On Thursday, April 11, join Panthers around the world for a day of giving like no other. Support any area of campus on #LivePurpleGiveGold, a day to empower the people and programs that fuel UNI’s success.

Together, let’s create a brighter, bolder future for current and future Panthers! Learn more and make your gift at dayofgiving.uni.edu.
UNI Alumni Magazine is published once a year by the UNI Alumni Association to keep alumni and friends informed and engaged.

UNI Alumni Magazine is distributed to select alumni and benefactors of the University of Northern Iowa. Suggestions and contributions for articles are welcome.

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ON THE COVER

Tomorrow begins now

We're all chasing a better tomorrow. But here at the University of Northern Iowa, that tomorrow has arrived.
DEAR UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY,

It is with great enthusiasm that I step into the role of president of the UNI Alumni Association, entrusted with the responsibility of fostering and strengthening the bond that ties us all together. As an alum of UNI, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude and pride for the campus experiences that shaped both my personal and professional growth.

Alumni play a pivotal role in the life of any university. Beyond the years spent on campus, our connection endures, serving as a bridge between the past, present and future. I am eager to collaborate with fellow alumni, faculty and students to build bridges that facilitate mentorship, career development and philanthropy. Together, we can create an environment where the achievements of one reflect the collective success of all.

In the coming months, I look forward to engaging with many of you, listening to your stories and understanding the unique ways in which UNI has shaped your lives. We can create a legacy that extends far beyond our time on campus. Whether it's professional collaborations, philanthropic activities or simply sharing our experiences, each interaction among our alumni community is valuable.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your alumni president and excited about the journey ahead to collectively shape the future of UNI.

Ever Loyal,

Brian Gabel, ’02
Assistant Vice President Alumni Engagement & Annual Giving
President of UNI Alumni Association

BRIAN GABEL
2002
Marketing & Advertising

FAVORITE UNI MEMORY:
Attending football and basketball games in the UNI-Dome

LOOKING FORWARD TO:
Connecting with fellow alumni and learning how UNI has impacted their lives in meaningful and important ways

FUN FACT:
I met my wife, Angie, in a UNI marketing class, spring semester of our senior year
People chase tomorrow. We chase a future full of a sense of hope and the promise of something greater than today. It’s human nature to want something more. We go to college to increase our knowledge and make a better future for ourselves. For us, UNI is where our tomorrows began.

UNI is special. This is the school that shaped who we are today. It’s shaping the current generation of Panthers and will do the same for generations to come.

Your UNI story is an integral part of our tomorrow. Without it, our alma mater would not be what it is today. UNI is stronger because of you. The tomorrow that’s here is only possible because of you – our alumni and friends.

There has never been a more exciting time for the University of Northern Iowa and Panther Nation. These pages are full of a new generation of UNI stories shaping our tomorrow – stories that tell of alumni and students making their mark on UNI, our communities and beyond. We don’t need to dream about tomorrow – tomorrow begins now.
The University of Northern Iowa’s purpose is to enrich lives, communities and the world through our students, faculty, staff and our alumni.

It’s a bold purpose – our why – and it’s providing the foundation for the future of UNI as we look forward to our 175th anniversary in 2051. This why statement identifies how we will accomplish our purpose:

+ Through personalized attention, we create an environment in which every person is able to reach their academic, professional and personal life goals.

+ By investing in the success of our students, faculty and staff, we empower individuals to build strong senses of purpose, community and responsibility.

+ By investing in individuals, we innovate ethical solutions to the problems of our time.
The Future Vision was developed in 2018-2019 by a broad workgroup from faculty and staff across campus, student leadership and a community representative. The workgroup was charged with researching and learning about future trends impacting higher education, Iowa and the broader world, and recommending a set of vision elements for UNI.

“We need to be thinking and planning well into the future,” said UNI President Mark Nook in his charge to the workgroup. “The decisions we make today will impact UNI 30 years in the future.”

UNI’s Future Vision and why statement served as the framework for the 2023-2028 strategic plan.

Beginning in 2021, the UNI Strategic Planning Committee led a year-long process to engage the campus community, Cedar Valley, State of Iowa and beyond in the work of preparing “Create. Empower. Innovate.” Through on-campus idea walls and a survey of faculty, staff and students, community town halls throughout Iowa, and work sessions with Iowa community college leaders and the UNI Foundation and Alumni Association boards, the UNI Strategic Planning Committee had thousands of voices to help shape the contours of the plan.

The university's Future Vision and the launch of a new strategic planning process inspired a wave of planning efforts across campus by various colleges, academic departments and programs. These unit-level planning efforts have focused on envisioning their “tomorrows” and determining how their aspired futures align with the university’s strategic plan and make progress toward achieving the Future Vision of UNI in 2051.

In many ways, the culmination of the university’s future visioning and all of the strategic planning across campus in recent years was the successful launch of the Our Tomorrow campaign (over $250 million raised to date), which was publicly launched in October 2022. The investments made through the Our Tomorrow campaign will impact our students, Iowa and the world today, but also over the next 50 years and beyond. UNI

Keep up with UNI’s Future Vision.
Degrees for tomorrow

The University of Northern Iowa continually evaluates how degree offerings can help our graduates stand out in a competitive workforce. UNI works with industry partners to effectively plan for what careers are needed to support the State of Iowa and the world beyond in the years to come. Here are some of the new degrees UNI has added to accomplish this goal in recent years.

**MATERIALS SCIENCE & ENGINEERING / MATERIALS SCIENCE ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY**

The new materials science & engineering major emphasizes the properties of metals, a core strength of the Applied Engineering & Technical Management Department. This program also leverages UNI’s foundry science facilities and materials science expertise in the physics and chemistry & biochemistry departments.

The materials science engineering technology program takes a more applied, industry-based and manufacturing approach, leveraging UNI’s existing facilities and strengths in metal casting and additive and subtractive metal manufacturing applications. Iowa companies like John Deere, Collins Aerospace, BAE Systems, Doerfer Engineering and A.Y. McDonald have indicated a need for graduates in these areas.

**HYBRID ACCOUNTING**

The number of accounting positions in the Des Moines metropolitan area exceeds the number of accounting graduates by more than 6 to 1. Although UNI’s renowned accounting degree is hardly new, a new hybrid delivery model offers the convenience of online business-core and elective courses with in-person evening accounting courses on Des Moines Area Community College’s Urban campus.

The program gives place-bound learners with an associate’s degree throughout Central Iowa the opportunity to enhance the competencies needed to make informative financial reports, influence critical business decisions and keep an organization’s finances in check.

**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING**

Nursing at UNI launches in fall 2024. The goal of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at UNI is to help meet the needs of the 80% of Iowa employers who report it is difficult or very difficult to recruit nurses. Research shows health care, and specifically nursing, is the most in-demand field of study among Iowa students seeking a four-year degree. UNI is positioned to provide the combination of hands-on experience and curriculum necessary to serve the students and residents of the state.
BUSINESS ANALYTICS

The new business analytics degree builds on the reputation of the Wilson College of Business. Business analysts see trends, stories, predictions and opportunities when they interpret data to recommend business decisions. The new offering expands from an area of emphasis to a major as the need for professionals in this industry is growing. Graduates in this area will have an understanding of economics to analyze historical trends to predict what would likely happen in the future, and the management skills to recommend and implement the path forward.

ONLINE MANAGEMENT:
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

As part of our growing commitment to adult learners, the Wilson College of Business expanded its business administration degree to include a fully online, part-time option. This program provides students with a solid understanding and experience in common core business practices. Graduates are able to serve effectively in a wide gamut of management positions such as production supervisor, business manager, employee relations manager, service representative and others. Courses include marketing, finance, human resources and operations management.

PURPLE PATHWAYS
FOR EDUCATORS

The College of Education has launched two alternative degree pathways. At the undergraduate level, the Purple Pathway for Paraeducators is an accelerated, online, practice-based program for paraprofessionals who want to become licensed elementary education teachers in Iowa with a special education endorsement. At the graduate level, UNI expanded its primarily online principalship program to offer the Purple Pathway for School Administrators, a partnership with Des Moines Public Schools to help meet a large need for administrative positions in its school district.

MASTER OF ARTS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

You could call it a “self-designed” master’s program. For students who want to pursue an innovative alternative to graduate study, UNI’s Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies offers a flexible, personalized plan of study to a selective and multidisciplinary group of graduate students. Unlike most MA programs, the MAIS gives students the freedom to take graduate courses from all departments and professional schools at UNI and provides non-traditional students who have graduate credit an opportunity to finish a graduate credential.

INDIVIDUAL STUDIES:
SPORTS ADMINISTRATION

After offering a minor in the area for years, UNI unveiled its Bachelor of Arts in Individual Studies: Sports Administration in fall 2023. This is a multidisciplinary program designed to prepare students for management positions within the sports industry. Through this program, students develop a core understanding of business concepts in the context of sports, leisure services, event and facilities management.

INDIVIDUAL STUDIES:
HUMAN SERVICES

This major is a unique interdisciplinary hybrid of UNI’s five already-established human services-oriented majors: family services, gerontology, psychology, social work and sociology. It is an exciting option for students who are interested in careers fueled by service to others. This entirely online program helps students develop skills to assist in times of crisis and educate a broad range of age groups — from infants to seniors. Committed faculty members prepare students for a variety of careers, ranging from adoption and foster care to juvenile justice and senior care.
The end of an era

For nearly a century, the West Gym has had an iconic presence on the University of Northern Iowa campus. Originally named the Men’s Gymnasium, its presence has been constant through countless sporting events, PE classes, dances, pep rallies, concerts, commencements and more.

The West Gym’s origins begin after World War I when UNI (then the Iowa State Teachers College) began to prioritize recruiting men to the teaching profession, including physical education and coaching. College officials decided that a new gymnasium built solely for men’s physical education and intercollegiate athletics could aid these recruiting efforts.

It served as a makeshift dorm, a polling location and gathering spot for the UNI community. It has been the site of marriage proposals and its coordinates are tattooed on the arm of at least one alum.

“The West Gym was once far more than a center for athletics,” said Sandy Stevens, ’62, a UNI Foundation trustee. “Concerts, graduations were held there, and that's where everyone congregated to mourn when JFK was assassinated.”

In 2023, architects and consultants identified unexpected structural issues in the building, making it necessary for the West Gym to be vacated. Offices for track and field, cross country and softball relocated on campus. UNI’s wrestling program was forced to choose an alternate location for its student-athletes to train and practice.

“The West Gym was an iconic space for us. So many memories were built there, but so many men were built there,” said UNI head wrestling coach Doug Schwab. “It’s not just a wrestling room, no, it’s so much more than that because of the lessons that were taught in it.”

“As an opponent, West Gym was intimidating. It never felt like we were playing in a sports facility, it was like you were walking right into the heart of the Panther den itself.”

- FORMER ILLINOIS STATE STUDENT-ATHLETE
In November, planning and fundraising for a new wrestling training facility began officially with the approval of the Board of Regents.

“We recognize the history of the West Gym and the importance. There are a lot of people that are connected to that facility,” said UNI President Mark Nook. “There will be pieces of the building that will be in a place to honor the facility, but more importantly honor the student-athletes that have trained in that facility. And that’s not just wrestlers — that’s volleyball players, that’s basketball players, it’s dance team members, it’s cheer team members and members of our Panther Marching Band that have all used the facility. There are a lot of memories amongst alumni in the West Gym.”

UNI’s new wrestling training facility will meet the program’s existing and anticipated future needs with weight and cardio training space, multiple mats, locker rooms, office space for wrestling, a rehabilitation room and a training room. This project will be solely financed by private gifts.

“We have a big lift in front of us, but when you consider the history of the University of Northern Iowa, Panther Athletics, the Panther Train and the individual student-athletes in the wrestling program, it gives me great confidence in this project,” said Nook.

“The people around our athletes are the most important, but having a facility that meets our needs is critical,” said Schwab. “I’m thinking about how we can get our next 100-year-old building. How that will happen is a lot of fans, a lot of donors and a lot of people who believe in what we’re doing beyond the wrestling mat.”

- MARK NOOK
A hub for civic education

Soon, the University of Northern Iowa will be known for civic education in Iowa.

That’s in part because of a recent initiative happening across campus, fueled by a highly-competitive Humanities Connection Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

The project is titled, “Humanities for Civic Education: Preparing Teachers and Students for Engaged Citizenship.” As one of the NEH grant reviewers noted, it has “the potential to improve civic education in the state as a whole.”

The interdisciplinary effort, which puts humanities in the spotlight, is led by a team of four department heads: Scott Peters, professor of political science; Jennifer McNabb, professor of history; Susan Hill, professor of religion; and Jim O’Loughlin, professor of languages and literatures.

The goals of the initiative are twofold.

First, to provide students with the skills necessary to engage in civic discourse and accommodate multiple viewpoints. The team gathered a group of faculty to design a multidisciplinary certificate named Civic Literacy, Engagement and the Humanities, offered through UNI’s general education program. The group also created a standalone minor, both of which are slated to be included in the 2024-2025 academic catalog.

“Precisely because this initiative is interdisciplinary, it posits civic literacy and engagement at the heart of the humanities and at the heart of what a student-centered institution like UNI is well positioned to accomplish,” O’Loughlin said. “It’s not a coincidence that our students’ voting percentages are among the highest in the nation, and we are building upon that strength.”

The second goal is to establish professional development opportunities for faculty across campus to help them learn strategies to enhance classroom discussions.
about controversial issues. Classroom discussion is an important part of learning, and civil discourse is a skill that students need to develop. To kick off this part of the initiative, in Fall 2023 UNI’s Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning partnered with The Discussion Project, centered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, to hold a workshop focused on fostering productive and civil classroom discussions.

**IMPACT ON FUTURE GENERATIONS OF STUDENTS**

The group also includes Benjamin Forsyth, associate dean for undergraduate studies and teacher education, who was added to the team because teacher preparation is key to the group’s vision, given their intentions to create programs that assist teaching majors in empowering their own students in humanities and civic engagement.

Forsyth noted that a quarter of undergraduate students at UNI are in teacher education, so it’s a big group that the initiative hopes to attract. The idea is that if pre-service teachers learn civic values during their own education, they’ll apply it to their future classrooms and help future generations of K-12 students better understand how the humanities interface with civic engagement.

“If we have more educated teachers on civic education, it is likely to show up more often in their own classrooms,” Forsyth said.

“We hope we’re known in the state as the center for civic education,” added Peters. “Everybody across the political spectrum says we need more and better civic education. Not only do we have a strength in that already on campus, but we’re also well-suited to make a big impact because of the College of Education and our future teachers.”

**PRESTIGIOUS GRANT AMPLIFIES WORK**

Having an NEH grant to support the initiative increases the visibility of the group’s work. Their desire to ensure that pre-service teachers and all UNI students are served well by this project emphasizes UNI’s commitment to both current and future citizens in Iowa as well.

“What students learn in the humanities, and in interdisciplinary programs like this one, are new ways of thinking, different perspectives they may not have encountered before, and ways to engage in civil discussions with people who are different from them. They discover ideas and texts and people that will expand their ideas about the world,” said Hill.

McNabb shared that the initiative illustrates the kind of work that should be happening on a college campus and in an academic environment, noting that the hallmark of the work being done on campus is interdisciplinary collaboration.

“Instead of building silos, we're trying to figure out how to build bridges,” she said. “And that's sort of what civic engagement itself is. That's a core idea … that we learn to listen and build on each other’s strengths and find problem-solving means of moving forward.”

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SCOTT PETERS
Professor of political science

JENNIFER MCNABB
Professor of history

SUSAN HILL
Professor of religion

JIM O’LOUGHLIN
Professor of languages & literatures

BENJAMIN FORSYTH
Associate dean for undergraduate studies & teacher education
WITH EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP EXPERTS

Equipping our school leaders for challenging times

With a passion for and belief in learning, few school administrators shy away from the challenge and constant change that is part of the educational environment. Nevertheless, the last few years have left their mark.

Since the emergence of COVID-19, Google searches lead to articles citing increases in principal and superintendent turnover. Political and legislative agendas add to the already complex variables that are intrinsic to roles meant to lead and guide school districts and individual schools — small and large, rural and urban — across Iowa.

Ensuring a quality, qualified pipeline of future leaders ready to take on these challenges and rewards of educational leadership remains paramount for institutions like the University of Northern Iowa. UNI’s reputation for developing tomorrow’s educators is second to none. The educational leadership program is the largest in Iowa, with 40% of practitioners in the state having graduated from UNI.

Educational leadership at UNI comprises principalship preparation and the post-master’s certificate in superintendency. Delivered primarily online, both programs provide convenience and flexibility while still maintaining the human interaction essential to the educational leadership field.

We talked to educational leadership faculty as well as alumni to discuss the current state of educational leadership at UNI and at K-12 schools around the state. UNI
What are the goals of educational leadership studies at UNI?

One of the overarching goals is to make the programs as practical and relevant as possible. We have to teach theory of leadership and theory of administration, but what’s more important is how we blend that theory into practice. So, for example, when I teach school law, yes, my students have to learn about the Fourth Amendment and search and seizure, but what’s more applicable to them is understanding the Iowa Code and the steps in conducting a legal search of a student. So we pride ourselves on that blend.

What are some of the biggest trends you’re seeing today in terms of educational leadership?

One of the biggest trends is the change in the gender balance. When I first started 17 years ago, the vast majority of students in the principalship and superintendency programs were male. That has seen a massive change, and it’s great to see a balance. We also have more students of color in our principalship and superintendency programs than we’ve had in many years.

We’re still finding a good number of teachers wanting to be administrators now. You might think if fewer people are going into teaching, there’s going to be fewer people going into administration. Maybe that will happen, but we haven’t seen it yet.
Describe a moment or experience that reminds you why you got into this field.

Aspiring leaders present their comprehensive portfolio in the spring of their second year in the program. Hearing students share their success and growth stories at this event is always a joy. After each cohort’s graduation, faculty consistently receive student appreciation messages and positive testimonies about support, their positive learning experiences and growth.

What is different about preparing today’s future leaders compared to the past, for instance, 10 years ago?

There is an increased emphasis on some more pressing issues in today’s world, namely emerging and fast-growing tech-assisted instruction and communication, student mental health and behaviors due to the changing environment, school safety, and societal and political context.
What is the purpose of the Institute for Educational Leadership?

The purpose of the Institute for Educational Leadership is to promote the improvement of elementary, secondary and postsecondary education through services for educational leaders serving schools in Iowa. Our mission states that the Institute for Educational Leadership serves as a catalyst for a) informed dialogue on educational issues impacting the schools of Iowa, region and nation; b) developing collaborative relationships with individuals and/or organizations external to schools; and c) education policy development. We offer these services through workshops including leadership camps, think tanks, school board dialogues and have recently added executive coaching to our menu of services.

Why is the Institute for Educational Leadership important?

The Institute for Educational Leadership provides comprehensive support to our school leaders in Iowa. The University of Northern Iowa is able to provide current, evidence-based and ongoing support for leaders beyond our outstanding educational leadership degrees and certifications.
Mike Fisher

Superintendent at Oskaloosa Community School District

Q. What about your preparation from UNI have you found most helpful as you deal with the realities of your day-to-day role?

A. UNI has been such a seminal part of my life for so long. My wife, who is an elementary teacher, is also an alum. UNI gave us the intellectual capacity to thrive, but also presented it in such practical ways. Each day I’m so thankful for how UNI educational leadership has transformed my entire family’s life. And the biggest strength is the relationships. I have been blessed to have so many people pour their lives into me. I’m not who I am today without UNI. It will always be home.

Q. What advice would you give to a new school administrator?

A. There is a great book by Dan Allender called “Leading with a Limp.” His thesis is centered on how great leadership is grounded in humility. We ultimately get into leadership for one of two reasons: because we want the power and privilege or we feel it’s a worthy cross to carry. This is what effective leaders must embrace. Humility and service.

Daryl Dotson

Assistant principal at Bondurant-Farrar High School

Q. What do you find the most challenging about being a school administrator these days?

A. It’s hard to pinpoint one thing that is most challenging. However, the daily unknowns or the different situations that arise throughout the school day or over the weekends can be challenging. We are never too far away for our jobs as school administrators even on the weekends. I am still learning that.

Q. How do you balance your roles with your external and internal constituents?

A. My superintendent, Rich Powers, who is a UNI graduate, gave me some great advice. He told me to “Just be yourself and everything will work out fine.” I knew this already, but to hear it from our district leader gave me the confidence that I didn’t have to be someone I am not. I treat people how I want to be treated. If I don’t know something, I will admit that but seek to find the answer. I truly care for people as human beings first. That is always the starting point for me.
ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Change is part of a school administrator’s role. Kim Huckstadt, assistant professor and program coordinator for the superintendency certificate, noted, “Even prior to COVID-19 and the intense political divide, the nature of the work and the context for decision-making and leadership have continued to change.”

How does the educational leadership program respond? Built into the curriculum are connections with practicing administrators who are doing real-time work and willing to share their insights and expertise. Principalship students grapple with scenarios during the popular “Day in the Life of” summer session role play, with alumni, faculty and staff bringing today’s issues to life. Embedded within courses are the work and resources – including guest speakers from organizations such as School Administrators of Iowa, the Iowa Association of School Boards and the Department of Education.

“We stay current and connected by building relationships with people across the spectrum of Iowa’s education and political systems. We serve on committees and advisory boards at the state level,” said Huckstadt.

“The bottom line is simply that we adjust our delivery and curriculum accordingly. When standards change, we change to align with those standards. When political issues such as legislation change, we make sure to bring those changes into our curriculum,” said Tim Gilson, ’86, ’06, associate professor of educational leadership and coordinator for international teacher leader program.

“I have now been here over 16 years, and the reality is that our program looks nothing like it did when I first came. Courses have changed, standards have changed, internship requirements have increased and perhaps more vital, curricular instruction aligned to those changes has dramatically been adjusted,” Gilson said.

Sarah Leichsenring
ASC ’19
Principal at Forest City Middle School

Q. What is different about being a school administrator these days? What do you find most challenging?

A. I’m still young in my career, but have found some of the most challenging parts to also be rewarding. Knowing each student and staff in our building is unique, and working in collaboration with our team to meet each of their individual needs. There are barriers to accomplishing this due to fiscal limitations, external forces like state/federal legislation or lack of resources, but we never take “no” for an answer if we know it is going to improve the school experience for our students. The classic picture of a managerial building administrator who focuses on discipline and supervision is just not the reality any longer. It takes commitment, delegation and trust in our staff to know things may get messy, but we can always find a solution.

Q. What about your preparation from UNI have you found most helpful as you deal with the realities of your day-to-day role?

A. Although UNI couldn’t prepare me for every situation, what it did teach me was to rely on making “people first” decisions, to reach out for guidance when needed, and that there will always be a strong network of colleagues to support my work throughout my career.
In the world of industry, innovation often arises from the unlikeliest of places. In 1993, a group of forward-thinkers within the Iowa Waste Reduction Center embarked on a journey that would revolutionize painter training and environmental responsibility. What began as an initiative to improve Iowa’s body shops eventually evolved into something much greater — the Spray Technique Analysis and Research program, known affectionately as STAR.

It was a time when the automotive industry was grappling with the environmental implications of its practices, particularly in painting processes. STAR sought to address this issue by developing cutting-edge techniques and tools to improve spray coating processes, reduce pollution and promote environmental sustainability. The Paint Application & Coating Education facility, located in the Cedar Falls Industrial Park, was established in 1999 to provide a dedicated space for STAR research and training.

The Department of Defense began taking a closer look at the implications of corrosion on military assets. It was identified that the cost of corrosion to a military department was in the billions of dollars annually, and severely impacted the ability to be mission ready. In response, STAR underwent a transformation becoming STAR4D (Spray Technique Analysis and Research for Defense). This evolution allowed the program to serve a broader range of industries, including defense, while maintaining its commitment to reducing environmental impact.

In the span of two decades, STAR4D has demonstrated key returns on investment such as a 10% increase in painter efficiency, a 10% decrease in paint usage and a 10-25% reduction in rework, just to name a few.

STAR4D celebrates anniversary

2003
STAR is modified for military painting operations — STAR4D (Spray Technique Analysis and Research for Defense) is founded.

2004
STAR4D contract is awarded to design, develop and validate a formal painter training course for the U.S. Air Force.

2004-05
Development of VirtualPaint, a groundbreaking technology that would revolutionize painter training.

VirtualPaint is a virtual reality system designed to be very user friendly, having a relatively low learning curve and giving the painter the ability to customize almost every aspect of the painting experience.
2006
Patent is filed for VirtualPaint, cementing its place as an industry innovation. Meanwhile, the development of the Virtual Blasting Simulator is underway.

2008
Patent is filed for Virtual Blast; first STAR4D satellite site at Letterkenny Army Depot.

2013
STAR4D Aerospace
U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command training begins.

2014
Online Painter Training is developed.

2016-19
United States Marine Corps asset production work begins.

2018
VirtualPaint 3D is incorporated into STAR4D certification courses, offering an even more immersive training experience by engaging trainees in a virtual reality painting environment that adopts extremely realistic aspects of the tasks being performed by painters within a facility. Painters trained with the VirtualPaint 3D system show significant improvement on the painting of more difficult or detailed parts.

2021
Contract is awarded to conduct evaluation of methods to deliver surface preparation and painter training at Department of Defense depots.

2023
The PACE facility undergoes significant upgrades, ensuring it remains at the forefront of research and training. This year also marks the certification of 5,000 painters through STAR4D.

a few. From its inception as a regional initiative focused on industrial painter training, STAR4D has evolved into a globally recognized program with a profound impact on multiple industries, from automotive to aerospace to defense. Its commitment to environmental sustainability, innovation and precision training has transformed the way we approach painting processes.
UNI COMMUNITY EMBRACES WAR REFUGEES

Oleh Shtefanchuk grew up learning English watching the television show, “Gossip Girl” and knew someday that he wanted to visit New York City. When an opportunity arose to become a high school exchange student in the United States, he jumped at the chance.

“I found an exchange program called FLEX. You compete with thousands of other kids, so it’s pretty rare to get in.”

While he didn’t land in the Big Apple, Oleh — who goes by the nickname “Odee” in the U.S. — enjoyed his junior year at WACO High School in Wayland, Iowa. He hung out with friends and played on the football team. Then, he had planned to return home to his country of Ukraine.

“My town is called Chernivtsi, which is in western Ukraine. It’s pretty far from what’s happening, but a bomb can drop anytime.”

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 forced Odee and six other Ukrainian exchange students in Iowa to extend their stays through their senior years of high school. After that, options were slim. Unable to return to their home country, they were stranded on the other side of the world, away from their parents, friends and families, who were stuck in the middle of the conflict.

“I try to text them everyday to ask if everything is okay,” said student Olya Hinchak. “My hometown’s airport was bombed in the very beginning. There is still bombing from time to time, but it is a safer part of Ukraine.”

In Iowa, the students’ host families began contacting higher education institutions throughout the state to see if anyone was willing to help. “I’m hoping that some college will come up and say ‘We’ve got these kids. Come. We’re going to take care of you,’” said host mom Alli Johnson.

While other schools in the state were sympathetic, it wasn’t until Johnson placed a call to the University of...
Northern Iowa that she actually received an offer of assistance.

UNI Chief of Staff and Ukrainian native Oksana Grybovych Hafermann, ’08, heard Johnson’s plea. “I need to follow up. I need to find out what exactly is happening, how many students do we have, what are the circumstances and situation. The next step — what do we do?”

Temporary Protective Status was the first item on a long-to-do list.

It allows the students to remain in the United States and attend UNI at the price of in-state tuition. The students also qualified for several merit-based scholarships. “These young people are incredibly bright and remarkably resilient,” said Grybovych Hafermann.

In fall 2023, all seven exchange students — along with an eighth student who fled Ukraine with her family when the war began — became freshmen at the University of Northern Iowa. Though the reasons for their presence on the Cedar Falls campus may be sobering, all eight are eternally grateful that fate and good fortune led them to UNI.

“For the first time in a year and a half I feel welcome. It really does feel like a second home,” said Ulyana Karpliuk, majoring in psychology. “I’m very grateful UNI has given me an opportunity to study abroad. It’s always been a dream of mine.”

“People at UNI made me feel welcomed and happy to be here,” said Daria Gramotieiieva, majoring in statistics & actuarial science and business analytics. “I got a lot of help from counselors, staff and students. Their impact convinced me that I made the right choice.”

“People at UNI made me feel welcomed and happy to be here.”
- DARIA GRAMOTIEIEVA

“All the people I have met so far were very nice and easy to get along with,” said Lucya Shapovalova, majoring in marketing: advertising and digital media. “They seem to actually care and want to help me.”

Five of the students spent their first year of college living on the same floor of Bender Hall, where they could often be found conversing in their native tongue. Because of what they’ve been through, all the students share an undeniable bond.

“They are some impressive young people for all they’ve been through, for what their families have been through, for what their country has been through,” said Pete Moris, director of University Relations. “But they’re also very typical college students.”

Odee is now majoring in finance and also considering a major in accounting. “My plans are to stay here for four years.”

AWARENESS THROUGH ART

To kick off Family Weekend 2023, the UNI Gallery of Art hosted a special exhibition on campus featuring artwork by Waterloo native and Des Moines resident Scott Charles Ross. Through his artwork, Ross aims to raise awareness about the Russian invasion of Ukraine and has given significant financial and personal support to the students. The event was a celebration of the students’ presence on campus, yet it was also an emotional time, given the reasons behind their enrollment.
Meeting human needs from things that grow

UNI RESEARCH WILL BE PART OF $20 MILLION GRANT TO ADVANCE BIOMANUFACTURING IN IOWA

Researchers from the University of Northern Iowa will play a critical role in a five-year $20 million grant to position Iowa as a leader in advanced biomanufacturing. UNI researchers are working with colleagues from Iowa State University, the University of Iowa, Central College and Dordt University, with UNI’s portion of the grant funds at $2.56 million over five years.

“It’s good for the state, and it’s great for our students, both graduate students and undergraduate students, because that’s part of what funds them,” said Bill Harwood, professor and head of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry who is the institutional lead from UNI. “It puts Iowa a little bit more on the map.”

The grant is from the National Science Foundation’s Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), which exists to build the capacity for competitive research in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. While the grant is titled “Building Capacity across Iowa to Meet Human Needs from Things that Grow,” its working title is “Chemurgy 2.0,” a reference to a term coined by George Washington Carver to describe things we need made from things that grow. The overall research goal uses Iowa’s agricultural strengths as a basis to develop new products and technologies.

The grant will fund student and faculty research, mentorship to compete for federal funds, new equipment and a new faculty position.

There are three areas of scientific focus in the initiative: plastics for additive manufacturing, fibers for flexible and rigid materials, and proteins for diagnostics and therapeutics. UNI is involved in all three areas.

These research pathways will create connections...
between institutions and laboratories throughout the state and provide new opportunities for students from all areas to participate in state-of-the-art research.

**Tim Kidd,** professor of physics at UNI, is a co-principal investigator of the grant proposal and co-lead of the fibers for flexible and rigid materials area. Kidd works with nanocellulose, a material that is by weight eight times stronger than steel. Nanocellulose comes from cellulose, which is the most common naturally-occurring organic molecule and is found in the cell walls of plants. It has great potential in applications including water purification, food preservation, catalysts and as a sustainable replacement for plastics. Nanocellulose products can be used for medical products to stop infection or even as an additive for foods.

While nanocellulose could be incredibly useful and sourced from agricultural byproducts such as corn or soy stover, it is costly and challenging to refine into a final product. Prices currently range from $100 to $1,000 a pound, making it too costly for most applications. One of Kidd’s goals is to develop more efficient methods of production, so that nanocellulose could be widely used and serve as a high quality product that would greatly benefit Iowa farmers as a new and sustainable source of income.

“We’re making a new market for agricultural byproducts,” said Kidd. “I think farmers would benefit greatly because they will benefit from an entirely new income stream.”

Some of the first steps Kidd took was hiring two new students to assist in the work and purchasing and installing new equipment for increasing nanocellulose production. In addition to research on these nanofibers, the nanocellulose will also be investigated as an additive for 3D printing applications.

**S.M. Ali Tabei,** associate professor of physics, and **Aleksandar Poleksic,** professor of computer science, are working on the proteins for diagnostics and therapeutics research team. Harnessing the power of big data using UNI’s new high performance computing system, they will use animal proteins to design medicines for animal agriculture as well as human health.

One of the unique aspects of the EPScoR project at UNI is student involvement. During the summer of 2023, several UNI students worked with faculty on research related to the “Chemurgy 2.0” initiative.

The EPScoR grant also allows for the funding of a new faculty member in data science, who will start in fall 2024.

In addition to the three focus areas, the research also aims to bolster Iowa’s workforce. UNI’s Center for Social and Behavioral Research (CSBR) will investigate Iowans’ interest in biomanufacturing careers and what drives persistence in STEM education to prepare students for those careers. They will also evaluate what motivates students from metropolitan areas and rural areas to choose STEM programs and biomanufacturing majors.

“If we don’t understand the drivers, the motivators, the factors that are influencing people, it’s very hard to do anything well,” said **Mary Losch,** director of CSBR and professor of psychology. “Certainly, biomanufacturing is an area of tremendous promise for a whole range of things.”

“We already know Iowa has a shortage of qualified advanced biomanufacturing workers,” said **Kyle Endres,** CSBR’s associate director and assistant professor of political science. “Manufacturers are saying a roadblock to expanding and continuing growth is an inability to find qualified workers who have the skills they need. By identifying what is preventing young people from pursuing those careers, we can have larger economic benefits beyond this project.”
A bolder, brighter tomorrow

OUR TOMORROW: THE CAMPAIGN FOR UNI BEGAN WITH A QUESTION: WHAT DOES THE WORLD NEED FROM US TOMORROW?

Campus challenged alumni and friends to make historic investments in the people, programs and places that define the UNI experience. Undaunted, the Panther family met the moment. The $250 million fundraising goal put forth at the beginning of the campaign has been surpassed two and a half years early.

More than a number, $250 million is fueling a bold future for UNI that is already taking shape in inspiring ways: campus spaces receiving significant upgrades, academic programs reaching new heights and students achieving beyond what they thought possible.

Already more than 28,000 (and counting!) alumni and friends have said yes to Our Tomorrow. Your overwhelming support has challenged the university to dig deeper and envision the needs of campus 10, 20 and 50 years from now.

To make that future possible, the UNI Foundation has identified a stretch goal of $300 million by 2026 to fund campus priorities. From additional support for student scholarships to launching our nursing program and creating a new home for Panther Wrestling, the initiatives here are essential to building the UNI tomorrow needs. UNI
Our path to $300 million

As we ride the momentum together to 2026, join us in reaching these stretch goals to strengthen our campus for generations to come. Here’s how we’ll focus the last two and half years of the Our Tomorrow campaign:

**STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS**
- Raise $75 million in **scholarship support**
- Raise $1.5 million for the **Student Emergency Fund, Panther Pantry and Panther Completion Grant**

**ENGAGED LEARNING**
- Double resources for **student professional readiness, undergraduate research opportunities, student service learning and community engagement** with $4 million

**ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND FACULTY**
- Launch UNI’s new nursing BSN with $3.5 million
- Raise an additional $10 million to support faculty and academic program growth

**ICONIC SPACES**
- Complete fundraising for the **Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center**
- Create a new home for **Panther Wrestling**
- Complete fundraising for phase 1 of the **UNI-Dome**
- Build a new practice facility to house UNI’s court sports pending Board of Regents approval

Create a brighter tomorrow. Join us in creating a bolder and brighter tomorrow for UNI and the generations of Panthers to come. To learn more and make your gift, visit ourtomorrow.uni.edu.
At 75, David Wilson, '70, is reflecting on life. Having spent nearly five decades rising in the auto industry and accumulating numerous honors along the way, he is looking back and contemplating his legacy.

How did this small-town Iowa kid from a lower-middle class family become chairman and CEO of Wilson Automotive, one of the country's largest privately held auto dealerships? Luck? Sure, he says, but more importantly: hard work, mentorship and a commitment to doing business the right way.
“I believe in the long run,” explains Wilson, a philosophy alum who also earned a minor in business. “I believe if you do things ethically and responsibly, you will be rewarded. Our company has done well by doing right.”

That simple, yet profound ideal is the motivation behind his $25 million gift to UNI, which was announced at a special event at homecoming 2023. Several hundred gathered on the south side of Curris Business Building to celebrate the transformative gift, the single largest donation in the university’s history, and unveil the new name for UNI’s renowned business college.

“I’ve been interested in the value of the liberal arts and ethical-based education since I was a student here at UNI,” Wilson told the crowd. “I believe my business success is a result of the philosophical education I received here. And for that I will be forever grateful.”

He added that he hopes the contribution will “foster instruction that reveals the importance of maintaining ethical principles in the corporate environment at all levels” while also recognizing the value of business to our nation’s future and the prosperity of its citizens.

In honor of the investment, the college will henceforth be known as the David W. Wilson College of Business.
UNI President Mark Nook announced the gift from David and Holly Wilson and the naming of the David W. Wilson College of Business in recognition for the gift.

Holly and David Wilson

“I believe my business success is a result of the philosophical education I received here. And for that I will be forever grateful.”

- DAVID WILSON
“The Wilson College of Business will truly transform business education at UNI, taking our already premier business programs to new heights,” said UNI President Mark Nook. “This is a historic moment for our campus. We’re honored that UNI’s first named college will stand as a testament to David’s belief in the power of education and will provide the resources for the university to foster innovation for the future.”

“Our students are the leaders of tomorrow,” said Leslie Wilson, ’84, dean of the Wilson College. “You’re looking at students today who are future CEOs; who are future business owners; who may be in the health professions, or social work, or teachers.”

She explained that now more than ever students need an education that fosters critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills to help them “make the right decision[s] for the business, for society, for their communities.”

“This gift will allow us to continue to maintain that tradition of excellence that we’ve been known for.”

- LESLIE WILSON
that we’ve been known for,” Dean Wilson added.

This most recent gift expands on David’s previous philanthropic support for UNI that established the Wilson Chair in Business Ethics in 1999. For the past two decades, the faculty in this position have educated students about ethics and served as a resource and authority on the topic for the community. The Wilson Chair will play an important role in the vision for the Wilson College and its focus on ethics and integrity.

EARLY LIFE AND UNI

A portion of the gift will also establish the Wilson Scholars Fund, providing renewable scholarships for students from Tama County, which includes Traer – David’s hometown.

That small town of 1,000 is where Wilson forged the foundation of his entrepreneurial spirit, delivering The Des Moines Register and Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier as an adolescent. His initial foray into sales, the job demanded he “sell the subscription, deliver the paper and then go around and collect” from his neighbors.

Wilson acknowledges growing up in a lower-middle class family was rarely easy. As the eldest of five children, David took on many responsibilities to support his parents, such as night and weekend chores once the Wilsons moved to a farm outside of town.

“I went from being a paperboy and shoveling snow and mowing grass in town to working for my dad, which didn’t pay as well,” Wilson laughed. “But that’s what we had to do to survive.”

Wilson Scholars Fund

The David W. Wilson Scholars Endowed Fund will provide scholarship support for students who graduate from a high school in Tama County, Iowa, and demonstrate financial need. The first Wilson Student Scholar will be awarded in the 2024-2025 academic year with the intent that eventually four Wilson Student Scholars will be funded annually. David grew up in Traer, Iowa, 30 minutes south of Cedar Falls. The Wilson Scholars Fund will offer a path to greater opportunity for generations of Panthers to come, supporting Student Access & Success – one of four pillars of the Our Tomorrow campaign.
Wilson Endowment for Integrity and Excellence

The David W. Wilson Endowment for Integrity and Excellence will broaden the scope of excellence for the David W. Wilson College of Business by achieving the following three goals:

+ Expanding student access and success by providing scholarship support, covering tuition, room and board, and fees for students in Tama County, Iowa.

+ Elevating integrity and expanding ethics education for business and non-business students.

+ Fostering innovation.

This endowment will help create a culture of innovation in the Wilson College of Business by providing direct funding and opportunity for innovation. The college will ensure that critical thinking and ethical decision-making remains central to its mission and seek continuous improvement in business program outcomes for Wilson College graduates, while also engaging non-business students in business ethics education programs. This will be a collaborative partnership with the Department of Philosophy and World Religions within the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences.

The Wilson endowment echoes the Our Tomorrow campaign’s commitment to academic programs and faculty, renewing our investment in the people and programs that support student success at UNI and beyond, with an eye to the next generation.
Neither of David’s parents attended college, but they always expected that path for their kids. David’s mother, who also worked full-time, arranged to pay his first year of school on the condition that he funded the remainder. Thus began David’s time at UNI as well as his entry into the auto business. “Car salesman” was the last in a series of mostly blue collar jobs – night time mechanic and a stint in a foundry among them – which financed his degree.

As an incoming UNI freshman, Wilson wasn’t sure what his future held. He considered dentistry; he thought he might become a minister. He admits that above all he was concerned with staying in school. The specter of the country’s intensifying war with Vietnam loomed over his college years. Too many of his friends, including a fellow Traer native who had dropped out of UNI, were wounded or killed in the conflict.

There were fond memories of UNI, too: attending wrestling meets, hanging out with friends in the Psi Omega fraternity and listening to the chime of the Campanile bells from his dorm in Baker Hall.

Inspired by classes with Professor Thomas Thompson, a longtime faculty member and head of the Department of Philosophy and World Religions, Wilson would graduate with a degree in philosophy.

“[Professor Thompson] was the one who really got me interested in logic, ethics and philosophy,” Wilson said. “He was an excellent instructor.”

“This well-rounded education gave me the perspective and the ability to really look at things and analyze them ... my training in logic I believe has really helped me tremendously in business,” he added.

Wilson would minor in business as well, more than a decade before the School of Business was formally created in 1981. At the time, the program’s home was Seerley Hall.
Wilson said his college years were also defined by the mentorship he received outside of the classroom under Dick Gray, the manager of the local car dealership where Wilson got his first sales job. The two often played chess after work hours and discussed topics such as philosophy and business well into the night.

It was Gray who first exposed Wilson to “The Power of Positive Thinking” by Norman Vincent Peale. The influential book taught Wilson to believe in himself in the face of adversity, and contributed to his decisiveness as a leader.

“I was [a college student] wrestling with those questions about ‘What’s happening in my life?’, ‘Where am I going?’” Wilson explained. “And this book says, ‘Quit worrying about where you’re going and what you’re doing and just do it.’”

In 2005, the power of positive thinking would come full circle for Wilson. He was one of 10 Americans that year who were inducted into the Horatio Alger Association, an organization co-founded by Norman Vincent Peale that celebrates “the achievements of outstanding leaders who have accomplished remarkable successes in spite of adversity,” according to the association’s website. With that honor, he joined a diverse membership that includes Ronald Reagan, Maya Angelou, Buzz Aldrin and Clarence Thomas, who would don Wilson with the medal signifying his membership.

“I believe with success comes increased responsibility,” he told an interviewer at the time.

“I’m hoping this gift will ensure students will learn to do things the right way.”

- DAVID WILSON
“IOWA NEVER LEAVES YOU”

Shortly after graduating from UNI, David and his budding family would move to Arizona. Wilson said he was inspired in part by a parade magazine ad that beckoned: “Go where the sun goes for the winter.”

As the family’s Lincoln limped into a Phoenix-area dealership, David made a decision that would change his life. When he learned the vehicle repairs wouldn’t be covered under warranty, David persuaded the manager to make him a salesman so that he could get an employee discount on the service. Within five years he would own a 25% stake in the business, ultimately leveraging the partnership to launch his own dealerships throughout the southwest United States and parts of Mexico.

Wilson Automotive now comprises 18 automotive dealerships and related companies, employing more than 2,500 people. Sales for these corporations total more than $3 billion annually, making Wilson Automotive one of the largest dealership groups in the nation.

Wilson credits the company’s longevity and success to its “belief in the value of people.” Wilson Automotive is characterized by its emphasis on customer loyalty and retention, its commitment to employees, outstanding reputation in the industry and dedicated involvement in the local communities as a generous and supportive corporate citizen.

“I left Iowa, but Iowa doesn’t really leave you,” David asserts. He says a transformational gift to UNI has long been on his mind, and this past year he and his wife, Holly, decided the timing was right.

“I’ve had a wonderful life, a terrific career,” David reflected. “This gift to UNI is made in the hope that this money will transform the university; transform the College of Business into teaching the ethical way to do business … I’m hoping this gift will ensure students will learn to do things the right way.”

UNI has long been on his mind, and this past year he and his wife, Holly, decided the timing was right.

“If you want to know what to buy in life, buy time.”

—Jim Wilson

Learn more about the largest gift in UNI history!
Through the eyes of Team TC/TK

The true identities behind UNI's cherished mascots, TC and TK, remain a closely guarded secret until a student graces the stage at Commencement adorned in paws, revealing the faces behind these beloved figures.

Eric Melrose, '23, can say he's worn the paws at Commencement. While donning a heavy fleece suit may not seem like it would inspire a big personal change, it's done exactly that for Melrose.

“I think I've gained a better sense of myself,” he said. “I've been embodying a whole different personality, but I think his personality rubbed off on me a little bit.”

Early on in the suit, Melrose was much more cautious and concerned about embarrassing himself. But by the end of his TC career, he was bolder and learned to play off what might otherwise be embarrassing scenarios.

Putting on the suit was also transformative for Addy Rieken, '23.

“Being TK has made me a lot more animated in my everyday life,” she said. “It’s made me a better communicator and helped with my confidence because I’ve had to be in front of a lot of people.”

Melrose first learned of the mascot opportunity early in his freshman year when he saw flyers around the dorms advertising Team TC/TK applications.

“I was always kind of the quieter kid in high school,” he said. “I never really did anything to make myself

“I’ve been embodying a whole different personality, but I think his personality rubbed off on me a little bit.”

- Eric Melrose
stand out, so this was a way to get out of my comfort zone without people knowing it was me in there.”

After applying online, Melrose went through an interview. Then he finally had the opportunity to get in the suit and experience the world through the eyes — or rather the mouth — of a very large cat. For 15 minutes, Melrose personified TC for his audition, shooting baskets, dancing and taking pictures.

Rieken’s first experience in the suit was unforgettable in its own right.

“It was a little surreal because you feel like you have control of your body when you’re not in a suit and then all of a sudden, you’re inside, and it feels like you just gained 200 pounds,” she said.

Getting in suit is a lengthy ordeal that takes place at an undisclosed location known as the Cat Cave. As soon as the suit is on, the Team TC/TK member must shed their true identity and embody the identity of one of UNI’s iconic cats.

“As soon as we leave that door, I’m TK,” said Rieken. “So there’s no more talking. There’s no more acting like Addy. I’m TK.”

Members of Team TC/TK attend many sporting events, but that’s far from the only way they make their mark as Panthers. From birthday parties to Homecoming, mascots keep the energy high and make sure everyone is having a good time.

Melrose’s favorite memory from his time as a mascot came when the UNI men’s basketball team beat Loyola in overtime to capture the 2022 MVC regular season championship. Although staying in suit through overtime tested his endurance, Melrose has no regrets.

“Rushing the court with the entire student section behind me — that is one of those things I will never forget,” he said.

Experiencing UNI through the lens of a panther suit has forever altered the way both Melrose and Rieken reflect on their times at UNI.

“I think I had Panther pride before, but being the mascot is a whole different level,” said Melrose. “There’s a certain sense of pride I have in this university that I don’t think I would have otherwise.”
The Panther evolution

From his debut in the 1930s, to the highly popular TC of today, UNI’s mascot has always been the school’s biggest fan. Take a walk through TC’s story and learn the background of “The Cat.”

1931
Burl Berry, ’32, submitted the winning entry to name the school’s athletic mascot, the Purple Panthers.

EARLY 1970s
The Panther took on another nickname, Rocky, because of its resemblance to a raccoon.

1973
The Pink Panther made its debut when UNI graduate Barry Delp, ’80, took the helm of the mascot program.

1976
Chuck Patten, ’61, wrestling head coach, allowed the Pink Panther to amp up the crowd with the mascot’s first pre-game introduction. Production included house lights off with a single spotlight on the mascot as the Pink Panther theme played.

EARLY 1980s
The new Black Panther was debuted by Steve Lorenz, ’88.

1960
Student John Shannon, ’63, took over the program and personally funded and constructed a new panther to resemble other state schools.

1958
The Panther was nicknamed Pepi Panther.

EARLY 1960s
Pepi began appearing at other events outside of athletic games.

The three-dimensional panther mascot made its debut at a basketball game.
1985
Lorenz began to sign autographs as The Cat, and later shortened it to TC.

1990s
TC received a few makeovers throughout the decade, finally deciding on a slimmer, more athletic design. TC began to increase appearances throughout campus and the greater UNI community.

2001
TC made his first-ever appearance at the UCA College Mascot Championships and placed 12th.

2007
TC finished seventh overall at the UCA College Championships.

2010
TK (The Kitten), TC’s sister, made her inaugural appearance at the Homecoming football game.

2018
TC rappelled off a building to support Ronald McDonald House Charities and TC won the MVC’s Mascot Madness tournament.

2019
TC and TK visited the Mascot Hall of Fame.

2023
The Cedar Falls Tourism & Visitors Bureau announced a project called “Panthers on Parade.” This is a project to bring statues of TC decorated by local artists to Cedar Falls. Making TC not only UNI’s mascot, but a symbol for the Cedar Valley.
CELEBRATING 125 SEASONS OF UNI FOOTBALL

Since the first season of football at the Iowa State Normal School in 1895, Panther football has built a legacy few programs around the country can match. With 31 conference championship seasons, nearly 700 wins all-time and 22 FCS playoff appearances, UNI football has built a historic resume with legendary athletes, iconic coaches and unforgettable memories.

The Panthers honored this anniversary season with a 125th season decal on their helmets all season long.

“We know today’s program would not be where it is today without those who came before us to create a legacy and inspire our up-and-coming generations to achieve greatness.”

- MARK FARLEY, HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

THE FIRST LEADER

When the Panthers played their first two seasons in 1895 and 1896, they had no head coach.

ALL-AMERICAN PANTHERS

115 members of the UNI football team have earned AP All-American recognition during their careers as Panthers. This includes 29 First Team selections, 27 Second Team, 24 Third Team and 35 earning honorable mention nods.

See more UNI football through the years
UNI, then the Iowa State Normal School, kicked off its first football season in 1895 with a 12-10 win over Coe College. The Panthers have played every year since, with the exception of 1906, 1907, 1944 and 1945.

Led by 160 rushing yards and two touchdowns by All-American running back Randy Schultz, ’71, the State College of Iowa Panthers defeated Lamar Tech in the Pecan Bowl for the program’s first-ever postseason victory, 19-17 in front of 7,500 spectators at Shotwell Stadium in Abilene, Texas.

The UNI-Dome opened its doors as the new home of Panther football. UNI won 228 games inside the Dome in its first 46 seasons, which included a remarkable 30-3 home mark during the Darrell Mudra era (1983-87).

One of the most memorable seasons in school history, the Panthers reached their first-ever national championship game. Despite falling to No. 4 Appalachian State, 21-16 in the title game, the 2005 season remains the deepest postseason run in program history.

The Panthers completed the first perfect regular season in program and conference history going 11-0.

With a 25-20 week one win at Iowa State, head coach Mark Farley, ’86, ’94, surpassed Stan Sheriff as the winningest coach in program history.

Defensive lineman Karter Schult, ’16, wins the Buck Buchanan Award, given to the top defensive player in FCS football.

Offensive lineman Trevor Penning, ’21, made history as UNI’s first-ever first round draft pick in the NFL in 2022, being selected by the New Orleans Saints.

Since 1966, eight Panthers have heard their names called in the top-100 of the NFL Draft, including two in the top-60.

**2022**  
TREVOR PENNING, ’21  
(New Orleans Saints, Pick #19)

**2021**  
SPENCER BROWN, ’20  
(Buffalo Bills, Pick #93)

**2015**  
DAVID JOHNSON, ’15  
(Arizona Cardinals, Pick #86)

**2008**  
CHAD RINEHART, ’07  
(Washington Redskins, Pick #96)

**2000**  
BRAD MEESTER, ’99  
(Jacksonville Jaguars, Pick #60)

**1997**  
DEDRIC WARD, ’98  
(New York Jets, Pick #88)

**1991**  
JAMES JONES, ’92  
(Cleveland Browns, Pick #57)

**1966**  
RANDY SCHULTZ, ’71  
(Cleveland Browns, Pick #74)

**1895**  
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**KURT WARNER, ’94**  
/ Pro Football Hall of Fame  
/ Super Bowl XXXIV Champion  
/ Super Bowl XXXIV MVP  
/ Two time NFL Most Valuable Player  
/ Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year

**TOP-100 ON THE BOARD**

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DEDRIC WARD, ’98  
(New York Jets, Pick #88)

**1991**  
JAMES JONES, ’92  
(Cleveland Browns, Pick #57)

**1966**  
RANDY SCHULTZ, ’71  
(Cleveland Browns, Pick #74)
The return of male students to the Iowa State Teachers College after World War I sparked the beginning of wrestling as an intercollegiate sport. In 2023-2024, the UNI wrestling team celebrated its 100th anniversary season.

With three national team championships, scores of All-American athletes and 44 individual NCAA champions, the history of Panther wrestling runs deep.

Wrestling has served as a rich part of UNI's fabric since its initial varsity team was formed in 1923. The proud history of UNI Wrestling includes the 1950 team that captured the NCAA Division I title at the West Gym. The Panthers also were crowned NCAA Division II champions in both 1975 and 1978. The 1978 NCAA Championships were hosted at the UNI-Dome. The program boasts five Olympians, including Bill Smith, ‘51, who won the gold medal at the 1952 Helsinki Games.

More recently, Parker Keckeisen (184 lbs.) became UNI's 10th three-time All-American after winning the silver medal at the 2023 NCAA Championships. The Panthers have claimed 17 individual NCAA titles, including Drew Foster (184 lbs.), who won UNI's most recent individual crown at the 2019 NCAA Championships.

“We have men that are going to go make differences in the world. Right now they’re making a difference in this program.”

- DOUG SCHWAB, HEAD WRESTLING COACH

See more UNI wrestling through the years
The Iowa State Teachers College won its first intercollegiate wrestling meet vs. Cornell College, 16-8.

The Panthers won their second Division II national team title in four years in the UNI-Dome.

On Nov. 30, 1984, UNI rolls past Missouri State 57-0 for its largest margin of victory in a dual meet in program history.

UNI-Dome hosts the NCAA Division I National Championships.

Doug Schwab, a 1999 NCAA champion and three-time All-American is hired as the ninth head wrestling coach in UNI history.

UNI Wrestling joins the Big 12 Conference.

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UNI Wrestling joins the Big 12 Conference.
then & now
UNI Leadership recreates historic 1926 photo

As celebration continues to recognize the restoration efforts at the University of Northern Iowa campanile, UNI leadership gathered on the morning of Tuesday, May 2, 2023, to recreate a historic photo of the campanile bells taken in 1926.

In the 1926 photograph, left to right:
/ J.F. Behlert - Bell Manufacturer
/ A.E. Meneely - Bell Manufacturer
/ Benjamin Boardman - Business Manager
/ Albert C. Fuller - Alumni Director
/ James E. Robinson - Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds
/ Homer H. Seerley - Iowa State Teachers College President

In the 2023 photograph, left to right:
/ Oksana Grybovych Hafermann, ‘08 - Chief of Staff
/ Marty Mark, ‘81, ‘12 - Chief Information Officer
/ Michael Hager, ‘88 - Vice President for Finance and Operations
/ Heather Harbach - Vice President for Student Life
/ Jim Jermian, ’95, ’09 - Vice President for University Advancement, President of the UNI Foundation
/ José Herrera - Provost and Executive Vice President
/ Pete Moris - Director of University Relations
/ David Harris - Director of Athletics
/ Mark Nook - University of Northern Iowa President

Keeping up with the residence halls

Each new generation of Panthers puts their own mark on student living. Take a tour of UNI’s dorm rooms today.

Bringing the past to life

The Mainstreet 360° project aims to tell the story of UNI’s campus by using augmented reality technology to overlay historical photos on modern day imagery. Creator Bettina Fabos, professor of interactive digital studies and director of Fortepan Iowa, says the project aims to connect time and space. The project recently received a $150,000 National Endowment for the Humanities grant.
From **UNI** to **Ninja U & TV’s “American Ninja Warrior”**

If you’ve never watched the reality-competition television show “American Ninja Warrior,” it features amazing individuals with abilities that might come straight from a Spider-Man comic — they run up 18-foot walls, hang by fingertips on narrow ledges and race through obstacles, all while hoping not to be eliminated by falling into pools of cold water below.

Many of the athletes you see on the show share something in common. “We are pretty sure we have the highest number of ‘American Ninja Warriors’ per capita,” says Scott Behrends, ’04, University of Northern Iowa graduate and co-owner of Ninja U — a one-of-a-kind gym which specializes in “ninja” training. He operates the venture with UNI graduate and co-owner Jacob Pauli, ’02, first opening a location in Cedar Falls, then adding a second location in Ankeny.
You might find similar gyms in surrounding states, but Pauli and Behrends say their Ninja U facilities are the only two exclusive ninja gyms in Iowa. Most athletes visit from within an hour's drive. Behrends says athletes of a variety of sports find the grip, speed and balance work at his facilities helpful.

“It started in my backyard doing obstacle courses with my kids,” says Scott, who is raising three children with his wife Lindsey, also a 2004 UNI graduate. “That morphed into the garage as we built peg boards and other obstacles hanging from the ceiling. We really got into ninja and started a YouTube channel around it.”
Behrends likes to share his story with many UNI business students and entrepreneurship clubs each semester. The idea evolved into a first place pitch at the 2017 Cedar Valley Startup Weekend and later became a reality when Ninja U held its grand opening the following year. The pair was able to take advantage of the CIPCO Business Enhancement Internship program through UNI’s John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center to fund interns studying in the field of leisure, youth and human services to receive hands-on training.
The partnerships with UNI don’t end there. “When we opened, the UNI rock climbing club came to set routes on our rock wall. Now our athletes frequent the UNI rock wall for cross-training.”

As you learn more about Ninja U and its athletes featured on the “American Ninja Warrior” television show, the ties to UNI keep popping up.

“Our Ankeny manager, Nate Person, ’18, a UNI athletic training alum, does a great job there,” said Behrends. “He was also selected to be on ‘American Ninja Warrior’ this season.”

“Athletic training has really shaped the way I coach ninja,” said Person. “Having an eye for exercise progression makes it so easy to break it all the way down to the basics.”

NATE PERSON

2018
ATHETIC TRAINING

1 SEASON ON
AMERICAN NINJA
WARRIOR

FAVORITE OBSTACLE:
LACHE

MOTTO:
I AM A HUGE BELIEVER
THAT NINJA IS FOR
EVERYONE
“I actually went to UNI with the intention of getting into rock climbing because I wanted to get on the show,” says Jackson Twait, ‘19, from Hudson, Iowa. “When I was younger, I always wanted to go to the UNI rock wall, because I grew up nearby. I was always trying to get my mom or dad to take me to the WRC.”

For Twait, being a double major in actuarial science and economics didn’t leave a lot of room for free time for training. “All of it was eaten up by rock climbing and training for the show for the most part. But I also had a blast. All the climbing at UNI really strengthened my fingertips,” he said.

Now that he’s no longer a student, Jackson focuses his training at the Ninja U in Cedar Falls.

“I’m in here about every day of the week,” he said. “It has everything I need in terms of obstacles, people push me and everyone here has become like my best friend. Now that we’re starting to get other people from the gym here on the show, it just makes it that much more sweet.”

As of 2023, you can count 14 Ninja U athletes who have appeared on the nationally-broadcast television show. “We’d like to say it’s a mix of good ‘ol Iowa work ethic, fitness made fun, the positive environment and incredible coaches we have,” says Behrends.

**JACKSON TWAIT**

*2019 ACTUARIAL SCIENCE & ECONOMICS*

*6 SEASONS ON AMERICAN NINJA WARRIOR*

**FAVORITE OBSTACLE:** CLIFF HANGERS

**MOTTO:** “YOU DON’T BET AGAINST UNI IN MARCH”
- BARACK OBAMA
Pauli might know a thing or two about coaching. He’s the most decorated pole vaulter in UNI Track and Field history, earning him a 2011 induction into the UNI Athletics Hall of Fame. Jacob’s wife, Nikki, ’02, was also a UNI student athlete and now is an adjunct instructor in UNI’s department of social work.

“My entire UNI experience contributed to where I am today, but really just an appreciation for the community is what has led to our desire to create a business that has such a great impact on kids in the area,” he says.

Behrends agrees. “Ninjas must learn to fail an obstacle and learn from it, just like life. It really teaches grit from a young age. We offer classes starting at age 3, and it’s amazing to hear the stories of what ninja has done for some kids.”

But Ninja U isn’t just for elite athletes or aspiring ninjas. “Ninja U Cedar

Falls was named the 2022 Tourist Attraction of the Year, so we really have become a destination for fun, not just a gym,” said Behrends. “We are really proud of our ‘American Ninja Warrior’ athlete list, but even more proud of the family it has created.”

Whatever makes a “ninja,” it seems to run in the family. Scott’s son Ben, a junior at Cedar Falls High School, joins him in competing on the TV show, and his son Jason competed on season one of “American Ninja Warrior Junior.”

“My oldest son and I have been on three seasons of ‘American Ninja Warrior’ together and I was previously in 2019,” says Scott. “My nephew, Chris, has quite a few seasons under his belt too. He was a UNI student for most of that and is now a manager at our Cedar Falls gym.”

The most recent season of “American Ninja Warrior” featured Scott and Ben Behrends, Nate Person and Jackson Twait.

Keep an eye out for the group on season 16 of “American Ninja Warrior,” which will air in 2024.
ALUMNI SERVE CEDAR VALLEY THROUGH EXECUTIVE ROLES

UNI has a long reputation of graduating professionals into the nonprofit sector. Historically at least 10% of UNI graduates join the nonprofit sector post graduation. Graduates, from a range of UNI degree programs, end up in a diversity of areas — youth organizations, event planning, community and human service providers etc. Alumni also serve philanthropic organizations such as private and family, corporate, and community foundations and trusts.

As several UNI alumni demonstrate, leaders of these organizations are critical in directing the volunteer and financial resources of their organizations to achieve the greater good for their communities. These alumni are responsible for managing combined assets of more than $180 million and annual grantmaking of almost $12 million to the Cedar Valley and northeast Iowa. Their UNI experiences have contributed to their leadership and their work to make our communities great places to live, learn, work and play.
“Philanthropy is rewarding yet hard work. We see community success — and failure — but show up again and again to make our world a better place. Often we are overworked and underpaid, but we wouldn’t change our community roles for the world. In the Cedar Valley, I am surrounded by incredible female leaders that I’ve looked up to for years and that have taught me much of what I know. They’ve passed the baton to me, and now it’s my responsibility to pour into the next generation, create space for them and their leadership, and advance their passions for philanthropy to continue best practices in this work.”

Emily Hanson

2013
LEISURE, YOUTH & HUMAN SERVICES/NONPROFIT YOUTH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BLACK HAWK COUNTY GAMING ASSOCIATION
10 YEARS IN PHILANTHROPY

“My experience at UNI completely shaped who I am today as a nonprofit professional. I had classes in the recreation, tourism and nonprofit leadership department that taught me theoretical approaches to philanthropy while directly connecting me to the community off campus, so I could apply what I was learning real-time. I also had the opportunity to take on leadership roles for student organizations like the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance and UNI Dance Marathon. This helped me gain experience collaborating with large groups of people, allowed me to acquire leadership, management and facilitation skills I still use to this day.”

Emily Hanson

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Hannah Luce

2021
LEISURE, YOUTH & HUMAN SERVICES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WATERLOO SCHOOLS FOUNDATION
4 YEARS IN PHILANTHROPY
“My first philanthropic experience was through my church as a kid. I thought about philanthropy as a career after I returned from my sophomore study abroad experience in South Africa. It changed my world, and then I changed my major! Opportunities through UNI’s Nonprofit Leadership Alliance shaped everything. From my relationships with faculty to internship experiences I had in the community, UNI helped create the dots I’d connect later.”

Megan McKenzie

“Otto Schoitz Foundation’s purpose is to improve the health and wellbeing of the community and its individual residents. My role at Otto Schoitz Foundation is my second career — I was the CFO for a regional health system prior. I made a career change when the health system transferred ownership, which enabled the creation of the Otto Schoitz Foundation. I wanted to be part of the foundation from its inception, to have a hand in developing its mission and ultimately its impact within and across our community. My work has allowed me to directly work with those individuals and organizations who are effecting change for the betterment of all. It’s been very rewarding.”

Shelli Panicucci
“Being a leader in philanthropy means truly being involved in the community, supporting nonprofits, connecting with donors, and bringing it all together to do my part to continue making our city a great place to live, work, and play. The Cedar Falls Community Foundation serves as a trusted partner in helping donors impact the community, particularly in areas they are passionate about. Without organizations like ours, many projects or services may go unfunded, which would be a huge detriment to our community. We have been serving Cedar Falls for almost 50 years and are working every day to make a difference in our community.”

“Philanthropic organizations can play many critical roles in our communities. While they obviously provide financial support and sustainability to organizations, programs and communities, they can also be connectors, conveners and more. At the Guernsey Charitable Foundation, we meet passionate people doing all sorts of innovative and effective things. We often find ourselves simply introducing people to one another for support, partnerships and learning opportunities. All critical issues take coordination and collaboration to address, so we try to make sure we are at the table to understand the issues and where we can be of service.”

Casey Reints

2009 & 2011
SOCIAL WORK; MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MAX & HELEN GUERNSEY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

4 YEARS IN PHILANTHROPY

Sally Timmer

2012
COMMUNICATION STUDIES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CEDAR FALLS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

2 YEARS IN PHILANTHROPY
President Biden appointed Dr. Kimryn Rathmell, ’91, as the 17th director of the National Cancer Institute. Dr. Rathmell has been recognized for incredible contributions to kidney cancer research.

The National Cancer Institute is the federal government’s principal agency for cancer research and training. The NCI’s mission is to lead, conduct, and support cancer research across the nation to advance scientific knowledge and help people live longer, healthier lives.

“With this gift, we hope to support the teaching and research mission of the University of Northern Iowa, allowing scholars and students the academic freedom to explore American government and public policy.”
- CHUCK GRASSLEY

UNI is proud to accept two historic gifts to the institution from Senator and Mrs. Chuck Grassley, ’55, ’56, – a gift of the papers and other historical materials from the Senator’s time in the U.S. Senate to the UNI Rod Library, and a gift of an endowed professorship in the Department of Political Science.

A proud UNI alum, Senator Grassley is the longest-serving U.S. senator from Iowa, and the longest-serving Republican senator in history. He is the most senior member of the U.S. Senate and currently serves as the president pro tempore emeritus of the U.S. Senate.

These gifts honor the extensive legacy of Senator Grassley’s career in public service and continue the longstanding support Senator and Mrs. Grassley have provided to the University of Northern Iowa.

With this gift, we hope to support the teaching and research mission of the University of Northern Iowa, allowing scholars and students the academic freedom to explore American government and public policy.”
- CHUCK GRASSLEY

UNI TO HOUSE PAPERS OF U.S. SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY

UNI ALUM DR. KIMRYN RATHMELL PICKED AS 17TH DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

PANTHER ALUM GREG BALLenger, ’16, WAS A CONTESTANT ON THIS SEASON OF THE HOLIDAY BAKING CHAMPIONSHIP ON FOOD NETWORK
ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

FORMER STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT ESTABLISHES MAAS STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARD

Growing up on a small family farm, Jim Maas, ’77, says his University of Northern Iowa education amounted to an “intellectual awakening.”

During his time at UNI, the purpose-driven young man from the Cedar Rapids area would become increasingly involved in the intersection of public policy and making a real difference in people’s lives. As a sophomore, he would be elected president of the UNI student body.

“I’ve always believed in making the world a better place,” Maas said.

That philosophy courses through Maas’s 38-year career in the federal government including stints in the Bureau of the Census for the 1980 Census, the Department of Energy during the nation’s energy crisis, the Environmental Protection Agency during the Superfund cleanup and Brownfields redevelopment program creations, and at the White House’s Office of Management and Budget dealing with a paradigm shift in the government’s information technology strategy.

“Everything I learned in student government – how to build coalitions, how to understand and implement policy – I used those same skills in my government roles,” Maas said.

As a UNI student, Maas valued his education but was unsure how he would pay for it. He credits scholarships and a modest stipend for the student body president with filling the gap and helping him graduate with a degree in sociology.

Now retired and living in the Washington, D.C. area, Maas worked with the UNI Foundation to establish the James L. Maas Student Leadership Award, which will provide a scholarship for student leaders making a difference on campus and in the community.

“Leadership is ubiquitous,” Maas said. “It is a part of every aspect of your life. I want those who may not have the financial means to have the opportunity to be involved in student government or other leadership positions that connect them with their broader community.”

JOEL WAGGONER’S JOURNEY FROM UNI SCHOOL OF MUSIC TO “ONLY MURDERS IN THE BUILDING”

Joel Waggoner, ’08, found himself alongside Meryl Streep (pictured), Steve Martin and Martin Short in the popular Hulu series as his character directed rehearsals for a Broadway show. Joel has performed in a few Broadway shows in real life as well.

“It’s one of the best music schools in the country,” he says of the UNI School of Music. “I wanted to be a really good musician, and I knew UNI could make me that.”
HERITAGE HONOURS AWARD WINNERS

PAUL DONAHUE, ’78
Alumni Achievement Award

KATY SUSONG, ’04
Young Alumni Award

KIP ELLIOT, ’89
Alumni Service Award

CATHY IRVINE
Honorary Alumni Award

PRESIDENT’S PHILANTHROPY AWARDS WINNERS

STAN & ROSE LORENZ
Purple and Gold Award

KEVIN ZAUGG ’96
Emerging Philanthropist Award

JOEL & LINDA HAACK
Faculty/Staff Award

THE BRIGHT FOUNDATION
Corporate and Foundation Award
2023 GOLD & BOLD Awardees

Nicole North, ’19
A UNI chemistry grad, North is currently pursuing her PhD at the Ohio State. After being accepted into NASA’s Planetary Summer School, she earned NASA’s Future Investigators in NASA Earth and Space Science and Technology fellowship and became a NASA principal investigator on her own research project.

Daniel Laudick, ’13
With a BA in economics, Laudick is the founder of Red Cedar, a public-private partnership to support entrepreneurs and new business startups in the Cedar Valley. In addition to Red Cedar, he has helped to create several businesses and community initiatives. He was elected Cedar Falls mayor in November 2023.

Jessica Mwanza, ’15, ’17
A two-time alum of UNI’s speech pathology program, Mwanza worked as a speech-language pathologist with an Iowa AEA before joining the Special Hope Network in Zambia. There she works to improve access to much needed therapeutic services like speech-language therapy for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

2023-2024 Alumni Board

First Row: Kevin Saville, ’87; Sam Adams, student representative; Chet Adams, ’20; Drew Conrad, ’93, chair of the board; Jamal White, ’18.

Back Row: Laurie Krumm, ’83; Debora Blume, ’94; Ann McCall, ’92; Eric Hackman, ’12; Doug D. Whittle, ’73; Eric Johnson, ’98; Dylan Keller, ’14, ’16; Micaiah Krutsinger, president, Northern Iowa Student Government; Cherin Lee, ’71, ’82; Sarah Schlicher, ’93.

Not Pictured: Renae Billings, ’05; Victoria Crouse, ’07; Courtney Chabot Dreyer, ’94; Elizabeth Hackbarth, ’08, ’11; Ben Hammes, ’08; Dennis Jordan, ’91; Krystal Madlock, ’95, ’04; Chance McElhaney, ’07; Erin McElroy, ’15; Joe Murphy, ’06; Trevor Rayhons, ’18; Coree Smith, ’98; Bryant Wallace, ’96.
5

QUESTIONS WITH PHYSICS ALUM
SAM PROPHET

1. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE UNI FOR YOUR UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES?

I chose UNI after meeting with Paul Shand my senior year of high school and touring the physics department. I knew that I would be majoring in physics (later picking up a minor in mathematics) and toured a few schools during that time. The student to faculty ratio and the amount of student research being conducted really made UNI stand out from the other schools I visited.

2. WHAT DID YOU ENJOY ABOUT BEING A STUDENT AT UNI?

I was very lucky to have faculty that really rooted for my success and were willing to devote their time to questions. In a lot of schools, you’re lucky if the professor knows your name, and questions to the faculty often go unanswered.

3. WHERE HAVE YOU WORKED SINCE GRADUATING?

After graduating UNI, I started a PhD before beginning an engineering career. The first job I had was as an electrical engineer for a boat manufacturer. After six months, I moved on to NASA.

4. HOW HAS YOUR UNI PHYSICS DEGREE HELPED YOU SUCCEED IN YOUR CAREER?

Systems engineering is a great field for someone looking to enter engineering with a physics degree. The problems you solve vary drastically in disciplines of engineering. The physics program at UNI exposed me to so many different fields of study, that I feel confident in my ability to face almost any engineering issue, regardless of the discipline. A bonus is that recruiters really like physics majors!

5. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR CURRENT STUDENTS AS THEY PREPARE TO SEEK EMPLOYMENT?

Patience and persistence. It’s easy to get bogged down after getting rejected. I interviewed for three separate positions at NASA before getting one. And once I got here and talked to my coworkers about my experience, I realized that everyone goes through the same thing. So just keep applying and going on interviews. It’ll happen!
1960s

'62 Sandy Stevens, BA, Glen Ellyn, IL, received the Bill Nelson Award for Contributions to Wrestling by the Iowa Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame on 10/21/2023.

'63 Carroll Engelhardt, BA, Moorhead, MN, published his fifth book “By the Sweat of His Brow: The R.M. Probstfield Family at Oakport Farm,” which recounts the story of a prominent German pioneer family living in the Red River Valley frontier of Minnesota.

'67 David Prescott, BA, Oklahoma City, OK, was awarded a 50 year certificate of appreciation from the Oklahoma Bar Association.

1970s

'70 Steve Speth, BA, MA ’79, Lebanon, OR, is a featured guest on a PBS series “America Outdoors.” The episode filmed in the Chaco Cultural National Park in New Mexico and aired in Sept. 2023.

'72 Dennis Wenthold, BA, Miami, FL, was a teacher for 14 years and school administrator for 24 years before retiring in Panama and running a bed and breakfast called Cabanas Potosi in El Valle de Anton.

'74 Bill Hesse, BA, MA ’78, Bella Vista, AR, retired from public school teaching in 2009 and moved to Bella Vista, AR. He conducted the Bella Vista Men’s Chorus for five years, currently conducts the choir at First Presbyterian Church in Rogers, AR, and has a private voice studio. Since 2020, he has had high school students compete successfully at Arkansas NATS and in 2023, his students won both High School Classical Treble and High School Music Theatre Treble.

'74 Cheryl Mullenbach, BA, Panora, published a book titled “Grit, Not Glamour,” which celebrates contributions by our foremothers to farming and ranching in the 19th and 20th centuries.

'76 Jamie Van Nostrand, BA, Cambridge, MA, was appointed chair of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities on 5/1/2023.

'79 Mike McEniry, BM, Rockford, retired from teaching at Mason City High School after 37 years in public education and from teaching at Waldorf University for 4 years. He currently teaches brass students in his home studio. Since March 2022 he has been collecting, repairing and purchasing band instruments, music, teaching materials and financial donations for a mission project to start an instrumental music program in La Victoire, Haiti, with the help and assistance from First Covenant Church in Mason City. Materials arrived in La Victoire on 8/8/2023. A music camp was held the following week and the program is now underway. He teaches Zoom lessons to the children in La Victoire along with some of the Haitian musicians.

1980s

'81 Gail (Briddle) Bunz, BA, Hudson, retired 8/1/2022 after 25 years with the Rod Library at UNI.

'81 Ronald Langford, BA, Milwaukee, WI, was a Wisconsin state public defender from 1985 and has received numerous awards, including National Top 100 Criminal Defense Trial Lawyers of 2018 and Top Ranking Attorney Iowa 2020.

'82 Kyle Cornish, BA, Hernando, MS, was recognized by FedEx with the Purple Promise Chairman’s Award, which is granted to those who have delivered exceptional service under unusual circumstances. He serves as a supply and logistics analyst and was instrumental in the distribution of flu vaccine.


'83 Karen (Meddock) Farley, BA, Des Moines, retired as senior underwriter after 36 years with Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield.


'86 Mark Kittrell, BA, Cedar Falls, received the 2023 Leader of the Year Award from Grow Cedar Valley.

'86 Deb Vangellow, BA, Sugar Land, TX, received the 2023 Nancy Lopez Golf Achievement Award from the Ladies Professional Golf Association.

'87 Anne (Gutknecht) Schreck, BA, MA ’95, Cedar Falls, received the 2023 Gold Star Award for Outstanding Teaching. She is a literacy strategist at Irving Elementary School in Waterloo.

'88 Mike Capesius, BA, Ball Ground, GA, was promoted to vice president corporate tax at Superior Essex Inc, an Atlanta based multinational magnet wire and communications wire company.

'88 Patrick Murphy, BA, Northport, AL, entered his 28th year with the University of Alabama softball program. He is the winningest coach in any sport in school history.

'89 Jane (Brandt) Lindaman, BA, MA ’95, ASC ’05, EdD ’05, Waterloo, received the 2023 Legacy Award from Grow Cedar Valley.

1990s

'92 Guang Jin, MA, DIT ’95, Cedar Falls, was named to the Marquis Who’s Who in America for 2022-2023. She is the CEO of Sunshine Global Services, LLC.
'93 Stephanie (Bell) Eckhardt, BA, Eldridge, was elected to the North Scott School Board on 11/07/2023. She is a realtor with Ruhl & Ruhl Realtors in the Quad Cities.

'93 Luke Miller, BM, Ottumwa, is the director of bands at the Cardinal Community School District and has been teaching music for 23 years. He serves on the Iowa High School Music Association’s adjudicator list and has been a judge at several events over the years. Miller performs as principal tubist for the Ottumwa Symphony Orchestra and recently became manager of the newly formed Ottumwa Symphony Youth Philharmonic and the Ottumwa Symphony Youth Orchestra.

'93 Amy Van Polen, BA, Wheaton, IL, was appointed CEO of Bridge Communities.

'93 Jennifer (Stephens) VanHaaften, BA, Fort Atkinson, WI, co authored a chapter on national and ethnic dress with UNI professor emeritus Annette Lynch that was published in “The Routledge History of Fashion and Dress, 1800 to the Present” on 9/30/2023. She is the assistant director at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison, WI, serves on the Wisconsin Federation of Museums’ board and was program chair for the 2021 and 2022 Association of Midwest Museums annual conferences.

'94 Karen Tupper, BA, Dubuque, was appointed senior vice president of internal communications strategy, planning and signature programs at Citi.

'95 Krista (Ficek) Castellanos, BA, Aliso Viejo, CA, was elected president of the Capistrano Unified School District Board of Trustees, which represents the 8th largest school district in California. She is also an elementary teacher for the Santa Ana Unified School District.

'96 Karen (Norby) Fannin, BM, Omaha, NE, was named director of the School of Music at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She is a professor, director of bands, and conducts the Symphonic Wind Ensemble, teaches undergraduate and graduate conducting, instructs courses in music education and provides leadership for all aspects of the UNO band program. She is an Edward Clark Diamond Professor of Music.

'96 John Sutter, BA, Dubuque, was named vice president of Field of Dreams Operations.

'97 Michael Gabrick, BA, '98, Kansas City, MO, is a director of digital management with KPMG US.


'97 Karla Williams, BA, Pflugerville, TX, launched Echelon Protection Group, a business specializing in high end executive protection.

'98 Tina (Kneisel) Bakehouse, BA, BA '01, Hastings, published a book titled “Discovering Our Magnetic Speaker Within.”

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2000s

'00 Matthew Nielsen, BA, Rumson, NJ, was promoted to vice president and head of enterprise digital and data with American Express.

'01 Valerie Jennings, BA, Overland Park, KS, is the founder of Jennings Social Media & MarTech. She has grown the business into a highly competitive growth marketing agency.

'02 Gregory Aker, BA, Columbia, MO, performs as lead tenor saxophonist in the Columbia Jazz Orchestra, and works remotely as vice president of engineering for a fleet management startup based out of Dallas called Vinli.

'02 Alan Greiner, MM, Jefferson, received special recognition for his contributions to the arts at the 2023 Governor’s Arts Awards. He has served as the executive director of the Iowa High School Music Association for 21 years.

'02 William Hagans, BA, Houston, TX, was board certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in the area of personal injury trial law.

'02 Megan (Odell) Lantz, BA, Ankeny, is a partner in the immigration department with Dentons Davis Brown.

'02 Grant Menke, BA, Ankeny, was named deputy secretary of agriculture with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

'04 Sarah (Miller) Diesburg, BS, Cedar Falls, received the 2022 Computer Science Educator of the Year Award from the Technology Association of Iowa. She is an associate professor at UNI.

'04 Chad Lang, BA, Glenwood, was selected as the School Administrators of Iowa Central Office Administrator of the Year for 2023. He also has written a book with UNI assistant professor Dr. Matt Townsley, called “A Parents’ Guide to Grading and Reporting: Being Clear About What Matters.”

'04 Gabriel Smith, BA, Akron, OH, is the associate director for the Customer Experience (CX) Professionals Association. He recently led efforts to create the first “CX Book of Knowledge” with a team of authors around the world.

'04 Ashley (Atherton) Thompson, BA, Ames, was named to the United Way of Story County Board of Directors.
'05 Jed Ellerbroek, BA, Saint Louis, MO, was promoted to portfolio manager with Argent Capital Management.

'05 Stacey (Conaway) Mahajan, BA, BA '10, Austin, TX, was awarded by the Texas Society of Certified Public Accountants as one of the 2023 Rising Stars in the accounting profession. She is senior finance manager at Wilsonart International.

'05 JoEllen (Schwab) Pruis, MA, Waterloo, received the 2023 Gold Star Award for Outstanding Teaching. She is a 6th grade teacher at Hoover Middle School.

'06 Brandon Clark, BA, Des Moines, was recognized in the 30th Edition of “The Best Lawyers in America.” He is an attorney with McKee, Voorhees & Sease, PLC.

'06 Laura (Rutt) Jordan, BA, Johnston, was promoted to brand manager of the State of Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. She has done graphic design with the State of Iowa since 2019.

'06 Jim Miller, BA, Waterloo, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. He is the Cedar Valley market president for First Interstate Bank.

'07 Samuel Kreassig, BM, Waterloo, was named associate director of human resources at Waterloo Community Schools. He previously served as assistant principal at Hoover Middle School.

'07 Tony Pollastrini, BA, Waverly, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. He is a partner with The Accel Group.

'07 Jaymes Sime, BA, Omaha, NE, received the 2023 JCI (Jaycees) USA Ten Outstanding Young Americans Award. He is the president and CEO of Child Saving Institute.

'07 Andrew St John, BA, Polk City, was named CEO and executive vice president of Central Iowa Power Cooperative.

'08 Natalie (Moon) Dlouhy, BA, Hudson, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is a commercial relationship manager with Lincoln Savings Bank.

'09 Bryan Conaway, BA, Verona, WI, is a retail sales leader at AAA Madison West (WI), AAA Rockford (IL), and AAA Vernon Hills Car Care Plus (IL) for the Auto Club Group.

'09 Drew Van Woert, BA, Clive, was promoted to director of underwriting for property and casualty insurance at Farm Bureau Financial Services.

2010s

'10 Tonya Zlab, BA, Des Moines, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is a public health professional with the Iowa Department of Health & Human Services.

'10 Nick Krob, BA, Des Moines, is the 2023 chair of the Licensing Executives Society Iowa Chapter. He is an attorney with McKee, Voorhees & Sease, PLC.

'10 Reilly (Zlab) Martin, BA, Portland, OR, is the executive director of Technologists for the Public Good.

'12 Maria (Schreiber) Sulentic, MA, Algona, was elected K-12 vice president for the Iowa School Counselor Association. She is a school counselor with the West Bend Mallard Community School District.

'12 Katelyn (Pedersen) Tungland, BA, Cedar Falls, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is a regional director with Junior Achievement.

'12 Spencer Walrath, BA, Glenview, IL, is the system director for corporate reputation for NorthShore University HealthSystem in Chicagoland.

'12 Reilly (Zlab) Martin, BA, Portland, OR, is the executive director of Technologists for the Public Good.

'12 Nick Krob, BA, Des Moines, is the 2023 chair of the Licensing Executives Society Iowa Chapter. He is an attorney with McKee, Voorhees & Sease, PLC.

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'12 Katelyn (Pedersen) Tungland, BA, Cedar Falls, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is a regional director with Junior Achievement.
'13 Janae (Holtkamp) Guay, BA, Cedar Falls, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is an assistant corporate controller with CPM Acquisitions.

'13 Bryce Lobdell, BA, Des Moines, was promoted to buyer and planner for LeMar Industries.

'13 Kyle Maley, BA, Burnsville, MN, is a senior managed service provider sales engineer with Arctic Wolf. He has also re-entered the competitive running scene and will be running professionally for Run Minnesota in the USATF Minnesota championship circuit.

'13 Jamie Perry, BA, Waverly, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. He is the chief financial officer for Exceptional Persons, Inc.

'13 Andrew Quandt, BA, Le Mars, was promoted to vice president of lending at North Star Community Credit Union.

'13 Alicia Rogers, BA, Waterloo, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is the director of training and development at Goodwill Industries of Northeast Iowa.

'14 Brady Bednar, BA, Olathe, KS, is a systems engineer for O’Reilly Auto Parts.

'14 Nathan Dobbels, MA, Bondurant, received the 2023 Professional and Scientific Learning Community Coordinator Award from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University. He is an academic advisor in agricultural education and studies.

'14 Katie (Beale) James, BA, Davenport, after nine years as a teacher interventionist, she is now a school counselor at a junior high, published writer appearing on NPR and has a young son, Hunter.

'14 Andrew Rubenbauer, BA, Brooklyn, NY, received a Climate Corps fellowship with the Environmental Defense Fund to work with the Dairy Farmers of America in Kansas City, KS.

'14 Riley Schreder, BA, MA '16, Des Moines, was named a finalist for the 2023 Courage Award at the Inspiring Women of Iowa Event.

'15 Sarah (Turner) Helleso, BA, Waterloo, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is the director of Try Pie Bakery.

'15 Makayla McDonald, BM, MM ’17, Brooklyn, NY, was the keynote speaker at the Cedar Valley Arts Summit in Apr. 2023. McDonald sang the lead role of Harriet Tubman in the New York premiere of Thea Musgrave’s “The Story of Harriet Tubman” with Utopia Opera and has performed with Dell Arte Opera Ensemble, Light Opera of New York, Beth Morrison Projects at Harlem Stage, New Muses Project at the Kaufman Music Center, American Opera Project + New York University/Tish and Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre.

'15 Ben Owen, BM, Cincinnati, OH, won the 2023 John Ness Beck Foundation Award for composers of sacred choral music.

'15 Jessica Petersen, BA, Phoenix, AZ, was promoted to associate director of strategy with Highnoon.

'15 Alex Rebling, BA, MA ’21, Fairfield, is the activities director and dean of students for the Pekin Community School District and serves as second lieutenant for the 109th HHC Medical Battalion for the Iowa Army National Guard.

'15 Tirzah Roussell, BA, Delhi, is an attorney with Dentons Davis Brown.

'16 Colin Wilson, BA, Iowa City, received his doctor of musical arts degree in voice in Aug. 2023 from the University of Iowa. His submitted thesis/recording project was titled: “Beyond Ev’ry Valley: A Tenor’s Guide to Oratorio Arias and Recitatives Beyond the Standards.”

'17 Charles Mhoon, BA, MA ’23, Evansdale, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. He is an educational counselor with the UNI Center for Urban Education.

'17 Naima Burrs, MM, Richmond, VA, was featured as a recitalist on the Longwood University Chamber Music Series in Jan. 2023. Burrs is a violinist and conductor and is a doctoral candidate in conducting at the Catholic University of America. She recently appeared as a guest on the NPR program “With Good Reason,” where she discussed her upbringing and career, and

'17 Tiffany (Harms) Miller, BA, Cedar Falls, received the 2023 Gold Star Award for Outstanding Teaching. She is a 2nd grade teacher at Cedar Heights Elementary in Cedar Falls.

'17 Shantel Kahrs, BA, Hudson, received the 2023 Gold Star Award for Outstanding Teaching. She is a 7th grade social studies teacher at Peet Junior High in Cedar Falls.

'18 Adam Bolts, BA, Cedar Falls, received the 2023 Gold Star Award for Outstanding Teaching. He is an English teacher at Dunkerton High School.
performed works celebrating the contributions of African American composers and musicians.

"18 Kaylee Clemens, BA, Des Moines, has been a medical social worker with Iowa Home Care for five years. She also teaches dance for Devine Dancers in Des Moines and will be starting her fifth year as coach of the Des Moines Roosevelt Color Guard.

"18 Jack Higgins, BA, Kansas City, MO, is senior vice president of industrial brokerage for Colliers.

"18 Ashlyn (Kullen) Jungwirth, BA, Waterloo, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is a business development and marketing specialist with Cardinal Construction.

"18 Jade Pint, BA, Readlyn, is a human resources generalist for Masterbrand Cabinets.

"18 Alexis (Hawley) Rogers, BA, San Marcos, TX, earned a Master of Science in criminal justice from Texas State University and works for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division. She will also be working on a Master of Arts in professional counseling and concentration in clinical mental health.

"19 Alan Malone, BA, Waterloo, is the associate artistic director of the Waterloo Community Playhouse/Black Hawk Children’s Theatre.

"19 Kirstin Samuels, BA, Schofield, WI, is a human resource generalist and business partner for an air movement manufacturing company.

"20 Stef Graser, BA, Menomonee Falls, WI, is a senior data analyst with Northwestern Mutual Corporate.

"20 Marissa Miller, BA, Waukee, graduated from Drake Law School in 2023 and is an associate attorney at Dutton Law Firm.

"20 Jake Cash, BA, Cedar Falls, teaches 6-8th grade project lead the way at Bunger Middle School in Evansdale. Courses include medical detectives, human services and business/career exploration.

"21 Kaitlyn Evers, BA, Clinton, is the assistant director of the Sawmill Museum.

"21 Hannah Luce, BA, Waterloo, was named one of the Cedar Valley’s 20 under 40 by the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier for 2023. She is the executive director of the Waterloo Schools Foundation.

"21 David Thom, BM, Dubuque, is in his second year teaching 5th grade band in Dubuque and second year teaching overall and loves every moment of it.

"22 Brendan Gould, BA, Waterloo, works at BowStern Marketing.

Marriages

"21 AJ Reding, BS, married McKenna (Meinhard) Reding, BA ’22, 6/8/2022.

"21 Gabi (Cummings) Smith, BA, married Sam Smith, BA ’22, 6/4/2022.

Births
"06 Jesse Hach, BS, and Lindsay (Guenther) Hach, BA ’11, Cedar Falls, daughter Collins Margaret born 10/31/2022.

"11 Jordan Brunsma, BA, BA ’17, and Larry Guadagnoli, BA ’12, Mason City, son Maxwell Steven born Nov. 2022.


"15 Kelli (Strohbehn) Gartman, BA ’15, MA ’20, ASC ’20, Montezuma, son Coy Neal born Apr. 2022.

"15 John Gogola, BA, and Alex Gogola, Pittsburgh, PA, son Brady Andrew born 7/21/2023.

"16 Erin (Mulder) Hodge, BA, and Ayden Hodge, Lincoln, NE, daughter Clarke Brené born 2/7/2023.

Deaths
"50 Joan (De Rycke) DeRycke Lambka, 2 yr Cert., died 11/19/2023 in LaGrange, IL.

"55 Laurens Blankers, BA, died 10/25/2022 in Owatonna, MN.

"55 Howard Pigg, BA, died 1/31/2023 in Portland, OR.

"57 Patricia (Hansen) Braynard, BA, died 3/27/2023 in GA.

"69 Judy (Bartelt) Gantenbein, BA, MA ’80, died 6/3/2023 in Mooresville, NC.

"70 Mireya Bernal Greco, BA, died 10/18/2021 in Frederick, CO.

"71 James Dewitt, BA, died 9/5/2023 in Eaton, OH.

"75 Raygena (Klaaren) Garringer, BA, died 8/17/2023 in Williamsburg.

"75 Michael Rokes, BA, died 4/25/2023 in Cedar Falls.

"81 Anne (Gallagher) Nass, BA, MA ’83, died 2/19/2023 in Waterloo.

"85 Jeffrey Heffelfinger, BA, died 12/30/2021 in Altoona.

"93 Todd Swift, BS, died 12/26/2022 in Weaverville, NC.

"00 Meridie (Williams) Burger, BA, died 5/28/2023 in Des Moines.
UNI WORD SEARCH

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- Ways to donate real estate
- What to do in the first 48 hours after you lose a loved one
- Making the most of your retirement assets

For more information on how you can make plans to support UNI contact:

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