



## PRESS KIT

SPRING COMMENCEMENT 2022



### **Ceremony Schedule:**

#### **Friday, May 6**

7 p.m. — Campus Commons  
Performance Hall

*All doctoral candidates*

#### **Saturday, May 7**

9 a.m. — Nottingham Field

Kenneth W. Monfort College of  
Business and College of Natural  
and Health Sciences

*All bachelor's and master's  
candidates*

#### **Saturday, May 7**

12:30 p.m.. — Nottingham Field

Colleges of Education and  
Behavioral Sciences, Humanities  
and Social Sciences and  
Performing and Visual Arts  
*All bachelor's and master's and  
specialist's candidates*

### **Breakout Musical Theatre Star and Former Lumineers Band Member to Deliver UNC's 2022 Spring Commencement Address**

UNC alumna Neyla Pekarek '09 will deliver the address at UNC's spring commencement ceremonies on Saturday, May 7, at Nottingham Field.

Pekarek found immediate success in the music industry after graduating from UNC with a degree in Music Education. In 2010 she joined the Denver folk-rock group The Lumineers as a cellist and vocalist, performing all around the world.

Pekarek is now pursuing her own musical endeavors with the 2019 release of her debut album, *Rattlesnake*, and her debut musical, *Rattlesnake Kate*.



[Read the full story](#)

# PRESS KIT

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Spring Commencement, 2022

## **Related information:**

[UNC Spring Commencement website](#)

[Celebrating the Graduating Class of 2022](#)

[UNC 2022 Spring Commencement Ceremonies, May 6-7](#)

[Faces of Spring 2022 Graduates](#)

## **UNC's Class of spring 2022**

*Data regarding UNC's spring 2022 class is tentative as of April 26, 2022. Degrees are conferred June 2022.*

### **Number of students graduating: 1,445**

- Number earning bachelor's degrees: 1,065
- Number of undergraduates who are first generation: 452 (42%)
- Number earning graduate degrees: 380 (323 master's, 29 specialists, 28 doctorates)

### **Age range:**

- Undergraduate: 20-78
- Graduate: 22-64

### **Average GPA:**

- Undergraduate: 3.43
- Graduate: 3.84

### **International countries represented: 13**

- Bahamas, Belarus, Canada, China, El Salvador, Ghana, Hungary, Nigeria, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sweden, United Kingdom

### **States represented: 47**

- Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming

### **Colorado counties represented: 46**

- Adams, Arapahoe, Archuleta, Baca, Boulder, Broomfield, Custer, Delta, Denver, Douglas, Eagle, El Paso, Elbert, Fremont, Garfield, Gilpin, Grand, Hinsdale, Huerfano, Jefferson, Kit Carson, La Plata, Lake, Larimer, Lincoln, Logan, Mesa, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, Morgan, Otero, Ouray, Park, Phillips, Prowers, Pueblo, Rio Blanco, Rio Grande, Routt, Sedgwick, Summit, Teller, Washington, Weld, Yuma

### **Most popular majors (by degrees awarded):**

- Undergraduate: Business Administration, Psychology, Elementary Education, Nursing, Sport and Exercise Science, Criminology and Criminal Justice
- Graduate: Special Education, Educational Leadership, Music, Business Administration, Nursing, Sport and Exercise Science, Biomedical Science, Education

## Commencement Speakers:

Doctoral Commencement — Friday, May 6, 7 p.m.

**Student speaker: Becky Alice De Oliveira**

**Doctor of Philosophy, Applied Statistics and Research Methods**

Becky De Oliveira is an educator, writer, graphic designer, and, most recently, a research methodologist, having returned to higher education for a Ph.D. in Applied Statistics and Research Methods. She previously coordinated a master's program at a university in Michigan, taught various writing and teaching methods courses, and helped doctoral students write dissertations. De Oliveira has published a collection of essays and two children's books, along with dozens of articles, medical reports, advertising copy, radio scripts, book chapters, and academic articles. She worked for a top-10 healthcare advertising agency in the United Kingdom, creating a wide variety of promotional items. At the University of Northern Colorado, De Oliveira has served as program director for a three-year grant funded research project examining interventions to reduce sexual risk in adolescents and young adults. In December of 2021, De Oliveira was diagnosed with glioblastoma, a malignant and aggressive form of brain cancer, which has impaired her ability to read. Despite the challenges, she has continued to enjoy working on her research, and is especially looking forward to graduation! De Oliveira and her husband have two sons, ages 22 and 18.

Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist's Ceremonies

Kenneth W. Monfort College of Business — Saturday, May 7, 9 a.m.

**Student speaker: Sarah Marie Otto**

**Master of Business Administration, Business Administration: General Business**

Sarah Otto is a veteran of the United States Army and has called Aurora, Colo., her home since 2007. A first-generation college graduate, Otto utilized her military benefits to earn her Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Metropolitan State University of Denver in 2009. Otto has spent most of her career in both the clinical and operational sides of healthcare. A self-proclaimed life-long learner, she began pursuing her Master of Business Administration to build on her foundation of business knowledge. During her time at the University of Northern Colorado, Otto participated in the Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative Collegiate Program as a team member in 2021 and team leader in 2022. Otto credits the Daniels Fund, MBA faculty, especially Dr. Krahne, Dr. Wanasika and her team members, for the ethical case competitions' opportunities in expanding her educational experience. Otto is thankful for the overwhelming support and encouragement of her husband and four children as she focuses on her love of learning. After graduation, she aspires to move towards a human resources position and is considering pursuing a Ph.D. in order to teach ethical leadership and management principles to future generations.

College of Natural and Health Sciences — Saturday, May 7, 9 a.m.

**Student speaker: Justin Thomas Venman**

**Bachelor of Science, Chemistry**

Justin Venman is a Colorado native who grew up in the Pikes Peak region. He is receiving his Bachelor of Science in Industrial Chemistry, with a minor in Earth Science. Venman chose the University of Northern Colorado for its small-town atmosphere and tight-knit community. During his time at UNC, Venman worked as a student advancement ambassador for the Annual Giving office, and was the president of UNC's literary arts magazine, The Crucible. He would like to thank his family, his professors and his two roommates who were always there to cheer him on.

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences - Saturday, May 7, 12:30 p.m.

**Student speaker: Jaimie Leigh Horton-Hoffmeister**

**Master of Arts in Teacher, Education: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education**

Jaimie Horton-Hoffmeister is a Tennessee native who completed her undergraduate degree at Middle Tennessee State University. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education and led many local initiatives in her community. Since then, Horton-Hoffmeister relocated to Denver, Colo., teaching in an Elementary classroom for eight years. Her profession has led her to find a passion for teaching students of diverse backgrounds. Horton-Hoffmeister found the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse program at the University of Northern Colorado through ongoing professional development. This licensure requirement transformed into Horton-Hoffmeister pursuing her master's degree in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education. Through this program, Horton-Hoffmeister has learned what it means to meet the needs of all of her students. Equity, inclusion and culture have become defining words for her instructional practices, thanks to the University of Northern Colorado. Horton-Hoffmeister is also a proud daughter, sister and wife. Without her family, friends, coworkers and students, Horton-Hoffmeister could not have been a successful teacher and student throughout the completion of her master's degree and would like to thank them for their ongoing support. The University of Northern Colorado has given Horton-Hoffmeister invaluable learning experiences to implement in her classroom and beyond in hopes of a better future for her students and their families.

College of Humanities and Social Sciences - Saturday, May 7, 12:30 p.m.

**Student speaker: Josephine Saige Walter**

**Bachelor of Arts, Communication Studies and Bachelor of Arts, Journalism**

Josephine Saige Walter is graduating with a bachelor's degree in News and Multimedia Journalism and Communication Studies. Walter is a Colorado native who is a kind, vibrant and gregarious individual that has been able to surmount many things in her life. With her optimistic outlook, she always befriends all diverse walks of life and sees the good in everything. During her time at the University of Northern Colorado, Walter often could be found at all varieties of UNC events: sporting, performing or social. In the journalism department Walter enjoyed her time representing UNC on Bear News, their student-ran newscast and as their social media representative. In the future she wants to expand her knowledge of communication, journalism and reporting by entering the media industry. Walter wants to see positive change in the world, and sees journalism as the perfect outlet to reach across the globe to make that change possible.

College of Performing and Visual Arts - Saturday, May 7, 12:30 p.m.

**Student speaker: Bailey Anne Walder**

**Bachelor of Music Education, Music Education**

Bailey Walder is honored and excited to be chosen to speak at the May 2022 Commencement Ceremony. Walder is graduating with honors, receiving her Bachelor of Music Education (emphasis vocal, piano, and general music for K-12) and minoring in Special Education. She has enjoyed working for the University of Northern Colorado as a student ambassador, new student orientation leader and Performing and Visual Arts Student Senator, as well as participating in several campus honors societies and organizations. Walder would like to thank her amazing family, incredible friends and all the faculty and staff at UNC for supporting her in this journey and helping her achieve far more than she ever thought she could. She looks forward to sharing the joy of music with the next generation as she joins the Colorado community as an elementary music teacher this upcoming school year.

## Celebrating the Graduating Class of 2022

Take a deeper look at six of the unique graduates, including a 78-year-old man who lived the history he studied, a record-breaking swimmer striving for Olympic gold, a performer eyeing the New York stage, a California business guru already successful in the field, an educator taking on a mountain of roles to support the youth and a future veterinarian who dealt with an inconceivable loss en route to her degree.



### **78-Year-Old Graduate, Veteran Brings History to Life in the Classroom**

When newly minted teacher Kent Trompeter steps into his classroom to teach in the fall, he'll be bringing with him a lifetime of experiences – and stories – that not every 2022 college graduate can match.



### **Greatest UNC Swimmer Strives for Moore**

Madelyn Moore is the most successful swimmer at UNC to date. In the 2021-2022 season alone, Moore placed first 20 times, was awarded the Western Athletic Conference Swimmer of the Year and represented Team Bermuda at the World Championships.



### **Jack of all Trades, Master of Many**

Out of the many talents Vi Dang has, and the list is long, being able to make their dreams a reality is near the top. Their creative energy is nothing if not contagious.

"I've always been a person who wanted to experience everything I could."



### **Transfer Student Finds Direction, Independence and Endless Opportunities**

Well before graduating, Irene Mendoza has already begun her career in social media marketing and would love to continue that work in the fashion industry. But if that doesn't work out, she's eager to doing something of her own.



### **Making the Leap to College and Finding Community**

After the most devastating event happened to Sierra Jarmon and her family, the future veterinarian clung to a new community and mentors in order to achieve her goals.



### **Perseverance Pays Off for Education Graduate, Dad of Six**

Ryan Quintana could write a book on time management. He finished his degree in Elementary Education while working full-time for Amazon, helping his wife with her daycare business and being dad to his six kids ranging in age from four to 17.