

# Eagle Edge

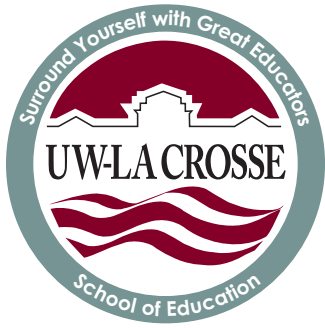
LEAD. EDUCATE. COLLABORATE. INNOVATE.

Building a  
**BETTER**  
tomorrow  
*together*

UWL School of Education  
students volunteer with youth  
programs at local YMCA

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ISSUE 2 | FALL | 2017



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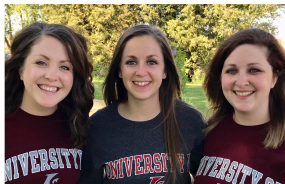
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# Eagle Edge

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**COVER IMAGE:**

A three-credit foundation Educational Studies course is partnering with the local YMCA to give students volunteer opportunities and more hands-on experience with kids.



Visit past issues of the School of Education newsletter

from THE DEAN



Marcie Wycoff-Horn, Ph.D.

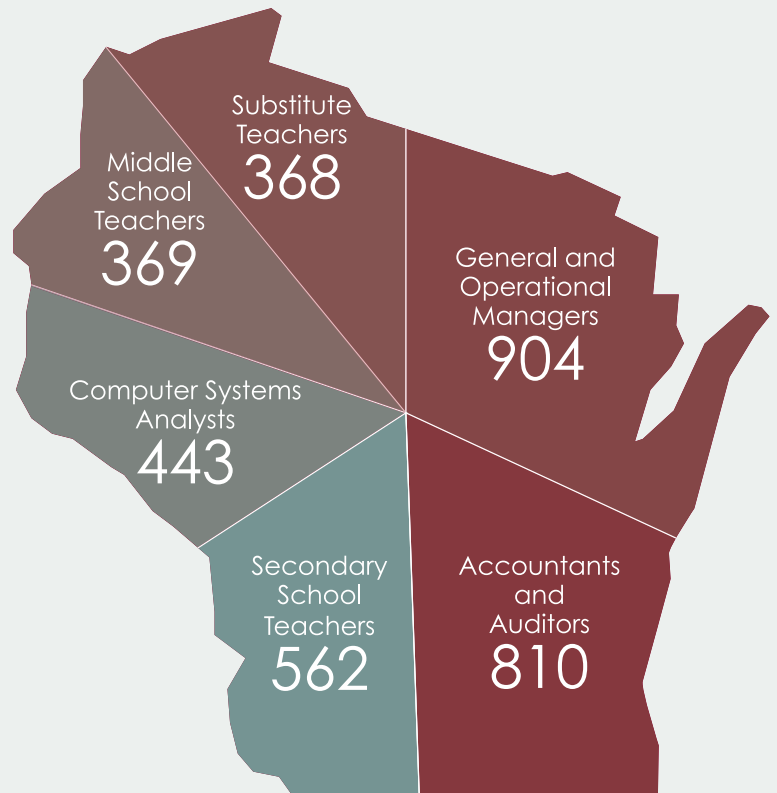
Despite the challenge of teacher shortages we see across the state and nation, the UWL School of Education, Professional and Continuing Education has maintained steady enrollment numbers. With Elementary Education among the top five majors chosen at UWL, we continue to lead the state in preparing educators. We are strongly committed to providing an exceptional education for our students through several hands-on learning opportunities, including a variety of local, urban and even global classroom experiences. In addition to these experiences, our faculty are leading the way in innovative research and pedagogy to ensure our teacher candidates are ready to serve children in Wisconsin and around the world. In this issue, you will learn more about how the UWL School of Education is trying to meet various needs, such as offering new programs such as the Grow Our Own Teacher Diversity program aimed at increasing the number of qualified and culturally diverse educators in our local schools. Furthermore, the Milwaukee Urban Experience launched this summer with the aim to provide teacher candidates with a hands-on learning experience in urban settings. With the generous support of donors and the expertise of our award winning faculty and staff, we are working toward fulfilling the responsibility to serve all learners and help meet the needs of the thousands of students in Wisconsin and beyond.

Marcie Wycoff-Horn, Dean

## Meeting Wisconsin workforce needs

The top six projected annual job openings in Wisconsin requiring bachelor's degrees

Source: UW-System report "UW System Academic Programs and Wisconsin's Workforce Needs." The report used Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development data on the projected average annual job openings due to growth in the economy and the replacement of existing employees for the period 2012 through 2022.



cover STORY

# Building a BETTER tomorrow *together*

UWL School of Education  
students volunteer with  
youth programs at local  
YMCA



## UWL School of Education students are pumping up their community service skills as volunteers for the local YMCA.

Moreover, the students are learning the Y is more than a fitness facility as they help fill the organization's need for passionate role models in youth programs that aim to grow strong communities.

Nearly 100 UWL students in a three-credit, foundational Educational Studies course — EDS 206 — volunteered last spring semester and this fall to work with kids through two La Crosse Area YMCA programs, which provide services to communities throughout the region.

The majority of the UWL students have been volunteering with the Y's School-Age Child Care program that places students at seven different area elementary schools. The other students have been volunteering with the Y's Youth Engagement Program. Through these programs, students engage with, mentor, and build relationships with kids through a variety of activities whether helping them with homework, playing board games, or monitoring them on the playground.

"The School of Education has been very open to bridging additional relationships with us," says Nate Torres, school age administrator for the La Crosse Area Family YMCA. "They recognize the benefit to their students and the impact their students can have on the community through us."

One of the major benefits for students, says Scott Baker, a UWL EDS 206 instructor, is that it allows them to gain more hands-on experience working with kids in the beginning of their teacher education program. That's important for determining whether students are a good fit for the profession, and, if so, deciding the age range they want to work with.

"Students come in with preconceived ideas about what they want to teach. But when they see realities of what it is like, they may change their mind. It helps students get a sense of what is the best fit for them," says Baker. "I always advocate that students get as much hands-on experience as they can. It makes them better candidates when they do apply to that first job."

UWL junior Kyle Kolar knew he wanted to teach high school when he started volunteering for the school-age program

spring semester. So, at the start of the program, he wondered how he would possibly benefit from working with youth — Kindergarten through fifth grade students.

At the end of the semester, Kolar still wanted to work with high school students, but he realized how experience with youth would help him do that.

"I almost think it's better to start working with young kids rather than just jumping right in with high school students," he says. "Young kids don't know the difference between right and wrong yet, and they're not afraid to say anything. This provides you a lot of opportunities to practice using discipline in a calm and collected manner, and explaining why something is wrong."

Kolar says the experience gave him ideas for new teaching strategies, as well as the opportunity to work with a diverse group of students including two children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. "Through my experiences with them, I now have a better understanding of their disability and know more effective ways to work with them," he says.

### Y BENEFITS TOO

For the Y, the partnership helps create a pipeline for students to become employed as school-age program leaders at the Y. The YMCA's school-age program runs licensed childcare for children throughout the region. They need qualified staff with experience working with kids, says Torres. UWL students are perfect candidates for these positions as they often have already taken some foundation educational courses and are passionate about working with kids. If the experience has been positive for all involved, volunteers are encouraged to continue their work with the YMCA by applying for employment as a School Age Program lead.

"Even if they don't stay on as employees, they gain experience in the class, and we have volunteers who are knowledgeable and passionate about kids who can be role models and build relationships, and that is really awesome for us," says Torres.

This is the first time the class has partnered with the Y. Baker says the Y is a good fit because many of the volunteer positions are within close walking distance, and the variety of programs at different schools that offer students flexibility.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN CLASS

Students are required to take 10-15 hours of community engagement as part of EDS 206, a class in the Educational Studies Department.

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A three-credit foundation Educational Studies course is partnering with the local YMCA to give students volunteer opportunities and more hands-on experience with kids.



# A career and a craft

*Popular professor, life-long learner honored through education scholarship*

David Witmer helped evolve UW-La Crosse into what it is today. As assistant chancellor from 1972-90, he provided leadership in planning, budgeting and establishing new academic programs. He helped secure approval for campus buildings, including the Center for the Arts and what is now Wimberly Hall.

But what Doris Witmer remembers most about her husband's time at UWL isn't related to program development or facility planning. She pulls a framed column off the wall of her La Crosse home. Originally printed in the Racquet student newspaper and written by a former graduate student of David's, it describes him as having "an absolute passion for his

craft in teaching." It goes on to thank David for being the type of professor who shares his love for his subject area.

Lee Goodhart, a retired professor of teacher education, had the office next door to David's in Morris Hall when they both taught education courses. Goodhart describes David as "a quiet guy with a wry sense of humor" who was not only popular among students. Many faculty went to him for his thoughtful advice and admired the way he engaged students in topics.

Goodhart and other education faculty would sometimes go to David's classroom just to watch him kick off a class.

ABOVE PHOTO: At UWL, David Witmer oversaw planning, budgeting, and faculty personnel as assistant chancellor from 1972-1990. He was also a passionate instructor for teacher preparation courses at the undergraduate and graduate level. A scholarship in his name will support education majors. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library, Special Collections, UWL.

He was known for starting in a dramatic way — with some outrageous statistic or unbelievable fact, says Goodhart.

“It was enjoyable to watch,” he says. “His student ratings were always exceptionally good.”

Not only was he a gifted teacher, David was a life-long learner, says Doris. She recalls the many evenings when he’d go to his upstairs room where papers were spread across the floor to do research and other work well into the evening.

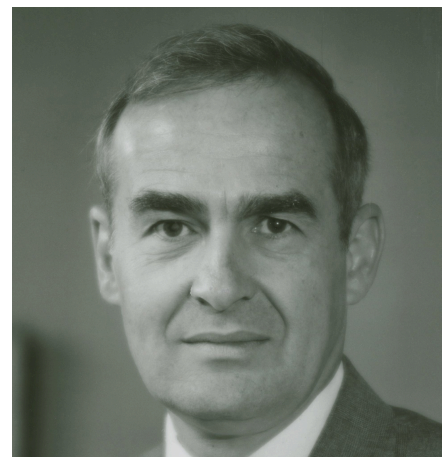
David grew ill with pancreatic cancer in the spring of 1998. Some students who knew of his diagnosis placed his name on top of their mortarboards at spring commencement. He died that August at age 65.

Doris says starting a scholarship that honors her husband and supports education majors just made sense. Not only because David was an educator who deeply connected with and motivated students, but also because he spent his lifetime giving to others.

David was raised in a parsonage and his parents taught him to be generous, says Doris. Throughout his working career, he always gave money to different causes whether it was the church or the local hospital. At one point Doris shared her concerns with David that he was giving away more money than was coming in.

“He said, ‘what do you want that you don’t have?,’” recalls Doris. “I thought about it. There was nothing. That was the end of that. I became a cheerful giver from that point on.”

Doris says her husband would be very pleased to learn she decided to direct her giving toward UWL. “He’d wonder why I didn’t do it sooner,” she says.



David Witmer was a UWL administrator who also changed lives as an educator. As professor of Foundations of Education Policy and Practice, he taught the philosophical, historical, sociological, economic, cooperative and governmental bases of schooling in the School of Education. *Photo courtesy of Murphy Library, Special Collections, UWL.*



Doris Witmer, of La Crosse, started the David R. Witmer Endowed Scholarship in Education in honor of her husband. It provides scholarships to UWL education majors. All three of the Witmers’ children graduated from UWL: Mark ‘79 and Jeffrey, ‘79, and Laura. ‘85, Jeffrey contributed \$8,000 to the fund. The first scholarship was awarded in April 2016.

## A UW SYSTEM START

Prior to UWL, David Witmer served as a program coordinator in the Academic Affairs office of the central administration of the UW System. He brought to campus experience as an administrative officer, systems and procedure analyst, teacher and military police officer. He had also served as a staff and legislative lobbyist for the Board of Regents (1964-1972). Under Gov. Warren Knowles and Gov. Patrick Lucey, he served on the staff of the Kellett Commission, successfully urging the creation of the University of Wisconsin System.



# MILWAUKEE *urban* EXPERIENCE

Students in intensive summer program grow as educators, build bonds with Milwaukee children

## *Students thank donors who make MUE possible:*

“I would not have been able to participate in the MUE program if it wasn’t for the donors. The donors took off the stress of finances and allowed me to stay present with teaching in an urban setting. I am forever thankful that I was able to complete such an amazing experience, and I wouldn’t have been able to do it if it was not for the generous donors.” –

— UWL student Rebecca Neidinger

“Their money went toward an educational experience that was unique, challenging, and I think essential to the type of teacher I am working to become. If donors wanted their donation to help future teachers become educators confident in their philosophies, then they have achieved that.”

— UWL student Nate Edwards



One of the major concerns in Milwaukee is the future of its schools. In a city that faces education struggles including the widest graduation-rate gap between black and white students in the country according to 2014-15 federal data, there is a need for quality teachers.

Through a new partnership that started this summer, UWL is working to change that Milwaukee school trend. It's also giving UWL teacher education students hands-on experience working with diverse children that they'll need regardless of whether they choose to work a big city or not.

A cohort of UWL students participated in an intensive field experience alongside UWL faculty in urban schools in Milwaukee, May 23-July 27. The Milwaukee Urban Experience program is a new partnership between UWL and the Center for Urban Teaching.

UWL students Nate Edwards and Rebecca Neidinger call the six-week program challenging yet rewarding.

"The MUE was definitely difficult," says Edwards. "Every member of the Milwaukee Urban Experience cohort now has stories of struggle to tell, but we also know that students can learn the most while struggling."

Edwards says at one point he was teaching in a school just steps from his childhood home, yet he was able to see the neighborhood in a new light — from an educator's perspective.

Neidinger, who grew up attending small, rural schools, says it was challenging to learn to adapt teaching in a new environment. The cohort of students

came back to their apartments at the end of the day tired and hungry, she says. Yet students found comfort in the fact that they were all in it together. Neidinger and Edwards says they are grateful for the amazing connections they made not only with UWL students and faculty in the program, but with diverse kids in the urban classrooms.

"Being a teacher is really about person-to-person interaction — maybe with people who are different from you," says Jon Boche, director of staff recruitment and development at St. Marcus Lutheran School in Milwaukee. "Someone at La Crosse realized that and said this is what students need. I don't think many universities say that to their students."

Students were able to come together after the school day in an apartment-style residence halls to connect and share ideas related to their classrooms, says Alyssa Boardman, UWL assistant professor of Educational Studies.

"If I were to go back to when I was receiving my teacher training, and I knew this was an option and I knew the benefits I would get from it, I would sign up for it in a heartbeat," she says.

### HOME VISITS

In addition to working in classrooms, students also participated in home visits to gain a greater understanding of where

some of the children in their classrooms were living and the potential challenges they face.

"It was eye-opening as to where some of the students come from, and allowed me to fully see why it is important to get to know the students in my classroom and create lasting connections," says Neidinger.

### UWL STUDENT NICOLE STOCK AGREES

"It is one thing to hear about it, but it's one thing to see it in their situations. It shows me how hard it is to get out of that situation as well," she says. "It inspired me more because I think one of the ways to help with that whole cycle ... is education.

Students say The Milwaukee Urban Experience taught them about their philosophy of education. And Stock and Neidinger call the program the most rewarding experience of their lives.

"I've learned that I truly have a passion to teach the future generations, and that I know and I want to wake up every morning to see the smiling faces of my kiddos in the classroom," says Neidinger. "I have learned that teaching is not easy and that I will be put in uncomfortable situations throughout my career, but it is these situations in which I will grow the most as an educator."

OPPOSITE PAGE PHOTO: MUE participant interacts with a St. Marcus student during her field experience at the school over the summer.

# TEACHERS TOGETHER

Alumni sisters see challenges, rewards in the profession

Growing up, the Ariss sisters' unfinished basement became a make-believe classroom. The cement walls were the black board. Old desks from a nearby church were recovered, and school workbooks with blank pages at the back were reopened.

Lindsey Ariss recalls waiting patiently for her turn to be the teacher and tell her two older sisters what to do.

Today, the three sisters don't have to take turns. They're all teaching or entering the profession. Lindsey will graduate from UWL in December 2017 with degrees in education and Spanish. Her sisters, UWL alums Jaimie Andrews and Courtney Carlson, earned degrees in education in 2012 and 2015, respectively. Andrews is now a special education teacher at Cashton Elementary School while Carlson teaches special education in the Prairie du Chien School District.

## FINDING EDUCATION

It would appear that each sister followed the other into education, but in fact, they all followed their desire to work with kids. As teens, they were the babysitters next door and the swim lesson instructors at the local pool. And when they went away to college at UW-La Crosse, they all decided to continue on that path in teaching careers — even as teachers landed at the center of a major political battle in the state.

The oldest sister, Andrews, says she encouraged her younger sister Lindsey to think hard about whether going into education was the right choice when she was starting college in fall 2013.

photo by Megan McCluskey

“The state of education in our state was uneasy and challenging,” says Andrews. “I encouraged her to think about that and realize the challenges she might face, especially at the start of her career.”

Lindsey decided to pursue education anyway. She recognized the job is much more complex and nuanced than the sisters' childhood scenarios of writing names and lessons on the board. Beyond politics, teachers are working with real people every day. Kids bring to school, not just a brain for working through lessons, but an entire self filled with diverse and complex emotions, says Lindsey.

But that aspect is what Lindsey finds most rewarding.

“One of the biggest things I've learned is when kids are upset or are acting out, they will all react differently. Some kids will say they need time by themselves — and they actually do — while others say that but don't mean that,” she says. “You see that all kids are different, and it's important to build relationships with them so they open up to you and feel safe and comfortable talking to you about anything.”

Andrews finds a similar sense of fulfillment by helping kids socially and emotionally. She is drawn to kids who need more support. “That's why I think I went into special ed,” she says.

## FINDING UWL

Carlson recalls the family taking day trips to La Crosse growing up. They'd drive by UWL and their father, Jim, would point to the campus and say, “That's where I went to school.”

“I have always looked up to my dad and thought that was so cool,” says Courtney.

When she approached high school graduation, UWL was the only place Carlson applied. Coming from the small Wisconsin city of Prairie du Chien, UWL had a similar small community feel, she says.



The sisters, from left, Jaimie Andrews, Lindsey Ariss and Courtney Carlson grew up playing school together. They all attended UWL and are now in or entering teaching careers. Although it may appear they followed each other into education, they, in fact, all followed their desire to work with kids. The girls' parents are Jim and Sherry Ariss. Jim attended UWL for two years.

“I feel I had an actual relationship with the professors,” says Carlson. “They knew me and they knew about things in my life.”

Lindsey says professors frequently meet with her — even outside of office hours. Many offer their cell phones as the best way to reach them.

“I’m amazed how selfless they are,” she says. “You know their students are their primary focus.”

In that way, they’re similar to the Ariss sisters. The three still frequently get together today and the topic of education always comes up. They share what they’ve learned from their own classrooms and find support.

Andrews says the fact that Lindsey pursued education, despite challenges the profession faces, shows that she is the type of teacher dedicated to kids that the future needs.

“I’m excited to see what she does,” says Andrews.

### A WIDE CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Lindsey realized an even wider circle of support beyond her older sisters in spring 2016 when she received the Ruth A. Nixon-Davy scholarship for Spanish majors. Davy, who died in 2014, was also a teacher — both of high school Spanish and later at UWL. She chaired UWL’s Foreign Language Department and brought new opportunities and program exchanges to students.

When she retired in 1984, her students started a UWL scholarship in her name.

“It makes you realize that there are people out there who believe in something as much as you do — whether that’s education or Spanish education,” says Lindsey.

# Grow Our Own

*Program makes earning a teaching degree more attainable, aims to increase teacher diversity*

Kazoua Yang is a teaching assistant in the La Crosse School District. She has wanted to be a teacher since the second grade. The Grow Our Own Teacher Diversity Program in partnership with the district is helping her become one with the financial support and flexibility she needs.



Kazoua Yang's dream to become an educator started when she met her second grade teacher. The fun-loving, light-hearted woman invented silly songs to teach lessons. She went above and beyond to meet students' needs, and had a way of making everyone feel like they belonged — even Yang who hadn't felt that way before in class.

Yang came to the U.S. from Thailand at age two with her parents, refugees from the Vietnam War. Both didn't speak English, and Yang would need to learn the new language through a special program at school. She recalls the difficulty adapting to a new culture, struggles learning English, and always feeling behind peers.

But in second grade Yang had someone who helped her connect in the classroom and made learning easier — her Elementary Teacher, Ms. Terry Visger.

"She never made me feel like I was different," recalls Yang. "And she always expressed her appreciation for our culture."

Yang realized in second grade the power of a good teacher. That's the moment she knew she wanted to become one too. Yang earned a degree to become a teaching assistant (TA) at Western Technical College with the intention of continuing on to earn a bachelor's degree in teaching eventually.

But life got in the way. She started a family and needed a full-time job to help her husband pay the bills. She became an assistant director of a daycare and manager of a floral shop before starting to work as a TA for the La Crosse School District. But with pressing financial obligations and a family at home, Yang never returned to earn her education degree.

That is, until she found the support to help her do it. A few years ago, Yang heard about a program that would offer diverse teachers in the area the flexibility and financial support to complete education degrees — a partnership between UWL and the La Crosse Area School District that aimed to grow teacher diversity. Yang is now in her second year of the Grow Our Own Teacher Diversity (GOO-TD) program. She is excited to potentially begin her field experience as soon as next semester. Her teaching career could begin in a little over a year.

"It feels really good," says Yang. "It is really, really hard work. Late nights, early mornings, not a lot of sleep and having to

give up family time. But I keep telling myself, once this is done, I will be in a better position, and I'll be able to move on to my other goals."

In addition to being a teacher, Yang looks forward to no longer living paycheck to paycheck and moving from renting to owning a home.

She would "absolutely" encourage others to join the GOO-TD program — particularly if they have the same kind of dreams she has. She found support from faculty in the program and staff at her school. They've given her the flexibility with her schedule and credits to achieve her education dream, as well as academic and financial support.

"It's a win-win if this is something someone really wants," she says, adding that, "I don't want people to come into the program with the thought that it will all be perfect. If you want to join this program, you need to be flexible, too."

While giving students new opportunities to reach goals, the program also fills larger societal goals of increasing teacher diversity. Yang sees this program as a way to fill that important need.

"As a teacher of color, I see how students of color can relate to me — especially the Hmong students," she says. "Their teacher says they never talk in class, but they talk to me in Hmong and they feel comfortable with me."

It reminds her of her own experience in second grade. As an incoming teacher, she looks forward to reaching students when others can't — just like Ms. Visger.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The purpose of the Grow Our Own Teacher Diversity program (GOO-TD) is to partner with local school districts to increase the number of qualified and culturally diverse educators in community PK-12 classrooms. Currently, EPC is partnering with the La Crosse School District to recruit employees, such as non-certified teacher assistants, into the GOO-TD program to earn their bachelor's degrees in education, tuition free. The program not only has an impact on the EPC students enrolled, but also on the students in the PK-12 classroom who will learn from teachers of color as they bring their diverse backgrounds and experiences. The program has been supported in part with funding from the La Crosse Public Education Foundation and the La Crosse Community Foundation.

# OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS

*Alums honored with Burt and Norma Altman Teacher Education Award during Sept. 23 ceremony*

Chris Gleason, '02; Lisa Koenecke, '91; and Wayne Welch, '56, were among six UWL alumni honored for distinguished service and successful careers during an Awards Brunch and Ceremony Sept. 23 at UWL.

Gleason, Koenecke and Welch received the Burt and

Norma Altman Teacher Education Award, which honors and recognizes outstanding educators and the significant contributions they make to children and communities. Professor Emeritus Burt Altman and his wife, Norma, long-time supporters of teacher education, created the award in 2015.



## THE CHRISTOPHER GLEASON FILE

- Instrumental Music Teacher, Patrick Marsh Middle School, Sun Prairie, since 2004. La Crosse Logan Middle School, 1999-2004; East Troy Middle School 1997-1999
- Founder, Kalahari Band Festival
- Semi-finalist for the 2017 Grammy Music Educator Award; Wisconsin representative for National Teacher of the Year Award; Michael G. George Distinguished Service Award; Kohl Teacher Fellowship; Melvin F. Pontious Sparks in Music Education Award
- Masters of Education in Professional Development from UWL, May 2002



## THE LISA KOENECKE FILE

- Passionate advocate for youth and school counseling
- Counselor at River Bluff Middle School, Stoughton
- Past president of the Wisconsin School Counselor Association
- Board of Directors, American School Counselor Association
- Wisconsin Gay Straight Alliance of Safe Schools Educator of the Year, 2013
- Kohl Fellowship Award, 2016
- Master's in school counseling from UW-Whitewater, 2008
- Bachelor's in psychology from UWL, 1991



## THE WAYNE WELSH FILE

- Distinguished, long-time educator, researcher and author in science education.
- Professor at University of Minnesota, 1974-95. Currently, professor emeritus.
- Served as an educational and evaluation consultant for numerous international and national projects.
- Fulbright Research Scholar to New Zealand; Fulbright-Hays Lecturer to Israel.
- Master's in education from University of Pennsylvania, 1960; master's in physics from Purdue University, 1963; doctorate in science education from UW-Madison, 1966.
- Bachelor's in secondary education from UWL, 1956

## Penny Kroening, '85

- Earned a bachelor's in physical education teaching.
- Received a Masters in Education from Carroll University, 1992.
- Taught physical education at Summit View Elementary School, Waukesha, Wisconsin, for 32 years.
- Coordinated Wisconsin State Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops for Heart.
- Served as vice president and active member of the Board of Wisconsin Health and Physical Education.
- Presents at national conferences on topics of engaging students, personalized student learning, and technology as a tool for assessment.
- Encourages students to imagine, move and develop a lifelong love of physical activity.

.....

### What do you like most about being a physical education teacher?

I love that I have an ability to come to work and be with students who are filled with excitement to move and a joy for learning. My personal and professional challenge is to take that enthusiasm and facilitate learning while maintaining that excitement. I go to work to teach kids how to play, and then how to take that joyfulness home and make it part of their home life too.

### In what ways do you link your UWL education to your success?

I'm very proud to be a UWL graduate. When I started teaching, I was set up for success because I had professors who had challenged me. Every time I come into a new unit, I'm thinking about how can I make it better and do it differently to engage more students. Many other UWL graduates are working to move the physical education profession forward in Wisconsin as leaders of the state association of Wisconsin Health and Physical Education. When I look around the room [at WHPE board meetings] and see how many are graduates of UWL, it's like, "yes! Something good is going on there."



Penny Kroening, '85, was 2016 National Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year.



### NOTEWORTHY RECOGNITION:

- 2016 National Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year from SHAPE America, the national society of health and physical educators
- Wisconsin Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year
- Midwest District Teacher of the Year
- 2014 Wisconsin Jump Rope For Heart/Hoops for Heart Educator of the Year

# Rita Chen recognized with UWL teaching award

Rita Chen, Educational Studies, was among six UWL faculty members recognized for excellence in teaching. The Provost Office received approximately 800 teacher nominations from UWL students. A UWL committee selected the winners of the 2017 Eagle Teaching Excellence Award.

## Rita Chen, Ph.D.

Associate professor, Department of Educational Studies

**Years at UWL:** Eight

**Teaches:** I teach literacy courses and supervise teacher candidates in public schools. I teach four major courses: Foundations of Literacy; Teaching Language and Literacy; Field Experience One; and Teaching for Social Justice through Service Learning. I run the Eagle Bluff Professional Development School site where K-5 public school teachers work with me to prepare pre-service teachers to learn to teach and assess students' literacy skills.

**History:** I was an elementary school teacher for more than six years, teaching English language learners in Taiwan. I also taught immigrant children and adults in Bloomington, Indiana. I earned my doctoral degree in Language and Literacy Education from Indiana University-Bloomington.

**Favorite part of teaching:** The best part of my job is to work with a group of students who want to be teachers, are not daunted by responsibility and challenges weighing upon their shoulders, and cannot wait to experience the energy of teaching children in schools! My students make every day in the classroom unique, hilarious and meaningful for us all. Just thinking about all the wonderful teachers who have graduated from UWL makes me proud of my job!

*“Rita Chen is the definition of excellent. She has made this semester my favorite one at UWL. Her passion for what she does makes a huge difference in the lives’ of her students. She goes out of her way to help, encourage, and prepare her students for their future endeavors of teaching!”*

— UWL student Jennifer Michalke

