

UNC

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH

Carolina Magazine

HOW A KING EARNED HIS *Crown*

Dave King, '81, M.A. '82, founded, owned and operated Triple Crown Sports, a business that has organized thousands of competitive sports tournaments.
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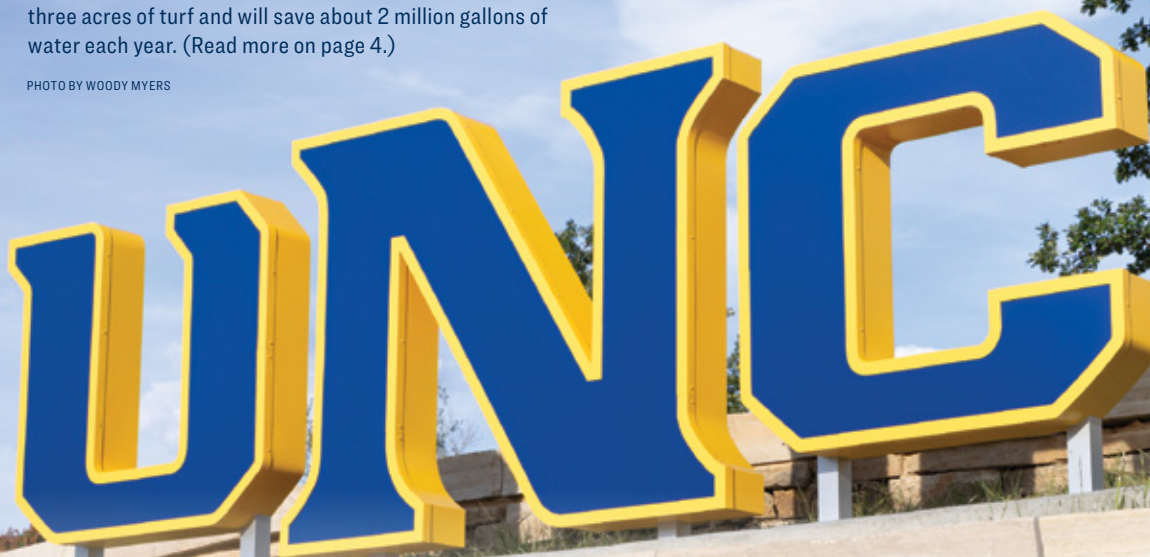
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President Andy Feinstein and wife Kerry stand beside a new UNC sign during a Homecoming weekend ribbon cutting celebrating the nearly complete University Center Hill water conservation project. The sign, overlooking 11th Ave., anchors a native grass public park that replaces over three acres of turf and will save about 2 million gallons of water each year. (Read more on page 4.)

PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS



Fellow Bears,

One of the things I enjoy most about every issue of *UNC Magazine* is the opportunity to pause and celebrate a handful of the people who make our university community exceptional — students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

Their journeys are a testament to how higher education fuels excellence, inquiry, inspiration, and discovery. Together, their stories showcase the impact of these principles in action — in the field, in communities (both near and far), and in the lives of others.

In this issue, you'll see the ripple effects of those impacts on a broad scale.

You'll find it in Anthropology Professor **Andy Creekmore**, whose decade of field work in northern Iraq is helping map the underground ruins of what is likely a lost Mesopotamian capital, expanding our understanding of early human civilizations. You'll see it in alumnus **Dave King**, who turned an idea inspired by his determination to create something better into *Triple Crown Sports*, one of the most influential youth and collegiate tournament organizations in the nation. And it's unmistakable in Director of Jazz Studies **Dana Landry**, whose leadership has shaped UNC's Jazz Studies program into one of the most successful programs in the country, producing national award-winning student musicians for over two decades.

But impact isn't always measured on a global or national scale. It's also deeply personal, found in moments that connect learning to mentorship and support.

You'll find that in the box of letters that Geography Professor **Karen Barton** recently uncovered, written by students to their future selves 17 years ago — and how she used those letters as a chance to reconnect with her former students. You'll see it in the journey of Head Volleyball Coach **Lyndsey Oates**, where she's not only racked up her own impressive coaching record over the past 20 years, but orchestrated and sustained a competitive Division I program that is equally fueled by her passion for the game and her players. And it's reflected in our continued efforts to find ways to support student success in multiple ways, from expanding our Bear Pantry to launching our **Center for Student Well-Being**, ensuring every student has the resources to thrive.

The true measure of UNC doesn't belong to a handful of people or moments. It's something we all create together every day; in the lives we touch and the change we inspire. Wherever your journey takes you, your impact as a Bear continues, shaping lives, communities, and possibilities for years to come.

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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ON THE COVER

Dave King standing on the balcony outside of his office at Triple Crown Sports' facility in Fort Collins during the P5 Patriot Games tournament this past summer. The event had over 300 college coaches in attendance and more than 2,000 athletes competing.

PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

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More Space, More Resources

Pantry expansion strengthens student support

UNC's Bear Pantry was first created in 2014. Back then, the storefront was no bigger than a closet. It has since grown both in physical size and through community partnerships to create more accessibility to food and hygiene products. And this past January, the pantry received its biggest facelift yet.

Thanks to a \$310,000 grant from The Weld Trust, along with approximately \$430,000 from the university and gifts from other generous donors both large and small, UNC secured funding to expand the pantry and enhance student support resources with the newly created Center for Student Well-Being.

The new space was officially opened to the university community on Jan. 27, in the lower level of the University Center in place of the former Student Computer Commons. Since that time, pantry staff have served between 250-300 people every week, compared to 90-110 people in its previous location.

Monetary, food and hygiene donations are vital to the Bear Pantry's ability to serve the needs of the university community. During its first semester of operation in 2025, the pantry brought in over 54,000 items. Nearly half of those items were contributed by the Weld Food Bank, the pantry's largest partner. About 2,200 donations came from the community, and generous monetary donations funded the remaining items purchased by pantry staff from local grocery stores.

In addition to the free nutritious food and other essentials available in the pantry, students can meet with the center's resource navigators for individualized support and connections to other resources related to food insecurity, housing insecurity, medical and mental health care and emergency funding.

—Syndey Kern



PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

FOOD INSECURITY ON THE RISE, HIGHER FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS:

- In 2023, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service reported that **13.5% of U.S. households experienced food insecurity** at some point during the year.
- In 2025, the American College Health Association National College Health Assessment reported that **57% of undergraduate and 49.2% of graduate students reported experiencing food insecurity in the past 30 days.**
- A spring 2023 survey at UNC revealed that **more than 50% of both undergraduate and graduate students reported some degree of food insecurity in the past 30 days.**



PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

WHAT'S NEW AT THE BEAR PANTRY?

More space and expanded support:

- The renovations allowed UNC space to triple the size of the previous pantry from 400 to 1,225 square feet.
- Expanded space to stock produce and frozen meat products from the Weld Food Bank, and vegan and plant-based meats to support a variety of diets.
- Guests in need of additional food resources can meet with resource navigators from the Center for Student Well-Being to learn more about Colorado's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and get connected with community partners for other basic needs support.

➔ Learn more about how UNC's Bear Pantry (unco.edu/bear-pantry) and Center for Student Well-Being (unco.edu/center-student-well-being) support UNC students.

Give today ➔
and support
these programs!



TOP 10 ITEMS PANTRY GUESTS NEED THE MOST*

- 1 Pasta items (gluten and gluten free)
- 2 Rice
- 3 Canned meats
- 4 Produce (non-refrigerated)
- 5 Shelf stable milks/dry milk
- 6 Spam
- 7 Canned soups/meals
- 8 Seasonings
- 9 Toilet paper and paper towels
- 10 Laundry detergent

**Based on trends and prices of goods tracked by Bear Pantry staff – these are often items that are not available at the local food bank or generally out of price range for purchase.*

News Briefs

PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

(RIVER) WATCH AND LEARN

From its source nestled high in the Rocky Mountains to where it meets the South Platte River just east of Greeley, the Cache la Poudre River flows down 6,155 ft. in elevation, across 126 miles of Colorado countryside and provides an average of 89 billion gallons of water annually — including drinking water for more than 400,000 residents in northern Colorado.

But in Greeley, for the past 25 years, the number of sites dedicated to monitoring the quality of all that water has been a resounding zero.

In 2024, that changed as faculty members and students from UNC, in partnership with the River Management Society (RMS), a national nonprofit organization that supports professionals who study, protect and manage North America's rivers, came together to restore and restart Greeley's River Watch water quality monitoring site, which had been out of commission since 1998.

Now, students interested in river science can earn a certificate in River Studies and Leadership, building hands-on experience in, on and around the Poudre River while helping preserve an important source of water in northern Colorado.

This certificate is a collaboration between the departments of Chemistry, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, and Geography, GIS and Sustainability. Students who participate in this certificate program will have the chance to learn about the facets of water ecosystems, including the social impacts of water on communities, the economic influence bodies of water can have, the chemistry involved in monitoring water quality and more.

SPROUTING NEW LANDSCAPE TO SAVE AROUND 2 MILLION GALLONS OF WATER PER YEAR

On any given day, the sidewalks north of the University Center are filled with people navigating to and from Central and West Campus. Students walking single file often fill the concrete pathways that wrap around the center point of campus but rarely step on the gently sloping 3.4 acres of Kentucky bluegrass nearby.

According to Chris Bowers, UNC's first-ever energy and sustainability manager, this is one of the most visible areas on campus, making it the perfect spot to create a showcase space that demonstrates thoughtful design and sustainable practice.

Bowers' job is to advocate for and implement environmentally friendly practices on campus. His latest project, with the help from the state, City of Greeley and UNC students, is to transform the underutilized grass area near the 20th Street and 11th Avenue intersection, also known as the UC hill, into an accessible public park that will benefit around 22,000 people, including students and the neighboring community.

The transformation will result in huge water conservation benefits as it includes converting the existing bluegrass into natural grass, installing water-efficient irrigation and creating more walkways, seating areas, hammock spots and student art display areas.

"Right now, the site requires high amounts of water to keep the existing bluegrass green," Bowers said. "With the slope of the hill, the high sunlight exposure and the older irrigation system, UNC is watering at a rate equal to a golf course."

The conversion from bluegrass to drought-resistant grasses is estimated to reduce water use by 86%, saving around 2 million gallons per year — an amount roughly equal to providing 67 households in Greeley with water for a full year.

FUTURE TEACHER CONFERENCE CELEBRATES 10 YEARS, EXPANDS AUDIENCE INTERNATIONALLY

UNC's College of Education and Behavioral Sciences celebrated 10 years of preparing and inspiring the next generation of educators at its 2025 Future Teacher Conference in February.

"I can't believe it's been 10 years," said Suzette Youngs, Ph.D., Literacy Education professor and conference co-founder. "From the beginning, our motto has been to start small and do it well. Our inaugural conference welcomed 40 participants, and it has significantly expanded year after year. This event has become a truly transformative experience for aspiring teachers."

This year, thanks to generous community partners who have donated more than \$20,000 to the conference over the past five years, more than 500 high school and community college students participated in the free, day-long event. UNC alumna and Colorado Teacher of the Year in 2023, Jessica May, '96, delivered the keynote address. And for the first time, the university welcomed international participants that included two high school students and their principal from Belize.

Chris Kyser, Ed.D. '14, associate professor in UNC's School of Teacher Education and co-founder of the conference, met the Belize students on an annual trip to the country while serving in her role as a board member of the Belize Education Project. The nonprofit organization helps improve literacy and education in the country's Cayo District.

"It's really exciting," Kyser said. "The idea is that the international students can learn about our classrooms, meet some of our future teachers and connect in their shared passion for education. At the same time, it's a chance for everyone involved to get inspired and excited about teaching, no matter where they are."

A GLIMPSE INTO THE NEW HYBRID MASTER OF ARTS IN STUDIO ART

This year the School of Art and Design opened a new graduate program, the Master of Arts in Studio Art. This studio-based degree takes an individualized approach to help students deepen their artistic practices and synthesize their skills and interests. The goal is for students to finish the program with a researched body of artwork that explores deeper concepts, diverse media and advanced techniques.

The M.A. in Studio Art is designed for working adults and delivered mostly online over two fall and spring terms, with required studio hours either on campus or elsewhere, and one in-person summer intensive on campus. This is ideal for art educators who are teaching in public schools and want to enhance their credentials. The program also has a graduate certificate option for people who already have a master's degree but need more graduate-level coursework to teach concurrent or dual enrolled art classes.



Keith Humphrey, Ph.D.
Vice President, Student Affairs

UNC SELECTS NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

This March, UNC chose Keith Humphrey, Ph.D., as the university's new vice president for Student Affairs. Humphrey was selected through a national search that launched last fall and started his position on May 19.

"I am excited to welcome Keith to UNC. He is an action-oriented and innovative leader with a deep commitment to student success. He is an expert at fostering an inclusive environment and recognizes the value UNC places on supporting our diverse student population," said UNC President Andy Feinstein.

"Keith is a collaborative and approachable student-centered leader, and I am confident he will quickly step into the role as a trusted advisor to me, senior leaders and other university administrators and to faculty members on a wide range of matters that are core to our 'Students First' commitment."

Humphrey came to UNC from Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California, where he most recently served for 12 years as vice president for Student Affairs. In that role he oversaw more than 550 staff in 30 departments, supporting almost 23,000 students. He brings over 25 years of higher education experience to UNC, which includes 14 years serving in various roles at the University of Arizona, including as assistant vice president for Student Affairs and dean of students.

Aligned with UNC's strategic priorities and commitment to student success, supporting student learning has been at the core of Humphrey's professional leadership throughout his career.

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In the Business of Building Relationships

New dean guided by listening and focused on student success

Steve Elias brings passion for promoting student success through immersive education and enthusiasm for relationship-building to his new role at the Kenneth W. Monfort College of Business (MCB).

When he arrived at the University of Northern Colorado in July, Steve Elias, Ph.D., already had a slate of meetings scheduled. And that's just how the new dean of MCB wanted it. Throughout his career in higher education—including long tenures at New Mexico State University and Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado—he discovered his greatest strength lies in building meaningful relationships.

“A priority for me is getting to know everyone across campus and in the community,” Elias said. “How I interact with students, alumni, faculty, the president, provost, community members and everyone else is the same. When people know you and your interest in working with them, it goes far.”

Whether he's taking an overseas call from a faculty member at 6 a.m. on a Saturday, meeting with alumni on a weeknight or talking with students or staff during business hours, Elias prides himself on being available. He maintains a three-tiered open-door policy: if the door is wide open, it means come right in; if it's cracked, knock first and he'll likely stop what he's doing for a brief chat; if the door is closed, he's probably in a meeting.

With over 24 years in higher education, Elias has developed vast expertise. He has taught leadership and organizational behavior, managed administrative procedures, advanced efforts that promote student, faculty and staff success and cultivated and stewarded lasting alumni and donor relationships.

“All of those skillsets involve working with other people and nurturing relationships. I treat people the way I would want to be treated,” he said.

For Elias, the move to Greeley is like coming home. While earning a doctorate in Applied Social Psychology from Colorado State University, he met the love of his life. They've been married for 22 years and have twin 17-year-old boys. Before making

STEVE ELIAS, Ph.D.
Dean, Monfort College of Business

We stand to benefit tremendously from stable leadership, so that's going to be a priority. Another priority is going to be listening.

—STEVE ELIAS

Colorado his home, Elias earned a master's degree in Applied Psychology from Auburn University Montgomery and a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of South Florida.

When he talks about leading MCB, his excitement is palpable.

"I am passionate about interdisciplinary hands-on education because I understand its importance. Immersive education gets at the depth of learning because it leads students to think and experience things differently. The skills they develop will serve them even as their professions evolve," he said.

Most recently, he held leadership roles at Fort Lewis College (FLC) and New Mexico State University (NMSU). At FLC, where he served as business school dean for eight years, he secured the school's most significant gift, a \$10 million endowment to name the school. He was instrumental in establishing the college's largest endowed scholarship, first endowed professorship and the entrepreneurial-focused Center for Innovation—a community-facing center dedicated to start-ups and small business development throughout southwest Colorado.

Prior, he was at NMSU's College of Business for nine years, serving in several roles. He directed the doctoral program; headed the management department, where he also was a professor; was interim associate dean for research; and directed the Woodrow Wilson MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership program.

His short-term plans for MCB involve listening and preserving the college's "phenomenal foundation" by ensuring everyone is on the same path. Long-term, as dean, he'll set the course that everyone will navigate together. As he develops those plans, the perspectives of students, faculty, staff, alumni and donors are key.

"We stand to benefit tremendously from stable leadership, so that's going to be a priority. Another priority is going to be listening. The programs we launched at Fort Lewis were successful because we listened. Whether it was an alumnus or business community member talking about what we could do differently or faculty and staff discussing whether we could do it," Elias said.

While he acknowledges that the job of dean is not a nine-to-five position, he said it's fun 99% of the time, allowing him to connect with people and create new opportunities. When he isn't working, he enjoys live music and traveling with his family.

He said that with today's rising tuition costs, many people question the value of higher education, even when a leading business school provides it.

"The value of higher education is there when higher ed is done correctly. It sets students up for future success because they're able to think critically and be adaptive as time goes on. It's just so important," Elias said. "With those key skills they're able to be successful, while also having a positive impact on society.

"To me, that is a clear demonstration of the value of higher ed, and I am very excited to lead a college that places such a high emphasis on creating value for our students and community."

—Brenda Gillen

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UNC ACHIEVES CARNEGIE'S PRESTIGIOUS R2 RESEARCH ACTIVITY DESIGNATION

UNC was named an R2 institution based on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education's criteria. The designation, announced on Feb. 13 as part of Carnegie's 2025 Research Activity Designations, places UNC among the nation's colleges and universities with "high research activity" and exemplifies a commitment to critical inquiry, discovery and creation.

A strong focus on research, scholarship and creative works (RSCW) has been integral to the university's strategic plan, *Rowing, Not Drifting 2030*, particularly as reflected in the prioritization of innovation and creation as a core component of the institution's vision for the future.

The plan was launched by UNC President Andy Feinstein in 2020 and articulated his dedication to establishing a robust infrastructure to support RSCW. Over the past four and a half years, the university has invested in RSCW and renewed its focus on achieving the R2 classification.

Feinstein said the designation not only recognizes the institution's activity and impact as a research university, but it is also evidence of the significant progress the university community is collectively making toward achieving its strategic priorities.

"I am proud of our achievement," said Feinstein. "UNC's designation as an R2 institution is recognition of the intellectual contributions by the faculty, student and staff researchers whose work is addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing our state and beyond."



PHOTO COURTESY OF GREELEY-EVANS SCHOOL DISTRICT 6

Training Teachers and Supporting Students, the Artistic Way

Future teachers, lasting impact: UNC students bring music and art into local classrooms

CREATIVITY. CULTURE. COMMUNITY.

Building a rich and vibrant society begins with inspiration — instilling passion and curiosity in the minds of the younger generation. It begins by planting seeds of artistic enjoyment that will bloom into a lifelong love of creating and an appreciation for what we can achieve with a little ingenuity.

At UNC, two programs, both providing hands-on experiences for future educators and bringing extracurricular artistic opportunities to the Greeley community, are doing just that.

AFTER HOURS ARTISTRY

Learning through imaginative artistry and the use of different art materials is an iconic part of many children's educational journeys.

But beyond adorning the fridges of proud parents or being tucked away in memory boxes for years to come, what impacts do these early artistic creations have on the children who made them?

For Connie Stewart, '74, M.A. '94, founder of the After School Arts Program (ASAP), the impact is both formative and long-lasting.

ASAP enables Arts and Music Education students from UNC to plan and teach a variety of extracurricular arts courses to students at Chappelow K-8 Arts Magnet School in Greeley.

"It's my hope that the positive experiences these kids have with art reinforce the value of the arts within education," Stewart said. "The experience and the growth don't end when we stop being kids. We carry those experiences with us."

Stewart, a professor emerita of Art Education, established ASAP nearly 25 years ago while teaching at UNC with the goal of providing students the chance to get hands-on teaching experience.

The program consists of seven to eight weeks of UNC student-taught classes each semester, held on Fridays at Chappelow. Participating students design their own lessons and offer a wide variety of artistic opportunities to the children they teach.

“One of the big values of the program is that our teacher candidates get to devise their own unit and actually teach it in the classroom,” Stewart said. “You can talk about it in methods classes all you want, but it just isn’t the same as getting out and doing it.”

Alison Myers, ’04, M.A. ’13, participated in the program as a UNC student. Now an adjunct faculty member in Arts Education while teaching at Chappelow, Myers supervises the program.

“It’s valuable in that it builds these fundamental connections. The Chappelow students get to learn from college students and vice versa,” Myers said. “It gives the kids this perspective on the future and where they can go from here.”

Rachel Brown, ’07, has a son in ASAP. According to her, the experience has been an amazing one for him — he signed up in kindergarten and is now in seventh grade.

“Up until last year, he’s been in every single session he could, except one, because he didn’t bring the paper home,” Brown said.

“With programs like this in a community, I think you’re going to see more kids engaged with their schooling and more success when it comes to graduation,” Brown said. “My son has special needs and isn’t a man of many words, so for him to be loving it and to want to keep doing it for this long definitely says something.”

THE STRING’S THE THING

Although most K-12 students will craft, sketch and paint in school, not all of them will be given the opportunity to play an instrument.

School bands and orchestras aren’t uncommon, but their optional nature combined with the cost of instruments and time commitment means that some students will miss out on the chance to make music.

That’s where the String Project comes in.

Part of the National String Consortium, the UNC String Project launched in 2017 with the goal of training tomorrow’s string educators while providing accessible instrumental opportunities for those in and around the Greeley community.

UNC students who join the program teach both group ensembles and private lessons. The elementary students who participate are primarily in the 4th and 5th grades.

Mary Baxter, a senior double major in Education and Violin Performance, joined the String Project during her freshman year and never looked back.

“I hadn’t really taught music before, and I remember being so scared coming into it,” Baxter said. “But everyone was so nice and so supportive. By the end, I felt more than comfortable being the only teacher in a classroom of students.”

Annette Haller, ’21, a String Project participant during her time at UNC and a current teacher at Chappelow, agreed wholeheartedly.

“Every second of teaching experience and relationship building that I did with String Project prepared me for my teaching career,” Haller said. “It was an invaluable connection between that theoretical learning and the reality of teaching actual young people.”

Beyond the personal and professional growth, Baxter emphasized that the program filled an impactful niche within the community.

“It brings music to so many students — whether it’s those wanting to connect with playing outside of school, those who aren’t able to afford traditional private lessons or the many homeschooled or remote students we’re able to work with,” Baxter said. “We’ve never turned away a kid who has wanted to do it.”

The connections the project strings together throughout the community are precisely what make it such an impactful program. In less than a decade, it has brought music into the lives of countless children, all while training future teachers for the road ahead.

—Duard Headley



A Beacon for Sustainable Change

How light is transforming and improving modern chemistry

Inside her lab in Ross Hall, Bonnie Buss, Ph.D., and her students are helping to write a new set of rules for a more sustainable form of chemistry — harnessed by the simple power of visible light.

There's no doubt that traditional chemistry, particularly the large-scale chemistry that spurred the Industrial Revolution and created new technologies for plastics, batteries, clothing, pharmaceuticals and fertilizers, has been vital to a host of advancements and products that are essential to daily life.

But that type of chemistry also consumes a lot of energy. It pollutes air, water and soil, emits greenhouse gases and can expose workers to harmful chemicals.

Buss, an assistant professor in UNC's Chemistry and Biochemistry department, is among a group of chemists helping to build fundamental research in the relatively new field of photoredox catalysis. It's a method of chemistry that uses energy from light — oftentimes ordinary, visible light like blue LED, blacklight or even sunlight — to make those same chemical reactions.

It's like photosynthesis, the process by which plants convert light energy into chemical energy. And the result is the ability to produce chemicals faster, in fewer steps, at cooler temperatures and without producing waste — all things that could lead to significant economic and environmental benefits across multiple industries.

Take, for instance, pharmaceuticals. According to Buss, the industry has one of the more well-defined applications of the technology.

"Pharmaceutical drugs are complicated. A specific drug can take a certain number of synthetic steps to make, and every step adds to the cost of producing it," said Buss. "So, the possibility of lowering costs, just by having more efficient reactions — that's huge."

CUTTING EDGE COLLABORATION

Buss describes herself as a curious person with an interest in sustainability that extends beyond the field of chemistry. Finding research aligned to both her professional and personal passions was no accident.

"Something that has always been important to me is this idea of doing chemistry that I can feel good about — things that shape the world in a way I'm passionate about,"

The research Buss is referring to is her work at the Center for Sustainable PhotoRedox Catalysis, aka SuPRCat. Based out of Colorado State University, SuPRCat is a Center for Chemical Innovation funded by the National Science Foundation — a collection of leading minds in the field, "exploring how to design chemical manufacturing processes harnessing light energy and utilizing readily-available materials as catalysts."

With expertise in photocatalysts and polymers, Buss is one of 13 multidisciplinary researchers from seven different universities on the team. Her role allows her and her students to contribute to this essential field of research while collaborating with experts in complementary fields, like computational, spectroscopic and synthetic chemistry.

"Our students can see this very sophisticated kind of analysis that I don't otherwise have the expertise to do. And with all these people working together, instead of being siloed individually, we can accomplish so much more," said Buss.

LIGHTING THE WAY FOR STUDENT SCIENTISTS

While Buss and her students aren't engaged in the type of research intended to bring about flashy breakthroughs, their work is critical to building the body of knowledge in the field.

PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS



Bonnie Buss, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Chemistry and Biochemistry

Mary Kate Hall, M.S. '25, now a doctoral student in UNC's Chemical Education program, is one of those students doing the work. She spent two years in the Buss lab completing research for her master's thesis, which explored ways to make it easier to recover and reuse photocatalysts, and allowed her to collaborate with members of the SuPRCat.

"One of the coolest parts was getting to use the instrumentation and expertise that I wouldn't normally have access to if we were just working in isolation," said Hall. "SuPRCat aren't the only photochemists out there, but we're one of the leading groups kind of

pushing the boundaries of this science."

Hall said the experience also influenced what she'd like to bring to her future classroom.

"This has changed my perspective on how I want to connect what I previously considered 'research-only chemistry' to the chemistry that's taught in the classroom. This is the kind of chemistry that students need to know is happening," said Hall.

For Macy Killen, a junior in UNC's Chemistry-Pre-Health concentration, working in Buss's lab wasn't something she imagined she could do as an undergrad. She conducted independent research over the summer focused on making photocatalysts that can be recovered.

"I'm relatively new to all this, so every day, I'm learning something new and being pushed outside my comfort zone. I'm having to critically think about every single thing I do in the lab, finding ways to be conscious of how much solvent or materials we're using and not be wasteful. That's really important to me," said Killen.

Buss also launched a new lab in spring 2025 for students taking Organic Chemistry II that will focus on some of the more modern, cutting-edge concepts related to green chemistry and sustainability, as well as photoredox catalysis and polymers.

"It's a lot of key concepts that we don't hit very hard in lecture, but that are really important. We want to integrate a little bit more so the broader chemistry community at UNC can take advantage of it."

—Deanna Herbert, '92

CATALYSTS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

The role of a catalyst is fundamental in chemical manufacturing. They speed up reactions and reduce the energy needed to get from point A to point B, without being consumed in the process.

While both traditional chemistry and photoredox catalysis rely on catalysts, there are significant differences that make photoredox catalysis safer and more sustainable.

In traditional chemistry, catalysts often require high heat and pressure to kickstart a reaction. In contrast, photoredox catalysis uses light to activate a reaction, often at room temperature. This makes the process more energy-efficient and easier to control.

Because light is more selective than heat in terms of activating specific molecules or bonds more precisely, photoredox catalysis can reduce the number of synthetic steps required to produce the reaction. This reduces waste and makes the overall process more efficient.

While both traditional chemistry and early research in photoredox catalysis relied on metal-based catalysts, often using scarce and expensive metals that are difficult to mine, Buss and her team are focused on metal-free, organic photocatalysts. It's a newer direction in the field that offers a more sustainable alternative. These organic catalysts can perform the same work without relying on mined materials, and they typically generate little to no chemical waste.

Field Notes

DOCTORAL STUDENT FINDS ALARMING RATE OF SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS IN TEACHERS

After working as an accountant in corporate America for six years, Breanna King, M.A. '23 found her passion for working with young people. She pivoted "180 degrees," enrolling in UNC's School Psychology program. Her doctoral research examines secondary traumatic stress in educators and its impact on students and declining teacher employment levels.

"Secondary traumatic stress occurs after being exposed to the trauma of others. Hearing about someone's trauma can negatively affect those working with the traumatized individuals and bring about post-traumatic stress disorder-like symptoms. Exposure to student trauma has become an occupational hazard for teachers," King said.

By focusing on educators, she has set her research apart from most studies on secondary traumatic stress, which primarily deal with medical and mental health workers.

Approximately 92% of the school personnel in her study reported some level of secondary traumatic stress. For 45%, those stressors were at severe levels.

"I measured it using a scale that maps directly onto the 'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders' (DSM-5-TR). The PTSD symptoms my sample were experiencing corresponded to clinically significant levels of secondary traumatic stress," she said.

That's a higher level of stress than is typically reported by emergency nurses, mental health professionals and social workers. This finding is relevant, she said, because secondary traumatic stress has been shown to lead to attrition. In September 2024, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the teaching profession is experiencing its lowest employment levels in 50 years.

"I wanted to not only better understand the prevalence but also learn if there were protective factors we could implement within school systems to help educators," King said. "I've come to realize a systems-level approach is needed to make administrators aware of secondary traumatic stress, how it's affecting their staff and what they can do to implement preventative and mitigation strategies."

King is optimistic that creating a system where educators can flourish will benefit not only those individuals and their students but our whole society.

Field Notes cont. on page 13

For Dr. Beth Longenecker, the importance of the doctor-patient relationship is personal. Raised around her father's rural medical practice, she witnessed firsthand how deeply physicians impact their communities, inspiring her career-long commitment to preparing the next generation of physicians to serve where they are needed most.

PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

To Build a New College

A letter from Founding Dean Beth Longenecker

For the past five years, UNC has been on a journey to build a new College of Osteopathic Medicine. These efforts continue to accelerate as we construct a new 100,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art building, hire our inaugural faculty and staff, navigate accreditation processes and create a recruitment plan to attract our first class of students.

I joined the team just over three years ago when President Andy Feinstein hired me as the founding dean for the college. During this time, I have been frequently asked “Why did you choose to accept this position?”, “Why osteopathic medicine?” and “Why UNC?”

To answer these questions, it may be helpful to know a bit about my background.

I grew up in a small rural town in Pennsylvania about 25 miles from the nearest hospital. My father was the town physician, and my mother was his office nurse and office manager. His practice was adjacent to our home and on many occasions, dinner or a backyard barbecue would be interrupted by one of our neighbors facing an emergency.

Some of my earliest memories include riding in my father's jeep while he made house calls. These experiences provided me with insight into the vital role a physician plays in their community as well as shaped my concept of the doctor-patient relationship.

My father took the time to get to know his patients and their families. He understood that someone's well-being was not only impacted by genetics but also by stressors and support systems. He actively engaged in the community, from providing medical oversight of our volunteer ambulance and healthcare to our volunteer firefighters to cooking at the annual town pancake breakfast.

While some of his style may have been due to his personality and desire to connect, he attributed much of his approach to the tenets of osteopathic medicine that were taught to him as a medical student in Philadelphia. While all physicians trained in the United States focus on the diagnosis and management of disease through evidence-based application of pharmaceutical and surgical methods, osteopathic physicians are trained in a philosophy that emphasizes a holistic approach, focusing on the body's interconnected systems, preventive care and a treatment approach that incorporates manipulative therapy, lifestyle and social interventions. Witnessing my father's commitment to his work and interaction with his community, when I decided to become a physician, I only applied to osteopathic colleges.

As I embarked on my medical education at Ohio University, my path began to diverge from that of my father. Rather than focusing on primary care, I opted to see patients in the emergency department and, upon completing residency, chose to do so in a safety net hospital in the South Bronx neighborhood in New York City. I applied a holistic approach to my patients and, whenever possible, worked with them to address the stressors, family dynamics, barriers and available support to help them achieve their best health outcomes.

I served as a faculty member while in the Bronx, eventually becoming the director of the emergency medicine residency program while pursuing a master's in medical education. Teaching the next generation of physicians was not only something that inspired me, but it was also a way to exponentially impact our community. If individual physicians see, on average, 60,000 patients in their career, graduating 17 residents per year from our program provided access and care to more than a million patients.

As my career progressed, I started working full time at osteopathic medical schools, first aiding in residency development, then as an associate dean overseeing the clinical aspects of the curriculum and finally as a campus dean at my alma mater. It's these experiences that led me to UNC, embracing the challenge of creating a new College of Osteopathic Medicine in one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country, graduating doctors who serve where they are needed most.

Colorado and the rest of the nation are facing a significant physician shortage. The American Association of Medical Colleges estimates a shortfall of 86,000 physicians across the U.S. by 2036, while Colorado is only meeting 34% of physician needs currently. As the state's population continues to grow and age this situation will only worsen unless we address it.

Building on our highly regarded health care and science programs such as nursing and public health, a College of Osteopathic Medicine aligns perfectly with UNC's Students First and career connected strategic priorities, ensuring hands-on, community-focused education that leads directly into successful careers. And our longstanding commitment to serving Colorado's growing and diverse communities, especially in rural and underserved regions, means we already have the partnerships, interdisciplinary excellence and alumni network needed to train osteopathic physicians who will stay and practice here.

Our college has come a long way toward welcoming our first class of 75 students and it will continue to grow until we have 150 students in each class.

We are working with hospital systems and practices across the state and region to develop opportunities for clinical rotations, where students work directly with physicians to learn patient care, as well as to develop residency programs (also known as graduate medical education) so that our students can continue their educational journey in our state after graduation.

We are developing a curriculum that embraces osteopathic philosophy, with the goal of graduating physicians who know their patients, recognize that health is impacted not just by the body, but also the mind and spirit, and who will positively impact not just their patients, but also the communities that they serve.

—Beth Longenecker, DO, Founding Dean

DOES A BREATHING INTERVENTION IMPROVE IMMUNE FUNCTION?

In his fourth year of study in the University of Northern Colorado's (UNC) Sport and Exercise Science Ph.D. — Exercise Physiology Concentration program, Edwin Rodriguez is embarking on research with cancer patients.

"My dissertation research will compare a rapid breathing protocol — cyclic hyperventilation with retention — to a high-intensity interval training on heart rate variability and immune function," he said, noting the two-week study focuses on improving immune cells' ability to kill cancer cells.

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) employs quick, intense bursts of exercise followed by short, active recovery periods. His work with cancer patients demonstrated the importance of exercise, which also is backed up by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He wondered if guided breathing could be an effective alternative for those unable to do HIIT.

As Rodriguez delved into various breathing interventions, he also learned about flow cytometry, a technique for identifying and sorting cells and their components in which cells are stained with fluorescent dye for detection by laser beam illumination. Flow cytometry enables him to find and visualize natural killer cells.

"This cell population circulates in the blood looking at cells to see if they're expressing signs of stress or distress. If cells are not acting how they should, natural killer cells kill them. I'm trying to see if we're able to enhance the cytotoxic ability of natural killer cells in individuals who can't perform high-intensity interval training but can do this rapid breathing intervention," Rodriguez said.

His research could guide health care providers' recommendations to patients, and not just the Americans diagnosed with cancer every year. It's applicable to chronic inflammation associated with numerous disease states, including cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and autoimmune conditions effecting nearly 125 million Americans and contributing to approximately 60% of premature deaths worldwide.

THE NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

300,000

Nearly 300,000 physicians will retire nationally by 2035

139,000

The U.S. will face a shortage of 139,000 physicians by 2033



Colorado's two existing medical schools cannot meet demand and turn away thousands of qualified applicants each year

1,773+

Colorado will need 1,773 additional primary care physicians by 2030 — a 49% increase

34.6%

Only 34.6% of Colorado's need for physicians is currently being met

Mesopotamia's Lost City – Uncovering the



By Duard Headley

UNSEEN

Andy Creekmore, professor of Anthropology, has spent the past decade in northern Iraq mapping out the underground ruins of a hidden Bronze Age city, contributing to the historical tapestry of one of humanity's most influential civilizations.

Just outside of the city of Erbil in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq, gently rolling plains stretch for miles. At a glance, the most prominent features in the area are a handful of hills, a few farm buildings nestled between sparse trees, fields of grass that glow amber in the evening sun and the occasional herd of goats marching dutifully across the countryside.

Thousands of years ago, those hills nurtured the birth of some of the world's earliest cities and empires. History looks back on Mesopotamia as one of the most important, influential areas of early human history, colloquially dubbed the “cradle of civilization.”

Now, beneath the softly swaying grass and the hooves of passing livestock, an ancient city—a once-mighty Mesopotamian capital, now lost to history—lies buried, invisible to the naked eye.

Rising and readying well before dawn to beat the vicious heat of the day, a small team of anthropologists and archaeologists sets out onto the plains, toward the site of Kurd Qaburstan. The group, lugging pounds of scanners, sensors and other equipment with them, is focused on a single goal: uncovering the unseen.

The Magnetometric Man

Back in his office in Greeley, thousands of miles away from the site, Andy Creekmore, Ph.D., sits at his desk, pouring over subsurface maps he made of the excavation. It is February 2025, and Creekmore, professor and chair of the Anthropology department at UNC, is preparing to head back to Iraq in June.

“It’s really remarkable, you know?” Creekmore says, pointing to a line on his screen, one of many that make up a comprehensive map he has pieced together of the city that lies beneath the ground at Kurd Qaburstan.

“There aren’t any Middle Bronze Age cities that I’m aware of where we have this degree of detail about their urban structure.”

The only reason the Kurd Qaburstan project team has so much data on the site in the first place is due to Creekmore’s magnetometry work. The team is made up of anthropologists and archaeologists from Johns Hopkins University (JHU), the University of Central Florida (UCF), UNC and several other national and international institutions.

Creekmore serves as the team’s geophysicist, directing the sensing and mapping efforts at the site through a method known as magnetometry.

“Under the right conditions, you can see differences in the magnetism of what’s buried there,” Creekmore said. “With that, you can see walls and streets, map the structure of the city through street networks and tell where temples and palaces are all before you even need to break ground.”

Magnetometry is a method that involves using complex sensing equipment to measure variations in the Earth’s magnetic field, revealing the presence of buried objects and features made from soil, stone and other materials. Since the project began in 2013, Creekmore has spent five summers—field seasons in 2013, 2014, 2017, 2022 and 2024—working to map the precise urban layout of a city buried entirely below the surface of the earth. Adding to the challenge, the site covers nearly 100 hectares of land, a space approximately the size of 200 football fields.

During that time, Creekmore and his team of assistants have been able to identify dozens of structures, including the city’s walls, a large temple and a palace, as well as countless roads, alleys and pathways. Most recently, in 2024, Creekmore discovered what the team suspects is a second palace, adding the structure to the city’s ever-growing map.

But what about the Kurd Qaburstan site is so significant as to make such a monumental undertaking worth the time and effort?

IRAQ

ANBAR

NINEVAH

Mosul

DOHUK

Dohuk

ERBIL

Erbil

Kirkuk

Suleimaniyah

Suleimaniyah

TA'MIM

SALAHUDDIN

Samarra

DIYALA

Baqubah

Ramadi

Baghdad

BABIL

WASIT

Kut

Karbala

KARBALA

Hilla

Diwaniyah

Najaf

QADISIYAH

Samawa

NAJAF

MUTHANNA

DHI-QAR

MISAN

Amara

Nasiriyah

Basrah

BASRAH

Although it hasn't yet been fully confirmed, the team believes that the city sleeping beneath the ground may once have been the capital of a powerful region in the Middle Bronze Age (~2100-1600 BCE).

"We piece together a historical landscape by filling in the gaps with names of cities and other places when we find them," Creekmore said. "For example, we might find documents that mention, say, 'we sent an envoy to the city of Greeley' or 'we sent the army out for a battle with Loveland.' And over time, you can sometimes figure out where these places were through excavation and comparison."

One city in the Erbil Plain has been mentioned in artifacts found at other archaeological sites that tell of its conquest and destruction — two monumental stone slabs, one now in the Louvre Museum, the other in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, commemorate the defeat and capture of this ancient city by the kings Shamshi-Adad of Assyria and Dadusha of Eshnunna.

But until now, experts have been unable to identify where this conquered city was buried.

"After researching it, the only site of an urban scale in the Erbil Plain that dates to the Middle Bronze Age is at Kurd Qaburstan, the one that we've discovered and are working at now," Creekmore said. "And so, it was hypothesized by Harvard archaeologist Jason Ur that this site might be this 'lost' city."

The city's name? Qabra.

Discovering Qabra

Until just over a decade ago, archaeological excavations in northern Iraq — what was once northern Mesopotamia — have been scarce due to political unrest and conflict in the region. In recent years, however, that has largely changed. The region has become much more stable and open to outside visitors, allowing researchers to begin filling gaps in the historical record by examining sites in the area for the first time ever.

The city believed to be Qabra is one such site, according to Glenn Schwartz, Ph.D., Archaeology program director at JHU, and director of the Kurd Qaburstan project from 2013 to 2022.

"We know a lot about southern Mesopotamia, but not nearly as much about northern Mesopotamia, which is environmentally and culturally different," Schwartz said. "We really didn't have as much information, so [the project] is an opportunity to contribute to the pioneering efforts to learn about this important part of northern Mesopotamia."

For the research team, working on this project serves as an incredible chance to contribute to the historical record and uncover knowledge that has lain dormant for millennia.

In the field — Creekmore has spent over a decade peering into Iraq's secret, subsurface topography using magnetometry devices like this one.

More specifically, under the direction of Tiffany Earley-Spadoni, Ph.D., associate professor of History at UCF, the focus of the Kurd Qaburstan project has shifted toward improving understanding about how Bronze Age cities formed, rose and fell, as well as piecing together a picture of how everyday people lived.

Earley-Spadoni took over the role of project director from Schwartz in 2022. Although new to the position of director, she has been working at the site since 2014 and spoke at length about the team's goals.

"One of the things that had been previously supposed in these ancient cities was that there were the very rich and the very poor and no one in between," Earley-Spadoni said. "One of the things that we're finding in contrast is a glimpse of these relatively well off, 'middle class' neighborhoods — places where there are neither rich nor poor but still seem to have a relatively high quality of life."

According to both Schwartz and Earley-Spadoni, the magnetometry work being led by Creekmore is essential to this goal because it allows the researchers to map out a complete picture of the city — not just areas of elite, higher class occupation like palaces and temples.

"There's always a problem in archaeology of what we call a 'top-down perspective,'" Schwartz said. "We tend to get information about the people at the highest ranks of society. And they share their perspective and are looking down at everybody else, which obviously leads to a skewed perspective for us."

Among the excavation team's findings are clay pots marked with seals of ownership, a game board for recreational activity, shards of intricate pottery and several tablets inscribed with cuneiform — the world's earliest known writing system — that they hope to have translated in upcoming seasons.

"Dr. Creekmore's work provides the foundation and the structure upon which we are able to build better research questions," Earley-Spadoni said. "It allows us to guide our excavations in a way that is more ethical and responsible because of how we are able to target areas of interest rather than digging blindly."

Through their work, the Kurd Qaburstan project team isn't just uncovering artifacts and mapping the city — they're helping to tell the story of what life was really like for the people that lived, loved and worked within the walls of this metropolis.

"Now we're excavating there and finding all kinds of traces of everyday life, which is really touching," Earley-Spadoni said. "We can now add some texture, some tangibility to the lives of these people we imagine in this bustling Bronze Age city."

Uncovering the Past, Inspiring the Future

In addition to helping to uncover the history of a lost Mesopotamian metropolis, the Kurd Qaburstan project has had a second, more personal impact on the lives of a few of the team's members.

Alongside the archaeologists, anthropologists, researchers and geophysicists, several college students have visited the site over the years. Coming to the project from universities across the world, these students are given the chance to participate in real field work and experience what it's like to travel the world and contribute to the tapestry of history.

During his time working at the site, Creekmore has been able to bring six UNC students with him, with some accompanying him for multiple seasons.

Laura Sweatt, '18, is one such student.

Sweatt graduated from UNC with her bachelor's in Anthropology and had the chance to work with Creekmore and the rest of the project team at Kurd Qaburstan during the 2017 season.

"Working with Dr. Creekmore was just amazing," Sweatt said. "Helping pull together the magnetometry work was just like seeing history — this massive city with temples and walls and houses — come to life right before your eyes."

For Creekmore, giving students the opportunity to experience what it's like to work on projects like this is one of the most important parts of getting out in the field in the first place.

"I'm a teacher at the end of the day," Creekmore said. "I love seeing students get out and do the work they've been learning about. I want to be able to share that experience with as many of them as possible."

Due to uncertainty surrounding the stability of the Kurd Qaburstan region, Creekmore has been unable to bring students with him to the site in recent years. But looking ahead to future projects, he hopes to make the student component a high priority — a sentiment Sweatt shares.

"I think [trips like this] are just about the most valuable part of the student experience," Sweatt said. "You get to see and do so much. We met locals — the kinds of people I'd only seen or heard about on TV — and it really opened my eyes as to what life can be like around the world. I can't tell you how impactful the experience was. They were amazing."

Over the summer of 2025, Creekmore returned to Kurd Qaburstan and completed mapping the ancient city below the ground, marking over 10 years of work toward uncovering the past.

And regardless of the discoveries made in future seasons at Kurd Qaburstan or what projects he ends up working on in the years to come, Creekmore remains committed to using geophysical methods to further our understanding of the past while inspiring and uplifting the next generation of anthropologists. His work at UNC and beyond is helping to patch the gaps and weave new threads into the complex, ever-changing tapestry that is human history. **UNC**

HOW A
KING
EARNED HIS

er





own

By Ryan Mueksch
Photography by Woody Myers

For over 40 years, Dave King, '81, M.A. '82, owned and operated Triple Crown Sports, turning a spur-of-the-moment idea into a multimillion-dollar business that has organized thousands of competitive sports tournaments nationally and internationally

From the time he was in first grade, Dave King knew how to organize a great event.

"When I was 6 years old, I invited 10 kids over to the house. I put together a mini decathlon and a basketball game and we served graham crackers with chocolate icing at halftime. From that moment on, I've been in the hospitality business," King said with a big smile. "I've always liked to create memories and put together competitions."

That high standard of event management stuck with King throughout his childhood and young adult years.

As a student at UNC, King was a standout track and field athlete, competing in the decathlon and pole vault. Always looking for different ways to be active and involved in competition, Dave and his then-girlfriend, now wife, Annette King, '81, became avid slow-pitch softball players.

One summer when playing in a tournament in Craig, Colorado, Dave was asked to leave the tournament after getting into a disagreement with one of the organizers, voicing his displeasure for how the tournament was run.

As Dave recalls, "The gentleman said to me, 'King, if you think you can do it any better, do it yourself.' I took those words to heart. We had a long drive from Craig to Grand Junction and in the car, I cooked up our own tournament and called it 'Triple Crown.'"

After a successful first trial run of the tournament in Dave's hometown of Meeker, the following summer, in 1983, Dave and Annette organized men's, women's and co-ed softball tournaments in Steamboat, Breckenridge and Grand Junction — the three legs of Triple Crown. In total, 195 teams competed Friday evening to Sunday evening. And this time, everyone went home happy.

"I was the guy who always believed if something wasn't right, fix it," King said. "I wanted to come up with something special."

From 1983 to 1986, the Kings continued to organize Triple Crown tournaments in the summer. While they enjoyed organizing and competing in the events, bringing dozens of teams together at each location, they also recognized it was becoming a lot of work with no financial benefit.

“It was time to either stop altogether or go all-in,” King said.

“We decided to do it all the way. I wrote a business plan, resigned from my job and off we went.”

In 1988, Triple Crown Sports (TCS) purchased office space in downtown Fort Collins, and as acting CEO, Dave hired 17 employees to get the company off the ground and running.

Four years later, the “Triple Crown Slow-Pitch Softball Series” expanded to 130 cities, with ESPN televising the tournament championship of Triple Crown’s largest event in Steamboat.

In 1992, TCS began expanding to host tournaments for additional sports, including baseball, basketball, soccer, volleyball, roller hockey and fast-pitch softball. Adult, collegiate and youth tournaments were organized. Major sponsors came on board, including Nike, Louisville Slugger, Russell and Budweiser.

The business appeared to be doing great. More staff were hired as tournaments and events began increasing at a rapid rate, leading to greater exposure and interest. TCS hosted top-notch tournaments, providing fun and memorable experiences for the athletes in a professional setting — ultimately what King had set out to do.

However, after years of having a bottom line with minimal profit, he knew something needed to change.

“I was proud of what we created, but it was a hard moment for me to accept that I wasn’t the best at running a business in terms of generating enough revenue for sustainability,” King said. “I knew we needed a refreshed business model.”

A self-proclaimed turning point for King and TCS, in 2007, he elected to enroll in the Owner/President Management program at Harvard’s Business School, an educational experience designed for business owners to help elevate their businesses to the next level.

“We ultimately realized we were not charging enough for the product we were producing,” King said. “After the price point changed, the consumer interest never wavered, and that allowed us to grow at a much more sustainable rate.”

Patty Harsch, now a senior consultant for TCS, first started working for the company 32 years ago. After becoming friends with Dave and Annette in the early ’90s, Harsch, a fellow sports fan herself, admired what the Kings were building and wanted to be a part of it.

Since joining the staff in November of ’93, she’s worn many different hats, including director of HR and chief culture officer. Outside of the Kings, her tenure with TCS is among the longest of any employee. She believes that what has made Dave — and TCS — so successful over the years, is the relationships that King and his staff have built.

“They are not surface level, they are deep relationships,” Harsch said. “We truly care about the people we’re serving.”

One of many examples of these strong relationships is that with Dedeann Pendelton-Helm, current head Softball coach at UNC and former employee of TCS. Pendelton-Helm

began working for King in 1996, when she helped launch the fast-pitch softball division of TCS.

Fast forward 29 years later — TCS’s Sparkler and Fireworks tournaments over the 4th of July brought together over 1,000 teams from across the country to Colorado, with games played along the Front Range, from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins. This past summer, over 130 college softball coaches were in attendance to recruit participating players.

“There is no doubt Triple Crown has impacted the world of softball statewide and throughout the whole country,” Pendelton-Helm said. “Dave has such good relationships with countless coaches and players — he is constantly trying to advance the game. It’s evident how passionate he is about women’s sports, but softball in particular.”

One of those coaches King developed a strong relationship with is former Tennessee softball coach Ralph Weekly, who coached the Lady Vols for 20 years. His teams won 949 games and reached the College World Series seven times. Weekly, who was recently at the TCS facilities during one of their premier softball tournaments, compared the complex to “softball’s version of the Field of Dreams.”

“When thinking about the pioneers of softball in the United States, Dave King is in the top three — no question,” Weekly said.

King’s entrepreneurial spirit, passion for softball, and innovative ideas led TCS to recently unveil the College Sports Evaluation (CSE) Performance Lab as part of their facilities in Fort Collins. It’s a state-of-the-art indoor facility that provides softball players with precise data points on their hitting and pitching efficiencies, mirroring what Major League Baseball players have access to at many of their team’s facilities.

“In this lab we are able to track the movement of the body and the movement of the object,” King said. “Through that, we believe we can help players identify patterns that will increase performance and decrease injuries.”

Force plates below the turf surface measure footwork and exertion levels throughout the pitching motion while high-speed motion capture cameras record spin rates, arm angles and pitch movement. When hitting, important metrics like exit velocity, swing speed and ball flight are tracked.

“The tools used in this pitch and hitting lab are very similar to those seen in professional settings, which is why a solid understanding of biomechanics is essential to fully take advantage of data analysis,” said Jake Vassar, a graduate student in UNC’s Biomechanics program who is completing an internship at TCS, specifically within the CSE lab.

“Unlike subjective assessments made with the naked eye, these tools allow us to quantify performance and identify precise areas for improvement. Because the

“When thinking about the pioneers of softball in the United States, Dave King is in the top three — no question.”

—Ralph Weekly

technology is cutting-edge and expensive, it's not typically accessible to most athletes — especially at the youth or amateur level.”

Just this past year, King invited the UNC softball team to serve as the ‘beta testers’ for the CSE lab — a win-win for the Bears and TCS.

“We felt very lucky to be able to use the lab,” Pendelton-Helm said. “We’re a smaller mid-major program but to have access to that, what some of these big P4 [power four conference] programs are trying to use, it was really special and made us feel big-time.”

As a proud alumnus of UNC, King has given back to the university in many ways. He served as an adjunct faculty member in the Kenneth W. Monfort College of Business, was interim head softball coach at UNC over a decade ago and has given generously to the UNC athletic department through TCS to help with their greatest areas of need. King is a long-time supporter of UNC’s softball program, including supporting necessary enhancements to Gloria Rodriguez Field.

“Dave is always willing to help — whether it’s philanthropic or just providing advice, he really cares about UNC,” said Darren Dunn, director of Athletics at UNC.

“Oftentimes in college athletics, people do things for money. Dave once told me, ‘Do things that can benefit people.’ That has stuck with me over the years, and is something I remember when I’m making decisions,” said Dunn.

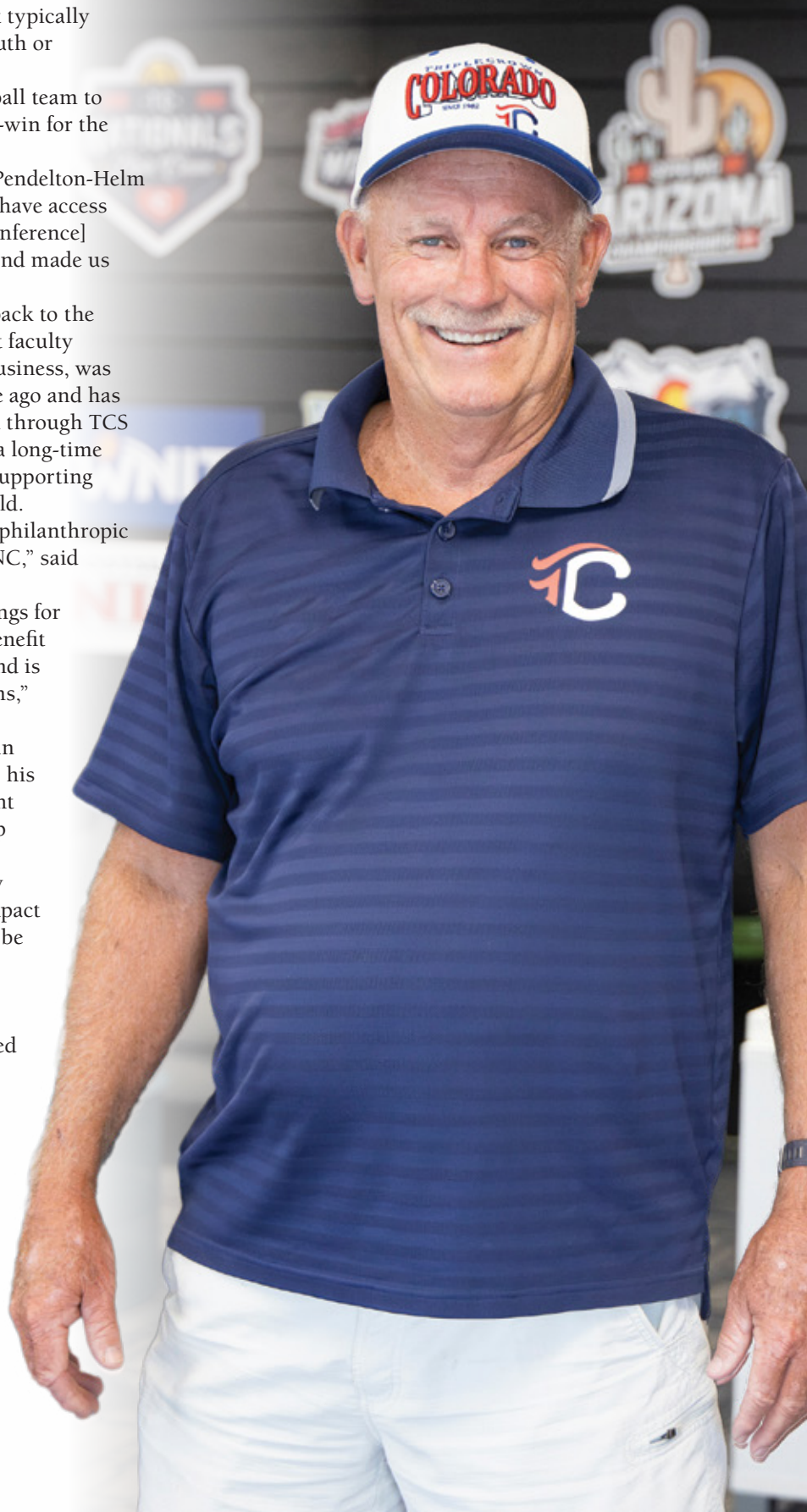
At 68 years old, King is still actively involved in TCS, but has proudly passed the baton of CEO to his oldest son, Keri. His daughter, Kelly, is chief talent officer, and the two now have majority ownership of the company.

Although Dave isn’t involved in the day-to-day operations quite as much as he used to be, his impact is still felt in the building — and his legacy won’t be soon forgotten.

The success TCS has experienced is evidenced in numbers — it generates roughly \$35 million in revenue annually and has organized tournaments nationally and internationally for over 330,000 teams.

What’s more difficult to measure are the memories created for hundreds of thousands of athletes and their family members, friends and loved ones — and the relationships that have blossomed with countless players, coaches, friends, sponsors and supporters.

While Dave may not be at the center of TCS for the next 40 years — his children intend to be — ensuring that “King energy” will live on. **UNC**



Hitting the **high** **notes**

UNC's jazz program dazzles over the decades

By Dan England
Photography by Woody Myers

Dana Landry, director of UNC's Jazz Studies program, was recently honored with the 2025 DownBeat Achievement Award for Jazz Education and is featured in their November publication. Over the course of his 30-year teaching career, Landry helped create successful jazz studies programs at Eastern Tennessee State University and UNC. After his arrival at UNC in 2002, one of the first things Landry set out to do was start a Jazz Studies program. Today, UNC offers the degree at all levels — bachelor's, master's and doctoral — with more than 120 jazz majors who attend the school.

➤ archive.maherpublications.com/view/686850013



In 2004, Dana Landry's third year as leader of UNC's Jazz program, Lab Band I won the DownBeat Music Award as the top big band in the country. He felt proud of his students and his work. But mostly, he felt relief.

Stepping into UNC's Jazz program was not unlike a football coach taking over Alabama or a basketball coach taking over the University of Kansas. Dana Landry, M.M. '94 was replacing Gene Aitken, a legend in jazz education known for his innovative teaching methods and grace in even the hottest spotlight. National titles, or, in this case, DownBeat awards that recognize the country's top students and the programs they attended, were assumed, not strived for.

"It was an unspoken expectation," Landry said.

He is, of course, more relaxed these days, as he celebrates his 23rd year as director of Jazz Studies. But when he took the job, he felt a pressure he'd never experienced before.

He had found his footing as the director of Middle Tennessee's Jazz program. He applied only out of respect because Aitken encouraged him to do so, Landry got his Master of Music at UNC under Aitken in 1994, and he didn't want to let him down. He was apprehensive at best; he knew there would be big shoes to fill. But he also knew when UNC offered him the gig, he couldn't turn it down.

He was the smaller college coach landing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to lead a legendary program. It doesn't always work out. This time, it did.

During Landry's tenure, UNC has won 95 DownBeat awards in many categories, for both student groups and soloists. Established in 1976, they are considered among the most prestigious awards in jazz education in the country. In total, UNC has claimed 172 awards dating back to 1980. *Editor's note: UNC's Symphony Orchestra also deserves a nod*

for winning DownBeat awards for the top group 10 times from 1999-2013.

And yet, winning awards wasn't Landry's first priority. He wanted to get UNC a jazz degree.

Buddy Baker started the program in 1965, and 11 years later, UNC hired Gene Aitken. Aitken did many things to build up UNC's Jazz program, including starting the vocal jazz program and expanding the annual UNC • Greeley Jazz Festival from eight groups to more than 300 today, making it one of the best and largest in the country. In 1985, a CD released by his UNC student vocal jazz group was nominated for a Grammy. In 1995, Aitken was named into the International Association of Jazz Educators' Hall of Fame. He did it all with a flair that resonated in his ferocious handshakes and the flashy outfits he wore at performances, some of them seemingly made from disco balls.

But Aitken didn't want a jazz major. He wanted players to get better at their instruments, and they could do that, he reasoned, by learning from classical music teachers. Aitken was confident he could teach them a style of music, aka jazz, as they became terrific players.

Landry believed times were changing and that UNC needed a jazz major to stay competitive with other top schools. UNC now offers the degree at all levels — bachelor's, master's and doctoral — all with Aitkin's support. The degree justified Landry hiring instructors specifically to teach jazz, including guitarist Steve Kovalcheck, M.M. '09, drummer Jim White, bassist Erik Applegate, M.M. '94, vocalists Kerry Marsh and, later, Marion Powers and composer Drew Zaremba. There are now more than 120 jazz majors who attend the school.

"We have a large number of jazz graduate students who mentor the undergraduates," Landry said. "It's worked out great."

This is what Gavin Allen-Dunn, M.M. '22, a pianist in the doctoral program, loved about UNC. He was only 21 when he entered the master's program and was a little intimidated by UNC's reputation. But Landry, he said, does a good job of encouraging the older students, some of them in their mid-30s, to mentor the underclassmen.

"Other schools can be cutthroat," Allen-Dunn said, "but at UNC it wasn't a constant breathing down your neck. Everyone is there to help each other."



There are also many players who choose not to get a jazz degree but still love to play it, including those in music education and classical performance. Allison Young graduated with a degree in Music Business in 2022, a new concentration from the School of Music. Young used the degree to get marketing jobs while gigging as a jazz musician. She has since led her own group, toured with the Glenn Miller Orchestra as the baritone saxophonist and played with Randy Brecker, KNOWER and Lauryn Hill.

Young is now pursuing a master's degree at the prestigious Eastman School of Music. She won two DownBeat awards with Lab Band I (2022) and a funk lab band (2021).

"There's such a high level of playing happening in that program," Young said. "Just being around all that excellence was really inspiring."

There are others who don't play jazz primarily once they graduate but appreciate the education the jazz school gave them. Connor Terrones, a guitarist and singer, has had a lot of success playing in Denver after graduating with a jazz degree in 2016. He plays with Americana groups, singer-songwriter Kaitlyn Williams, a jazz fusion group and a rock band he started called Questshun. The rock band is his top priority now: He plans to release an EP before the end of this year to coincide with a fall tour.

He's been able to flirt with so many genres of music because of what Kovalcheck taught him about soloing over jazz chords.

"He taught me that there's a contextual element to soloing," Terrones said. "He used to tell me, 'This is what jazz guitarists do,' and at the time, that annoyed me, but as I get older, I have found that it's really important. Improvisation can have a different context given the styles you play. I was taught to play in a jazz context, but the way he communicated it to me helped me transcend it."

Going to the jazz program also helped him learn how to be a professional musician.

"I learned the process of work ethic and what it takes," Terrones said. "What a practice routine looks like."

You have to work hard, after all, to be recognized.

Winning more DownBeat awards was not Landry's main goal, but they did provide validation that what he was doing was working.

"It's hard to rank creativity," Landry said. "But the awards are an acknowledgement that what we're doing here is serving the students well."

DownBeat picks the winners based on recordings, which can be live or in the studio. Landry prefers to record the top band in a studio but is flexible on other categories — sometimes students will use a solo recorded at a concert. Judges don't know who is playing on the recordings, which adds legitimacy to UNC's domination: UNC can't rely on its reputation. Landry prefers to audition students for the top groups the same way: They play behind a screen, so he doesn't know who is trying out.

Landry is especially proud that the recordings he sends to DownBeat typically feature student compositions instead of standards written by classics such as Duke Ellington. Some might consider that a handicap, but it shows the talent as well as the work ethic at the school.

He doesn't know how many entries there are each year, but the lists are typically littered with the top schools, including Miami, Eastman and North Texas. The top programs care about the awards and winning them is prestigious enough that musicians will list them in their biographies.

Landry likes the fact that the system has changed. In the past, schools picked their entries, but now students can submit an entry on their own if they like, as long as faculty signs off on it.

"Sometimes students can believe they're not good enough," Landry said. "But you want to encourage as many as possible to give it a shot."

Landry said accepting the position at UNC over two decades ago is one of the best decisions he's ever made. He brought a level of familiarity to performances, as he enjoys wearing the same kind of bright, flashy outfits favored by Aitken. But his high expectations are perhaps the best way he's carried on the UNC tradition.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to teach and collaborate alongside a faculty of world-class artists and to mentor students who bring such remarkable talent and dedication to their craft. From freshmen to doctoral candidates, their creative energy makes it possible to pursue projects here at UNC that simply couldn't happen anywhere else." **UNC**

Alumni Spotlight



Player: Gavin Allen-Dunn

Instrument: Piano

Time at UNC: Graduated with a Master of Music in 2022.

DownBeat Awards: Won best soloist as well as awards with the top band.

What he's doing now: Gigging and figuring out his next step.



Player: Connor Terrones

Instrument: Guitar and singing

Time at UNC: Graduated with a Bachelor of Music in 2016.

DownBeat Awards: Won with the top vocal jazz group

What he's doing now: Gigging in Denver as a well-known musician and playing with his rock band, Questshun, that will release an EP in November.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CONNOR TERRONES

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLISON YOUNG



Player: Allison Young

Instrument: Baritone Saxophone

Time at UNC: Graduated with a Bachelor of Music in Music Business in 2022.

DownBeat Awards: Won with the top band as well as a funk band.

What she's doing now: After a stint playing with the Glenn Miller Orchestra, she is attending the Eastman School of Music.

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Bears Linked Through Letters

UNC Geography Professor Karen Barton discovered the heartwarming impact of nearly 200 letters written 17 years ago by her former students.

By Amber Medina

She intentionally left the assignment broad. Simply asking her students to write a letter to their future self and tell them how they hoped things would unfold.

Back in 2008, Barton remembered a simple assignment from a class she taught in graduate school and decided to implement it again in her Geography 100-level courses. It was an exercise in reflection on the world and what it may become in the future.

Barton taught over 200 underclassmen students that year. Now, nearly 18 years later, she came across that box of letters and began reaching out to those students to see where they were and how they were doing.

"They were so kind," Barton said of the reactions of her former students. "It was delightful to get in touch with them. UNC students have always been just extraordinarily nice, really compassionate, good people."

That generation of students in 2008 had come of age in an era that witnessed the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the environmental and social impacts of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The war in Iraq was ongoing, and the global financial crisis was beginning

"It was just a beautiful experience to connect with these students."

—Karen Barton

to have widespread effect on the U.S. economy and job markets. That year, Barack Obama was elected the first African American U.S. president and was largely supported by young voters.

"It was a really exciting, dynamic time in history, here at UNC and around the world," Barton said. "Students were really inspired and focused on environmental changes. They wanted to know if they could make a difference. They had all this horsepower, and they were just really determined to do something."

For Barton, the human dimension of these letters was the most enriching part of this assignment, looking back on what those students hoped for themselves and for the world and the people in it.

"It was just a beautiful experience to connect with these students," she said. "It reminded me of why we do this work."



Karen Barton is a passionate geographer, educator and changemaker dedicated to amplifying underrepresented voices and driving community-based solutions. As a senior faculty member, she leads innovative courses on climate change, sustainable development and geographic literacy. Barton has won 12 Fulbright fellowships. Her work spans the globe, from leading conservation-focused study abroad programs to being knighted in Senegal for amplifying local communities through impactful storytelling and research. Currently, she is spearheading projects that intersect peace, climate and cultural heritage, aiming to inspire the next generation of explorers and scholars.

Letters to the Future

Barton launched a new Letters to the Future project in her Geography 100 summer class in 2025.



Adam Lucero, '10

**GEOGRAPHY & HISTORY EDUCATION
STUDENT ADVISING**

Adam grew up in Pueblo, Colorado, and came to UNC to become a teacher. They studied geography and history, taught in Greeley after graduating, and then moved out west to Oregon.

“My initial goal was to be a classroom teacher and then once I moved to Portland, I kind of found myself,” they said.

Adam worked in nonprofit, youth service and education until they took a role in academic advising at Portland Community College (PCC) serving first-generation and low-income students through holistic program support. In 2022, they became student records coordinator for PCC.

“When Dr. Barton sent my letter, I was hesitant to read it,” Adam said. “I thought ‘this is going to be so cringe.’ And it was cringe, kind of, but it was also sweet to read about this 20-year-old kid from Colorado thinking about global issues.”

Adam says Barton was one of their favorite professors. They naturally gravitated toward Barton’s very human take on geography.

Their experience at UNC built empathy and helped them understand other ways of living, other places and what is really going on in the world. Their education provided a broader perspective which still influences the work they do with students today by understanding different walks of life and situations that people come from.

“I think UNC just planted the seed of wanting to create more justice in the world, and, as an educator, using the tools and resources that I have within my work to do that — to create pathways and remove barriers for more students to have positive educational journeys.”



Estelle Staffieri, '13

**GRAPHIC DESIGN & MARKETING
SOFTWARE UI/UX QUALITY ASSURANCE**

After graduating from UNC, Estelle began working in digital marketing for a few different firms in Colorado. She then transitioned into e-commerce marketing until she had to consider other opportunities for financial growth.

“I had to pivot,” Estelle said. “The job market after I graduated was fairly rocky, but being adaptable, having good communications skills, resilience and perseverance were a lot of things I had picked up at UNC.”

Estelle remembered how much she had enjoyed working on a past project that involved application design, and she decided to earn her certificate in front-end engineering. Now, Estelle is working in software quality assurance and UI/UX testing.

“UNC gave me a broader view of the world and really opened me up to a lot of different paths I could take.”

Estelle says Barton’s was one of her favorite classes from her time at UNC.

“Professor Barton’s class was really inspiring, and it was one of those experiences where you feel the passion of the professor, and you want to rise and meet that passion equally.”

Estelle hopes that future UNC students continue writing letters to their future selves.

“It warms my heart to know that this sort of time capsule has come full circle. I get to remember my younger self, and all the potential, hope and excitement that were in my life then. Even though things are very different now, it gives me that perspective again, that I actually can play a more active role in my life.”



Robert Vincent, '09

**POLITICAL SCIENCE
MANAGING ATTORNEY**

Bob Vincent graduated from UNC with a degree in Political Science and minor in Geography. He then graduated from the University of Kansas School of Law in 2013. Bob says the single best thing that happened to him after graduating from UNC was meeting his wife. They have three children, two dogs and enjoy life in the Kansas City metro suburbs.

Bob is a managing attorney for ONE Gas, one of the nation's largest natural gas public utilities.

When Barton reached out to him about the letter he wrote as a student, it resulted in a flood of different thoughts and emotions.

"My first reaction was, 'Oh, lordy, what did I write?'" Bob said. "It pulled me back to that phase of life, how exciting and stressful it was, and how priorities evolve over a lifetime. What I spent hours agonizing over back then now seems so insignificant."

As a student, Bob says he fell in love with geography. Barton's engaging teaching style and the passion for the field that she and other UNC professors shared were contagious.

"I wasn't looking to get a geography minor, but I liked it so much, I just kept taking classes and that was the result of it."

Bob says his experience at UNC was his first real exposure to understanding different ideas and perspectives, providing him the opportunity to grow the critical skills needed to become an attorney.

"I loved my time at UNC," Bob said. "They say, 'the grass is greener on the other side,' and it's a warning. It isn't always greener. What's true is the grass is greener where it's watered, meaning people thrive and grow in an environment where others are willing to pour their time, talent and treasure into them for a greater good — and that's the environment at UNC." **UNC**

From Letters to Leadership:

In 2008, Professor Barton asked her students to write to their future selves. Today, our Bears are thriving across the globe.

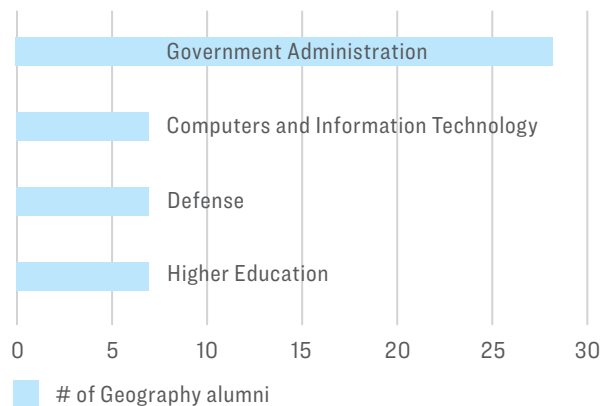
GLOBAL REACH:

UNC alumni work in **71 countries around the globe**, a testament to the "broad view of the world" instilled during their time at UNC. Other than the United States, the countries with the most UNC alumni working there are **Thailand, Taiwan, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Australia**.

TOP INDUSTRIES FOR GEOGRAPHY ALUMNI:

The most common industry in which Geography majors since 2008 are working is government administration — demonstrating the ways that UNC alumni are directly contributing to public policy globally.

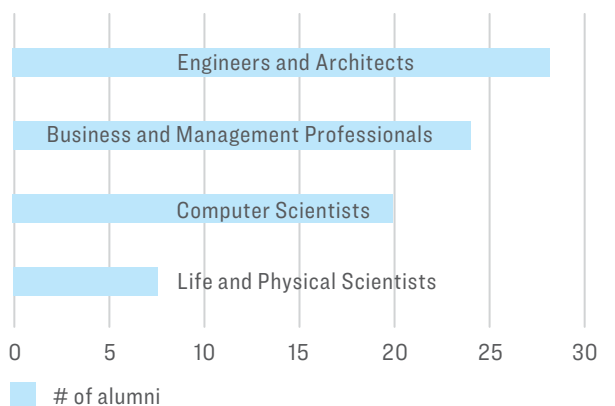
of Geography alumni



TOP PROFESSIONS FOR GEOGRAPHY ALUMNI:

Geography majors since 2008 are working as engineers and architects, computer scientists, managers and life and physical scientists.

of Geography alumni since 2008



TOP INDUSTRIES FOR ALL UNC ALUMNI SINCE 2008:

Employment data for all alumni who graduated from UNC since 2008 show education, health care and government in the top five industries, followed closely by banking and computer science/technology.

LYNDSEY OATES, M.S. '04
Head Coach, Women's Volleyball



PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS

Set Up for Success

Under pressure to uphold a winning legacy, Lyndsey Oates rose from interim head coach to Big Sky icon — the architect of a competitive Division I volleyball program grounded in a culture of mentorship and growth.

Lyndsey Oates, M.S. '04, still gets goose bumps thinking about 2009, the first year she truly believed she could be a successful head coach for UNC's Women's Volleyball program.

When she took the position in August 2005, it was, more or less, an offer she couldn't refuse, even though she'd been an assistant for just a few years. That was the same year UNC transitioned to a Division I (DI) program, and at 25, Oates was one of the youngest head volleyball coaches in DI history. UNC asked her to be interim head coach because, to put it bluntly, they didn't have anyone else. Former head coach, Ron Alexander, '88, left three days before the start of the season.

Despite that, this wasn't a program that UNC expected to just limp along. Alexander left with an 88-13 record, and before him, Linda Delk, M.A. '78 won 700 matches and 14 NCAA tournaments, including four deep runs that ended at the Elite Eight.

Oates knew the game. She was a star at Eaton High School and played for Louisiana State University (LSU). At LSU, one of her coaches told her she saw the game better than she played it, a remark that insulted her at first and later affirmed her career path.

But she knew nothing about being a head coach.

"It was a bit overwhelming," Oates said.

She started with two losing seasons, but UNC was patient, and in 2008, there was a breakthrough. The team finished third in the conference. She had an experienced and talented team that had learned alongside her. She had hope.

A year later, in 2009, she and her team won their first Big Sky tournament championship and Oates won Big Sky Coach of the Year.

It was not only an affirmation for her and the seniors who stayed after Alexander left, but also for UNC. Many questioned the Bears' move to DI. The team's title was a good answer for the critics. Yes, UNC could compete and win at the highest level.

Goose bumps.

“If you’re only fueled by passion, you will burn out. It’s mentoring and raising girls and helping them through life — that is what’s keeping me here.”

—Lyndsey Oates

...

Now in her 21st year as head coach, Oates’ successes are equally as impressive as her predecessors — five-time Big Sky Coach of the Year, 14 Big Sky titles, seven NCAA tournament bids.

Like any good coach, she’ll remind anyone she didn’t do it alone. Terry Pettit, who led the women’s volleyball program at Nebraska for 22 years, stepped in early to serve as Oates’ mentor, something she considers to be a ‘Godsend.’

Oates kept the blue-collar work ethic that defined UNC volleyball but grew alongside her players and even adjusted her strict demeanor.

“You have to give more grace to some college students,” said Taylor Stuemky, ’10, a former player who is now the senior associate athletic director for Internal Operations at the University of Wyoming. “We went from one strike and you’re done to three strikes.”

Stuemky said despite her youth, Oates was way ahead of her time in psychology and motivation.

The weekend before the 2009 Big Sky tournament, the team lost their last two matches soundly. Oates took her players outside and showed them pieces of wood painted with words like “doubt, denial, frustration.” Then she handed them little axes.

“We just chopped wood and got out all our anger,” Stuemky said. “It was a reset. We went into that tournament refocused and ready.”

And they won.

...

Following that first title, Oates and her team were on a roll, winning conference titles in 2010 and 2011, and conference tournament wins in 2012 and 2014. During that time, her personal life was also taking off. She married husband Mark in 2012 and had a son, Dylan, in 2013 and a daughter, Rylee, in 2015. Things were going well.

But in 2015, the team went 14-16, and over the next three years, posted a modest 61-57 record. UNC didn’t fall far, she says today, but those years weren’t up to her standards.

“I had to make a lot of hard decisions to get us back,” Oates said. “It wasn’t one thing. The solution had to be a lot of little things.”

After implementing those changes, UNC came roaring back in 2019, winning 26 games, earning regular season



Oates connects with her team from the sidelines at the Bank of Colorado Arena during their early-season Sept. 2 victory over Colorado State University. In front of a packed crowd, the Bears claimed the match 3-2, capping it off with an exciting 15-12 fifth-set win.

and conference tournament championships and advancing to the NCAA tournament. Since then, she’s had arguably her best years, with a .700 winning percentage and three tournament titles.

During the 2024-25 season, the team tallied 28 wins — Oates’ personal best — before losing to Arizona in the National Invitational Volleyball Championship semifinals. They also ‘won the state’ for the first time in program history, beating every other DI program in Colorado.

Oates continues to do it the right way, something that Jenny Glenn, Oates’ former assistant and now head volleyball coach at Metro State, admires about her.

“She would do whatever it takes to win but do it with integrity,” Glenn said.

Oates said she knows the rules but relies on her faith to inform her about the right choices.

“I pray about it and listen to my gut feeling,” she said. “I know my character is what matters.”

She has a bigger purpose, she said, and that’s what keeps her going through the tougher years and the fundraising and the pressure to win.

“If you’re only fueled by passion, you will burn out,” Oates said, “but it’s mentoring and raising girls and helping them through life that is what’s keeping me here.”

—Dan England

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.

60s

Joyce Zeiler, B.S. '66, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA, was in the first nursing class at UNC, and had a 30 year nursing career, ending at UCI for the last 17 years.

70s

David Greenwald, B.A. '73, Tularosa, NM, had a lengthy career working at various universities (Texas Tech, Arizona State, University of Colorado), private consulting firms and private/non-profits (Museum of Northern and Jornada Research Institute). He is currently the president of Jornada Research, where he continues to conduct archaeological investigations, lead overseas tours and is currently organizing the 2025 Archaeoastronomy and Celestial Geometry Conference in Ruidoso, NM.

Bill Rowley, Ed.D. '73, Fort Collins, CO, retired dean of the School of Education, Seattle Pacific University.

Margaret Mizushima, B.A. '74, Port Townsend, WA, released the latest installment of her award-winning Timber Creek K-9 Series, *Dying Cry*, on Oct. 14, 2025.

Deb Kenny, B.S. '75, Monument, CO, has been a nurse for almost 50 years now and still going strong. She served 24 years in the military and 25 years in various other positions. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and serve on the Military/Veteran and Bioethics expert panels. She will complete a doctorate in Bioethics next year, and was recently selected to serve on the board of directors for the Friends of the National Institute of Nursing Research.

Roger Bryant, B.A. '76, Suffolk, VA, retired from a full-time 26-year career as clinical psychologist, serving on active duty, GS, and contractor for U.S. Army and U.S. Navy in Hawaii, Oklahoma and Virginia. "It has been an amazing career — meeting and serving incredible individuals who keep our country safe."

80s

Martin Wojciechowski, D.A. '81, Bozeman, MT, retired as professor and associate dean from Arizona State University (ASU) in 2024, after a 42-year career of research and teaching in plant and microbial biology at the University of Arizona, the University of California and ASU.

David LeNoble, B.A. '85, Broomfield, CO, retired after an amazing 30+ years teaching and working in education. It has been an honor and joy to teach since 1986. The best part is how UNC prepared me to jump right in and teach.

Alton Dillard, B.A. '86, Denver, CO, UNC Alumni Board member, celebrated 30 years in government communications.

90s

Philip Clifton, B.S. '92, Pocatello, ID, retired from the Department of Veteran Affairs in 2018.

Andrea Wieland, B.A. '92, Brighton, CO, won the Rich Feller Leadership Award in 2022. This annual award honors Rich Feller for his outstanding dedication and service to the career development profession in the local, national and international arenas. The recipient of this award is recognized for making valuable contributions to the career development field and emulating Rich Feller's service to others as mentor and colleague.

Heidi Yewman, BAE '92, Portland, OR, is a nationally recognized gun violence prevention advocate whose efforts grew out of personal trauma growing up in Colorado. Her forthcoming book, *Dumb Girl*, published Aug. 19, 2025, illustrates how healing and activism are deeply intertwined.

Michael Younger, BAE '92, M.A. '03, Alvin, TX, retired in May 2021 after teaching high school and junior high school science for 29 years, including earth science, biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, ecology, paleontology, career education, and coached many chess teams. "UNC prepared me for

my career remarkably well and was a safe and welcoming home for me for seven years as I earned a double major B.A. and later a M.A.

Gretchen Schott, B.A. '94, M.A. '97, Fishers, IN, published the best-selling book *Joy@Work: When Women Lead*, an anthology that delves into the unique strengths and superpowers that women bring to the workplace.

Brandy Ward, B.A. '95, Otis, CO, won election for Washington County Commissioner District 2 in Colorado.

Vicki Collet, M.A. '98, Rogers, AR, was appointed co-editor of the journal, *Literacy Research and Instruction*, and named graduate program coordinator in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at the University of Arkansas.

00s

Matt Christiansen, B.A. '01, Syracuse, UT, selected as the new director of Developmental Math at Weber State University. Matt previously worked in K-12 education as a high school teacher in Greeley, CO, and also as the K-12 math coordinator for the school district in Greeley. For much of his 23 years of experience in education, Matt has worked to provide curriculum and instructional materials and experiences for struggling learners, along with professional development for teachers and administrators throughout the United States. Through his professional experience Matt has collaborated with authors and researchers in the mathematics community, where he has learned to appreciate the value of data and research to guide instructional and curricular decisions.

Douglas Owens, D.A. '03, Norfolk, VA, became the chairperson of the Old Dominion University Department of Music in June 2016. He continues to teach undergraduate and graduate music education courses and directs the ODU Jazz Orchestra.

Stephen Melton, B.A. '06, Tahlequah, OK, is publishing a research paper outlining an important and potentially groundbreaking gravitational model for the matter-antimatter asymmetry and origins of dark matter.



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the latest news and highlights.

Cristóbal (Chris) Garcia, B.A. '08, Evans, CO, was appointed to serve on the Aims Community College Board of Trustees in an interim role through November 2025. A proud Mexican American, first-generation college graduate, and lifelong northern Colorado resident, Chris is honored to support an institution deeply rooted in access and educational opportunity. He looks forward to contributing his leadership experience, community connections and student-centered perspective to continue serving students and families across the region.

10S

Christopher Redfearn, D.A. '12, Jamestown, ND, was named dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at Central Washington University.

Nicholas Mancini, M.A. '13, Englewood, CO, company was selected as the 2022 Startup of the Year through the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce.

Lacy Cleveland, Ph.D. '14, Arvada, CO, was awarded Colorado Christian University's 2025 Junior Faculty of the Year.

Zach Herzog, B.S. '15, Kirkland, WA, was ordained into the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Afterward, he will begin serving as associate pastor for Community Life at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Olympia, WA. "I'm grateful for the foundation my business education at UNC provided, which continues to inform my leadership, organization management and community-building in ministry."

Yvette Flores, B.A. '17, Evans, CO, led the Mexican American History Project of Greeley, whose goal is to address the gaps in the recorded history of Greeley by documenting and sharing the stories of Mexican Americans who have contributed culturally, intellectually and economically to our city. As part of this effort, they interviewed 44 local residents across multiple generations, partnering with UNC Archives to transcribe and archive the oral histories for future use. The book will be distributed in both English and Spanish to all county schools, libraries, museums and community centers between late 2025 and early 2026. It will be one of the few Spanish-language resources offering insight into both the past and present of Greeley's Mexican American community.

Brandy Lynch, Ph.D. '17, Lees Summit, MO, associate professor and program coordinator for Physical Education at the University of

Central Missouri, was elected to the board of directors for SHAPE America — the Society of Health and Physical Educators. She also serves as president of the Missouri Society of Health and Physical Educators, where she leads statewide initiatives in advocacy, professional development and convention planning.

Madeline Azari, B.A. '18, Greeley, CO, was named the 2024 Intermountain Affiliate Advisor of the Year, an accolade that celebrates advisors who make meaningful contributions to communities through advising roles. Azari currently leads leadership programs within Residence Life at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her work was acknowledged on a regional scale, representing institutions across eight states and two Canadian provinces. The honor is especially significant as it came through the nominations of two of her students, underscoring the impact of Azari's mentorship. Azari received official recognition for the award last month, solidifying her reputation as an outstanding leader and advisor in higher education.

Ryan Gonzalez, B.S. '18, Greeley, CO, was elected to the Colorado State House of Representatives, member of the Energy and Environment and Finance committees.

George Blankley, B.A. '19, Eugene, OR, graduated from the University of Oregon School of Law with a JD in 2025.

Miranda Martino, M.A. '19, Ph.D. '22, Kansas City, MO, was named as one of the University of Central Missouri's 10 Under 40 for her work as a school psychologist.

20S

Tara Hobbs, B.S. '20, Colorado Springs, CO, earned her Master of Science degree from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

Griffin Tendler, B.S. '20, Henderson, NV, was named Las Vegas 40 Under 40 for 2025.

Izze Woloson, UCERT '21, Boulder, CO, made history in 2021 as the first person with Down syndrome to graduate from college in the state of Colorado. Since then, she has continued to redefine what inclusion looks like — living independently, working as a barista, life coach and disability rights advocate. This fall marks a special milestone: the 20th anniversary paperback release of *My Friend Isabelle*, the beloved children's book written by her mother, Eliza Woloson, and inspired by

Isabelle's early friendship with a little boy named Charlie. For two decades, the award-winning book has been a steadfast resource for families and educators introducing young children to the concepts of kindness, difference and inclusion. The new edition features an afterword written by Isabelle, in which she reflects on what she's learned since the book's debut — how change happens through small, intentional choices made by people in power: deans, employers, politicians and parents who choose to take a chance, offer an opportunity or widen the circle of inclusion. Isabelle is deeply proud to be a UNC graduate and credits the university with playing a pivotal role in her life by giving her the same opportunity as everyone else: the chance to pursue a college education and earn her degree.

Ashley Evans, B.S. '22, South Salt Lake, UT, graduated from the University of Utah in May 2025, with a master's degree in Atmospheric Science.



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INDUCTION CEREMONY

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March 28, 2026

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In Memory

1940s

Louise Williamson Poland, '44 A.B.

1950s

Merietta Ball West, B.A. '50
Margaret Zimmerman Kingery, B.A. '52
Dean Bushnell, B.A. '52, M.A. '56
Tish Kastler Schmucker, B.A. '52
Barbara Smith Walker, B.A. '53, B.A. '64
Bonnie Gimple Manion, B.A. '54
William Roberts, B.A. '54, M.A. '61
Estelle Suzuki Sumimoto, B.A. '55, M.A. '56
Mary Lynn Tanner Bridgewater, B.A. '55, M.A. '58
Kaye Nissen Veldhuisen, B.A. '56
Barbara Hillhouse Wilson, B.A. '56, M.A. '57
Dale Schropp, B.A. '56, M.A. '61
Alan Zetler, M.A. '56
Mercedes Triplett Morrison, A.B. '57
Orie Davenport Thompson, B.A. '57
Carolyn Kahler Fugal, B.A. '57, M.A. '57
Deo Wolff, B.A. '57, M.A. '58
Kenyard Smith, M.A. '57
Donald Schliesman, M.A. '57, Ed.D. '61
Ken Dillner, B.A. '58
Dean Harold, B.A. '58
Karen Cline Krill, B.A. '58
Donald Suits, B.A. '58
Joan Kauffman Brookshire, B.A. '58
Don Cimaglia, B.A. '58, M.A. '61
Ralph Jordan, B.A. '58, M.S. '69
Jerry Stinson, B.A. '58, M.A. '62
Keith Holdridge, M.A. '58
Mary Keenum Barbee, B.A. '59
Jeanne Cooke Collins, B.A. '59, Ed.D. '88
Annette Nixon Lasater, B.A. '59
Beverly Smith Harold, B.A. '59
Bob Woods, B.A. '59, M.A. '64
Ralph Rieves, B.A. '59
John Allen, B.A. '59
Paul Sheaman, M.A. '59

1960s

Ralph Gleckler, B.A. '60
Pat Pisciotta Klomp, B.A. '60
Jane Nagamine Uyehara, B.A. '60

Jim Edmondson, B.A. '60
Joyce Klier Davis, B.A. '60, M.A. '65, Ed.D. '78
Ed Anderson, B.A. '60
Sharon Burt Burt, B.S. '60
Gary Funkhouser, M.A. '60
Jack Neuzil, M.A. '60
Carol Gunderson Goddard, B.A. '61
John Fuller, M.A. '61
Dick Ouellette, M.A. '61
Peter Roknich, M.A. '61
Chuck Southward, M.A. '61
Dick Pangborn, B.A. '62
Frank Sheehy, B.A. '62
Marilyn Nelson Hinrichsen, M.A. '62
Wayne Moellenberg, M.A. '62, Ed.D. '66
Carmen Fell Van Pelt, B.A. '63
Bob Bolles, B.A. '63, M.A. '66
Jerry Snapp, B.A. '63, M.A. '71
Paul Battiste, B.A. '63
Walter Friesen, Ed.D. '63
Dick Backes, M.A. '63
Dan McGee, M.A. '63
Van Phillips, M.A. '63
Donald Scott, M.A. '63
Barbara Gray Evans, M.A. '63
Keith Messer, B.A. '64
Fred Gabsewics, B.A. '64
Judith Hakes Hakes, B.A. '64, M.A. '68
Ray Reeb, B.A. '64
Jane O'Brien Bruce, B.A. '64
Sharon Lee Eaves, B.A. '64, M.A. '71
Jim Jacobsen, Ed.D. '64
John Smith, M.A. '64
Jane Holley Sullivan, B.A. '65
William Barber, B.A. '65
Dale Thein, M.A. '65
Lloyd Carlton, M.A. '65
Deslyn Schutt, M.A. '65
Sue Tate, B.A. '67
Gary Heath, B.A. '67, M.A. '76
Gregory Button, B.A. '67, M.A. '72, Ed.D. '77
Dick Booth, B.A. '67
Nils McDermott, M.A. '67
Bonnie Miner Poole, M.A. '67
Ellen Mastin Hissrich, B.A. '68, M.A. '71
Frank Stoops, B.A. '68
Kent Smith, B.A. '68
Clancy Barrett, B.A. '68

Ethel Goetz Cole, M.A. '68
Diane Kottenstette Jokerst, B.A. '69, M.A. '70
Jennifer Bevin Cole, B.A. '69, M.A. '85
Karen Kerin Schuler, B.A. '69
Beth Ladwig Valdez, B.A. '69
Mitchell Frank, B.A. '69
Shirley Zarse Kolin, B.A. '69
Janie LaBonde Uhlig, B.A. '69, M.A. '76
Joyce Pike Pike, M.A. '69
Frank Randall, M.A. '69
Glenn Reynick, M.A. '69
Helen Knickman Herren, M.A. '69
Vera Finger Randall, M.A. '69
Olivia Medina Moore, M.A. '69
Carl Weigand, M.A. '69, Ed.D. '78
Gerald Clark, M.A. '69

1970s

Michael Kleine, B.A. '70
Connie Rebell Williams, B.A. '70
Patricia Johnson Ottem, B.A. '70
David Henderson, B.A. '70
Terry Bland, B.A. '70
Carol Vangraefschape Lambert, B.A. '70
Larry Myers, B.S. '70
Marvin Heller, Ed.D. '70
Susan Fisher McCabe, B.A. '71
Juvana Epperson Wheeler, B.A. '71, M.A. '83
Carolyn Reeve Baumgartner, B.A. '71
Larry Raehal, B.A. '71, M.A. '85
Cindy Madson DeLong, B.A. '71
Larry Houser, M.A. '71
Petey Lippott, M.A. '71, Ed.S. '77
Rick Wright, Ph.D. '71
Deborah Deetz Sloan, B.A. '72
Bill Schalla, B.A. '72
Phil Jarvis, B.A. '72
Chuck Grams, B.A. '72
Karen Torp Torp, B.A. '72
Anton Christoff, Ed.D. '72
Mary Simer Bowman, M.A. '72
Darlene Jamison, M.A. '72
Larry Potter, B.A. '73, M.A. '79
Susan Walter Bomar, B.A. '73
Joyce Thompson Carr, B.A. '73
Kenneth Fender, B.A. '73
Emily Patchen, M.A. '73
David Krill, M.A. '73

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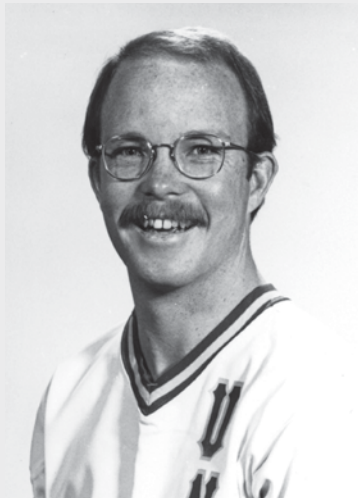
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John Haefeli tips his hat to the crowd before throwing out the first pitch at the Colorado High School Activities Association Class 3A Baseball Championship on Saturday, May 31, at Butch Butler Field in Greeley. Haefeli died later in the day after a nearly year-long battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 67.

PHOTO BY GREELEY TRIBUNE



In Memoriam: John W. Haefeli '86



Dedicated Greeley educator and philanthropist, John W. Haefeli, M.A. '86, passed away on May 31, 2025. Alongside his wife, Delia, '90, John was an active supporter of UNC, Greeley-Evans School District 6 and numerous other community organizations, with a lifelong commitment to giving back.

John and Delia both earned their master's degrees at UNC. John was a retired District 6 educator and former adjunct faculty member at UNC's School of Teacher Education. An avid Bears fan, he also served as an assistant coach for UNC Baseball and on the UNC Alumni

Board. Together, the couple established the Haefeli Family Scholarship to support aspiring teachers at UNC.

In addition to his lifetime of service and generosity to his alma mater, John was a prominent figure in Greeley and widely recognized for his exceptional contributions to education and community service. He served eight years on the District 6 Board of Education, including as director. In 2023, he joined the Aims Community College Board of Trustees, where he advocated for expanded educational opportunities and supported initiatives to increase access to education for all learners.

John and Delia, also a retired educator, established the Delia and John W. Haefeli Opportunity Fund through the District 6 Success Foundation to assist local students with essential needs, like internet access, course fees

and extracurricular activities. They also funded a scholarship for The Greeley Dream Team, an organization dedicated to helping students achieve graduation.

Beyond his work in education, John was actively involved in numerous community organizations, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of Weld County, Catholic Charities Migrant Housing Board, United Way of Weld County, the Northern Colorado International Refugee Center and the Colorado High School Activities Association Foundation. He also worked with disabled veterans through Project Healing Waters.

John leaves behind a profound legacy characterized by his unwavering dedication to education, commitment to community service and passion for empowering others, particularly students. He is remembered as a leader, mentor and compassionate individual whose impact on the Greeley community will endure for generations.



Karen Carpenter-Hill, B.A. '74, M.A. '74
 Clare Dore Johansmeier, B.A. '74
 Larry Roots, B.A. '74
 Vicki Tanin, B.A. '74
 Pattie Riley Priebe, B.A. '74
 Masoud Shirazi, B.A. '74, M.A. '75
 Clarence Suber, M.A. '74
 Judy Vrabel Poulson, M.A. '74
 Carol Gerr Rafsky, M.A. '74
 Gene Walter, M.A. '74
 Carol Glach Cornetta, M.A. '74
 Harold Hoyal, M.A. '74
 Dennis Schmitz, B.A. '75
 Nancy Anderson Vargas, B.A. '75
 Wayne Ludlow, Ed.D. '75
 Mary Roberts Arris, M.A. '75
 Shelly Weinberg, M.A. '75
 Catherine Gipson, M.A. '75
 Robert Kimmel, B.A. '76, M.A. '88
 Joani Flower Coyne, B.A. '76
 Pat Moran Parker, B.S. '76
 Kay Chapman Davis, M.A. '76
 Ray Mickelson, M.A. '76
 Jeannette Alexander Wedding, M.A. '76
 Diana Ott Guppy, B.A. '77
 Mike Wine, B.A. '77
 Vickie Smith, B.A. '77
 Rhonda Stinnette Spencer, B.S. '77
 Lou Peca, M.A. '77
 Lucy Wright, M.A. '77
 Carol Pivarunas Wilson, B.A. '78
 Jule Temple Carrington, B.A. '78
 John Reed, B.A. '78
 Bob Marshall, B.S. '78
 Ruth Schlager Evans, B.S. '78

Vivian Van Kalkerer Howell, BSN '78
 Jane Waters Carlson, M.A. '78
 Jeannette Bryant Brown, M.A. '78
 Jeffrey Duck, B.S. '79
 Gus Wilgus, M.A. '79
 Bob Easton, M.A. '79

1980s

Jeff Anselmo, B.A. '80
 Nancy Chambon Moulton, B.A. '80
 Barb Allen Wilcox, B.A. '80
 Karen Taylor Miracle, B.S. '80
 Gerald Doty, B.S. '80
 John Monnett, Ed.D. '80
 Phyllis Banks Fulton, M.A. '80
 Robert Gallegos, M.A. '80
 Carl Zinge, M.S. '80
 Eula Wiley Strayer, M.A. '81
 Kelly Gablehouse Calkins, B.A. '82
 Wesley Lawrence, B.S. '82
 William Manzer, D.A. '82
 Sandi Stout, M.A. '82
 Kathy Hoflund Kreps, M.A. '82
 Patricia Day, B.S. '83
 Evelyn Epperson, B.S. '83
 Tom Addicott, D.A. '83
 Tom Flock, B.S. '84
 Cyndi Kehl Winter, B.A. '86, M.A. '88
 Shawn Poole, BAE '86
 Christina Joder, BAE '86, B.S. '01, M.S. '16
 John W. Haefeli, M.A. '86
 Robert Jennings, M.A. '87
 Deanna Holmes, M.A. '87
 Mike Stanislaw, B.S. '89
 Maxine Ehrmann, M.A. '89
 Sandy Rothman, M.A. '89
 Ruth Stampka, M.A. '89

1990s

Jan Kassel, M.A. '90
 John Wolta, B.A. '91
 Janine Pacheco-Reed, B.A. '92
 Alisa Andrew Alfonso, B.A. '93
 Carla Mathiesen Brossman, B.S. '93
 Daniel Rice, B.S. '94
 Roger Lam, M.A. '95
 David Urano, B.S. '96
 Barbara Day, M.A. '96
 Tara Haller, M.A. '97
 CJ Johnson, B.A. '98
 Richard Chilcoat, Ph.D. '98
 Todd Clifford, B.A. '99
 Lois Mount Anders, M.A. '99

2000s

Carol Skinner, MAT, '04
 Sandy Hamilton Drumm, B.A., '05
 Jeff Vandiver, M.A. '05
 Jeannie Lindberg Chapin, B.A. '06
 Patty Aalborg, B.A. '09
 Mack Kithcart, B.A. '09, M.A. '11
 Edward Lopez, B.A. '09
 Laura Mason, MAT '11

2010s

Andrew Koziuk, B.A. '11

2020s

Ian Dunham, B.A. '23

Faculty and Emeritus Faculty

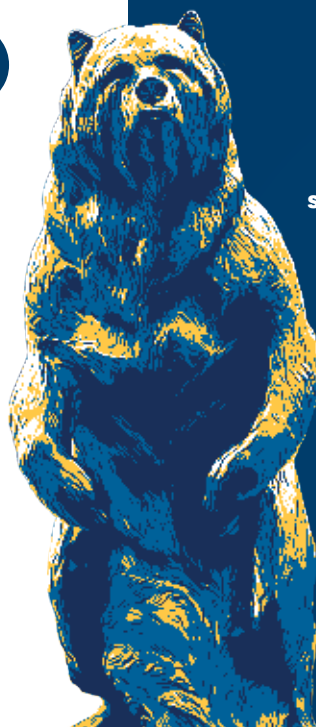
Richard (Dick) Ormrod
 James Schreck
 James Conley
 Rik D'Amato

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A Season for the Record Books: The 2024-25 Northern Colorado Men's Basketball team had one of the most successful finishes in university history, including the program's first-ever National Invitational Tournament bid.

PHOTOS BY LEXIE MARTIN

Last Look

Record-breaking Big Sky champs

The 2024–25 season will go down as one of the most successful in Northern Colorado Men's Basketball history. From claiming a share of the Big Sky Conference regular season title with Montana, finishing as the tournament runner-up and earning the program's first-ever National Invitational Tournament bid—the Bears rewrote the record books and cemented themselves as one of the most efficient, explosive and balanced teams in the country.

On Friday, Aug. 29, the 2024-25 team's Big Sky championship was immortalized in the Bank of Colorado Arena with a banner unveiling.

Led by head coach Steve Smiley, now the winningest coach in UNC's Division I era, Northern Colorado racked up 25 wins last season, the second-most in a single season in program history. Their .714 winning percentage was the ninth-best all-time, and second-best in the DI era. The Bears also matched their all-time best in Big Sky play, finishing with 15 conference wins, the most since joining the league in 2006.

UNC didn't just win games last season, they dominated them, leading the conference in:

- Assists per game – 15.8
- Effective Field Goal Percentage – 58%
- Field Goal Percentage – 50.7%
- Three-Point Percentage – 38%
- Scoring Offense – 80.6 points per game
- Scoring Margin – +7.9
- Defensive Rebounds per game – 26.14
- Winning Percentage – 71.4%



Fans can follow and stay up to date on all the action at uncbears.com and on X (formerly Twitter) (@UNC_BearsMBB), Instagram (@UNC_BearsMBB) and Facebook (/UNCBearsMBB).

Those numbers translated into national prominence, as UNC finished:

- 1st in the nation in FG% (50.7%)
- 4th in EFG% (58%)
- 19th in 3PT% (38%)
- 30th in Scoring Offense
- 46th in Assist/Turnover Ratio (1.43)
- 46th in Scoring Margin (+7.9)
- 48th in Assists per Game
- 49th in Rebound Margin (+4.3)
- 42nd in Winning Percentage (71.4%)

The Bears' dynamic trio of Langston Reynolds, Isaiah Hawthorne and Jaron Rillie, '24 fueled the team's success.

Reynolds led the Big Sky and ranked 20th nationally in field goal percentage (59.3%), Hawthorne ranked fourth in the league in scoring (17.4 ppg) and Rillie finishing first in the Big Sky and 38th nationally in assist/turnover ratio (2.53) and second in the league in total assists (162).

The Bears returned to the court to kick off their 2025-26 season on Monday, Nov. 3.

—Brooke Richards



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BEAMING WITH PRIDE President Andy Feinstein joined faculty, staff, students, donors and friends in signing the final internal beam for UNC's proposed College of Osteopathic Medicine. The Aug. 28 "beam topping ceremony" marked a significant milestone in the construction of the new 100,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art medical college.



Watch Our Progress! This live construction camera shows minute-by-minute progress on the new building: unco.edu/liveview



PHOTO BY WOODY MYERS