



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
SERVICE LEARNING ACADEMY

P-16 INITIATIVE

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UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Omaha

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

Not only do service-learning projects provide meaningful connections to curriculum for P-12 and UNO educators, but many also align directly with the University of Nebraska Omaha's universitywide goals focusing on:



SUSTAINABILITY



EARLY CHILDHOOD



STEM



GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

Throughout this newsletter, these indicators will help to show a project's connection to one of these four goals.



UNO student Taleisha Newbill and two of the Lewis and Clark Girl Scouts discuss their life goals and how they will make those goals reality in the project "Get Your Worth."

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT: GET YOUR WORTH!

By Camtrice Bexten

This semester, UNO students and the Girl Scouts formed an exciting new partnership. Professor Peggy Jones's *Black Women in America* class teamed up with Taylor Jackson's Girl Scouts troop from Lewis and Clark Middle School for "Get Your Worth." In this service-learning project, the two student groups interacted throughout the semester as pen pals and through a series of visits. They explored topics of self-advocacy, education, and career planning, including a special "Dream Your Future" week where Prof. Jones guided students through important

career topics such as salary negotiation. The students had the opportunity to learn from each other and share about their commonalities as well as learn about important Black women.

As part of the project, the Girl Scouts toured the UNO campus to get a taste of college life and the wide variety of careers available to them; the troop even participated in a college class with the UNO students. At the "Get Your Worth" celebration, the Girl Scouts presented what they learned throughout the semester to their college

partners, and each girl received a photo scrapbook commemorating the project. For Prof. Jones, the project was the culmination of much planning and collaboration between the partners. "The end result was that my class worked with the Girl Scout troop to serve the troop's needs for exploring race, gender, self-advocacy, and leadership as part of their curriculum. It was an amazing experience all around, with both groups of young women reflecting, learning, and sharing with each other."



A UNO Intensive Language (ILUNO) student learns from a Holling Heights English Language Learner (ELL) student while perusing books on a visit to Omaha Public Library - Millard Branch.

THROUGH OUR EYES & HEARTS: CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

By Meghan Perrin

Students in Linda Loftus's Intensive Language Program (ILUNO) often don't speak the same native language. Nor do the students in Mrs. Kim Brown's English Language Learners (ELL) program at Holling Heights Elementary. However, when both groups of students came together, they were all able to practice their English.

The two classes partnered with Omaha Public Library (OPL) Millard Branch in a P-16 service-learning project this spring. The students discussed their individual cultures and found many similarities, as well as many differences. They gathered at OPL to listen to the story *Same, Same but Different* by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw and were

inspired to write their own book, depicting some of the many similarities and differences between their cultures.

Students interacted on UNO's campus to paint collective art murals for Holling Heights and OPL's Millard Branch to reflect the discussions about culture and language they were having. As Millard Public Schools District ELL Support Specialist, Pam Erixon, noted, "I know this project is making a lasting impression on my students. Offering them opportunities to be on the UNO campus and see students much like themselves attending college, is invaluable. It also has shown them that no matter their age, nationality, or language they can still contribute in a meaningful way".

GERMAN LANGUAGE PARTNERSHIP

By Alexandra Bauer

Have you ever wondered how learning a new language could become a service-learning project? This semester, UNO German Language professor Gwyneth Cliver collaborated with South High Magnet School German Language teacher Ella Patkovsky and Beveridge Magnet Middle School teacher Lauren Bartels to do just that. UNO students led by Frau Cliver adapted the German folk tale *Seven Ravens* into a play that South High and Beveridge Middle school students practiced and performed at the seventh annual CultureFest. The UNO students worked with the German Language students to learn their lines and the historical background of the play. Frau Cliver said, "This has been a wonderful way for my students to practice the process of writing with a real audience in mind. They also enjoyed interacting with the younger German students very much." Students were able to learn about the process of being in a production, design their own costumes, and perform for the CultureFest audience, all the while reinforcing their German language skills.



An Edison Elementary 2nd grade student assists a QLI resident with painting a picture about nature.

SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS TEACH CHARACTER AND CIVILITY

By Amber Smit

The spring of 2017 marked the third semester of the partnership between Mrs. Jennifer Doll-Fowler's 2nd grade students at Edison Elementary School, Quality Living International's (QLI) Mrs. Sue Hall-Erickson and UNO Professor Jeff Knapp's *Social Work 1500: Social Work and Civic Engagement* students. This semester, UNO students worked with residents at QLI writing skits to teach 2nd graders about a variety of topics, including bullying, respect, responsibility, and communication. The partners also worked together to create props for the skits and presented their work to the residents at QLI.

The interactions between QLI residents and 2nd grade students expanded how the 2nd grade classroom collaborated with the school's Alternative Curriculum Program (ACP). Edison students with special needs (ACP) engaged with the 2nd grade students and QLI residents during a weekly reading program. Additionally, having college students learning with the youth while applying their social work skills helped to reinforce the college-readiness skills students practiced daily. Because of the partnership, Mrs. Doll-Fowler noted positive changes in her students and an improved sense of belonging for all: "My students have learned to respect all people and appreciate everyone they meet for their similarities and their differences. They have learned how to have conversations with others, build relationships with genuine interest, and the importance of being kind to those we meet."



*UNO student Emery Snow helps Beveridge students to get into character at the first rehearsal of *Seven Ravens*.*

WATER QUALITY TESTING

By John Matthews



Dr. Richter-Egger (UNO) explains the process of ion chromatography to Omaha Northwest High and UNO students.

“Can we get one of these in our classroom?!” a student from Omaha Northwest High School (ONW) asked her teacher, Ms. Rachel Benzoni. The student had just excitedly run her last water sample collected from her home through the ion chromatograph inside a UNO Department of Chemistry Testing Laboratory. In their P-16 service-learning project, the ONW students worked with Dr. Dana Richter-Egger’s *Chemistry in Environment & Society* students at UNO to collect and test water samples taken all over the Omaha Metro Area. The samples were tested for contaminants that cause harm if consumed in high levels. Additionally, the P-16 team was charged with gathering water samples from their homes at different times to dispel myths about flushing lead out of pipes. This information was used to better equip Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance with real data from Omaha homes.

Over the course of three visits together, the ONW and UNO students learned about how the water supply is treated and filtered before consumption, as well as standard lab techniques used to test the quality of that water.

“

What stands out to me is the students’ enthusiasm when they’re on campus. Whether they are doing analysis or touring the campus they are extending their knowledge and experiences beyond what they’ve been able to at the high school level.”

UNO Professor Dr. Dana Richter-Egger

Not only did the students learn lab techniques associated with testing water supply quality, but they learned the broader impact that lead poisoning can have on communities.

Through the process of testing water samples, the students prepared a presentation on the dangers of lead poisoning backed from original data they produced for an educational piece that Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance can use with their clients.

THERE IS NO PLACE FOR HATE HERE

By **Lindsey Kreikemeier**

This semester, Professor Don Bowen's *Media Storytelling* class formed a P-16 service-learning partnership with Jessica Winter's *Advanced Media* class at Alice Buffett Magnet Middle School and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Throughout the semester, the students worked to support the "No Place for Hate" campaign that is sponsored by the ADL in several of the metro area schools. The students participated in the ADL's Promoting Empowerment in our World (PEW) event, conducted interviews around anti-bullying, and created an anti-bullying video for the ADL. The students who participated in PEW in February created a video diary room for the event. They then took the pictures and videos from that day and turned them into a promotional presentation that the ADL will be able to use in the future.

“ This project is a great example of how college students and junior high students can put their heads together to come up with something that will be useful for the nonprofit we've teamed up with.”

Professor Don Bowen

The Buffett and UNO students celebrated their project by presenting their work at the ADL's "No Place for Hate" rally in April on UNO's campus. Ms. Winter noted many positive effects of the project: "I love how engaged our middle school students were with their project and the college students. The project is supporting our class learning goals because [the students] directly applied their knowledge to better the community and gained real-world experience."



Students from Alice Buffet Magnet Middle School edit the video that they created from footage taken during a project event.

USING DATA TO MAP OUR IMPACT

By Rosa Najera

The P-16 Initiative was created to specifically address poverty and its residual effects such as: educational achievement gaps, high dropout rates, disengaged youth, and high truancy rates. Due to the link between poverty and the negative effects on students' academic achievements, the P-16 Initiative focused on training P-12 and UNO teachers in service learning at P-12 schools where 75% of families attending are below the poverty level (Dierberger, 2015). The Service Learning Academy used data visualization to articulate where these efforts were happening in the Fall 2015 semester.

The visual depiction of P-16 project locations with race and income data overlaid help identify areas with established relationships and areas where additional presence is possible. The income and race data on the map helps visualize the environment in which P-16 service-learning collaborations are occurring. Omaha is historically segregated with African Americans in the north, Latinos in the south, and Non-Hispanic Whites in the west, which is visually depicted in Cable's racial dot map (2013). Beyond racial segregation, according to city data in 2013, 31% of the population are below the

poverty level in North Omaha and 22.5% in South Omaha.

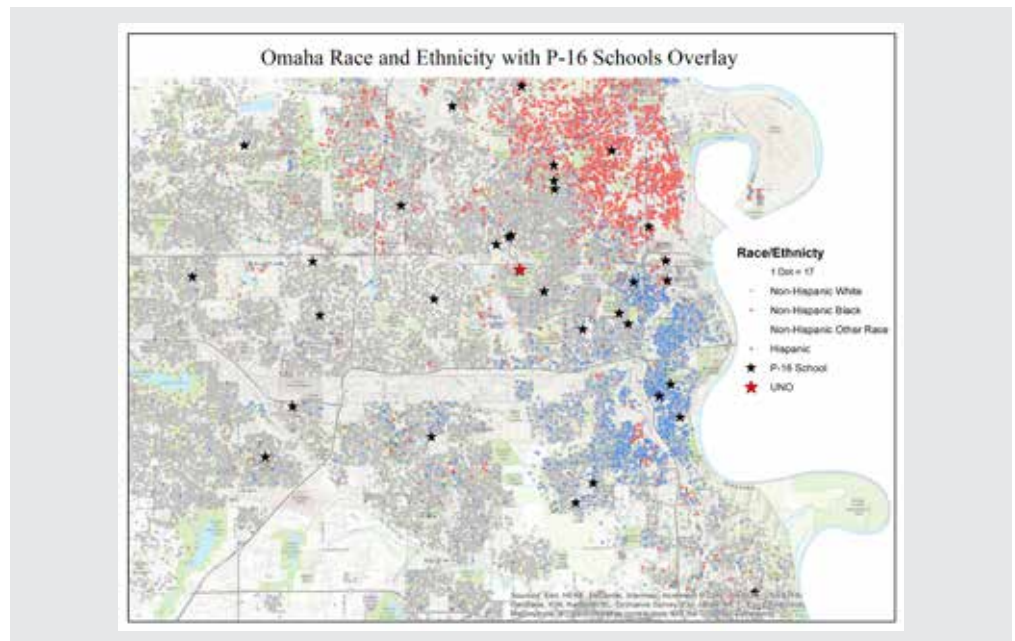
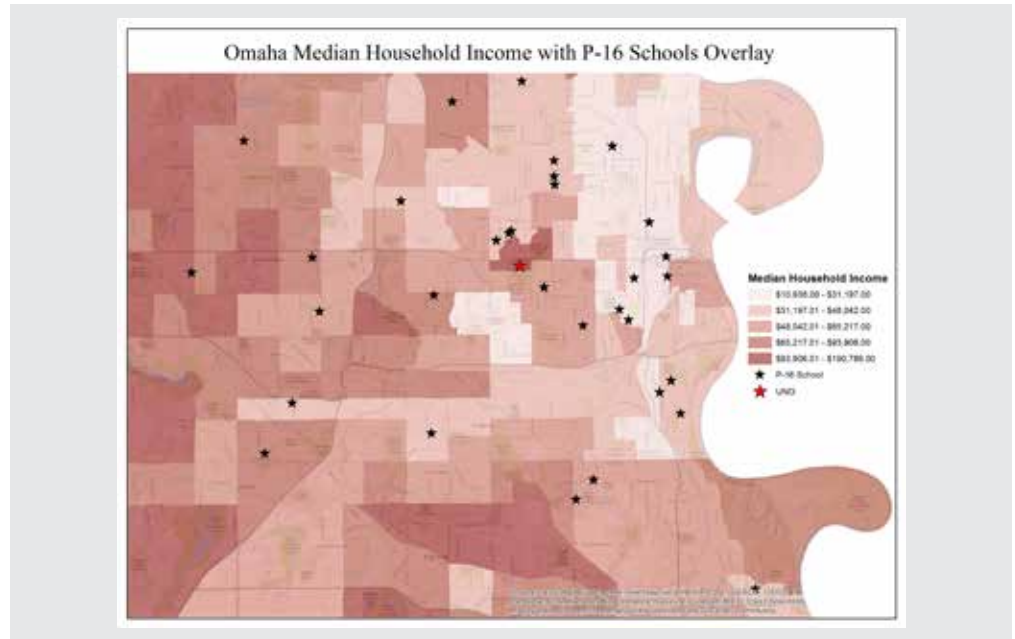
Overall, 41% of P-16 service-learning project school sites are located in North Omaha. Because race and ethnicity are often correlated to poverty, which negatively impacts academic achievement, it is important to continuously look at these two variables

and be strategic about how P-16 service-learning project school sites are recruited, created, and implemented.

Cable, D. (2013, July). The Racial Dot Map. Retrieved from Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service website: <http://www.coopercenter.org/demographics/Racial-Dot-Map>

Dierberger, J. (2015). P-16 service-learning partnerships: A model for success. Delano-Oriaran, O., Penick-Parks, M.W. & S. Fondrie (EDs.), The Sage sourcebook of service-learning and civic engagement (pp. 171-178). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

U.S. Census, 2010, Table S1903





UNO Computer Design student J.J. Loneman receives feedback on the application prototype developed with McMillan students.

FOR A BETTER OMAHA

By Stephanie Diaz

Dr. Brian Dorn's *User Experience Design* class worked closely with McMillan Magnet Middle School's 6th grade *Computer Applications* class taught by Ms. Kelly Kurz to create their P-16 service-learning project, "For a Better Omaha." Both groups discussed ways that McMillan students could improve their community, their school, and their families. They focused on improving cafeteria lunches, preventing bullying in schools, organizing fun time with family, and ensuring students are sleeping enough. Then UNO students collaborated with their McMillan counterparts to develop computer applications that would address these topics. One group developed an application for students to vote on the next day's school lunch while another created better surveillance to prevent and report bullying at school. The students met to critique and give feedback on the designs, each time creating a more enhanced version of the applications. At the end of the semester, the students came together to test out the prototypes of their new applications and celebrate the progress they made.

DEVELOPING LEADERS THROUGH SERVICE

By Savanna Allen

Millard South High School had an exciting start to their Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program this year. JROTC instructors Major Ryan Bagley and Sergeant Peter Mamula have been working hard this semester to develop leadership capacity in their students. Colonel Sean Coveney, Chair and Professor of Aerospace Studies at UNO, had similar goals for his ROTC and Arnold Air Society cadets. Through their meetings at Millard South and at UNO, the cadets were able to practice their leadership

skills together. They decided on a food insecurity theme, which led to a partnership with The Hunger Collaborative. The students connected their leadership skills to this issue by coordinating a food drive at the annual UNO Drill Meet and service at Together Inc. "Leadership isn't just commanding the situation or managing people, but mentoring them to make sure they have the tools to in turn lead others," stated UNO Cadet Zach Evans.



UNO and Millard South JROTC students with the results of their food drive in partnership with The Hunger Collaborative.



RASA students from Norris Middle School enjoy special seating privileges while visiting the capital building in Lincoln.

NEVER TOO YOUNG TO START MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By Socorrito Salcido

This year, students from the Redbird After School Academy (RASA) Council from Norris Middle School's Completely Kids program collaborated with Dr. Rhonda Saferstein's *Intro to American Government* class to focus on learning about the electoral process, just in time for the United States Presidential elections. The outcome of the election results stirred up a lot of mixed emotions for the students, so it was essential that Dr. Saferstein's class provided an opportunity to learn about citizens' First Amendment rights. UNO students teamed up with the RASA Council and focused on teaching the students how to advocate for themselves, their families, and their communities, as well as to voice their opinions in a constructive manner. UNO and RASA students wrote letters and made

phone calls to their senators' offices in order to voice concerns about issues that were important to them such as pollution, school lunches, health care, and immigration. These activities prepared them for a field trip to the state capital where they toured the capitol building and met with a state senator. Community partner Nebraskans for Civic Reform arranged the meeting, and students presented on the topic of pollution. A RASA student shared about her experience: "RASA Council is one of my favorite clubs because I have gotten to go places where government decisions are made and met people who impact my life and family, like [former] Congressman Brad Ashford." The ongoing partnership showed our RASA students that they are never too young to start making a difference!

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LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Leadership has a significant effect on the kind of work we are able to do, how we can do it, and the extent to which it is accomplished. Service-learning projects are created with the support of leadership, leadership provides a strategic path for which organizational goals are charted, it emboldens team members to dream and make the impossible tangible.

The Service Learning Academy's Director, Paul Sather, has provided strong leadership since 2003 as the first full-time Director of a position for which a path was forged through institutional leadership. Paul's dedication to service-learning led UNO to serve as a national leader in community engagement; Paul's position was endowed by Barbara and Wally Weitz in 2015. Upon his retirement, the Directorship will be named the Paul W. Sather Directorship of the Service Learning Academy. Paul's efforts institutionalizing service learning at UNO, developing strong community partnerships and empowering teachers across the Omaha metropolitan area to engage their students in their learning, are simply, momentous.

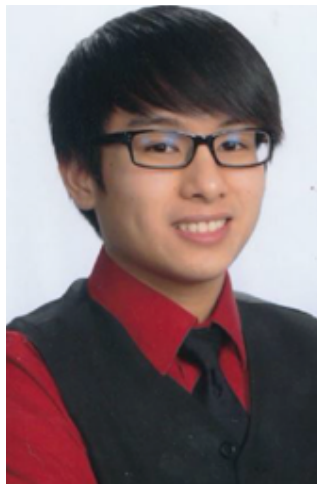
I want to also thank the community partners, faculty, teachers, and administrative leadership for dreaming with us, saying "yes," and going into uncharted territories when service-learning was starting. You paved the way for countless students that became politically engaged, more empathetic, and more aware of their community. You provided capacity and service for countless organizations. Even though transitions occur, we know strong leadership builds a strong foundation for the future.

Sincerely,

Julie Dierberger, P-16 Coordinator

2017 NEWMAN CIVIC FELLOW

Jimmy Nguyen



Jimmy Nguyen is a leader in service to his community. Mr. Nguyen, a freshman in the Biochemistry-Pre-Pharmacy program, is an outstanding campus and community leader who is fully committed to addressing barriers to student success. Mr. Nguyen is remarkable for his dedication to service activities on and off campus and for his advocacy for service to his fellow students. Over the years, he has devoted his

time and talents to establish and lead the South Sioux Student Association, which exists to help students from his hometown who come to the university persist until graduation, and has grown this organization by over 200% since 2015. As an English Language Learner and a young student, he recognizes the importance of a strong educational foundation and works tirelessly to ensure his peers have access to the

support and resources they need to be successful. In his hometown of South Sioux City, Mr. Nguyen has invested in the success of his peers by helping to establish Kids' Café (a local book bank), and has served on the Sioux-land Youth Advisory Council and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative. He continues his work with these organizations today while also continuing his efforts on campus.

OUTSTANDING SERVICE LEARNING FACULTY AWARD

Dr. Mitzi Ritzman



Mitzi J. Ritzman is an Associate Professor in the department of Special Education and Communication Disorders. She is the co-director of a peer-mediated social learning program for young adults

on the autism spectrum. Her philosophy of teaching is grounded in critical thinking, dialogue, and strengthening students' sense of personal responsibility; the integration of service learning into each of her courses has been a primary avenue through which these elements have been addressed. Dr. Ritzman has presented on the impact of community engagement at local and national conferences, was the recipient of a 2014 Carter Award for Service Learning by the Nebraska State Council for Social Studies, in collaboration with Omaha Public Schools' Blackburn Alternative Program, and was a 2016 UNO Service Learning Academy Faculty Fellow.

OUTSTANDING SERVICE LEARNING STUDENT AWARD

Gaby Amador



Gaby Amador is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with an endorsement in English as a Second Language and a minor in Spanish. Her anticipated graduation date is set for the

fall of 2018. Gaby participated in the *College Prep and Family Learning* project for the past two years. Her work on this project helped her gain a true appreciation to motivate students to pursue higher education, regardless of their circumstances. Gaby shared about her service-learning experience: "I truly felt the best reward knowing that I was able to give so much guidance to the families that I had worked with. I hope I can be able to help in (other projects) in some way, as well as in any other class in the future that involves a service-learning component. It is safe to say that my service-learning experience has earned a special place in my heart."



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SERVICE LEARNING SEMINAR 2017

July 10-14, 2017

Register at: sla.unomaha.edu

On the cover: UNO Social Work 1500 students and Omaha Street School students practiced interpersonal skills in partnership with Table Grace Cafe using the fun of a ball pit to spark conversation.



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