



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

College of Education  
& Health Professions

# LEADING WITH CARE

College of  
Education &  
Health Professions

# A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Colleagues, Students, and Friends,

Despite the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brought in 2021, [our College](#) family persevered with resilience, care, humor, and a commitment to excellence.

We found creative ways to help each other and people in the community. Nursing students participated in COVID screening, contact tracing, and vaccine administration in Northwest Arkansas communities. Faculty pivoted to online instruction and spent precious summer hours learning best practices for online delivery of courses.

The Boyer Center for Student Services staff found ways to connect with students remotely and held over 10,000 student appointments in the 2020-2021 academic year.

It became very challenging to find clinical placements for students to meet the program outcomes and help them progress toward graduation. Still, faculty partnered with area school districts and health agencies to balance safety and student needs.

Our 2021 magazine is filled with positive stories about student and faculty success, the College's caring alumni, and research that helps people thrive. You'll find [Dean's Spotlight](#) stories throughout,



highlighting outstanding students in our College who are already making a difference in the community, Arkansas, and the world.

We hope you'll be inspired by how our College is leading with care.

**WE CARE FOR OUR STUDENTS  
SO THEY CAN CARE FOR  
ARKANSAS AND THE WORLD**

COEHP Bachelor's Degrees: Nearly **90%** of our students reported working, continuing education, or enlisting in military/volunteer service within 6 months of graduation. This is the highest overall percentage across all U of A colleges.

# A CARING COLLEGE

**5,980**

Students  
*(As of fall 2021)*

**\$608,943**

Scholarship awards  
*(Academic year 2020-21)*

**1,349**

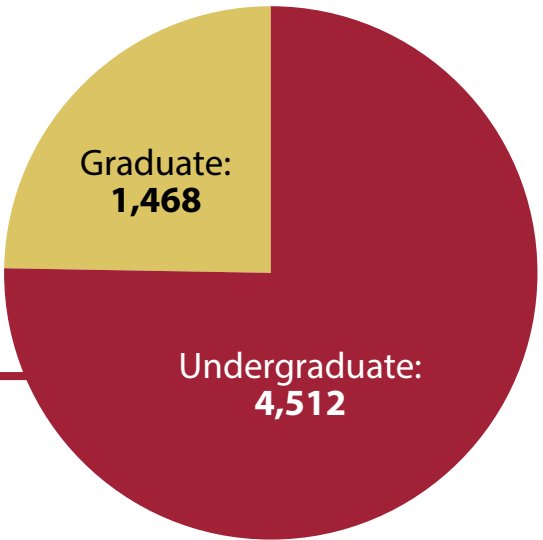
Degrees awarded  
*(Academic year 2020-21)*

**514**

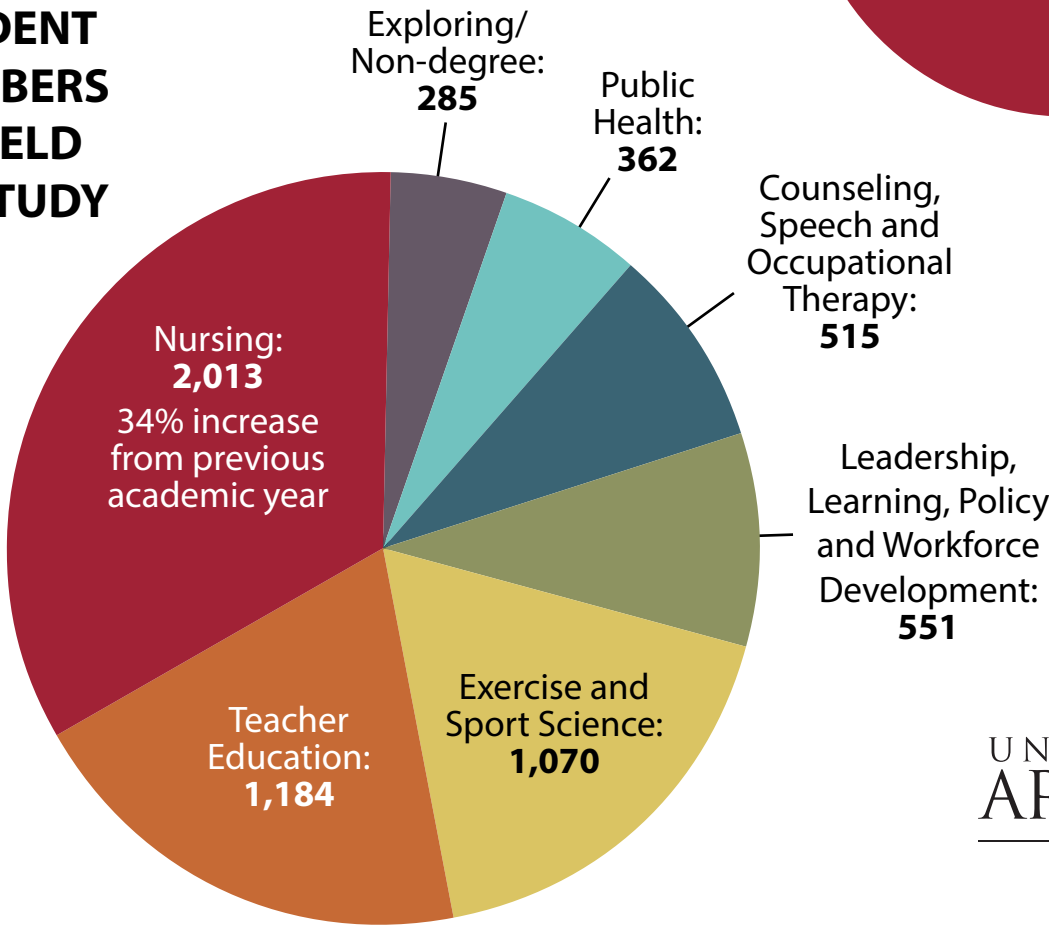
Honors students

## STUDENTS

Our College's fall 2021 enrollment increase of 10.4% exceeded the university-wide enrollment increase of 5.5%. We continue to have the largest graduate student enrollment at the U of A and the top two largest departments on campus: The [Department of Health, Human Performance and Recreation](#) has 1,580 students and the [School of Nursing](#) has 2,013 students.



## STUDENT NUMBERS BY FIELD OF STUDY



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This fall, **190** [teacher graduates](#) from our College are educating more than **4,750** students in classrooms across Northwest Arkansas and the country.



### OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

The second cohort of 26 [occupational therapy](#) doctoral students began coursework on Jan. 2, 2021. As part of Dr. Jeanne Eichler's Creative Arts as a Modality in Treatment course, the inaugural cohort spent time painting at MY-T-BY-DESIGN art studio. The experience took them through the vulnerable process of expressing themselves through art so they can use the method effectively with future patients. They also experimented with storytelling, music-making, and theater games to expand their therapeutic repertoire.

OUR COLLEGE OFFERS MORE THAN 50 DEGREE PROGRAMS, INCLUDING 17 BACHELOR'S PROGRAMS AND 35 MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL PROGRAMS. WE HAVE OVER 160 FULL-TIME FACULTY MEMBERS WHO HELP STUDENTS GROW IN THE CLASSROOM SO THEY CAN EXCEL IN THE CARING PROFESSIONS.

### ON-THE-FIELD LEARNING

Nicole Edison is a master's student in the [Recreation and Sport Management program](#) and a marketing graduate assistant. During football season, she coordinated HogTown, the street festival held before each Razorback home game. The classroom expands to the field when students participate in immersive opportunities with the university's sports teams.



### TAMARA KUYKENDALL

*Higher Education master's student, Honors alumna*

[Tamara](#) is a scholar, former Razorback track athlete and champion for African-American voices. She's the 2021-22 Black Graduate Association President and created "Athletes Raising the Standard" in 2021. She aspires to become an athletic director in higher education.

"I am using Athletes Raising the Standard (ARTS) as a social platform to educate Black high school athletes on how to navigate their college experience successfully."



## SIGNING WEEK

Educator Commitment Signing Week is an annual event celebrating teachers. New, veteran and future teachers sign a Commitment to Education, showing their pledge to the students of Arkansas, the teaching profession, and the future of education in the state.



## PARKER EVATT

*Early Childhood Education major with a focus in reading/dyslexia, M.A.T. candidate*

Parker is an enthusiastic senior who's already elevating the teaching profession. He's president of the U of A Educators Rising chapter, which he helped bring to campus two years ago. He was selected as a 2021-22 National Collegiate Ambassador for the organization.

"My biggest passion is teaching. It's my lifelong purpose. I have never looked back or reconsidered my decision to enter the teaching program at the U of A."



## NEW MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH DEGREE

The pandemic underscored the crucial role public health professionals play in protecting and improving people's health worldwide. To meet the increasing need for change agents in this field and the health challenges within our state, the College added a new [Master of Public Health program](#) in fall 2021, offering concentrations in public health practice and physical activity. In addition to the 36 hours of academic coursework, students must complete six hours of applied practice experiences. Classes are taught by accomplished faculty in epidemiology, aging and health, health behavior and health communications, physical activity, and exercise science.



**MENTOR TEACHER OF THE YEAR** Four Northwest Arkansas public school teachers were named [mentor teachers of the year](#) for 2020-21. U of A teacher candidates intern in public schools across the region for hands-on training before managing their own classrooms. Being paired with great mentor educators is vital to a student teacher's success. Pictured: Mentor teacher Nichole Paquet-Smith, left, and alumna Laura Hurst. Other mentor teachers selected for the honor included Ryan Finley, Owl Creek Middle School in Fayetteville; Adriana Rivera, Old Wire Elementary School in Rogers; and John Land, Janie Darr Elementary School in Rogers.



CARING IN THE

CLINIC



FIGHTING THE PANDEMIC

2021 brought the relief of vaccinations. Nursing students administered more than 10,000 vaccines at various large-scale clinics and schools across the region. Students also participated in COVID screening and contact tracing. During the pandemic, the [Eleanor Mann School of Nursing](#) continued its mission of transforming lives through nursing education and inspiring leadership in nursing practice and academics to improve society’s health and well-being.



Of the **506** students in the [L.P.N. to B.S.N.](#) program, **44.27%** are African American. Overall, **57%** of students represent a minority population. The average age of students is **36**.



**KANDACE WILLIAMS**  
*Online Doctor of Nursing Practice student, Eleanor Mann School of Nursing*  
[Kandace](#) was working in a medical intensive care unit in Texas when her mother was admitted to a hospital in New York due to COVID-related complications. In response to her challenging personal experience, she created a “COVID ICU Communication Guide” for hospitals.  
“I had to wait on phone calls and release all control of my mom to someone I had never met. Although I’m in the healthcare field and understood what was going on, I still felt so helpless.”



SPEAK OUT

Speech-language pathologist Jessica Danley (left) is the new clinical education coordinator for our [Communication Sciences and Disorders](#) program. She also manages the college’s on-campus Speech and Hearing Clinic and places graduate students in clinical internship sites in the community. Danley oversees new therapy services for adults in the clinic, including specialized programs for swallowing difficulties and vocal rehabilitation. She recently secured a Parkinson Voice Project SPEAK OUT! grant to help individuals with Parkinson’s disease improve their communication skills.

The [clinic](#) has provided comprehensive speech, language and audiology services to individuals and families in Northwest Arkansas since 1960. The clinic serves as a training and research laboratory for undergraduate and graduate students.



STUDENTS IN OUR COLLEGE GAIN VALUABLE HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE THROUGH CLINICAL PRACTICUMS, INTERNSHIPS, OR SKILLS/SIMULATION LABS BEFORE GRADUATION.





### BORN TO BE A NURSE

Nadine Gatarayiha received the nursing school’s coveted Clinical Excellence Award. The faculty nominate and vote on the student who has exceeded expectations in the clinical setting with patient-centered care, evidence-based practice, and professional communication.

[Nadine](#) is from Rwanda, where getting an education is often a luxury.

“I have been fortunate enough to be among the few lucky women who have had the privilege of receiving a good education, which has opened so many doors for me — including being able to attend the Eleanor Mann School of Nursing,” she said. “I see myself as an investment that other people have made in me, and I always strive to pay it forward.”

Nadine was invited to speak at the nursing school’s pinning ceremony, an event marking the milestone of nursing students beginning work with actual patients during clinical rotations. She concluded her speech with these words: “I can confidently say that I was born to be a nurse; to hold, to aid, to save, to teach, and to inspire. It is my calling, my passion, my life, and my world.”



### MOLLY BESS RECTOR

*Clinical Mental Health Counseling master’s student*

[Molly](#) earned an MFA in poetry from the U of A six years ago and graduated in December with a master’s degree in counseling. She’s blending both degrees to make people healthier. Molly directs a community non-profit called Open Mouth Literacy Center and uses poetry prompts and other writing exercises in therapy sessions.

“Right now, we’re focused on accessibility in poetry programming, and we’re also developing a fellowship for a poet currently experiencing incarceration, in collaboration with DecARcerate. We’re trying to get poetry out there in lots of different ways.”

Molly was among various graduate students in our program who offered free mental health counseling during the pandemic. Since April 2020, counselor education students have provided services to more than 90 U of A students and Northwest Arkansas residents. The program added a telehealth course that’s now required for all students.



### ONLINE LEARNING

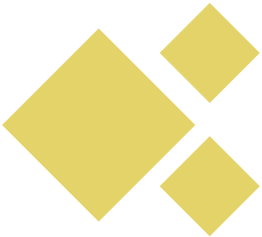
Nurses like Jolaade Adesina continued serving their communities as the pandemic raged on in 2021 while also working toward their dream of earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from the U of A. The online L.P.N. to B.S.N. program meets the needs of working licensed practical nurses like Jolaade, who works at a correctional facility in another state. She’s able to complete her clinical hours there.

### DIVERSITY TOOLBOX

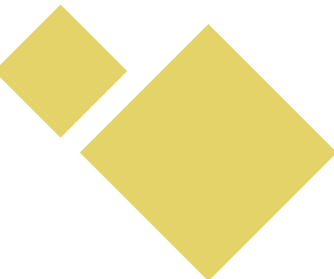
Students in our Eleanor Mann School of Nursing developed a “Diversity Toolbox” in 2021 to promote inclusion and to foster a deeper understanding of issues like racial bias.

Jessica Weiss (top) and Payne Colton curated various resources for the project, including video interviews with students who have disabilities, book and movie suggestions, and art. It’s a self-paced living resource that continues to expand under the direction of nursing students Trang Do and Sam Torres (bottom).





**CAMP CONNECT** is a summer day camp our College hosts for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Each child is paired with a peer mentor around the same age, and our students also assist with the community [outreach program](#). Renee Speight, teaching assistant professor of special education, said this summer's camp at Crystal Bridges Museum focused on art projects around the topic of "identity."



OUR COLLEGE OFFERS A VARIETY OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICE PROGRAMS TO BENEFIT ARKANSAS AND BEYOND. OUTREACH INITIATIVES INCLUDE THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, THE EDUCATION RENEWAL ZONE AND THE OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE. DISABILITY-RELATED OUTREACH AND SERVICES INCLUDE AN AUTISM SUPPORT PROGRAM AND PARTNERS FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES.



**TINY TUSKS**

[Tiny Tusks](#) Breastfeeding Support is a joint project of the School of Nursing and the U of A Athletic Department. In 2021, the program expanded to three permanent spaces in the football stadium. At every home game, the spaces are staffed by lactation consultants, nursing students and nursing faculty. It's a clean, private area to nurse, pump or change a baby's diaper. The spaces offer rocking chairs, changing tables, bottled water and engaging projects for older kids.



**BENJAMIN WRIGHT**

*A recent graduate of the Communication Sciences and Disorders program*

Midway through his freshman year at the U of A, [Benjamin's](#) grandmother had a stroke and needed help regaining her speech. He changed his major to Communication Sciences and Disorders and plans to work with adults who have communication disorders and swallowing issues because of a problem with the brain.

Benjamin also volunteers with the Arkansas chapter of Achilles International, which promotes inclusivity for people with disabilities through athletic programs and social connections. Benjamin helps guide athletes with disabilities, literally running alongside them for safety and to assist with any special equipment they might use.



**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Dr. Lewatis McNeal is our College's assistant dean of administration and diversity and director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. He said the office seeks to transform DEI beyond norms, stereotypes and expectations because the College is atypical. "Our goal is to synergize DEI within our college and prepare our students for success in the global world," he said. "The College's work on diversity is comprehensive, focusing on diversity in a multitude of ways which includes gender, race, disability status, sexual orientation, age, social class, language, and geographic location, as well as a world view on cultures and religions." Dr. McNeal's experience and expertise span both education and health.





### DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Dr. Linda Eilers, a literacy professor in our College, is a member of the Arkansas Affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library board. She's working with the organization to increase the number of families registered for the program. Children from birth to kindergarten are welcome to receive free books through the Imagination Library.

Only 26% of all preschoolers in the state participate. All 75 counties in Arkansas are now enrolling children, which is a good start, Dr. Eilers said. In this photo, Henry Lorah-Boles, 3, "reads" to his new sister, Dorothy Elizabeth, from *The Little Engine That Could*, one of the books he received through the program.



### ARKANSAS A+ SCHOOLS

The College has more than 25 education and health programs to benefit Northwest Arkansas and the state, including disability-related services and K-12 outreach. Among them is [Arkansas A+ Schools](#), a whole-school network with a mission of nurturing creativity in students by incorporating art into all subjects like literacy, math, science and history. Alyssa Wilson is the new executive director of the program, funded by the Windgate Foundation. A+ provides schools with ongoing professional development, support and research.



Photo by Danny Barger

### MISS ARKANSAS 2021

Whitney Williams, a senior in our Communication Sciences and Disorders program, won the title of Miss Arkansas 2021. A member of the Razorback Majorettes, she made history as the first baton twirler to be crowned Miss Arkansas. Whitney was scheduled to compete in the Miss America Pageant in December.

Whitney is studying to be a speech-language pathologist. Her platform is "Heart for the Arts," based on the non-profit organization she founded to help children who may be struggling in school.

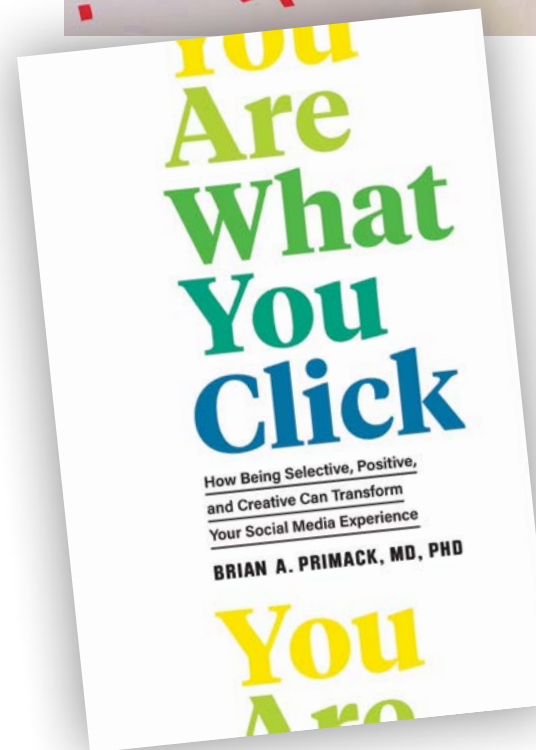


### EMMA HULBERT

*U of A cheerleader, nursing student and Bodenhamer fellow*

Emma delights in lifting nursing home residents' spirits as part of the squad's community involvement events.

"My grandfather and aunt both have multiple sclerosis, and I have witnessed them be taken care of by both exceptional and struggling nurses. I decided to pursue nursing to become a superior nurse, offering quality care to diverse patients. My understanding of the tremendous impact a nurse can have on patients and family members, coupled with my ability to speak Spanish, equips me to care for a wide variety of people."



### SOCIAL MEDIA MAKEOVER

Dean Primack's new book, *You Are What You Click*, published in fall 2021. It was quickly nominated by the Next Big Idea Club, one of the highest awards for non-fiction. Dr. Primack is internationally known for his research on how media and technology influence health. With wit, heart, and humor, his book offers creative and innovative advice on establishing intentional and healthy social media habits.



# CARING FOR STUDENT ATHLETES



### Athletic Training Leadership

Dr. Luzita Vela (right) was hired in 2021 to lead the Master of Athletic Training program. Dr. Liz Parke (left) was hired as a teaching assistant professor and clinical education coordinator. Drs. Vela and Parke joined Dr. Brendon McDermott, associate professor, in rounding out the program.

At the U of A, a team of certified athletic trainers provides state-of-the-art medical care for students participating in intercollegiate athletics. Researchers in our College's Department of Health, Human Performance and Recreation also help protect Razorback players. They share the latest scientific data about issues like hydration, concussion and strength training.

Students in the department's [Master of Athletic Training](#) program are also part of the athletes'

care team. They participate in the day-to-day operations that help their fellow students compete more safely while gaining hands-on training in all aspects of clinical athlete care.

Our graduates aren't limited to working in sports, though. The field of athletic training is growing and expanding to new sectors. Various alumni work in the performing arts, the military, industries, public safety, and occupational health.



### Scholarship Recipient

Athletic training student Ava Chiarelli received the 2021 Zachary Brian Hooper Endowed Award in Athletic Training scholarship. Ava is among the many students in our College who help make Razorback game days possible.



### A Helping Hand

Jon Melia, a U of A Master of Athletic Training graduate and current assistant athletic trainer for Razorback football, assists a player off the field to be evaluated.



### Taping Techniques

Dr. Vela works with master's students on taping techniques and how they're used to prevent, treat or manage injuries. She has been making a difference in the athletic training education community for many years and received the 2021 Bob & Lynn Caruthers Service Award from the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education.



## CARING THROUGH

# RESEARCH

### Teaming for Transition

Young adults with disabilities often struggle to transition from school to adult life. This can interfere with long-term employment, community involvement and overall independence.

An interdisciplinary group of College of Education and Health Professions faculty received a \$1,079,177 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to prepare professionals who can help. The “[Teaming for Transition, Preparing Youth in Transition to Community and Work](#)” faculty will select 31 scholars to complete their master’s degree — with tuition paid — in special education, vocational rehabilitation, or social work with a specialization in transition programs and services. These specialists will help support youth with disabilities and their families as they plan for the future.



### FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Samantha Middleton is one of eight students who received a [Noyce Scholarship](#) in 2021. The fellowships include paid in-state tuition and fees to support completing the 11-month Master of Arts in Teaching degree, leading to Arkansas teacher licensure. Fellows also receive a \$10,000 annual stipend for each of their first four years of teaching secondary math or science in a high-needs school district.

Drs. William F. McComas, Kim McComas, Laura Kent and Stephen Burgin, from our College, and Dr. Shannon Dingman, from the mathematics department in Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, developed the successful proposal for the teaching fellowship: Teacher Enhancement of Agency and Authenticity in Mathematics and Science (TEAAMS).

Samantha, who’s Native American, has a bachelor’s degree in botanical science and a minor in fisheries and wildlife science. During the pandemic last year, she volunteered to teach short lessons for elementary-age students via Zoom. She also worked as a substitute teacher at schools in Rogers and Fayetteville.

“I found out I was passionate about teaching,” she said. “This fellowship has opened the door for me to teach in schools that need the most support and to reach students who need the best teachers.”

She hopes to teach middle school science after earning her master’s degree in May 2022.

Applications are open for a second cohort to begin study in June 2022. The deadline is Feb. 15, 2022.

OUR FACULTY ARE INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN FOR THEIR SCHOLARLY WORK AND RESEARCH. IN FISCAL YEAR 2021, OUR COLLEGE RECEIVED 99 SPONSORED RESEARCH AWARDS TOTALING MORE THAN \$20.2 MILLION. THAT DOLLAR AMOUNT IS THE SECOND-HIGHEST ON CAMPUS, BEHIND THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING. THE COLLEGE HAS RECEIVED MORE THAN \$100 MILLION IN EXTERNAL GRANT FUNDING OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS.



### LAB DISCOVERY

The College’s various research labs allow faculty to study everything from sport concussion to aging to play therapy. Their discoveries help make people’s lives better and students have a hand in the process. Several new labs were added in 2021. New faculty member Kevin Murach created a lab to advance research on molecular muscle mass regulation. His focus is on preventing muscle mass loss with age and improving muscle performance in health and disease.

Dr. Abigail Schmitt’s new lab, Neuromechanics of Human Movement Laboratory (affectionately called “the MOVE lab”), focuses on how the control of movement changes when a person has a disease or injury that makes it difficult to walk. Her research helps people move in better or safer ways.

Another new lab, initiated by faculty members from two different programs, is helping people with limited speech. Dr. Elizabeth Lorah is an associate professor in special education and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Dr. Christine Holyfield is an assistant professor in our Communication Sciences and Disorders program and a speech-language pathologist. Students who work in the [Augmentative and Alternative Communication research lab](#) attain supervision hours toward Applied Behavior Analysis graduate certification. Speech-language pathology students get advanced training. All learn about a wide range of techniques to help with communication, including sign language, symbols, word boards, and speech-generating devices. Students are also included in research projects and are invited to develop their own. Master’s student Laura Jackson is pictured above working with 4-year-old Alaina.



[Project REACH](#), a federal grant program in our College, is helping meet the needs of a rapidly-growing English learner population in various Northwest Arkansas schools. In this photo, Sandra Chacon is teaching first-grade students at Westwood Elementary School in Springdale. She’s working toward a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education at the U of A.

The goal of REACH is to mentor bilingual, bicultural paraprofessionals



### NNAMDI EZIKE

*Ph.D. candidate, Educational Statistics and Research Methods program*

[Nnamdi](#) is the first student in our ESRM program to land an internship with Educational Testing Service, the nonprofit that develops and administers tests like Advanced Placement, the GRE, Praxis, and TOEFL. He’s currently collaborating with other ETS scientists on diagnostic rating systems. Their research will help improve the reliability of students’ scores on open-ended assessments such as writing prompts.

“Human raters who rate open-ended assessments are fallible despite training and calibration. Working with ETS this summer, I performed Monte Carlo simulations to evaluate different methods of adjudicating essays when raters disagree. Specifically, I explored the impact of four different adjudication methods in accurately determining students’ true scores.”

to earn their bachelor of science in education degrees as well as assist certified K-6 teachers to become ESL-endorsed (English as a Second Language) and have an opportunity to earn a TESOL graduate certificate (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) through a hybrid online program.

Dr. Diana Gonzales Worthen is the director of Project REACH and the principal investigator of the U.S. Department of Education grant.



# CARING ALUMNI

## TELL ME YOUR STORY

As an oncology and palliative care nurse for 25 years, alumna Dr. Heather Coats often saw patients' beliefs, preferences, and values being ignored as they moved through the healthcare system.

Doctors and nurses typically asked patients "How are you?" But they rarely got to the more humanizing "Who are you?" While working on her dissertation at the University of Arizona for a Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing degree, Heather stumbled upon a way to help change that.

Heather found that clinicians who hear patients' unique stories make better treatment decisions when those decisions are aligned with patients' beliefs, preferences, and values. It's important for both parties to remember that patients are not just the sum of their symptoms.



**TEACHER OF THE YEAR** Alumna [Xian Lu](#) connects with her middle school students at the diverse District of Columbia International School by learning what makes them unique, fostering their confidence, and teaching them her native Chinese language through the lens of social justice.

Her efforts were noticed on a larger scale in 2021 when she was named Teacher of the Year by the Greater Washington Association of Teachers of Foreign Language. In her fifth year of teaching at the D.C. school, Xian has started learning Spanish to better communicate with her students.

She graduated from our College's Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program in May 2015.

OUR ALUMNI IMPROVE THE LIVES OF PEOPLE EVERY DAY ACROSS ARKANSAS, THE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD. OUR COLLEGE'S GRADUATES TEACH CHILDREN FROM PRESCHOOL THROUGH ADULTHOOD, HELP DELIVER BABIES AND PROVIDE CARE AND COMFORT TO THE ELDERLY. THEY DIRECT RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS THAT BOOST HEALTH AND REJUVENATE THE SPIRIT, AND THEY HELP THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THE POWER OF SPEECH TO REGAIN IT.



Photo by Stephen Ironside

## NURSES CRUSHING COVID

Retired nurse and alumna Lori Mahler (center) felt helpless as the COVID-19 pandemic raged across Northwest Arkansas. When local pharmacies started receiving vaccines, she reached out to a few retired nurse friends and asked if they'd like to help her administer them. Soon, Lori was deploying over 100 active and retired nurses, as well as several doctors, to pharmacies, vaccine clinics, and schools across the region. She called the group "Nurses Crushing COVID." Volunteers, which included several other Eleanor Mann School of Nursing faculty and alumni, administered thousands of vaccine doses.

The volunteers were celebrated on May 18 at the Fayetteville Town Center.

Event sponsor Prewitt Mahler Tucker Private Wealth Management Group of Wells Fargo Advisors and the Wells Fargo Foundation also made a surprise announcement of a \$15,000 scholarship to the nursing school.

## HARTER'S HEROES

Special education teacher and alumna [Kristy Harter](#) is focused on one goal. "I want all people — no matter their abilities or disabilities — to feel loved, known, seen and heard. I want each of my students to recognize the superpowers they have within," she said.

That desire inspired the superhero-themed program in her classroom, Harter's Heroes. It's been so successful that Kristy and her Structured Learning Services team at McNair Middle School in Fayetteville won the 2021 "Team That Makes a Difference" award from the Arkansas Association of Middle Level Education.







## EMPOWERED

Interim Chancellor Charles Robinson stopped by the [EMPOWER](#) tailgate at a September Hogs game. It was hosted by the A.L. Chilton Foundation, represented by Ed and Bonnie Harding (left) and Larry and Patti Brown (right), all of Dallas. Alumni Bonnie and Patti were there to congratulate EMPOWER's first graduate, Nick Lange (center right). EMPOWER helps provide an inclusive learning environment on campus.



## Alumni Mentorships Through RazorLink

Our College is seeking health and education graduates to sign up for [RazorLink](#), a new mentoring platform that engages the U of A's network of alumni and friends in our students' professional development. The community is a place to network with students, alumni, faculty/staff, and other professionals.

Mentoring provides a connection back to the university, but the relationship can also offer employers valuable insights into what they can expect as new generations move into the workforce.

To join the RazorLink community, visit [razorlink.arkansasalumni.org](http://razorlink.arkansasalumni.org). Alumni may also reach out to Madelyn Jones, our new director of employer relations, at [smj041@uark.edu](mailto:smj041@uark.edu) or 479-575-8636.

## WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?

Alumna [Afton Schleiff](#), assistant principal at Central Junior High in Springdale, was selected in 2021 to participate in the "Educator's Neighborhood" — an international cohort inspired by the life and work of Fred Rogers. After learning that he kept a collage of his childhood photos in the room where he wrote "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" scripts, Afton

embraced his approach. She placed a photo of herself as an eighth-grader on her desk at the junior high. "I believe the collage inspired him to remember the feelings of childhood," she said. "I placed my own teenage photo on my desk to remind me of the feelings of adolescence. I look at it before I speak with a student."



A graduate of our College's Master of Arts in Teaching program in 2005, Afton is back in class now, earning a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. Her degree emphasis is on literacy, adolescent, and social-emotional learning. This Mister Rogers quote guides her interactions with friends, family and students every day: "Love is at the root of everything. All learning. All parenting. All relationships. Love, or the lack of it."



## RHYTHM & SHOES

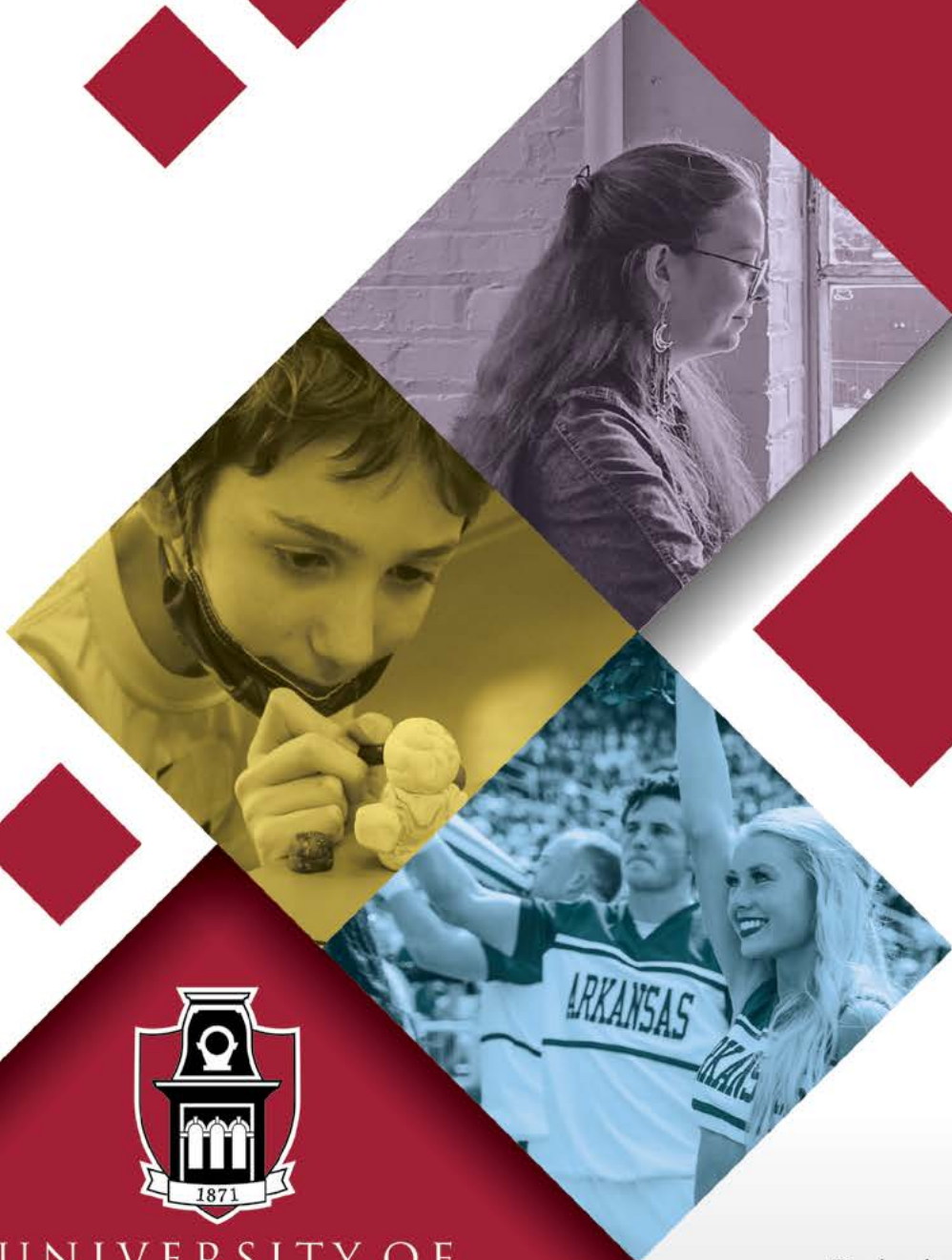
After suffering through anorexia and bulimia in high school, alumna [Tobey McCutcheon](#) wanted to pursue a career that allowed her to help young girls with their health and fitness goals — while also addressing low self-esteem and poor body image. She opened a dance studio after graduating from the U of A in 1995. In 2015, Tobey sold Rhythm & Shoes to one of her dance teachers. She still teaches in the studio, though. Seeing her former students become dance teachers themselves is rewarding. She's confident that her life lessons will continue to be taught alongside the dance moves.





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