

UNC

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

magazine

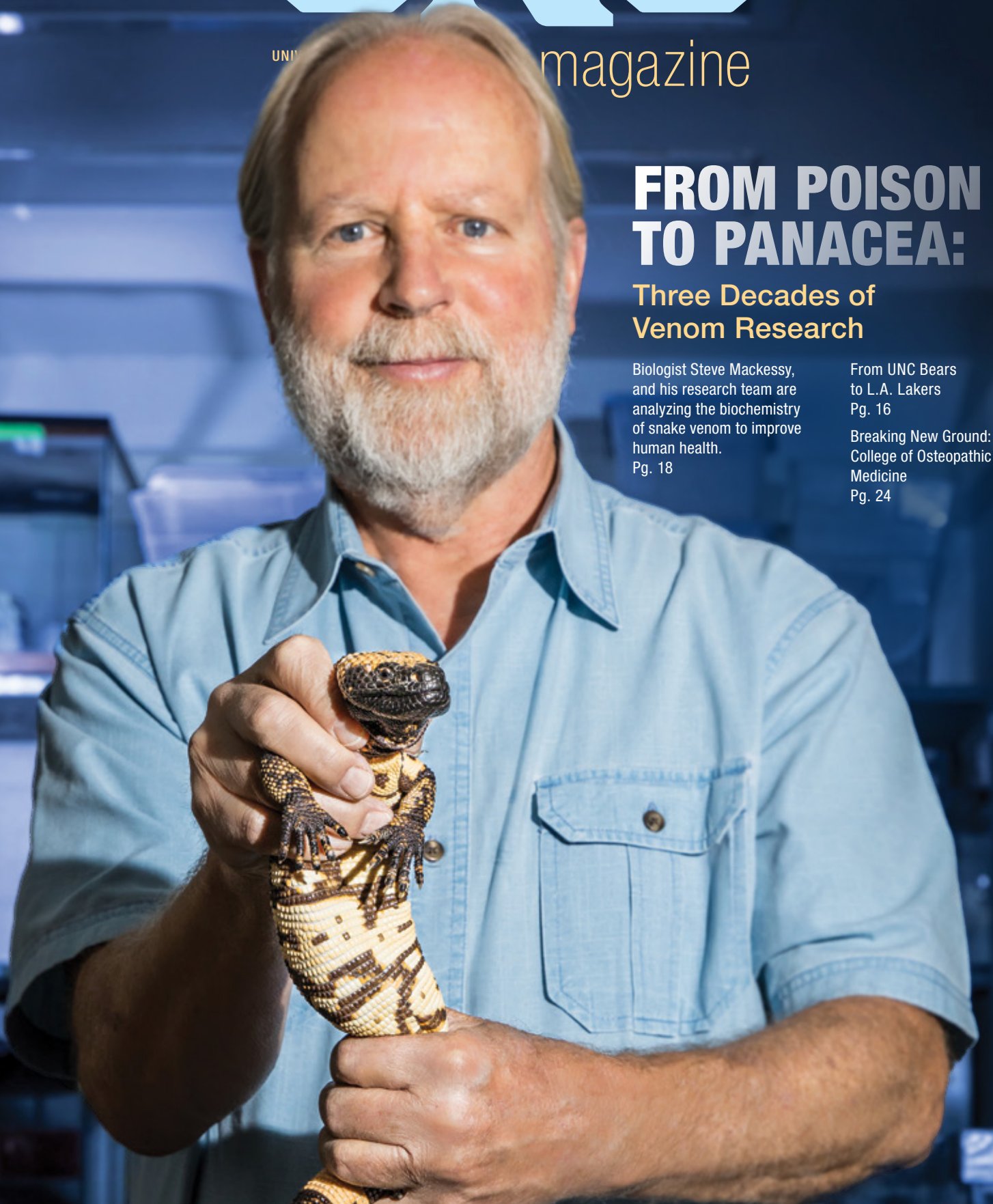
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Fellow Bears,

We have much to look forward to this year, especially as we focus on the third two-year phase of our strategic plan, *Rowing, Not Drifting 2030*. As we continue to make progress toward our vision for UNC's future, we will build on a strong foundation of previous successes across each of the five vision elements that guide our work. For example:

Students First: We welcomed more new, first-time undergraduate and graduate students in our fall 2024 class compared to last fall—a 1.7% increase in total enrollment. Our current student population is 8,561, comprising 6,242 undergraduate and 2,319 graduate students. The enrollment gains are attributed to our strategic enrollment planning efforts and the actions we are taking to keep a UNC education accessible and affordable.

Empower Inclusivity: Now that we have achieved federal designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution, we are working to enhance academic programs, expand support services and invest in initiatives aimed at promoting student success and graduation. This includes efforts designed to support our Hispanic/Latine-identifying students—now 27% of our student population—as well as delivering on our commitment to ensuring that all students have the tools they need to thrive.

Enhance & Invest: We continue to invest in and support faculty success and research. In this issue, you can read about the Center for Innovative Educator Preparation we launched this fall, which seeks to break down barriers for those aspiring to enter the education field. You can also read about the fascinating 30-year career of world-renowned researcher Steve Mackessy, Ph.D., who explores how properties in snake venom can improve human health.

Thanks to our outstanding Nursing faculty, our undergraduate Nursing program is ranked No. 54 among all public and private universities in the latest U.S. News & World Report's 2024-25 Best Colleges rankings. This is UNC's highest program ranking ever and represents an impressive jump of 32 spots from last year.

Innovate & Create: Our proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine reached another major milestone toward accreditation when it moved from Applicant to Candidate Status with the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation. Read more on page 24.

Connect & Celebrate: Homecoming always reminds me of the enduring relationships alumni have with UNC. I was happy to see so many of you during the Homecoming events in September and at the groundbreaking ceremony for the proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine, a highlight of the week.

It's hard to believe 2025 is just around the corner. I am grateful for your strong support of our students and our university. This has been an extraordinary year for UNC. I can't wait to see what the new year brings.

Go Bears!



Andy Feinstein
President

 The *Rowing, Not Drifting 2030* Strategic Plan can be found online at unco.edu/strategic-plan

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Dalton Knecht, '23, (R) shakes hands with NBA commissioner Adam Silver (L) after being drafted 17th overall by the Los Angeles Lakers during the first round of the 2024 NBA Draft at Barclays Center on June 26, 2024 in the Brooklyn borough of New York City.

PHOTO BY SARAH STIER/GETTY IMAGES

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PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

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UNC Magazine is published twice per year by the Division of University Advancement at the University of Northern Colorado and distributed to alumni and friends. Its content and the website is produced and designed by the University Marketing and Communications Department in the Division of University Advancement. Contents may be represented only by permission of the editor.

I'm a Bear: Shaping the Canvas

**SPRING GRADUATE RAQUEL EDUARDO NÚÑEZ
LEAVES COLORFUL LEGACY**

Sitting on top of a ladder, holding a brush dipped in calming yellow paint, Graphic Design and Photography alumna Raquel Eduardo Núñez, '24, is painting a floor-to-ceiling mural in a student lounge on the first floor of Kepner Hall. The design, consisting primarily of vibrant blue shades, features a collage of drawings of a bear, a robot, mountains, dominos and a video game controller.


The space is called the Innovation Hub, which students can visit between classes, so Eduardo Núñez filled the walls with intricate patterns to help promote students' creativity. Her favorite part of the mural though, is her signature written at the bottom center of the mural: Raquel Eduardo Núñez 2024.

"It makes me feel like I've left my mark," Eduardo Núñez said. "I've come to realize how grateful I was during my time in school for the privilege of pursuing higher education and walking through the halls to my classes. Now, when I walk past the mural, I see my creativity on the walls and feel a deep connection to being part of the University of Northern Colorado (UNC)."

Being selected to paint the mural is the cherry on top of the cake for what Eduardo Núñez has achieved at UNC. She graduated summa cum laude with two majors in three years with a Digital Marketing minor and an Arts Entrepreneurship certificate, was in the



RAQUEL EDUARDO NÚÑEZ, '24
Graphic Design and Photography



Honors Program, won the Dickeson Presidential Prize for Leadership and financed her education thanks to multiple scholarships including the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative and the Stryker Institute for Leadership Development.

“I’m really proud and grateful for where I am now,” Eduardo Núñez said. “Especially because when I first moved to Colorado, I didn’t know any English. So now having graduated from a university in the United States, is a big accomplishment.”

Eduardo Núñez grew up in Mexico with her family and moved to Yuma, Colorado, when she was just 8 years old. Yuma is a rural town in northeast Colorado with a population of 3,456, according to the 2020 census. Eduardo Núñez said the cultural adjustment didn’t come easy.

“I had to relearn everything, and we didn’t know anybody from around the town, so trying to connect with the community was tough at first,” Eduardo Núñez said.

To adapt, Eduardo Núñez focused on two things — academics and art. The academic drive came from her parents instilling the importance of a college degree in her since she was a child. For them, education meant opportunity.

“Education opened the door for my parents to migrate to the United States, and because of that, they instilled in me the profound importance of learning. Through knowledge, we truly gain a unique kind of power that shapes our lives and opens endless opportunities,” Eduardo Núñez said.

With the goal of furthering her education set, Eduardo Núñez and her family had to figure out how to achieve it. Being a first-generation student in the United States, the family had to research a completely different application process, financial aid and housing options.

Eduardo Núñez did have a leg up in one aspect of the enrollment process. At Yuma High School, where she went to school, students can take concurrent enrollment courses from Northeastern Junior College. So, Eduardo Núñez took college courses instead of taking electives in high school.

“I’ve always been really driven by academics and the arts, so taking these courses helped a lot with my career. It was great to have such a big support system there.” Eduardo Núñez said. “That is how I was able to graduate a year early.”

Then, Eduardo Núñez learned about the resources available to her. Colorado’s ASSET Program, which stands for Advancing Students for a Stronger Economy Tomorrow, is a state law that allows U.S. citizens, permanent resident aliens and students without lawful immigration status to qualify for in-state tuition rates if they meet certain conditions. Because Eduardo Núñez is originally from Mexico,

she is considered an international student. However, since she finished high school in Colorado and lived in the state for several years, she was able to qualify for in-state tuition through the ASSET program.

“That was a big portion of the decision on whether it was a reality for me to go to college,” Eduardo Núñez said. “I knew that if I was going to be considered an international student, the odds of finishing and pursuing a degree would be a lot harder. So, I just looked at schools that had the ASSET program and luckily UNC was one of them.”

Once enrolled, Eduardo Núñez met with Rudy Vargas, ’13, the director of the César Chávez Cultural Center and Undocumented Student Services at UNC, who introduced her to the scholarships she would be eligible for. Eduardo Núñez was awarded so many scholarships that she received her degrees free of any tuition costs.

“Coming from a family where we were immigrants not too long ago, I specifically looked into having the cultural resources that would be helpful for me as a primarily Spanish-speaking student,” Eduardo Núñez said. “And UNC met many of those criteria. I knew that with the resources and an amazing fine arts program, it was the right spot for me.”

Now it’s time for Eduardo Núñez to leave her signature outside the classroom. She landed an internship with a faith-based nonprofit called Engineering Ministries International (EMI) in Colorado Springs. She’s working with the communications and design team documenting and creating digital marketing that tells powerful stories of transformation. EMI serves groups across the globe by designing critical structures — schools, hospitals, water systems and more — within communities that need them most. Through her work, she’ll highlight the profound impact these projects have on people’s lives, sharing stories of hope, restoration and the love of Christ by creating designs for communities across the world.

Eduardo Núñez will also pursue freelancing opportunities as a designer working on branding, photography and mural projects.

“I’ve really enjoyed painting since I was young, and I’ve been diving into the digital realm. But I’ve always fallen back into painting and having brushes everywhere and just kind of letting that wild creativeness come out,” Eduardo Núñez said. “I acknowledge that we all have different journeys, and we all experience and see the world in different ways. I’ve really enjoyed representing that in my work.”

Wherever Eduardo Núñez goes in her career, she’ll leave her brushstrokes through it all.

—Sydney Kern

 raquelencreative.com, raquelen.substack.com

GO BEARS!

WELCOMING THE 25TH NORTHERN COLORADO ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME CLASS!

Every two years, UNC Athletics inducts outstanding former student-athletes, teams, coaches and supporters into the University of Northern Colorado Athletics Hall of Fame. Members of the 25th class were announced earlier this year, showcasing UNC's breadth of athletic excellence. In September, six inductees were celebrated for their many achievements on and off the field. Join us in congratulating this impressive lineup of players and coaches.

TAD BOYLE MEN'S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH, 2006-10

Tad Boyle played a crucial role in building the UNC men's basketball team into the powerhouse it is today. In just four years, as UNC became an NCAA Division I school, Boyle brought them to a near Big Sky title win. In his final season coaching at UNC, Boyle propelled the program to its first 20-win season since the 1980s when the team went 25-8. He is also responsible for recruiting and developing numerous award-winning players, including three All-Big Sky honorees, a fellow UNC Hall of Famer and Big Sky MVP and the 2009-10 Big Sky Defensive Player of the Year. Boyle continues to have a successful career serving as head coach for the Colorado Buffaloes.

MARIEL GUTIERREZ, '18 WOMEN'S SOCCER, 2014-18

Mariel Gutierrez, '18, is one of UNC women's soccer's and the Big Sky Conference's most decorated student-athletes in history. Gutierrez recorded a massive 36 goals while at UNC, ranking fourth all-time, and the 14 assists she recorded rank seventh all-time. Gutierrez holds several Division I-era records including game-winning goals with 14, shots attempted with 220 and shots on goal with 112. She holds fifth place in UNC's all-time rankings for games played, with a total of 85 appearances. Gutierrez was awarded the 2018 Big Sky Conference Offensive MVP, the Big Sky Conference's Golden Boot award and was a three-time All-Big Sky Conference First Team selection.

SAVANNAH SMITH, '19 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL, 2015-19

Savannah Smith, '19, tops the UNC women's basketball leaderboard as the leading scorer with an incredible 2,013 points scored throughout her career. She holds career records in nine scoring categories, including the single-



season record for points scored at 708 and three-point field goals made with 300. Savannah also set the program's bar for points scored in a single game after she posted a pair of 40-point games in 2019. Among her many accolades and awards, Smith was named 2018 Colorado Sportswoman of the Year, Big Sky MVP for the 2017-18 season, 2018 Big Sky Tournament MVP, and was a three-time All-Big Sky First team selection.

TOM RUNNELLS BASEBALL, 1974-77

Tom Runnells is a renowned Greeley baseball player. Runnells played in the College World Series in 1974 and on three Great Plains Athletics Conference regular season and tournament championship teams. At the conclusion of his UNC career, he boasted a .394 batting average, drove in 51 runs, and scored 73 times. Runnells spent 41 years in professional baseball, playing for the Cincinnati Reds and managing the Montreal Expos, among other positions. Runnells' career culminated in his time as a member of the



PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

L-R: Tad Boyle, Mariel Gutierrez, '18, Savannah Smith, '19, Tom Runnells, Jaime White, Jed Roberts

Colorado Rockies organization. Notably, he was the bench coach for the Rockies in 2009 when the team secured the wild card for the World Series. Runnells was later awarded the Colorado Rockies Abby Greer award for the MVP of spring training in 2012 — the only non-player to receive the award.

JAIME WHITE
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH, 2006-14

Jaime White led the UNC women's basketball team to 117 wins as head coach, becoming the all-time leader in wins while overseeing the transition from Division II to Division I. During the 2010-11 season, White was named Big Sky Conference Coach of the Year when she coached the team to jointly win the Big Sky regular season championship and finish 12-4 in conference play. Under her leadership, the Bears reached the Big Sky Tournament championship game twice. White coached a total of 15 All-Big Sky honorees and two of her former student-athletes

are also inductees in the UNC Athletic Hall of Fame. Since leaving in 2014, Coach White has continued her success as head coach of the Fresno State women's basketball team.

JED ROBERTS
FOOTBALL, 1985-89

Jed Roberts was a valuable player on the Bears football team during his time here. He was selected as a first-team All-NCC (North Central Conference) linebacker his junior year, and by the time he finished his collegiate career, he was tied for 14th place in completed sacks. After UNC, Roberts played for the Edmonton Elks in the Canadian Football League from 1990-2002, primarily as a linebacker and defensive end. Part of the 1993 Grey Cup championship team, Roberts set several single-game and franchise records for the Edmonton Elks in special team tackles. With an impressive 163 special teams tackles during his 12-year stint, Roberts continues to hold the franchise record for career special teams tackles.

—Tamsin Fleming



DEDEANN PENDLETON-HELM
Head Coach, UNC Softball

PUTTING THE BEARS ON THE MAP

Coach Dedeann Pendleton-Helm and UNC Softball



“We don’t really focus on that piece,” said Dedeann Pendleton-Helm, head coach of the UNC softball team, referred to as Coach P by most. And that piece she was talking about was winning.

But win is exactly what Coach P has done since arriving at UNC in the fall of 2022. Under her leadership, the Bears won their first conference championship in 2023. Then, in 2024, they became back-to-back champions. Previously, she coached at Colorado State University for 17 years. UNC is her first head

coach position, and she came in with an inspiring mission. “Really, the entire focus was how much team-building we could do, and how much love and care we could give,” said Coach P.

“When it comes to the ballfield, we play ball to the best of our ability.” She’s more focused on cultivating a team that’s in sync and backed by a coaching staff that truly cares about them. In essence, it’s building a team that fights hard for their fellow Bears and digs deep to play well on behalf of something bigger, explains Coach P.

Sabrina “Javo” Javorsky, is one of those Bears. She’s a catcher majoring in Athletic Training who joined the UNC Bears in 2023 from Fairleigh Dickinson, a private university in New Jersey. She describes herself as an intense player, “I won’t stop until I’ve hit my goal. Some coaches tell you to calm down, but Coach P loved my intensity and helped me be a leader.”

The 2023 softball program’s mission statement was ‘Rooted in Love.’ That simple statement illustrated the team’s goal. It was a year focused on building meaningful relationships, trust and deciding on their values. Coach P embodies the theme and empowers her entire coaching staff to live by that value.

“That personal connection means the most. They treat you as a person before a player,” said Javorsky.

Coach P welcomes new players warmly each year. “Every year you rebuild that love, trust and care.”

“How do they look, Javo?” quoted Javorsky, when Coach P asked her about pitchers during practice. “It’s huge when the catcher and pitcher have that trust.” This simple question showed how much respect and trust Coach P has for the senior catcher.

“When I first came here, I was very secluded,” said Javorsky. “Coach P and her wife both helped me. They helped me tear down my walls to trust on and off the field.” Heather Pendleton-Helm, Ph.D., Coach P’s wife, has taught at UNC for over 20 years. She is a tremendous supporter of the team and plays an active role in supporting student-athletes.

UNC softball had a lot to prove with the first-ever conference championship in the rearview. But Coach P didn’t feel the pressure. Instead, she’s realistic about what the team can accomplish. “We’re going to go through years of non-winning and winning.”

So, when the Bears went to the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) regionals in 2024, they went to Stillwater, Oklahoma, with their heads held high representing Bear Country. They played against No. 5 seed Oklahoma State and almost beat the decorated University of Michigan program, and though the Bears were eliminated after those two losses, Coach P talks fondly about the experience. “We saw our team fight and play hard and play great softball. They are proud to be Bears.”

Being a Bear means being open to a community. “As an athlete, you’re put in a limelight ... being here has helped me grow as a person. [During home games] you see the T-ball and travel teams [in the stands], and you can tell they want to be like us one day,” said Javorsky.

Bringing Bear pride into softball was also a great way to reconnect with alumni across generations. The team held an alumni event where 40 UNC softball history-makers attended, including Gloria Rodriguez. Rodriguez coached the Bears for eight seasons from 1970-77 and led the Bears to two Final Four finishes. Thanks to the generosity of many alumni and softball fans, UNC’s softball field is named after Rodriguez, recognizing her dedication to women’s sports and paving the way for the Bears that came after.

Today, softball is growing. According to ESPN Press Room, the 2024 season was the most-watched regular season since 2015, with viewership up by 13% from 2023. Viewers are interested in the fast-paced game and the caliber of players. Locally, Greeley is showing up for the Bears. “It’s gotten massive over the last three years. More people are watching softball and enjoying the fast-paced game,” said Coach P.

Even though the Bears aren’t focused on winning, they are proving themselves as a force to be reckoned with on the mound, at the plate and everywhere in between. This coming softball season, root for the Bears and stay rooted in love.

“It is a game. Remember it’s a game and show that love,” said Coach P.

—Brenna Rhiness



PHOTO BY LARS BARON/GETTY IMAGES

Jourdan Delacruz, '23, competing at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Au Revoir: Bears Share Their Paris Olympics Experience

University of Northern Colorado (UNC) was proudly represented at the 2024 Paris Olympics. An alumna and a faculty member's daughter competed at the summer games, and although neither left with a medal around their neck, their experiences were still bright and golden.

Lift with All Your Might

On Aug. 7, Dietetics alumna Jourdan Delacruz, '23, stepped up to the platform in the South Paris Arena 6 with a full crowd in attendance and hovered over a 6'6" long barbell bearing a total weight of 185 lbs. After a few deep breaths, she heaved the weight from the floor over her head in one continuous motion for a successful lift. In the sport of weightlifting, this is called a snatch, and it's one of two lifts each athlete performs in competition. Each athlete gets three attempts at the lift, their heaviest successful weight counting toward a portion of their final score. On her second attempt, the 26-year-old tried to lift 87 kg (191 lbs.) and then 88 kg (194 lbs.) on her third and failed both, making her first attempt her best.

Completing the first round was already an accomplishment for Delacruz. She competed in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games but did not complete a successful lift.

After a brief intermission, the 12 athletes in the 49 kg (108 lbs.) competition took on the second of the lifts, the clean and jerk. In this event, athletes lift the barbell from

the ground to the shoulders (the clean) and then lock it over their head (the jerk) to stand in a forward lunge position. Despite only having one successful lift in the last round, Delacruz remained calm and focused. She attempted to lift 105 kg (231 lbs.) and easily did. Her second attempt at 110 kg (242 lbs.) failed but her third attempt at 111 kg (244 lbs.) stuck.

Delacruz ended the 49 kg competition with a total of 195 kg—her best score in the snatch combined with her best in the clean and jerk—to claim fifth place in the world.

"It's bittersweet. I definitely expected a better performance. I expected to be on that podium, but I'm not as sad as I thought I would be. I think that's just because I've had an amazing Olympic experience and knowing that my friends and family are here waiting for me—that's making it so much better. But I'm really proud of myself."

Delacruz completed the competition with a smile, a bow and a wave to the cheering crowd.

"In a lot of ways, this feels like my last competition. So, it was just a moment for me to acknowledge the barbell, this sport and everything that it's taught me and how much I've grown as a person in the last 10 years," Delacruz stated on the USA Weightlifting website.



Raising an Olympian

While training for the Olympics can turn into a years-long commitment packed with sacrifices, School of Nursing Senior Lecturer Erin Cummins, MSN, '12, says raising an Olympic athlete almost requires the same dedication and the emotions are just as high. Her daughter, Olivia Cummins, at age 21, was

the youngest track cyclist to join Team USA in the Paris Olympic Games.

“We love to watch her race,” Erin said. “We love it more when she’s happy at the end of the race than when she’s not, but we don’t care about the winning and losing. She cares enough about that.”

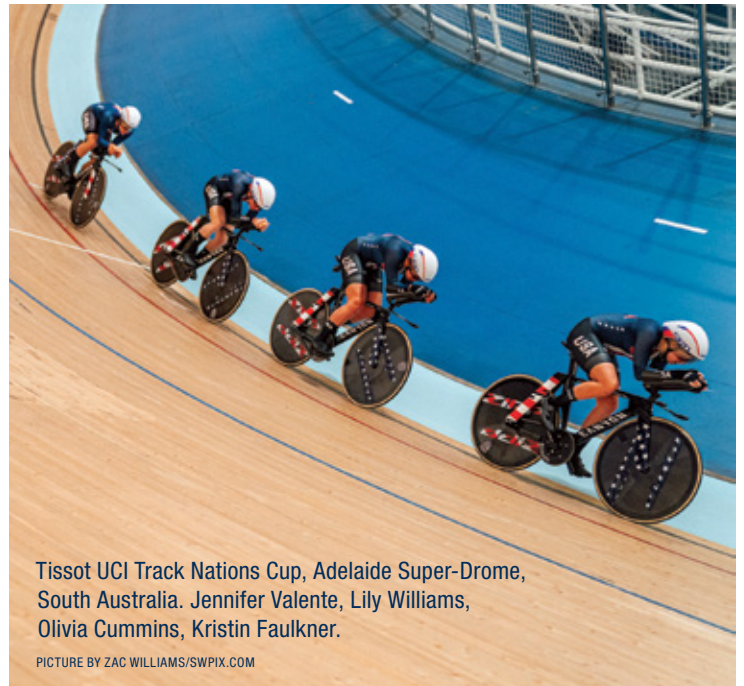
Five women including Olivia formed the Paris 2024 USA Cycling Olympic Team. In the gold medal competition against New Zealand, the team finished with a time of 4:04.306, which is just a fraction of a second off the world record time, earning Team USA the first gold medal in Women’s Team Pursuit. However, Olivia did not compete in this race or the previous qualifying races.

“She basically would get ready for each round, but I think she had a pretty good idea after qualifications that she probably wasn’t going to race unless something happened to someone,” Erin said.

In track cycling, while five athletes comprise the team, only four compete in each round of races. Cyclists race on a bowl-shaped indoor track known as a velodrome, which is typically angled at 45 degrees. The teams have the option to switch out racers in between rounds, however, Team USA chose to stick with the same four athletes, which means that even though Olivia made the team and warmed up before each race, she did not compete and therefore could not return to Colorado with a gold medal.

“It was the kind of situation where there was no way, unless there’s a really good reason, to switch up the team,” Erin said. “It’s such a tough situation because she was right there. If she had raced there is little doubt that the outcome would have been different. Her coach said if she would have competed for any other country, she absolutely would have been on the track.”

While traveling to Paris with her family was an overall great experience, Erin says the outcome is hard to swallow. Watching her child have so much drive —



Tissot UCI Track Nations Cup, Adelaide Super-Drome, South Australia. Jennifer Valente, Lily Williams, Olivia Cummins, Kristin Faulkner.

PICTURE BY ZAC WILLIAMS/SWPPIX.COM

pouring blood, sweat and tears into a sport and being so excited to make the team just to be let down hurts.

“As a mom, it’s hard to see your child sad. But the good thing is she is pretty motivated to compete in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics Games,” Erin said. “It was weird. It was exciting to see the team doing well, but hard to see your kid not participating.”

HOW THE TRAINING WHEELS CAME OFF

Erin says Olivia has been biking since she was 5 years old and from the outset she took the sport seriously.

“She did her first race in training wheels and competed in a little grassroots race in Fort Collins and a couple of little boys beat her,” Erin said. “She was so upset, so, so mad and crying, and they ended up having a second kids race where she blew past everyone.”

Erin didn’t know her family’s life was about to change then, but it did. From that point on, Olivia raced in local races and moved up in different road programs for kids until those in the industry finally suggested to the Cummins that then 11-year-old Olivia should consider competing in nationals.

“We were like, ‘What is nationals?’,” laughed Erin. “My husband and I grew up riding bikes, but we didn’t come from a cycling family background. Most kids who are into bike racing, their parents have also been bike racers or many of them are professionals.”

That year, Olivia raced in nationals and came in second place, making it obvious to the Cummins that their daughter was a pretty good bicyclist. That’s when the life-changing dedication began. The family of four began traveling all over the country for bike races and had Olivia join the Olympic Development Program when she was 15.

Now, Erin says her daughter is already getting back on the bike striding right into her collegiate athletic career at Colorado Mesa University. With the next Olympics on the

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horizon, Erin hopes the outcome at those games will be a big shift.

“Olivia has a chance to be the leader of the team because it is quite possible that none of the current athletes will return,” Erin said.

So, the race to L.A. begins, and Erin says she is ready to jump on her daughter’s support team again though she knows the journey can be an emotional rollercoaster.

“I am so proud of Olivia,” Erin said. “The way she handled her situation, she was personally going through a lot, but she was able to do what she needed to do with a smile on her face and in a mature manner. She totally understands and respects the decisions that were made even if it wasn’t what she wanted.”

—Sydney Kern

.13 SECONDS AWAY FROM REPRESENTING JAMAICA IN THE OLYMPICS

UNC Junior Track and Field star Jerome Campbell hoped to live out his Olympic dreams of representing his native country Jamaica in the Paris Olympics Games. In his pursuit, Campbell posted his second-fastest time in the 110-meter hurdles on the fourth and final day of the Jamaican Olympic Trials. While his time was impressive, Campbell ran a 13.32, he placed just .13 seconds behind the third and final spot on the Jamaican Team for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Campbell will return to UNC to compete in the 2024-25 track and field program.

BEARS WORK HARD BEHIND THE SCENES

Alumni are hard at work to make sure the Olympic competitions go off without a hitch, including:

- 14 alumni are employed with the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee. Most of these Bears graduated with a Sport and Exercise Science degree and are working in operations, marketing/communications or athletic training jobs.
- Six alumni are employed with the Special Olympics organization and most majored in Recreation, Communication Studies and Journalism.

Liz Baylon Trejo receiving the Syd Staggs Advocacy Award.



LIZ BAYLON TREJO, '22
First-year Master's in Public Health

MPH STUDENT EXEMPLIFIES PUBLIC HEALTH ADVOCACY

The Colorado School of Public Health keeps the memory of Syd Staggs' advocacy and inclusion alive with a namesake award. Liz Baylon Trejo, '22, the inaugural recipient of the Syd Staggs Advocacy Award, received the distinction at the school's annual awards banquet last spring.

"Before the banquet, I learned more about Syd and the work they had done, along with just being an incredible human being in general, and couldn't believe what an honor it was to be nominated and chosen for this award," said Baylon Trejo, a first-year Master's in Public Health (MPH) student in the Community Health Education program at UNC.

Staggs's parents and award overseers, Kelley and Mark Staggs, presented Baylon Trejo with the award.

"I actually got to meet Syd's family at the award ceremony, which made it that much more special," said Baylon Trejo. "They mentioned that they were part of the selection committee for this specific award, and they said if Syd had read my nomination, they would have chosen me as well. I almost started crying right there; there was so much emotion with meeting them and talking about Syd."

Before their passing, Syd Staggs was a tireless public health advocate, leader, friend and ColoradoSPH graduate dedicated to helping other LGBTQ+ individuals gain the same sense of acceptance and affirmation that they had.

The ColoradoSPH community came together to honor Staggs and their work. With the help and generous support of Staggs's parents, they established an advocacy award in Staggs's name to recognize a current student who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to advocacy for underserved and disadvantaged populations in public health.

Students who apply for the scholarship submit their work on a significant project or achievement focused on improving the health and well-being of these populations or show a record of above and beyond effort and service towards this advocacy work.

One of Baylon Trejo's nominators describes her as "exemplifying what it means to be a public health advocate, putting her heart and soul into her community on top of what it takes to excel in her MPH coursework."

Baylon Trejo's advocacy for public health began as an undergraduate student worker in the César Chávez Cultural Center and Undocumented Student Services at UNC before continuing her work there through a graduate assistantship.



PHOTO BY COLORADO SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AT CU ANSCHUTZ

"I'm an events and program specialist through the center," Baylon Trejo said. "Essentially, I help plan and execute events for the well-being of students in general, with a focus on Latinx and undocumented students. A lot of it is making sure we create programs that holistically address student well-being in general and tap into different areas that students have shown interest in."

Additionally, Baylon Trejo plays a fundamental role in coordinating the DREAMer Engagement Program, which serves first-year DACA students through mentoring, community events, support and resources and connections to faculty and staff. She also worked as a Spanish community navigator, facilitated testing for ESL classes and participated in numerous community engagement activities.

According to Baylon Trejo's nominators, she never hesitates to share her voice and advocate loudly for immigrants, especially those without documentation. While she isn't certain what the future holds for her, Baylon Trejo knows she wants to continue focusing on immigrant and undocumented populations throughout her time at ColoradoSPH and beyond.

"I definitely love working with the communities themselves, rather than being on the outskirts," Baylon Trejo said. "I envision myself working face-to-face, being very hands-on in the communities. I'm excited to see what that looks like in the future and explore opportunities that are available."

—Teryn Ferrell, Communications Student Assistant at the Colorado School of Public Health



UNC President Andy Feinstein, business and mathematics major Daniel Garza and alumnus John Schmidt, '84

PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

Daniel Garza's Journey from Platteville, Colorado, to Stellenbosch, South Africa

Honoring One Young Man's Passion for Exploration and Technology Through a New UNC Scholarship

Following a tragic skiing accident, President Andy Feinstein and his wife Kerry established a scholarship in memory of their son, Nicholas Feinstein. Honoring Nick's great enjoyment of both technology and exploration, the Nicholas Feinstein Technology Internship Scholarship supports top Monfort College of Business students who are focusing on technology, Computer and Information Services (CIS or Software Engineering). It's for students, like Nick, who are motivated to advance their technological skills by exploring new places and opportunities. John Schmidt, '84, cofounder and co-CEO of WeFi Technology Group, hosted Nick as an intern in the summer of 2023 and was eager to partner with

Andy and Kerry to honor Nick's legacy through an annual internship for a UNC student with similar goals and passions.

The first recipient of the scholarship and internship was Platteville local, Daniel Garza. Growing up, Garza was always curious about how things worked and regularly took his computer apart to see how the inner workings fit together. By the time he got to high school, his fascination with technology only magnified. Clearly, he was bound to do big things, especially with his knack for high-level math like calculus.

As a first-generation student, navigating college applications and decisions about where he would enroll

Pictured here atop the summit of Colorado's Mt. Princeton in July 2021 while hiking with his parents, Andy and Kerry, Nick Feinstein had an adventurous spirit, deep curiosity, and passion for life. Always the outdoorsman, Nick spent as much time as possible skiing, fishing, mountain climbing and exploring.

was new to both Garza and his family. No matter where he went, he knew he wanted to make the most of his time. Garza wanted to be close to his family while receiving a quality education that would give him the skills to be competitive in his field.

Garza's childhood interests have carried over into his adult life, on track to graduate in 2026 with degrees in Computer Software Engineering and Mathematics. Once he settled in on campus, Garza saw that his majors were well-tailored to his skill set and aspirations in life. Wanting to pursue software engineering as a career, Garza began applying for summer internships during his sophomore year.

One of the opportunities that Garza applied for was an internship with the WeFi Technology Group. The tech company specializes in providing the information technology industry with finance solutions that allow businesses to expand and grow in new regions globally while ensuring compliance with each location's specific rules and regulations. WeFi interns are placed at one of the tech group's locations across the world based on their skills and interests. Receiving the Nicholas Feinstein Technology scholarship, Garza's costs for the internship were covered.

"I wasn't overthinking it [as I applied]. I wasn't worrying about 'Oh my gosh, I'm going to be across the world from my family!' I was just hoping for the best, hoping I get this opportunity," said Garza.

Even when Garza received a written offer to pursue the internship with the WeFi Technology Group it was hard to believe the opportunity would become a reality.

"It still didn't feel real even when I got it. I saw the written offer and I signed, but it didn't feel real until the night before, as I was packing," said Garza.

Garza was placed with the WeFi team at their Innovation Centre in Stellenbosch, South Africa for two months during the summer of 2024. When Garza departed from Denver International Airport, it was the first time he flew on a plane — first embarking on a four-hour connecting flight before boarding a formidable 15-hour international flight. Until this summer, the furthest from home Garza had been was Washington state as a young teen.

While in Stellenbosch at his WeFi internship, Garza worked on solving complex software engineering problems, including a lot of research and prototyping. Garza's goal was to assist in building software solutions to help WeFi customers.

Being mentored by and working alongside a team of seasoned professionals was unlike anything Garza had



ever experienced before, and it taught him many lessons about entering the workforce.

"It quickly became apparent to me that writing software is a creative process and that there are many ways to achieve the same goal. I was given the opportunity and latitude to explore alternatives, which was daunting at times, but the team ultimately guided me to implement the best solution for WeFi," said Garza.

Over the summer, Garza honed his skills and experienced life in a new country, learning about the people and culture. Importantly, the funding opportunity paired with the internship experience boosted Garza's confidence and gave him direction for his career.

"I really want to be a software engineer now. I don't know exactly what field of software engineering — web development, operating systems or firmware, things like that — but I do really enjoy the software engineering work," said Garza.

The life changing opportunity for Garza was made possible thanks to the generosity of Andy and Kerry and the investment of time and resources from John and the WeFi team. Through his internship, his goal of excelling in his classes and his desire to become more involved in the math club this year, Garza returned to Greeley inspired and eager to accomplish more than he ever thought possible.

—Tamsin Fleming



PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

Impact

Innovation Center to Remove Barriers for Aspiring Teachers

The University of Northern Colorado's (UNC) Center for Innovative Educator Preparation launches this fall, aiming to break down barriers for those aspiring to enter the education field. With a focus on access, affordability and innovation, the center is well-positioned to address challenges future educators face in their path to teaching.

ACCESS AND INNOVATION

The center, housed in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, has strong leadership from Co-Directors Corey Pierce, Ph.D., and interim dean Nancy Sileo, Ph.D. '98. They are committed to identifying and eliminating obstacles that prevent people from becoming educators.

According to Pierce, the center will address both systemic issues and practical challenges.

"Our mission is to identify those barriers and then come in and say, 'Hey, what can we do?'" Pierce said. "Do we need to write a grant? Do we need to influence policy? Do we need to change practices at UNC to reduce those barriers?"

To achieve this, the center is working on several fronts, from policy advocacy and partnerships with other educational institutions to direct support for students and educators. One of the center's innovative approaches involves creating strong partnerships with school districts and other stakeholders to find new ways of teaching and informing policies that favor educators, school psychologists, counselors and school district leaders.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT AND BUILDING PATHWAYS

Another way the center is increasing access to a college education is through concurrent enrollment programs. Concurrent enrollment allows high school students to

Our mission is to identify those barriers and then come in and say, 'Hey, what can we do?'

—Corey Pierce, Ph.D.

take college-level courses that count for both high school and college credit, giving them a head start on their higher education journey.

Concurrent enrollment programs have been around for a long time. In 2009, the Colorado state legislature established the Concurrent Enrollment program, which allows high school students to take college-level courses for free. The program is the most popular dual enrollment program in the state, with nearly 40% of high school graduates participating. However, students in rural areas struggle to participate in concurrent enrollment programs. Pierce points out a gap: high school students in rural areas often struggle to take advantage of concurrent enrollment classes because there are fewer teachers certified to teach these college-level courses. To address this, the center proposed creating online cohorts that allow students from different schools to participate in these classes remotely.

“If we’re talking rural Weld County, you may be talking to two kids interested in this school and two kids interested in the neighboring school,” Pierce said. “What we’ve done is created online cohorts so a teacher can teach using online synchronous formatting, reaching students from multiple high schools.”

By expanding access through these innovative online formats, the center not only enables students in remote areas to benefit from concurrent enrollment, but it also reduces the financial burden on families since the program covers tuition costs through partnerships with school districts and grants.

SUPPORTING FUTURE EDUCATORS THROUGH FINANCIAL ADVOCACY

The Center for Innovative Educator Preparation will focus on addressing financial barriers that prevent students from completing their education degrees.

“The [Colorado] state legislature says that we are not producing enough teachers. And we all know that one main reason is financial,” Pierce noted. “So, we presented a snapshot with real data to help them make informed decisions.”

In collaboration with Prepared to Teach, a national organization that funds student teaching residencies, the center participated in a survey that identified specific financial challenges faced by future educators.

The survey highlighted heartbreaking stories, such as students nearing the end of their program who had

to move out of their apartments, sell their belongings and live in their cars in order to afford tuition and basic living expenses. These stories provided a stark picture for elected officials, such as the Colorado Joint Budget Committee, who then allocated more funding toward scholarships for educators.

Thanks to this effective advocacy, the Colorado department of Education created the Educator Recruitment and Retention Program (ERR), which provides \$10,000 scholarships to help aspiring teachers cover their educational costs in exchange for a three-year commitment to teaching in a Colorado public school. However, the scholarships are on a first-come, first-served basis and the demand has outstripped the available funding, highlighting the need for ongoing advocacy and support.

CREATING INCLUSIVE PATHWAYS FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

The center is also working to create pathways for paraprofessionals — people who work in schools but are not yet licensed teachers — to advance in their careers. Through a partnership with the Poudre School District’s “Become a Teacher” program, the center has facilitated scholarships that allow paraprofessionals with an associate degree or a bachelor’s degree to complete a special education licensure or a master’s degree program in education at UNC, tuition-free.

“Now, we’re getting 17 people through [them], and those 17 people will go through [UNC] tuition-free,” Pierce said.

This initiative has expanded to include Weld County, where the center leveraged a grant from The Weld Trust to cover up to 9 credit hours for paraprofessionals who want to further their education. The goal is to identify more funds and partnerships to support these educators through their entire programs, ensuring they can advance without the financial burden.

LOOKING AHEAD: STRENGTHENING UNC’S ROLE IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION

The work of the center is crucial not only for addressing current shortages in the teaching profession but also for positioning UNC as a leader in educator preparation, both in Colorado and nationally.

As the center grows, the university’s vision is for it to serve as a hub for regional research and collaboration, inviting educators, researchers and policymakers to develop innovative solutions to address the challenges facing the education sector.

By bridging gaps, advocating for equitable policies and creating innovative pathways, the Center for Innovative Educator Preparation is laying the groundwork for a more accessible and inclusive future in education.

—Carlos José Pérez Sámano

From UNC Bears to L.A. **LAKERS**

By Ryan Mueksch

Transfer Student Starts NBA Career

Dalton Knecht becomes first UNC alum selected in first round of NBA Draft

From wearing blue and gold as a UNC Bear to purple and gold as a Los Angeles Laker, Dalton Knecht, '23, (pronounced 'connect') has hit the jackpot with the opportunity he's walking into to begin his professional basketball career.

On June 26, 2024, Knecht was drafted 17th overall by the Los Angeles Lakers, one of the most storied organizations in all of professional sports.

Less than 18 months after playing his last home game in Bank of Colorado Arena in Greeley, Knecht will play his first regular season NBA game in the famed Crypto.com Arena in downtown Los Angeles, previously known as the Staples Center. The arena that has iconic statues of NBA legends Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabar, Shaquille O'Neal and the late Kobe Bryant is the same arena Knecht will call home for the foreseeable future.

Knecht's journey to the NBA is truly a once-in-a-decade-type of story.

An undersized guard playing high school basketball in Thornton, Colorado, Knecht wasn't immediately on the radar of many college coaches. Despite the lack of attention from Division I and Division II coaches, Knecht was determined to play college basketball and found a landing spot at Northeastern Junior College in Sterling, Colorado. There, he played two seasons and earned National Junior College Athletic Association All-American honors as a sophomore, averaging 23.9 points, 7.5 rebounds and 2.0 assists per game.

After suffering an injury in December 2021, Knecht embraced his role as the Bears' top player off the bench, helping the Bears to a 22-16 record and a runner-up finish in the Big Sky Tournament.



Knecht's success at the junior college level attracted the attention of UNC coaches, who were the first to offer him a Division I scholarship. Knecht played two seasons at UNC, where he quickly became a starter and key contributor for the Bears. In the 2022-23 season, as a senior, Knecht averaged 20.2 points, 7.2 rebounds and 1.8 assists per game. Knecht's 20.2 points per game led the Big Sky Conference and ranked in the top 25 nationally.

Knecht graduated from UNC in May 2023, earning a bachelor's degree in Communications. With an extra COVID-19 year of eligibility, Knecht elected to enter the transfer portal, where he became one of the most highly sought-after players in the country.

Knecht went from not receiving any Division I scholarship offers just four years prior to mulling offers from some of the most successful Division I programs in the country. Ultimately, Knecht landed at the University of Tennessee, where his success on the court continued to rise.

Using his fifth year of eligibility, Knecht wasted no time bursting onto the national scene, scoring 37 points against North Carolina in an early non-conference game. Despite the defensive pressure teams placed on him as the season went on, Knecht continued to flourish. He had 39-point games against SEC foes Florida and Auburn and scored a career-high 40 points against Kentucky.

Knecht finished the season in the top 10 nationally in scoring. He was named SEC Player of the Year, a consensus First Team All-American and was runner-up for the Associated Press's National Player of the Year award.

"He's an anomaly," said Steve Smiley, UNC Men's Basketball head coach. "This type of story just doesn't happen. For him to chase his dreams and now be a first-round NBA draft pick, we are super proud of him."

Knecht's ascension from playing in junior college to the Big Sky Conference to the SEC and now the NBA has not come without hard work and many sacrifices.

"There are three types of players in college," Smiley said. "Like it, love it and live it. The 'live it' guys — there are very few of those. Dalton is one of those guys. Dalton wants to live in the gym, he lives basketball. He's going to keep getting better in the NBA too because he lives it."

"He has a drive that is next level," said Connor Creech, '24, Knecht's teammate at UNC and former

roommate. "Nothing can stand in his way. He knew he was a first round pick, even if he was the only person who believed it. Northern Colorado helped prepare him to do what he did at Tennessee, but he's been built for it his entire life."

Knecht's made-for-Hollywood story continues, fittingly, in L.A. where he will don a Laker jersey this season as a teammate to one of the greatest basketball players of all time, LeBron James.

"Instead of being locker neighbors with me in Greeley, he's going to be locker neighbors with LeBron in L.A. — how cool is that?" Creech said. "There's added pressure there, but he craves that. He's going to make LeBron better — that might sound crazy, but it's true. Dalton fits a role that they need, and he's going to make a difference in a championship hunt for the Los Angeles Lakers."

"Dalton's story is an example of anything is possible that you set your mind to," Smiley said. "We can tell recruits, 'You can come here and whatever your dreams are, you can achieve them.' A UNC graduate is now a Los Angeles Laker." **UNC**



PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

Knecht scored 20 or more points in 18 games at UNC during the 2022-23 season, including a then career-high 34 points against Idaho.

After a standout season at Tennessee, Knecht was a finalist for the Naismith Trophy and the Wooden Award, both of which are awarded to the nation's top college player.

Selected 17th overall in the 2024 NBA Draft, Knecht becomes the highest NBA draft pick from Colorado since 1997.

FROM POISON TO PANACEA:

Three Decades of Venom Research

By Debbie Farris
Photography by Woody Myers



Biologist and snake expert Steve Mackessy and his team at UNC have analyzed the biochemistry of snake venom to improve human health.



Hundreds of venomous snakes. King Cobras. Spitting cobras. Mambas. Gaboon vipers. African vipers. South American vipers. North American vipers. Every type of snake imaginable.

That's what fascinated Steve Mackessy, Ph.D., from an early age, thanks to his part-time job in high school — working at a reptile supply company. He's been enthralled with these venomous creatures ever since. Now, he is a professor of Biology in UNC's College of Natural and Health Sciences.

"It is intriguing to me that small animals like venomous snakes and Gila monsters can produce such a myriad of toxins — and how they safely store this bioweapon, what it is biochemically and how purified toxins can be repurposed as therapeutic drugs is even more fascinating!" said Mackessy.

Today, the world-renowned expert in snake venom biochemistry and proteomics runs the Mackessy Venom Analysis Lab (MVAL) at UNC. The lab focuses on identifying the compounds in snake venom that can improve the health of people with debilitating diseases and disorders.

"The general focus of my research is on venomous snakes and their venoms," explains Mackessy. "However, particular research projects involve very different aspects of the biology of these remarkable animals, ranging from functional biochemistry to population molecular genetics to natural history/ecology."

FROM CALIFORNIA TO COLORADO: A JOURNEY IN VENOM RESEARCH

The southern California native earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Evolution/Ecology at the University of California Santa Barbara and his doctorate in Zoology and Biochemistry from Washington State University. He was a postdoctoral research associate in Biochemistry at Colorado State University. Mackessy joined UNC in 1991 as an adjunct instructor and was hired into a tenure-track position in 1994.

Over the past three decades, Mackessy's lab has been funded by prestigious national and regional grant agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, the National Sciences Foundation, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management and the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade.

Mackessy has published more than 200 scientific papers, book chapters and natural history notes and several books, garnering more than 9,000 citations. He was the managing editor of the *Journal of Natural Toxins* for seven years and currently serves on the editorial boards of three journals: *Toxins*, *The Scientific World Journal* and *Journal of Venom Research*.

THE GILA MONSTER: A DEADLY BITE

Mackessy's research gained international attention following the first fatality from a Gila (pronounced "hee-la") monster bite in 90 years. In February 2024, Christopher Ward, a 34-year-old man from Englewood, Colorado, died after he was bitten by his pet Gila monster. The autopsy revealed that Ward died from complications of what must have been an excruciating, four-minute bite to his right hand.

The Gila monster, a slow-moving reptile that can grow to two feet, is the only venomous lizard native to the United States and one of only two venomous lizards in the world. Though venomous, Gila monsters are retiring animals that bite only when threatened or harassed. Mackessy's early research focused on Gila monster venom, making him uniquely qualified to investigate this case.

"It was kind of a return to my roots. [The fatality and the focus on Gila monster venom] was one reason we wanted to bring the lizard back here, so we could extract venom and answer some of the questions that we have about it," Mackessy said.

To investigate why Ward died from a typically non-lethal Gila monster bite, Mackessy teamed up with a colleague, Dr. Nick Brandehoff, a medical toxicologist and reptile expert in the Denver area and a consulting physician in the case. The research team brought the Gila monster to the lab for comparisons between the one that bit Ward and another one obtained years ago from New Mexico.

Their findings were surprising. The basic biochemistry of the two venoms was quite similar, but the Gila monster that bit Ward produced 10 times more venom than the other lizard. "That was one of the very noteworthy things," Mackessy explained.

"These animals use venom defensively, whereas rattlesnakes and other venomous snakes typically use it offensively. And it's often based on how they feel." This proved part of the biologist's working hypothesis — that this lizard was really agitated, and when they're agitated, they produce a lot of venom.

The research revealed that Ward likely received an extremely high dose of venom due to the lizard's agitated state and the prolonged four-minute bite.

"Rattlesnakes strike and release very quickly, and in about a fourth of a second, it's deposited a large volume of venom," said Mackessy. "But some Gila monsters hold on for quite a while, which is apparently what this one did."

"Gila monster venom systems are really weird," Mackessy noted. "Their glands are in the lower jaw, and the teeth that deliver the venom are grooved, so it's a very inefficient delivery system compared to rattlesnakes."



It was important to study two similar Gila monsters. “Even with the same species, they have their differences, where they’re from, their age ... all that can affect their venom,” said Mackessy. By extracting venom from two Gila monsters, the researchers could compare the results to understand what might have contributed to the man’s rapid decline and eventual death.

FROM VENOM TO MEDICINE: THE SCIENCE OF DRUG DISCOVERY

Located on the second floor of Ross Hall, the Mackessy Lab is a vibrant setting for scientific discovery that attracts visiting scholars from around the world. It’s also a wonderland for UNC students drawn to discovering and harnessing venom compounds with promise for drug discovery research and development.

The lab houses many different species of snakes, which are the source of the crude venoms extracted every two months. Many of these venoms are not commercially available from any other sources, making the Mackessy Lab a unique and valuable resource in the field.

Once enough venom is available, researchers work to isolate venom toxins, purify specific components and stabilize them for future testing. This approach allows the researchers to process small amounts of venom rapidly, screen them for potentially useful medicinal compounds and utilize new sequencing methods to determine the primary structure of target molecules in a more cost-

effective way. This is a critical early step in the molecular characterization of potential therapeutics.

In collaboration with colleagues, the Mackessy Lab uses innovative techniques like mass spectrometry to analyze venom samples. This approach helps researchers identify and understand proteins in the venom, compare venoms from different species and evaluate venom diversity.

The ultimate goal is to learn more about the biochemistry of venom. Biochemistry and molecular biology have become the foundation for understanding all biological processes and essentially life. This approach to investigating snake venom can lead to identifying novel compounds that could result in new drugs to address debilitating diseases and improve human health.

Circling back to early Gila monster research, in 1990 an endocrinologist in the Bronx studying the venomous lizard’s saliva led to the discovery of the hormone exendin-4, similar to one humans release after eating to control blood sugar levels. The hormone was later synthesized into the drug exenatide used to treat type 2 diabetes.

“There are other peptides in Gila monster venom,” continues Mackessy. “One drug based on these peptides that is being used right now is Ozempic, which was initially designed as another type of drug agonist that stimulates the body to regulate blood sugar glucose.”

Inspired by Gila monster venom, the popular drug Ozempic used to treat diabetes and obesity was brought to market in 2017. The discovery of Ozempic, based on research that began in the 1970s, like most basic science



resulted from the work of many scientists, emphasizing that science is iterative, and it could be 20, 30, 40 or 50 years before developing a drug.

“We’re interested in therapeutic drug discovery, and we collaborate with people from all over the world on some of these projects,” said Mackessy. “We can do a lot of the basic science, but taking drugs to market requires additional expertise.” The work that Mackessy and his research team do is anything but basic.

CURRENT RESEARCH: IMPROVING HUMAN HEALTH

The Mackessy Lab is currently working on several drug discovery projects, including:

- Purifying specific proteins from rattlesnake venoms.
- Identifying substances with unique effects on blood coagulation or cancer cells.
- Exploring compounds that show potential in limiting metastasis in several types of human cancers.
- Evaluating a minibinder protein that could revolutionize snakebite treatment in remote areas.

In a paper published several years ago, Mackessy and his team found that a compound from Russell’s viper venom has the potential to be an effective antithrombotic agent, a promising treatment for clotting disorders that cause strokes. Several substances appear to be effective clot-promoting agents to control bleeding, which has strong emergency medical implications.

MAKING A GLOBAL IMPACT

Mackessy’s global reputation as a snake expert has resulted in speaking invitations at conferences in Spain, England, India and Brazil, as well as at many conferences and universities in the United States. Mackessy has been the subject of numerous local, national and international news stories, blogs and TV shows, including on the Discovery Channel and BBC.

As a result, the snake venom expert has attracted students to his lab who have continued their work around the world. For example, he hosted visiting Fulbright scholar Dr. Melisa Benard Valle from the Instituto de Biotecnología, UNAM in Cuernavaca, Mexico, who visited his lab several times spending three or four months here working with students. She is now a postdoctoral

fellow at the Center for Antibody Technologies in Denmark and is currently collaborating with Mackessy on his latest research project involving a minibinder protein. The project has shown encouraging results in mice who receive a minibinder protein after receiving a venom toxin.

“We can actually rescue the mouse, and they survive,” said Mackessy. “Until you show it [can work] in a living system, it’s hard to say you’ve got something that’s actually going to work.”

The breakthrough could have a global impact. In remote parts of the world, there are snakes that produce lethal toxins that kill people very quickly. People in the rural areas of Africa, Asia and South America are most at risk and least able to afford treatment. Currently, people are treated with antibodies from horses, sheep or other large animals but that’s expensive, explains Mackessy, and it’s not available in a lot of places plus it takes a while to get it.

If these minibinder protein molecules prove effective, then scientists may be able to produce injectable shots or oral pills that can be stored easily on a shelf in extremely rural areas.

“If somebody gets bitten by a mamba or cobra or something, you could give them a couple of these tablets with drugs X, Y and Z that target these different toxins in the venom. It may not cure them, but it does keep them from suffering the most severe effects, including death. And gives them more time to get to a clinic,” said Mackessy.

NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS

A vital part of Mackessy’s work is mentoring students. He has worked with generations of undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom have secured excellent positions in universities, biotech companies and governmental agencies. Several undergraduate students who worked in his lab have become successful physicians, research scientists and scientific professionals in a variety of fields.

“UNC is small, but big enough. The students are very pleasant to work with. They don’t have the attitude of entitlement that we see in some of the bigger schools,” said Mackessy. “Some of our students are absolutely stellar and would be competitive anywhere, Ivy League schools, etc.”

Sam Kerwin, a current Ph.D. student who works in Mackessy’s lab, has conducted several of the onsite analyses of Gila monster venoms. In June, Kerwin and graduate student Eric Januszkiewicz presented at the international scientific symposium Venom Week IX in Durham, North Carolina.

Mackessy has been widely recognized for his work in and out of the classroom, garnering top awards for excellence in research and teaching at UNC.

Former students like Anthony Saviola, Ph.D. ’15, now a research scientist in Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics

at the University of Colorado Anschutz, continue to collaborate with Mackessy on groundbreaking research.

Saviola explored the actions of “non-toxic toxins” — known as disintegrins — found only in viper venoms and found that it allows rattlesnakes to relocate prey they bit — simply by scent trail. In later studies, he also found that this same molecule helps to prevent cancer cells from spreading to other parts of the body. This is an excellent example of how the snake uses a molecule in the venom for one purpose — finding its prey — but when purified, scientists can use it for an entirely different purpose, as a potential anti-cancer drug.

“When cancer cells become metastatic and they leave the site of a tumor,” explains Mackessy, “they become dangerous because they can set up tumors throughout the body. This level of penetration into tissues defines the severity, or stages, of the cancer.”

Saviola found these molecules effective in preventing certain cancers from spreading, an idea that was sparked in the Mackessy Lab when he was a graduate student.

“We’re not the first ones or the tenth ones to come up with the idea of using disintegrins [to stop the spread of cancer cells]. A group at USC developed a disintegrin from copperhead snake venom and they took [the research] quite far and started clinical trials,” Mackessy said.

Other alumni, such as Cassandra Modahl, Ph.D. ’16, have gone on to work at prestigious institutions like the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and Disease. After completing her Ph.D. in Mackessy’s lab, Modahl obtained a postdoctoral research position in Singapore in one of Mackessy’s colleague’s labs. Currently, she’s working on venom projects at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and Disease, the first institution in the world dedicated to research and teaching tropical medicine.

“I just saw her at a Gordon Research Conference in Maine that I was chairing this summer. She was one of the speakers we invited to talk to about her research. So yeah, that’s cool,” said Mackessy.

Undergraduates at UNC also find their way to Mackessy’s lab as they pursue a chance to make a difference.

“I remember we had a high school dropout who was diagnosed with cancer at age 19, survived that and decided to turn things around and do something different with his life,” said Mackessy. “He initiated cancer cell research in my lab as an undergraduate, and he’s now a practicing physician trained at the Mayo Clinic and has his own practice in Montana.”

As Mackessy continues his pioneering work in venom research, he remains committed to pushing the boundaries of science while inspiring the next generation of researchers. His work at UNC not only contributes to our understanding of venomous creatures but also holds the promise of saving lives through innovative drug discoveries. **UNC**



**UNC's proposed College of
Osteopathic Medicine receives
Candidate Status and breaks ground
on the \$127.5 million building that is
expected to open its doors in 2026**

BREAKING

By Debbie Farris

New GROUND



IMAGE BY SMITHGROUP

It has been three years since President Andy Feinstein — with the support of the local health care community and other leaders — launched his ambitious vision to open a medical college on the University of Northern Colorado's (UNC) campus.

Those efforts address the critical shortage and growing demand for doctors, particularly in rural areas, which is negatively impacting people's ability to access health care in Colorado.

Now, the logistics of creating UNC's proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) are falling into place, thanks to the tremendous efforts of university leadership, donors and supporters. The feasibility and economic impact studies are complete, state legislation has been passed, funding has been secured, a dean and two associate deans have been hired and now another significant milestone — the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA) advanced UNC's proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine from Applicant to Candidate Status in August.



Candidate status is the second of three stages the university must go through prior to reaching full accreditation. According to Beth Longenecker, D.O., M.S., FACOEP, FACEP, and founding dean of the UNC COM, the advancement in the accreditation process means the college is officially recognized by the COCA and will be publicly listed on their website. It also means the college is on track to begin recruiting its first class in 2025 and welcoming them to campus as early as fall 2026.

As those foundational elements have come together, Longenecker has been working to create relationships, developing the tenets of a student-centered program and orchestrating the vision that will make Colorado's third medical school stand out from the rest.

“Our vision is to create a medical college that serves as a catalyst in building a more diverse physician workforce who will positively impact communities across Colorado and the intermountain region, particularly in rural and underserved communities.”

One of the fastest-growing health care professions in the country, osteopathic medicine is both a philosophy and practice. It is a holistic approach to patient care that focuses on the body's ability to heal itself and considers the patient as a whole person, according to the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine. Osteopathic medicine focuses on providing care in rural and urban underserved areas with more than half of the nation's DOs practicing in the primary care specialties of family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics, according to a 2023 American Osteopathic Association report.

The Country Doctor

“In rural communities, rural doctors are not just treating patients, they are treating neighbors, friends, their kid's teachers, etc. So, there's this whole other emotional level to preparing physicians for rural communities,” explains Longenecker.

Born and raised in Limeport, Pennsylvania, a small town of fewer than 2,000 until she was 13 years old, Longenecker is well acquainted with rural doctors. Her father was one. He even made house calls when patients were unable to come into the office, sometimes with his daughter in tow, observing and absorbing it all. Longenecker's mother was the office nurse.

“I remember it was \$7 per visit and \$9 for a visit with medical drug dispensing,” recalled Longenecker. In the 1930s, house calls represented 40% of physician-patient encounters, according to the medical journal *Clinics in Geriatric Medicine* (Feb. 2009). In 1972, only about 5% of care provided by doctors took place in patients' homes, and by 1980, house calls had decreased to less than 1%.

“By recruiting rural students [for medical school], there's a higher probability that they will go back to their communities as rural doctors. At UNC COM, our students can participate in rural physician mentorships.”

While UNC COM graduates will probably not be making house calls, they will reflect some of the same core values as the old country doctors: care of the whole person, empathy, listening and collaboration, a holistic approach to medicine and focusing on medically underserved areas.

Expanding Leadership Team

This fall, Dean Dr. Beth Longenecker welcomed the first members of her leadership team to campus: Sanjeev Choudhary, Ph.D., and David Ross, D.O., FACEP, who will serve as associate deans for the UNC COM.

“These new leaders will be instrumental in developing the infrastructure for our curriculum, furthering our relationship with our clinical partners in the community, recruiting quality faculty and achieving pre-accreditation, our next step with the COCA.”



Sanjeev Choudhary, Ph.D.

As the associate dean of Preclinical Education, Choudhary will direct the development and roll-out of the UNC COM curriculum, oversee the division of assessment and lead the development of the college's research program. For the past five years, Choudhary served as a professor and founding chair of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology at Sam Houston State University — College of Osteopathic Medicine (SHSU-COM).

Like UNC COM, SHSU-COM's mission is to train health care professionals who can make a meaningful impact on the health and well-being of rural and underserved communities.

“As we embark on the journey to shape the future of health care through UNC COM, I am driven by a singular vision: To empower the next generation of physicians with the knowledge, compassion and innovation needed to serve our most vulnerable communities,” explained Choudhary.

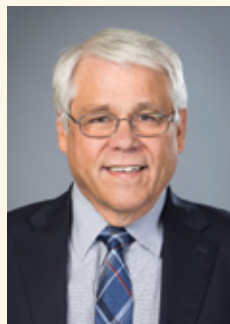
“Together, we will build a curriculum and research foundation that extends beyond the classroom, creating a lasting impact on rural and underserved populations.”

Choudhary has also held tenure-track faculty positions in the Departments of Biochemistry and Internal Medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston.

Choudhary brings more than two decades of extensive administrative, teaching and leadership experience to his role at UNC COM. He has utilized a wide range of active learning methodologies, including problem-based learning, team-based learning, case-based learning, flipped classroom and small-group discussions among others.

Choudhary has received research funding from the National Institute of Health, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association and others. He is an American Council on Education Fellow and gained a comprehensive understanding of effective leadership in higher education, including strategic planning, new program development, fundraising, university finances and student success.

After earning his bachelor's in Chemistry and his master's in Biochemistry at the University of Pune in his native India, Choudhary received his doctorate in Biochemistry from the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, a prestigious medical research institute in India.



David Ross, D.O., FACEP

Ross, the associate dean of Clinical Education and Graduate Medical Education, will oversee the clinical components of the curriculum, including fostering relationships with physicians and hospital systems to secure clinical rotations. He will also spearhead efforts to create additional residency training programs across the state and region.

“I was excited about the opportunity to design something together with my coworkers, Dr. Choudhary and Norma

Juarez and, of course, Dr. Longenecker, that we think will work well for students. How that will all work, and how we will integrate into the rest of the university . . . were very interesting challenges for me,” said Ross. “[At my previous university], we just didn't have the scope of colleges and schools like you do here.”

The award-winning educator and scholar brings extensive teaching, mentoring, state and national leadership as well as research experience to his role at UNC COM. Previously, Ross served as professor of Emergency Medicine at Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine (RVUCOM) in Englewood, Colorado.

He also served as a faculty member in the Office of Simulation in Medicine and Surgery, director of the Rural and Wilderness Medicine Track and co-director of the Pre-Doctoral Simulation Fellowship program. As part of his work there, Ross was charged with identifying and growing medical student interest in rural and wilderness medicine. He developed a Rural Physician Mentorship Program for students in that track.

“I had a group of students every year at Rocky Vista who were interested in rural practice, and we tried to cultivate them and grow that interest into rural medicine,” said Ross. “Through that work, I really have come to enjoy working with rural physicians and appreciate what they do. Because unless you go there, see and talk to them, you don't really realize what it's like. And it is very much the UNC COM's mission to produce rural primary care physicians.”

As a trauma center site surveyor for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Ross visited nearly all the rural hospitals and communities in Colorado. Leveraging his own military experience in the U.S. Air Force in rural Oklahoma, Ross served as the course director for the first and second years of RVUCOM's Military Medicine Program. The rigorous program introduces students entering active-duty service to military medicine over three and a half years.

Ross earned his bachelor's degree in Nutritional Science from the University of Washington and his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine from the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific at Western University of the Health Sciences in Pomona, California.

In September, Longenecker launched searches for an associate dean of Admissions and Student Affairs to start in January; five full-time faculty members; and three department chairs in Anatomy, Natural Medicine and Primary Care all to start July 1, 2025. In total, UNC COM will have 65 faculty and staff by 2030.



Learn more about UNC COM unc.link/osteopathic-medicine

A Natural Fit for Medical Education

“The looming physician shortage is an issue that will have broad impacts across many Colorado communities,” said Feinstein. “There is a clear and urgent need for more medical education programs to begin training additional future physicians now. Our location is the fastest-growing metropolitan area in Colorado and one of the fastest-growing in the country, meaning UNC is well-positioned to help meet that need for our region and beyond.”

Widely recognized as a leading university for education and teacher preparation, UNC also has a history of excellence in the health sciences, with its popular undergraduate Nursing program ranked No. 54 in the nation in U.S. News & World Report’s 2025 Best Colleges. The university offers nationally recognized programs in Nursing, Rehabilitation Counseling, Audiology, Public Health and Speech-Language Pathology.

With its recent federal recognition as Colorado’s newest Hispanic Serving Institution and deep commitment to diversity, equity and inclusivity, UNC is ready to prepare the next generation of physicians while also increasing underrepresented populations in Colorado’s physician workforce.

Anatomy of a Different Kind of Medical School

Driven by a mission to provide a transformative education in a culture that cultivates proficiency, inclusion, collaboration, mentorship and professionalism, Longenecker and the COM faculty are committed to inspiring students to become caring physicians who embrace their identity, deliver patient-centered care, promote health equity and positively impact the patients and communities they serve.

The college will have a holistic approach to admissions. The COM student body will reflect UNC’s undergraduate population: working students, low-income students who may not be able to take advantage of medical tests preparation courses, students who are first in their families to attend college and other diverse populations. And, of course, UNC graduates.

“We will look at fit over academic profile: UNC graduates, community service, leadership, those who want to make a difference in communities ... and less weight on MCAT scores,” said Longenecker.

The ability to provide strong student support is what will set the UNC COM apart from other medical schools. This includes academic support to ensure students excel in their coursework by monitoring students’ progress, helping



them develop and organize their study strategies, providing standardized test-taking strategies, building mentorship opportunities and support, among other student success services.

“We want to destigmatize seeking study support, help or services,” said Longenecker, addressing the shame or embarrassment these high-achieving students often have when considering asking for help.

Longenecker experienced this herself when she was in medical school.

“I failed my first ever test in med school—an anatomy test. I had never failed any test in my life. Never failed anything in my life. Until medical school,” recounted Longenecker.

Medical school is quite different, explains Longenecker. “We [at the UNC COM] are here to support our students. It is one of the reasons I came to UNC. We need to be ready to help our students as they juggle life issues along with the challenge of medical school here.

“The national attrition rate of medical schools is 3-5%. We want to do better than that for our students,” said Longenecker, emphasizing her commitment to retain and graduate her students, the next generation of physicians who advance the distinctive philosophy and practice of osteopathic medicine. **UNC**

Gaining Ground

This fall, UNC broke ground on construction for the 110,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art medical school at a ceremony during UNC’s Homecoming celebration on September 28. The UNC COM will be located on the site of Bishop-Lehr Hall at the corner of 11th Avenue and 20th Street.

The University hired Tempe, Arizona-based construction company Adolfson-Peterson, consistently ranked among the top construction managers and general contractors in the nation, to lead the design build. UNC will work with two architectural firms, Dekker and SmithGroup.

Dekker is an award-winning design firm with offices in New Mexico, Arizona and Texas and has served public and private clients for over 60 years. SmithGroup, one of the world’s preeminent integrated design firms with 20 offices in the U.S. and China specializes in design solutions for health care, science and technology organizations, higher education and others for 170 years.

To fund the project, UNC secured the \$200 million minimum investment necessary to open the proposed college after Colorado Governor Jared Polis signed House Bill 24-1231 into law on May 1. The bipartisan legislation included \$127.5 million for construction, startup and accreditation expenses. The remaining investment comprises \$41 million from the state’s statutory reserve, which will satisfy the COCA’s escrow requirement and \$32 million from donors. One of those donors was The Weld Trust, a local organization that last fall made a generous, transformational gift of \$25 million for the proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine. It is the largest single gift in UNC’s history.

The UNC COM has a planned capacity to enroll 600 students to help meet the state’s workforce needs and is expected to add \$1.4 billion to Colorado’s economy over the next 20 years. However, annual contributions of at least \$197.2 million in added income to the state’s economy beyond that period are expected, according to a February 2024 economic impact report.



BLUE & GOLD

LYNDSLEY CRUM, '05
Political Science



An Alumni Tribute: What it Means to *be a Bear*

AVP of Alumni and Community Relations Lyndsey Crum, '05, Departs UNC

Here in Bear Country, we love a good alumni career success story. Lyndsey Crum, '05, is one such Bear whose decade of service as the University of Northern Colorado's Assistant Vice President for Alumni and Community Relations has left an indelible mark on our community. Her story is a shining example that exemplifies the mantra: "Once a Bear, Always a Bear."

Lyndsey's journey at UNC began as a first-generation college student from Hawai'i pursuing a degree in Political Science. Her early passion for community engagement and leadership laid the foundation for a career dedicated to fostering strong connections between alumni and the university. When she returned to her alma mater 10 years ago, she brought a vision that would transform the Alumni Relations program into a national leader.

Under Lyndsey's guidance, UNC's alumni network flourished. She built a diverse and dynamic community of alumni donors, employers and advocates, ensuring that Bears remained actively engaged and invested in student success long after they left campus. Her strategic use of a metrics-based model resulted in consistent year-over-

year growth in alumni engagement, positioning UNC as a trailblazer in alumni relations.

Lyndsey's impact extended far beyond engagement. By aligning alumni relations with the university's broader, strategic goals, she ensured the work of her team supported student success, philanthropy and university advocacy. Her leadership fostered a culture of engagement that connected Bears across generations and industries.

In 2022, Lyndsey was recognized as a Fulbright Scholar, a high honor that took her to Berlin, Germany. As one of only 15 U.S. higher education administrators selected, Lyndsey deepened her appreciation for global education and international alumni engagement.

Lyndsey's decade of service to UNC is a testament to her unwavering commitment to the university and its community. Her legacy is one of connection, leadership and a deep love for her alma mater. Through her work, Lyndsey contributed to the success stories of countless alumni, who continue to make their mark across the globe in fields ranging from business and education to health care and the arts. Programs like Bear to Bear, in which

SHARE YOUR *Career Success* WITH US!

Help us celebrate you and your career path.

UNC graduates work in important roles in their communities — as nurses and educators, actors and executives — and so many more. Be sure your career information is up to date.



unc.link/alumni-update-info



See how your career information helps fellow Bears choose their path!



unco.edu/bears-go-big

alumni, faculty and staff volunteers reach out and personally welcome thousands of admitted students and Success Looks Like Me, an opportunity for alumni and professionals to advise students in the same career, are just a few examples of the initiatives she championed that continue to empower UNC alumni to achieve great things.

In August 2024, Lyndsey departed UNC and began her new position as the Assistant Vice President of Alumni Relations at Wayne State University (WSU) in Detroit, Michigan. In this new role, Lyndsey will lead alumni and career partnerships for the WSU alumni community, continuing to strengthen the Bear Network through her own professional accomplishments.

As we celebrate Lyndsey's achievements, we are reminded that "Once a Bear, Always a Bear" is more than a motto — it's a way of life that Lyndsey exemplifies in every way. Her dedication to UNC has strengthened our alumni community, ensuring that future generations of Bears will continue to go big and make a difference in the world.

—Clare Buttry

Alumna and Award-Winning Mystery Novelist Strikes Again

Speech Pathology alum **Margaret Mizushima**, '74, unveils secrets within the mossy forests of the Pacific Northwest in her latest novel, *Gathering Mist*, the ninth installment to the Timber Creek K-9 mystery series.

The series and latest novel follow Deputy Mattie Wray, her K-9 Robo and veterinarian Cole Walker as they work together to solve crimes that affect their community. The author doesn't have to dig deep to find inspiration for the thrillers. In real life, Mizushima's husband is a veterinarian, and she grew up horseback riding and herding cows, connecting her to animals and nature. Before becoming an internationally published author though, Mizushima was a speech therapist focusing on the science of language and shifted her career to focus on artistic and creative language.

Mizushima has found much success in the second chapter of her life. Along with engaging readers in page-turning mysteries, she was awarded the Silver Medal in the Benjamin Franklin Awards, named a finalist for the Colorado Book Awards and named the 2019 Writer of the Year by Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers.

Already receiving star reviews, *Gathering Mist*, features Deputy Wray who is summoned to Washington's Olympic Peninsula for an urgent search and rescue mission to find a celebrity's missing child. When Wray and Robo begin their tracking efforts, dense forest, chilling rain and unfriendly locals hamper their efforts, and soon Wray suspects something more sinister than a lost child is at play.

Support a UNC alumna and pick up a copy of *Gathering Mist* to read and follow along the desperate search of find a missing child before it's too late.



Alumni Notes

Editor's note: Alumni Notes items are submitted by alumni and are not verified for accuracy by our editorial team. While we welcome alumni news, *UNC Magazine* is not responsible for the information contained in these submissions.

70s

Steve Antonopoulos, B.A. '72, M.A. '73, Limon, was inducted into the Professional Football Athletic Trainer's Hall of Fame, and the Pro Football Hall of Fame Award of Excellence in 2024.

Edward Lepper, B.A. '79, Cibolo, Texas, retired from the United States Air Force.

80s

Colette Pitcher, B.A. '81, Greeley, was inducted into the Greeley Arts Legacy Hall of Fame in October 2024, recognizing her lifetime of accomplishments as "a talent in multimedia, a master in watercolor, and an internationally known bronze sculptor." Pitcher was given UNC's Honored Alumni Award in 2023.

John Foy, B.S. '88, Casper, Wyoming, retired from the Natrona County School District after a 28-year teaching career as a second-grade teacher.

90s

John Rosa, B.A. '93, Littleton, published his debut novel, titled *Sons of Potenza*, a fictionalized account of the rise of organized crime in Colorado and the Rocky Mountains.

Heather Laskowski (Potter), B.A. '94, Beacon Falls, Connecticut, joined BlueLabs Analytics, a leading provider of analytics services and technology, as the Director of Legal Operations and Compliance.

Jennifer Meyer, B.A. '98, Fruita, represented and coached the Team USA Racquetball team at the Pan-American Games in Santiago, Chile in October 2023.

Brooke Berry-Wolf, B.A. '99, New York City, was the sole theatre teacher selected to receive the Big Apple Award for Teaching Excellence in New York City, which recognizes and celebrates teachers who inspire students, model equitable learning, affirm students' identities, and enrich their school communities. Brooke was selected from thousands of nominees from across the NYC public school system.

00s

Angela Fajardo-Valdez, B.A. '01, Colorado Springs, was named the 2023 Elementary Principal of the Year by CASE.

Lea Harms, B.A. '09, M.A. '11, Keller, Texas, self-published a memoir of stories from her time as a 911 dispatcher, titled *Lives on the Line: Stories from America's First-First Responders*.

10s

Jaime Burgher (Ingrisano), B.A. '10, M.A. '14, Golden, joined the Colorado Nonprofit Association as the Director of Programs.

Jillian Fanning-Hoblitt, B.A. '11, Cheyenne, Wyoming, published two children's books, titled *A Giraffe in the Forest* and *A Bear in the Savanna*.

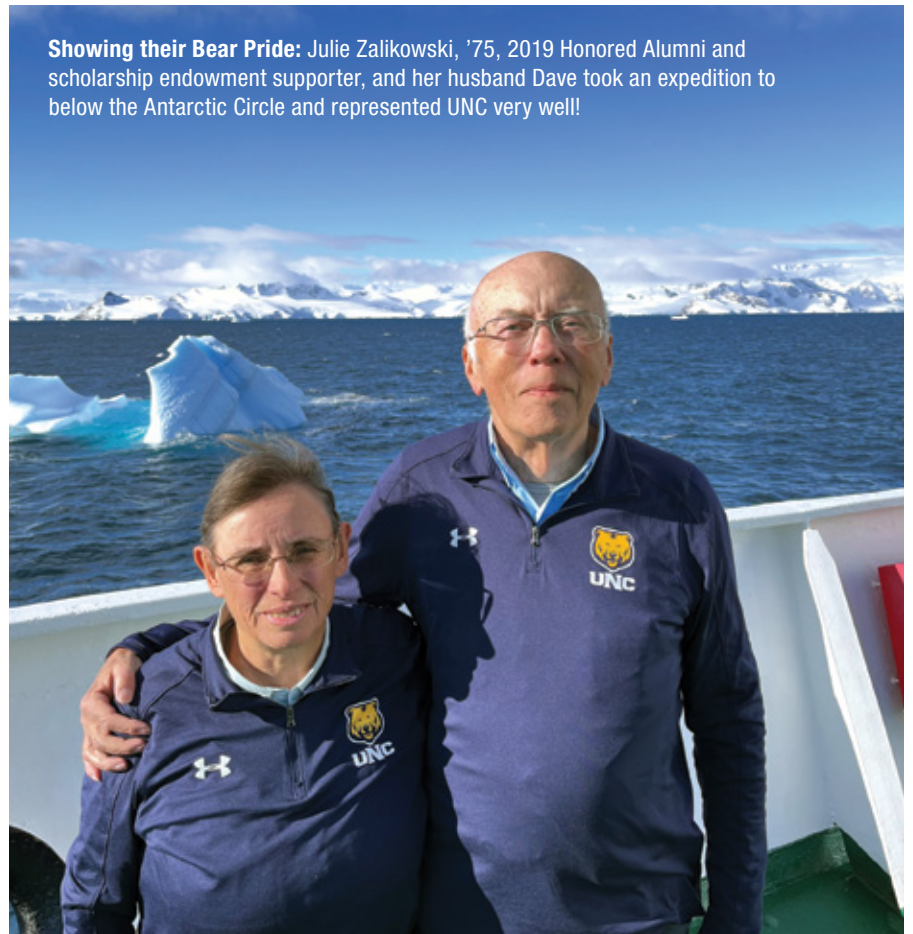
20s

Sydney Novotak, B.A. '20, M.S. '24, Brighton, began her role as Assistant Principal at Padilla Elementary School.

Submit Alumni Notes online at unco.edu/unc-magazine

Stay connected! Join more than 80,000 people and follow us on LinkedIn @ [university-of-northern-colorado](https://www.linkedin.com/company/university-of-northern-colorado) or on X (formerly Twitter) @ [@UNCBearsAlumni](https://twitter.com/UNCBearsAlumni) for the latest alumni and university news and highlights.

Showing their Bear Pride: Julie Zalikowski, '75, 2019 Honored Alumni and scholarship endowment supporter, and her husband Dave took an expedition to below the Antarctic Circle and represented UNC very well!





The Way We Were: We welcomed the Class of 1974 back to campus for their 50-year reunion during Homecoming Sept. 27-28.

In Memory

1940s

Beverly Dyer, B.A. '41
Irene Houtchens, B.A. '48
Betty Schlagel, B.A. '49

1950s

Beth Singkofer, B.A. '50, M.A. '66
Bea Hungenberg, B.A. '51
Allen Deck, M.A. '52
Laurie McLaughlin, B.A. '52
Dewey Adams, M.A. '53
Rose Hall, B.A. '53
Marian Muske, M.A. '53
Dora Schell, B.A. '53
Harriet Parsons, B.A. '54
Lucile Reeder, B.A. '54
Ernest Matuschka, M.A. '55
Gloria Porter, B.A. '55
Audrey Tam, B.A. '55
Chet Buckley, M.A. '56
Evelyn Marvin, B.A. '56, M.A. '60
Oscar Ridings, B.A. '56
Leonard Sinclair, B.A. '56
Ernie Stumpf, B.A. '56
Phillip Tompkins, B.A. '56
Jan Coates, B.A. '57
Dorothy Douth, B.A. '57
Francis Roche, M.A. '57
Bob Trautmann, M.A. '57, Ed.D. '64
Ed Craig, B.A. '58, M.A. '64
Ed Green, B.A. '58, M.A. '63
Millie Marsh, B.A. '58
Helen Shaffer, B.A. '58
Chuck Burke, B.A. '59, M.A. '62

Joe Carney, M.A. '59
Bud Cook, M.A. '59
Ken Kempf, B.A. '59
Jerry McKenzie, B.A. '59
Ron Tarket, B.S. '59, M.A. '66
Barbara Trimmer, B.A. '59, M.A. '64
Earl Wullschleger, B.A. '59, M.A. '62
Milton Negus, M.A. '59

1960s

Harold Johnson, B.A. '60
Wayne Merritt, B.A. '60
Bernetta Ruchotzke, B.A. '60
George Sneddon, B.A. '60, M.A. '62
Jim Christopher, B.A. '61
Larry Downey, M.A. '61
Rosemary Fri, M.A. '61
Gordon Gartner, M.A. '61
Mary Lambert, B.A. '61
Clara Larsen, B.A. '61
Susan LeDuke, B.A. '61
Patti O'Brien, B.A. '61
Eldon Reyer, B.A. '61
Jack Varner, M.A., '61
Duane Wagner, B.A. '61, M.A. '62
Beverly Wickstrom-Potter, B.A. '61, M.A. '68
Lilburn Wesche, Ed.D. '61
Darlene Bruner, B.A. '62
Coleen Davis, B.A. '62
Barney Demicell, B.A. '62
Delsie Foreman, M.A. '62
Norm Frenzel, Ed.D. '62
William Howe, M.S. '62
Bob Lind, B.A. '62, M.A. '66

Joan Paris, B.A. '62, M.A. '66
Mildred Thomas, B.A. '62
Arlene Walding, B.A. '62
Carol Yung, B.A. '62
John Avila, B.A. '63
Gloria Collins, M.A. '63
Connie Dahlstet, B.A. '63
Nancy Friesen, B.A. '63
Charlene Lum, B.A. '63
Jerry Pederson, M.A. '63
Marcia Schatz, B.A. '63
Jim Titterington, M.A. '63
Robert Anderson, B.A. '64, M.A. '67
Joe Bonacquista, B.A. '64, M.A. '66
Dennis Carroll, M.A. '64
Robert (Bob) Morgan, B.A. '64, M.A. '68
Jerry Palmer, B.A. '64
Leland Richards, B.A. '64
George Rusovick, B.A. '64, M.A. '68
Larry Dunkle, B.A. '65
Larry Fooks, B.A. '65
Bev Hadden, M.A. '65
Bob McNew, M.A. '65
Betty Nelson, M.A. '65
Dianna Pfeifer, B.A. '65
Rick Steffens, B.A. '65
Bruce Broderius, Ed.D. '66
Teresa Kistler, B.A. '66
Harry Sweda, M.A. '66
Kathy Tegtman, M.A. '66
Daniel Demski, B.A. '67
Daniel Gohmert, B.A. '67, M.A. '68
Bob Harms, B.A. '67, M.A. '68
James Jones, Ed.D. '67

Jim Kercher, B.A. '67, M.A. '69
 Larry Malsam, M.A. '67
 Jeanne Mott, B.A. '67
 George Plakorus, B.A. '67
 Linda Shupe, M.A. '67
 Janet Wolf, B.A. '67, M.A. '71
 Louise Clarke, B.A. '68
 Sue Davisson, B.A. '68, M.A. '76, Ed.D. '79
 Jeanne Gaynor, M.A. '68
 Joseph Hudson, B.A. '68
 Kaye Marsh, B.A. '68
 Sandra McCalla, M.A. '68
 Doreen Smith, M.A. '68, Ed.S. '78
 Wilbur Anderson, M.A. '69
 Jim Bland, M.A. '69
 Jeannie Blom, M.A. '69
 John Fotheringham, Ed.D. '69
 Tom Glasmann, B.A. '69, M.A. '72
 Sandy Graham, B.A. '69
 Fannie Green, M.A. '69
 Mary Hall, B.A. '69
 Gary Howard, B.A. '69
 Twanda Page, M.A. '69
 Frank Randall, M.A. '69
 Shirley Yauk, B.A. '69, M.A. '77

1970s

Sue Bolinger, B.A. '70
 Bart Farner, B.A. '70
 Jacqueline Lockwood, B.A. '70, M.A. '77
 Neil Roberts, Ed.D. '70
 Evelyn Santilli, B.A. '70
 Virginia Taylor, M.A. '70
 Jack Van Zytveld, M.A. '70
 Ed Young, B.A. '70
 John Arnold, B.A. '71, M.A. '72
 William Arnold, B.A. '71
 Irene Betz, B.A. '71
 Marietta Bliss, B.A. '71
 Jane Cogswell, M.A. '71
 Edward Fisk, M.A. '71, Ed.D. '75
 Donna Gersten, B.A. '71
 Paul Lafkas, B.S. '71
 Sharon McNitt, M.A. '71

Sharon Peterson, B.A. '71, M.A. '79
 Kathleen Pickard, B.A. '71
 Bob Pyle, Ed.D. '71
 Melvin Roy, Ph.D. '72
 Ferrill Standage, M.A. '71
 Jean Whitney, B.A. '71, M.A. '77
 Walter Clayton, B.S. '72
 Joan Dvorak, B.A. '72, M.A. '73
 Jim Green, B.A. '72
 Lewis Hinkley, B.A. '72
 Mike Kinney, B.A. '72
 Wally Moore, B.A. '72
 Steve Sayre, Ed.D. '72
 Janis Stanley, B.A. '72
 Charles Tutor, B.S. '72, M.A. '73, Ed.D. '85
 Russ Wells, B.A. '72
 Dorothy Yaden, B.A. '72, M.A. '77
 Chris Brown, B.A. '73
 Ken Elder, B.A. '73
 Jack Faulkner, B.A. '73, Ed.D. '79
 Carolyn Gardner, B.A. '73
 Bill Howard, B.A. '73
 Neva Iseli, B.A. '73
 Mary Ann Leber, B.A. '73
 Mark MacFarlane, B.A. '73
 Nancy MacKenzie, B.A. '73
 Tim Redsull, B.A. '73
 Jerry Rockett, M.A. '73
 Dan Shanis, M.A. '73
 Bob Aguiar, B.A. '74
 Ginger Chacon, B.A. '74
 Karen Dilka, B.A. '74, M.A. '79
 Terry James, B.S. '74
 Juanita Scott, B.A. '74
 Majd Sharify, B.A. '74
 Terry Christensen, B.A. '75
 Carol Doerner-Long, B.A. '75
 Clare Foote, M.A. '75
 Helen Kitchens, Ph.D. '75
 Meg Miller, M.A. '75
 Ella Simms, M.A. '75
 James Brown, B.A. '76, M.A. '78
 Ronald Cady, B.A. '76

Bill Delo, M.A. '76
 Robert Dingwall, Ed.D. '76
 Sheryl Fanning, M.A. '76
 Norma Gilmore, Ed.D. '76
 Victoria Howard, B.A. '76
 Bill Lombard, M.A. '76
 Shirley Mertens, B.A. '76, M.A. '77
 Paula Pattschull, M.A. '76
 Joseph VanWie, Ed.D. '76
 Janet Wahlert, B.S. '76
 Dana White, B.A. '76
 Bill Winkle, B.A. '76
 Janis Ackerman, M.A. '77
 Jane Burner, M.A. '77
 Jeanette DeHerrera, B.A. '77
 Suzanne Fink, B.A. '77
 Polly Jesse, B.S. '77
 Cynthia Johnson, B.S. '77
 Erie Johnson, Ed.D. '77
 Barbara Johnson, M.A. '77
 Dick Lemke, Ed.D. '77
 Walter Schlegel, M.A. '77, Ed.D. '79
 Johnnie Williams, M.A. '77
 George Case, M.A. '78
 Sharon Thomas, B.S. '78
 John Bartling, Ed.D. '79
 Ronald Rehms, M.S. '79

1980s

Marvin Ballard, M.S. '80
 Bill Blumberg, M.S. '80
 Karen Mercer, M.A. '80
 Kaye Monfort, B.S. '80
 Louann O'Dell, M.A. '80
 Michael Pauley, B.A. '80, M.A. '82
 Anna Rohrbacker, B.A. '80
 Stanley Voth, M.A. '80
 Lowell Huffman, B.A. '81
 Cyrilla Haverkamp, B.S. '82
 Neil Wahlert, B.M. '82
 Christine White, B.A. '82
 Sharon Arnusch, B.A. '83
 Phyllis Garcia, Ed.D. '83
 Jann King, M.A. '83

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Tributes

Rosemary Fri, M.A. '61

Legendary UNC administrator and trailblazer for Women's Athletics



The Bear community is deeply saddened by the passing of Rosemary Fri, M.A. '61, a trailblazing figure in women's athletics at UNC, who passed away on Aug. 11, at the age of 91.

Fri's journey with UNC began in 1959 when she arrived in Greeley to pursue her master's degree

at what was then Colorado State College. A Southern California native, Rosemary's passion for education and athletics was evident early on. She earned her bachelor's degree from UCLA in 1955, and after teaching in California, she made her way to Greeley, where she would leave an indelible mark on the university and its Athletics programs.

In 1961, Fri joined UNC as a physical education instructor. Her dedication to advancing opportunities for women in sports was unwavering, and in 1965, she took on the role of coordinator of Women's Athletics. Under her leadership, the program grew to include 10 sports, setting the stage for decades of success.

One of Fri's most significant contributions was the creation and growth of UNC's Women's Tennis and Volleyball programs. In 1963, nine years before the implementation of Title IX, Fri created the Women's Tennis program and served as its only head coach for 42 years. In 1967, she also established the UNC Volleyball program. Her foresight and determination paved the way for the successes that the volleyball team continues to enjoy today. As current volleyball head coach Lyndsey Oates remarked, "Rosemary was a legend at UNC and truly a trailblazer for women's sports. She was a wonderful mentor to me, and I was so blessed to coach alongside her in her last several years."

Fri's impact extended beyond the tennis court and volleyball court. She was a mentor to countless student-athletes and colleagues, always giving more than expected and empowering those around her to succeed. Her dedication to her players and her passion for education earned her a place in the inaugural class of the UNC Athletics Hall of Fame in 1994.

Even after her retirement, Fri remained a steadfast supporter of UNC athletics, attending games and events, and continuing to inspire those around her. Her love for the university and the community was evident in everything she did.

In her memory, the Rosemary Fri Women's Volleyball Scholarship endowment continues to support student-athletes, ensuring that her legacy of empowerment and excellence for female student-athletes lives on. Rosemary Fri will be remembered not only for her numerous achievements but also for her kindness, encouragement and unwavering dedication to others. She was, and always will be, a true pioneer.



Sports Media Collection, 1984. Archives and Special Collections, University of Northern Colorado

Stan Schroeder, B.A. '83
Laura Lockwood, B.S. '84, M.P.H. '97
Sandy Sup, M.A. '84
Robert Fleming, B.A. '85
John DiFalco, M.A. '86
Marlys Dolan, B.A. '86
Sheila Godfrey, B.A.E. '86
Julie Samsel, B.A.E. '86, M.A. '00
Kristi O'Shea, B.A. '87
Mark Sulzman, B.S. '88
Robert Young, Ed.D. '88
Lynn Wiggin, B.A.E. '88

1990s

Mary Jurgensmeier, B.A.E. '90
Susan Buckley, M.A. '91
Vicky Krizan, B.S. '91
Carolyn Caudry, M.A. '92
Mark Hirschfeld, B.A. '92
Andrew Peterson, M.A. '92
Lori Schiek, B.S. '92
Greg Wentzel, B.A. '92
Randy Cook, M.S. '93
Malissa Gore, B.A. '93
Jenny Hall-Camacho, B.A. '93, Ph.D. '07

Jerry Pluger, M.A. '93
Brandon Quinn, B.A. '94
Brian Randolph, B.A. '94
Amelia Roper, B.A. '94
Kathleen Siebrands, M.A. '94
Brent DeNeice, M.A. '95
John Gimlin, B.A. '95
Steve Adamson, B.A. '97
Mary Eby, M.A. '97
Heather Heintz, B.A. '97
Mary Johnson, M.A. '97
Karl Van Etten, Ed.D. '97
Chad Davis, B.S. '98
Susan Kushman, M.A. '98
Janice Herrera, B.A. '99

2000s

Cory McCrea, B.A. '00
Karen Carpenter, M.A. '03
Katie Olmstead, B.A. '03
Richard "John" Dellenbach, B.S. '05
Danielle Shields, B.S. '05
Nancy Jacobson, B.A. '06
Lisa Monroney, B.A. '06, M.A. '08
David Nagle, B.A. '06

2010s

Kory Nicastle, B.A. '11
Greg Johnson, B.A. '13
Dan Ritter, B.A. '14
Kori Mayfield, B.A. '19

Faculty and Emeritus Faculty

Charlie Poston
Lee Shropshire
Lloyd Worley

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—Aleah Green
Kathleen M. Newman Memorial Scholarship recipient

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Last Look

Back and Better Than Ever

Tobey-Kendel Hall, or T-K as it is known on campus, reopened in fall 2024 to much fanfare from students. The dining hall underwent a \$3.7 million building remodel last year to create an open kitchen, food stations, additional seating and a 24-hour market.

Students can get three meals a day between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The new food stations offer quite a selection, including chicken, ramen, home-plate comfort food, pizza, pasta, soup and salad. T-K also offers U Cook, a station where students can choose a protein, vegetables and rice and then cook their own food.

Just Baked is a large vending machine on the first floor of T-K, and it offers hot comfort food such as macaroni and cheese.

The T-K market is the only spot on campus where students have 24-hour access to food except for



PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

vending machines. The light fare includes salads, soups, sandwiches and parfaits. The market is located next to the Tobey-Kendel ballroom to encourage students, faculty and staff to gather.



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PHOTO BY LEXIE MARTIN

Homecoming 2024

Students and alumni enjoyed cuddling with goats at the popular Petting Zoo during Homecoming. As they say, it's good luck to meet a goat!

