The past two years have been challenging for everyone. Many industries are dealing with higher prices, stressed supply chains, workers out sick or reluctant to rejoin the workforce because of childcare issues or safety concerns, and other lingering issues from the global events that have shaken our world. Higher education is also facing enormous challenges, and we’re seeing at UNI the same trends we’re seeing nationally, including lower enrollment, strained budgets, and students who need a lot of support due to rising costs and the stress of the past couple of years.

The Department of Political Science is responding to these forces by offering up-to-date curriculum that will attract new students and prepare them for life after graduation, by providing students with opportunities to apply their learning outside of the classroom, and by engaging with the public to help them understand the political forces that shape our everyday lives.

For the first time in a generation, UNI overhauled its general education requirements, replacing the Liberal Arts Core with University of Northern Iowa Foundations of Inquiry (UNIFI). UNIFI’s three-tiered structure encourages students to engage with basic skills, discover knowledge across a number of learning areas, and then make connections across disciplines by earning an interdisciplinary certificate. Our department has been working on refashioning existing courses and creating new UNIFI courses and certificates that will appeal to students in this new framework. These include: topical courses centered on timely and important issues that allow us to offer a compelling gateway into political science; a course and a certificate on information literacy; and participation in certificates on American studies, leadership & innovation, social science statistics & data analysis, civic literacy & engagement, and others. We are also reviewing our political science major to assure that we continue to help students develop the knowledge and skills to allow them to be successful in their careers and responsible participants and leaders in their communities.

This newsletter highlights some of the ways our students are applying their knowledge and developing their skills outside of the classroom. Whether it’s aiding in UNI’s nationally recognized #PanthersVote efforts, participating in our award-winning Model United...
Nations Competition Team, presenting their research at regional and national conferences, or completing internships, the student experience is enriched when students have the chance to participate in experiential learning. Some of these opportunities were curtailed during the height of the pandemic, but with vaccines in place and most workplaces and conferences returning in person, we expect these opportunities to continue to increase.

Finally, in addition to being excellent teachers, our faculty are creative and productive scholars who give of their time and expertise to help the public understand the world. Often that expertise has concrete, practical application. For example, this year RAMONA MCNEAL and a co-author presented their research on cyber harassment at the 66th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The policy they recommended based on their findings was recently adopted as a resolution by the Commission on the Status of Women. Our faculty regularly appear in national and statewide broadcasts and publications and they deliver dozens of public talks on campus and around the state. This year we sponsored virtual and in-person events on topics such as free speech on college campuses, the war in Ukraine, cybersecurity, and election administration and integrity, just to name a few. This public-facing role is an important part of our mission as scholars and it models to our students what it means to be active in civic life.

Our alumni are doing exciting things across the state and the nation. We’ve provided a few highlights in this newsletter, but we’d love to know more about what you’re up to. Please feel free to email me (scott.peters@uni.edu) any time to let me know about your achievements. We continue to seek ways to connect our students to career paths. For instance, we have been interviewing alumni about their careers and sharing them with students. You can see them all at bit.ly/polisciplaylist. We have also been working on expanding our LinkedIn group to connect alumni to one another and to current students to enhance networking and career opportunities. If you would like to participate in any of these efforts, please let me know!
DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

INTERNSHIPS | JAYME RENFRO, INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR

With pandemic restrictions lifting, we were able to offer more opportunities for internships. Since last May, 23 students completed internships.

Two students completed congressional internships, one with Senator Grassley’s office and other with Rep. Feenstra’s office.

PETER JOHNSON completed an internship with the Midwest Partnership for Economic Development in west central Iowa, a position that led him to employment there after he graduated.

Another student, SANDRA THIMAN, completed a virtual internship with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia, working on projects related to women’s access to technology and entrepreneurship.

LINDSEY INGRAHAM worked with the City of Waterloo to do research on blighted properties in order to help the city identify the factors that make it more likely that property becomes abandoned or uncared for.

JOE LINK completed two internships this year, one with the Black Hawk County Election office and one with the Public Defender’s office in Waterloo. His work at the Public Defender’s office included drafting a policy proposal that the Chief Public Defender is considering recommending be adopted.

I continue working to build partnerships with governments and organizations across the state in order to increase opportunities for our students and to try to identify paid internships.

Please email me at jayme.renfro@uni.edu if you have internship opportunities available.

MODEL UN

The Model United Nations Competition Team received the Distinguished Delegation award at the National Model UN competition in New York in April. This was a very competitive conference, with students from dozens of schools across the country and around the world, including several universities each from France, Germany, Spain, and Canada, as well as schools from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Ecuador and the UK. The team consisted of political science majors ZACH ZIPPE and MEGAN ROBINSON, as well as ALENAH RANKIN (Social Work) and ALEX PERRIN (Social Science Teaching) and advisor BRIAN WARBY.

Next, Megan and Zach reflect on their Model UN experiences:
"I have had the pleasure of being the Model UN President since the beginning of 2022. At the start of the 2021-2022 school year, I was the Secretary and Treasurer for the team with big hopes for the year. When many of the members of the team graduated during the 2020-21 year, then-President Alenah Rankin and I saw the opportunity to revamp the club and find a brand new group of students who were excited to travel and find solutions to global issues. By the Chicago conference in November of 2021, eight members of the team had never been to an in-person conference before. After that conference, I was elected and took over as the President. My executive team consists of a sophomore, Alex Perrin who attended the New York conference with me, and two freshmen, Sofia Steele and Isabel Beekman. While a lot of our members had a large learning curve in front of them, I was blown away by the initiative and drive the students had. By the spring conference, I was confident the team could have functioned even if I was not there. For a team of majority freshmen and sophomores, we have only upwards to go.

On top of our newer members, our four most experienced members killed it at the national conference in New York. The team consisted of Zach Zippe, Alenah Rankin, Alex Perrin, and me. I won’t speak for others, but the National Conference was daunting for me. But between making friends, seeing New York (for the first time for me), and using each other to build from, our team thrived. Our award, the Distinguished Delegation Award, is only awarded to balanced teams who all make impacts on their committees and represent what diplomacy looks like. The fact that a four person team gathered more points than some 12 person teams illustrates how phenomenal our team did. I had an absolute blast being the Delegate for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and cannot wait for next year." —MEGAN ROBINSON

"When I first came to UNI I didn’t really know my place on campus. I found my place on the Model United Nations Competition Team which offered me a lot more opportunities than I had bargained for. My very first conference was the fall conference in Chicago. I was tossed directly into the fire, but I immediately loved the experience. This is when I first learned about being a global citizen and the responsibilities of the international community.

The following year my best friend, Aladlin Dafalla, was the president of the club and I was his vice president. This was a natural transition for us, and it was a great year for Model UN until COVID hit during the spring semester. This canceled our international trip to Tokyo, and pretty much everything got shut down at UNI.

Fortunately, this year we were able to go to the New York Model United Nations Conference in New York City. In this conference we represented the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea where our delegation from UNI won a distinguished delegation award. In my time in Model UN it was the first time we had won an award as an entire delegation, which is a huge accomplishment for the team. I can honestly say that it was the most competitive conference I had been to, and I was very proud of the whole team. It wouldn’t have been possible without Model UN president Megan Robinson, former Model UN president Alenah Rankin, and Model UN secretary Alex Perrin. A lot has changed since my first Model UN conference. Alladin works for the real United Nations at the Qatar delegation, we won an award, and I can honestly say that without Model UN my college experience would not have been nearly as great.” —ZACH ZIPPE
SCOTT PETERS and a team of department heads from across campus were recently awarded a highly competitive $35,000 Humanities Connections Planning Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for a project entitled "Humanities for Civic Education: Preparing Teachers and Students for Engaged Citizenship." Their project, "Humanities For Civic Education: Preparing Teachers and Students for Engaged Citizenship," will fund a team of faculty to develop an interdisciplinary UNIFI certificate on Civic Literacy and Engagement. The team of professors will create coursework and requirements for a 12-hour interdisciplinary certificate, “Civic Literacy and Engagement,” that is part of a new University of Northern Iowa Foundational Inquiry (UNIFI) general education program.

This certificate will center the humanities in civic education and will encourage students to explore their obligations as citizens, both in the classroom and outside of it. As one of the members of the panel reviewing the proposal noted, due to UNI's role in educating future teachers, the certificate has "the potential to improve civic education in the state as a whole."

In addition to Peters, the project is led by Jennifer McNabb (History), Susan Hill (Philosophy and World Religions) and Jim O’Loughlin (Languages and Literatures). Other partners on campus include the College of Education and the Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy.

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: [neh.gov](http://neh.gov).
The University of Northern Iowa was again recognized as a national leader in student voting and civic engagement. With 73.1 percent of eligible students voting in the 2020 election, UNI received a Gold Seal as part of the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. More than 840 institutions serving nearly nine million students took part in the nonpartisan challenge, intended to increase student participation in the U.S. elections process.

UNI’s #PanthersVote initiative, helped boost eligible student voter turnout from an already high 66% in the 2016 presidential election to 73% in the 2020 election. Turnout among registered voters was even higher, growing from 74.6% to 82% over the same period. UNI student turnout was about eight percentage points higher than peer institutions around the country.

The Department of Political Science oversees the campus’s #PanthersVote efforts, which are coordinated by Justin Holmes. To help increase student participation, #PanthersVote partnered with Northern Iowa Student Government, UNI Athletics, the UNI President’s office, Blackhawk County Auditor, League of Women Voters, and others. Voter participation increased despite a pandemic that required the group to shift to a largely online strategy. These groups sponsored a series of voter registration events, online videos to inform students about issues and answer questions about voting, and early voting at the UNIDome.

The awards are based on 2020 data from The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), a research study at Tufts University’s Institute for Democracy & Higher Education. It includes voting data from over 1,100 colleges and universities across the country.
CONFERENCE ON ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND INTEGRITY

The Department of Political Science and Master of Public Policy program sponsored the Electoral Administration and Integrity Conference on campus in April. The program brought together local election officials from Black Hawk and Grundy County with UNI students and faculty to discuss how elections are carried out and the factors that influence trust in elections.

Grant Veeder, Black Hawk County Auditor, and Rhonda Deters, Grundy County Auditor, ran through the processes that Iowa election officials use to prepare for elections and to verify that election results are accurate.

JUSTIN HOLMES, the chair of the UNI American Democracy Project and political science and economics major ANTON BENJEGERDES discussed #PanthersVote and the importance of civic engagement on campus, while Karen Showalter, Black Hawk County Election Administrator, discussed voter registration laws in Iowa.

DONNA HOFFMAN and CHRIS LARIMER presented their research on redistricting in Iowa and KYLE ENDRES presented his research on how perceptions of electoral integrity have changed since the 2020 election.

We also heard a keynote address from David Kimball, professor of political science at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, titled “Understanding Public Beliefs About Voter Fraud.”

RUSSIAN/UKRAINE

EVAN RENFRO, BRIAN WARBY and Greg Bruess (History) participated in a panel discussion and Q&A about the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on March 7. About 100 students and community members attended to learn about the history leading up to the invasion and the international security and economic ramifications of it.

SOTU WATCH PARTY

The Department of Political Science and the American Democracy Project sponsored a State of the Union Address watch party in February. About 40 students attended to watch and discuss the address and the Republican response by Governor Reynolds.
EVAN RENFRO received tenure and promotion to associate professor. Since joining UNI, he has demonstrated excellence in the classroom and a willingness to go above and beyond in mentoring students. His research furthers our understanding of international relations by examining how culture influences people’s conceptions of international and human security. His work combines several modes of inquiry, including philosophy, cultural analysis, and communication theories. He serves as the departmental liaison to important partnerships with U.S. Strategic Command’s Academic Alliance and the Iowa Network of Human Rights Academics.

CHRIS LARIMER received the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence in recognition of his excellent teaching, his scholarly achievements, and his service to UNI, the discipline and the State of Iowa.

DONNA HOFFMAN was nominated for the MWOne Advising Award. Her nomination recognized not only her excellent academic advising but her work mentoring students to be applicants for competitive national scholarships such as the Truman Fellowship.

KATRINKA CARPENTER retired in Oct. after 37 years of service to UNI. In addition to her seven and a half years in the Department of Political Science, Katrinka worked in the College of Education, the Departments of Theater and Accounting, and the School of Applied Human Sciences, among other offices. With her support and hard work, the annual Women in Politics Scholarship Banquet doubled in size. She was integral to planning the department’s American Democracy Project and #PanthersVote efforts and to the growth and success of our student Model United Nations group which travels regularly to national and international competitions, and she provided vital support in the transition of the Master of Public Policy program to a successful online program. From Department Head Scott Peters, “Most of all, though, Katrinka offered compassionate, patient and helpful service to our faculty and students, guiding us through university processes, directing us to the offices that could answer our questions, keeping us on task and making sure we didn’t miss deadlines.” In her retirement, Katrinka plans to spend more time with her family, pursue her interest in local history and volunteer with her local library. We wish her a very happy and fulfilling retirement.

KATIE SIRES — In November, Katie Sires joined us as our new department secretary. Katie came to UNI in 2019 and served over two years as the employment team secretary II in Human Resource Services. Katie has a love for all things vintage. She plays guitar and sings in local band, Katie and the Honky Tonks along with her husband, Luke (also a UNI employee). While not at work, Katie enjoys seeing live music and spending time with her two extremely spoiled poodles, Bernadette and Bonnie. Katie has been a great addition to the team and we’re happy to have her aboard!
DONNA HOFFMAN | Year two of the pandemic continued to present faculty, staff, and students with many challenges. Faculty adapted to different classroom environments while still striving to serve our students. I enjoyed teaching two sections of Introduction to American Politics for first-year only students in the fall. Two peer mentors assisted these new students in navigating both the classroom environment, as well as campus. 

CHRIS LARIMER and I continued our research on several aspects of Iowa politics. We have a forthcoming book chapter on Iowa as a swing-state in presidential politics. We also continue research on Iowa’s unique redistricting method and how different states’ methods do (and don’t) affect district competitiveness. We presented a new research project on congressional rhetoric at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in the spring. I also continue my research on presidential rhetoric, updating State of the Union Address data and examining how presidents use rhetoric surrounding their unilateral executive actions. This latter project will be presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Montreal, Canada, this fall.

KYLE ENDRES | My second year at UNI has been a very busy and productive year. I had peer-reviewed articles accepted for publication at Politics, Groups, and Identities; Research & Politics; and Current HIV Research. I collaborated on multiple data collection projects and co-authored several technical reports with my colleagues at UNI’s Center for Social & Behavioral Research. I also presented research on Push-To-Web survey design at the 2021 Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research conference, a paper on cross-pressed constituents at the 2022 Midwest Political Science Association meeting, findings from the 2021 Iowa Health, Wellbeing, Use of Substances, and Gambling Survey at the 2022 Annual Governor’s Conference on Substance Abuse, research on public opinion on electoral reforms and election integrity at UNI’s conference on Election Integrity, and, finally, I presented research on branded survey materials at the 2022 American Association for Public Opinion Research conference in mid May.
RAMONA MCNEAL | Much of my research activities for this year represents a continuation of my work from the 2020-2021 school year. Recently, a co-authored book chapter, “The Intersection Between Mass Shootings and Domestic Violence” was accepted. It explores whether the relationship between domestic violence and mass shootings was made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. This book chapter builds on a paper I presented on domestic violence at last year’s Annual Midwest Political Science Association Meeting. This year I presented several papers. The first, “School Shootings Continue: How are the States Responding?” was a co-authored paper presented at this year’s Annual Midwest Political Science Association Meeting and examines the impact of the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on current gun policy. In addition, I co-presented the paper, “A Gendered Perspective on Cyber-aggression” at the 66th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) that considers policy alternatives to cybercrimes including cyberstalking and cyber harassment. My research agenda for this summer will be to build on this research and will focus on evaluating policy alternatives for addressing different acts of cyber-aggression against women.

BRIAN WARBY | It finally feels like life is getting back to normal at UNI! In May of 2021, after 9 months of Covid-related delays, I left Cedar Falls for Kampala, Uganda as a Fulbright Scholar. The Fulbright Scholar program is a competitive and respected fellowship program operated by the US Department of State. While it was a great honor to be a Fulbright Scholar, the Delta variant of Covid was just taking off when I arrived in Uganda. I spent the majority of my 6-month fellowship under a strict government lockdown. I had a lot of time to think and read. My top recommendation is Dambisa Moyo’s The Edge of Chaos. The lockdown prevented me from doing the research I had hoped to do, but a Ugandan colleague has come onto the project as a co-author and we hope to get everything back on track soon. My friend Joseph Mulondo, a tour guide and safari operator (and nephew of the Bugandan king), often said, “there’s no rush in Uganda.” So, I’ve had to learn to be patient with ethics boards and government approvals. Despite the setbacks, it was an interesting and unique experience and I’ve found many ways to relate my experiences to my International Relations and Political Economy classes. I returned to campus in October to teach second-half semester classes. In addition to the normal teaching and research, it has been a pleasure to work closely with some of our excellent students over the past year on their own research projects, and with the Model United Nations team. With university enrollment down, class sizes are smaller, and student organization participation is lower, but UNI students continue to impress.
# CONGRATULATIONS 2021-22 GRADUATES!

## SUMMER & FALL 2021

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**
- Kaylee Meyer
- Mason Neisen
- Tanner Strudthoff

**POLITICAL COMMUNICATION**
- Shawn Burrage
- Jacob Madden

**POLITICAL SCIENCE**
- Rafiea Abdelrahim
- Oghenechukwu Avwunuma
- Shamir Butt
- Witt Harberts
- Brycen Henry
- Adel Scherrrer
- Reese Skinner

## SPRING 2022

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**
- Joe Link
- Liam Sweeney

**POLITICAL COMMUNICATION**
- Ayanna Eckblad

**POLITICAL SCIENCE**
- Arlo Bates
- Cole Beirnes
- Skylar Briggs
- Jasmine Carbin
- Brandon Dicks
- Brady Fisher
- Dani Goedken
- Diana Kajtazovic
- Andrew Kallenback
- Joe Link
- Katie Sones
- Sandra Thiman
- Isabelle Thomasee
- Finch Vandyk
- Carson Wright
- Zach Zippe
JASMINE CARBIN | POLITICAL SCIENCE & SOCIOLOGY

Jasmine will be continuing her education at Drake University Law School this fall.

SANDRA THIMAN | POLITICAL SCIENCE

Sandra will enter the International Masters Program in Political Science at Stockholm University this fall.

ZACHARY ZIPPE | POLITICAL SCIENCE

As an infantry officer in the Iowa Army National Guard, this fall Zachary will be heading to the Infantry Basic Officer Leaders Course. He will attend law school in the fall of 2023.

DANI GOEDKEN | POLITICAL SCIENCE

Dani will enter UNI's Master's of Student Affairs Program this fall.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

AMBASSADOR JOHN R. DINGER, ‘74, RECEIVES HONORARY DEGREE

The University of Northern Iowa presented Political Science alumnus Ambassador JOHN R. DINGER with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree during the spring commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 14, 2022.

After growing up in the small town of Riceville, Iowa, Ambassador Dinger graduated from UNI in 1974 with a degree in political science and a minor in French. As he neared graduation, ROBERT ROSS, the head of the Department of Political Science, asked him an important question that would change his life: “Have you considered the Foreign Service?” In fact, John had never heard of the Foreign Service, but he applied and was accepted, launching a career that would take him around the world representing U.S. interests.

Ambassador Dinger served in London, Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg, South Africa, and three tours in Japan. In 2000, he was appointed ambassador to Mongolia, where he helped open markets to major American companies, including Boeing and Coca-Cola, and negotiated with the Mongolian government over American foreign policy priorities. During his career he served in important State Department offices in Washington, D.C., including as principal deputy assistant secretary for intelligence and research. Among other accomplishments in this role, he helped establish the department’s first Office of Cyber Affairs and was integral in forming principles to guide the diplomacy of cyberspace.

Ambassador Dinger’s career highlights the strengths of UNI and our department. His mentor helped him find his passion, which led him to a career of service to his country. Ambassador Dinger now helps return the favor, frequently visiting the UNI campus to share his career experiences with students and encourage them to pursue foreign service careers. He also still stays in touch with Dr. Ross, who joined us for a luncheon on campus in John’s honor.
AYAH AL-DURAZI (Political Science, ’21) works as a community organizer for the nonprofit Together Colorado. She does faith-based organizing, working on climate, immigration, and housing issues.


CARALINE EGGENA (Public Administration, ’18) is a Community Development Planner at the North Iowa Area Council of Governments (NIACOG), which provides services to eight counties in northern Iowa. Her work has focused on managing a housing trust fund that helps low income Iowans pay for home repairs so they can stay in their homes.

YADIRA GUZMAN (Political Science, ‘21) was awarded the Young Woman of Tomorrow for the Women of Persimmon awards from the YWCA of Black Hawk County. She is currently in the Master of Human Rights program at the University of Minnesota’s Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

JACOB HARBERTS (Political Science, ’19) is a Program Delivery Manager-Supervisor for the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA).

LINDSEY HINES (Public Administration, ’18), Administrative Specialist at IMPACT Community Action Partnership, a central Iowa organization built to reduce barriers faced by those living in poverty by offering programming and connecting clients to community resources.

PETER JOHNSON (Public Administration, ’21) is Executive Director at Midwest Partnership Economic Development Corporation, which serves Adair and Guthrie counties in West Central, Iowa.

COREY JONES (Political Science, ‘21) is Chief of Program Development at Rhode Island Department of Labor & Training. He previously served as policy director to incoming Rhode Island governor on Equity, Justice & Opportunity and Executive Director of Black Lives Matter New England PAC. He is running for City Council in Providence.

ALISHA THOMPSON (Political Science, ’17) is a program manager at Thread, Inc. in Baltimore Maryland. After earning a Master’s in Public Policy and Management from the Universiti Brunei Darussalam, she began working at Moveable Feast, a nonprofit in Baltimore that helps provide people with chronic and life-threatening illnesses with healthy, affordable food appropriate to their dietary needs. In December, 2021, she moved to Thread, Inc. There, she works with others in the community to help high school students succeed in high school and after, developing a plan to attain their degree and into post high-school pathways. Explaining her work, Alicia says “We start working with high school students when they are about 14 or 15 years old and we stick with them for 10 years. They can think that they quit us, but they don’t—they can’t—because we don’t quit them. We’re just always there.”
The Department of Political Science at the University of Northern Iowa offers undergraduate degrees in political science, public administration, and political communication, as well as the graduate Master in Public Policy degree. We emphasize student-focused education with small class sizes, research opportunities, engagement opportunities, and internships. Our award-winning faculty turn excellence in research into excellence in the classroom. Visit us on the UNI campus in Sabin Hall or at csbs.uni.edu/polisci.