

EAGLEEDGE

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'We live in LaCrosse'

Digital storytelling project
amplifies diverse voices



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On the Cover

Students, community members developed skills and shared stories through a digital storytelling project led by Professor of Educational Studies Heather Linville.



In this issue of The Eagle Edge, you will learn how faculty, staff, community partners, and alumni are making a difference through telling their story. Throughout the newsletter, you will read about alumni and faculty who are sharing their stories and talents close to home, on the West coast, and across the globe. Stories that include how UWL has directly or indirectly shaped who they are and their work that impacts so many today.

Discover how two faculty members used their recent sabbaticals to promote a sense of belonging both here and abroad. The first, Dr. Heather Linville, focused on how storytelling impacts individuals in our backyard by leading a project about living in La Crosse and multilingualism, highlighting the importance of sharing one's unique and meaningful life experience. The second faculty member, Dr. Lema Kabashi, spent a year in Kosovo working alongside early childhood special education teachers guiding them in early identification and intervention strategies to support all students, with the hope that their sense of belonging is increased.

Our focus in the School of Education continues to be on diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, at the heart of the matter sits belonging. Strong educator preparation programs must be grounded in this work. Educators can help foster a sense of belonging by being courageous like many individuals demonstrate in this newsletter. As Ken Williams (author of Ruthless Equity) states, we need to embrace “a commitment to courage over comfort,” and it requires educators to come every day with the belief that “students need passionate advocates and high expectations with support, great teaching, empathy, and rigor.” Strategic connections with campus, community, and school partners will help us as we stay focused on our School's mission to have a profound respect for the dignity of all learners, and competencies that enable them to be effective educators as they create classrooms where PK-12 students feel a sense of belonging.

You belong here,

Marcie Wycoff-Horn

Marcie Wycoff-Horn
Dean



Christine Hippert, professor of archaeology and anthropology at UWL, is spearheading a new mentorship program for School of Education faculty. The program is designed to help faculty get acclimated to the community while succeeding and advancing in their careers.

MEANINGFUL

FACULTY MENTORING PROGRAM BOOSTS NEW SOE FACULTY, STUDENTS

MENTORING

When Christine Hippert accepted a faculty position at UW-La Crosse, she had some learning of her own to do.

Hippert, who was raised in Massachusetts, noticed that many UWL students were not as outspoken as the ones she had encountered out East. Eventually, after speaking with her colleagues, Hippert developed strategies to make students more comfortable and get them to open up.

Now in her 16th year at UWL, Hippert is returning the favor by spearheading a faculty mentorship program designed to acclimate School of Education (SOE) faculty members on campus and in the community.

“Faculty at UWL are from all over the United States and all over the world,” says Hippert, a professor of archaeology and anthropology. “This means that they infrequently have a social network that they can count on to help them acclimate to La Crosse, our students and our campus.

To successfully teach, faculty have to learn the written and unwritten rules of La Crosse, a process that takes time by connecting and talking to others.”

The program, specific to the SOE, kicked off during the 2021-22 academic year and included eight workshops on various issues related to faculty development, mentorship and career progression.

Faculty who participated left with personalized guidance on the promotion and tenure process, allowing them to work toward the ranks of associate and full professor.

Based on feedback from a faculty survey, Hippert developed two new mentoring initiatives for the 2022-23 academic year.

First, new faculty hires will be paired with senior faculty members in the Department of Educational Studies.

Second, SOE faculty with two to six years of experience at UWL will be paired

with former members of the Joint Promotion Committee, the group responsible for evaluating promotion files.

Supporting new faculty in the promotion process is particularly important in the wake of COVID-19, which limited social connections between new and senior faculty.

This also made it difficult to teach, as new faculty were expected to teach online without having any firsthand experience with the student body.

“The vision and support behind our mentoring program are about investing in the SOE faculty, staff and students,” Dean Marcie Wycoff-Horn says. “Through mentoring programs like this one, research results indicate an improvement in confidence, career satisfaction, growth without fear of judgment and ultimately success for faculty, staff and students. By offering support through mentoring, everyone benefits.”



UW-La Crosse Professor of Educational Studies Heather Linville helps local middle school student Julia Bacalso on her digital storytelling project. Through the “We live in La Crosse: Stories of belonging” project, Linville hopes to amplify diverse voices in the La Crosse community.

Building skills and stories

An award-winning logroller who started at 6 years old.

A school district employee supporting coffee bean farmers in his native Guatemala.

These are the types of stories featured in “We live in La Crosse: Stories of belonging” — a digital storytelling project led by UW-La Crosse Professor of Educational Studies Heather Linville.

“As someone who has made La Crosse her home, I’ve been thinking about how to amplify people whose voices are often hidden,” Linville explains. “Our goal is to work with them — people who are multilingual or come from diverse backgrounds — and give them the tools to share their story.”

One week in mid-July, Linville and digital storyteller Polina Vinogradova hosted 15 local students and community members in a computer lab at Lincoln Middle School in La Crosse.

Linville and Vinogradova showed the class examples of digital storytelling, exploring themes of home, belonging and multilingualism.

Students also learned about digital storytelling software and techniques, such as how to blend photos and audio clips into a cohesive narrative.

Some of the stories were featured during a public exhibition Sept. 16 at the Pump House Regional Arts Center in La Crosse.

“When we started the project, they had no idea what their story would be or where it was going to go,” Linville says. “It’s been fun to see them respond to the project and really get engaged.”

With guidance from Linville and Vinogradova, the students developed unique and colorful stories based on their life experiences.

Julia Bacalso, a student at Longfellow Middle School, created a story about her love for Korean pop music.

Victoria Stojalowsky, a student at Logan Middle School, focused on her favorite sports: volleyball, softball, basketball and others.

And Aini Anderson, a student at Holmen Middle School, shared her passion for logrolling, a sport she picked up at 6 years old after her father saw an article in the newspaper.

“I tell the story of when I was a beginner up to today, and how much I’ve gone uphill and gotten better,” Aini says. “Logrolling is fun, but it’s a lot harder than it looks. My friend tried it out and could barely stay on.”

Aini, proud yet humble, says she kept her footing for more than an hour once.

Crafting these memories into a story — and watching others do the same — was educational and rewarding, Aini says.

“It’s a lot of people doing a lot of different things. Everyone set their mind on something different,” she explains. “I’m really glad I did this. It was really interesting.”

Edgar Rodriguez, a teaching assistant interpreter for the School District of La Crosse, took the opportunity to support a cause near to his heart.

Rodriguez remains close to many people in his native Guatemala, including coffee farmers who are struggling



Aini Anderson, a student at Holmen Middle School, created a story about her passion for logrolling — a sport she picked up at 6.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



“I have an opportunity to express myself and share my story with a wider audience”

Edgar Rodriguez

due to economic conditions and a hurricane that devastated the country in 2020.

To support them, he sells their coffee beans in the La Crosse area, where profits are much greater. He also runs an Airbnb offering guests workshops on coffee history, coffee roasting and coffee tasting.

He calls these efforts Coffee for Hope, the basis of his story.

“I want to help the community and improve the lives of these coffee farmers and their families,” he explains. “When I started the digital storytelling workshop, I didn’t know much about it. Now, I have an opportunity to express myself and share my story with a wider audience.”

Best of all, Linville notes, these storytelling projects are not self-contained.

The skills developed through the workshop can be applied in many ways, far into the future.

“We want everyone to leave with these skills and these tools,” Linville says. “A story can be more than just words.”

ABOUT THE PROJECT

“We live in La Crosse: Stories of belonging” was made possible by a grant from Wisconsin Humanities, with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and its A More Perfect Union initiative. It is part of Linville’s sabbatical research.

Edgar Rodriguez, a teaching assistant interpreter for the School District of La Crosse, discussed his efforts to help support coffee farmers in his native Guatemala.

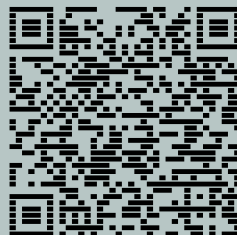


WE LIVE IN LA CROSSE

STORIES OF BELONGING

seeks to raise awareness of linguistic diversity,
increase the sense of belonging among multilingual
individuals, and create opportunities for
connection and community-building across
linguistic divides.

Find the stories here.



Transformational educator

Vance used personal relationship with award's founder to find success



Mary Lee Vance remembers her first day as Professor Burt Altman graduate assistant.

Nervous about returning to her alma mater for a master's program after a negative experience in a different program, Vance was intimidated when she was assigned to work for the well-known teacher education professor.

After an initial hiccup because Vance didn't have a bachelor's degree in education, she was determined to be the best assistant he had ever had.

She succeeded. In September, Vance received the university's top alumni educator award named for Altman: the Burt and Norma Altman Teacher Education Alumni Award.

Vance, '79 & '83 had plenty of opportunities to learn under Altman. As part of her grad assistantship duties, she would teach sections of his human relations classes. Even though she was an introvert, Vance grew to develop the comfort and skills necessary to teach and present, with guidance from Altman — tools she would use throughout her career.

Altman mentored Vance out of the classroom, too, providing social networking tips. Vance recalls being invited to his house for a cocktail party and initially not wanting to attend. Eventually agreeing to do so, she expanded her comfort zone.

Altman and his wife, Norma, eased her jitters. Teacher Education Professor Kent Koppelman and his wife, Jan, also made Vance feel at ease in social situations where Vance developed additional vital networking skills.

"All four made a deep impression on me and were highly instrumental in my ability to be as successful as I have been in my higher education career," Vance says. "Were it not for the support they provided me, their belief in my abilities, their reinforcement and their friendships I might never have completed my graduate program."

Over the years, Vance's passion for removing educational barriers for people of color and individuals with disabilities has grown and continues to inspire others.


"Few individuals have put more time and energy into figuring out how to remove the barriers set before these individuals," says Paul Grossman, retired chief civil rights attorney with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights in San Francisco.

Vance is also known for her efforts supporting international adoption.

"Mary Lee has been an inspiration to adoptees over the years and is a respected and influential leader in the adoptee community, as well as the broader Korean community, both nationally and internationally," says Holt International Vice President Susan Soonkeum Cox.

Mary Lee Vance (left), '79 & '83, is the recipient of the 2022 Burt and Norma Altman Teacher Education Award. The award is particularly meaningful because Burt was one of her mentors during her time at UWL.





“You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it.”

Grace Lee Boggs, author and social activist

ONBELONGING

UWL's Michelle Sylvester shares ways to build a better culture



Michelle Sylvester, senior equity advisor and recruiter

Diversity, equity and inclusion have become the key drivers in many organizations intent on racial transformation. But what about belonging?

At the heart of diversity, equity and inclusion sits belonging, described in an infographic produced by Trent University as: “An environment that engages the full potential of the individual, where innovation thrives, and views, beliefs and values are integrated.”

Professor Marina Morgenshtern at Trent Durham’s campus suggests the following to create a welcoming space for diversity:

- Students need to feel recognized
- Students need to be validated and engaged by faculty, administration and staff
- Being valued, cared for and accepted by fellow students is crucial
- The entire community — administration, faculty, student services and students — should proactively engage in creating the institutional ethos of belonging, inclusion, diversity and equity.

Belonging is considered an integral part of one’s identity. It is layered and nuanced and cannot be entirely defined through an academic lens.

Personally, I have experienced belonging as an emotional sense of acceptance. When partnered with race, alienation can become part of the challenge (or struggle) to one’s sense of belonging. It can ultimately lead to assimilation in order to belong.

Having been a teacher of color for many years in predominantly white institutions in South Africa, I witnessed, as a teacher, the need to belong, the need to feel part of a community. I felt this not only as a teacher but could sense it in the hearts and minds of my students of color.

Key to educator development is how we as educators create a culture of belonging in our classrooms. The creation of belonging in my experience must be intentional without being discernible. At the door of my room and in visible parts of the school, I had a poster to remind me and every child that they have a space, a place and a voice in that room. Composed by professor and researcher Brené Brown, it read: “Be Here, Be You, Belong.”

Teachers play a pivotal role in creating the reality of belonging.

I close with the following quote by consultant and speaker Victoria Farris:

“We don’t create a culture of belonging and inclusion because we talk about it or because we wish to, we create a culture of belonging and inclusion when we learn to regulate ourselves, to unpack our bias and judgment, and become consciously aware of the subconscious patterns that we hold and the harm that they inflict. We cultivate belonging when we practice radical self-accountability, self-compassion, and deep commitment.”

As a School of Education, this is our challenge as we continue to have the difficult and courageous conversations, critically examine our own pedagogy and incorporate a culture of belonging into our practice.

Educational expedition

Ally Hetto to teach English as a Second Language in South Africa

Ally Hetto has taught English as a Second Language virtually to students all over the world.

Soon, she'll have the chance to work with students face to face, thanks to a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship that will send her to South Africa for most of 2023.

"I am hoping to improve my intercultural skills and learn more about the best practices for teaching English to speakers of other languages and how to effectively implement them in the classroom," says Hetto, '21, who majored in Spanish and Education at UW-La Crosse. "This is not my first time traveling overseas, but it will be the longest time I've spent abroad at one time."

Hetto is awaiting specifics of her assignment, but she knows she'll be teaching English to students in South Africa for approximately nine months beginning next year.

In preparation, she has been learning Zulu — one of South Africa's 11 official languages.

She will also bring a wealth of experience traveling the world and teaching English as a Second Language.

Hetto recently spent six months in Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia while simultaneously teaching English online.

This allowed her to build on her lifelong appreciation for the Spanish language and Latin American cultures — something she hopes to share with students in South Africa.

"I have been studying Spanish culture and language since middle school, so I am very excited to explore and learn about a new culture and its perspectives," she explains. "I'm looking forward to sharing my knowledge of the U.S. culture and Latin American culture with my students and creating a community in South Africa."

"I loved my time at UWL and am grateful to have such great support and encouragement from my peers and professors,"

Ally Hetto

Fulbright is an international exchange program designed to expand perspectives through academic and professional advancement and cross-cultural dialogue. Its programming includes grants, assistantships, fellowships and other research opportunities in approximately 140 countries.

Hetto chose South Africa because of its linguistic diversity and multiculturalism. When she's not teaching, she hopes to explore as much of the region as she can, including Kruger National Park, Table Mountain in Cape Town and Okavango Delta in Botswana.

Hetto was inspired to apply for an assistantship by current UWL Professor Heather Linville and former UWL Lecturer Melissa Collum, both Fulbright alumni.

She says several UWL staff and faculty assisted her through the application process, even though she had graduated a year before.

"I loved my time at UWL and am grateful to have such great support and encouragement from my peers and professors," she notes. "I'm very lucky that UWL continues to support their alumni!"



Ally Hetto, '21, will teach English as a Second Language to students in South Africa thanks to a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. She hopes the experience will strengthen her intercultural skills and provide insight into best teaching practices.



Kosovo connection

Lema Kabashi explores educational assessments in her native country

Lema Kabashi is helping unlock the potential of teachers and students halfway across the world.

Kabashi, Ph.D., an associate professor of educational studies focusing on special education at UW-La Crosse, returned to her native country of Kosovo for her recent sabbatical. She set out to test the validity, reliability and utility of Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System (AEPS) for Infants and Children, 3rd Edition — a popular tool used to assess the development of children from birth to age six.

The sabbatical, taken during the 2021-22 academic year, was a success personally and professionally, Kabashi says.

“What I cherish the most is the excitement of teachers to learn content that is not theoretical, which is usually the case with pre-service and in-service programs in Kosovo,” she explains. “The practical skills they acquired helped them identify the developmental level of the children they were working with and enabled them to support all children in their classrooms.”

“Initially, (the teachers) thought that many skills in all eight areas of development were too high for Kosovar children”

Lema Kabashi

AEPS-3 seeks to measure children’s development across eight areas: fine motor, gross motor, adaptive, social-emotional, social-communication, cognitive, literacy and math.

Teachers can use these evaluations to set educational targets tailored to each child’s needs and development.

However, Kabashi notes, early childhood professionals are not allowed to use assessment tools that have not been carefully tested for validity, reliability and utility.

Kabashi’s research evaluated AEPS-3 through a field test broken into six studies: content validity, utility, inter-rater reliability, curriculum validity, psychometrics and cutoff score, and concurrent validity.

Four of the six studies are complete, while the other two are either paused or ongoing. (The sixth study, on concurrent validity, is paused because Kosovo does not currently have a norm-referenced assessment that can be used for comparative purposes.)

Although it is not yet finished, Kabashi says the project has already been mutually beneficial.

“Initially, (the teachers) thought that many skills in all eight areas of development were too high for Kosovar children,” Kabashi notes. “However, after the curriculum validity study, they found out that not only children who participated in the study but all other children in their classrooms were able to meet those goals. This means that the results of the field test could change the standards in the early childhood field in Kosovo.”

Kabashi also observed Kosovan teachers’ deep commitment to their students.

“It is unfortunate that schools in Kosovo operate on a low budget and without much support for teachers,” she says. Still, “over 50 teachers who participated in the field test were willing to put in extra hours into learning how to assess children’s development ... and use

these results to improve children’s skills and overall development.”

The trip was also a homecoming for Kabashi, who grew up in Kosovo and earned her bachelor’s degree at the University of Pristina in the nation’s capital.

Kosovo has undergone many positive changes since Kabashi lived there — most notably its independence from Serbia, declared in 2008.

“As a country undergoing a transition, it is expected that there are struggles of different nature in all aspects of life, including education,” she explains. “However, the willingness to make improvements is seen everywhere. For example, in the area of special education, we see more children with exceptionalities included in inclusive classrooms. In early childhood education, we see programs embracing approaches such as Montessori and Reggio Emilio. Also, many pre-service programs emphasize the need for special education.

“However, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in the area of early identification and early intervention as well as special education.”

The need for early identification and intervention in Kosovo has only recently received attention, including through Kabashi’s research.

Once the project is complete, Kabashi plans to discuss the results with her colleagues and students at UWL. She is already planning research papers and presentations, and she is scheduled to speak at two international conferences this fall.

The ultimate goal, Kabashi says, is for the Albanian version of AEPS-3 to be the first criterion-referenced curriculum-based assessment in Kosovo and neighboring countries where Albanians live and the Albanian language is spoken.

To Andi Cloud, storytelling is more than a hobby, more than a way to communicate a series of events.

It is a way of life.

“I have found that, when I tell stories, there is a lot that is learned and inferred from them. And a bond between the teller and the told creates a relationship,” says Cloud, '04 & '12, an artist and storyteller from the Ho-Chunk Nation. “We need more of that right now — we need more understanding and more love, and more relationships between all people, indigenous, nonindigenous. Everyone. Stories are the light; they are the olive branches.”

Cloud recently found a new way to share traditional Ho-Chunk stories.

As the Madison Public Library's inaugural Storyteller in Residence, Cloud was tasked last fall with designing and delivering programming meant to enhance appreciation for Ho-Chunk culture among Madison area residents of all ages.

One of her goals, she says, was to show that there is much more to indigenous people than what has been portrayed in films, books and mascot imagery.

“I feel it is my part in this world to create bridges to understand and appreciate Ho-Chunk culture,” Cloud explains. “Our stories are part of that journey and the bridgework.”

From October to December, to anyone who would listen, Cloud shared Ho-Chunk origin, clan, warrior and autobiographical stories.

She also organized interactive, hands-on learning opportunities, as well as a lecture series featuring Ho-Chunk tribal members.

The oral tradition is particularly important to Ho-Chunk and other indigenous people, Cloud says. It's a way to pass on life lessons, connect with native ancestors and build understanding among non-indigenous communities.

In those efforts, the two-month residency went even better than expected.

“I am extremely elated with how everything turned out and the support I had from the Madison Public Library and Ho-Chunk Gaming-Madison,” Cloud says. “The thing I most enjoyed about the program were the people I got to work with and the people I got to meet through the programming. The audience was people from all walks of life, young and old. The program, in its entirety, was a success.”

While the residency is over, Cloud is not finished sharing her culture.

The Oneida resident sells beadwork and sewing projects at craft fairs and pow-wows throughout Wisconsin and the Midwest.

STORIES FROM THE SOUL

Andi Cloud shares Ho-Chunk tradition through Madison library project



She has written a children's book, "Migizii," which she is working to publish.

And soon, she plans to film and produce a documentary, "Maanape," about Ho-Chunk Veterans.

In fact, Cloud was embracing and sharing her culture even during her time at UWL, while earning a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in education-professional development.

She was a student senator and the co-chair of the Native American Student Association.

She also built many impactful relationships with her professors and within the Office of Multicultural Student Services.

"Everyone in that office, I love and cherish. If I didn't have them and the students I met through them, I don't think I'd be a bachelor's and master's degree alum," Cloud says. "My experiences at UWL are probably my favorite part of my young adulthood. I found my second family."

Andi Cloud, '04 & '12, served as the inaugural Storyteller in Residence for the Madison Public Library. Cloud shared traditional Ho-Chunk stories with people of all ages.

Photo by Ruthie Hauge, The Capital Times

JOIN US IN WELCOMING NEW STAFF AND FACULTY



Leah Davis, academic program specialist/advising (new role)



Rosie DeFino, assistant professor educational studies



Katie Fries, administrative assistant



Christiana Martin, field experience coordinator and communications specialist



Melissa McGraw, assistant professor educational studies



Rebecah Neitzel, field experience administrative assistant



Jennifer Pinnow, academic services director and certification officer



Michelle Sylvester, senior equity advisor/recruiter



J.C. Wagner-Romero, assistant professor educational studies