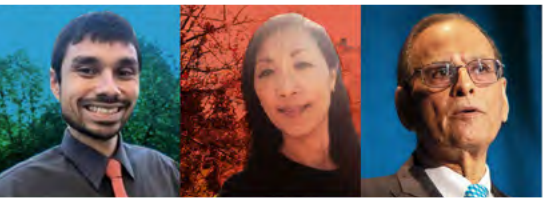


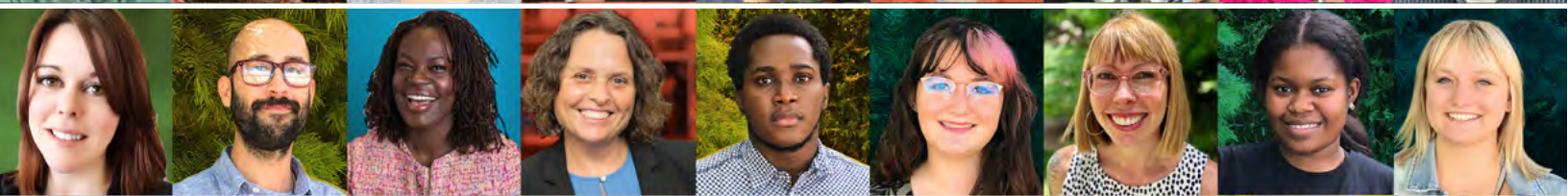
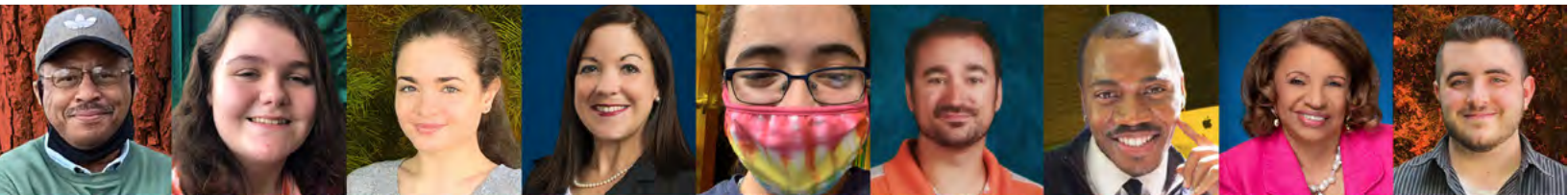
THE UB GSE MAGAZINE SPRING 2021

# Learn

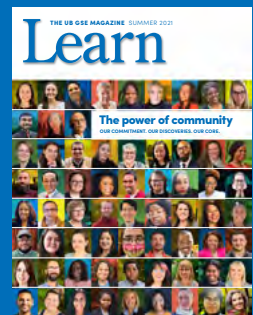


## The power of community

OUR COMMITMENT. OUR DISCOVERIES. OUR CORE.







SPRING 2021 • ISSUE 2

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**On The Cover:** A mosaic of faces of the people featured in the community stories. Photos were submitted and range from selfies showing personality to professional headshots and environmental cropped images.

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## ED ARTIFACT

# The composition notebook: A centuries-old design and its modern work

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

The composition notebook—ubiquitous, anonymous, cheap—hides a history that goes back centuries before it and its speckled black and white cover ascended to the school supply pantheon.

While modern purveyors sell a profusion of redesigns with recycled paper, dot grid pages and covers with constellations and metallic swirls, Pennsylvania's [Roaring Spring Paper Products](#) believes that its \$2 notebook was among the first in the U.S. to debut in the 1890s.



Photo illustration courtesy Roaring Spring Paper Products

"They were durable. They were cheap. No frills, no fuss, but they get the job done ... You can fold it in half and stick it in your back pocket ... You can't rip a page out without it being noticeable ... I think the composition is just sort of a go-to in education for those reasons," said Kristen Allen, marketing director for the 133-year-old company, which sells about 2 million a year.

The classic black-and-white cover design emerged in 19th century France and Germany. The mass-produced pattern imitated the elegant, ancient marbling technique of dipping paper into a dye bath rippling with color, said New York City designer Aron Fay.

His curiosity about the utilitarian book that his colleagues used to draft their work led him to study its evolution in rare book libraries, which he chronicled [online](#).

Fay then created his own fancy tribute that lay flat when opened, had thick paper and Italian cloth binding. In 2016, it took him 30 days to raise \$100,000 on Kickstarter and print thousands in Europe. "It still shocks me to this day," said Fay, principal and creative director of FAY Design.

His \$20 notebooks, with a speckle pattern he drew, sold out in six months. His Comp.design now features wrapping paper and totes.

The best part of his foray? Learning the history that started in about 1820 and, eventually, made it affordable for anyone to own a blank book ready to be filled with anything.

"It democratized writing," Fay said. "Start page one, plow through and write to the end of the book. You have this work. For me, personally, it's important to have this record to go back to ... Historically, each of the component pieces are not necessarily of the highest quality. They hold together in a miraculous way."



# Dear GSE Alumni and Friends



GSE faculty, staff, and students made clear throughout this trying year how seriously we take our mission as a public research university.

As we close out this extremely challenging academic year, it seems fitting to focus this issue of Learn on community and connecting. There should be no doubt that community and connecting are central to the work we do. I am so proud of the many ways GSE faculty, students, and staff reached out to lend support and provide assistance where needed. When the Buffalo Public Schools identified a need for their high school students, GSE's office of educator preparation jumped right in and designed a mutually beneficial homework assistance program. As the needs for more literacy support became apparent, once again GSE, with the very generous financial support of Liz Czarnecki, BA '76, EdM,'94, created a summer literacy program for students in Buffalo. Our admissions and advising staff have been nothing short of extraordinary in reaching out and making connections with prospective and current students. GSE faculty, staff, and students made clear throughout this trying year how seriously we take our mission as a public research university. Throughout the pages of this edition of Learn, you will read story after story of people coming together through their teaching, research, and service to help and support individuals and communities. Working with communities has been transformational for so many of us and indeed has provided us with new insights and perspectives. As we turn our attention to reopening GSE for in-person classes this fall, I am humbled and honored to be associated with such a talented group of faculty and staff and so grateful to partner with so many dedicated community members and advocates. Indeed, there is much work to do to realize more inclusive and equitable communities, but I feel certain that we are on the just path to doing so.

Kind Regards,

Suzanne Rosenblith

## GSE in the News

Headlines from stories that featured our faculty and students

"Another Voice: Police are ill-suited to handling mental health crises" featured Sabrina Musson, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology. [READ IT HERE](#)

"Chaos at the Capitol: Local parents, and teachers discuss the issue with children" included an interview with Claire Cameron, associate professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction. [READ IT HERE](#)

"'Struggling Like Hell: How COVID-19 Intensified the Pressure for Teachers Who Are Also Moms'" quoted Julie Gorlewski, professor and chair of the Department of Learning and Instruction. [READ IT HERE](#)

"Remote Learning Adds Major Pressure for Teacher Moms" featured Julie Gorlewski, professor and chair of the Department of Learning and Instruction. [READ IT HERE](#)

"Rethinking grades amid the pandemic: Back to the ABCs" quoted Corrie Stone-Johnson, associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. [READ IT HERE](#)

"How to tackle your child's weight gain" featured Myles Faith, professor and chair of the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology. [READ IT HERE](#)

"California governor proposes dual-admissions pathway for community college students" quoted Nathan Daun-Barnett, professor and chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. [READ IT HERE](#)

"Tough Talks: Families tackle current events with their children" featured Stephanie Frederick, assistant professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology. [READ IT HERE](#)

"As schools re-open across the country, there's one thing that has not gone away: lockdown drills" quoted Amanda Nickerson, professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology. [READ IT HERE](#)

"Adult support eases effects of bullying at boarding school" featured Stephanie Frederick, assistant professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology. [READ IT HERE](#)

"COVID-19 and School Reopening: Stakeholders Explore Merits of Reopening Schools" featured Adetola Salau, PhD student in Curriculum, Instruction and the Science of Learning. [READ IT HERE](#)





## The story behind the story: “Brilliant Brown Babies”



### DIY publishing: GSE alumna makes a children’s book from scratch and finds success on Amazon and social media

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

School psychologist and mother Desiree Williams, MA/AC '15, got serious about finishing her first children’s book the year her father died. Now, “Brilliant Brown Babies,” which she self-published and put on Amazon at the start of the pandemic, sells about 10 copies a week.

She dedicated the book to her dad, Charles A. Williams, a city health services administrator, “who always made sure all the brown babies in his life knew how brilliant they were.” It aims to get that message out to more children with bright, simply drawn characters inspired by Charles Schulz’s Peanuts, and affirming lines: “Brilliant brown babies... have curly, curly hair ... always care and share ... are smart, smart, smart!” and “love to make art.”

“I wanted it to be something that was colorful and engaging in rhyming language to build on those early learning skills and,” she said, “so that Black and brown children could read and feel proud of themselves.”

The project was inspired by her search for books when her son Cortland was almost 2. Not many had Black characters. “Children look for role models to see where they could be in life one day,” Williams said. “I think representation is so important. It is essential.” She works on this concept with students in her regular job at Hamlin Park Claude and Ouida Clapp Academy. “One of the things that I do all the time, as a school psychologist, is make sure the children who come into my office know how brilliant and special they are,” she said.

Williams credits her mother Tonja Williams, an associate superintendent at Buffalo Public Schools, for encouraging her to address racial inequities. This led Williams to GSE and course work about the African American experience. “We discussed things like racial disparities in special education, as well as testing biases, which truly encouraged

GSE alumna, school psychologist and mother Desiree Williams, MA/AC '16, with her son Cortland, 4, reading “Brilliant Brown Babies.” (Photo courtesy Desiree Williams)

my activism as a school psychologist and author,” said Williams.

As she started her book by writing it out, like a poem, she included Black culture and history. One page has a line about coming from kings and queens of Africa. A character wears a baseball cap with an X for Malcolm X. Another is dressed in red, black and green, the colors of the Pan-African flag designed by Marcus Garvey.

Cortland, now repeats phrases back to her, saying things like, “I’m a king, Mommy.” “I wanted to create something that would help parents teach their children,” said Williams.

As she’s shared the book, sometimes virtually with students, she’s been heartened by their response. One memorable takeaway from a children’s Zoom book club in Washington, D.C.: As she read the page about beautiful skin, she could see a little girl smile and point to herself, as if to say, “You’re talking about me!”

Children look for role models to see where they could be in life one day. I think representation is so important. It is essential.

Reactions like that have been their own reward. “I would write this book, or put another book out, for free,” she said. The experience led her to start a new one about helping children identify their emotions. “If you are able to access your emotions and know what to do with them,” she said, “it really opens up doors for your entire life.”

## BOOK STACKS

### Recent books published by members of the UB GSE community



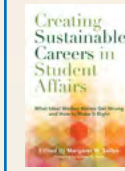
**“Literacy Instruction with Disciplinary Texts: Strategies for Grades 6-12”**

co-authored by John Strong, assistant professor, learning and instruction. Published in 2020 by Guilford Press, this book provides a blueprint for constructing literacy-rich instructional units in English language arts, science, and social studies and describes how to design interconnected text sets and plan lessons that support learning and engagement before, during, and after reading.



**“Negotiating Place and Space through Digital Literacies: Research and Practice (Digital Media and Learning)”**

co-edited by Ryan Rish, assistant professor, learning and instruction. Published in 2019 by Information Age Publishing, this book considers how space/place, identities, and the role of digital literacies create opportunities for individuals and communities to negotiate living, being, and learning together with and through digital media.



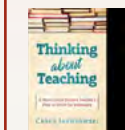
**“Creating Sustainable Careers in Student Affairs: What Ideal Worker Norms Get Wrong and How to Make it Right”**

edited by Margaret W. Sallee, associate professor, educational leadership and policy. Published in 2020 by Stylus Publishing, this book argues that the current structure of student affairs work is not sustainable, as it depends on the notion that employees are available to work non-stop without any outside responsibilities, that is, the “ideal worker norm.” The field places inordinate burdens on staff to respond to the needs of students, often at the expense of their own families and well-being.



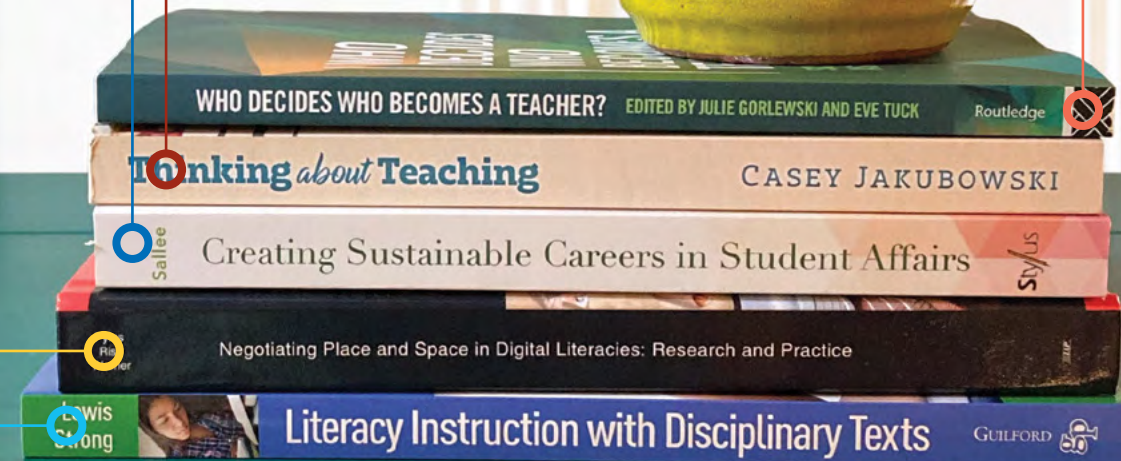
**“Who Decides Who Becomes a Teacher?: Schools of Education as Sites of Resistance”** co-edited by Julie Gorlewski, chair and associate professor, learning

and instruction. Published in 2019 by Routledge Press, the book extends the discussions and critiques of neoliberalism in education by examining the potential for Schools of Teacher Education to contest policies that perpetuate injustice in K-12 schooling. Drawing on a case study of faculty collaboration, this edited volume reimagines teacher preparation programs as crucial sites of resistance to, and refusal of, unsound education practices and legislation.



**“Thinking About Teaching: A Rural Social Studies Teacher's Path to Strive for Excellence”**

by Casey Jakubowski (AC, '08). Published in 2020 by EduMatch, this book seeks to give a voice to rural education, in this unstable time, and reflects on a wide range of research and experiences. It offers all educators a reflective voice to channel their own experiences on their journey, beginning to end.





BY MICHELLE KEARNS AND MARCENE ROBINSON



**UB and GSE alumna  
Amanda Knapp,  
BS '00, EdM '03,**

drew on her West Virginia roots when she began winning off-road racing competitions with a motorcycle graduation gift she got after earning her doctorate. Now as associate vice provost and assistant dean leading student success initiatives at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, she's found a connection between racing and academia. "It's all about keeping students on track," she said. "You find a way within yourself to overcome that hurdle ... It's all about having the right support around you. Anything is possible. We all cheer for our students. Just like racing." Read the full story on page 26.



**GSE Professor  
Jaekyung Lee**

will travel through Asia as he studies how to make education more accessible to girls, immigrants and refugees as part of his 2020-21 Fulbright Global Scholar Award, one of the most competitive in the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program. "My ultimate goal is to inform global education policy initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Education, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all," said Lee. Read the full story on page 37.



**Adetola  
Salau, a GSE  
PhD student**

in the Department of Learning and Instruction and a dual citizen of Nigeria and the U.S., is also the senior special assistant for education to the governor of Lagos State. Her focus on transforming Nigerian STEM education to be more hands-on and interactive came, in part, from her years living in New York, where she finished her bachelor's and master's degrees. She also learned as she taught STEM classes in secondary schools in South Carolina, North Carolina and California. Ahead in the fall issue: a story about how Salau is applying the lessons of her GSE coursework in real time as she launches innovative programming initiatives for the 5 million public and private school students of Lagos State. Stay tuned ... You can read the full story in our upcoming fall issue.



**A GSE research  
team adjusted  
a graphic-novel  
teaching project  
to fit COVID  
restrictions, and it went  
virtual and international.**

Fourteen students from the U.S., Mexico and India joined in by video calls and developed stories related to the issues and inequities at home and school that the pandemic highlighted. Their work and drawings, developed with leadership from UB and GSE educators, illustrated an educational truth: "Storytelling is a pathway to learning," said Sameer Honwad, program coordinator and GSE assistant professor of learning and instruction. Read the full story on page 32.



# Meet me in my (ad-hoc) office

with Tiffany Karalis Noel

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

The shutdowns of the pandemic highlighted how much travel means to Tiffany Karalis Noel, clinical assistant professor and director of doctoral studies, in the department of learning and instruction. As she worked from home, she noticed how objects in her apartment, like the giant wall map of the world, came through on Zoom and fostered conversation with the PhD students she supports through their dissertations.

Even Dexter, her new puppy, helped add levity from his dog bed on her desk. “This is real life,” said Karalis Noel, who also enjoyed glimpses of the cats and children from other people’s screens. “It really provides an opportunity to build rapport with students, and with my colleagues, in ways that are easily prompted by what’s going on in my background.”

Karalis Noel focuses her research on teacher education, mentoring relationships in higher education and the role of equity and inclusion in school environments.

A new doctor of education, or EdD, program co-created by Karalis Noel won state approval this year. The online, part-time degree in “Learning and Teaching in Social Contexts,” expects to enroll its first class next year and is designed for working professionals interested in conducting research to solve problems in education.

The program could, for example, support a school district leader interested in implementing and evaluating the educational impact of an antiracist curriculum. “It’s an opportunity to address those problems of practice that you’re observing in your local, educational community,” she said.

As Karalis Noel looks ahead to this fall’s return to campus, she plans to take elements of her virtual and home office into her space at Baldy Hall. Instead of the virtual door she kept open for students during the pandemic, she looks forward to leaving her real door open and seeing people in person again. A small new globe she’s marked with pins of places she wants to go – from the Galapagos Islands to Greece – will sit on her desk to foster conversation and help students consider the possibilities of research-related travel. “We’re definitely not going to take it for granted anymore,” she said..

## KARALIS NOEL’S RESEARCH AREAS

- Access and Equity
- Bullying
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Educator Preparation
- English Education
- ESL/ENL/Bilingual
- Gender, Culture and Equity
- Higher Education
- Linguistic, Discourse and Sociocultural Context
- Literacy
- Professional/Staff Development
- Qualitative Research Methods
- Race, Inequality and Education
- Social and Emotional Development

Prince’s “Purple Rain” album got a lot of play this past year. The artist is a favorite, in part because of his connection to home – Chicago for Karalis Noel and Minneapolis for her husband. “We both grew up listening to a lot of Prince. It was something that we both really connected over when we met. So, when we are feeling stressed or feeling like we need to do something else other than stare at our laptop screens ... something that we do is play our records. Even though it’s just the two of us and our two cats and dog, we’ll dance around the apartment. It’s a really great form of release for us.

Karalis Noel bought this world map with her husband, Brett after they were married in 2018. They use it to plan and chronicle their journeys. The COVID-19 restrictions elevated its importance. “We’ve been spending a lot more time standing in front of this map and just saying, ‘OK, so where are we going to go?’” she said.

Next to the wedding photo, there is a jigsaw puzzle of Madison, Wisc., home to the University of Wisconsin where they both went to college.

Dexter, who they got as a puppy from a Wisconsin friend last fall, has been happiest in his dog-bed perch on the desk. He was a silver lining for Karalis Noel and her husband during the pandemic. They knew they had the time to give him the walks he needed. “It’s just a joy to have that experience of raising a little puppy, which we both always wanted to do and never really felt the time was right,” she said. “He has been a light for both of us during this difficult time.”

(Photo/ Brett Noel)



# LESSONS

[in community]



“Working with communities is transformational. The stories in this issue of Learn highlight the seriousness with which we take our responsibilities as a public research university.”

Suzanne Rosenblith, Dean

## Community matters.

It defines who we are. It aligns with our mission as a public research university and graduate school of education. Community and its lessons strengthen academics with innovations and evidence-based practices, improve opportunities for people and spark creativity.

Communities are organic opportunities. They form and intersect. Relationships develop and learning happens when education, ideas and impact expand.

This work is at the very core of our purpose. It's in GSE's DNA.

Faculty ground their research in local schools. They design projects that aid educators and address emerging issues, like racial justice and learning in virtual classrooms.

Our students pitch in with life-changing efforts, like providing free tutoring for a public school system when teachers, students and parents struggled with the shift to online learning.

We come together to ensure that a student struggling with the isolation of the pandemic feels supported and included in his new GSE community so that he can imagine his future as a leader in higher education.

Newcomers are welcomed and supported, allowing them to bring a fresh perspective and to do their best work.

We offer help and expertise to a new virtual summer camp designed to keep young students on track. This, in turn, enhances teacher preparation, giving our students a chance to learn as they work.

By collaborating and partnering with communities we identify needs and find solutions. When we rally together, ideas materialize into empowering initiatives, like the new Youth Alliance on Education, a consortium of teens from schools throughout the region talking about educational reform.



# Ground-breaking collaboration with teens from across Western New York sparks new ideas for school reform

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

It was 30 minutes into the very first meeting of teenagers from across Western New York. Students were typing their thoughts about school reform and change on bright yellow, orange and pink virtual sticky notes. The cyber bulletin board on the Zoom call was filling up with their ideas about school change:

**"A place where mental health is not just focused on but actually taught about to students and staff."**

**"An open environment where you can express your feelings."**

**"My ideal school would be less stressful."**

**"Teachers making sure everyone understands what's happening instead of rushing to do tests."**

These suggestions came during the inaugural gathering of the Western New York Youth Alliance for Education, a GSE initiative that brought together teens during a chaotic time so they could make their ideas known, discuss what was important to them and learn how to advocate for change. As the first session unfolded, students were surprised by how good it felt to discuss new ideas. The GSE-guided project, with eight local community collaborators, aims to cultivate students' ideas about equity in education and help them to organize. "What they want to do for kids is incredible," said Lily Fisher, 14, an eighth grader at Sweet Home Middle School in Amherst. "I think this is a fantastic program. The way that it's unfolding is extraordinary. They're giving

us a voice. The adults aren't running it. So far, the group, known as YAE, pronounced "yay," has drawn about 100 students in grades 7-12 from 23 schools across Western New York. Students met and identified priorities that subcommittees are now working on: Anti-racism and cultural diversity, mental health services, anti-bullying and safer schools, improving student-teacher interactions and a

**LESSON/INSIGHT:**  
Ideas for change are bigger and better when a community works together.

more inclusive LGBTQIA+ environment. "By the end of it, I was just feeling so much hope for what we could do with this organization," said Jillian Farrell, a GSE graduate student working on her master's degree in higher education and student affairs. She has been surprised by the students' innovative suggestions, curiosity and passion for finding ways to include all kinds of student perspectives in school decision making. "I feel like I've really expanded the way I think about higher education," she said. From the start, Farrell was impressed by students' ideas for school change as she read their YAE applications—from creating resource groups for students with mental health concerns to reducing waste by using washable metal silverware instead of plastic. "Every single one of them had amazing things to say," said Farrell. "I lucked out that this is the project that was put in my lap." The experience has broadened her own career interests. She enrolled at GSE during the pandemic because of the strength of its higher-education training and her ambition to coordinate college study-abroad programs. Now, Farrell realizes she enjoys working with junior high and high school students. She likes helping them advocate for things like

LGBTQIA+ concerns and getting faculty to use preferred pronouns.

"They just want to help out the students that need it," said Farrell. "They're all fighting for everyone else in their schools."

YAE meetings, which are open to any junior high or high school student in the region, will continue on Zoom for the time being but, eventually, they will include in-person gatherings.

For now, the virtual format has yielded impressive results. Farrell has admired the consideration and camaraderie she's noticed as students use the Zoom chat function to praise each other for good ideas.

"They're so excited to be a part of something. To be so loving to each other," said Farrell. "That's something that amazed me from the get-go."

## Ideas in action

From the beginning, Ava Brigham, 16, was so interested in exploring the ideas that came up, like student support groups, she decided to start up a related organization at her own school in Royalton-Harland High School in Middleport.

She won approval from the superintendent to start Students for Tolerance Unity Diversity and Inclusion, or STUDI, a club focused on creating awareness and understanding. "Its purpose is to normalize these things that are going on in the world," said Brigham. Because her school is not racially diverse, a group of about 10 or 20 students starting to meet every other week began by researching and discussing pandemic-era civil rights protests.

"The topic that we're focused on right now is the Black Lives Matter Movement," she said. "People had a lot of good questions because they had never thought about learning about it before."

YAE also taught her about process. As Brigham plans, she is applying the SMART goal model she learned and is making sure aims are smart, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

So far, she said, YAE has been eye-opening.

"I love how thoughtful and intelligent everyone in the group is," she wrote in a survey, "and hearing their different opinions regarding problems in their schools is very

interesting and inspiring. I have never been included in anything like this group, so it's super exciting."

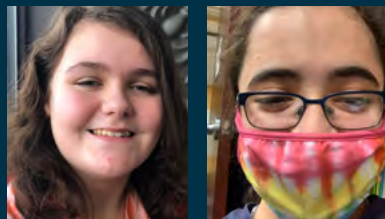
For the GSE faculty leader organizing YAE, the experience has been energizing.

"The kids truly see themselves as change agents, which is exactly what we were hoping to foster," said Amanda Winkelsas, assistant dean for outreach and community engagement and a clinical assistant professor of learning and instruction. "The experience of participating is validating that expertise and fostering that sense of agency in students, which ultimately will make for better, more equitable schools."

The project began to develop last summer during conversations with GSE Dean Suzanne Rosenblith. The pair talked about the social justice protests of the pandemic. As they considered Buffalo's own segregated school system, they wanted to bring students together to share their perspectives about achieving racial equity.

"The idea is that kids are the experts on their own experiences and have important things to say," said Winkelsas. "How do we give them the space to do that?"

She is working on a summer event for students to present their ideas for action and change to school districts and leaders. "We have a broad range of community partners with access to a variety of people in positions of power, who are able to act on the ideas that the kids share. That gives me hope that there's a lot of substantive change that can be made as a result of this whole initiative," she said. "I look at younger people and I just feel so hopeful about the potential because their ideas are so progressive and attuned to equity and inclusivity."



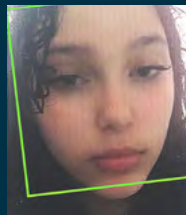
Lily Fisher

Sofia Reisman



Nishimwe Jeska

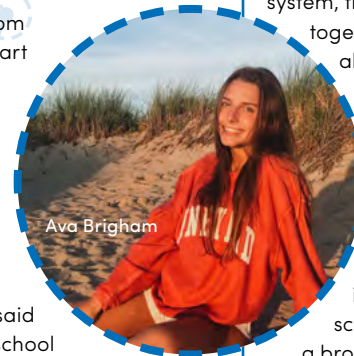
Inwoo Shin



Rosaly Rosa



Amanda Winkelsas



Ava Brigham



Jillian Farrell

**"I think this is a fantastic program. The way that it's unfolding is extraordinary. They're giving us a voice. The adults aren't running it. Kids are running it."**

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

Local organizations join the project to help spread the word and advocate for YAE-proposed changes

- [Buffalo Police Athletic League](#)
- [Buffalo Prep](#)
- [Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization](#)
- [Erie I BOCES](#)
- [Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology](#)
- [Buffalo Public Schools](#)
- [Community Action Organization of WNY](#)
- [WNY United Against Drugs & Alcohol Abuse](#)



# UB Homework Help tutors come to the aid of high school students

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

Kier Bishop, 14, made his mother proud and impressed her with his confidence and focus as he transformed his freshman year grades last semester. He had a rocky beginning as the pandemic shifts set in. When he started high school last fall at Frederick Law Olmstead, he was making a transition from a smaller Catholic school to a public school that he was not able to step inside of. Nor did he get to meet any of his classmates or teachers as he finished his first year.

As he sat in on his Zoom classes, Bishop had questions about what he was learning, but he wasn't sure how to get answers. When his mother spotted an ad on Facebook, he agreed to try "Homework Help," a new, free tutoring service that GSE launched to assist with virtual learning needs when school buildings were closed during the pandemic. UB students earned teaching credits by tutoring Buffalo Public Schools high school students who signed up for help.

The program launched in November and averaged about 80 appointments with UB tutors and Buffalo students each week. The popular initiative drew 125 UB volunteers – from undergraduate education majors taking courses in GSE's UB Teach program to GSE graduate students.

## Learning is a two-way street

BPS students gave their tutors high marks in the reviews. And there were more interested tutors, about 45, than there were Buffalo students who asked for help, said Elisabeth Etopio, assistant dean of teacher education and clinical associate professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction. The success and extra capacity have led to plans to continue the program next year, she said, perhaps broadening the scope to include more school districts.

She has been pleased to see that some matches, like Bishop and Isabella Pezouvanis, a freshman education major, have been so successful, they met sometimes twice a week, all semester long.

A photo illustration features UB undergraduate and tutor Isabella Pezouvanis, left, and high school student Kier Bishop, right. The pair worked together during the spring 2021 semester of the pandemic. (Photos courtesy Pezouvanis and Bishop)

"That skill of building a relationship with individual students and gaining insights into individual students, for me, as a teacher educator, is just crucially important," Etopio said. "We know you have to have a rapport before they're willing to learn ... You have to trust the person who's guiding you through your homework ... That's a hallmark of good teaching."

Demonstrating another successful teaching strategy, Pezouvanis flexed to adjust to a glitch. While she'd offered to help with English, she was assigned to cover geometry as well. When Etopio checked, Pezouvanis said she could handle both subjects by brushing up on her geometry. "That kind of initiative on the part of our students is moving," said Etopio.

## "It's given me a new lens. How can I be an advocate in and out of the classroom?"

Pezouvanis, who signed up to earn credit for a course, got more out of the experience than she expected. As she worked with Bishop, she could see how rapport impacts learning, just as Etopio hoped.

**LESSON/INSIGHT:** Experiential learning benefits both teacher and student.

Pezouvanis let Bishop take charge and guide each session, coaching and encouraging him to strengthen his problem-solving skills as they worked together to tackle homework puzzles. He zeroed in on his most pressing homework concerns—from English to social studies—and took time with geometry, which he likes for its connection to his ambition to design cars.

"It's given me a new lens," Pezouvanis said. "How can I be an advocate in and out of the classroom?"

Bishop noticed changes in himself since they started working together. He used to rush through homework, just to get it over with. He learned to take his time and work more efficiently. "I feel like it's better than being sloppy and rushing," he said.

His Zoom partnership with Pezouvanis led to the sense of community he'd been missing at virtual high school. "It helps," said Bishop. "I got to actually talk to her and it's easier to understand stuff."

# In-person literacy program morphs into a unique summer tutoring camp for Buffalo students

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

A unique lesson in community and learning emerged last summer when the pandemic stretched on after the semester ended and GSE began supporting the virtual summer camps set up by Buffalo's Say Yes to Education Program to keep students engaged while school was out:

After Christiana Kfour, PhD '21, trained 10 GSE students to coach elementary school students in tutoring intervention at virtual camp sites throughout the city, they discovered a broader focus on community that made them better prepared to lead. As they worked, they found ways to keep students engaged and coming back to the optional, virtual sessions.

The summer program taught GSE educators and counselors in training an important lesson about the power of community in teaching: Feeling connected strengthens learning for young pupils and graduate students.



Matthew Jackson

"Being with one another is really conducive to learning and being able to learn," said Matthew Jackson, who is in his first year of study for a master's degree in school psychology. Jackson facilitated a memorable reading session about travel and ocean life for third graders and was impressed by how easily the children connected with each other in a virtual setting. They noticed and asked about toys they could see on screen in Zoom. It was illuminating. The summer camp wasn't mandatory, but because students were making friends with each other, they kept coming back.

During a lesson about the Great Barrier Reef, the campers came together even as they lost interest. One little girl held up a Barbie doll and another student chimed in happily, "Oh, Barbie's coming?" Soon all the children were holding their dolls up to their screens.

Jackson and the other staff at the arts nonprofit Community Canvases decided to give the campers a break. They played music from Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" as dolls

floated back and forth on the screens.

"We had a big dance," said Jackson. He and the staff realized the stakes were low. It was OK to focus on 15 minutes of spontaneous kid fun. This led to a key insight: Remaining flexible enhances learning.

"Just seeing that they were able to form a sense of community and successfully learn through the summer was really important at a time when that seemed like that could be really difficult," Jackson said.

By summer's end, Jackson had widened his career interest beyond high school, which had been his original focus. "I do love the little kids a lot more than I thought I ever would," he said.

## Making connections from afar

Julianna Casella, a first-year PhD student in the counseling psychology and school psychology program, was living at home in Long Island as she worked at the same camp program as Jackson. For her, the experience led to a skill-building opportunity to lead the entire camp in a lesson about space.



Julianna Casella

She showed campers a virtual planetarium that could switch between views of stars and drawings that revealed the constellation shapes. She talked about how Orion was named for a hunter in Greek mythology. Students were soon writing in the Zoom chat that they could see the scorpion and bear in the stars.

"During the lesson, a lot of the kids were really engaged," Casella said. "It gave me a lot of confidence in myself. It was just really gratifying that I could be teaching them and that they actually wanted to learn."

She was also surprised by how seamlessly teachers shared ideas and resources on

Google Docs. Even though she was at the other end of the state, it was as if she was in Buffalo with everyone else.

"It was really cool to see the connection that faculty at a school can still have from far away," Casella said. "I think it definitely helps with effective learning and teaching. You were able to have a bunch of brains thinking about something instead of just one."

There was another, unexpected bonus. She and Jackson became friends, a feat that has been more challenging during the pandemic when her GSE courses were virtual. It made

**LESSON/INSIGHT:** Connecting to a community and being flexible strengthens learning.

for a much better first year of graduate school. "I felt much more at ease and comfortable in the classroom because I knew I had a friend," Casella said.

## A summer shift

The Say Yes virtual camp program wasn't what Kfour expected. In the end, that didn't matter. The important thing was GSE educators in training got to try their skills in a dynamic situation and build rapport with students while supporting literacy skill development.

The virtual experiences that have become so common during the pandemic have been a great opportunity. Home life on the other side of the Zoom screens, with dolls, toys and pets, help everyone get to know each other.



Christiana Kfour

classrooms, said Kfour.

"Once you build that rapport, they're going to open up. This is a great opportunity to get to know your students," she said. "We're so focused on this tunnel vision that we have to meet the needs of the curriculum. We have to find a way to really know our students and really be able to meet those needs within the classroom setting."

Insights, like these, about community, flexibility and adaptation have great promise to strengthen education when students return to



## GSE's community supports new student as he starts grad school on rocky virtual ground

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

After finishing his degree in criminology and sociology as the pandemic started last spring, Anthony Vargas, BA '20, enrolled in GSE's higher education and student affairs master's program.

At first, Vargas, a Marine veteran, was motivated by his undergraduate work at UB as a resident assistant. He set his sights on a career in student affairs because he knew how transformative outreach to students can be. When students feel like they are part of a strong campus community, Vargas knows they work harder and persist toward graduation with confidence.

**LESSON/INSIGHT:**  
Communities need advocates to support their members

This lesson in community reemerged for him at GSE this year and led Vargas to focus and elevate his own ambition toward a new goal of becoming a professor. That decision followed his own low point as a new graduate student.

As the COVID-19 and systemic racism pandemics set in, Vargas felt isolated and this dragged him down. Three members of the GSE faculty showed friendship and mentored him, taking time for long conversations while cheering him on in moments when he needed it most.

"To sit here now, as a master's student in this double pandemic that we're facing, with amazing scholars at my side and in my corner," he said. "I'm very grateful and very thankful for that."

The first to help was Raechele Pope, associate dean for faculty and student affairs, chief diversity officer and associate professor of higher education, who also serves as his advisor and talked with Vargas at length when he needed perspective.

Then, after taking three classes with Stephen Santa-Ramirez, a new assistant professor of higher education, the men had a connection. Their shared Latinx experiences and identities led Santa-Ramirez to become a mentor to Vargas.

He found a third champion in Terri N. Watson, an associate professor of educational leadership and human development at The City College of New York and a UB Distinguished Visiting Scholar with the Center for Diversity Innovation. He was particularly interested in her

work to build community within New York City schools, where they both grew up. He signed up to be one of her mentees. Watson then asked him to sit on the student panel that was part of GSE's virtual "Creating the Beloved Community" symposium to address racism and build community in schools.

### Guided by communities, at home and UB

His journey in academia was shaped by his roots as a first-generation student. "My parents immigrated from the Dominican Republic. My mother never graduated from high school. My dad never graduated from the eighth grade," he said. "I grew up in Washington Heights in New York City. It seems like yellow tape, like the yellow police tape, has become a piece of furniture for our neighborhood. From shootings and stabbings and drug cartels ... That's what I grew up around."

Not long ago, someone asked him why he wanted to get a PhD. Vargas answered by explaining how each one of his degrees is a tribute to the people who influenced him.

### "To sit here now, as a master's student in this double pandemic that we're facing, with amazing scholars at my side and in my corner," he said. "I'm very grateful and very thankful for that."

"My bachelor's degree was for my mother," he said. "She always asked us: 'If there's anything you can do for me, give me that degree and I know that coming to this country is all worth it.'"

"My master's degree is for my family, to let them know I'm still making those strides."

"My PhD is for me and my community. It's for the change that I'm going to use my agency to make. Change in all of my communities—in my Washington Heights community, in my Latinx community, in my first gen community, in my veteran community ... All of these communities need advocates in them so badly," he said. "I'm a firm believer that mentoring works."

## Coalition addresses food inequity: GSE professor's research resonates in the food crisis of the pandemic

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

After the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools, Sarah A. Robert, GSE associate professor of learning and instruction, and specialist in school food politics, began volunteering with Seeding Resilience. This Buffalo coalition of community members, nonprofits, schools and government—organized spring 2020 to address food inequities highlighted by the pandemic—aligned with Robert's research.

As a policy analyst, she works to improve public understanding of the critical role schools play in distributing food. Local needs were highlighted at the beginning of the pandemic when school buildings closed. The Buffalo Public Schools estimated that fewer than half of the 29,000 students who relied on school breakfasts and lunches were getting help with hunger.

"Food, and how schools fill the need for food, are now more crucial than ever," said Robert, also director of GSE's Social Studies Education Programs. "This is an issue of human rights."

### "How do we use those relationships to transform what matters most to the community?"

The Seeding Resilience team worked to get food to people, support farms, encourage vegetable gardens and create jobs. Its projects have included a map of grocery distribution points and resource brochures that Robert translated into Spanish.

Her work with community groups, like Seeding Resilience, informs her understanding of policy. Lately, Robert has been thinking about ways to keep the connections strong. "What's on my mind most these days," she said, "is how do we use those relationships to transform what matters most to the community?"

For her, the COVID-19 crisis has underscored the diminishing funding for school food programs, and the need for change. The variety and quality of meals have also been declining as school districts centralize kitchens, and food costs for families and students rise.

**LESSON/INSIGHT:**  
Volunteering fosters opportunities to contribute and learn.

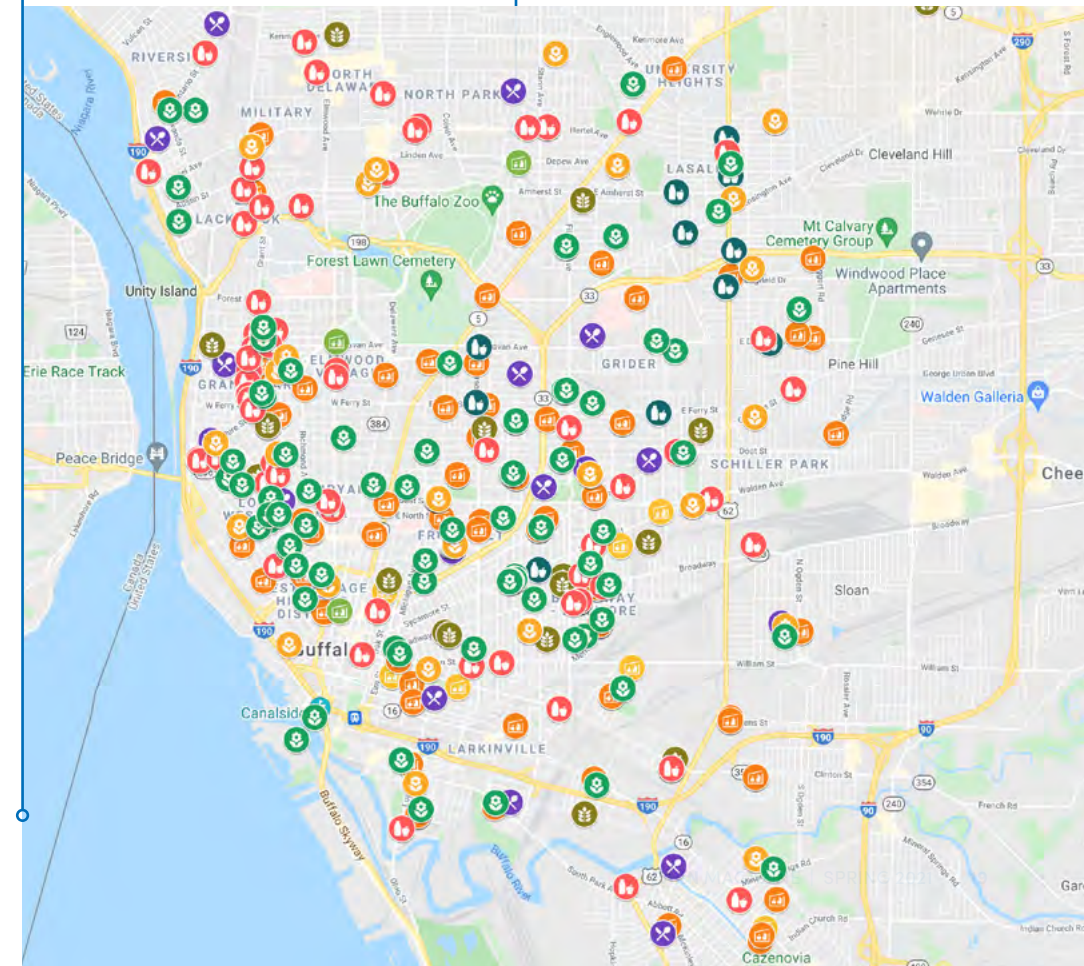
Chronicling new directions in practice and policy is the subject of her upcoming and fourth book: tentatively titled "Transforming School Food Politics Around the World." Robert is co-editing it with Jennifer E. Gaddis, assistant professor of civil society and community studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Sarah A. Robert

As she looks beyond the pandemic, Robert hopes that increased public understanding of the critical role schools play in feeding people will lead to reform and equity. "Schools are food hubs," she said. "Let's reprioritize how we spend tax dollars to reflect our societal values – because we do care about feeding our neighbors."

A screen shot of a Google map adapted by Seeding Resilience to show food distribution and pickup locations throughout the Buffalo-area.







Amy Reynolds



Raechele Pope

# Creating inclusive curricula and awareness

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

As part of a new UB effort to help faculty reimagine their courses to include more diverse perspectives, two GSE professors shared their expertise and ideas with colleagues as one of a series of “Inclusive Pedagogy” online seminars organized by UB’s Office of Inclusive Excellence.

In their webinar, Amy Reynolds, professor in the Counseling, School and Educational Psychology Department, and Raechele Pope, associate dean for faculty and student affairs, chief diversity officer and associate professor of higher education, outlined an approach to analysis and self-reflection in teaching practices.

“Very few faculty were trained to actively address equity issues in their coursework,” said Reynolds.

She and Pope explore multicultural issues in their teaching, research and writing, and have co-authored two related books together: “Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs: Advancing Social Justice and Inclusion” and “Creating Multicultural Change on Campus.”

“Including scholars of color and other minoritized and marginalized groups and infusing cultural content and critical analysis is essential to making higher education inclusive and relevant,” said Pope. “If we are truly committed to equity, diversity, justice and inclusion, we must begin with a massive overhaul and transformation of our curriculum.”

During their spring presentation, they reviewed strategies for incorporating a more diverse point of view in every discipline—from math to the social sciences.

“Our belief is that every single class can have a diversity component, even if it’s math or science,” said Reynolds. “Every class can use a cultural lens and understanding of inclusion to better teach all of their students, not just the students that may be from minoritized or marginalized groups.”

A change in teaching practices that veers away from relying on white Eurocentric perspectives is critical, they said. “All students need an expanded view of every topic area to deeply understand its impact on the world and on various populations,” said Reynolds.

## Getting started

To help faculty broaden the scope of their teachings, Reynolds encourages resources like francesharper.com, a website aimed at assisting math educators created by a math education professor at the University of Tennessee. The site includes problem samples that reveal social justice insights and help people consider different approaches.

Reynolds and Pope highlighted the need to include equity and diversity issues in course readings, assignments, and how student work is evaluated. For example, Reynolds explained that a diverse perspective can come through in a math word problem that asks students to calculate what hourly wage is needed for a family to afford housing in a city like Chicago.

“Then, inevitably, as you talk about that,

you increase the awareness of students around social justice issues ... about economic inequity,” she said. “And they begin to understand the ways in which systems are not working for everybody.”

Considering social justice issues can also improve science teaching. Pope described how using news-related illustrations, like the lead-contaminated water in Flint, Mich., helps engage students.

“So, you’re talking about science. You’re talking about biology and then you talk about providing clean, safe water for people to drink ... in these communities where people have ignored it,” she said. “Those are science-type questions with a social justice lens or an infused lens.”

## Faculty reflections

For Alex Reid, associate professor in the Media Study Department, Pope and Reynolds’ presentation was a beginning. “I thought it was a good overview of some of the challenges and where to start,” he said.

Reid, a former professor in the English department, is director of UB’s Writing Across the Curriculum program. While incorporating readings from diverse perspectives is a long-standing principle in literature courses, he is exploring how to apply that lens when teaching about media and emerging technologies.

Namsook Kim, GSE clinical assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, thought of Pope and Reynolds’ presentation as an opportunity to self-reflect and ask, “Is what I am doing transformative enough?”

Kim realized that inclusivity is ongoing work. As she prepares her classes, she looks for scholarship, writings and videos, from diverse sources, taking time to find the right pronouns.

“We have to do this all the time,” she said. “I am revisiting everything. Commitment is not an option. It’s a must. It is part of our professional competence.”

## Next steps

This year’s webinar programming from the Office of Inclusive Excellence was part of a bigger partnership with the schools throughout the university. Efforts ranged from last year’s GSE Teach-In forum about racial equity to a School of Public Health

**“Every class can use a cultural lens and understanding of inclusion to better teach all of their students, not just the students that may be from minoritized or marginalized groups”**

workshop about creating more collaborative learning environments and increasing student contributions to coursework.

The series of six webinars averaged about 100 attendees per presentation and included topics that ranged from general approaches to curriculum change to case study consideration, anti-racist teaching practices, and how to facilitate classroom conversations about race.

Pope and Reynolds’ presentation was unique because of its specificity, said Jared Strohl, PhD ’20, diversity project coordinator for the Office of Inclusive Excellence. “They were really zooming in to the course-design aspect,” he said. “I think that was the real strength of their presentation.”

For Strohl, their focus on curriculum was particularly helpful for highlighting the importance of incorporating student insights into coursework.

“When you’re designing a course, you’re not just thinking about the material in your syllabus and the readings you have. It’s also digging a little bit deeper into, ‘How are the students themselves engaging with the course? What are the ways that you’re bringing them into the fold of the curriculum and asking them to become part of the

class?” he said. “There’s this relationship-engagement piece that I hadn’t been thinking about as holistically before.”

While the Office of Inclusive Excellence hasn’t settled on its approach for future

**LESSON/INSIGHT:**  
Sharing knowledge with a community fosters change and inclusion.

initiatives, the website has resources culled from this year’s work, including some session recordings and strategies from UB and other institutions.

Overall, the programming was successful. Strohl expects it will inspire the planning for next year that lies ahead this summer.

One of the keys to more inclusivity is the kind of community exchange that Pope and Reynolds contributed to.

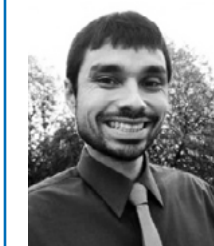
“The foundation of real change comes from relationships. It comes from trust. It comes from learning from one another. It comes from talking with people who think very differently than you and maybe have had a totally different training than you,” said Strohl. “So how to break down those barriers, the siloes that people always talk about with academia is a complicated problem, but I think that focusing on an issue like inclusive pedagogy, something that everyone who is a faculty member at UB does ... that is how we’re really going to foster change.”



Alex Reid



Namsook Kim



Jared Strohl

## GSE waives GRE for non-licensure programs

This year, GSE began a three-year pilot study to better understand the impact the Graduate Record Examination admissions requirement has on potential applicants. The requirement was removed for most programs as a way to eliminate a barrier to accessing advanced study. Program faculty have designed holistic admissions processes that will be studied to better determine their effects.

Ryan Taughrin, assistant dean for enrollment management, said the decision to remove the GRE requirement creates opportunity. It has allowed his team to recruit more students and make graduate school more feasible. The exam expenses include about \$200 to take it, along with the costs of test preparation services and materials.

**“The examination is not a predictor of success in graduate school.”**

“The GRE has often served as a barrier in two ways, both in the cost of the exam, and in the fact that research has consistently shown that the examination is not a predictor of success in graduate school,” Taughrin said. “Compounding this, is the fact that the exam is considered to test someone’s ability to take a test, not to actually succeed.”

The waiver applies to all nine doctoral programs and six master’s programs—in educational psychology and quantitative methods, information and library science, mental health counseling, higher education and student affairs, school counseling and school psychology. The school will continue to require the GRE for programs that lead to certification as required by the New York State Education Department.

Next year, GSE will re-evaluate the waiver and decide whether to make it permanent, said Suzanne Rosenblith, GSE dean.

The research showing that the test does not predict success is compelling. “Removing this barrier just makes good sense,” she said.



# GSE symposium explores MLK's vision of just and equitable schools

BY MARCENE ROBINSON AND MICHELLE KEARNS

To help transform schools into spaces grounded in justice, equal opportunity and love, this spring GSE hosted “Creating the Beloved Community,” a free virtual symposium inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr.’s vision for an inclusive society.

About 650 people, including an estimated 200 UB students, listened to five authors, activists and educators share insights about reshaping the education system to be less punitive and more responsive to young people from all backgrounds and transform schools into places where everyone thrives.

said, explaining how a white teacher may trigger reactions in Black students. Self-reflection is one tool for becoming aware of the dynamic.

“As a white educator from suburban America, not only do I need to ... figure out like, ‘Oh man, I may have some biases I



Christopher Emdin, PhD | David E. Kirkland, PhD/JD | Wendy Luttrell, PhD | Noliwe Rooks, PhD | Shannon R. Waite, EdD | Terri N. Watson, PhD

“Our job is not to merely teach kindness and test-taking skills. Rather, we must practice love and provide all students with the skills that will enable them to reach their dreams,” said Terri N. Watson, a UB Center for Diversity Innovation Distinguished Visiting Scholar and associate professor of educational leadership at the City College of New York, who organized the two-day series of webinars in collaboration with GSE colleagues.

“It was nice to come together to work on the beloved community with the community at UB,” she said. “Putting this event together, that was community. We formed a team.”

**LESSON/INSIGHT:**  
Creating community brings people together to learn, challenge ideas and grow.

The symposium opened with Christopher Emdin, a Columbia University Teachers College associate professor of science education and the award-winning author of the New York Times’ Bestseller, “For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood and the Rest of Y’all Too.”

Educators need to take time to understand the subtleties of race in the classroom, he

need to address,’ I also have to understand there are some preconceptions that those young people have about suburbia, about whiteness, about how I may look like a police officer, or the social worker, or the judge,” Emdin said. “So, the beginning step is for the educator to understand ... ‘If I represent all these things that are richly enshrined in a tradition that has done violence to young folks, and I’m an extension of that, what can I do to intentionally depart from that? What do I do to show young folks that I recognize how they see me, and I’m actively working toward being better?’”

After each session, students met in smaller Zoom forums to talk about what they heard. The meetings were a welcome break from the social isolation of the past year’s pandemic. “Students were happy to have a space to just talk,” said Watson.

For GSE Dean Suzanne Rosenblith, the symposium exemplified the importance of community as a tool for change.

“Coming together as an academic community to listen, learn and exchange ideas around equity, diversity, justice and inclusion is critical,” she said, “if we are to realize just and inclusive schools for all children.”

**“If I represent all these things that are richly enshrined in a tradition that has done violence to young folks, and I’m an extension of that, what can I do to intentionally depart from that?”**

Selfies and portraits that illustrate this issue were submitted by the subjects at our request unless otherwise indicated and credited.

# Community. Planted, rooted and in bloom.

Community is embedded in everything we do. At GSE, it is a noun that acts like a verb. “That’s where the power lies. This pandemic has taught us that,” said Terri Watson, visiting scholar and associate professor of educational leadership at the City College of New York. “There’s no singular person that’s more important than the whole.”

As a visiting scholar, Watson brought people together, led conversation and created dialogue this past year. “We have to be in dialogue, and I think community is the best and safest place for that,” said Watson.

The “Beloved Community” title of the spring symposium, taken from Martin Luther King Jr.’s call to action, also reflects GSE’s core goals. In this age of the pandemic and social justice reform, it’s easy to become siloed in a divided world. In GSE’s community, people are invited to come together to learn, challenge ideas and grow.

**“Our commitment to using our teaching, research and outreach in the service of improving and transforming communities is authentic and true.”**

Suzanne Rosenblith, Dean





## A conversation with Heidi Julien about the urgency of digital literacy and the fight against misinformation

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

For Heidi Julien, a GSE professor of information science, who has devoted her career to education, scholarship and digital literacy, public acceptance of misinformation is an alarming, and old, problem. It could use a modern fix that starts with school librarians and civics lessons. New public clarity about the need for change came from the pandemic's highlighting of the life-saving power of good information.



### Q What is misinformation?

**A** I'd like to distinguish between misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation being information that is problematic in some way--not true, heavily biased, perhaps. Whereas disinformation is the same thing but communicated with intent to deceive.

Misinformation and disinformation have been with us for a very long time--since people started communicating.

My main focus is really on misinformation. That's a "wicked problem," a term used in some fields like computer science for problems that are seemingly intractable because they're so complex.

### Q You say that through the recent change in presidential administrations, the Centers for Disease Control has illuminated distinctly different approaches to information sharing?

**A** The CDC has a global reputation for high quality, accurate analysis, research and information. That reputation was severely challenged and tarnished under the previous administration because political appointees insisted on hiding information, altering information for political ends. That was clear and just part of their general war against science.

The difficulty there is, once people lose faith in an institution like that, rebuilding that so that people can trust the really important, mission-critical kinds of information coming from that source, takes a long time.

I think it's very clear that the current administration is honoring science, putting it at the forefront, honoring transparency.

Government not only has an obligation both from a moral point of view, but also from a

policy point of view.

It also has a role in promoting and funding, advocating for the development of the set of skills, the knowledge that people need to be able to critically analyze information.

### Q Is the government doing this work now?

**A** Not to the extent that it needs to, for sure. It needs to be moved way up the policy agenda.

Government needs to fund things like curricula in schools that focus on critical thinking. Those aspects of the curriculum are rarely tested and what's not tested gets pretty short shrift.

I think there's a lot more that can be done. It's something that needs to start in the early years. So that we can at least graduate high school students with some basic sense of how to critically analyze information. How to identify media sources that are credible. Recognize an outlet like Fox News for the entertainment source that it is rather than any source of actual news.

### Q How should schools be teaching these skills?

**A** To be honest, there are resources in most schools to help with this and that is school librarians.

They're well trained in supporting teachers to deliver curriculum that would assist with this. But the problem is, school librarians aren't often recognized for the experts that they are. They're often viewed as sort of an adjunct.

### Q What do you suggest?

**A** Just trying to shift people away from the quick Google search as a solution to all information. As well as disabusing people of the falsehood that younger people who've grown up with computers and are skilled at throwing a key word or two into Google and coming up with five million hits are somehow digitally literate.

Doing quick searches and uncritically accepting whatever Google throws back at you, does not make you very skilled at all.

It takes deliberate teaching and learning of how to search well: How to sift through the nonsense that you get and actually critically evaluate what you have. So, it's got to be integrated into education. I will also say that it's not just digital skills or media literacy skills.

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**“Doing quick searches and uncritically accepting whatever Google throws back at you, does not make you very skilled at all.”**

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It's also a sense of civics because a real problem that I think we have now is people don't understand how government is structured, how it works.

I would say that's also part of the issue, particularly here in the United States, where there's so much political alienation and divide and misinformation in the political arena. If you don't understand how government works or how it's structured, you can believe all kinds of silly things.

*About: Heidi Julien is a professor of information science with a focus on information behavior, digital literacy, misinformation, qualitative research methods, and research design and methods. She is past president of the Association for Library and Information Science Education, and the Canadian Association for Information Science, and active in the Association for Information Science & Technology. She co-authored the 2020 working paper "An exploratory investigation of digital literacy training programs led by public libraries and other local community organizations."*



# Advocating for students: GSE alumna's career journey enhanced by lessons from off-road racing



## Knapp balances academic advocacy with adventures on a motorcycle

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

Amanda Knapp, BS '00, EdM '03, has two passions: motorcycle racing and student success. She wins off-road motorcycle competitions with the same kind of determination that drives her career as a university administrator and student advocate. She developed her focus as a first-generation college student, earning her master's in higher education administration from UB's GSE before finishing a doctorate in education policy at the University of Maryland.

She has made it her job to forge connections with students as she helps them overcome obstacles.

An associate vice provost and assistant dean leading student success initiatives at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, she traces her relationship-based approach to leadership, on campus and on the racetrack, back to GSE.

One professor stands out: Raechele Pope, associate dean for faculty and student affairs, associate professor of higher education and GSE chief diversity officer. Pope's lessons and group project work emphasized that leadership is built on strong ties—with students, families, faculty and staff.

Knapp now oversees academic success programs that serve UMBC's 12,000

GSE alumna Amanda Knapp, PhD, hones her off-road, hare-scramble race technique during a ride clinic in 2019. (Photo courtesy Samantha Kilgore)

undergraduates, 25 percent of whom are first-generation students like herself. She leads standards and policy work, learning resources that include a tutoring and writing center, and a new effort: a year-old, data-driven "academic advocacy" program that identifies and assists at-risk students using data like GPA, out-of-state residency and first-generation status.

Her office reaches out if faculty report concerns or when students withdraw from class, have an overdue balance or fail to login to an online course. So far, the results are promising. Students in the program stayed in school 82 percent of the time, compared to 69 percent who persisted without it.

"We will walk them through whatever barriers they face until it's resolved," Knapp said. "That personalized support is what we have learned makes the difference."

Her sensitivity to student needs comes from



For the Knapp family, off-road motorcycle racing is a sport everyone is passionate about. From left to right: husband Ryan and children Riley, Priscilla and Mason. Virginia Motorsports Park, November 2019. (Photo courtesy Samantha Kilgore)

her experience as a first-generation student. Her grades were good, but she didn't know to apply for scholarships and instead took out loans, which she is still paying off.

At UB, Knapp developed her career interest in helping others with their college journeys as she moved from earning a bachelor's degree in management to studying at GSE.

Her racing became an inadvertent career asset when she got a motorcycle graduation present eight years ago. After she earned her PhD, her husband and mother, worried about what she'd do without a dissertation to work on, gave her the kind of dirt bike she rode as a girl growing up in rural West Virginia.

Just as she became known professionally as Dr. Knapp, she also became racer No. 334, a number she picked because she was a 34-year-old mother of three. That November she entered her very first "hare scramble," a race style with trails through woods and water.

Her public profile, elevated by two recent East Coast championships, led her to become a role model for young women as she landed on the cover of *American Motorcyclist*, drew sponsorships from companies like Dunlop Tires and, last year, joined Toyota's MakeUp2Mud Campaign at the Monster Energy Supercross Race, which attracted an estimated 40,000, in Tampa, Fla.

Now she finds links between her academic work and racing.

"It's all about keeping students on track," she said. "You find a way within yourself to overcome that hurdle ... It's all about having the right support around you. Anything is possible. We all cheer for our students. Just like racing."

Anything is possible. We all cheer for our students. Just like racing.



Knapp celebrates with undergraduates on campus at UMBC's First-Generation Student Day, 2018. (Photo courtesy Amanda Knapp)





## Forging resilience: GSE alumni reflect on navigating teaching careers in uncertain times

Advice from Great Recession graduates

BY BRIAN HAYDEN

Matthew Miller, EdM '11, thought he had it all figured out. The Buffalo native was majoring in economics at Syracuse University and preparing for a career in finance when he interned at an investment bank in London in 2006. It was there that he began to learn about the bank's mortgage lending practices that, two years later, would be a leading cause of the Great Recession. Miller knew the banks' handling of mortgage derivatives was unethical. He also knew he needed a different career.

As he explored his options, he believed teaching would be a more rewarding career, and he decided to visit UB's GSE. The social studies program director spent an impromptu hour with Miller talking about the profession. This influenced his decision to apply, and he enrolled just as the recession set in. Miller – now a high school social studies teacher in the suburban Kenmore-Tonawanda School District – credits his graduate school experience with teaching him the flexibility and adaptability he needed to thrive.

"I think that completing grad school during a time of uncertainty was extremely relevant for how the world really is," Miller said. "It's unpredictable and will throw extra challenges at you, but will prepare you for when life does the same."

Miller was far from alone in pursuing additional education during a time of economic downturn. As students sought to further their education during a time when jobs were scarce, graduate-school enrollment nationwide spiked – from a pre-recession 2.57 million in 2006 to 2.93 million in 2010, according to the National Center of Education Statistics.

A decade later, the pivot to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic created a new set of uncertainties for aspiring teachers. It's difficult to imagine how a career might shift five to 10 years from now as the world continues to change. While the challenging circumstances surrounding the pandemic are new and uncharted, today's graduate students are not the first to navigate uncertainty.

Alumni who graduated during the Great Recession of 2008-09 had some advice for current students about how to succeed as a teacher in an unpredictable world. Miller and others say they believe they built a foundation in graduate

school that enabled them to thrive with resilience, hard work and ambition.

Miller's path wasn't easy at first. When he landed a part-time position in 2010 at the Ken-Ton School District, he was teaching two classes a day and subbing in the afternoon. By year's end, his job was eliminated because of budget cuts. Friends encouraged him to move South to find work, but Miller was sure he'd find something closer to home. He decided to stay.

"I stuck with it and said, 'No, I'm going to make it work,'" Miller said. "If it's something you want to do, you'll find a way to get a job. There will always be a need for teachers."

The next several years were challenging. Miller worked as a substitute teacher, transitioning between short and long-term positions in suburban Buffalo districts. In 2015, he finally secured a long-term substitute teacher position in Ken-Ton. In 2018, it led to a full-time teaching position. Last year, he became tenured in the district's program for at-risk students.

Miller credits GSE for instilling in him a passion for teaching that has carried him through his career. The past decade's twists and turns revealed that life is full of change. Pivoting, he said, is necessary for success.

"I think that's a really important lesson for teaching – sometimes circumstances change and you have to adjust on the fly," Miller said. "Sometimes a pandemic hits and shuts down society, and now you're teaching online. Nothing ever goes perfectly according to plan, and that's OK. That's where a lot of real-world learning can happen, and that's the stuff the kids will really remember."

Miller wasn't the only GSE alum whose persistence during the Great Recession paid off. Kelly Hudock, EdM '09, was confident in her GSE education, the perseverance that was required to graduate and believed that "if you wanted something, you worked hard." Her days were 18 hours long as she balanced

her master's degree with two different jobs. "At that point, I was a little grumpy about it," she said, "but now it gives me the work ethic that I need to be a great teacher."

Hudock said her graduate school experiences helped keep her motivated to find a good teaching job during an economic recession. She now works as a fourth-grade teacher in the Vestal School District.

"Grad school is where you really got in there. You got to see yourself as a teacher... That's where you got to shine," she said. "I finally got a sense of pride that, 'This is why I worked so hard, and that I actually am capable of what I thought I could do.'"

GSE had the foresight to see where education was heading and what it was going to look like in the future and prepared us for it.

For Justin Skrzyński, EdM '14, the recession motivated him to excel in graduate school and find success in an extremely competitive job market. Enrolling at GSE gave him an edge and the digital literacy and technology skills he needed to find work and start his career. He now works as a social studies teacher in the Wellsville Central School district.



Kelly Hudock (left) and Justin Skrzyński (right)

"GSE had the foresight to see where education was heading and what it was going to look like in the future and prepared us for it," he said. "If I'm going to make it in a recession, I'm going to stand out from everyone else... You have to be a trend setter. You have to be a risk-taker."





## Taking the Match.com approach to finding a therapist

New GSE alum launches startup with UB as the incubator

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

(Photo/Jess Levenson)

As Avishai Afek, MS '21, worked on his GSE master's degree in mental health counseling, he discovered and followed an unexpected, entrepreneurial path. In the months ahead, he will launch MyStartWell, a business he created at UB to address a fundamental mental health care problem: How to find a good therapist when the process for finding one can be confusing.

From idea to design and launch, the UB community has worked like a startup network to support Afek – with inspiration, a student entrepreneur fellowship and technical design help from computer science students.

"I'm glad that UB as a community was able to rally around and promote his vision," said Sabrina Musson, program director for the mental health counseling program and clinical assistant professor of counseling, school and educational psychology. "I'm very excited about it. It has the potential to be revolutionary within mental health counseling."

Afek's MyStartWell.com interface, now in development, will be a nod to Match.com, but with mental health, rather than romance, as its goal. It will assess users' needs and ask them about objectives and preferences in therapy. They will be able choose whether they'd like to work with someone who is focused on the past or present. They can also select a style: Would they like empathetic listening or more challenging work toward specific goals? Do they want to direct the session? Or, would they prefer the therapist to lead? Based on choices like these, prospective clients will then be connected with mental health practitioners who have the right skills, approach and specialty.

"I want someone to find a good therapist on their first try," said Afek who is now working with the upstate incubator Launch NY. "I want to transform this clunky, convoluted mental health system. I want to make a difference for thousands, if not millions of people."

He also wants to simplify the process so that people can avoid phone tag and book appointments immediately online. Once a match is made, the site will coordinate payment and allow people to track their progress in therapy. Users will be able to assess things like mood, their relationship with the therapist and objectives.

"A good working alliance is made up of at least two things: an actual rapport and working on the same goals," said Afek. "We're not just here to help you start well. We're also here to help you stay well."

The system will charge counseling professionals and health insurance companies. Therapists will pay a fee to participate. "We'll take care of scheduling and billing and help you match with clients you most want to work with," Afek explained.

“From idea to design and launch, the UB community has worked like a startup network to support Afek – with inspiration, a student entrepreneur fellowship and technical design help from computer science students.”

Finding the right counselor traditionally has been so difficult, people often give up looking, he said. Navigating to a professional, who has the right mix of rapport, ability to address particular needs and aligns with health insurance, can be frustrating, confusing and expensive.

"One in three people drop out of therapy after their first session... The more alarming statistic: Two thirds of people who have mental health issues don't even seek out treatment," Afek said. "There's no real process."

Musson agrees. There are not good options for an organized approach to searching for a therapist who can address all the variables unique to each person. This problem has long been in need of a solution.

"The first steps are really hard. You can Google something but you're really navigating blind on finding the right person and finding the right fit," she said. "Different counselors lean different ways. It's important to have the right fit."

## An idea develops

Afek stepped into his new role as mental health entrepreneur gradually, with key inspiration from GSE. He arrived at UB in the fall of 2019 to start the mental health counseling program after working for three years in a residential home for people with mental illness and addiction.

During orientation, before classes started, he was inspired by Raechele Pope, associate dean for faculty and student affairs, chief diversity officer and associate professor of higher education. She asked students to consider what kind of impact they wanted to make on the world.

As he studied, a theme emerged. Afek was learning how the mental health care system did not have a streamlined approach to finding therapists. By developing a fix, he realized he could potentially impact even more people than by counseling individuals.

"When I learned... that this whole process is really complex, I thought back to what Dr. Pope said: 'What impact do I want to make?' I started thinking beyond the therapy session," Afek said.

Curious for a better understanding of systemic failings, he took a class in health care strategy and operations in the School of Management. Then, a few weeks into his second semester, an email came through describing the yearlong Western New York Prosperity Fellowship for students working on entrepreneurial projects.

Afek became the first fellow from GSE's mental health counseling program. He took advantage of trainings and opportunities, like a six-week summer "accelerator" for people planning startups. It was part of Blackstone LaunchPad, an entrepreneurial program for UB students.

Earlier this year, Afek got more support when he pitched his idea to graduate students in a class called "Project Development," or CSE 611, in the Computer Science and Engineering Department of UB's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. They liked the concept so much, a team of four decided to work on a website design and gain experience in startup development. At the end of this semester, they presented a working prototype.

"It's been super exciting to watch this idea grow from an idea in my head to reality," Afek said. "It's just been wild to see how much has happened in one year."

## Online research findings

While it is not yet matching clients with therapists, MyStartWell.com does have a market research survey with questions for people about what problems or difficulties they've faced while seeking therapy. "We hope to identify which people would most benefit from our service," said Afek.

So far, results from about 200 respondents highlight the need for better tools:

- 81 percent reported feeling hopeless as they tried to find a therapist.
- 60 percent were frustrated by the process.
- 47 percent were confused by it.
- 67 percent of people didn't know how to pick the right therapist.
- 64 percent said they did not know where to begin.
- 35 percent had trouble finding a therapist who matched their personal needs.
- 61 percent had trouble finding someone affordable.

This confirms Afek's personal experience during the pandemic. Even he struggled, as a professional in training, to find therapists for friends who asked. "I got a headache when I tried to help them," he said. "It's very heartbreaking when you want to find a therapist and then can't."

Afek also knows perseverance pays off. He's worked with counselors since he was a teen: The experience was transformative.

"I know the impact a good therapist can have," he said. "A therapist is a huge ally in helping you take a better look at yourself and how you can lead a better life."



# Students around the world come together to create COVID-themed comics with UB program

BY MARCENE ROBINSON

“A lot of cultures around the world, particularly non-Western cultures, use stories as a platform to think about and understand the complexities in our world.”

A team of UB GSE researchers helped high school students from the U.S., India and Mexico create comic book stories and better understand the pandemic’s impact on people and their communities.

The program, “Working for Educational-Equity: Scientists, Artists and International Design,” or “We Said” for short, brought together students on video calls to discuss how the COVID-19 virus was affecting people’s lives as they designed graphic novels in a free, three-week program last July.

The students’ stories, now on the [We Said website](#), explored how wealth and access to health care shaped people’s experiences in different communities.

“Storytelling is a pathway to learning,” said program coordinator Sameer Honwad, GSE assistant professor of learning and instruction. “A lot of cultures around the world, particularly non-Western cultures, use stories as a platform to think about and understand the complexities in our world.”

The comic format works well for educators because it easily engages young people, he said. Over the past decade, graphic novels have become one of the fastest-growing categories in public libraries and other educational settings in the U.S.

“It’s an accessible art form that many of us grew up looking at, and the illustrations enable another layer of creativity and expression,” said Shakuntala Devi Gopal, a GSE doctoral student who coordinated the program. The COVID comic project team also included Ryan Rish, GSE assistant professor of learning and instruction; Jessica Scates, coordinator of diversity initiatives within the UB School of Dental Medicine; and Anthony

White, GSE research assistant and adjunct instructor.

## Building connections with stories

Honwad developed the comic project by drawing on his research interests—creating inclusive learning environments with storytelling platforms.

He initially designed “We Said” for a Buffalo high school to use graphic novels and explore local food systems. As the pandemic unfolded, he shifted online with a new focus on COVID-19’s community impact.

Honwad found 14 students interested in meeting on Zoom and making comic stories by reaching out to university contacts in the U.S., India and Mexico.

As the group began meeting, they focusing on the pandemic and the news of the past year, discussing the racial justice protests, technology and how people’s experiences differed, depending on socio-economic factors and resources, like wealth and health care access.

They also learned about each other and differences in their cultures. Students from the U.S. and Mexico were shocked that India had a caste system, Honwad said.

“There are a lot of similarities in how powerful individuals oppress people who have lower economic status. In the U.S. people are oppressed on the basis of race while in India the caste system is the basis for systemic oppression. In India the Dalits are members

of society who were considered outcasts and continue to be left out of the socio-political conversations in contemporary India,” said Honwad, who has been thinking about fostering more student conversations about the impact of colonialism. “How do you build solidarity between people who are in parallel situations in terms of oppression across the world?”

As the students developed their COVID stories, Rish, guest speakers and comic artists offered design guidance.

Eventually, the young people divided into groups that focused on a virus-related area: home life, school or relationships.

“The students enjoyed connecting with people in their age group that they would not have met otherwise,” Gopal said. “The experience also allowed them to work creatively. Some of the students don’t have opportunities for that type of expression.”

Next up: The researchers plan to apply for grant funding to expand the project and train teachers to help students design comics as part of their lessons. “How can teachers use storytelling as a tool,” Honwad said, “to get their own material across to students?”



The instructors and students who took part in the “We Said” program.



Students in the UB “We Said” program used comic books to express the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives and communities. From left: “Home Tales” by Saakshi Badoni of India, “Alternative Medicine” by Urmi Shukla of India and “Presenting ‘We Said’ comics,” by Valentina Orihuela of the U.S. and Mexico. (Images courtesy of the artists.)





# The anatomy of a scholarship

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

When Charice Thompson, BA '18, MS '21, returned to UB to finish the bachelor's degree in political science she'd started two decades earlier, her goal was to show her children the importance of finishing the college education she'd put on pause to open a hair salon.

Then, she headed to graduate school with another ambition—to forge a career and assist Black entrepreneurs, like her. At first, the civil rights movement inspired her ambition to be a lawyer. When she didn't get into law school, she pivoted.

The memory of a nurturing grammar school librarian led her to GSE's information and library science master's degree program. "I realized that there's more than one way to approach something," said Thompson. "I had to make a shift."

Her new ambition developed as she cultivated information science skills.

She did legal research during a law library practicum. She

learned how to find answers to questions and tackle business conundrums.

In this, her last year, scholarships were a welcome morale boost and financial infusion when the pandemic interrupted business. Last summer, there was a lull at her Amherst Sittin' Pretty hair salon. Knowing extra money could help, Thompson took advantage of the quiet to search her UB email inbox for scholarship notices.

By November, she had won the two she applied for—along with a GSE tuition waiver based on her academic merit.

## A new scholarship in action

In addition to winning a New York Library Association Dewey Scholarship, Thompson is the inaugural winner of the Drs. Henry J. and Bonita R. Durand Scholarship, established by the late Henry Durand, UB associate vice provost of academic affairs and GSE clinical associate professor, and his wife, the former chief of staff to the president of SUNY Buffalo State. It was designed for graduate student alumni of UB's Cora

P. Maloney Center programs. Preference is given to first-generation students and those facing economic barriers as they study at GSE or in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning in the School of Architecture and Planning.

Thompson was moved by the scholarship support. "It means a lot to me," she said. "It's more important right now because of the pandemic ... A good thing after all that's happened in the last year."

## "How can I contribute to informing my community in a way that I wasn't informed?"

### A new career begins

Thompson's experience as an entrepreneur motivated her studies. She's confronted racism and challenges like a former neighbor who hung a Confederate flag on his door when she opened her first salon decades ago. She also understands difficulties like getting business loans. "Who knows what my business would be if I was able to secure funding when I needed it?" she said. "I dealt with discrimination. I was young. I didn't have the tools I needed to fight back."

As her last year at GSE converged with the pandemic and social justice protests, she's been considering her career and how to use information science to advocate for civil rights, social change and other Black entrepreneurs like her.

"It's just important to be informed and know what the resources are," she said. "How can I contribute to informing my community in a way that I wasn't informed?"

*For information about creating and funding new scholarships, please contact Kerri Lehmbek (EdM '00), GSE associate director of advancement, at [lehmbek@buffalo.edu](mailto:lehmbek@buffalo.edu).*

(Photo courtesy Charice Thompson)

## SCENE ON SOCIAL



## Just another day at the home-office

Before the holiday break in December, Ryan Taughrin, GSE's assistant dean of enrollment management and director of admissions, made a virtual guest appearance at Buffalo Public School #18 in an English as a New Language class taught by his wife, Holly Taughrin. She posted this photo on Facebook to show how her husband went all out when he pitched in to help with a lesson: He dressed up in one of his many costumes to read a story about a very hungry, prehistoric animal in "The Dinosaur That Pooped Christmas" to a class of first graders. And, yes, that is a hot dog suit. It was a hit with the young learners—and our online friends.

**Karen M.**  
As a former School 18 teacher and an alumna of the GSE (2x over), this warms my heart!

**Holly T.**  
This was my class (also my Hot Dog of a husband), and our daughter is actually a Lancaster student at Como Park. Thanks for all you do!

- Tracie A. 👍
- Jean F. 👍
- Brian G. 👍
- Sara S. 👍
- Renée R. 👍
- Michelle C. ❤️
- Laura D. 👍
- Tetyana S. 🤪
- Margaret S. ❤️
- Janet V. 👍
- Christine C. 👍
- Stephanie B. 👍
- Danielle L. 👍
- Sarah A. 👍
- Sabrina M. 👍
- Emanuela S. 👍
- Danielle M. ❤️
- Chrissy D. 👍
- Catherine C. ❤️
- Lynette D. ❤️
- Kelsey H. 👍
- Julia Lyn ❤️
- Kerri L. ❤️
- Suzanne R. 👍
- Danielle L. ❤️
- Nicole M. 👍
- Amdad A. 👍
- Kelly A. 👍
- John S. 👍
- Elizabeth L. 👍
- Maria W. 👍
- Norline W. 👍
- Ahmed N. 👍
- Ashley C. 👍
- Amber W. ❤️



## On the Move

### FACULTY AWARDS AND HONORS



**Xiufeng Liu**  
a professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction, has been elected to be a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

### STUDENT AWARDS



**Heather Hagenbuch, PhD '21** Higher Education, is this year's winner of the Edwin D. Duryea Jr. Higher Education Memorial Award.



**Christiana Kfour, PhD '21** Curriculum, Instruction and the Science of Learning, is this year's winner of the Delbert Mullens "Thinking Outside the Box" Award.



**Nancy Krisch, a** Curriculum, Instruction and the Science of Learning doctoral candidate, won the 2020 Physical Therapy Learning Institute's Education Influencer Award.



**Felipe Orozco, a** doctoral student in the Curriculum, Instruction and Science of Learning Department, is the 2021 winner of the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center's Transforming Education Through Leading and Learning, or TELL, Award for Outstanding Innovative Leader.



**Jennifer Saboda,** an Education Leadership and Policy doctoral student, has been named a Clark Scholar and joined the 2021 UCEA David L. Clark National Graduate Research Seminar in Educational Administration and Policy.



**Stephanie Schaefer, PhD '20** Curriculum Instruction and Science of Learning, won the American Education Research Association, or AERA, 2021 Division H's Outstanding Publications Competition in Category 5: Outstanding Dissertation.



**Kerri Shaffer, an** Information Science doctoral student, won a Donald A. B. Lindberg Research Fellowship from the Medical Library Association.



**Charice Thompson, MS '21** Information and Library Science master's degree student, won the 2021 New York Library Association Dewey Scholarship and the Drs. Henry J. and Bonita R. Durand Scholarship.

### ALUMNI AWARDS



**Catherine Fisher Collins, EdM '79, EdD '90,** won the Graduate School of Education's Distinguished Alumni Award.

**14** ↑ **Spots Up From 2020 Ranking**  
U.S. News & World Report 2021 Best Colleges  
**BEST GRADUATE SCHOOL**

## GSE professor receives Fulbright award to study educational equity in Asia



GSE Professor Jaekyung Lee will travel throughout Asia as he studies how to make education more accessible to girls, immigrants, refugees and other marginalized communities with a 2020-21 Fulbright Global Scholar Award, one of the most competitive awards from the prestigious Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program.

"By pursuing more effective and equitable policy interventions, I hope my Fulbright study can help improve educational opportunities and outcomes for disadvantaged children and youth across the region," said Lee, a professor of counseling, school and educational psychology.

An international leader in education policy and equity, Lee will examine how public schools provide safe, supportive learning environments for vulnerable students as he visits South Korea, Vietnam and Kazakhstan.

Developing nations in Asia are challenged with providing equitable education for all students, particularly high-risk populations such as female, rural, low-income, immigrant and refugee children.

Lee is particularly interested in learning from South Korea's successes as he explores policies that close achievement gaps for vulnerable students. As he works in the year ahead, he will analyze international datasets, interview education policymakers and visit schools with innovative and inclusive programs.

"What lessons can developing nations in Asia, such as Vietnam and Kazakhstan, learn from South Korea? While Korea was a war-torn society, held back by very low literacy levels in the early 1950s, today its young people achieve the highest level of education," Lee said. "My ultimate goal is to inform global education policy initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Education, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all."

## The SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence: Special Award for Special Service



The Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence was created in 1997 to recognize students who have best demonstrated and have been recognized for outstanding achievements in such areas as academics, leadership, athletics, community service, creative and performing arts, campus involvement or career achievement. It is the highest honor bestowed upon a student by SUNY.

Raven Baxter, PhD '21, has been named a recipient of the 2021 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence in the new Special Service category for her efforts to educate the community about the facts related to COVID-19 and safety. Baxter, also a recipient of the prestigious Arthur A. Schomburg Fellowship, graduated this year from GSE with a doctorate in Curriculum, Instruction and the Science of Learning.

Baxter, a molecular biologist, science communicator and educator, is the founder of the STEMbassy science advocacy organization. She gave the opening keynote at SciComm 2020, a conference dedicated to effective communication of science to diverse audiences. She was also featured in Mother Jones magazine and on Fortune magazine's "40 Under 40" list of emerging leaders in 2020.

Baxter is also a songwriter and performer who incorporates educational themes into her recordings and music videos. "Wipe It Down," her parody of Lil Boosie's "Wipe Me Down," highlighted information, science and safety tips related to the pandemic. It was viewed nearly 27,000 times in its first three months. Through her efforts this past year, Baxter has reached more than 4 million viewers and has won 200,000 followers world-wide as she shares her ideas about best practices in science and education.



# IN MEMORIAM

## A legacy of reform and kindness

Lifelong educator Herbert L. Foster, 93, GSE emeritus professor, died on Feb. 26 in his home in Edgartown, Mass., where he had moved with his late wife, Anita, in 1998.

A prolific writer and speaker, Foster was known internationally for his work in urban education focusing on teaching teachers about Black culture with the goal of improving their relationships and effectiveness with Black students, particularly Black males.

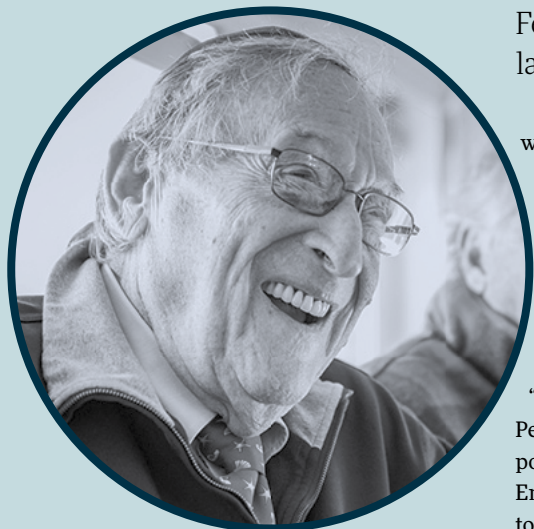
He laid out his plan for successfully educating Black males in his 1974 book, "Ribbin', Jivin', and Playin' the Dozens: The Persistent Dilemma in Our Schools." As he pointed out, "Students have to learn standard English, but you have to learn their language, too."

A decorated World War II veteran, Foster received his EdD from Columbia Teacher College. After teaching in NYC for 17 years, he was hired by UB in 1970 for his expertise in urban education and joined the Learning and Instruction Department. He retired in 1995.

Among those commenting publicly about Foster in reaction to an article in the Vineyard Gazette following his death was his former colleague and friend of 30 years, Al Pautler, also a GSE professor emeritus. "Herb cared about students and was always ready to assist on doctoral committees," Pautler noted. "Always a smile and never saw him down in spirit."

Donations may be made to the Anita G. and Herbert L. Foster Student Scholarship Endowment Fund at the UB Foundation, which supports students pursuing a degree in literacy or special education.

“Herb cared about students and was always ready to assist on doctoral committees.”



(Martha's Vineyard Times Photo/ Gabrielle Mannino)

## Leadership with resilience

Mike M. Milstein, the first chair of GSE's former Department of Educational Organization, Administration and Policy, died on March 12 in New Zealand, where he had lived for 20 years. He was 83.

Milstein began his career in education as a social studies teacher in the Minneapolis Public Schools. After receiving his PhD in educational administration from UC Berkeley, he joined UB's faculty as an assistant professor of educational administration. He was named an associate professor in 1971 and from 1976-85 held the position of professor. He was the first chair of EOAP (now the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy) from 1982-85.

Milstein served on the faculty of the University of New Mexico from 1985-2000. He was chair (1985-89) and co-chair (1989-91) in the Department of Educational Administration, and professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Organizational Leadership from 1992-2000.

At UNM, he established himself as a leader in changing preparation programs for educational leaders. He developed an internship program that was a model for other universities preparing leaders for schools. He was a proponent of the use of portfolios for educational leaders in place of the traditional dissertation. His focus was on supporting practitioners who could make a difference in their leadership roles.

From 2000 until his death, Milstein was a partner in the Resiliency Group, Ltd., Albuquerque, N.M. and New Zealand.

Milstein was the author or co-author of 13 books, including two on making schools more resilient that he co-authored with his wife, Doris Annie Henry, who is among his survivors. Milstein and Henry met when she was a keynote speaker at a conference that he organized at UNM. They were married for 21 years.



## A life of service, innovation and impact

Amy J. Vilz was one of 11 librarians selected this year to receive the New York State Outstanding Librarian Award recognizing service to their communities. It was a bittersweet recognition, coming a month after her death at 47 from cancer on March 4.

Vilz accomplished a great deal in her 47 years.

A native of Buffalo, she received a BA in history in 1995, and a MLS in 2006, both from UB. Before joining the University Libraries as UB's archivist in 2013, she held archival positions at Rochester Institute of Technology, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, D'Youville College and the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library Rare Book Room.

Vilz worked tirelessly to make the UB Libraries a more effective service organization, and demonstrated leadership, guidance and innovative efforts that will have a lasting impact on the university, particularly her work to digitize UB's vast audiovisual holdings.

Evviva Weinraub Lajoie, vice provost for UB Libraries, noted: "Amy's commitment to the profession and her collaborative, creative spirit brought a thoughtful and forward-thinking perspective to her leadership of the University Archives."

Vilz served as co-editor-in-chief of the open access journal she co-founded, The Reading Room. She was a member of the Western New York/Ontario Association of College and Research Libraries.

She was determined to live life to the fullest. After receiving a terminal cancer diagnosis, she traveled to Europe, bought a house, planted a perennial garden, toured Buffalo as if she were a tourist and wrote her own obituary.

“Amy's commitment to the profession and her collaborative, creative spirit brought a thoughtful and forward-thinking perspective to her leadership of the University Archives.”



## Guiding with artistic flair

Nancy B. Broderick, a GSE staff member for more than 40 years, died Nov. 23, 2020 in her home in Willamsville at the age of 102.

After working as a bank teller and then a market analyst for Carborundum Corp., Broderick joined the staff of UB's Faculty of Educational Studies, predecessor to GSE, in the mid-1960s. She took graduate classes at UB and was named an assistant dean. She later was appointed an associate dean, providing continuity under several deans, and retired in 2001 at the age of 83.

Broderick curated and framed many prints that hang in Baldy Hall.

A graduate of Radcliffe College, she was a world traveler who visited countries including China. Her hallmarks included a sense of style and a positive attitude. "Her

diplomatic skills and great sense of humor enabled her to navigate politically fraught situations," recalled her son, Peter. "Smart but modest, her generosity and charm never wavered."



“Her diplomatic skills and great sense of humor enabled her to navigate politically fraught situations.”



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Fan cutouts in the seats in the Alumni Arena, because fans were not allowed to attend games during the pandemic, January 2021. (UB Photo/Meredith Forrest Kulwicki)