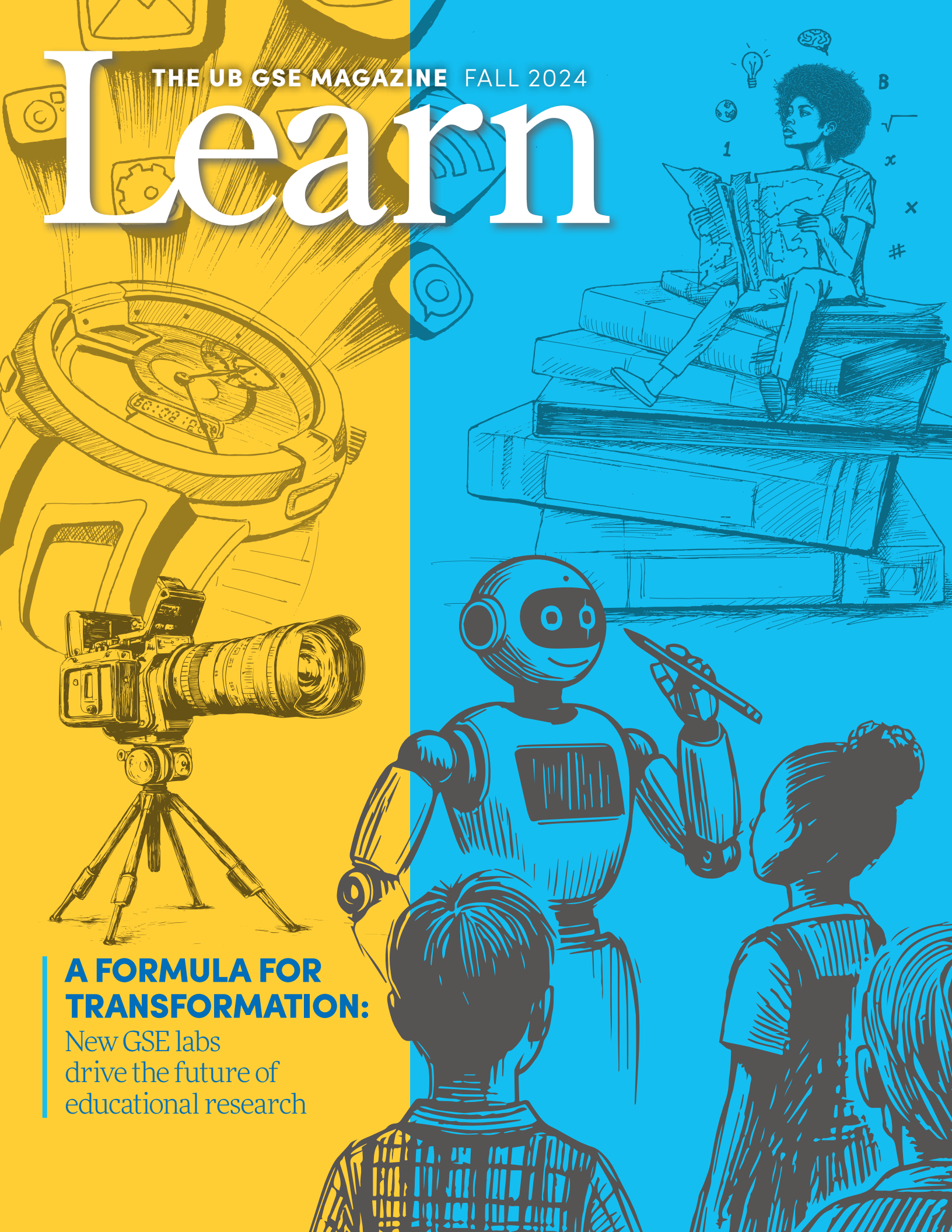


THE UB GSE MAGAZINE FALL 2024

# Learn



## A FORMULA FOR TRANSFORMATION:

New GSE labs drive the future of educational research



FALL 2024 • ISSUE 9

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



10

COVER STORY

**A formula for transformation:  
New GSE labs drive the future of educational research**

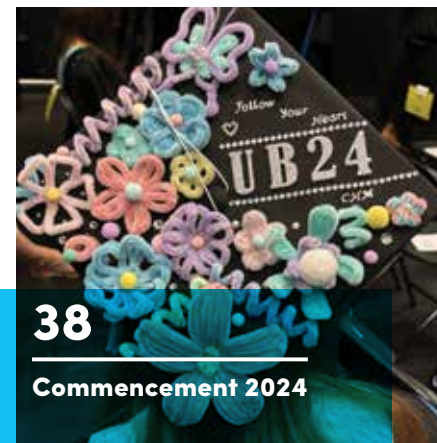
## DEPARTMENTS

- 3 Ed Artifact** Before the Cloud, there was the floppy disk
- 8 Office Hours** Meet SUNY Distinguished Professor Amanda Nickerson
- 39 Bulletin Board** School news in brief
- 46 Roaming the Halls** PhD student Courtney Copeland has a passion for community, a dedication to serving and a mission to share the journey
- 51 Scene on Social** Introducing Ed, the newest member of the GSE family



30

**Fellowships & Scholarships**



38

**Commencement 2024**

## 6 Book Stacks

Publications by GSE authors

## 18 Q&A

Third-year PhD student Marianne Lagutaine addresses the challenges of flexible thinking, and people's ability to maintain an open mind

## 20 Welcome to GSE

GSE welcomed six new faculty members this fall

## 22 New Grants Power Innovation

Eleven GSE researchers recently awarded prestigious grants

## 23 Teaching a Passion for UB Fulbright Recipient

Alum Leah Cabarga receives Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to teach English at the University of Montenegro

## 24 'Undocujoy'

UB professor highlights higher ed experiences of undocumented students

## 26 Gifts of Giving

Gregory J. Dimitriadis' legacy lives on through endowed professorship

## 28 Student Perspective

UB Bulls football receiver Taji Johnson shares his path from collegiate athlete to aspiring sports psychologist

## 33 Advancing Climate Education

GSE's Alexa Schindel works to integrate climate education for all students across New York State

## 37 Trajectory

Alum Jelicia Jimenez empowers Black communities through literacy by bringing bookshelves to barbershops

## 44 Alum Seeks Endangered African Texts

Dorothy Woodson, MS '76, dedicates her career to preserving written works in Indigenous African languages threatened by globalization

## 47 Class Notes

Updates from our alums

## 49 In Memoriam

## ED ARTIFACT

# Anything but a flop: Before the Cloud, there was the floppy disk

BY NICOLE MEHLMAN-DAVIDOW

Storing data and documents safely has been a must since the invention of the computer. Before the Cloud, there was the flash drive, and well before that, there was the floppy disk. Do not let its silly name fool you; this device was the best way to transfer data long before its more compact and convenient successors.

According to howstuffworks.com, the floppy disk was invented by Alan Shugart, who worked at IBM, in 1967. The disks were dubbed "floppy" because the packaging was a flexible plastic envelope. The disk is made from a thin piece of plastic coated with a magnetic material on both sides. Its purpose is to place data on that circular piece of metal-coated plastic. Originally the floppy disk measured eight inches, and it gradually shrank as its popularity grew.

More than five billion floppy disks were sold annually at their peak in the mid-1990s, according to ibm.com. Software companies were at the forefront with using floppy disks because they could write programs, put them on the disks and sell them. Users were no longer tied to a single computer because they could transfer data easily between machines.

The floppy disk began to phase out of use as data grew in size and scope. It has since been replaced by other data-storage methods that are more compact and have a greater capacity. Along came CDs, then USB flash drives and later memory cards, and as of late, Cloud storage.

The use of the floppy disk may have gradually tapered off, but it is still highly symbolic, representing the early days of computing.





Dear GSE Alumni and Friends,

As I write this, the fall semester is already underway and the energy on campus is unmistakable, thanks in part to the beautiful fall weather in Western New York. This semester kicked off with high-energy orientations and gatherings. I had the pleasure of welcoming our new students during the GSE orientation in August. The group is incredibly diverse and eager to pursue degrees across our many programs. I also welcomed five new postdoctoral scholars to GSE. They bring a wide range of talent and research interests, and I look forward to seeing where their work leads.

In this issue, you'll meet our new faculty, who are addressing critical research questions across a wide range of disciplines.

We also introduce our Labs for Transformation, a series of four community-engaged research projects in which GSE has made significant investments. These projects reflect our commitment to ensuring that partnerships are genuine, collaborative and mutually beneficial.

You'll find highlights of newly published books by our faculty, including "Transforming School Food Politics Around the World" by Dr. Sarah A. Robert, a work gaining significant attention in academic circles.

In Office Hours, you will learn more about Dr. Amanda Nickerson, director of the Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention, who has recently been named a SUNY Distinguished Professor.

We take special pride in our alumni, particularly when they launch groundbreaking initiatives. Jelicia Jimenez, who earned her master's degree in information and library science in 2022, has done just that with her Black Boys Read Too program. We are incredibly proud of her achievements.

This edition also honors the memory of two GSE pillars: Dr. Michael Kibby, an extraordinarily influential professor of literacy, who passed away this spring and Mrs. Chandra Murphy, assistant to the dean, who died suddenly in April.

We are also grateful to the Dimitriadis family for their generous gift in honor of former faculty member Dr. Greg Dimitriadis. Their gift will establish an endowed professorship, ensuring Dr. Dimitriadis' student-centered values live on.

As we begin this academic year, I want to remind you that it will be our last in Baldy Hall. GSE's move to South Campus is set for the end of this academic year, and we look forward to welcoming you to Foster Hall next fall.

Be well and stay in touch.

Suzanne

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT

A pledge to peaceably share and care for North America's five Great Lakes

We would like to acknowledge the land on which the University at Buffalo operates, which is the territory of the Seneca Nation, a member of the Haudenosaunee/Six Nations Confederacy. This territory is covered by The Dish with One Spoon Treaty of Peace and Friendship, a pledge to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. It is also covered by the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, between the United States Government and the Six Nations Confederacy, which further affirmed Haudenosaunee land rights and sovereignty in the State of New York. Today, this region is still the home to the Haudenosaunee people, and we are grateful for the opportunity to live, work and share ideas in this territory.



"Great Lakes, No Clouds" Image of North America's five Great Lakes courtesy of US NASA Earth Observatory.

## GSE in the News

Headlines from stories that featured our faculty and students

Megan Iantosca, associate professor of educational leadership and policy, co-authored an article in **DIVERSE EDUCATION** titled "On Census Race/Ethnicity Data Collection."

Tiffany Karalis Noel, clinical assistant professor of learning and instruction, wrote a column for **INSIDE HIGHER ED** titled "What if We Valued Teachers as Much as Athletes."

**SPECTRUM NEWS 1** quoted Noemi Waight, associate professor of learning and instruction, in a story titled "Frontier CSD Reminds Kids to Keep Looking Up After Eclipse."

**PHYS.ORG** published a study by Jaekyung Lee, professor of counseling, school and educational psychology, titled "Study Examines Educational and Career Disparities Among Minoritized Students."

**WIVB-TV** quoted Nathan Daun-Barnett, associate professor of educational leadership and policy, in a story titled "Regents Exams Could Be a Thing of the Past for Students."

**PRNEWswire, ASSOCIATED PRESS AND YAHOO!FINANCE** published a study authored by Catherine Cook-Cottone, professor of counseling, school and educational psychology, titled "New Study Finds Over 60 Cases of Assisted Suicide in Patients with Eating Disorders, with Little Oversight."

**WBEN-AM** quoted Amanda Nickerson, SUNY Distinguished Professor of counseling, school and educational psychology, in a story titled "How to Talk to Kids about the 2024 Presidential Election."

Teacher Residency Program alumnus Gary Crump was featured in an article in **THE NEW YORK POST** titled "Those Who Can, Teach".



# BOOK STACKS

Books and chapters published by members of the UB GSE community



“Mister Turkey’s Song” was written by GSE alum Joyce Maguda, MLS ’82. It was published independently in September 2023.



“Transforming School Food Politics around the World” was co-edited by Sarah A. Robert, PhD, an associate professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction. It was published by the MIT Press in May 2024.



“Trauma-Informed and Trauma-Responsive Yoga Teaching” was co-written by Catherine Cook-Cottone, PhD, a professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology. It was published by Singing Dragon Press in June 2024.



“Healing While Studying: Reflections and Strategies for Healing, Coping, and Liberation of Graduate Students of Minoritized Identities” was edited by Richard D. Williams, a PhD student in the Department of Learning and Instruction, and Arthur A. Schomburg Fellow. It was published by Information Age Publishing in February 2024.



“Culturally Responsive Instructional Supervision: Leadership for Equitable and Emancipatory Outcomes” was co-written by Ian Mette, PhD, an associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. It was published by the Teachers College Press in June 2024.



**“Good Science” carving:** Nickerson and colleagues Lyndsay Jenkins and Stephanie Fredrick were worried about a finding from one of their studies that might be misperceived. “We need to just do good science,” Nickerson concluded. Hearing about the comment, Jenkins’ husband, a woodworker, went out to his garage and made placards for the group to preserve this guiding principle.

**Citation:** Nickerson received this certificate of appreciation from the U.S. Secret Service for speaking at the Safe Schools Initiative Seminar presented by the Erie County Law Enforcement Foundation.

**Badge:** Nickerson collects souvenirs of her professional conference attendance, including this badge from the 2019 World Anti-Bullying Forum in Dublin.

**Kids’ notes:** Following a presentation at an area school, Nickerson received these heartfelt notes from children who expressed themselves simply and memorably.

**Gratitude jar:** Alberti Center team members express written appreciation for acts small and large by placing cards in this container.

**RESEARCH AREAS**

- School Crisis Prevention and Intervention
- Bullying
- School Safety
- Bystander Intervention

(Photo/ Stephen Gabris, Onion Studio, Inc.)

# Office Hours with Amanda Nickerson

**Indefatigable researcher devoted to preventing bullying abuse**

BY ANN WHITCHER GENTZKE

Since arriving at UB in 2011 to head the Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention, Amanda Nickerson has been a determined researcher of bullying in K-12 settings and beyond. Recently promoted to SUNY Distinguished Professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, Nickerson has attracted local and national media attention for her investigations of school bullying, a persistent problem affecting an estimated 20% of American youth.

Although strides have been made in understanding bullying prevention, the complexities of the issue remain a conundrum. “Most of the work at this point has been done at a universal prevention level,” Nickerson explained. “What do we do to prevent the bullying from happening? Schools take many different approaches to do this, and we have legislation that mandates certain things. But we know that some of these universal approaches are not as effective as they could be.”

Nickerson became interested in anti-bullying research while at the University of South Carolina, where she obtained her doctorate. “Bullying is so common,” she said. “So many people are affected by it, and the effects are long-lasting. I wanted to better understand why and how it happens, and probably more importantly, how we can prevent it and intervene when it happens.”

To address these perplexities, Nickerson is pursuing research on several fronts. She is principal investigator of a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security awarded to the Alberti Center to build youth resiliency and implement bystander intervention training. She’s also working on a book

to provide guidance to parents and educators on cyberbullying and how to help youth navigate digital technology and social media with Stephanie Fredrick, associate professor of counseling, school and educational psychology, and associate director of the Alberti Center, and two other colleagues.

She has also been studying empathy as a way to prevent school bullying. In a paper published in *Psychology of Violence*, led by Dylan Harrison, a PhD student in GSE’s Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, and including several other authors, Nickerson and her team asked why some bullying victims go on to become bullies themselves, while other victims “defend,” or seek to mitigate or counter, the perpetrators’ bullying actions. The researchers found that “as affective empathy increased, the relationship between victimization and perpetration became less pronounced, and the relationship between victimization and defending became more pronounced.”

While pursuing her UB career, Nickerson has watched her own children grow to adulthood. She and her husband, Brian Nishiyama, are proud parents to Ethan, 24, a 2022 UB graduate who works for Tesla in Buffalo; and Alex, 19, a second-year computer science major at UB and member of the Honors College. She enjoys travel, gardening, music, exercise, and spending time with family and friends.

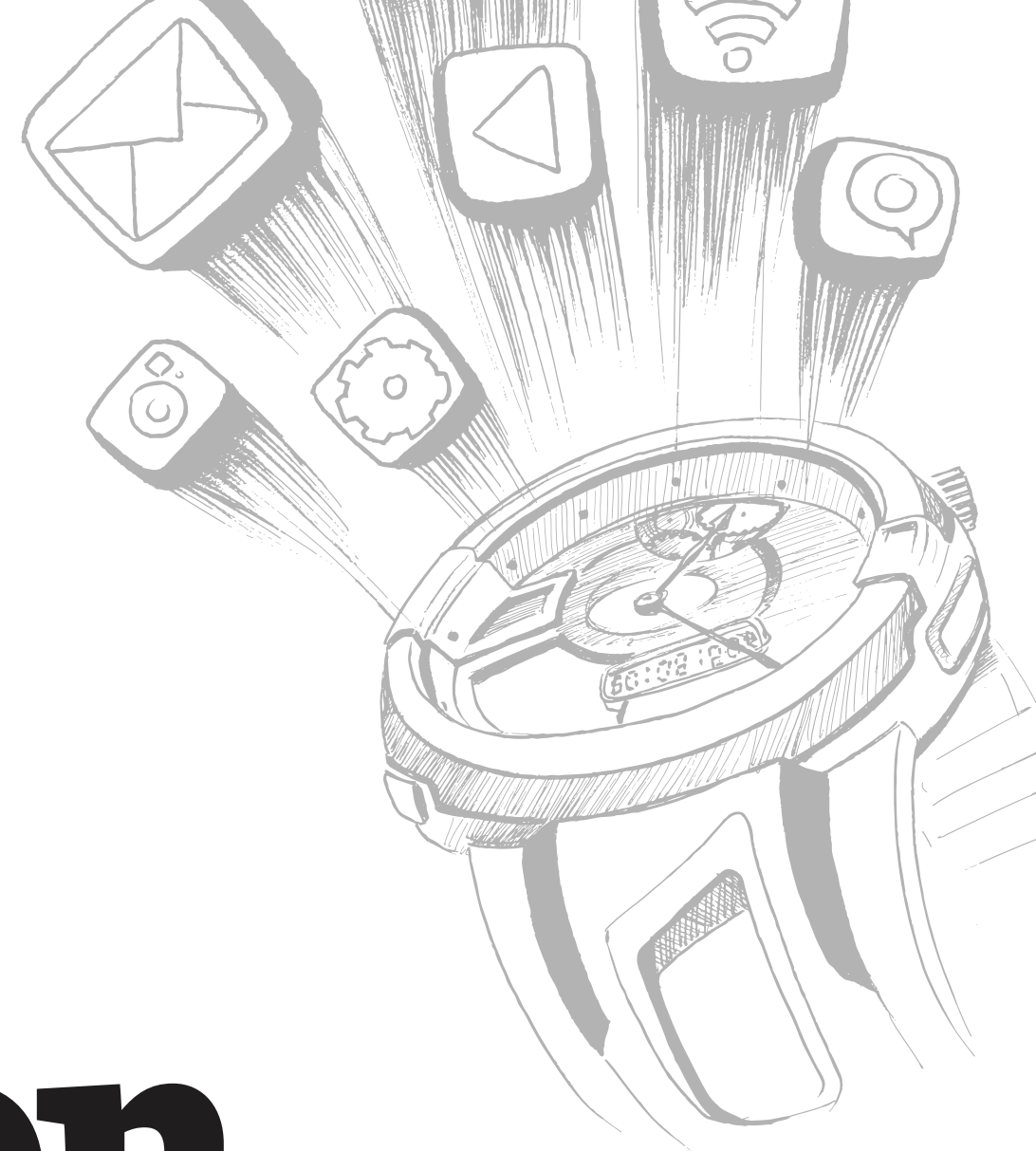
In other words, it’s a full life for this inveterate investigator of bullying abuse, who wants nothing more than to reduce its incidence and help promote the mental health of youth.

COVER STORY:

# A formula for transformation.

New GSE labs drive the future of educational research

BY DANIELLE LEGARE AND NICOLE MEHLMAN-DAVIDOW



**W**hat sparks a revolution in education? For X. Christine Wang, GSE professor of learning and instruction and senior associate dean for interdisciplinary research, it's the courage to pursue bold, untested ideas that could redefine the future.

"It's about exploring high-risk, future-facing solutions," according to Wang.

That's exactly what Wang and four other GSE researchers aimed to do in January 2024 when the school launched four new research labs. Each lab's mission is centered on pushing the boundaries of equity-focused educational research, tackling real-world problems and delivering community-driven solutions. The labs mark the beginning of a new chapter of exploration at GSE and in the field of education.

Ian Mette, GSE associate professor of educational leadership and policy, was among the faculty members eager to contribute to this new chapter. Building on his earlier research, which led to several successful publications, Mette was determined to establish his Culturally Responsive Instructional Supervision Practices (CRISP) lab as a space to examine how theoretical ideas can evolve and be applied in real-world settings.

"We have these ideas and theories that we know are important and useful for creating more equitable outcomes for all students," Mette explained. "But the real work begins when we ask, 'How do we operationalize them? How do we help this theory evolve over time so that we understand how this works in practice?' There's nothing so useful as a good theory, but the theory needs to be able to transition and translate into practice."

“We’re authentically engaging with communities, recognizing that the problems we think exist may not be the ones that truly matter to them.”

— Suzanne Rosenblith,  
GSE Dean

## Bridging theory and practice: A new vision for educational research

Mette’s aspirations echo the broader vision within GSE’s leadership. Recognizing the need to bridge theory and practice, GSE Dean Suzanne Rosenblith spearheaded the Labs for Equity-Oriented Transformative Research Initiative to establish labs that would apply research findings in real-world settings.

Rosenblith invited faculty to submit proposals to establish labs that would tackle some of the most pressing issues in education through an equity lens. The initiative provided initial funding to support bold, transformative research ideas, ensuring that the labs had the resources to get started and make an immediate impact. The response was enthusiastic, with Mette and several other faculty members across departments eager to contribute to the transformative vision.

“A lot of people talk about community-engaged scholarship and research-practice partnerships, but too often, it’s just lip service,” Rosenblith explained. “What we’re doing here is different. We’re authentically engaging with communities, recognizing that the problems we think exist may not be the ones that truly matter to them. This authentic engagement is not just a part of our mission—it’s at the heart of it.”

From Rosenblith’s perspective, the four labs are about more than research—they’re about generating knowledge that makes a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and communities.

This impact extends to GSE’s students, who also are engaged in the innovative work. Yaxin (Grace) Xing, a PhD student involved in the PlayfulAI Learning and Design Lab, shared: “[The projects I’m working on] help me dive deeper into AI in education and enjoy the process. It’s not just a job for me; it’s more about my passion.”

As a result of the initiative, faculty and students alike are advancing the school’s mission and pioneering new methods of inquiry and solutions that have the potential to make a lasting impact.

“I want to support and signal to our faculty that their cutting-edge, forward-thinking work is valued,” said Rosenblith. “It’s important that we invest both materially and symbolically in these innovative efforts.”

Step into the labs that are already driving change through innovative research and community partnerships, paving the way for revolutionary educational practices and policies.

## PlayfulAI Learning and Design Lab

As AI continues to reshape various sectors, GSE’s PlayfulAI Learning and Design Lab is leading efforts to harness AI’s transformative potential in early childhood education (ECE). Led by **X. Christine Wang**, the lab is dedicated to developing responsible, effective and equitable AI learning tools for young children ages 5 to 8.

Wang envisions the lab as a hub for innovation in AI literacies and child-centered AI design.

“We have a three-pronged approach,” Wang explained. “First, we look at foundational research to understand children’s experiences with AI tools. The second part involves supporting AI literacy by developing tools that help children learn about and engage with AI. Finally, the third piece is where we engage children in the actual design of AI tools.”

“It’s essential that children are actively involved in this process because they bring perspectives that we might not consider. For example, we’re exploring collaboration

thought about, and that could be a springboard to innovative AI tools for their learning, play and social-emotional development.”

The PlayfulAI Learning and Design Lab’s team is comprised of experts in ECE, AI and computing education. It collaborates with community partners to generate AI-powered innovations that support child development and enhance early education.

Grace Xing, a doctoral student in the Department of Learning and Instruction, is one of those experts. For Xing and other students involved, this lab offers a unique opportunity to delve deeply into their research interests.

“We feel that AI is an emergent topic, particularly as AI technology becomes more prevalent in our daily lives,” she said. “It’s critical for educators to know how they should introduce AI in early childhood education to align with children’s developmental milestones. That’s why we wanted to start this lab,” she said.

“From my personal perspective, I found this project to be very fascinating and promising, overlapping a lot with my own interests.”

Reflecting on the lab’s mission, Wang explained that its work goes beyond simply observing children’s interactions with AI. Discussions within the lab have focused on how AI can be thoughtfully introduced to young learners while addressing broader societal and ethical implications. For Wang, the goal is to use those insights from children as a foundation for addressing significant and timely challenges that both the research community and society at large must confront.

The PlayfulAI Lab’s work extends beyond research and tool development. Wang and her team also are focused on guiding educators, caregivers and policymakers to support and prepare young children for an AI-driven future.

“Our work isn’t just about creating tools,” Wang said. “It’s about equipping those who interact with young children to navigate and thrive in a world increasingly shaped by AI.”

“This lab is an opportunity to push forward research that could have a significant impact on early childhood education,” she said.

“We need to think about young learners as active innovators for the future.”

— X. Christine Wang

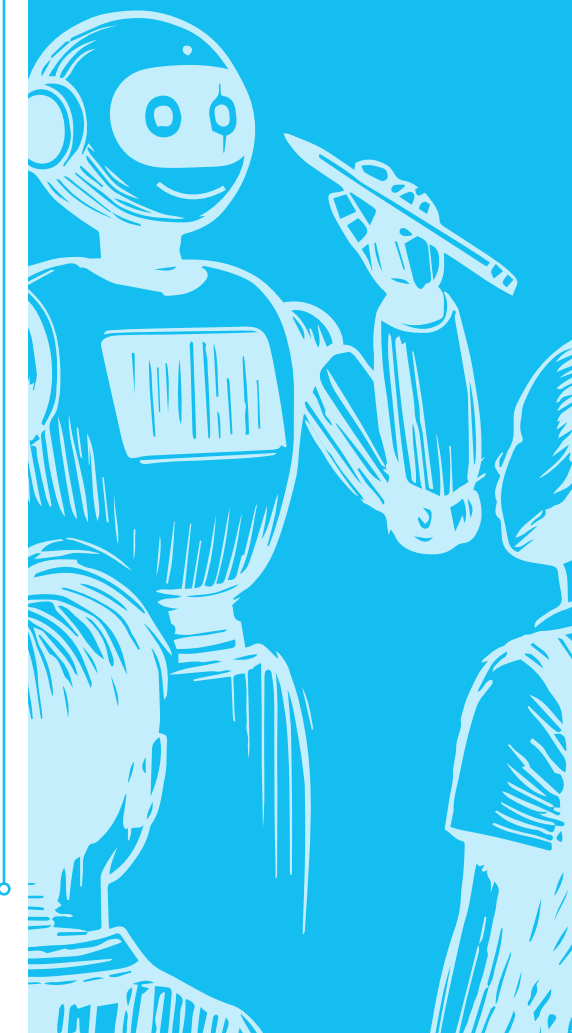
potential with Fisher-Price to create AI tools that actively involve kids in the design process.”

Wang emphasized the lab’s focus on ensuring that young learners are not just passive users, but active participants in shaping the technologies of the future.

“Ultimately, our goal is to study not just the parents and teachers, but to involve the kids themselves. We need to think about young learners as active innovators for the future. They could come up with ideas we never



X. Christine Wang



## The BLESS Co/Lab

In a world where systemic AntiBlackness remains entrenched within educational systems, the Black Liberation in Education, Schools and Society (BLESS) Co/Lab is building on the work of scholars, educators and Black communities invested in the well-being of Black people. Co-directed by **Gwendolyn Baxley**, assistant professor in GSE's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, the BLESS Co/Lab is dedicated to advancing Black liberation in education.

The BLESS Co/Lab encompasses an interdisciplinary team, also co-directed by Darnese Daniels, senior director of academic support and culturally responsive and sustaining education at the New York City Department of Education and proud founder of her educational consulting firm Lifting Light and Love LLC; Ja'Dell Davis, PhD, researcher and evaluator at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Jacque Forbes, PhD, assistant professor of educational studies and contributing faculty in Africana studies at Dickinson College; Marius A. Jackson, digital designer; and Gloria Rosario-Wallace, EdD, executive director for strategy and implementation at New York City Public Schools and adjunct professor for the National Aspiring Principal Fellowship through New Leaders and the Bank Street Graduate School of Education.

Leading together, they are committed to transforming and liberating spaces and systems that already exist, as well as creating

spaces that support Black youth, their families, and the communities and schools that nurture them.

"The BLESS Co/Lab is a space where we're leveraging the power of our research and story-telling to think about Black liberation for young folks within our schools," explained Baxley.

"But it's also about Black families, Black practitioners and Black youth workers who support the affirmation and well-being of Black youth... The collective is for folks who are interested in centering Black freedom, Black joy and Black healing."

BLESS's mission is to establish a collaborative network dedicated to identifying and dismantling the deeply ingrained system of institutional AntiBlackness. Guided by principles of community knowledge, consciousness-raising and coalition building, the team generates, shares and uses knowledge as a tool for action, aiming to reduce harm to Black students and advocate for liberatory practices and policies.

"I think of our work as an alternative to how research is traditionally conducted—challenging who gets prioritized, what philosophies are valued and how Black folks in the education system are engaged," said Forbes.

A cornerstone of the lab's current research project, "The Education of Black Youth Amid Covid and Beyond," is its community dinners, which provide safe spaces for fostering dialogue and building coalitions. These gatherings have enriched the lab's research and led to actionable strategies that address

the needs of Black youth and their communities.

"It's a way to center Black knowledge and thought, to uplift the voices of Black families, practitioners and youth, and to foster connections that drive action," Baxley explained.

In addition to these dinners, the lab hosts retreats focused on healing and restoration for Black women community leaders, reinforcing its commitment to supporting those who carry the emotional weight of caring for others.

The lab also develops accessible forms of knowledge dissemination through publications and creative mediums like storyboards and podcasts, sharing its findings with the broader community in ways that resonate beyond academia. Some of BLESS Co/Lab's work has been published in NYU Voices in Urban Education.

Above all else, the lab members are devoted to facilitating transformative change in the community. "Our work is non-hierarchical. We all are contributing meaningfully in different ways, whether that's through the dinners, the writing or other visioning aspects of the work," said Baxley.

"It is a mutually beneficial partnership, where, as a researcher in academia, I'm not extracting and then leaving from the community in which I am alongside. Instead, it's asking, 'How are we collectively working together to think about this important idea of Black liberation, and how are we fighting for Black liberation moving forward as a collective?'"

## Culturally Responsive Instructional Supervision Practices (CRISP) Lab

As schools continue to see their student populations become more diverse, it's imperative that educators grow their knowledge of culturally relevant teaching practices and identify their own biases as they interact with students.

**Ian Mette** has made it his mission to research the best practices to help teachers center socio-cultural identities and students' lived experiences rather than their own.

"Culturally responsive instructional supervision takes an immense amount of work that requires educators to be critically conscious about their own privileged

textbook, "Culturally Responsive Instructional Supervision Leadership for Equitable and Emancipatory Outcomes," that articulate the best ways to bring theory into practice.

CRISP's mission is to support and create innovative professional development and training for PK-12 educators to assess, implement and establish cultural competencies through AI collaboration and feedback. The goal is to inform leadership development and organizational decisions, while improving team dynamics to ensure the implementation of culturally responsive instruction.

Mette and his colleagues are conducting a study in which their subjects—educators from the Western New York community—wear devices to measure their physical reactions to stimuli.

"We want to know what happens to the human body physiologically when you engage in conversations about race, ethnicity, language, gender and identity orientation," he said. "By measuring variables like skin conductance, heart rate variability and oxygen saturation when someone is engaging in cultural-based discussion, we want to understand what's happening internally so that we can have better conversations that are more natural and comfortable for educators after they go through professional development based around our culturally responsive model."

CRISP has found its lab participants through Mette's connections with local school districts. Data collection will begin this fall and continue through next spring.

"We'd like to submit this data as part of our pitch for a large National Science Foundation grant," said Mette. "Moving forward, we want to bring culturally responsive practices to educators, but we also want their feedback so we can continue to improve this model."

Through its data collection, the CRISP lab will be studying how AI can support the development of equity-oriented educational leadership and inform communication patterns regarding classroom instruction that can revolutionize how practitioners, policymakers and researchers work together to generate real solutions for a more equitable and just education system.

"The hope is we're able to measure and show that if you have less physiological stimulation when engaging in culturally responsive discussions and you can keep your body calm that you can engage in a more open reflection about improving your practices," explained Mette. "We want educators to support students with different identities and lived experiences that they bring with them to the classroom."

.....  
"This framework requires that teachers understand the lived experiences of students and that they care for them and use those as assets to leverage learning within the classroom." — Ian Mette  
.....

identities," explained Mette. "This framework requires that teachers understand the lived experiences of students and that they care for them and use those as assets to leverage learning within the classroom."

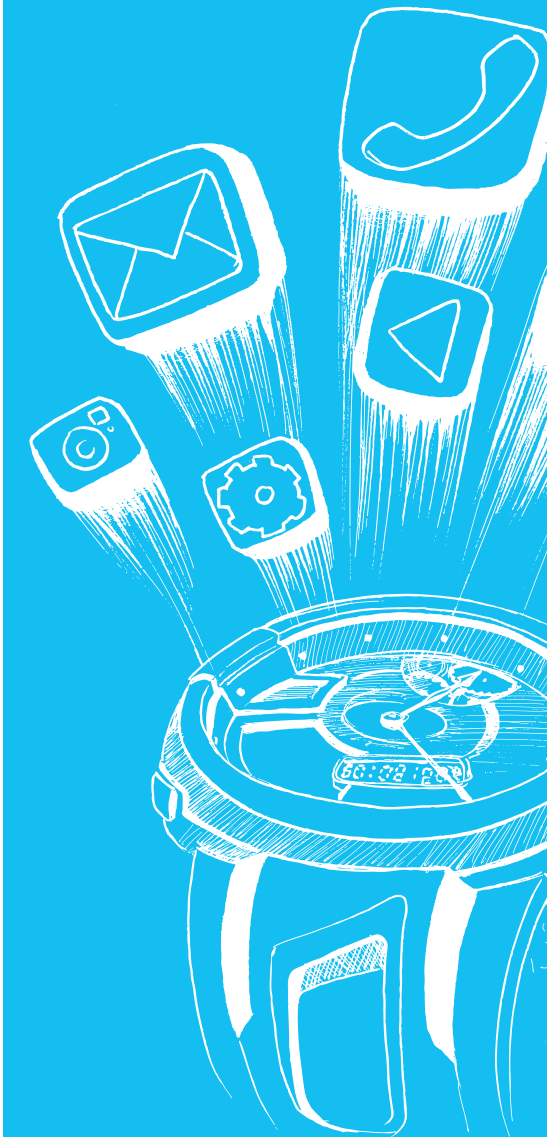
The Culturally Responsive Instructional Supervision Practices (CRISP) lab was born out of years of collaboration between Mette and his colleagues from across the country.

Mette has developed and expanded upon the framework of culturally responsive instructional supervision alongside Dwayne Ray Cormier, PhD, and Yanira Oliveras, PhD. Cormier, a long-time educator, recently became the founder and CEO of Culturally Responsive Solutions, LLC. Oliveras is an associate professor in the School of Education at the University of Texas at Tyler.

Their collaboration has produced a book, "Making a Difference: Instructional Leadership That Drives Self-Reflection and Values the Expertise of Teachers," and a



**Ian Mette**



**Gwendolyn Baxley**

.....  
"The collective is for folks who are interested in centering Black freedom, Black joy and Black healing." — Gwendolyn Baxley  
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## Visualizing Brilliance for Equity in STEAM with Video Lab (ViBES with Video)

The importance of science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) related learning has been highlighted in school districts throughout the U.S., and GSE has been at the forefront of innovation in STEAM education. The mission to make STEAM more inclusive is at the core of the Visualizing Brilliance for Equity in STEAM with Video Lab (ViBES with Video). ViBES is led by **Naomi Thompson** and **Virginia Flood**, assistant professors in GSE's Department of Learning and Instruction. GSE faculty members X. Christine Wang; Noemi Waight, associate professor of learning and instruction; and Saguna Shankar, assistant professor of information science, also are founding members. Using video recording technologies, the lab looks to champion equity and social justice in STEAM education.

"The traditional ways of studying how people learn STEAM subjects have often involved pen and paper assessments and limited ways of capturing information about learning. Naomi and I are trying to bring people together and use innovative new forms of video recording technology to capture learning," explained Flood.

"Our goal is to research innovative new ways to record learning in understudied settings. For example, joining science students at a riverbed for an ecology project and capturing

collaboration and teamwork with drone video." The core mission of ViBES with Video is to rethink how learning is studied and understood. Flood and Thompson believe traditional methods often fall short by focusing on decontextualized, individualistic perspectives.

"Some of the more traditional ways of capturing and learning don't always allow everybody's brilliance and knowledge and ways of thinking to be visible or to be seen or measured," said Thompson. "It's about building on folks' assets and trying to understand what are the types of learning

**"Naomi and I are trying to bring people together and use innovative new forms of video recording technology to capture learning." — Virginia Flood**

that we've been missing with previous methods, and how can we interpret visual cues into factual data and themes."

In contrast, the ViBES Lab aims to amplify the voices of racially, linguistically and culturally diverse learners, capturing

the dynamic and situated nature of their educational experiences.

"We'd like to invite different stakeholders and community members into our meetings and workshops, and we want to think more broadly about where STEM learning takes place," said Thompson. "For example, in partnership with Gabrielle Graham from the Buffalo Museum of Science and Jay Barber from the English Department here at UB, we're video recording a workshop that we're leading that blends together creative writing and science."

This lab will be one of the first to develop a culturally responsive and sustaining asset-based analytic framework for video research, created in partnership with the communities participating in the study. This collaborative approach enhances the research process and ensures that the insights gained are deeply rooted in real-world contexts.

"A big goal of ours is to gather different experts from a wide variety of departments and use their knowledge and experience in the space to build new methodological frameworks for being able to assess and understand learning in these authentic ways," said Thompson.

"A great example we're working on right now is collaborating with Saguna Shankar from the Department of Information Science. She's helping us think about collecting video data, and she's an expert in data privacy and how people care for data," added Flood.

"This is something we had not originally thought about, but because we work with a

**"Some of the more traditional ways of capturing and learning don't always allow everybody's brilliance and knowledge and ways of thinking to be visible or to be seen or measured." — Naomi Thompson**

diverse group of faculty in GSE, we were able to tap her expertise," continued Thompson.

As for the future, the ViBES with Video Lab is committed to expanding its technological and methodological capabilities. By training new researchers in these innovative approaches and securing external funding, the lab will support a vibrant portfolio of projects that promise to drive lasting change in STEAM education.

"A big mission of ours is to involve doctoral and master's graduate students and apprentice them in this work," said Flood. "We have started to develop a PhD-level class in this type of research that will be hands-on learning to send new scholars into the field with this expertise as well."

**“It’s what our mission is about—we want to make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities.”**

— Suzanne Rosenblith,  
GSE Dean

## Looking forward

As the labs approach their first anniversary, the impact of their work is already beginning to take shape.

For Wang, the progress made so far is just the beginning of what these innovative spaces can achieve.

"I really feel that this group of labs represents our research innovation across all departments. With this heavy investment in exciting, future-facing solutions, we are positioning ourselves well to move our research agenda forward and harness the potential of these innovation opportunities, including grants in areas like AI," she said.

Wang's sense of enthusiasm and anticipation is shared by Rosenblith, who is eager to see how these early efforts will translate into tangible outcomes. "I'm excited to hear about the results, and as we reach the one-year mark in January, we'll see what has materialized," she said.

"The researchers are all really trying to move a needle, and they've all identified important needs," Rosenblith added.

"I would love to see all of them be really effective in this seed round, work through some of the issues, scale the work and make real differences. It's what our mission is about—we want to make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities. The work has the potential to do that, and I only want them to be successful."



**Naomi Thompson**



**Virginia Flood**



# Q&A



## For therapists (and the rest of us): flexibility is a superpower Marianne Lagutaine's approach embraces nonbinary thinking

BY JANA EISENBERG

An article published earlier this year by Marianne Lagutaine, a third-year PhD student in counseling psychology in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, addressed the challenges of flexible thinking, and people's ability to maintain an open mind. The piece was written for the Society of Counseling Psychologist's website, and thus aimed at practitioners, but its message is broadly applicable. Lagutaine, whose research interests include considering therapeutic relationships under the impact of race and culture, as well as embodiment and integrated approaches, recently spoke with *Learn* about her perspective.

### Q So what is "flexible thinking"?

**A** One of the things I thought about when writing the article was, for beginning therapists, how hard it is to sit with "I don't know...": "I don't know what the diagnosis is," "I don't know this person's background." I also thought about Western culture, versus the East. The Eastern approach is frequently "yes, and" rather than "either/or." For most people, it is much easier to see the black and white. I also was inspired by my teenage son, who is always so sure about everything.

**"When I have conversations, I no longer try to change anyone's mind. I can't do that; if someone's not ready to change, they won't change."**

### Q Why is it important to be flexible?

**A** If you jump to certainty, you are short-changing yourself. You're not looking at all the options; you're going down the well-trodden path. With everything that's going on in the world, especially U.S. politics, it's important to say, maybe we're both right. Or to ask questions: What about your point of view? Do we have common ground? We are surrounded with algorithms that confirm our own point of view, so we have to work at staying flexible and agile. When we are flexible, we are able to innovate, to change perspective. We can move away from "the way things have been done before."

### Q How does this mesh with your research?

**A** I think about what the body is saying—that integration between body and mind. Much of how I deal with things is nonbinary. It's about how the mind and the body inform each other. For example, by modifying your breathing, you can calm down your mind. The article is a call to nonextreme thinking—to looking at spectrums rather than even a diagnosis. Instead of "is a person ill or are they healthy," there's a continuum. I want to

encourage people to explore that continuum and to sit with "I don't quite know." It can be uncomfortable.

### Q You mentioned world events and politics...

**A** Yes. It's important to acknowledge current events in the privacy of the therapy room. They affect people on individual levels. I try to provide space to listen and to acknowledge where people are coming from. When I have conversations, I no longer try to change anyone's mind. I can't do that; if someone's not ready to change, they won't change. But rather than judge negatively, I choose to say, "Okay let's try again." Let's listen to each other because we've got to start somewhere.



After a 16-year career in advertising, Marianne Lagutaine transitioned to therapy, earning MA degrees in art therapy and counseling. She brings a unique perspective to her research on therapeutic relationships, particularly the role of race, culture and embodiment in therapy.



# New Faculty



**Kristin Cipollone** is a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction and the associate director of the UB Teacher Residency Program. Originally from Batavia, she has 20 years of experience in education, working in schools, universities and community organizations. Cipollone began her career as a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher in the South Bronx before pursuing her PhD in education, culture, policy and society at UB. Cipollone’s research focuses on teacher preparation, specifically community-engaged approaches, and examines how inequality is reproduced within educational systems.



**Brianna Devlin** is an assistant professor of early childhood education in the Department of Learning and Instruction. Devlin is from Livonia, Michigan, and earned her PhD from the University of Delaware. Her research focuses on early mathematics learning, identifying important skills related to math and designing instructional practices to support young children, especially those who experience difficulties. She has extensive experience in early childhood education, as well as postdoctoral work at Purdue University and the University of Oregon.



**Jacoby Loury** is an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology. Originally from Rochester, Loury’s research explores anti-racist school counseling, culturally relevant counseling practices and how conversations about race impact counselor training. A graduate of Virginia Tech with a PhD in counselor education, he has worked as a school counselor and provided supervision and instruction to aspiring counselors. Loury is passionate about supporting diverse populations through innovative approaches such as gaming and hip-hop.



**Xi Lu** is an assistant professor in the Department of Information Science. Originally from Xi’an, China, Lu earned her PhD from the University of California, Irvine. Her research focuses on human-computer interaction with an emphasis on health and personal informatics. She explores how socio-cultural contexts influence technology use in marginalized health domains. Lu’s work has been published in tier-1 human-computer interaction venues. She was named a 2023 EECS Rising Star and received the ICS Steckler Family Endowed Fellowship for her research on women’s health.



**Anne Perrault** is a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Information Science. Originally from Rochester, Perrault earned her PhD in teaching and curriculum from the University of Rochester. Her research focuses on information behaviors of educators to improve pedagogical practices, and the health information behaviors of young people with varying abilities. She has published in refereed and practitioner journals. Publications include “Reaching All Learners: Understanding and Leveraging Points of Intersection for School Librarians and Special Education Teachers” and “Schools as Information Ecologies: A Proposed Framework of Study.”



**Casandra Wright** is a clinical associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. Originally from Elmira, she holds an EdD in educational leadership and policy from UB and has over 35 years of experience in early, secondary and postsecondary education. Wright’s research and work focus on leadership development, equity-driven education and social justice. She has contributed to leadership coaching programs and initiatives in urban school settings, emphasizing student safety and equity. Wright is passionate about mentoring at-risk youth and continues to advocate for excellence and equity in education.

# Powering innovation: GSE researchers secure substantial research grants

BY DANIELLE LEGARE

Throughout 2024, GSE researchers have made significant progress in advancing educational research and practice by securing prestigious grant funding. Their grants underscore GSE's reputation as a leader in innovation and scholarly excellence, supporting a wide range of projects that address critical issues in education.

From transforming early literacy instruction with AI and bolstering teacher residency programs to exploring computational literacies and promoting social justice in computing, the grants fund impactful work that will drive the field forward.



**X. Christine Wang** has been awarded a **\$10 million** grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to establish the Center for Early Literacy and

Responsible AI. This center will focus on harnessing AI to transform early literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. GSE co-PIs are Christopher Hoadley, John Strong and Jaekyung Lee, and local partners include Buffalo Public Schools and Erie 1 BOCES.

In addition, Wang received a **\$34,878** grant from the National Science Foundation to support the International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS) 2024 Annual Meeting, specifically for the Doctoral Consortium and Early Career Workshop.



**Amanda Winkelsas** has secured a **\$4,190,612** grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the UB Teacher Residency Program.



**Christopher Hoadley** received a **\$999,998** grant from the National Science Foundation for his project, "Participating in Literacies and Computer Science: A

Research-Practice Partnership to Explore New Computational Literacies."



**Erin Kearney** has been awarded a **\$687,495** grant from the New York State Education Department for the Clinically Rich Intensive Teacher Institute, which is focused on bilingual education and English for speakers of other languages. Tim Monreal is a co-PI.



**Africa Hands** has secured a **\$493,910** grant from the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program to study the unique challenges and cultural strengths of first-generation BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) professionals in the library and information science field.



**Federica Bulgarelli** has been awarded a **\$275,000** grant from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to explore how infants process speech from older children and how it impacts their early language development.

In addition, Bulgarelli has also received a **\$10,000** Language Learning Early Career Research Grant for her project, "Searching for variability: The role of listener choice on learning new words."



**Amanda Nickerson** has secured a **\$243,955** grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program and a **\$26,000** grant from the National Association of School Psychologists for evaluating the PREPaRE School Crisis Program.



**Amanda Nickerson and Stephanie Fredrick** have been awarded a **\$233,955** grant from the Department of Homeland Security for their project, "NAB IT! (Norms and Bystander Intervention Training)."



**Christopher Proctor** received a **\$150,000** grant from the Mozilla Foundation for his project, "The Impossible Is the Least We Can Demand: Computing and Social Justice."



**Tasha Austin** has been awarded a **\$70,000** grant from the National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation for her project, "Culturelessness as a Conceptual Framework: Cultural Capital and Racialization in Novice Language Teacher Pedagogies." In addition, Austin has received a **\$47,124** grant from the Spencer Foundation for her project, "Excavating the Oral Histories of Black World Language Teachers."



**Timothy Monreal** received a **\$70,000** grant from the National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation for his project, "Somos El Sur: Mapping the Collective Experiences and Dreams of Latinx Teachers Across the U.S. South."

"I am really excited to see so many GSE faculty securing extramural funding for their research projects. This is both a reflection of the strategic and scaffolded work of our Office of Research Activities, as well as the innovative and talented faculty represented within GSE."

—GSE Dean and Professor Suzanne Rosenblith

# Teaching a passion for UB Fulbright recipient

BY CHARLES ANZALONE

Many students' higher education success stories start with a role model inspiring them to greatness. Leah Cabarga, one of UB's recent Fulbright winners, is the opposite. Cabarga felt "like a shadow" during middle school and high school. Now she is finding her heart's passion by overcoming that isolation and becoming the teacher-mentor she never had.

"My teachers' eyes would pass over me and linger just long enough to acknowledge that I was not invisible, but not long enough to ever make me feel like a person either," Cabarga wrote in her Fulbright application while explaining how becoming a teacher who changes students' lives has become her abiding passion.

"My grades were above average. I did not cause any problems. I was quiet. And I seemed fine on the outside. Thus, very few teachers really took the extra steps to truly get to know me. Although I was shy and seemingly content, I still craved connections, extra support and comfort of a safe space in school."

The disconnect continued. Cabarga began her college career studying occupational therapy after several high school teachers told her directly that she would "regret" pursuing a teaching degree.

"I listened to them at first," said Cabarga. "However, after my first semester at college, I realized the excitement, passion and enthusiasm were all missing for me in the health care field. I missed English, and craved reading and writing."

So Cabarga made the pivot that led to her greatest achievement. She changed majors, graduating from UB—in May 2023 with a bachelor's degree in English and in 2024 with a master's degree in education. This fall, she will travel to Montenegro in southeastern Europe on a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, where she will teach academic writing and conversation classes to English majors at the University of Montenegro. A native of Hamburg, she plans to return to teach grades 5-12 in Buffalo when her Fulbright ends.

The intellect and drive to change the world common to so many Fulbright winners comes in a purely human way for Cabarga. She says she was born to be a teacher. It is her highest calling, and she is driven to be the best she can be.

"Going against the advice from others and knowing that I was entering a challenging,

undervalued and stigmatized field, I needed to follow my heart," Cabarga said. "Therefore, I chose English and decided to take some education courses as well to see if I enjoyed them.

"Unsurprisingly, I ended up falling in love with both. Working with students on their writing, tutoring, substitute teaching and now student teaching have solidified that. While teaching is a complex, difficult and strenuous field, I genuinely could not picture myself doing anything else.

"These feelings of insignificance were disheartening in high school, but consequently, they were also the compass that pointed me toward a career in teaching. They ignited a passion in me to work toward becoming the teacher that I needed in high school for others."

## Learn and unlearn

Kathleen Reeb, visiting instructor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy who worked with Cabarga in a sociology of education course, called working with her a "true delight."

"She wants to be a better teacher and human every day she wakes up," Reeb said. "I challenged her to put herself in different situations where she could learn authentically from different groups of people. It seems her personal and professional journey has led her to the Fulbright. I love this for her."

## Tangible connections

Cabarga has now experienced firsthand a taste of that teacher-student connection she longed for. Her best moments came while student teaching in an English classroom at Amherst High School, where she was able to watch students grow over the school year. She also worked in UB's Center for Excellence in Writing and tutored as a "Homework Helper" in the Buffalo Public Schools.

"I have come to the realization that I did not go into teaching for me, but I went into it for the students and the connections I am able to make with them," Cabarga said. "I believe the Fulbright committee was able to feel my passion toward connecting with others, learning every day and aiming to grow as both an educator and human.

"Now, I am able to be the teacher for others that I wish I had when I was growing up."

"I believe the Fulbright committee was able to feel my passion toward connecting with others, learning every day and aiming to grow as both an educator and human."

# UB professor highlights ‘UndocuJoy’ in higher ed experiences of undocumented students



Growing up as a member of a mixed-status family, UB faculty member Stephen Santa-Ramirez witnessed firsthand the complexities and inequities of immigration law and policy in the U.S.

BY ALEXANDRA SACCONI

“Being undocumented is a condition created to keep us from smiling, but look at us thriving.”

This line in a spoken-word poem by poet and activist Yosimar Reyes inspired a UB faculty member’s recent publication.

After attending a session facilitated by Reyes at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in 2018, Stephen Santa-Ramirez, assistant professor of higher education, drew inspiration for highlighting the joy in the lives of those with liminal legal status.

Published this fall in the *Journal of College Student Development* (Johns Hopkins University Press), “UndocuJoy as Resistance: Beyond Gloom and Doom Narratives of Undocumented Collegians,” co-authored by Santa-Ramirez and Kayon A. Hall, assistant professor of higher education at Kent State

University, explores how undocumented college students experience and embrace joy despite navigating barriers, such as anti-immigrant policies and racist nativist sociopolitical climates.

“There’s more to these communities than what the media is portraying, more than the gloom-and-doom narrative,” Santa-Ramirez said.

When he and Hall wrote the article, they opened with Reyes’ poem because “it encourages us to consider bringing in the narratives of joy in conversations about undocumented students while we’re also simultaneously sharing the more difficult stories of what these communities have historically endured and are currently facing in the United States and within higher education institutions across the nation,” Santa-Ramirez added.

The publication joins Santa-Ramirez’s previous work about the experiences of undocumented college students, a theme with which he feels a strong personal connection. Growing up as a member of a mixed-status family, Santa-Ramirez witnessed firsthand the complexities and inequities of immigration law and policy in the United States. “As a first-generation student with citizenship privileges, I had access to work-study programs, and I could work on campus, and Pell grants, which are federally funded programs. Undocumented students are not eligible for such programs and resources,” he explained.

As an educator, Santa-Ramirez has worked with students of various statuses: citizens, international students, students on various visas and undocumented students. Although they share similar identities and lived experiences, he saw undocumented students struggle without the same opportunities he had with his U.S. citizenship.

“I noticed that there was a lot of complexity that some of the undocumented students had to face that was different than my experiences in college,” he said. “That really pushed me to do more advocacy work in my role in higher education as an administrator in support of undocumented communities and folks of various liminal legal statuses.”

Most of Santa-Ramirez’s work focuses on first-generation and low-income students, students from economically neglected geographic areas, college student activism and resistance efforts, and the holistic experiences of undocumented students.

In this work, he observed that academia tends to “lump everybody together” and employs “a one-size-fits-all model,” he said. He wanted to ensure that undocumented students were not getting lost in this monolithic identity, so he drew inspiration from Reyes’ poem and began to highlight the joy that acts as resistance to the hardships that undocumented students face.

Santa-Ramirez says he believes this is the best time to uplift the voices and experiences of these students and their families because “legislators are not really giving hope and promise to the undocumented immigrant community,” he said.

According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which has provided administrative relief for immigrant youth, is still valid for those who received the status prior to July 2021, but remains uncertain for current and future arrivals pending a ruling by a U.S. District Court in Southern Texas.

“DACA is still in limbo, even though the Biden-Harris administration has been trying to push for the program. There has been no bipartisan agreement on a path to citizenship in Congress yet,” Santa-Ramirez noted. “But there is a large community fighting for a more concrete, broader path to citizenship that can help out a lot of undocumented and immigrant folks in this country that goes beyond just what we identify as students with DACA.”

**“It’s important to teach ourselves about their experiences—the good, bad and the ugly—to take the load off the people already fighting the fight every day, just trying to live right.”**

With his sights set on the future of immigration to the U.S., Santa-Ramirez is also focused on the future of current undocumented college students. “There’s this thread in my work of their experiences with access to college, their persistence through college to graduation,” he said. “Now I’m expanding that to their post-graduation experiences. Are we, as higher education institutional agents, actually preparing undocumented students while they’re with us, on our college campuses, effectively? And how can we do more to serve undocumented students best when they’re with us, enrolled in college, as they navigate the process before graduation?”

Outside of his work in academia, Santa-Ramirez advocates for the racially minoritized, including those who are undocumented and immigrant college students. He currently serves as a 2024–26 co-chair of the Latinx Network via ACPA-College Student Educators International, as an associate editor for the *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* (JCSHA), and as an advisory board member for both the *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* (JCSHA) and *Voces Nuevas* via the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU).

“I think everyone should keep in mind that undocumented students are here in a plethora of our institutions across the nation,” Santa-

Ramirez pointed out. “And it’s important to teach ourselves about their experiences—the good, bad and the ugly—to take the load off the people already fighting the fight every day, just trying to live right.”

He hopes “UndocuJoy as Resistance” will focus on the assets, talents and skills that undocumented students have to “promote their communal joy amidst the chaos.”

“These talented, beautiful, brilliant folks are doing so much good in our world, our society, and our colleges and universities. We want to support them holistically, which includes highlighting the more joyful parts of the narratives,” he said.

“My co-author and I hope that this article and our broader work help other policymakers and scholar-practitioners to better engage with these communities and begin these types of conversation—bringing in more joy, hope and love in our work with, for and alongside undocumented students and immigrants of color writ large.”

Santa-Ramirez recommended that those who want to learn more about supporting undocumented students view this special issue he edited last fall for *New Directions for Higher Education*, as well as the “United We Dream” Toolkit for educators.

*Stephen Santa-Ramirez is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. His experiences in higher education and student affairs include work in multicultural and LGBTQIA+ affairs, residential life and housing services, and migrant student services. In addition to teaching at GSE, he has taught at colleges and universities throughout the U.S.*



CONTINUING THE MISSION:

# Gregory J. Dimitriadis' legacy lives on through endowed professorship

BY DANIELLE LEGARE

**G**REGORY J. DIMITRIADIS was more than a professor; he was a mentor, a guide and a source of support for his students and community. When he passed away in December 2014, it was no wonder that his family received an outpouring of letters and emails from colleagues, friends and former students sharing how deeply Dimitriadis had touched their lives.

Inspired by these words, Dimitriadis' family sought a way to honor his legacy and ensure that his life's work would continue to inspire future generations, leading to the creation of the Gregory J. Dimitriadis, PhD Assistant Professorship in Educational Leadership and Policy. This endowed professorship will support scholars who share Dimitriadis' dedication to urban education and policy, particularly with a focus on race and equity.

The heartfelt messages revealed the profound impact he had made, both personally and professionally:

"Greg has been the person I knew I could always turn to for help and understanding," wrote Beth Bouloukos, a colleague from SUNY Press.

"Not only was he brilliant, prolific and always pushing ideas in critical and ethical ways, but he was a genuine person, one of the most humble in the field," said researcher Debbie Sonu.

"Greg is alive and well in the way I treat others, especially my students. Never once do I let an email or message or office visit grow stale or unattended," reflected former student Justin De Senso. "Never once do I ignore students, colleagues or persons in need. Greg taught me this."

## A profound commitment to research

Lois Weis, SUNY Distinguished Professor, first met Dimitriadis as a candidate while chairing a search committee tasked with finding a new faculty member for the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. From the moment they interviewed him, Weis and the other committee members were struck by Dimitriadis' passion and enthusiasm for his research. His commitment to exploring the intersections of education, culture and social justice was evident, making him the unanimous choice for the position.

His impact at GSE was immediate. Dimitriadis' research on urban youth culture opened new avenues of inquiry in educational research. His books, such as "Performing Identity/Performing Culture: Hip Hop as Text, Pedagogy, and Lived Practice" and "Critical Dispositions: Evidence and Expertise in Education," challenged conventional thinking

The endowed professorship ensures that his life's work—his commitment to research, dedication to equity and devotion to students—will continue to influence the field for years to come.

and brought fresh perspectives to the field. "As research faculty, if we don't think our research is important, it's going to be really hard. But Greg was committed to it, and he thought it was important. He loved it," Weis said.

His research was not confined to academic circles; it was deeply rooted in the realities of those he sought to serve. This approach not only enriched his scholarship, but also earned him the respect and admiration of his peers and students.

## Genuine mentorship and guidance

Beyond his scholarly achievements, it was Dimitriadis' humility and genuine care for others that left a lasting impression on those who knew him.

"Greg loved mentoring the next generation of students," Weis recalled. "He was very respectful of students and where they were coming from."

Tchaikovsky "Scottie" Wardlow, a former mentee and close friend, echoed this sentiment: "He was always positive, always encouraging. He helped me through some of the toughest times in my life, and he never gave up on me."

## Honoring a legacy of care, compassion and scholarship

Since 2015, the Gregory J. Dimitriadis, PhD Dean's Excellence Fund has supported students by providing funds to attend practical

professional development sessions, guest speaker series and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting. While this fund will not change, the new Gregory J. Dimitriadis, PhD Assistant Professorship will focus on research and excellence.

The creation of this new fund is a fitting tribute to Dimitriadis' legacy. The endowed professorship ensures that his life's work—his commitment to research, dedication to equity and devotion to students—will continue to influence the field for years to come.

"Dr. Greg Dimitriadis left an indelible impression on the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy and the entire GSE community. His legacy endures in the lives he touched among faculty and students across the Graduate School of Education," said Nathan J. Daun-Barnett, chair and associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. "This endowed professorship gives us an opportunity to celebrate his contributions by honoring a scholar who makes a significant contribution to the department's intellectual life."

The scholars who hold this professorship will carry forward Dimitriadis' mission, conducting research that addresses the pressing issues of our time with the same passion and energy that Dimitriadis embodied. The Dimitriadis family finds solace in knowing that their commitment will ensure his name and legacy continue to inspire future generations at GSE.

"He was all about helping and trying to encourage and empower people," said Wardlow. "The person who gets the [endowed professorship] with his name on it should take pride—because that man was awesome."



Gregory Dimitriadis with his parents, Marie and Jim Dimitriadis, at his graduation from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he earned his PhD in speech communication.

At right: Photos of Dimitriadis throughout the years, from his time in Buffalo (top) to his graduation from the University at Urbana-Champaign (middle and bottom), where he celebrated with his loved ones, including his sister Christina, friend and mentee Elton, Aunt Teresa, mother and father.

# Beyond the game: My path from collegiate athlete to aspiring sports psychologist

BY TAJI JOHNSON

UB Bulls receiver Taji Johnson balances his life as a Division I athlete with his passion for mental health. His goal is to become a sports psychologist, advocating for mental health awareness and support in athletics.

Ever since I was a kid, I've always dreamt of being a collegiate athlete at the Division 1 level. It's been a goal of mine for as long as I can remember. So, when I finally got here, it was no surprise to me that my expectations were high. After playing four years at Boston College and graduating with a bachelor's degree in applied psychology, I decided it was time for a change and chose to transfer to the University at Buffalo. A significant factor in my decision was the prestigious Graduate School of Education. I am currently pursuing a master's of education degree in education studies with a focus in counseling.

During the season, my day-to-day life is pretty hectic, as I essentially have two full-time jobs at once. However, having been in this environment for so long, I've learned to navigate the nuances and manage each day smoothly. With morning practices combined with classes throughout the day and evening, being a student-athlete requires immense commitment and focus. Almost every hour of my day is accounted for and has a purpose. My biggest struggle during the season is finding personal time for myself. But growing up, my mother always taught me that you make time for the things you want to do, so it's not impossible. I am truly blessed to be in this position, and I never take it for granted.

This fall, I am taking classes in mental health counseling, foundations of psychology and counseling, and ethical counseling. My passion lies in mental health, especially for athletes. My career goal is to become a sports psychologist, working with collegiate and professional athletes on their mental health and performance. As an athlete, I know that mental health has only recently begun to be openly discussed, despite being an ongoing issue since sports

began. My goal is to continue destigmatizing mental health issues and advocate for them to be treated with the same importance as physical injuries. I believe that by combining my personal experience as an athlete with the knowledge I gain through my education, I can formulate effective strategies to address these issues head-on and contribute meaningfully to the education community.

**“My goal is to continue destigmatizing mental health issues and advocate for them to be treated with the same importance as physical injuries.”**

UB has been instrumental in my personal development and my journey through college, and I am grateful for the opportunity to make a positive impact on this community in any way I can.



Taji Johnson is a receiver on the UB Bulls football team. A native of Powder Springs, GA, he is the recipient of the 2023-24 1-MAC Student-Athlete Award. Photos courtesy of UB Athletics.

# 2024-25 Fellowships and Scholarships

## Presidential Fellows

The Presidential Fellowship Program, inaugurated in the fall of 1984, is awarded to new PhD applicants who have a record of excellence. Students must be appointed as a full teaching, graduate or research assistant.

### Rahnuma E Jannat

HOMETOWN: Dhaka, Bangladesh

PROGRAM: Counseling Psychology and School Psychology PhD

"I aspire to become a leading school psychologist and tenure-track professor with academic research focused on cyberbullying and culturally informed school-based cyberbullying prevention interventions for adolescents. The Presidential Fellowship offers me crucial financial assistance, enabling me to concentrate on my academic pursuits and research without the distraction of financial hardship. It is indicative of the university's assurance of my ability to make significant contributions to my field, which serves as an incentive for me to strive for excellence."

### Farid Mokhtari

HOMETOWN: Mashhad, Iran

PROGRAM: Counseling Psychology and School Psychology PhD

"I hope I can help people to better make decisions in life, especially adolescents and young adults, for their education/career paths, and assist them to cope with their difficulties in building their identity. Being a Presidential Fellow provides additional support so I can gain deeper knowledge and skills to better serve as a psychologist."

### Molly Moore

HOMETOWN: Buffalo, New York

PROGRAM: Counseling Psychology and School Psychology PhD

"My research interests center around childhood health behaviors, with a particular focus on weight, nutrition, food insecurity and family-based interventions. I am honored to have received this fellowship and excited to deepen my knowledge while collaborating with the researchers at UB. I am incredibly grateful for the support and am thrilled to be a part of such impactful work."

### Karlygash Rakhimova

HOMETOWN: Almaty, Kazakhstan

PROGRAM: Higher Education PhD

"As a mother, scholar and former corporate leader, I am passionate about improving access to education for international students and parent-students, like me, who juggle multiple roles while pursuing their academic dreams. This fellowship empowers me to conduct research that will advocate for policies and practices that better support these underrepresented groups. I hope my work will inspire institutions to create more inclusive and compassionate learning environments where every student can thrive."



## UB Graduate School Fellows

The UB Graduate School Fellowship helps fund outstanding graduate students at UB.

### Jingning He

HOMETOWN: Hunan Province, China

PROGRAM: Curriculum, Instruction and the Science of Learning PhD

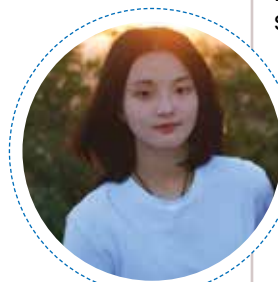
"I am deeply interested in the professional development of novice teachers, particularly in their identity development. I look forward to conducting longitudinal research during my PhD studies to gain insights into the complexities of teacher identity and to assist teachers in navigating the "reality shock" of their early career. This fellowship has enabled me to relocate to a new country, provided me with a cross-cultural perspective on research, allowed me to collaborate with exceptional colleagues, and supported my ongoing passion for teacher research."

### Shuvo Kundu

HOMETOWN: Dhaka, Bangladesh

PROGRAM: Information Science PhD

"My academic and professional goals are to study how political misinformation spreads and to find ways to stop it using technology and information science. The Graduate School Fellowship greatly reduces the financial burden of my education, allowing me to focus more on my research. With this support, I hope to create solutions that improve the quality of information people rely on, which can lead to better decisions in society."



### Aloysius Mwanje Senono

HOMETOWN: Kampala, Uganda

PROGRAM: Information Science PhD

"My academic and professional goals are centered around advancing research in data literacy and data feminism in marginalized communities. This fellowship will provide me with the necessary resources and technical support to develop impactful, data-driven interventions that empower underrepresented groups, leading to more equitable access to health care, education and economic opportunities. Through this work, I aim to make a positive impact in the lives of marginalized groups, particularly those who have been excluded historically from key socioeconomic opportunities."

### Vi Trinh

HOMETOWN: Hanoi, Vietnam

PROGRAM: Curriculum, Instruction and the Science of Learning PhD

"My research interests lie in social justice issues, technology and curriculum. I seek to answer the question: "How can we as educators not only design courses that promise a well-rounded curriculum, but also promote positive social changes?" With my fellowship, I have more access to an inclusive learning environment and a wide range of opportunities that allow me to be a part of the community as a learner and contributor."





## Arthur Schomburg Fellows

UB's Arthur A. Schomburg Fellowship Program provides financial support for master's and doctoral students who contribute to the diversity of the student body and have overcome a disadvantage or other barrier to success in higher education.

### Kylee Healy

**HOMETOWN:** Wilson, New York  
**PROGRAM:** Educational Psychology and Quantitative Methods PhD

"My research interests focus on educational inequalities and the potential applications of artificial intelligence in education. The opportunity to be a fellow provides me with the resources necessary to complete meaningful research that can positively impact communities that often are overlooked and underserved."

### Rachel Hechinger

**HOMETOWN:** Boston, Massachusetts  
**PROGRAM:** Counseling Psychology and School Psychology PhD

"I am passionate about making eating disorder treatment more accessible for marginalized people, including people with larger bodies and those with cooccurring disorders. I hope to help create evidence-based approaches to fight weight stigma in eating disorder spaces and to create resources for individuals typically left out of these spaces."

### Abigail Henry

**HOMETOWN:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
**PROGRAM:** Curriculum, Instruction and the Science of Learning PhD

"Teaching Black history is endlessly hard and yet forever rewarding. My priority is to use my experience and research to further develop high-quality Black history teaching resources, assessments and pedagogies for the secondary classroom. I am honored to be a Schomburg Fellow for UB's Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education."

### Jahare Hudson

**HOMETOWN:** Buffalo, New York  
**PROGRAM:** Counseling Psychology and School Psychology PhD

"I plan to become a counseling psychologist, providing counseling services to minority groups harmed by systemic racism. I hope to advance the understanding of identity and intersectionality, as well as the effects of those within an individual. Particularly, I am

interested in looking at these ideas within the Black queer community."

### Winter Linch

**HOMETOWN:** Long Island, New York  
**PROGRAM:** Educational Psychology and Quantitative Methods PhD

"My academic and professional goals focus on examining educational inequalities shaped by gender, family and societal factors across both Chinese and American contexts. This fellowship enables me to pursue a doctoral degree without financial constraints, allowing me to explore new research directions and deepen my engagement with my current areas of study."

### Bea Mask

**HOMETOWN:** Denton, Texas  
**PROGRAM:** Counseling Psychology and School Psychology PhD

"My research goals focus on school violence prevention and school climate. I am particularly interested in the sense of school safety for students and staff from LGBTQ+ and other marginalized identities. This fellowship allows me to focus my efforts on research and clinical experience to further serve and advocate for vulnerable communities."

### Shay Valley

**HOMETOWN:** Enon, Ohio  
**PROGRAM:** Higher Education PhD

"I primarily study trans and queer college students in hopes of improving the college campus and college experience for these populations. My current research focuses on how asexual and aromantic college students create healthy intimate relationships and how colleges can support these relationships."

## Advancing climate education

GSE's Alexa Schindel works to integrate climate education for all students across New York State



A vital grassroots movement to advance climate education across New York State is underway. At the heart of the initiative's policymaking wing is Alexa Schindel, associate professor of learning and instruction, who is playing a key role in shaping the future of climate education.

Schindel is a member of the policy committee of the Climate and Resilience Education Task Force (CRETf), which has been instrumental in defining and advocating for P-12 Climate Education for all students in New York State. The CRETf policy committee—composed of climate education scholars, P-12 educators, parents, recent college graduates, authors and college professors—worked with youth and with Brooklyn Senator Andrew Gounardes' office to draft a comprehensive climate education bill, introduced as S278A/A1559A.S.278A in the 2023-24 legislative session. S.278A sought to establish comprehensive climate education in public pre-kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools. This groundbreaking legislation aimed to equip educators with the resources and support they need to effectively explore the causes and impacts of climate change, consider the socio-emotional learning impacts on their students and educate students with tools for action.

Schindel joined CRETf members and supporters on two of their five trips to Albany, where they held 130 meetings with

legislators. The bill gained 42 Assembly and 19 Senate co-sponsors, 70 organizational endorsements and significant media attention. Organizations endorsing the bill include the Western New York Clean Air Coalition and the Seneca Nation Office of Emergency Management. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass, and no state funds were allocated toward climate education.

### CRETf and NYSED are now united in their commitment to bring climate education to all students in New York State.

However, this has not stopped Schindel and CRETf, who continued to meet with key stakeholders over the summer. At the end of the 2023-24 legislative session, CRETf engaged in conversations with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to learn what they want and need to move climate education forward in the state. At the same time, CRETf talked with members of ClimeTime in Washington, the Senior Climate Change Education Advisor for New Jersey, and other policymakers and activists across the country to understand the promises

and pitfalls of other states' initiatives, which Schindel and CRETf's policy committee shared with NYSED.

CRETf and NYSED are now united in their commitment to bring climate education to all students in New York State. "The collaborative relationship that our CRETf policy committee has forged with NYSED is a significant development and is a testament to our persistence, successful advocacy, and the wealth of knowledge and expertise of our members," Schindel said. We are incredibly excited to work with NYSED."

In fall 2023, the New York Board of Regents' Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures outlined their new "Portrait of a Graduate," which will include climate literacy as one of several key competencies. These updated graduation standards demonstrate increased support for climate education among state-level policy actors. This includes funding for updated climate learning standards, providing resources for educators, and professional learning opportunities through university pre-service teacher programs, BOCES, districts and service providers. CRETf continues working with partners and New York's decision-makers to develop a legislative package that can finally move the needle on climate education in 2025.

Schindel also supported the development of the New York Climate Education Hub as a member of the Working Committee and Advisory Board. The Hub, which officially launched in August 2024 in time for the start of the school year, boasts resources made by and for New York state teachers, as well as professional learning opportunities and news articles for students.

To learn more, visit the New York Climate Education Hub at [nyclimateeducation.org/](https://nyclimateeducation.org/).

On Jan. 30, 2024, Alexa Schindel and other members of the Climate Education Task Force met with Senator Andrew Gounardes in Albany to support a climate education bill.



# Welcoming this year's residents

## Nicholas Czekaj

Speaks French, Chinese and Arabic. He graduated from UB in 2017 with majors in French and international politics. After graduation, he served as a youth development volunteer in Ouarzazate, Morocco, teaching English with the Peace Corps. He then spent three years managing an English training center in Yangzhou, China, further deepening his passion for world languages and cultures. Now, back in the U.S., Czekaj is dedicated to sharing his global experiences and fostering a sense of community in his hometown of Buffalo. **"I am grateful to UBTR for the opportunity to take my place amongst the teachers who are growing the Buffalo community to become more just, sustainable, prosperous and neighborly."**

## Emily Davis

Holds a bachelor's degree in community engagement and communication from Buffalo State University. She began her community work with the Common Roots Land Trust in Meadville, Pennsylvania. She later served as a new arrivals specialist at the International Institute of Buffalo, helping secure housing for refugees. With previous experience as an elementary-level teacher's aide, Davis is passionate about creating compassionate, student-centered classroom environments. In her free time, Davis enjoys gardening, reading, cooking, hiking and blowing bubbles to relieve stress. **"I was interested in UBTR because I thought it would be a strategic steppingstone to have a mentor teacher that I am co-teaching with and learning from."**

## Sophie Goliber

Is an earth scientist and educator from Otisville, New York. She earned her BS in geology from UB in 2017 and her PhD in geological sciences from the University of Texas at Austin in 2022, focusing on Greenland's glaciers. Outside of her professional life, Goliber is a blocker for the Devil Dollies roller derby team and enjoys cooking, video games and crocheting. **"I enjoyed my time in research and contributing to science. However, I felt that I had the most impact with my teaching and outreach. I am excited to work with students in Buffalo as it is my home, and I love being a part of this community."**



## Leon He

Is an aspiring educator from Shanghai, China, with a degree in applied mathematics and statistics from Stony Brook University. Outside of teaching, he enjoys singing, playing guitar and flute, and connecting with others through basketball. **"I want to be a teacher because I find joy in seeing students' progress in character, behavior and academics. Moreover, as a STEM teacher, I have strived to ignite a passion for science in my students through engaging and interactive methods. I hope I can equip myself with more professional skill sets and carry on the journey of teaching."**

## Maya Johnson

Earned her BA in English with a focus on linguistics and rhetoric from CUNY Hunter College, where she also worked as a babysitter and tutor. In her free time, she enjoys reading, going to the gym and practicing yoga, and her favorite snack is Tillamook cookies and cream ice cream. **"I became interested in becoming a teacher when I began reflecting on the experiences that gave me the most joy. I found that when I was working with young children, helping them learn and seeing their growth and progress, I was happy."**



## Theresa C. Land

Is a dedicated educator with more than 23 years of experience teaching in Buffalo Public Schools. She holds a BS in mathematical studies from Buffalo State University, graduating in 1997. Her passion for teaching, particularly math, was solidified through her work with high-risk and disadvantaged youth at the Inner-City Community Center in Buffalo. She enjoys planning community events, and in her free time, she loves listening to music, watching funny movies and indulging in chocolate. **"The UBTR program allows me the opportunity to take advantage of the chance to complete the work I started by providing me with a housing stipend and academic support. Now that my son has recently graduated from college, I can begin to focus back on completing my master's degree and teacher certification to become a math teacher."**



## Andrew Othman

Has a BA in linguistics with a Japanese concentration, earned in 2024, and received an associate degree in liberal arts in 2022. He is fluent in Japanese. He has also worked as a teacher's aide at Stanley G. Falk School, where he honed his skills in supporting and inspiring students. His favorite book is "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho.



**"I became interested in education when I began giving guitar lessons as a teenager. My French teacher in high school also formed a guitar club for students, which had a major impact on me and gave me some great experiences. It is my goal to have a positive influence on students the way my teachers have had on me."**

## Jakob Pachucinski

Holds a BS in applied mathematics with minors in data science and statistics. Outside of work, he enjoys disc golf, camping, writing music and has recently rekindled his love for Legos. **"I have worked at a place in Blasdel called Mathnasium for almost five years now, and throughout my time there, I developed a love for getting students to understand math. Buffalo has been my home city my entire life, and I would love to give back to the community and grow our City of Good Neighbors."**



## Yanelly Reyes

Is a bilingual educator with a BA in psychology from D'Youville University, where she graduated with honors and was an active member of the E-Sports team. A proud mother of two boys, Reyes draws inspiration from her children every day. Her experiences as a dental assistant and lead-poisoning educator further ignited her desire to teach, especially in underserved communities. In her free time, she enjoys reading, drawing and playing games with her boys. She also has a love for Bachata music. **"The UBTR program resonates with my professional aspirations due to its commitment to preparing educators to create equitable and unique needs for diverse students."**



## Taylor M. Reynolds

Has a diverse academic background, holding an associate degree in liberal arts from Kingsborough Community College, a bachelor's degree in history from the City College of New York, and a master's degree in urban planning with a specialization in community health and food systems from the UB. With extensive experience as a data specialist and in customer success roles, Reynolds has developed strong skills in active listening, customer engagement and supporting educators. In his free time, he enjoys playing guitar, golfing, making ice cream and watching Buffalo sports. **"I enjoy hands-on learning, and the UBTR program's apprenticeship model made me feel I would learn under a skilled, veteran teacher—precisely the experience I wanted."**



## Emil Abner Rivera

Is a bilingual educator from Puerto Rico with a strong background in special education. He is transitioning to focus on new language acquisition. He views the school environment as a sacred space for nurturing human potential and creating a constructive, peaceful atmosphere amid global challenges. Rivera is deeply motivated by the belief that education is an affirmative action toward fulfilling our basic humanity. In his free time, he enjoys road trips, exploring new places and nature, and finds relaxation in these journeys. **"I see the school as a sacred/safe/peaceful place where we as human beings can create a space of construction. Believing in nurtured constructive spaces is what motivated me the most to join this program."**



## Randino "Sarge" Sargent

Is an author, community activist and Army veteran with eight years of service, including a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. In 2010, he walked from Buffalo to Washington, D.C., to advocate for homicide victims and raise awareness about the toll that violence takes on families and communities across our nation. Upon returning, he authored "Silent Steps: The Souls of My Feet," which details why he was inspired to walk. He is married with three daughters and taught himself to speak Kiswahili. He aims to become a teacher in the Buffalo Public School system: **"My goal is to become a teacher to positively impact our society by helping our youth develop empathy, critical thinking skills and an education that will go beyond the classroom."**



## Erin Schuster

Holds a bachelor's degree in geology from the University of Southern California and a master's degree in geology from California State University, Long Beach. She is currently completing her doctorate in evolution, ecology and behavior (EEB) at UB. With extensive experience in informal education at the Ocean Institute and the Aquarium of the Pacific, Schuster is passionate about sharing her love for earth science and inspiring students to reach their full potential. Outside of academics, Schuster enjoys crocheting, playing Dungeons and Dragons with friends and spending time with her cat. **"The UBTR program represents an incredible opportunity to get a teaching license and work in a classroom with students in a meaningful way."**





## Bringing bookshelves to barbershops: GSE alum empowers Black communities through literacy

BY DANIELLE LEGARE

Jelicia Jimenez's love for libraries and literature was first sparked at the Brooklyn Public Library. A 2022 graduate of GSE's information and library science master's program, her story is deeply rooted in her childhood, where Saturdays were spent exploring the vast world of books with her family. This early connection to libraries shaped her love for reading, leading her to pursue a career as a librarian.

Her passion for libraries and reading prompted her to search for a library program near New York City. GSE's master's program was one of the only accredited programs that appeared in her search. Intrigued by the research element and the potential to make an impact, Jimenez—along with her family—moved to Buffalo to enroll at UB. "The program was [available] fully online, but I wanted to find ways to connect with the campus. I wanted to make the most of my time in the program," she said. She did just that.

Jimenez thrived while participating in fieldwork opportunities, a graduate assistantship and coursework with GSE faculty like Clinical Associate Professor Brenda L. Battleson White: "She was wonderful. I loved the books that she introduced us to. Her class helped me understand information seeking as an objective behavior instead of the subjective," Jimenez recalled.

White, in turn, recognized Jimenez's passion and commitment to the communities she served. "Jelicia was a pleasure to work with because she always kept the needs of information users at the center of her decision-making," said White.



Jimenez and Ruqayyah Simmons partner with community members, including former Bills wide receiver Andre Reed (far left) and current Bills offensive tackle Ryan Van Demark (far right) to encourage African American boys to foster a love of reading.



### Interested in contributing?

Donations can be made on the Black Boys Read Too website, and volunteers are always needed to help with book swaps and read-aloud events. Visit: [blackboysreadtoo.org](https://blackboysreadtoo.org).

Jimenez's coursework became a powerful tool, driving informed decision-making and enabling her to track the impact of her work. After completing her program, she started contemplating the ways people from diverse backgrounds approach information. This reflection led to the birth of a groundbreaking initiative—Black Boys Read Too.

Partnering with Buffalo educator Ruqayyah Simmons, Jimenez initiated the placement of bookshelves and literacy pop-ups in barbershops throughout Buffalo, ensuring representation and diversity in the titles chosen. Their efforts have fostered environments where children and families can gather, read and connect.

The success of these endeavors has exceeded expectations, with barbers actively participating in conversations about literacy and parents finding joy in reading with their children. Their efforts have also expanded: Jimenez and Simmons recently placed bookshelves in community centers, waiting rooms and after-school programs throughout Buffalo.

"In class, Jelicia recognized the role of community in individuals' information seeking and use," said White. "The amazing work she has done in developing the Black Boys Read Too program is evidence of this. Jelicia not only saw an information need—in this case, books that reflect characters with whom readers can identify—but she moved beyond the library to develop a way to involve the community in meeting that need."

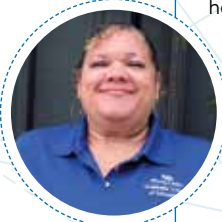
Jimenez, who currently serves as a community school navigator at Say Yes Buffalo, credits her time at GSE for helping to shape her innovative thinking. "My program was meaningful, and my heart is still tied to library and information sciences because of it," she said. "When you think of libraries, you think of literacy, but it's about data-informed decision-making and how societal progress leads to changes in information seeking."

Looking ahead, Jimenez hopes to continue inspiring a love of reading in children, especially boys: "We noticed qualitatively that boys were less motivated to go grab a book, and they saw it as more of a punishment than something to indulge in. I hope the kids who attend our Black Boys Read Too community events will be inspired and intrinsically motivated to keep reading."

### Sherri Singletary

Has a deep passion for working with children, earning her associate degree in early childhood education in 1997 and her bachelor's in 2007. She has extensive experience in various educational roles, including running her daycare program and working as a lead teacher at Head Start programs. Having lived on Buffalo's East Side most of her life,

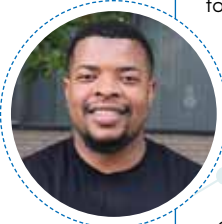
Singletary is committed to empowering students and addressing community disparities. Outside of teaching, she enjoys singing in a band. "I want to support the community I grew up in. I want to empower my students to know that they can achieve anything they put their minds to."



### Ali Somo

Is a multilingual educator with a deep connection to Buffalo, where he has lived since moving from Kenya. After graduating from Lafayette High School in 2018, Somo earned his associate degree in general studies from Erie Community College in 2020 and a BA in history from Buffalo State University in 2023. While pursuing his studies, Somo worked at Roswell Park

Cancer Institute and began teaching children in his community, focusing on religion and academic support. In his free time, he enjoys watching and playing soccer, especially in local Buffalo leagues. "To create moments and memories, all you need is an opportunity. UB and UBTR were the opportunities, and I am going for them."



### Hannah-Kiran Thukral

Graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 2023 with a major in data science and a minor in English. Passionate about research, Thukral worked in a sociolinguistics lab at Michigan State University and helped establish a sociology and data science lab at Mount Holyoke. Drawn to Buffalo for its blend of



opportunity and proximity to home, she is excited to contribute to a caring, student-focused school environment. In her free time, Thukral enjoys crocheting, taking long walks and diving into great TV shows. She is proud of her Punjabi heritage and spent eight years living in Bangalore, India. "I was drawn to the philosophy of the program and the idea that change in our schools can come from well-trained, caring teachers who do all they can to support their students."

### Tameka Thomas

Holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education (birth to sixth grade) and worked as a coach for teachers at Head Start. Thomas enjoys relaxing by reading books, spending time with her family and painting. Known for being adaptive, empathetic, passionate and creative, she has a strong interest in culturally diverse literacy and enjoys developing training programs. Her favorite snack is trail mix, and she loves the children's book "Eyes That Kiss in the Corners" by Joanna Ho. "I am interested in the UBTR program because it allows you to gain experience working with Buffalo Public Schools."



### Isabella Tronolone

Has a BFA in dance and a BA in English from Point Park University, and she graduated in 2019. She has spent the last five years teaching English language abroad to children ages 2-13 and recently began private tutoring for both children and adults online. Outside of her teaching career, Tronolone enjoys Pilates, long walks, dance classes and relaxing in coffee shops with a good sci-fi drama or catching up with friends. "I became interested in the UBTR program because of its heavy focus on mentorship and student teaching. I believe that observing and learning from people currently working in your prospective position is vital to the teacher education process."



# Commencement

**O**n Friday, May 17, 2024, GSE celebrated its 93rd commencement ceremony in UB's Center for the Arts. Faculty, staff, students and their guests gathered to recognize the achievements of the Class of 2024. Dean Suzanne Rosenblith and UB President Satish K. Tripathi conferred degrees on the 536 graduates during the memorable event.

The night before the ceremony, GSE hosted a special dinner to celebrate the achievements of graduates and distinguished members of the GSE community. During the dinner, several prestigious awards were presented:

### Dean's Service Award

**Steven Graser**, Director of Professional Development and Instructional Technology Resources, Erie 1 BOCES

### Distinguished Alumni Award

**David Cantaffa**, Associate Provost, Academic Programs, Planning, and Assessment, The State University of New York

### Dr. Edwin D. Duryea, Jr. Higher Education Memorial Award

**Sara Robinson**, Higher Education, PhD '24

### PhD Excellence Award

**Laureen Cantwell-Jurkovic**, Information Science, PhD '24

### Award of Excellence for Faculty Mentorship

**Alexa Schindel**, Selected by graduating PhD students for her deep commitment to student mentorship

At the commencement ceremony the following day, Dean Rosenblith presented several additional awards, acknowledging exceptional contributions to the GSE community:

### 1 Excellence in Community Outreach and Engagement Award

**Marcus Deveso**, Learning and Teaching in Social Contexts, EdD '24

### 2 Excellence in Equity, Diversity, Justice and Inclusion Award

**Hifza Nasar**, Early Childhood Education, EdM '24

### 3 Excellence in Research Award

**Madilynn Rutherford**, Counseling/School Psychology, PhD '24

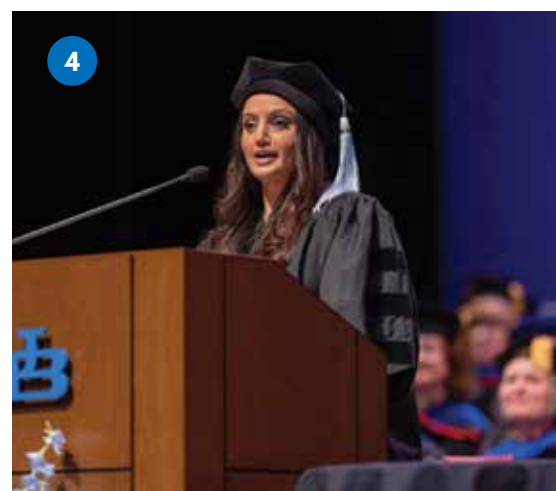
### 4 Delbert Mullens "Thinking Outside the Box" Award

**Finune Shaibi**, Educational Leadership and Policy, EdD '24

The ceremony also featured an inspiring speech by Finune Shaibi as the event's student speaker. She encouraged her fellow graduates with these words: "To my fellow graduates, I urge you to never lose sight of the impact you can have. Your work will touch the lives of countless individuals, shaping their futures in ways both big and small. ... Remember that you have the power to inspire, to uplift and to transform lives. Let your passion for education be a beacon of light in a world that can sometimes feel dark."

### Congratulations, Class of 2024!

At left: The family of the late Delbert Mullens attended GSE's 2024 commencement ceremony to congratulate Finune Shaibi on receiving the Delbert Mullens "Thinking Outside the Box" Award.



## BULLETIN BOARD

# On the Move | HONORS, AWARDS AND PROMOTIONS

### FACULTY AWARDS AND HONORS



**Sam Abramovich**, associate professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction and Information Science, has been named associate dean for academic affairs.



**Tasha Austin**, assistant professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction, was named a 2024 National Academy of Education (NAEd)/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellow, as well as the 2024 Early Career Award Winner for the Research Special Interest Group of the American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages.



**Catherine Cook-Cottone**, professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, published a book, "The Embodied Healing Workbook," that won silver in the Independent Book Publishers Association's (IBPA) Benjamin Franklin Award in the Body, Mind & Spirit category for 2023.



**Elisabeth Etopio**, clinical professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction, has been named interim associate dean for teacher education.



**Jaekyung Lee**, professor in the Department of Counseling, School and

Educational Psychology, received the UB Exceptional Scholar Sustained Achievement Award and was named a UB Fellow for AI in the Classroom.



**Timothy Monreal**, assistant professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction, was named a 2024 National Academy of Education (NAEd)/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellow.



**Amy Reynolds**, professor and chair in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, was elected to the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association, representing Division 17 of Counseling Psychology.



**Tangela Roberts**, assistant professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, recently passed the psychology licensure exam to become a licensed psychologist.



**Stephen Santa-Ramirez**, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, is the recipient of a 2023-24 UB Exceptional Scholar-Young Investigator Award.



**Margaret Saltee**, professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, has been named department chair.



**Saguna Shankar**, assistant professor in the Department of Information Science, was the 2024 recipient of the Doctoral Dissertation Award from the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) and the winner of the Eugene Garfield Doctoral Dissertation Competition of the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) for "Caring for Newcomer Communities and Their Data: An Inquiry into Interdependence in Information Practices."



**Paris Wicker**, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, is the recipient of the Irvin Lee (Bobby) Wright Dissertation of the Year Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) for her dissertation titled,

*Continued on next page*

# On the Move | HONORS, AWARDS AND PROMOTIONS

"Who Gets to be Well? A Multi-Method Social Network Analysis of Well-Being for Black and Indigenous College Students."



**Jinting Wu**, associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, received a Faculty Research Award from the Communities of Care program in UB's College of Arts and Sciences, supported by a grant from the Mellon Foundation for her project titled "From Burnout to Renewal: Centering Healing and Wellbeing in Post-Pandemic Education through a Heart-Based Contemplative Approach."

## STUDENT AWARDS



**Melinda Haas**, an information science PhD student, has been named one of Buffalo Business First's 40 Under 40.



**Taji Johnson**, an education studies master's student and UB Bulls wide receiver, has earned the Mid-American Conference's student-athlete award, presented to those who have shown tremendous impact and excellence in inclusion efforts.

## ALUMNI AWARDS



**Elizabeth Adelman**, MLS '94 director of the UB Charles B. Sears Law Library and vice dean for legal information services in the School of Law, was appointed to the rank of SUNY Distinguished Librarian, the first librarian in UB history to receive that distinction.



## STAFF AWARDS

**Amber Winters, Danielle LeGare, Nicole Mehman-Davidow** and **William J. Belz III**, members of the GSE marketing and communications team, in partnership with **Ellen Stay**, were awarded a Judges' Citation for Excellence in Design for both the fall 2023 issue of Learn magazine and A College Graduate's Guide to Becoming a Teacher in NYS e-book in the SUNY CUAD Awards of Excellence.

## FACULTY PROMOTIONS



**Erin Kearney** in the Department of Learning and Instruction has been promoted to professor.



**Tiffany Karalis Noel** in the Department of Learning and Instruction has been promoted to clinical associate professor.



**LaGarrett King** in the Department of Learning and Instruction has been promoted to professor.



**Namsook Kim** in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy has been promoted to clinical associate professor.



**Amanda Nickerson** in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology has been named SUNY Distinguished Professor.



**Amanda Winkelsas** in the Department of Learning and Instruction has been promoted to clinical associate professor.

## Visiting Faculty



**Xueying (Sherry) Gao** is a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Counseling,

School and Educational Psychology. A native of Dongying, China, she holds a PhD in methodology, measurement and analysis from the University of Central Florida. Gao's research focuses on using quantitative methods, like educational data mining to improve student engagement and achievement, with a focus on MOOCs and learning algorithms. She works across education, social work and public health, and has published on topics such as the efficacy of computer-adaptive reading programs.

## WELCOME TO GSE

**Fabian Barch** joined the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology as a postdoctoral associate.

**Bethany Daniel** joined the Institute of Learning Sciences as a postdoctoral associate.

**Deana Forbes** joined the Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education as a graduate fellow.

**Abigail Henry** joined the Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education as a graduate fellow.

**Ari Hock** joined the Institute of Learning Sciences as a postdoctoral associate.

**Heather Killen** joined the Institute of Learning Sciences as a postdoctoral associate.

**Kathleen Kinney** has joined the UB Teacher Residency Program as a program manager.

**Hannah Montgomery** joined the Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education and the Center for Literacy and Reading Instruction as a program and operations administrator.

**Khadejah Ray** joined the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy as a postdoctoral associate.

**Vonetta Rhodes** has joined the UB Teacher Residency Program as a program manager.

**Michael Sheridan** has joined the Early Childhood Research Center as an early childhood lead.

**Aprell Scott** has joined the Dean's Office as executive assistant to the dean.

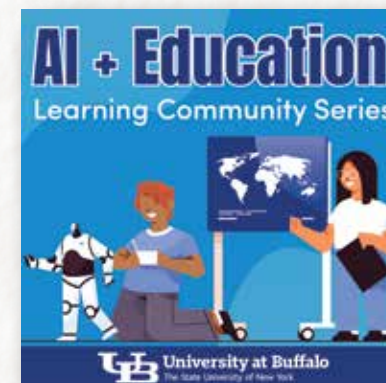
**Xintian Tu** joined the Institute of Learning Sciences as a postdoctoral associate.

**Julianna Walker** has joined the Early Childhood Research Center as an early childhood assistant.

## Event Recap

### Ai + Education Learning Community Series

This series is scheduled to occur every fourth Tuesday of the month. It began on Jan. 23, 2024, and continues through Dec. 17, 2024.



### The Department of Information Science Spring Research Seminar

"Enhancing Community Resilience: An Interdisciplinary Study of Midwestern Public Libraries" featuring Iulian Vamanu, PhD, University of Iowa | May 9, 2024

### PhD Awards and Recognition Ceremony

May 16, 2024



# Event Recap

**Commencement**  
May 17, 2024



**New Student Orientation**  
Aug. 24, 2024



**Institute for Learning Sciences Talk Series**

- **"Giving Them Their Flowers: Youth Participatory Archives and WOC Digital Art Exhibitions as Intergenerational Sites of Learning"** featuring Wendy Barrales, PhD, New York University | Sept. 18, 2024



**Teacher Residency Summer Institute**  
July 10-11, 2024 | Aug. 13-15, 2024

**Teacher Education Summit**  
July 17, 2024

**Teaching Black History Conference**  
July 26-28, 2024



**Igniting Equity in Education Conference** | Aug. 9-10, 2024

**Dean's Leadership Team Retreat**  
Visit to Foster Hall  
| Aug. 13, 2024



**Ice Cream Social**  
Aug. 27, 2024

**Department of Information Science Fall Seminar Series**  
**"Trajectories of Knowledge Work: Evidence from an Online Freelance Labor Market"** featuring Steven B. Sawyer, PhD, Syracuse University | Sept. 12, 2024



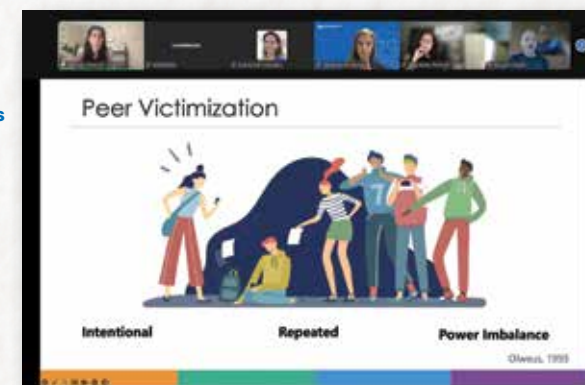
- **"Collaborative Map Building to Engage a Rural Community's Locally-Held, Landscape-Based Climate Knowledge"** featuring Heather Killen, PhD, University at Buffalo | Oct. 9, 2024
- **"Designing the Future of Learning: Collective Embodied Play in Mixed Reality for Young Children"** featuring Xintian Tu, PhD, University at Buffalo | Oct. 23, 2024
- **"Visions of Wallingford: Neighborhood Learning through Collaborative Filmmaking"** featuring Ari Hock, PhD, University at Buffalo | Nov. 20, 2024



**Dean's Lecture Series**  
**"Trans-disciplinary Learning with Community at Heart"** featuring Miwa Takeuchi, PhD, University of Calgary | Sept. 20, 2024



**Alberti Center Colloquium Series**  
**"Understanding the Effects of Peer Victimization on Adolescent Health: Pathways and Protective Factors"** featuring Hannah Schacter, PhD, Wayne State University | Sept. 24, 2024



**CLaRI Colloquium Series**  
**"The Science of Reading: A Conversation with P. David Pearson and Fenice Boyd"** featuring P. David Pearson, PhD, University of California, Berkeley and Fenice B. Boyd, PhD, University of South Carolina | Sept. 26, 2024



**"Learning Across Cultures: A Conversation Connecting International and Domestic Students"** featuring UB GSE's Erin Kearney, PhD, and Nate Daun-Barnett, PhD. | Oct. 8, 2024

**Cellphone Ban Webinar** featuring UB GSE's Stephanie Fredrick, PhD, Katy Leigh-Osroosh, PhD, and Amanda Nickerson, PhD. | Oct. 10, 2024

**Presidential/Schomburg Reception**  
Oct. 18, 2024

**VITAL Scholars Presentations**  
Oct. 16-17, 2024

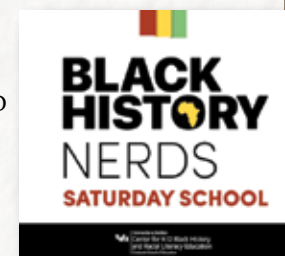


**Alberti Center Conference**  
**"Current Practices for Preventing Bullying and Promoting Safety in Schools and Online"** featuring Catherine P. Bradshaw, PhD, University of Virginia and Kira Wong O'Connor, Head of Youth Well-Being and Creator Safety Policy Engagement Youth Safety Policy at Meta. | Oct. 23, 2024

**70th Anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education**  
**"Lift Every Voice"** featuring Jillian Hanesworth, the first poet laureate of Buffalo, NY. | Nov. 7, 2024

**Black History Nerds Saturday School Professional Development Series**

- **"Black Elephants in the Room"** featuring Corey D. Fields, PhD | Apr. 27, 2024
- **"From West Philadelphia to Burlington, Vermont: African American History for Teachers"** featuring Abigail Henry | May 11, 2024
- **"We Refuse: A Forceful History of Black Resistance"** featuring Kellie Carter Jackson, PhD | Sept. 24, 2024
- **"Black Millennials, Slipping Alliances and the Democratic Party"** featuring Donovan Watts, PhD | Oct. 12, 2024
- **"60th anniversary of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project"** featuring La TaSha Levy, PhD | Nov. 9, 2024





## GSE alum travels the world in search of written works in or about Indigenous African languages

BY NICOLE MEHLMAN-DAVIDOW

ABOVE: OCTOBER 21, 1988. COURTESY, UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO

RIGHT: NOVEMBER 6, 1989. COURTESY, UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO



Dorothy Woodson, MS '76, has spent her career collecting written works in various languages from the African continent that have begun to disappear as globalization increases.

As a child, Woodson received a colorful atlas from her parents. When she saw the continent of Africa, she was mesmerized by its shape and thus began a life of interest in faraway places, geography, languages and culture.

"I am sure there were other moments that sparked my interest, but I want to give my parents credit," joked Woodson. "At seven or eight years old, I remember that atlas distinctly, and for the rest of my education, I knew I wanted to learn more about the countries on the continent."

This fascination became a passion, and armed with undergraduate and graduate degrees in geography, Woodson made her way to UB to develop her career as a scholar.

"I had an enjoyable path to my career through UB," said Woodson. "I knew I wanted to enter the library and information program because it was a route to pursue my academic interests. My spouse at the time had a job at UB and that provided me a chance to study and work there."

Training to become a librarian in the 1970s looked different when Woodson was a student. There were no computers and no Google. She and her colleagues were like detectives as they searched for leads to find written works.

"I was in the program before the internet! We were trained to find information without the use of search engines," said Woodson. "The most challenging and fulfilling part of the job was when we would find something that had been difficult."

After completing the program, Woodson worked at UB's Lockwood Library for 20 years, beginning in 1977. "I was the bibliographer for social sciences, and I was responsible for buying books in those fields. As a research librarian, I helped faculty and students find materials," said Woodson. "We didn't have computers when I first started, and even now, much is not available online, so librarians will need this detective work skillset."

Woodson also was a faculty member at UB, teaching classes about research methods in various

subject areas. While a faculty member, Woodson also was part of the faculty senate, and she held positions as secretary and vice chair while also participating on the executive committee.

After being so involved at UB, an offer from Yale University provided Woodson a chance to truly specialize in African studies. She joined the Yale library staff in 2000.

"Yale provided me a wonderful opportunity to concentrate on what I was passionate about. I was responsible for sub-Saharan Africa, while others were also specialized based on other geographic regions," she explained. "As the curator of African studies, I was responsible for collecting anything published or printed in various countries on the continent."

The preservation of material written in Indigenous languages became a goal for Woodson, who believes as globalization continues, there is a risk of these languages being lost forever. "Africa is made up of 52

**"We didn't have computers when I first started, and even now, much is not available online, so librarians will need this detective work skillset."**

countries, and I think we tend to lump the continent as one country," she explained. "The reality is that Africa has about a third of the world's languages. Nigeria alone has 250 or so languages and dialects. At Yale, I tried to collect as many of these items as I could, so that they would be available for future generations."

Woodson retired from Yale in 2017 and resides in Virginia. However, she still travels frequently. "Everywhere I have been around the world I love, but my heart is in Eswatini and South Africa," she said.

When asked what advice she would give current students looking into librarianship, Woodson said: "The field offers so many opportunities for students from various disciplines. For example, language majors can become cataloguers, computer majors can work in data-related fields, and those with graduate degrees in the disciplines can specialize in areas related to their subject."

## A passion for community, a dedication to serving and a mission to share the journey

BY JANA EISENBERG

PhD student Courtney Copeland's affinity for mental health started early during high school when she interned in her school's counseling center. "I worked alongside the social worker, psychologists and counselors, and doing peer mediations," said the Buffalo native. She was also exposed to the field through close family members' careers.

Between 2006 and 2015, Copeland earned a BA (psychology), and two MS degrees (one in clinical mental health; the other in school counseling). She was working as an elementary school counselor in North Carolina. But she quickly concluded that she wanted to do more, and on a larger scale.

Then the pandemic struck and two of her students died. "It hit me very hard. I was accepted into the PhD program and came back to Buffalo during the shutdown. I started the program, and also cared for my grandparents. I was part of my communities again in a different way," Copeland said.

Being a Black woman working for a doctorate could feel daunting, Copeland noted. But in her experience, especially having attended an HBCU (historically Black college/university), it was realistic. "I can see and touch it. Friends and former classmates are my role models," she said. "They've shown me what is possible."

One of her research interests, and now her dissertation topic, is deeply personal. "I've been around sports and Black athletes most of my life. I became interested in sports psychology. At UB, I've worked with athletes,

focusing on mental health. This feels like 'where I belong,'" she said.

"'Masculinity' can almost be a bad word—we usually refer to it in the hegemonic sense: 'toxic masculinity.' We don't see the resilience, or the advocacy that is needed, especially and historically, in our Black male athletes."

Copeland, also an enrolled Seneca Nation member, recently received an award from the UB Department of Indigenous Studies for her research.

"I support and am involved in both Black and Seneca communities. Coming back to Buffalo was an opportunity to continue this support. I feel

fortunate to be working alongside the Seneca Nation in Buffalo," said Copeland.

"It's also opened my eyes to the historical harm done, especially through research, for example, not sharing resources garnered from research with its participants."

Copeland co-hosts and founded "Diagnosing Sitcoms and Movies," a podcast described as "a deep dive into Black television shows and films...to help expand the conversation around mental health."

The podcast brings to life her commitment to making her knowledge accessible. "I have a responsibility to share the academic and scientific information that I'm receiving with the community. The podcast is fun, and it's a way to get the conversation started about mental health—to alleviate some of the stigma," she said.

Her dissertation advisor and professor, Amy L. Reynolds, chair of the Department of Counseling, School and Educational

Psychology, described Copeland as "one of our most creative and community-minded doctoral students. An advocate for social justice

issues and sensitive to meeting the needs of those who are underserved or overlooked, she donates time to community causes, including Native American organizations and projects for Black youth in Buffalo."

Copeland noted, "One of my greatest accomplishments at UB is that another Indigenous female who I know from the community is entering into the program. It is important both that I go, and that I take my people with me."



Courtney Copeland combines her passions for mental health, community advocacy and research in her personal life and academic career.

## Class Notes

### 1960s

**Mary Boehm**, EdM '60, is a docent at the Buffalo AKG Art Gallery and the Burchfield Penney Art Center. She authored "Exploring Science and Art: Discovering Connections."

### 1970s

**Ann Lukasuk Marbach Kling**, MLS '74, retired as library director of the Clearview Library District in northern Colorado.

**Sharon Green**, EdM '78, retired from Niagara University after a 35-year career. She is a co-founder and public relations director of Global African Village, a small, all-volunteer nonprofit doing humanitarian work in rural Uganda. She also serves on the board of directors of the New York College Learning Skills Association (NYCLSA) and the Cazenovia Neighborhood Library in Buffalo.

### 1980s

**Joyce Maguda**, MLS '82, completed a 32-year career with the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library System and is the secretary for the Friends of Libraries Section of the New York Library Association. Last fall, she published a children's book "Mister Turkey's Song."

### 1990s

**Timothy Tryjankowski**, EdM '93, was the chair of the UB Professional Staff Senate, and recently retired from UB after a 33-year career in state service.

**Dennis Valone**, EdD '93, received the Pennsylvania Psychological Association's award for distinguished contributions to school psychology.

**Kevin McKelvey**, EdM '95, recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the UB undergraduate program at the Singapore Institute of Management, where he has served as resident director since the program was launched in 2004.

**Sally Snow**, BFA '92, MLS '95, retired from her position as assistant director for the Monroe County Library System in Rochester. She is working at UB in the College of Arts and Sciences as the sector administrative director for arts and humanities.

### 2000s

**Anne Marie Siejakowski**, BA '00, MLS '03, is an avid marathoner and previously worked as an academic librarian for 10 years within UB's libraries. She enters her 17th year teaching grades 7-12.

**Michael Mancini**, EdM '05, was promoted to vice president of institutional strategy and COO at Thomas Edison State University. He also is the vice president of the board of directors for the United Way of Greater Mercer County.

### 2010s

**Nicole LaMoreaux**, MLS '11, is the assistant director of research and instructional services at The New School. She and her husband, Ari Ress '11, married on April 1, 2023.

**Elle Collins**, BA '14, EdM '16, is serving as interim director of The Center for Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement at the University of Florida. She also is the director of The Machen Florida Opportunity Scholars Program (MFOS).

### 2020s

**Giambattista Davis**, EdM '20, started a new role at Cornell University as the assistant director for the Office of Inclusive Excellence in the College of Engineering.

**Monica Johnson**, PhD '20, won the American Psychological Association Division 17's Early Career Psychologist Social Justice award. She also was elected as Division 17's representative to the American Psychological Association Council of Representatives, the legislative body of APA.

**Sarah Smykowski**, EdM '20, became the associate director of communications and web in UB's School of Dental Medicine in January 2024.

**Boston Kistka-Montoro**, BA '19, EdM '21, is a program officer for the Fulbright specialist program at World Learning in Washington, D.C. She married her long-time partner Mike in Savannah, GA this past May.

**Raymond LeMay III**, MLS '21, was named library director for the Cohoes Public Library in May 2024.

**Christopher Spence**, EdM '13, PhD '21, was appointed superintendent of schools for the Utica City School District.

**Eleanor McCabe**, EdM '20, PhD '22, was elected president of Division 44 (Society for the Psychological Study of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity) within the American Psychological Association.

**Heather McCarthy**, Adv. Cert. '19, EdD '22, is principal of Holmes Elementary School in the Kenmore-Tonawanda UFSD.

**Margaret Colbert**, MLS '23, started a new position as the library coordinator for the University of Maine at Machias.



## Honoring the memory of Chandra R. Murphy

GSE RECENTLY EXPERIENCED the profound loss of **Chandra R. Murphy**, who unexpectedly passed away on April 16 at the age of 54. For more than two decades, Murphy served as the assistant to the dean. But her role was much more than that—she was the heart of the school.

With 28 years of service at UB, including 23 years in GSE, Murphy was a constant presence that many turned to for guidance, a smile or a much-needed laugh. Her professionalism and dedication were undeniable, but it was her kindness and compassion that left a lasting impression on those she encountered.

Murphy began her career at UB in 1996 as administrative support in the Division of Public Service and Urban Affairs. In 2001, she transitioned to GSE, where her skills and commitment to excellence flourished. Serving under three deans—Mary Gresham, Jaekyung Lee and Suzanne Rosenblith—Murphy was known for her institutional knowledge, warmth and sense of humor.

"It is still so hard to believe that Chandra is no longer with us," Rosenblith said. "Chandra was a consummate professional and a supportive assistant, but that doesn't come even close to describing her.

"She had this enormous laugh that could turn even the worst day into a bright spot. She always made everyone feel welcome. She understood the power of relationships and fostered them throughout GSE and UB."

"Chandra left an indelible mark on GSE but has also left one on me personally," she added.

Since her passing, GSE's community has recounted similar thoughts and memories. To those who knew her, Murphy was more than just a colleague.

"Chandra and I formed a special friendship during our time in GSE. She was one of the funniest people I know and had a way of making me laugh so hard, I cried," recalled Dawn Haak, GSE administrative operations coordinator.

"I miss our chats in the office and our walks in and out of work. I think about her all the time and will never forget the

amazing colleague and friend she was to me."

Kristine Mariglia, GSE director of personnel and finance, shared similar sentiments. "Chandra's presence in our office was more than just professional—it was a source of warmth and support, and most of all, friendship. I was blessed to know and work beside Chandra for over 15 years," she added.

Although Murphy had already built countless relationships throughout the years at UB, she always made time to welcome new colleagues warmly. Caroline Hurley, GSE events manager, fondly remembered Murphy's mentorship and friendship,

"When I started at UB," she noted, "I had to learn everything, and Chandra was a source of great knowledge for me in my role. She was helpful and always willing to share information that was pertinent to my work. Even if there were questions I didn't know I needed the answers to, she would sit with me and make sure I had everything I needed," Hurley shared.

Murphy also made time to learn about co-workers on a personal level. "I loved running into her at Tim Hortons some mornings, where we would catch up on the weekend or my wedding plans," Hurley said. "One thing I admired about Chandra was how steadfast her faith was. How she was at work was how she was in her everyday life. She was giving of her time, talents and gifts to anyone who needed them."

Murphy's impact on GSE was immeasurable, and her absence is felt deeply. As the GSE community reflects on her life and contributions, we honor her memory and generous spirit.

"Chandra was a bright light, always willing to lend a helping hand, share a kind word or offer her thoughtful guidance," said Mariglia.

"We will miss her dearly—her wisdom, her energy and the unique way she made every day better just by being herself," said Mariglia. "Chandra's memory will be forever in our hearts, and her contributions to both our team and our lives will not be forgotten."



*"Chandra's presence in our office was more than just professional—it was a source of warmth and support, and most of all, friendship." —Kristine Mariglia*



# IN MEMORIAM

Remembering recently deceased members of our cherished GSE community

## Faculty

### Michael Kibby

NOVEMBER 19, 1942–MAY 16, 2024

Michael W. Kibby, a beloved GSE faculty member, died on May 16, 2024, at the age of 81. His legacy as an educator, researcher and community leader has left a lasting mark on both the university and the community in Western New York.

Kibby joined the UB faculty in 1974, dedicating 38 years to advancing the field of reading education. He was widely respected for his expertise in the science of reading, contributing significantly to research that informed teaching practices and policy.

As the director of the Center for Literacy and Reading Instruction (Clari), Kibby mentored countless graduate students,

**He was widely respected for his expertise in the science of reading, contributing significantly to research that informed teaching practices and policy.**

helping them develop the skills necessary to become effective reading specialists. Under his leadership, Clari became a vital resource for Western New York, providing free literacy assessments and interventions to hundreds of children in the Buffalo area.

In addition to his professional achievements, Kibby was known for his warmth, humor and dedication to his family. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather, and his colleagues and students often spoke of his kindness and generosity. Kibby's legacy lives on through the thousands of educators he trained, the children whose lives were improved by his work and the colleagues who were inspired by his dedication and passion.



## Alumni

### 1940s

**Richard D. Keil**,  
BEd '49 | 06/11/2024

### 1950s

**Joseph C. Girard**,  
BEd '56 | 04/23/2023

**Dolores A. Liebner**, MS  
'59, BA '56 | 09/20/2023

**Naomi K. Mintzer**,  
BE '56 | 04/04/2024

**Esther M. Posmantur**,  
BE '53 | 05/08/2024

### 1960s

**John F. Aceti**,  
EdM '61 | 02/13/2024

**David M. Brogan**, EdM '63,  
BEd '59 | 06/13/2024

**Timothy J. Butler**,  
EdM '66 | 02/12/2024

**Ned E. Dingman**,  
EdM '79 | 04/21/2023

**George I. Doohar**,  
EdM '69 | 01/21/2023

**Patricia A. Dyer**, EdM '64,  
BEd '60 | 10/23/2023

**Richard J. Giannicchi**,  
EdM '69, BA '64 |  
06/13/2023

**Charles J. King**,  
EdM '64 | 06/09/2024

**Dr. Charles S. Mancuso**,  
EdD '69 | 07/31/2024

**Helen M. Martin**,  
EdM '61 | 06/01/2024

**Judith Flak Mahoney**,  
EdM '69 | 08/01/2024

**Donald A. Mattea**,  
EdM '69 | 06/19/2024

**William Monkarsh**, EdM  
'65, BEd '62 | 07/30/2024

**Gail E. Nelson**,  
BEd '68 | 06/24/2024

**Daniel Rockwitz**,  
BEd '65 | 07/02/2024

**Michael L. Russo**,  
EdM '65 | 05/15/2024

**Conrad J. Sharrow**, EdM  
'63, BA '62 | 07/22/2024

**Robert S. Swiatek**,  
EdM '66 | 11/28/2023

**Paul J. Williams Jr.**,  
EdM '69 | 06/30/2024

**Richard L. Wuertzer**,  
EdM '64 | 07/05/2024

**Tina A. Zayhowski**,  
EdM '69 | 06/05/2024

### 1970s

**Patricia C. Bernhard**,  
MLS '78 | 2024

**Dr. Douglas L. Burleigh**,  
PhD '76 | 06/29/2024

**Gerald A. Cantor**, EdM  
'72, BS '68 | 03/31/2024

**Judith A. Condino**,  
EdM '73 | 08/05/2024

**Dr. Vincent J. Coppola**,  
PhD '72, EdM '66 |  
04/05/2024

**Ruth L. Falbo**,  
MS '74 | 08/16/2024

**Patty L. Donegan**,  
EdM '71 | 09/18/2023

**Dr. Thomas G. Frank**,  
PhD '75 | 05/11/2024

**Dr. Gerald J. Hayden**, PhD  
'73, EdM '50 | 07/03/2024

**Donna M. Johnson**,  
BS '75 | 06/11/2024

**Dr. Joseph K. Riordan**,  
PhD '79 | 04/18/2024

**Fern I. Suckow**,  
EdM '70 | 07/16/2024

**Lieve Vankerckhoven**,  
EdM '70 | 10/23/2023

**Dr. Arthur O. White, III**, PhD  
'71, EdM '68 | 05/06/2023

### 1980s

**Dr. Ruth G. Keenan**, PhD  
'89, EdM '73 | 04/09/2024

**Angeline J. Gomez**, MS  
'80, BA '77 | 08/26/2024

**Mary A. Licker**,  
MLS '85 | 07/28/2024

**Laurie A. Maxwell**, EdM  
'88, BA '86 | 06/26/2024

### 1990s

**Margaret Cook Lew**, MLS  
'95, MBA '79 | 05/21/2024

**David A. Nojaim**,  
EdM '98 | 08/04/2024

**Dr. Elaine B. Richards**,  
PhD '92 | 04/10/2024

**Graham Smith**, MLS '97,  
BA '91 | 08/21/2024

### 2000s

**Lisa J. Aragona**, Adv. Cert.  
'03 | 05/15/2024

**John P. Handyside**,  
CAS '11, BS '05 | 02/11/2024

**Daysi P. McGill**, EdM '05,  
BA '00 | 07/27/2024

### 2010s

**Jennifer L. Abbott**,  
MLS '17 | 08/13/2024

### 2020s

**Christy D. Singh**,  
Adv. Cert. '21 | 04/01/2024

## Xiufeng Liu

Distinguished Professor  
LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION



I retired this past summer after 22 years as a faculty member in GSE's Department of Learning and Instruction (LAI). I did so with a heart full of gratitude: gratitude for the students who have trusted me to guide them, for the colleagues who have collaborated with me on grants and other work, and for UB which has been my second home.

My years at UB were an incredible journey filled with memories, challenges, and triumphs, each contributing to the tapestry of my

career. When I first began this journey, I was filled with a sense of excitement and anticipation. The opportunity to shape young minds, to inspire and be inspired, was a calling that I embraced wholeheartedly. Over the years, I have had the privilege of teaching and mentoring hundreds of students, particularly doctoral students and post-docs, each one leaving an indelible mark on my heart. Watching them grow, succeed and sometimes stumble has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.

Collaboration with colleagues has been another cornerstone of my career at UB. I am proud to say that I have worked with faculty from every GSE department and every UB school on externally funded grants, as well as many university task forces and committees. I have contributed my part to LAI, GSE and UB. The friendships and professional relationships I have built are among my most cherished memories.

Retirement is not an end, but a new beginning. In fact, I have already started an academic position overseas. I look forward to continuing my passion for scholarly work in STEM education, teaching and mentoring graduate students and post-docs, and providing services to my new university, community, and the profession. While I will miss the UB true blue, I carry with me the fun memories built and wisdom made at UB to my new journey.

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this incredible journey. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as a faculty member in LAI and GSE for the past 22 years!

My years at UB were an incredible journey filled with memories, challenges, and triumphs.

## Yuldonna (Chestnut) Middleton

Assistant Director  
UB TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAM



My career as an educator extended more than three decades as a high school business teacher; coordinator for entrepreneurship, banking and school-to-work; district supervisor; assistant principal and substitute principal. Moving on to work at UB was a natural progression for me. Being part of the leadership team for the UB Teacher Residency Program, in its infancy stage, gave me the opportunity to do what I love most—help others from marginalized communities to

progress. It was an incredible, highly skilled team that truly believed in the mission and vision of the program.

We, along with Buffalo Public School teachers and administrators, shared knowledge and skills that helped redesign the teacher preparation program for the entire university. I am so grateful to have worked with each of the team members and to have had the support of UB department heads and office administrators.

The teachers graduating from the UB Teacher Residency Program are better equipped with academic, social, emotional and first-hand practical preparation that has already proven to have a positive impact on children. I feel fulfilled in retiring from this type of educational work at this time.

It is with bittersweetness, yet excitement, that I take on a new life journey. A personal journey enabling me to explore my African roots, network with others and further contribute my knowledge, wisdom and experience to my children, grandchildren and the community.

Thank you, UB, for bringing me on board. It culminates a journey that was extremely enriching, rewarding and gratifying!

It is with bittersweetness, yet excitement, that I take on a new life journey.

# Welcome to the stampede: Meet Ed!

BY MARINA BARBOPOULOS

Introducing Ed, the newest member of the GSE family! His name represents our Graduate School of Education, and he's already making his mark across all of GSE's social media channels.

Ed made his debut at the Teaching Black History conference, and we knew right away we had something special. Since then, he's been spotted in all of the best places around UB—from hanging out on the academic spine to posing with the iconic bronze buffalo in front of the Center for the Arts and enjoying the peaceful views of Lake LaSalle.

Recently, Ed even helped highlight UB's bikeshare program, celebrated National Goose Day and read a book by one of his favorite GSE authors. He's proud to showcase everything that makes UB's community so unique.

More than just a furry friend, Ed embodies GSE's mission to connect with communities and foster innovative research.

We are so excited to see where Ed goes next! Follow along with Ed's adventures @UBGSE on Instagram, X, LinkedIn and Facebook.



Want to take Ed along on your next adventure and show your GSE pride? He has friends who travel, too! Email [GSEnews@buffalo.edu](mailto:GSEnews@buffalo.edu) to find out how you can get your own Ed and join in the fun.



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John Strong, assistant professor of learning and instruction, and Suzanne Rosenblith, GSE dean and professor, visit a tutoring program at Heritage Heights Elementary School, part of the Sweet Home district, in August 2024.

UB Photo/Douglas Levere