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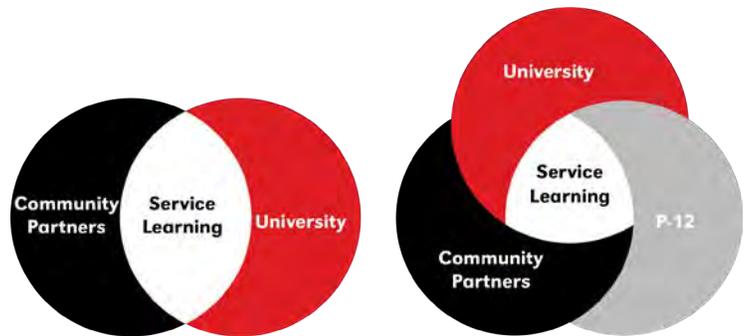
July 13-17, 2020

Don't forget to register for the Service Learning Seminar. During the seminar, participants have a front row experience to learn all about service learning.

The 4.5 day professional development experience is an opportunity for P-12 and after school teachers, administrators, and UNO full and part-time faculty members to understand the fundamentals of service learning and to develop a service learning project. Register at sla.unomaha.edu to reserve your spot.

SLA APPROACHES

What is the difference between the types of projects? The traditional service learning projects focus on a collaboration between community partners and a UNO class. The P-16 Initiative focuses on the collaboration between a UNO class, a P-12 class, and a community partner. Throughout the newsletter, projects will be identified with Traditional or P-16 based on their project structure. The stories are authored by members of the Service Learning Academy team.



TRADITIONAL MODEL

P-16 MODEL

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Not only do service learning projects provide connections to curriculum, but many also align directly with six areas that encompass the community engagement work at UNO and in the Omaha community. Throughout this newsletter, these indicators will show a project's connection to one of these six issue areas.



EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT



SOCIAL JUSTICE



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



HEALTH AND WELLNESS



INTERNATIONAL SERVICE



ECONOMIC SUFFICIENCY

LETTER FROM THE PAUL SATHER DISTINGUISHED DIRECTOR



On behalf of the Service Learning Academy team, I want to thank each and every collaborator for an outstanding decade serving and learning together. We are so proud of the projects developed, relationships made, research conducted, and the outcomes identified through service learning. As we close the decade, we look back and reflect on what we have learned, how we have grown, and dream for the future. One of the ways we can assess growth and learning is through research, which is the theme of this newsletter.

Research can take a variety of forms. The Service Learning Academy researches student perceptions of learning and skills applied in service learning courses through pre and post assessments. These data help us know students are building skills employers want such as critical thinking, teamwork, and communication in service learning courses. They also help us to identify areas where the Service Learning Academy can provide programming to strengthen service learning outcomes, which influences the programming and training we offer.

Quantifying outcomes can be difficult in service learning experiences. The outcomes can be related to student learning, community expectations, or civic learning goals. They often cannot be assessed easily and take time and effort to gauge. This newsletter is filled with qualitative stories of how service learning courses came to life and achieved their goals. It also tells stories of how students in service learning courses are using research to contribute to our community.

Pages 7 and 8 highlight how one person's contribution to service learning and their dedication to the Omaha community made a significant impact. Carlynn Hartman-Kurtz, the first Community Liaison in the Service Learning Academy, helped to build the service learning program at UNO. She facilitated training and developed partnerships between UNO faculty and community partners. She also had a passion to affect food insecurity in Omaha. Upon her passing, Carlynn's estate supported a program through No More Empty Pots for which service learning courses have contributed today. Carlynn's legacy lives on through the service learning partnerships that have evolved and programs that have grown from the seeds she planted so many years ago.

As we move into a new decade, I look forward to implementing the Service Learning Academy mission to facilitate university and community-wide partnerships, develop and collaborate on community-based research, and support rigorous service learning courses in pursuit of UNO's metropolitan mission to transform and improve the quality of life locally, nationally, and globally. Thank you for an exceptional decade; the Service Learning Academy team is excited to learn and serve with you in 2020!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Dierberger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Julie Dierberger, Paul Sather Distinguished Director

RESEARCH IN THE SPOTLIGHT

By: Amanda Anderson



A UNO student presents her findings from training dogs through positive behavior reinforcement at the Nebraska Humane Society.



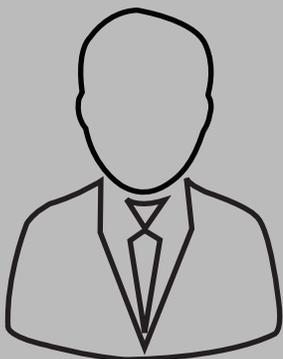
Burke High School students discuss their experience of testing soil at the Glacier Creek Preserve in Northwest Omaha.



The Teacher Researcher Partnership Project offered by UNO and Omaha Public Schools (OPS) in 2016 paired UNO faculty member Ashlee Dere with teacher Lee Stover of Burke High School. The pair quickly realized the research their students were doing was paving the way for a larger research collaboration between OPS and UNO. In 2017, Stover and Dere began the UNO-OPS Joint Research Symposium, which has now expanded to include multiple OPS schools, UNO departments, and service learning projects. Since its establishment, the symposium occurs annually and features a handful of exceptional service learning research projects.

Most recently, the 2019 UNO-OPS Joint Research Symposium, hosted at the UNO Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, included presentation themes ranging from wildlife conservation and sustainability to plastic bag use. The unique opportunity allowed UNO and P-12 student researchers to showcase their findings to a range of Omaha community members including nonprofit directors, government officials, P-12 administrators, community educators, and other students. The following OPS schools were represented at the symposium: Burke High School, King Science and Technology Magnet Middle School, and Northwest High Magnet School. In total, 76 P-12 students and 49 UNO students showcased their research through poster presentations or displays.

Sustainable Materials Management was one of many outstanding service learning projects highlighted at the event. UNO faculty member Steve Rodie and Northwest High School teacher Rachael Arens challenged their students to consider the advantages and disadvantages of banning plastic bags in Omaha through analyzing key facts and advocating for evidence-based solutions. Students were able to participate firsthand in advocacy by providing recommendations to influence political and social systems. Their decision to integrate and prioritize research as a key activity of their service learning project is testament to many of the educators involved in the UNO-OPS Joint Research Symposium who desire to encourage and celebrate student-led research through service learning.



DID YOU KNOW?

Over 90% of UNO students involved in service learning reported an improvement in the following workforce development skills: team work, critical thinking, leadership, problem solving, and public speaking.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT RETURNS FOR NEW ROLE

By: Stephanie Diaz

This August, Stephanie Diaz seized the unique opportunity to return to the Service Learning Academy (SLA) as the 2019-2020 Campus Compact AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA) member. Prior to this position, Diaz worked as a graduate assistant at the SLA while pursuing a Masters in Social Work and Public Administration. "When I learned there was another opportunity for me to be involved with service learning again at UNO, I jumped at the chance," Diaz said as she reflected on her decision to return to the office after graduation.

The SLA was awarded a grant from Campus Compact of the Great Plains for this position. Campus Compact AmeriCorps VISTA members serve organizations that help eradicate poverty by working alongside community members to meet the area's most pressing challenges while promoting local solutions. Education is a critical factor in the solution to poverty, so exploring how service learning can support education as an ingredient of student achievement is the primary goal of Diaz's service. The SLA will increase its capacity to address poverty in Omaha through Diaz fostering an awareness of P-12 assets and needs in the community.

Diaz's role is to advance community goals, while simultaneously strengthening SLA's ongoing partnership with P-12 schools in Omaha. She is currently conducting research about poverty in the community related to education. She said, "Research is a relatively new field for me but I find it fascinating." After combining her findings with information learned in listening sessions with P-12 teachers, Diaz plans to establish

training curriculum for UNO professors and community partners about addressing poverty through service learning. Her work will also contribute to the development of new, diverse P-12 partnerships in addition to the creation of anti-poverty P-16 service learning projects for the future.

E-mail Stephanie at svdiaz@unomaha.edu if you are interested in future listening sessions, research sharing, or trainings.



Diaz participates in a Coffee Chat at the Community Engagement Center.

THE BUSINESS SOLUTION

By: Amairany Fuentes



An essential part of service learning involves students taking their classroom lessons and applying them outside of the classroom. A prime model of this hands-on approach is UNO faculty member Erin Bass's *Business Ethics* course, which introduces students to the factors, opportunities, and pressures that lead many businesses and community agencies to face ethical dilemmas. To better understand the ethical dilemmas faced by agencies, UNO students had the opportunity to partner with a community agency and conduct ethics audits.

During the first few weeks of the fall semester, various community agencies in Omaha attended a class session, where they presented a brief overview of their organization's mission and purpose to the UNO students. Based on their personal ranking of the various agencies, students were each assigned an organization to partner with for the entirety of the semester.

As students performed ethics audits for their respective community agencies, they put into practice what they learned throughout their course

and developed an understanding of the foundations and processes that encourage and reward ethical decision making and behaviors. Bass said, "Service Learning allowed our class to gain real-world, practical experience while providing local non-profits valuable tools that will help strengthen their organization's ethics."

Throughout this service learning collaboration, both UNO students and the community agencies engaged in a direct exchange of knowledge and learned something new about business ethics. As community agencies learned how to examine and improve their ethical practices, students learned how ethical dilemmas impact the operations of community agencies in the real world.

"Service learning allowed our class to gain real-world, practical experience while providing local non-profits valuable tools that will help strengthen their organization's ethics."

— Erin Bass, UNO Faculty Member

LEARNING TO LOVE READING

By: Jared Torell

Graduate students from UNO faculty member Mitzi Ritzman's *Language Disorders: Birth to Five* course partnered with the Humanities Nebraska's Prime Time Reading Program. Founded in 1991, the program works in underserved communities to increase critical and analytical thinking skills in children and foster a love for reading.

Through this service learning project, UNO students managed the portion of the program that involves children 5-years-old and younger for Prime Time Reading interactions. Each interaction, led by UNO students, was hosted at Girls Inc., coordinated by the Humanities Nebraska, and open to families in Omaha to attend. The UNO students developed the lessons by choosing the books and preparing fun and hands-on activities. The families began each interaction by first eating a wholesome breakfast alongside their caregivers and UNO students. Sharing a meal allowed the children to feel comfortable with the UNO students before starting their reading lesson.

Ritzman said, "This project provides our students with the opportunity to... design activities that support the development of emergent literacy skills, while coaching caregivers to integrate similar activities into their daily interactions." Overall, the UNO students gained valuable experience working with young children in the classroom setting while addressing issues of educational support and social justice. This service learning project gives families an affordable reading program, while simultaneously working to close the achievement gap.



A Prime Time Reading student listens closely as a UNO student reads the story.

According to Humanities Nebraska, the majority of Nebraskan families who participated in the Prime Time Reading Program reported their children's discussion of books improved and their time spent reading as a family increased.



UNO faculty member Mitzi Ritzman's students prepared interactive activities for youth to help engage them while reading.

CREATIVE POWER OF COLLABORATION

By: Tracy Gilman

At the beginning of any traditional or P-16 service learning project, classroom instructors may request a Service Learning 101 presentation for their students. These presentations are offered by the SLA staff and provide students a short introduction to the meaning, importance, and expectations of service learning courses. The training was revamped this year when Graduate Assistant Tracy Gilman facilitated the successful student-led collaboration that would ultimately result in the production of a stunning Service Learning 101 video.

With support from the SLA, Gilman formed a video committee comprised of LaTrina Hall, P-16 Initiative Coordinator, and other graduate assistant colleagues including Socorro Salcido, Amy Zeller, and Jessica Foreman. Their goal was to create a short, engaging video articulating essential information for service learning students.

The committee had big dreams for production, which included finding a student animator to create portions of the video. Eventually UNO faculty member Lilly Lu introduced the committee to Grae Steele, an undergraduate student animator in the College of Communication, Fine Arts, and Media. Grae's exceptional talent as an animator proved a perfect fit for the Service Learning 101 video. In addition, the contribution of professional-quality video of campus was provided by University Communications Multimedia Specialist Rebecca Gratz. Gilman spearheaded the final production of the video by overseeing

the voiceover provided by UNO graduate student Derek Gilman and optimizing the video's accessibility for all students through collaborating with UNO staff members Becky Jacobs of the Accessibility Services Center and Richard Larson of the Office of Graduate Studies.

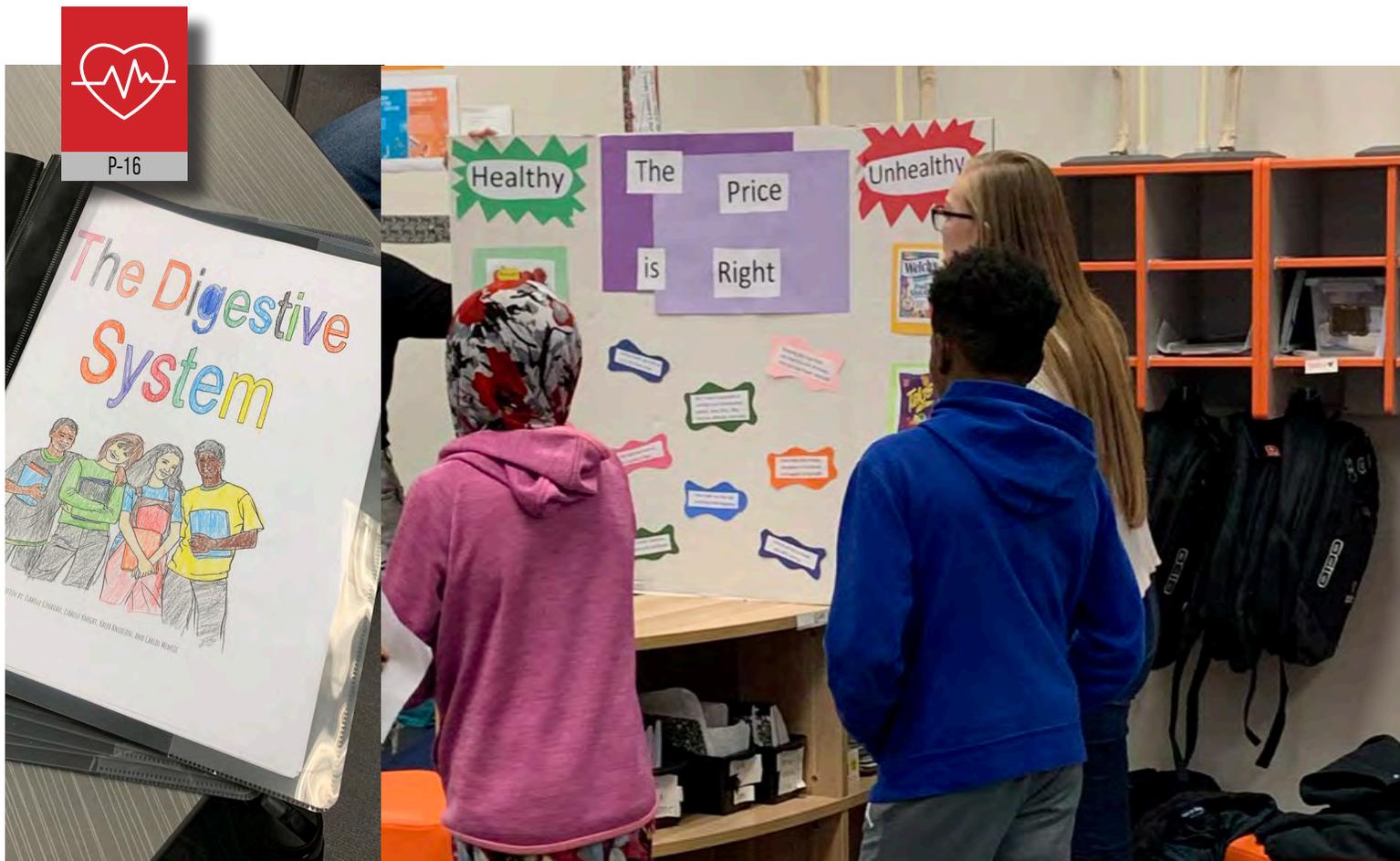
The video debuted in August 2019 and was immediately incorporated into the Service Learning 101 presentations for fall projects. Its success is testament to the outstanding collaboration and creativity exhibited by multiple UNO departments, students, staff, and faculty across campus. To view the video, visit <https://www.unomaha.edu/service-learning-academy/>. If you are a classroom instructor teaching a service learning course and interested in your students receiving a Service Learning 101 presentation, please inquire to your assigned graduate assistant or contact unosla@unomaha.edu for more information.

"It is awesome to watch an idea start out as a spark and grow into an amazing production. I was so proud of how all the students collaborated using their talents, experiences and passions to bring their ideas from paper to the screen."

— LaTrina Hall, Service Learning Academy



UNO Studio Arts student Grae Steele and SLA Graduate Assistant Tracy Gilman meet to discuss the Service Learning 101 video.



King Science and Technology Magnet Center and UNO students showcased a variety of information-sharing tools for No More Empty Pots including cook books, flashcards, coloring books, and games boards.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT... AND I CAN PROVE IT

By: Claire Fischer

How does food break down in the body? This is the question that teacher Kristen Utterback posed to her 6th grade *Science Foundation* class at the start of their service learning project at King Science and Technology Magnet Center. The project centered around a learning outcome that Utterback recognized was important for her students to acquire—the ability to research. To learn this concept, students spent the fall semester researching and learning about the digestive system, while working alongside collaboratively with students from UNO faculty member Aja Pelster's *Health Literacy* course. Based on the nature of their research focus, the project was called You Are What You Eat... And I Can Prove It.

While the 6th grade students developed skills in research and reporting, UNO students received hands-on experience tied directly to their course curriculum, which was to recognize the need for and practice health literacy among different populations. Specifically, UNO students adapted health and food-related information for clients of No More Empty Pots' pilot food program, which aims to be a version of "Meals on Wheels"

that delivers plant-based, fresh food to individuals living with cancer. The service is already delivered to people with food insecurity or access barriers. No More Empty Pots (NMEP) hopes to roll-out its pilot program on a larger scale to directly impact the lives of more cancer patients.

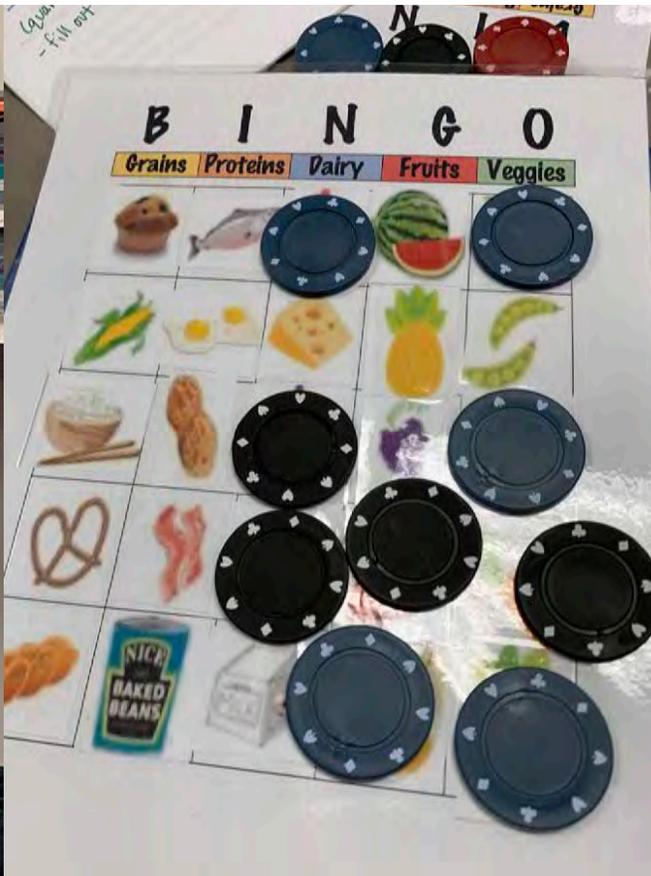
"We were so impressed by the projects the students completed. All of them were very creative and well-executed. No More Empty Pots is so excited to share what the students made!"

— Kate Swinarski, No More Empty Pots

NMEP asked the 6th grade and UNO students to develop health and food-related handouts of information for the organization to deliver

CARLYNN'S LEGACY LIVES ON

By: Katie Elfering, UNO Communications Student



to clients in addition to the packaged food already offered by the program. While researching the topic of food absorption and digestion through the lens of the program's unique needs, both UNO and King Science and Technology Magnet Center students became invested in the project and excited to deliver meaningful results to NMEP.

To celebrate the conclusion of their efforts, students presented their research findings regarding nutrition and their ideas for the pilot program of NMEP. Students brainstormed and created the following ideas as potential informational handouts for clients: cookbooks, poster boards, bingo games, and food flashcards. Their ideas were created with health literacy in mind, recognizing that different populations require unique information delivery.

Carlynn Hartman-Kurtz's legacy has inspired a decade of collaboration between No More Empty Pots (NMEP) and the Service Learning Academy (SLA). Her efforts shaped the foundation for a strong partnership of serving and learning together transpiring into the creation of countless opportunities for students in Omaha.



Carlynn's legacy continues to inspire student engagement across Omaha and beyond.

Hartman-Kurtz was the first employee the SLA hired in 1997 and served as the Community Liaison. "She truly helped shape and build service learning into what it is today," said Julie Dierberger, the SLA Paul Sather Distinguished Director. Throughout her career, Hartman-Kurtz found joy and passion working alongside NMEP, a grassroots nonprofit organization connecting individuals and groups to improve the self-sufficiency, food security, and economic resiliency of urban and rural communities.

In 2009 Hartman-Kurtz was diagnosed with Stage 4 Metastatic Cancer and lived with the disease for six years before passing away in 2015. During this time, she combined her experiences and networks from the SLA to produce an even larger impact at NMEP.

Nancy Williams, co-founder and CEO of NMEP, witnessed firsthand the passion Hartman-Kurtz had for both service learning and the mission of NMEP. "Carlynn understood the importance of community stakeholders providing real life opportunities for students to better understand community issues," Williams said. "[These opportunities] lead to more impactful solutions at the community level."

Hartman's impact not only lives on through the continuation of student involvement at NMEP through service learning projects, but she also chose to give in memoriam to NMEP, which in part continues to fund NMEP's meal delivery program to cancer survivors—the same program involved in the You Are What You Eat... And I Can Prove It project featured to the left.

"Carlynn always said to me that you can take the pretty way or the fast way," Dierberger said. Her preference for the scenic route is evident in the partnership that has unfolded between NMEP and SLA that will continue to last for decades to come.

"Carlynn understood the importance of community stakeholders providing real life opportunities for students to better understand community issues."

— Nancy Williams, No More Empty Pots

ART UNITES ALL

By: Amairany Fuentes



UNO students and seniors attend the *Madama Butterfly* production.



Seniors and UNO students reflect on their experience with Opera Omaha.



Traditional

When we think about the community resources available and accessible to senior citizens, we often tend to think about health and wellness related resources. However, through UNO faculty member Christopher Kelly's *Community Resource* course, UNO students were exposed to a wide range of community resources available to senior citizens that are not within the health and wellness model. Specifically, UNO students were able to learn more about opera in Omaha.

UNO students and senior citizens had the opportunity to attend Opera Omaha's production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* which depicts the story of Butterfly, a young Japanese woman that is married off to an American naval officer. Filled with love and betrayal, their story tragically unfolds. Throughout *Madama Butterfly*, the audience was exposed to heartbreaking melodies, mesmerizing sets, and vibrant costumes.

After the performance, both the UNO students and seniors had the opportunity to engage in an intergenerational discussion facilitated by Opera Omaha about *Madama Butterfly*. They began by discussing their expectations of the opera prior to seeing the performance and then elaborated on the ways in which their thoughts changed after seeing the performance. Afterwards, both students and seniors created collages that reflected an aspect of the opera that stood out to them during *Madama Butterfly*. Overall, the *Community Resource* course introduced opera to UNO students and seniors as a means to provide space for interaction among multiple generations.

"An important take-away from this project is the importance of building and sustaining relationships between members of our community across different generations. The opera is one of many ways in which different generations interact with one another and share common interests. There is much more we have in common than we might imagine and the arts is one way of discovering this."

— Chris Kelly, UNO Faculty Member



DID YOU KNOW?

In Fall 2019, the P-16 Initiative partnered with 20 unique P-12 schools in the Omaha Metropolitan Area.

FOOD SECURITY MATTERS

By: Maria Jimenez and Katie Pankonin



UNO faculty member Jeff Knapp assists South High Magnet School students as they tend to the Together garden during their initial site visit.

The many P-16 and traditional service learning projects offered by the Service Learning Academy (SLA) that focus on issues of food security are testament to the SLA's pledge to address high poverty in the Omaha community, as evident in the 2019/2020 strategic plan.

Food insecurity is defined as the social and economic condition involving the uncertainty of or limit on the basic accessibility of food. By connecting to community partners, the SLA historically recommends and integrates food accessibility and sustainability themes to the design and implementation of service learning projects. This fall was no exception as a variety of projects continued to address the same theme.

Two project examples occurred in UNO faculty member Jeff Knapp's *Social Work and Civic Engagement* course. In one project, Food for Thought, UNO students collaborated with the Blackburn Alternative Program's *Culinary* class taught by Staci Ivester-Christianson to serve meals at Adam's Park Senior Center for the 10th year. The project celebrated the community as everyone was "brought around the table" to learn about food preparation while enjoying nutritious food and each other's company.

Other UNO students collaborated with Kelly Lesser's Omaha South High

School *Art* class and the organization Together to create a cookbook that will be shared in varying capacities to inform, inspire, and empower the community regarding the impact of food and housing insecurity. South High students provided artistic visual components for the cookbook, while UNO students collected stories and recipes from Together clients.

Another project that addressed food security was a brand new project conducted by students of UNO faculty member Farrah Grant's *Introduction to Sustainability* course and Royonna Bristol's Omaha Bryan High School *Honors Environmental Science* class. Both student groups worked together through the semester alongside No More Empty Pots to research and present innovative solutions for food sustainability around the Omaha community.

Through firsthand service learning experiences with community organizations and leaders, students learn about and are witness to successful food security and sustainability programs in Omaha. The projects challenge students to be continual assets and resources moving forward in their community. Overall, providing food accessibility is a means to alleviating urgent poverty needs, and the Service Learning Academy aims to scaffold future generations of change-makers to find sustainable solutions.

BEYOND THE CELL

By: Grace Nelson



UNO students load the bus to attend a site visit to the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility.

Graduate students from UNO Faculty Member Mary Kate Hoffmann's *Social Work 8130: Generalist Practice I* course partnered with the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility (NCYF) for a service learning project for the fourth consecutive year this semester.

UNO students visited the NCYF on four separate occasions to practice

the Generalist Intervention Model by working with incarcerated youth on identifying, understanding, and leveraging their strengths. Through exploring their strengths, UNO students worked with incarcerated youth to set meaningful goals for the future.

The initial visit familiarized UNO students with the NCYF facility, daily schedules, and the available resources offered to youth through an informational tour. On their second visit, UNO students met in the cafeteria, where they were assigned to one or two youth to conduct an initial assessment.

NCYF Volunteer Coordinator Geri Knight asked the youth to take a strengths test and forwarded the results to the UNO graduate students. By utilizing the test results, students discussed and identified strengths with their partnering incarcerated youth(s). Together, they worked on setting goals grounded in their identified strengths.

Overall, UNO students employed a strengths-based approach, core to social work practice. When engaging with their assigned youth, they empowered them by creating space for youth to name and own their strengths. Understanding the youth's strengths and hopes for the future allowed UNO students to engage in meaningful conversation with incarcerated youth and connect them to valuable resources after their release and into their future.

FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

By: Mustapha Barry



A Marris Middle School student receives help solving math problems from her UNO student tutor.

UNO faculty member Michael Matthews' *Math for Elementary Teachers* course collaborated with Marris Middle School teacher Mary Kilnoski's *Math* class for the Maverick-Falcon Math Partnership project, which

allowed space for UNO students to coach the 5th grade students through math problems by applying innovative problem-solving techniques learned in their UNO course.

Students met at Marris Middle School, where the 5th grade students received one-on-one math instruction. By applying the theories and skills learned in their course, UNO students utilized media and technology as means to teach the lessons. According to Matthews, a student's ability to solve mathematical problems is enhanced when they can use a variety of tools to help them. Communication between students throughout the semester occurred virtually as well. "We made videos to communicate the solutions back and forth," said UNO student Kylie Dorner. "It was heartwarming to see their faces and hear about their hard work... I will miss working with these students."

This service learning opportunity was beneficial for the UNO students enrolled in the course, as they obtained hands-on practice with teaching math to young children. Marris Middle School students were eager to celebrate at the project's final interaction at UNO, where they were able to present what lessons they had learned throughout their involvement with the project.

COMMON GROUND

By: Amairany Fuentes



As we look around us, everyone appears heavily connected to an electronic device in today's society; even the youngest members of our community are familiar with a cell phone or Apple iPad. While spending time in front of the screen, we often forget how technology can be inaccessible and difficult to use for subsets of society.

In an effort to make electronic devices more accessible, UNO students from Jacques Musavyimana's *Thompson Learning Community Sophomore Seminar* course partnered with the Intercultural Senior Center to teach seniors basic computer and cell phone skills.

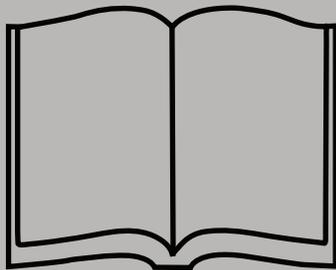
UNO students and Intercultural Senior Center participants attended four different interactions where seniors learned about various skills such as how to create an email, open social media accounts, change different cell phone settings, and avoid online fraud or scams. During each session, a brief presentation of each technical skill was given. UNO students then partnered with a senior participant to work one-on-one on any questions or concerns he or she had regarding technology.

Through every interaction, the senior participants were not the only ones learning something new. UNO students also benefited from the interactions. They seized the opportunity to learn from their community elders and even take a selfie or two during the exchange. While new technologies often are seen as sources of division or disconnect among different generations, this service learning project reinforced that technology may become common ground for seniors and college students to connect and bond.



A UNO student works with an Intercultural Senior Center client to discuss and answer questions about computer usage.

FALL 2019 IN REVIEW



109 COURSES

used service learning as a method of teaching at UNO



59 COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

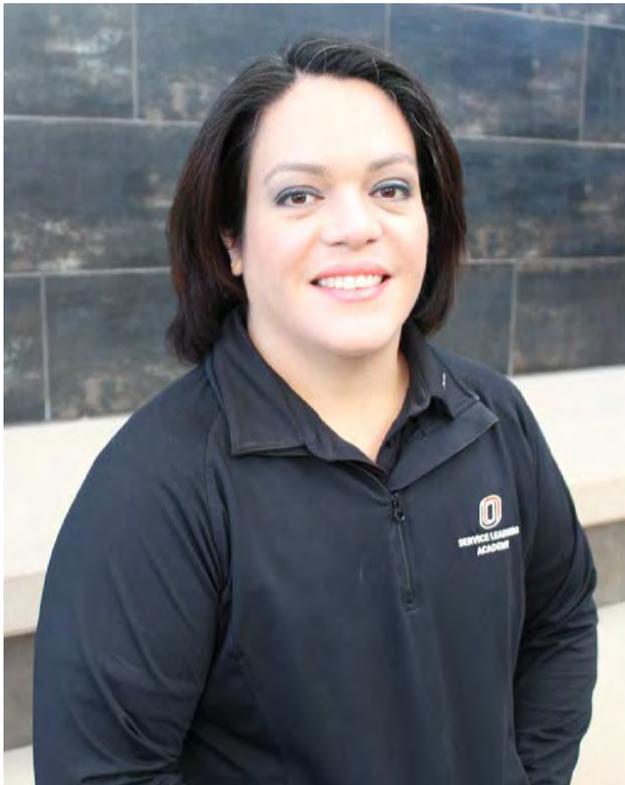
partnered with the Service Learning Academy in the Omaha Metropolitan Area



2,121 UNO STUDENTS

participated in service learning projects

MEET SLA'S NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS



Yria Santos-Torres

Yria Santos-Torres joined the SLA team in June of 2019 as the new Administrative Tech. This role allows her to fulfill her passion for helping others and meeting new people. Santos-Torres is already known in the office for her friendly smile and helping hand. As the Administrative Tech, her daily tasks involve receiving and resolving information requests in addition to a variety of other functions including maintaining databases, managing supply orders, processing payments, and coordinating office space.

Santos-Torres also is extremely passionate about the arts. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drawing from the University of Puerto Rico and a Master of Fine Arts in Creativity from Bellevue University. She expresses her love for creating art through drawing often in her free time and taking art courses at UNO.

When away from the office, you may find Santos-Torres wandering campus either making friendly conversation with old friends and new visitors or in the Weber Fine Arts Building attending meetings related to the Printmaking and Book Arts Guild student organization. She and her husband stay busy raising their three daughters, one of who currently studies Creative Writing at UNO.



Amairany Fuentes

Amairany Fuentes is the Service Learning Academy's new Weitz Fellow, joining the team in August 2019. Fuentes' passion for teaching and community engagement led her to the position. She works closely with Kirsten Case, the SLA Community Liaison, to help bring many traditional projects to life. During her time at the SLA, Fuentes will be co-planning two of SLA's biggest events, CultureFest and the Service Learning Showcase!

Fuentes received her Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from Carleton College and plans to use her background in research and community engagement to enhance the work the SLA does on a day-to-day basis. After her time at the SLA, she hopes to be accepted into a PhD program in American Studies.

Being able to teach and be part of academia has been a huge component of her life and work. When not at the SLA, Fuentes enjoys trying out new cooking recipes and attending different community events taking place around Omaha. The SLA is very excited to have Fuentes on board as the new 2019/2020 Weitz Fellow.

SLA RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

By: Megumi Makisaka

Omaha Public Schools and UNO Service Learning Academy's P-16 Initiative received national recognition for their service learning collaboration by being awarded the Excellence in Community Partner Engagement Award by the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC). The partnership pairs undergraduate or graduate courses and local P-12 courses to collaborate on meaningful service learning experiences in conjunction with community organizations in Omaha such as nonprofits, small businesses, and governmental agencies.

This UNO and Omaha Public Schools (OPS) partnership originated in 2009 when Omaha leaders and representatives from both UNO and OPS identified several community issues affecting youth, including high truancy rates, high dropout rates, and disengagement of youth in the community. In response to the community-identified challenges and opportunities, the P-16 Initiative was developed to implement service learning projects as a high-impact intervention strategy. The P-16 Initiative connects the P-12 and UNO curriculum through the development of collaborative and academic projects. These experiences connect learning outcomes with community-identified needs while meeting curriculum and course standards. "The [P-16 Initiative] also inspires students to think about their future by connecting them with college students and professors on the UNO campus," said Barry Thomas, Director of Equity and Diversity at OPS.

In the past 10 years, the P-16 Initiative has engaged over 20,000 UNO students and over 16,000 P-12 students in approximately 631 service learning projects. In each project, UNO and P-12 students are able to apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations to better their community resulting in enhanced comprehension of academic concepts and an increased sense of civic engagement. "Service learning is very experiential. It takes students outside of the classroom," said LaTrina Hall, the SLA P-16 Initiative Coordinator. "It gives them an opportunity to apply what they've been learning in the classroom to their experience within the community." The Service Learning Academy has found evidence that service learning experiences help reduce absences among P-12 students, raise retention rates of UNO students, boost civic engagement and literacy in students, and teach life and career skills.

The Excellence in Community Partner Engagement Award is one of the ESC's Awards for Excellence in Engaged Scholarship. Representatives from UNO's Service Learning Academy and OPS accepted the award at the 20th Annual Conference of the ESC in Denver, CO, in October 2019.

"This award is truly deserving national recognition for a unique, sustained partnership between Omaha Public Schools and the UNO Service Learning Academy. This work represents the essence of UNO's mission as an engaged metropolitan university.

— Dr. Deborah Smith-Howell
Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

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SERVICE LEARNING SEMINAR 2020

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Cover Photo: A Burke High School student discusses his service learning project results to King Science and Technology Magnet Center students at the 2019 UNO-OPS Joint Research Symposium. The research was conducted through a service learning partnership among UNO faculty member Ashlee Dere's *Soil Genesis* course, Burke High School, Northwest High Magnet School, and Glacier Creek Preserve. Students studied the biology of the soil to learn how to restore its health.

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