

# POLITICAL SCIENCE

2023-24 NEWSLETTER



## PARTNERSHIPS | SCOTT PETERS



**JAYME RENFRO** led her Race and Public Policy class through a project that explored how redlining policies has affected green spaces and tree canopies; students then worked with partners on campus and in the community to plant trees in some such areas in Waterloo.

Greetings from Cedar Falls, where we have recently wrapped up another school year. As I reflected on our accomplishments this year, I was struck by the breadth of partnerships we have formed as we do our work.

There are common stereotypes about academic departments, most notably that we are siloed from our colleagues in other parts of the university and that we are stuck in our “ivory towers,” disconnected from the “real world.” If those stereotypes ever had a basis in reality, they certainly don’t describe the Department of Political Science today.

In this newsletter you’ll read about two classes engaged in project-based learning that connects students to partners both on and off campus. Students in **JUSTIN HOLMES’S** class, Citizen Participation and Civic Engagement, worked with offices from across campus to plan UNI’s Fall 2024 Panthers Vote nonpartisan voter education campaign.

The department also remains a key partner in a broad-based civic education effort on campus. Several faculty members were instrumental in developing a new general education certificate and a standalone minor that links together political science with the humanities to help students develop civic knowledge, skills, and values. One of our partners in this initiative is also the College of Education, because we want our future teachers to be ready to incorporate civic education lessons into their own classrooms after they leave us.

Over the course of the last several years, faculty in our Master of Public Policy program have been working hard to improve the program, an effort that culminated last summer when the program received accreditation from the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), the global standard for public service education. A big part of these efforts has been bringing faculty to teach in the program from the Wilson College of Business, from Geography and Philosophy departments.

Beyond that, a Capstone course in which students worked on projects with government agencies and nonprofits around the state, and an active internship program, are key features that help students gain practical experience to be ready for careers as public service professionals.

Finally, we are also seeking to engage alumni in our efforts in a more systematic way. I taught a career preparation class in which students connected with our alumni and Career Services in order to help them see what kinds of career paths are available for them and develop the skills that will help them find jobs. Several faculty members, including **CHRIS LARIMER** and **EVAN RENFRO**, invited alumni to speak to their classes and integrated more career information into them. If you have any interest in speaking to a class, volunteering as an alumni mentor for our students, or work with an organization that can accept interns / would be interested in partnering with the department on a service-learning course, please get in touch. We'd love to explore how we could partner with you to benefit our students!

**SCOTT PETERS**  
*Professor and Department Head*



## UNI ANNOUNCES GRASSLEY ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP, DONATION OF SENATORIAL PAPERS

In January, UNI received two historic gifts from Senator and Mrs. **CHUCK GRASSLEY, '55** – a gift of an endowed professorship in the Department of Political Science and a gift of the papers and other historical materials from the Senator's time in the U.S. Senate to the UNI Rod Library. Together, these gestures 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.

**DONNA HOFFMAN** has been named the Chuck and Barbara Grassley Professor of Political Science. A nationally-known scholar of presidential rhetoric, Hoffman teaches courses on American political institutions, including the presidency and Congress, and is frequently sought out by media throughout the state and nation for her insights and nonpartisan analysis of politics. As the Chuck and Barbara Grassley Professor of Political Science, Hoffman will provide programming to UNI students and the broader community related to her scholarship and the importance of Congress and public service.

"I am honored to be named the inaugural Chuck and Barbara Grassley Professor of Political Science. Senator Grassley's commitment to public service is longstanding and has its roots at Iowa State Teachers College, now the University of Northern Iowa. Senator and Mrs. Grassley's gift confirms their trust in our commitment to preparing the next generation of public servants and citizens who understand that the continued functioning of our democracy

isn't automatic, but requires concerted effort and education," said Hoffman.

"It's more important than ever that students learn to rigorously analyze political issues and develop the ability to discuss them with others, including those with whom they disagree," said Senator Grassley. "Barbara and I hope the endowed professorship will help the Department of Political Science continue its excellent work in promoting civil discourse and preparing the next generation of Iowa's leaders. We wish Dr. Hoffman the best in her teaching and her scholarly endeavors as the inaugural Grassley Professor."

UNI's Rod Library currently houses Senator Grassley's political papers from his time in the Iowa House of Representatives and the U.S. House of Representatives through 1980. The new gift, covering his time in the U.S. Senate, will complete the collection of papers from his entire career in public office, providing researchers, faculty and students a rich source of materials spanning a distinguished career of more than 60 years. All materials will be delivered to the University upon the conclusion of Senator Grassley's service in the United States Senate.

"We hope scholars and students will use my Senate papers as part of their research and teaching. 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," said Senator Grassley.

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# MPP PROGRAM RECEIVES ACCREDITATION, ENROLLS NEW COHORT

Last July, our Master of Public Policy (MPP) was officially accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), making it the only NASPAA-accredited graduate program in the state of Iowa!

Last summer, 11 students successfully completed the program and graduated. Those graduates are working in a variety of governmental and nonprofit sectors, including state government, healthcare, social services, and emergency management. In the fall of 2023, we admitted a new cohort of students with backgrounds in economic development, city planning, nonprofit work, and other areas. These students are completing their first year in the program and will be working on their internships this summer.

**NEW to the program, we have moved to annual admissions and are currently accepting applications for fall 2024 admissions.**

We are excited about this move to annual admissions. As the only NASPAA accredited program in the state of Iowa, our faculty are dedicated to enhancing the skills of mid-career professionals looking to advance their careers. Our curriculum provides multiple opportunities for hands-on experience with policy practitioners, as well as several courses designed to improve skills relating to policy analysis that can be applied across numerous sectors.

If you are interested in the program, please reach out **CHRIS LARIMER**, MPP Program Coordinator, [christopher.larimer@uni.edu](mailto:christopher.larimer@uni.edu).

## CAREER READINESS

This year, **SCOTT PETERS** piloted a new course, Career and Professional Development in Political Science. The goal of the course was to expose political science, public administration, and political communication students to more examples of career pathways.

During the semester, the class met by Zoom with 18 alumni working in government, campaign consulting, government relations, regional economic development, marketing, nonprofit management, and international aid. In addition to talking to the alums as a class, students made individual connections with alumni mentors to talk about their career goals.

Working with Career Services, students developed professional resumes and LinkedIn pages; identified job notices consistent with their career goals and practiced writing cover letters; and practiced networking and elevator pitches. Students provided valuable feedback on the course and it is on the books again for Fall 2024, this time with even more students enrolled. We are hoping to make this a regular feature of our curriculum.

## 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.

There are several goals. First, the group seeks to enhance civic learning on campus. 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 now in the academic catalog and enrolling students.

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.

Third, we would like to have a significant impact on civic education in K-12 education across the state. 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 build civic knowledge, skills, and values.

The goal of this initiative is to make UNI the center for civic education in Iowa.



## WOMEN IN POLITICS

The department held its annual Women in Politics Bipartisan Scholarship Benefit in October. The benefit helps celebrate the contributions of Iowa women in public service, while raising money for the Women in Politics Scholarship fund, awarded to UNI undergraduate students studying political science or public administration with an interest in public service. The scholarship is supported by an advisory board of over two dozen women business and community leaders, co-chaired by Doris J. Kelley and the Rev. Cathy Young.

This year's event featured a dynamic presentation by Courtney Maxwell Greene, the Director of External Partnerships and

Community Engagement for UnityPoint Health. Ms. Greene worked for 15 years in television broadcast news as a reporter, producer, and anchor, including in Des Moines. She also spent several years in the Iowa government as press secretary for the governor, public information bureau chief and spokesperson for the Department of Public Safety, and communication director and division administrator for Iowa Workforce Development.

This year's scholarship recipients were **OLIVIA SCHNEIDER**, **FAITH LARSEN**, and **MADELINE HINZ**.



## WOMEN IN POLITICS

BIPARTISAN SCHOLARSHIP BENEFIT

**SAVE  
THE DATE**

TUESDAY  
**OCTOBER 8**  
★ 2024 ★



For more info & to register,  
visit: [csbs.uni.edu/WIP](https://csbs.uni.edu/WIP)

## FACULTY AND STUDENTS HONORED BY YWCA

**PROF. JAYME RENFRO** and **MADELINE HINZ**, '24, received awards from the YWCA of Black Hawk County for furthering the YWCA's mission "to eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all," and to "consistently support, mentor or inspire ... women."

Jayme Renfro received the Professional Woman of the Year award. Among other things, the YWCA recognized her work with the You're Next conference in encouraging women to get involved in public service, as well as the service-learning project she's leading in her Race and Public Policy course, which is described in more detail in this newsletter.

**MADELINE HINZ**, a political science and Spanish double-major, received the Young Woman of Tomorrow Award in recognition of several projects: a podcast on the psychological impact of family separation in immigration detention centers; a research project that analyzed language access to public services in New York and Chicago; and her Honors thesis (written in Spanish--only the second time this has been done at UNI) that explores language accessibility of voting materials in Iowa and Michigan. As her thesis director, Elise DuBord (Lang & Lit) summarized, "This innovative project draws together the analysis of state laws, voting practices, and demographic information to explore the nuances of language access in state-wide election practices and how state laws may facilitate or block access to voting. Ms. Hinz's research demonstrates the ways that she has successfully blended her academic and professional interests in Spanish and Political Science."

**CAROLINE CHRISTENSEN**, '24, a political communication / history double major, was also nominated for the Young Woman of Tomorrow award. Caroline has played an instrumental role in planning You're Next over the last two years. She has also had tremendous success in writing for and editing the *Northern Iowan*. Under her leadership as executive editor, the *NI* has successfully managed a transition to an increasingly online presence and has won a number of regional and national awards.





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## MODEL UNITED NATIONS | BY BRIAN WARBY

The UNI Model United Nations Competition Team has once again demonstrated its excellence on the global stage. Model United Nations (MUN), a simulation of the United Nations General Assembly and other UN bodies, provides students with a unique opportunity to engage in diplomacy, debate pressing issues, and collaborate with fellow delegates from member states.

In the fall, the UNI MUN team participated in the prestigious American Model United Nations Conference held in Chicago. Representing Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, our delegates showcased their expertise in international affairs. Notably, the team received accolades for its well-researched position papers and secured two Outstanding Delegation Awards:

**JUDE BEEKMAN**, representing Equatorial Guinea in the General Assembly (GA2), demonstrated exceptional negotiation skills and a deep understanding of global challenges.

**SARAH AWACHI**, who represented Gabon on the Security Council, exhibited leadership and diplomacy in addressing critical security issues.

The team's success continued into the spring when it attended the Midwest Model United Nations Conference in St. Louis. Representing Ecuador, it advocated for sustainable development, human rights, and peace. **STEVEN ZIMMER** received the Outstanding Delegate Award for his contributions to the Security Council.

Finally, the team participated in the prestigious Harvard World Model United Nations (HWMUN) competition held in Taipei, Taiwan, during spring break. This year, the team selected its four most experienced delegates to represent it at HWMUN. These seasoned diplomats demonstrated their expertise in international relations, negotiation, and diplomacy. Their participation in HWMUN allowed them to engage with peers from around the world, exchange ideas, and collaborate on pressing global issues.

The team then closed its year by hosting our own mini-conference that was open to all UNI students. Those who participated debated solutions and found common ground on the political and economic rights of refugees.



## VAJPEYI FELLOWSHIP

Since 2011, the department has awarded the Vajpeyi Fellowship to a faculty member who engages students in their research. Made possible by generous gifts from Stephen and Linda Segebarth and Catherine Gallagher, the award honors Professor Dhirendra Vajpeyi's service to UNI and the impact he had on students during his time in the department.

This year's award went to **BRIAN WARBY**. During spring and fall of 2022, Brian worked with **SANDRA THIMAN**, '22, on a project to aid Self-Help International, a nonprofit based in Waverly, IA, that operates a microlending program in Ghana. Examining Self-Help International's data, Brian and Sandra examined the strengths

and weaknesses of their program, based on the academic literature. They delivered a series of memos and a final presentation to the Board of Directors in October 2022. As Brian described it, "The project was a fully collaborative effort. I did all of the data analysis [and] took the lead in outlining each of the memoirs, but we were equal partners in the writing process. Sandra was the primary author on 2 of the 4 memos and provided valuable input on the others as well."

Sandra is now a Ph.D student at the Swedish Institute for Social Research, Stockholm University.

## 2023-24 STUDENT RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

In November, three of our students presented at Iowa Minnesota Campus Compact's Civic Action Academy. **GRAYSON ROWLET**, **AUBRIANNA WOODY**, '23, and **ASHLEE VICK'S** presentation, "Homelessness in Iowa," centered on how students at all levels can take action in their community to help with the homelessness issue in the state of Iowa. Through in-session education, discussions, and activities, they helped educate others on the stigmas around homelessness and how they can use their new knowledge and skills to make an impact within local government / communities.

**SERENITY KOLLASCH** received a Fruehling Fellowship for her project: "I Failed My Brother": How Online Radicalization Affects the Family Unit." **ANA KOGL** served as her faculty mentor.

Kollasch also presented the paper "Poisoned Pens and Pixels: A Historical Comparison of Genocidal Propaganda," at the 2024 Iowa Human Rights Research Conference in Iowa City in April.

**MADLINE HINZ** presented the paper "Tengo el derecho a votar?" The Impacts of Accessible, Multilingual Voting Materials on the Participation of Hispanic/Latinx Groups" at the INSPIRE Student Research & Engagement conference at UNI in April. Her faculty mentor was Elise DuBord, professor of Spanish.

**ALLISON MEAGHER** presented the paper "The United States Prison System: Exploring Race, Gender and Intersectionality Behind Bars," at the 2024 Iowa Human Rights Research Conference in Iowa City in April. Her faculty mentor was **EVAN RENFRO**.

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# MY STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

## | BY SERENITY KOLLASCH

Throughout my time at UNI, I have had two amazing opportunities to participate in undergraduate research that have shaped my academic and professional abilities. My honors thesis, titled “I Failed My Brother”: How Online Radicalization Affects the Family Unit, involved conducting in-depth interviews with ten individuals who were willing to share their personal experiences with radicalized family members.

This project helped build my qualitative research skills and also deepened my understanding of the impacts of online radicalization. On top of the academic skills I gained, I also presented this project at three separate conferences: the UNI INSPIRE conference, Research in the Capitol, and the Iowa Sociological Association Conference. These opportunities helped me hone my professional skills and allowed me to network in ways that wouldn’t have been possible without them.

In addition to my thesis, I also conducted a comparative analysis of genocidal propaganda across three historical genocides: the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, and the Rwandan Genocide.

This project involved an examination of primary and secondary sources in order to draw parallels and identify patterns used in propaganda to incite violence against a specific group of people. I also had the opportunity to present this project at the Iowa Human Rights Conference, further developing my professional and academic skills.

Both projects required a high level of analytical thinking and the ability to discuss complex topics, which has been invaluable in preparing me for my upcoming graduate studies at University College London (UCL).

As I prepare to attend UCL for a Master’s in Human Rights, I feel incredibly confident in my ability to conduct original research. In the future, I plan to publish both of these projects, which I believe distinguishes me from other graduate students within my program. These experiences have solidified my passion for research and human rights. I am eager to continue exploring topics such as these, and I feel that UNI has prepared me thoroughly to do so.

Overall, UNI has not only prepared me for the difficulties I might face in graduate school but has also inspired my profound interest in human rights and contemporary issues. I am excited to bring my experience to UCL and continue to develop my skills as a researcher and academic in order to make a meaningful contribution to the field of human rights.



## STUDENTS CAMPAIGN FOR VOTER PARTICIPATION

“Let your voice be heard.” That’s the message UNI student **GRACE CROAT** wants students to know as presidential and congressional elections begin in November. Croat is currently in a political science class preparing for the Panthers Vote campaign – which was established in 2018. The campaign is a non-partisan campaign intended to increase student participation in elections.

For the first time this year, **JUSTIN HOLMES**, who has chaired Panthers Vote since its inception, incorporated Panthers Vote planning into a project-based learning course, Citizen Participation and Civic Engagement. Students spent the first part of the semester learning about the factors that affect the likelihood of voting and turned toward applying that knowledge to plan UNI’s fall Panthers Vote activities. “We’re trying to find the disconnect,” Croat said. “How can we get those people that are motivated to actually show up? We looked at a lot of past research on how candidates motivate their voters, and we’re trying to apply that on campus.”

According to Holmes, UNI has a strong tradition of civic engagement. The most recent presidential election in 2020 saw a 73% student voter turnout. “Representative democracy depends on people voting,” Holmes said. “The whole theoretical underpinning of the American system rests on the consent of those who are governed.”

Holmes said the Panthers Vote campaign is particularly focused on engaging college students who may not be aware of how to register or participate in elections. “Young people turn out at much lower rates than older people,” Holmes said. “And there’s a

lot of reasons for that. One of the big ones is we make it fairly hard. There are a lot of steps to vote for the first time. And so a lot of what we’re looking at is doing kind of educating the campus.”

**FAITH LARSEN**, another student in Holmes’ class, said the class has brainstormed many ideas to engage campus. They plan to have a registration table at a football game towards the beginning of next semester, and want to put on a big event for National Voter Registration Day on Sept. 17. The class is also creating a short informative presentation which will be shown to larger UNIFI classes in order to reach as many students as possible. “We want to make it super engaging because people usually don’t want to talk about voter registration,” Croat said. “We are also thinking about collaborating with large student orgs to reach as many people as possible.”

**SERGIO MORANCY**, also a student in Holmes’ class, said he is working with Larsen and another student to collaborate with UNI Athletics. As a football player, he said spreading awareness about voter registration to student athletes is an important part of the Panthers Vote campaign.

Holmes said participating in civic engagement is especially important on a college campus, and the Panthers Vote campaign is an important part of that mission. “We are trying to prepare people to go out and do good things in the world and be productive citizens.”

## UPROOTING REDLINING

Decaying houses, abandoned buildings and residual pollution from the Rath Packing Company reflect a troubled history of housing discrimination, economic disparity and segregation in a select number of Waterloo neighborhoods. But students in Professor **JAYME RENFRO'S** Race and Public Policy seminar are seeking to change that – one tree at a time.

The students in Renfro's class have been studying the effects of redlining, a policy that began in the 1930s. When the federal government created the infrastructure for the 30-year, fixed rate mortgage backed by government insurance, it created maps that color-coded neighborhoods based on their perceived lending risk, with the riskiest colored red. Due to racist attitudes, the vast majority of Black neighborhoods were labeled high risk.

Renfro has been teaching about the legacy of redlining in her public administration seminar for several years, encouraging students to examine the long-term impacts on placement of schools, poverty levels, and other factors. Last year, while studying maps of Waterloo, Renfro's class noticed a key factor was missing from the formerly redlined areas – trees. According to Renfro, trees are often a key resource for neighborhoods that are often overlooked.

“Redlined areas tend to have a lot of commercial concrete parking lots, vacant lots, those sorts of things,” Renfro said. “They don't have trees. And a lack of trees creates an even worse neighborhood.” Without an adequate number of trees, the air quality in these areas is noticeably worse, and trees also help cool down an area with their shade, which is increasingly

important with rising temperatures and global warming.

This year, Renfro organized the class around a service-learning project to address that. Students worked with UNI's Center for Energy and Environmental Education and AmeriCorps to plan a tree planting event. Students worked in teams to identify areas that could benefit from more trees, publicize the effort, recruit volunteers and make other plans necessary to complete the project.

The class organized dozens of volunteers to plant trees, including the Iowa Army National Guard, AmeriCorps, and Vine Valley Real Estate among other corporations. The group planted 64 trees near East High School and the Jesse Cosby Center in Waterloo.

In addition to organizing the tree planting, the class organized several events to educate the community including a faculty panel discussion about the history of redlining with Jenna Peterson from Habitat for Humanity and UNI professors, an Earth Day sapling planting event, creek cleanup and community engagement fair. “The students keep coming up with things to do on their own,” Renfro said. “I did not tell them to do this. They did this all on their own. They keep coming up with extra work, and so it's been really cool to watch.”



**WATCH VIDEO!**

[csbs.uni.edu/trees-in-action](https://csbs.uni.edu/trees-in-action)

## CONGRATULATIONS 2023-24 GRADUATES!

### POLITICAL SCIENCE

AARON BURGER  
GAVIN ELLIOT  
MADELINE HINZ  
CHRISTIAN JAURON  
CHLOE JOHNSON  
PAUL JOHNSTON  
SERENITY KOLLASCH  
BERNARD MUHIRE  
DAMIAN RIVERA  
GRAYSON ROWLET  
MOLLY SCOTT  
ASHLEE VICK  
AUBRIANNA WOODY  
ZACH ZIPPE

### PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

ANTON BENJERDES  
BLACK BIERMANN  
HAILEY BOEHM  
DAISY BOEHMER  
GAVIN ELLIOT  
ANTONIO GROOTHUIS  
ALBRIGHT LUGALIA  
GRAYSON ROWLET  
AIDAN SCHMITZ  
ASHLEE VICK

### POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

CAROLINE CHRISTENSEN  
NOAH HACKBART



### SUMMER 2023 GRADUATES OF THE MPP PROGRAM

DYLAN BOLES  
KRYSTINA BRODEUR  
THEODORE DAY  
LUKE ELZINGA  
BRANDYCE FINK  
JACOB HARBERTS

IVONNE PETTEGREW  
TOM RALSTON  
SEMIR SINANOVIC  
KARYN SPORY  
SARA YENZER

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# STUDENT AWARDS

**NOAH HACKBART** received the Lux Service Award, which acknowledges exemplary service that will leave a lasting legacy. To qualify, students must hold leadership positions in at least two student organizations. A political communication major from Ankeny, Noah has been an active member of Northern Iowa Student Government since his very first semester at UNI. For four semesters, Hackbart served as the NISG director of governmental relations, building and strengthening relationships with state and local leaders. He advocated for the needs of students off campus and increased awareness about student government on campus.

**CAROLINE CHRISTENSEN** received UNI's Outstanding Student Leader Award, which recognizes students who have demonstrated dedication and leadership through their involvement in one or more campus activities. Caroline served as the Director of Public Relations for Northern Iowa Student Government, helped plan and lead the department's You're Next Conference for women's leadership in 2023 and 2024, and served on the staff of the *Northern Iowan*, most recently as executive editor.

**THE PURPLE & OLD GOLD AWARD** for Meritorious Scholarship is awarded to one graduating student in each major academic field who has demonstrated outstanding academic success at the university. The Department of Political Science is allowed two honorees: one for political science and political communication, and another for public administration. Our 2024 Purple & Old Gold Award recipients are **CAROLINE CHRISTENSEN** and **HAILY BOEHM**.



**SAM BLATT, '17** (Poli Sci) accepted a position as Director of Development and Public Relations at Riverview Center, which provides compassionate care for those affected by sexual assault in Iowa.

**PETER DREIFUSS, '21** (Poli Sci) joined Metropolitan State University of Denver as a Recruitment and Retention Specialist for the College of Business.

**WILL FLANEGIN, '21** (Public Admin, Poli Comm) started a position as a Logistics Analyst at CCC by Honeywell, where he plays a key role in managing international and domestic shipments and operations.

**AARIKA FORNEY, '18** (Poli Sci) is completing her Ph.D. program at the University of Oklahoma and has accepted a position as assistant professor of public administration at Kennesaw State University in Georgia, starting in the fall.

**JARED GIRRES, '19** (Poli Sci) started a new position as Management & Program Analyst at U.S. Customs and Border Patrol.

**CALEB GIPPLE, '20** (Public Admin) accepted a position as a Business Development Analyst with Advantage Capital.

**LINDSEY INGRAHAM, '23** (Poli Sci) is working as a Legislative Analyst at a Legislative Services Agency in the Iowa General Assembly.

**AHSAN JHANGIR KAHN, '19** (Poli Sci) has been serving as a Judicial Law Clerk for the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

**DYLAN KELLER, '14** (Poli Comm), legislative analyst for the Iowa Senate Republican Caucus specializing in health and human services, served as a fellow in the Health Reformers Academy.

**COURTNEY KLEIN, '18** (Poli Sci) started a new position as a PAC Senior Analyst for the Global Government Relations team at the aerospace and defense firm RTX.

**EMILY LOOMIS, '21** (Poli Sci) received her J.D. from Texas A&M. After passing the bar exam, she will join Patton, Hoversten & Berg, P.A. in Waseca, MN.

**ASHLEY MADSEN, '18** (Poli Sci) is the Director of Academic Success at the Drake University Law School

**DUSKY TERRY, '97** (Public Admin) was named president of ITC Great Plains, an electric transmission operating company serving parts of Kansas and Oklahoma.

**SANDRA THIMAN, '22** (Poli Sci) began a Ph.D. program at the Swedish Institute for Social Research at Stockholm University.

**BRIAN WEUVE, '98** (Public Admin) was hired as the Finance Director for the City of Pella, Iowa.

**SYDNEY WAGNER, '21** (Poli Sci), a law student at the University of Iowa College of Law, had a Note accepted for publication in the Iowa Law Review.

**JAMISON WHITING, '17** (Poli Sci) started a new position as Assistant City Attorney on the Police Reform Implementation Team for the City of Minneapolis. He is tasked with Community Engagement and Policy Reform as it relates to the Minnesota Department of Human Rights settlement agreement and impending U.S. Department of Justice consent decree.

**LAITO ZARKPAH, '22** (Poli Sci) began a new position as Philanthropy Coordinator at WesleyLife, a nonprofit focused on transforming the aging experience so people live longer, healthier lives.





## PITA AGBESE RETIREMENT

Pita Agbese is retiring after 35 years at UNI. Dr. Agbese completed his undergraduate work in his native Nigeria, and before coming to the U.S. to pursue graduate studies he taught at the high school level, meaning that the 2023-24 academic year culminates a 50-year career of teaching.

Dr. Agbese earned his Ph.D. from Northwestern University in 1984 and served in term positions in several universities (including UNI) before beginning his appointment here as an assistant professor in 1989. He earned tenure and promotion to associate professor in 1992 and was promoted to professor in 1998.

Dr. Agbese built an international reputation as an expert on Nigerian politics, civil-military relations, and human rights, among other topics. His scholarship on civil-military relations and democratization was especially influential, investigating the ways that the military could be an obstacle to both democratization and development more broadly. His expertise in Nigerian politics extended into other realms as well, including human rights, ethnic conflict, and environmental issues. He co-edited seven books and authored or co-authored two dozen peer-reviewed book chapters and twenty journal articles during his career.

Throughout his career, he earned grants from the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He served the university and the discipline in a variety of ways, including through consultancies and lectures delivered around the world. As just one indicator of his scholarly expertise and reputation, in 2019 he was selected as an election monitor in the Nigerian presidential election.

For many years, Dr. Agbese taught the Non-Western Cultures: Africa course within the Liberal Arts Core. In doing so, he exposed thousands of students to African cultures, history, and politics. In recent years, he continued this work by developing a new UNIFI course, “Colonial Encounters,” using the history and politics of colonialism to examine the development of African nations. Within political science, he taught courses in African politics, international law, international organizations, international political economy, and U.S. foreign policy.

In recognition of his accomplishments in teaching, scholarship, and service, Dr. Agbese received the Regents’ Award for Faculty Excellence in 2004.

The Department wishes him a rewarding retirement. We will miss his collegiality, the colorful photos that adorned his office door (he is an avid photographer), and his joyous laugh punctuating our discussions in department meetings.



**KYLE ENDRES** | "During this past year, I taught Social Science Statistics for the first time during the fall semester, which included hands-on instruction coding in R/R-studio to conduct statistical tests. In the spring semester, I taught Public Opinion & Voting Behavior where my students collaborated to design, field, and analyze an original survey consisting entirely of survey questions drafted by the students for their individual research projects. I am looking forward to teaching Data Collection, Reporting, and Analyses this fall to

the Master of Public Policy students. In addition, I submitted three new articles for peer review, presented research at two conferences, prepared several contract/grant proposals (including 3 NSF), collaborated on multiple data collection projects and co-authored several technical reports with my colleagues at UNI's Center for Social & Behavioral Research."



**DONNA HOFFMAN** began her 23rd year at UNI in August. She continues to enjoy teaching new generations of Panthers who have an interest in American politics. Highlights for the 2023-24 year include hosting two former members of Congress through the Congress to Campus program where our students both get a glimpse inside the institution, as well as learn the importance of public service. Hoffman was honored in January to be named the inaugural Chuck and Barbara Grassley Professor of Political Science,

the department's first endowed professorship. In addition, Hoffman and her co-author Alison Howard have a forthcoming book chapter on Obama's rhetoric surrounding his executive actions that will be published in a book on the Obama presidency. Hoffman and Chris Larimer also published a book chapter on Iowa's competitive Congressional districts in the 2022 election as well.



**RAMONA MCNEAL** | "My research agenda has been evolving. In recent years my interest has increasingly focused on education policy. I have a co-authored book chapter, "School Violence: A Focus on Mental Health" In J. Herron & S. Sartin (Eds.), *Impact of Gun Violence in School Systems* (IGI Global) coming out in June. It explores the impact of the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on the recent adoption of "red flag" laws at the state levels. Additionally, I presented a co-

authored paper on school mental health policies at the Annual Midwest Political Science Association meeting. Finally, I recently joined the editorial review boards of two education journals: the *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversity in Education* and the *International Journal of Project Management and Administration in Education*. My research agenda this summer will include a focus on education deserts in the U.S. as well as several non-educational policy issues. I hope to explore topics including sustainability and environmental policy."



**JAYME RENFRO** | "It's been a dynamic and rewarding academic year for me! Here are a few highlights:

Empowering Future Leaders: Alongside student Caroline Christiansen, I organized the "You're Next" initiative, aimed at encouraging women to step into the political arena. This program has been a fantastic platform for potential female candidates to gain insight and support.

Educational Resources: I authored "Public Administration: The Essentials," a free online textbook designed to make learning accessible for students everywhere. This resource provides foundational knowledge crucial for understanding and navigating the public sector.

Community Engagement: In a hands-on project with my students, we planted trees in historically redlined neighborhoods in Waterloo. This initiative not only beautified the area but also addressed the long-term impacts of environmental inequality.

Recognition for Impact: I was honored to receive the YWCA "Women of Persimmon" award, recognizing significant contributions to our community and beyond.

Here's to more impactful work in the coming months!"

## IN MEMORIAM

### **DR. ROBERT ROSS (1928-2023)**

Dr. Robert Leslie Ross, 95, died on Nov. 30, 2023, in Cedar Falls.

Dr. Ross joined the UNI as an instructor of political science in 1962 and was granted emeritus status in 1996. A 1950 graduate of UNI (then Iowa State Teachers College), he served in the Army during the Korean War and taught social studies in secondary schools in Iowa before earning an M.A. at Columbia in 1958. He earned his Ph.D. from Michigan State University in 1967.



Dr. Ross served as head of the department from 1971-1986. He taught American politics courses, including the presidency, public opinion, and campaigns & elections. During that time, he was frequently called upon by the press to comment on current events. Under his leadership, the department created the public administration major, established an internship program, and launched several endowments that continue to provide support to political science students today.

Dr. Ross was an active member of the community. He was very involved with his church and he coached or served on the board for various swimming clubs/teams. He served on the City of Waterloo Human Rights Commission and in 2004 received the Human Rights Commissioner Award. He had lifelong interests in politics, music, history, religion, and sports.

**HELP SUPPORT STUDENTS**  
*through the* **DR. ROBERT ROSS**  
**STUDENT SUPPORT FUND**

Through a generous gift from Dr. Ross's estate, the Department has established the Dr. Robert Ross Student Support Fund. This fund will be used to create a student-oriented space in Sabin Hall that will enhance a feeling of community among our majors. This study space will fill a great need in Sabin Hall and further our departmental goals of encouraging student belonging and retention. We look forward to commemorating Dr. Ross's contributions to the Department of Political Science within the space.

If you are interested in contributing to this project to honor Dr. Ross's legacy, you may make a gift online through the link or QR code below, or mail a check payable to the UNI Foundation to:

Dr. Robert Ross Student Support Fund  
C/O UNI Foundation Financial Services  
121 Commons, Cedar Falls, IA 50614



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