service learning. We look forward to another great year of learning and serving together!

Sincerely,

Julie Dierberger, P-16 Coordinator



UNO is the recipient of the Presidential Award for the Economic Opportunity category of the 2014 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. This award recognizes institutions with service programs that build economic independence, increase family stability, and create more sustainable and resilient communities. Institutions in this category are engaged in service that improves the financial well-being and security of economically disadvantaged individuals.



Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center 216
6001 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68182



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July 13-17, 2015

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