“After having the honor to serve as department head of Social Work for 10 years, I made the decision to step down at the end of the 2021-22 academic year and move toward retirement. I will miss working with staff, faculty, and students at UNI but will be keeping tabs on new initiatives that have been proposed. Our department is strong, with devoted faculty and staff, and I only expect it to improve over time.”

—CINDY JUBY

We would like to welcome Interim Department Head Adam Butler to the Department of Social Work. Dr. Butler is the current department head and professor of psychology. We are grateful to have him overseeing the social work department during this transition. Dr. Butler’s teaching interests are in industrial-organizational psychology and his research interests include work-family balance, occupational stress and health and college student employment, so we are in good hands. When not managing two vibrant academic departments, Dr. Butler can be found safely (?) off-road biking and competing in triathlons.
NEW STAFF & FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

SARINA CARRILLO
// started summer 2022

Sarina worked at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Social Work for 13 years prior to coming to UNI, in the Office of Admissions. She also worked at Changing Worlds as their accountant/bookkeeper. Sarina has experience in research in the biological sciences, physical sciences, and medical sciences at the University of Chicago. She has been published in multiple journals starting when she was a teenager. Outside of work, she has volunteered for not-for-profit organizations that help with rescue and care of abandoned and homeless cats. She advocates for the ethical treatment of all animals and is trying very hard to be vegan.

JAIMIE O’GARA
// started fall 2022

Jaimie received her BS in Psychology from Truman State University, her MSW from University of Nebraska at Omaha, and her Ph.D. in Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin. She has her LISW and CADC in Iowa and has also been trained in many different areas of therapy practice. This includes Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy, Parent-Child Psychotherapy, Sand Tray Play Therapy, Alternatives for Families – Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Circle of Security Parenting International, and Motivational Enhancement Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. As a clinician, Jaimie has treated a range of individuals in infancy to older adulthood facing an array of clinical concerns such as substance use issues, mental health disorders, and trauma.

Jaimie is teaching Practice with Individuals and Self-Care and Stress-Management for the Helping Professions. She chose to work at UNI because she found it to be the ideal institution for her teaching and research goals. She says, “UNI allows me to focus on teaching, which is my favorite part of my job, while also expanding my research on youth and family resilience.”

Outside of teaching, Jaimie leads the Dubuque Youth and Family Resilience Project.

ANGELICA VELAZQUILLO FRANCO
// started fall 2022

Angelica received her BA in Psychology from Belmont Abbey College, a master’s degree from the University of Chicago Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy and Practice, and is finishing her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. She was the Internship Coordinator for the Pozen Center for Human Rights at the University of Chicago and she has also worked as a math tutor for Chicago Public Schools.

The courses that Angelica is teaching are Social Policies & Issues and Social Work Research. When asked about why she chose to come to UNI she said, “UNI’s commitment to teaching and research was a big draw for me, and it continues to be. The education offered reminds me of the liberal arts education I received as an undergraduate. Furthermore, being part of UNI will allow me to work with and advocate for new communities. This will be an opportunity to grow as a person, a teacher, and a scholar.”
James (Jim) Gerald McCullagh was a professor of social work at the University of Northern Iowa from 1981 until he retired in 2021. Just under a year into his retirement, he passed away on April 27, 2022.

He was born on August 26, 1936 to James John McCullagh and Anna Patricia Rogers in New York City, New York where he grew up. His parents had emigrated from Tyrone in Northern Ireland. Jim was a dual U.S. and Irish citizen. Jim served in the Army for 3 years in several locations including Germany and California. He attended Curry College in MA before graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy from Chico State University of CA in 1963. He received a Master of Science in Social Work (MSSW) from University of Missouri-Columbia in 1970 where he met his wife Cheryl Ann Edwards, a Doctor of Education (Ed.D) in Counseling from Northern Illinois University in 1979, and a JD University of Iowa in 1993. Jim worked as a welfare worker in San Francisco in the early to mid-1960s. Before coming to UNI, Jim was an assistant professor at the University of Kentucky. He, his wife, and their son moved to Cedar Falls in 1981.

While at UNI, he was honored with the Randy A. Fisher Lifetime Achievement award as well as a UNI regent’s award. His research focused on Native American Indians and their contribution to social work. During this process he made a life-long friendship with Howard Chandler Walkingstick who was a prominent Cherokee and social worker. As a part-time lawyer he focused on juvenile law in Cedar Falls and Waterloo. Jim was a member of St. Stephens Student Center in Cedar falls where he volunteered as the sacristan for over a decade. Additionally, Jim was a Benedictine Oblate.

Jim loved to travel. He visited Europe many times including several visits with his family in Northern Ireland. He also visited the near east and Israel. In Israel he worked on a kibbutz for four months. Additionally, Jim often traveled to Hilton Head with family and friends. Jim was an avid antique collector and deeply enjoyed puzzles and Sudoku.

Survived by his son James John, Jim was buried at St. Patrick’s Cemetery in Greencastle, Northern Ireland with his deceased wife Cheryl McCullagh.

Jim’s legacy is evident in the social work department. As shared by Gabrielle (Sutton) Juarez, ’18, (BSW) when Jim retired, “Dr. McCullagh had a profound impact on my degree and career choice. His courses, lessons, stories, and overall kindness of his practice inspired me to continue in the field. I think of him and his lessons often in my current practice. His positive impact at UNI will be remembered and felt for many years to come, we have all been incredibly blessed to be his students!

Jim was generous to the social work department’s scholarships and awards, having funded (and continues to fund) the Anna McCullagh Memorial Endowed Scholarship (in memory of his mother), the James McCullagh Endowed Fund for Excellence and the Robert Schneider Award of Excellence in Leadership.
MONIFAH (MO) PONTON

Bachelor of Social Work Student

Mo is currently a student in the BSW program. She notes that this program makes sure students are prepared on the micro, mezzo and macro levels of social work. She likes that she is able to be hands-on and practice social work now so that she can make mistakes and learn from them before getting out in the field.

“I chose social work because I have always wanted to help people and I love to help people,” explained Mo. “I come from neighborhoods that receive minimum help, are written off, disregarded, viewed lazy, and most are on welfare services. These same people didn’t ask to be homeless, abused, have underfunded schools, or live in poor neighborhoods. I’ve seen mental health play in most areas of my life including school, friends, family and even with myself. I’ve also seen it be ignored and overlooked or, when addressed, the person doesn’t receive adequate help or is deemed insane and sent to a mental health institution. I want to be able to change those stigmas because everyone deserves to have good mental health and live in good neighborhoods where they feel safe and want to raise their children. A neighborhood that supports each other and a community that lends a helping hand. More importantly as a Christian, God called me to serve and it led me to all the opportunities I can help uplift people, communities and change policies that better benefit citizens.”

Mo has also been successful in creating a podcast. When asked about it she replied, “My podcast, created with my best friend who attends Iowa State University, is called Black Girl In College. The purpose of the podcast is to put Black women at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), and colleges overall, first. As young Black women, we realized our stories and perspectives were always put on the back burner when what we have to say is equally important. We aim to provide comfort and support as we share our thoughts and experiences. We discuss common topics in college, but from a Black woman’s perspective. We encourage all college students to listen.”

CHIT PHUU

Master of Social Work Student

Chit is a student in the MSW program who also attended the BSW program at UNI. They felt the BSW program prepared them for the master’s program by covering topics such as research, policies, addiction, ethics and diversity. Chit enjoyed the BSW classes and internship and felt it helped improve their social work skills. Something that really encouraged Chit to go on to the MSW program was their relationships with professors.

For the MSW internship, Chit is working at Waterloo West High School. There, they get to practice trauma-informed care (TIC) skills with students, and they plan to present to school staff to help them understand trauma within the refugee and immigrant children population, and to encourage a TIC environment at the school. Chit also mentioned that getting to work one-on-one with the students is really valuable.

“As a refugee who came to the U.S. with little to no English, it is a dream to be where I am right now. I would like to encourage others to continue their studies because chances won’t come twice. There are thousands of people who suffer to get their education on the other side of the world due to war, violation of human rights and lack of a safe place; therefore, be grateful for the opportunity that you have. Education is not boring if you are in the right program which matches with what you want to do. Keep looking for the right one to study and don’t give up!”
ASHLEY WOOD

Director of Community Based Services, Abbe Health

Since earning her degree at UNI, Ashley has worked her way up at the Abbe Center for Community Mental Health. She recently took on a new role as Director of Community Based Recovery Services there. She has also worked with CRUSH of Iowa in Linn County to work on opening a Linn County Recovery Center. She has taken part in several proclamations, discussions about mental health in the community, and provided resources to others to learn about what the Abbe Center has to offer.

Ashley chose to pursue a degree in social work because that is where she found her passion. She recognized that social work is an integral part of people’s care, coordination of various things, assisting people to meet their needs, and empowering people. Ashley enjoys advocating for those that cannot do so for themselves. She says, “Everyone deserves to be treated as a person because regardless of their diagnosis or situation, in the end, it comes down to just that ... we are all people!” Ashley noted that UNI helped provide insight into her passion and has helped motivate her to continue helping others.

ARIANE HAKIZIMANA

Since earning her degree at UNI, Ariane has been serving as Lieutenant in the National Guard as well as working at Midwest Counseling. She is currently working on her LISW. Along with that, she volunteers with AmeriCorps at Hawkeye Community College as well. She is also working on earning the rank of First Lieutenant.

When asked about why she chose to pursue a degree in social work, Ariane mentioned that she always wanted to help people. After she has seen people suffer with PTSD and seen immigrants and others struggle with access to services, she knew she wanted to help in these areas. Ariane attributes UNI’s trauma-informed care focus to helping contribute to her success. She also appreciated professors real-life experiences and willingness to help. She is still in contact with many of them.
ARIELLE ROTH  BSW

Palo Alto County Health System, Emmetsburg, IA  //  Spring 2021

FIELD EXPERIENCES TO HIGHLIGHT: Arielle was able to shadow a few different roles to see different sides to the agency and the services they provide, in both the nursing home/hospice unit and the behavioral health unit. She was granted the opportunity to complete tasks on her own while being supervised, such as the intake process and behavioral and mental health assessments of patients in the nursing home.

ACTIVITIES ASSIGNED: Arielle’s main tasks included observing hospice and nursing home social workers and behavioral/mental health counselors. She was excited to start completing tasks and assessments on her own under supervision.

SPECIAL PROJECTS: Palo Alto County Health System is working to get a substance abuse counseling group started, and Arielle was excited to be a part of this process.

PREPARATION FOR THE FIELD: Arielle has learned to go into things with an open-mind. Her internship experience also boosted her interpersonal and communication skills with clients and coworkers.

Arielle has found her internship to be very beneficial in shaping her social work skills. She enjoys talking with other social workers and listening to stories of their past experiences in the field.

ZOEY WEBER  BSW

Wesley Life – Edgewater, West Des Moines, IA  //  Summer 2022

ACTIVITIES ASSIGNED: Zoey completed a trauma questionnaire, biopsychosocial assessment, BIMS and PHQ-9 on every new admit. She additionally co-facilitated care conferences for the residents and their families; issued NOMNCs and helped the residents understand their right to appeal; helped residents complete their admission agreements; and found placements for people who had completed their skilled stay, but needed long-term care or assisted living.

SPECIAL PROJECTS: A group of seven students from the Marshall Islands were brought to the program during Emma’s time. This group met once a week do activities and talk about a variety of topics, including healthy relationships, goal setting, plans after high school and inclusion.

PREPARATION FOR THE FIELD: Zoey stated that the experience confirmed her passion. She knew she wanted to work with the aging population, but didn’t know what setting she wanted to work in. She loved the nursing home setting, and was pleased to get to work with both the long-term care and skilled residents. She was additionally able to incorporate the NASW Code of Ethics into everything she did.

Zoey also had a very supportive field supervisor, and would highly recommend Edgewater for students interested in working with the aging population.

EMMA BAERTLEIN  MSW

West High School English Language Learner Program, Waterloo, IA  //  Spring 2021

FIELD EXPERIENCES TO HIGHLIGHT: While working with Ms. Houston, Emma was able to learn an abundance of social work skills and compare the work of a social worker and a school counselor to see where they overlap and where they differ. While working in the school, she was able to meet all of the social work competencies and learn how they impact the students.

ACTIVITIES ASSIGNED: Emma was assigned a variety of tasks to work on individually and with supervision. She worked with two students of concern and observed, interviewed and reflected on why they may be struggling. She also held workforce meetings for students to find part-time jobs, apply for scholarships for college, sign up for drivers education classes, and supported them in classes if extra help was needed.

SPECIAL PROJECTS: A group of seven students from the Marshall Islands were brought to the program during Emma’s time. This group met once a week do activities and talk about a variety of topics, including healthy relationships, goal setting, plans after high school and inclusion.

PREPARATION FOR THE FIELD: Emma’s experience at West High School allowed her to understand how to apply social work ideas from the classroom into a real-world setting, and see where she needs improvement to become the best social worker she can be.
MADISON NEECE
MSW

MercyOne Northeast Iowa
OB/GYN, Waterloo, IA
// Fall 2020-Spring 2021

FIELD EXPERIENCES TO HIGHLIGHT: Medical social work often confronts some of the most difficult times in a person’s life. Madison had the opportunity to work with patients on some of their worst and best days — the pain and heartache of loss, the joy of new life, the hope for what is to come. She felt so honored each time she was able to support someone, wherever they were in their journey. She loves being able to sit across from a patient and help them feel safe and heard. Interning as a social worker for a women’s health clinic was an empowering and humbling experience overall.

ACTIVITIES ASSIGNED:
/ Intake/ prenatal support needs assessments
/ Depression/ anxiety and suicide risk assessments
/ Helping patients apply for WIC, SNAP, and Community Care financial aid
/ Supporting patients as they apply for Medicaid
/ Providing brief solutions-focused counseling sessions, meeting with patients to provide emotional support during periods of stress, grief, and adjustment
/ Helping patients access community resources to obtain baby items like diapers, wipes, cribs and car seats
/ Developing safety plans for patients experiencing domestic and sexual violence
/ Exploring mental health services and assisting with referrals to appropriate providers
/ Coordinating transportation to and from medical appointments
/ Documenting patient encounters including phone calls, in person meetings, and assessments in Epic electronic charting system

SPECIAL PROJECTS: Madison worked with her supervisor to design a triage screening tool for new prenatal patients. The aim of the screening tool was to help nurses identify patients with the most need for support during their pregnancy. They were able to “test drive” the screening tool and, with feedback from the nurses and midwives, got the tool approved for use at the clinic. It’s now part of the nurse intake process on the electronic charting system. After working with a patient who experienced a devastating loss, one of the midwives reflected on the lack of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) specific resources in the Cedar Valley, and in Iowa as a whole. Madison did some background research and developed a list of therapists of color who take Medicaid, offer sliding-scale services, specialized in trauma, and have expertise in pregnancy and parenting issues. This felt like a step toward providing the clinic’s BIPOC patients with options to see mental health counselors from similar racial and ethnic backgrounds. This work was especially important to Madison’s time at the Midwives’ Clinic during a year when the community experienced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and began to look more critically at systemic racism here in Iowa. Much of her role at the Midwives’ Clinic had an advocacy lens and she enjoyed learning about implementing social work skills with different client systems.

PREPARATION FOR THE FIELD: Interacting with patients, medical professionals, and community resources granted Madison a new appreciation for the unique perspective social work brings to patient care. One of the biggest “lessons learned” during the experience was to slow down, follow the patient’s lead, and lean into empathy skills. Her interpretation of a “presenting problem” was not always the same as that of the patient, provider or insurance company — reflecting on that helped Madison understand how social work fits in as a valuable component of healthcare.

“Social work offers so many different avenues to a rewarding career,” remarked Madison. “I love that my cohort at UNI has students interested in family and couples therapy, individual counseling, school social work, play therapy, policy and program leadership and medical social work. We’ve worked so hard this past year. Hearing about my classmates’ internship experiences has highlighted the impact each of us can make and demonstrated how essential social workers are to our community.”
EMBARC
Waterloo & Des Moines, IA

CLIENTS SERVED: EMBARC was founded by refugees for refugees. EMBARC’s main refugee populations come from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burma. The agency typically serves as a resource for refugees after their 90 days of governmental services.

AGENCY SERVICES: There are two different programs that EMBARC offers to refugees: RISE, which offers youth services and work-related services; and Family Services, which offers education for parents and those needing help with financial resources.

FACTS TO SHARE: Over 70% of EMBARC staff are either refugees or immigrants themselves; with 100% of board part of refugee communities. Interns have the opportunity to work with the refugees and interpreters, so they are able to see when social services get difficult and the obstacles these refugees face. The experience provides a deep dive into conflict resolution.

MOTIVATION FOR TAKING INTERNS: EMBARC offers the opportunity for students to gain better cultural understanding — building skills in how to work with the refugee community.

IMPACT OF INTERNS ON THE AGENCY: Social service navigation can be tedious. Student interns impact the agency in this social service navigation process for refugees in order to create stability in their homes. Students also collaborate with a licensed social worker to provide the best care for clients. Interns provide a different knowledge base to the team, creating a balance of knowledge in providing services to refugees.

INSIGHTS FOR FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS: Build cultural humility. As social workers, we work with diverse populations, so experiencing cultural differences and barriers people may face provides quality learning opportunities.

OTHER: It has been a pleasure for EMBARC to host interns — students have been willing to learn and are eager to work.

STUDENT FEEDBACK: “EMBARC is a Grassroots, Community-based, non-profit founded by refugees, for refugees. As Iowa’s first and only refugee-led service provider, our approach is different. EMBARC better understands not only the challenges, but also the dreams and potential of refugee families. We believe that in order to help a community, the individuals within must feel empowered to help themselves.” —Ben Stainbrook, MSW Foundation intern, Spring 2021

CRISIS TEXT LINE
New York, NY (remote internship experience)

CLIENTS SERVED: The Crisis Text Line is able to work with anyone who reaches out (accessible to all).

AGENCY SERVICES: Text messaging (team helps with what their texters deem as a crisis in that moment, help clients shift to a calm state, and helps build rapport).

FACTS TO SHARE: About 80% of population who shares something with crisis line share something they haven’t shared with anyone else before. Over 5 million exchanged messages with texters since 2013, when the agency started.

MOTIVATION FOR TAKING INTERNS: In March 2020, the Crisis Text Line launched their student learning program to help see how impactful their work can be on volunteers, help students understand crisis intervention, and build emotional intelligence in social workers.

IMPACT OF INTERNS ON THE AGENCY: Interns help the agency stay on top of their game. They’ve found that they can’t train students without keeping current with best practices. The experience also encourages them to understand why they are here — student questions and understanding the “why” behind what they do. Students are also helping increase the capacity of the agency — they are now able to engage with texters as often as they need to. They are also able to take texts between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m., which is the optimal time of receiving texts — having trained students take texts during these times has been very helpful.

INSIGHTS FOR FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS: Never be afraid to use your own voice — always use your voice and your own experiences to support clients. This new layer of remote telehealth encourages us to lean more into what our clients need — being willing to step into uncharted territory.

STUDENT FEEDBACK: “The Crisis Text Line organization has provided a wonderful opportunity for me by offering a range of flexibility in obtaining hours as part of my MSW field practicum. Communication via text has its challenges, so crisis counselors (cc's) are integrated into a collaborating team that supports each other through a network of professionals by offering a fulfilling experience in assisting individuals in a state of crisis move from a hot or warm, to a cooler calmer state. This experience as a cc has helped me refine and build on my professional resiliency. Thank you CTL!” —Paul Marion, MSW Specialization intern
TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE CONFERENCE  
Sept. 2021

The 2021 Trauma-Informed Care Conference, Addressing Family Violence & Child Welfare, featured keynote speaker Dr. Kendall Tackett. Breakout sessions were led by Dr. Rebecca Dickinson on Adlerian Play, Dr. Maria Corona from the Iowa Coalition for Domestic Violence, Frank Grijalva from the KINNECT program and Lisa Cushatt on addressing trauma work in Iowa.

CLINICAL SUPERVISION IN SOCIAL WORK REFRESHER COURSE  
Sept. 2021

Offered by Traci Ludwig, Clinical Social Worker at MercyOne Cedar Falls Behavioral Health to over 40 clinically practicing social workers via zoom. Our next offering is planned for fall 2024.

SOCIAL WORK ETHICS TRAINING  
Oct. 2021

Tom Eachus, Executive Director at UnityPoint Black Hawk Grundy Mental Health Center, provided the much desired Social Work Ethics Training in Oct. 2021 to over 200 area social workers via zoom. Our next offering is planned for fall 2023.

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE CONFERENCE  
Aug. 2021

The 2022 Trauma-Informed Care Conference, Addressing Trauma Across the Lifespan, featured keynote speaker Jen Alexander, a trauma-informed educator and expert on developmental trauma. Breakout sessions were led by Kate Haberman, owner and director of The Center for Foundational & Relational Wellness, LLC, who specializes in trauma and attachment; Dr. Elaine Eshbaugh from UNI’s Gerontology program who addressed dementia and trauma; and Jordan Dunn from Pathways Behavioral Services who addressed addictions and trauma.
UNI’s MSW program was named among the top graduate programs in the country, according to a new U.S. News & World Report ranking (Mar. 2022).

Since 2013, UNI’s Master of Social Work program has provided a trauma-informed care specialization based on decades of research on how people are affected by stress, adversity and oppression. Students work with scholars and experts in the field of trauma and mental health, gain experience in the field, and learn innovative approaches to address the complex problems facing our world.

“Our program is the only trauma-informed care program in Iowa, and one of only a few across the country,” said former Department Head of Social Work Cynthia Juby. “So that’s really what makes our program stand out and I believe that is why the program has been so successful.”

The program boasts flexible class schedules, which include online and in-person options. For students who prefer the flexibility of online learning there are two options. The first is an accelerated, part-time program that enables students to complete the program within two and a half years. The second is a part-time program for students who do not have an undergraduate degree in social work. That program takes about three years to complete.

Both online options are geared toward working professionals who might not have the time to take on the demands of a full-time program in addition to their careers.

UNI also offers an accelerated in-person program, which is full time and enables students who have their undergraduate degree in social work to complete their MSW in one year.

“This ranking is a testament to the quality of teaching we have at UNI,” said Matthew Vasquez, former MSW Coordinator. “Our commitment to the trauma informed specialization and being able to provide multiple learning offerings, whether it be in person or online, is what makes this program so successful and brings in a pretty wide draw of people who are wanting to get affordable social work education without compromising on quality.”

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SOCIAL WORK ADVISORY BOARD

We are blessed to have an active Social Work Advisory Board to provide a practicing social work perspective on our BSW and MSW programs. Their insight and feedback is invaluable as we discuss admissions, enrollment, curriculum, field experiences, staffing, community collaborations, workforce issues and professional development. We would like to thank them for their many years of service.

If you have an interest in serving on this committee, please reach out to Jenny Becker at jennifer.becker@uni.edu. Meetings are held via zoom.

See us on video!

BSW and MSW students teamed up with faculty for new recruitment videos to showcase our programs.

Be sure to watch and share with anyone you think might be interested in studying social work at the University of Northern Iowa!

VIEW MSW VIDEO
VIEW BSW VIDEO