

IMPACT

IN EDUCATION

2025 AWARDS





Agenda

WELCOME

Tanya Custer, PhD, MS, RT(R)(T)ARRT
Director, Interprofessional Academy of Educators
Director of Distance Education
Associate Professor, College of Allied Health Professions

OPENING REMARKS

H. Dele Davies, MD, MS, MHCM
Interim Chancellor

EDUCATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Jane Meza, PhD
Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Professor, Department of Biostatistics

AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Remarks from awardee supporters, followed by comments from the Varner Educator Laureate awardee

CLOSING REMARKS

Tanya Custer, PhD, MS, RT(R)(T)ARRT
Director, Interprofessional Academy of Educators
Director of Distance Education
Associate Professor, College of Allied Health Professions



Reception in Durham Research Center Commons following award ceremony



EMERGING EDUCATOR

Dr. Leah Stade

page 3



EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

Dr. Russell Buzalko

page 4



EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

Dr. Anthony Griess

page 5



INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

Dr. Analisa McMillan

page 6



INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATOR OF MENTORS

Dr. Ka-Chun (Joseph) Siu

page 7



VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Dr. Kelly Gonzales

page 8



VARNER EDUCATOR LAUREATE

Dr. Shaun Grammer

page 10

Fanning the flame
of **educational**
excellence





FACULTY **AWARDEES**

Emerging Educator

Dr. Leah Stade has long incorporated innovation into her teaching practices. A colleague once told her, “We can’t keep teaching the way it has always been done because we are preparing learners for careers, professions and lessons that don’t yet exist.”

As the academic fieldwork coordinator at UNMC, a position she assumed in April 2020, Dr. Stade has consistently sought to enhance her students’ learning experience. Her commitment to continuous improvement led her to participate in the Health Professions Teaching and Technology program, further refining her teaching methodologies. At UNMC, she plays a vital role in preparing future occupational therapists to be innovative and creative in their pursuit of best practices.

Dr. Stade’s proudest moments as an educator stem from witnessing her students bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world practice. She finds particular joy in meeting with students during and after their long-term fieldwork placements and hearing how they apply their didactic knowledge in practice settings. Seeing students overcome challenges and evolve into competent practitioners, capable of becoming future fieldwork educators, is deeply rewarding for her.

Dr. Stade’s approach to education is characterized by a forward-thinking philosophy. She believes in the necessity of adapting teaching methods to prepare students for areas of practice that may not yet exist, emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning. She encourages her colleagues to build supportive networks, seeking out individuals who challenge conventional thinking and foster collaboration. Dr. Stade advocates for sharing knowledge and celebrating the impact of teaching, recognizing that even small efforts can create meaningful change.



Leah Stade, OTD, MHPTT, OTR/L

Assistant Professor
Academic Field Work Coordinator
College of Allied Health Professions

“ You never know if you will make an impact, unless you try. Once you know you have made an impact, share that knowledge with others.”

Excellence in Educational Service



Russell Buzalko, PhD

Adjunct Associate Professor
Department of Pediatrics
College of Medicine

Director, Academics and Continuing Education
Children's Nebraska

“My belief is that it is of the ultimate importance to train, deliver and maintain the highest quality health care professionals for our future.”

“If someone has done something before, then you can do it. If no one has done it before, then you can be the first.” This powerful philosophy guides Dr. Russell J. Buzalko, an associate professor of pediatrics at UNMC and director of academics and continuing education at Children's Nebraska.

Originally from Schuylkill Haven, Pa., Dr. Buzalko joined UNMC's faculty in June 2014. His commitment to health care education is deeply rooted in the concept of “service to our learners.” Drawing from a distinguished 20-year career in the U.S. military, Dr. Buzalko recognized the similarities between effective teaching in military and health care settings. He emphasizes the critical importance of training highly skilled health care professionals, stating that “they will be taking care of us, our families and our friends. The service goes full circle.”

For Dr. Buzalko, the most rewarding aspect of being an educator is witnessing the success of his students. He finds immense pride in contributing to his students' achievements of certifications, graduations and career goals.

Dr. Buzalko approaches his role with humility and a strong belief in the power of collaboration. While he acknowledges that there is always room for growth, he believes that by working together, “we can achieve anything.” Dr. Buzalko's unwavering belief in potential empowers both himself and his students to strive for excellence and overcome challenges with determination.

Excellence in Educational Service

“Paying it forward by educating the next generation of health care professionals acknowledges and magnifies the spirit and generosity of those who taught me.” This principle has guided Dr. Anthony J. Griess throughout his career as a dedicated physician and educator.

A native of Minden, Neb., Dr. Griess began his journey in medicine at UNMC, where he earned his medical degree in 1995, and completed his internal medicine residency in 1998.

In 2005, Dr. Griess joined UNMC as a volunteer clinical faculty in Internal Medicine and Dermatology. Beyond his work as an educator, Dr. Griess serves his community as a skilled dermatologist and Mohs surgeon at Dermatology Specialists of Omaha.

Dr. Griess finds immense fulfillment witnessing the success of his former students, recognizing the profound impact educators have on shaping future health care professionals. His teaching philosophy centers on fostering genuine relationships with trainees and creating a supportive environment where they can thrive. He believes in setting high expectations, providing the necessary resources and leading by example, ensuring his students are well-equipped for their medical careers.

Dr. Griess’s dedication to teaching stems from a deep gratitude for the mentors who guided him. He strives to emulate their generosity, inspiring future generations to embrace the power of education and mentorship in health care.



Anthony Griess, MD

Volunteer Clinical Faculty
Department of Dermatology
Department of Internal Medicine
College of Medicine

Dermatologist
Mohs Surgeon
Dermatology Associates of Omaha

“ It is my sincere hope that my call to service inspires others to do the same.”

Innovative Practices in Education



Analisa McMillan, PhD, MEd

Director, Office of Teaching and Learning,
Office of the Dean
Assistant Professor, Health Promotion
College of Public Health

Associate Director, Interprofessional Academy
of Educators
Director of Distance Education
Academic Affairs

« Every step toward
innovation leads to the next
and builds your innovation
pathways. »

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”
Dr. Analisa McMillan cites this famous W.B. Yeats sentiment as the encapsulation of her teaching philosophy. As director of the Office of Teaching and Learning in the College of Public Health, Dr. McMillan focuses on igniting a passion for learning in both students and faculty. Since joining UNMC in 2012, she has been a driving force for innovation in education.

Originally from Aurora, Colo., Dr. McMillan has dedicated her career to enhancing teaching effectiveness and fostering student success. She believes in the transformative power of learning through traditional methods or facilitated by innovative technologies. She strives to prioritize meaningful engagement and constantly seeks new and effective ways to inspire learners.

One of Dr. McMillan’s proudest moments as an educator stems from the positive feedback she received following her Public Health Teaching and Training course. Many students reached out to detail how the course directly benefited their professional lives, serving as a testament to Dr. McMillan’s dedication to educating future educators.

Her advice to fellow faculty members emphasizes the importance of starting small, embracing collaboration and viewing every step towards innovation as a valuable learning experience. Dr. McMillan’s enthusiasm for teaching is infectious and a reminder to all that education should be both innovative and enjoyable.

Inspirational Mentor of Educators

“To teach is to learn,” is the tenet that guides Dr. Ka-Chun (Joseph) Siu, professor and director of the Global Health Opportunities Program in Physical Therapy at UNMC. Originally from Hong Kong, Dr. Siu joined UNMC in 2009.

He credits his own mentors with inspiring his academic journey, emphasizing the impact of their guidance and support. Dr. Siu strongly believes in the power of mentorship and fosters an environment where trust and collaboration lead to success.

Dr. Siu’s proudest moments as an educator center on witnessing the growth and achievements of his students and mentees. He dedicates himself to nurturing their academic abilities and celebrating each milestone they achieve. Dr. Siu’s commitment extends beyond the classroom, shaping future professionals prepared to make significant contributions to their fields.

Dr. Siu advises faculty who want to make a difference to seize every opportunity to connect with potential mentees and students. Sharing experiences and ideas, he believes, lays the foundation for impactful relationships that foster growth and development.

Dr. Siu’s dedication to education is rooted in the belief that teaching and learning are reciprocal processes. He continually reflects on this principle, ensuring that he remains both a teacher and a learner, fostering a dynamic and enriching educational experience for all involved. His leadership at UNMC exemplifies this philosophy, shaping future health care professionals and advancing the field of physical therapy.



Ka-Chun (Joseph) Siu, PhD

Professor
Chair, Physical Therapy Global Health
Opportunities Program
College of Allied Health Professions

“When both teacher and student make progress by learning from each other, teaching becomes an instrument that benefits both teachers and students simultaneously.”

Visionary Leadership in Education



Kelly Gonzales, PhD, APRN-NP, FNP-C

Associate Professor
College of Nursing

“ I embrace adaptability and reflection, allowing me to grow alongside my students and contribute positively to their educational journeys.”

“Education is an enduring asset,” Dr. Kelly Gonzales believes, recalling her mother’s words. “A few encouraging words can transform lives and change generations.” This philosophy has guided Dr. Gonzales throughout her career, dedicated to advancing nursing education and expanding the health care workforce.

Hailing from Iowa City, Dr. Gonzales has significantly impacted the health care community since joining UNMC in 2011. She is an associate professor at the College of Nursing and the key investigator for the Health Resources and Services Administration Bureau of Health Workforce team. Her leadership secured nearly \$4 million in funding to establish an academy to grow the number of nursing preceptors and faculty. The initiative, known as the Midwest Clinical Instruction Regional Network (MCIRN), addresses the critical need for clinical training resources across the Midwest. The MCIRN has already trained 250 clinicians and established vital partnerships across the region.

With 19 years of experience as an academic nurse, Dr. Gonzales values both her successes and the lessons she has learned from the challenging moments. A lifelong learner, she completed her doctoral studies at the University of Iowa and then continued her education by completing a graduate family nurse practitioner certificate at UNMC. Dr. Gonzales is proud of the many students she has inspired to pursue advanced degrees and cherishes her contributions to nursing education and workforce development.

2024-25 Honorable Mentions

Bradford Becken
College of Medicine

Greg Bennett
College of Dentistry

Claudia Berrondo
College of Medicine

Ishfaq Bhat
College of Medicine

Joyce Black
College of Nursing

Lindsay Blick
College of Medicine

Siddappa Byrareddy
College of Medicine

Jennifer Creps
College of Allied
Health Professions

Andrew Dudley
College of Medicine

Joseph Fauver
College of Public Health

Andrea Dutoit
College of Medicine

Alfred Fisher
College of Medicine

Heidi Keeler
College of Nursing

Sara May
College of Medicine

Melanie Menning
College of Medicine

Tzeyu Michaud
College of Public Health

**Kavya Shankar
Muttanahally**
College of Dentistry

Prasanth Ravipati
College of Medicine

**Amanda Ribeiro
Wobido**
College of Dentistry

Cory Rohlfen
College of Medicine

Nikki Sleddens
College of Allied
Health Professions

Lynette Smith
College of Public Health

Michelle Strong
College of Public Health

Nathan Sutera
College of Pharmacy

Molly Whitlow
College of Allied
Health Professions

Katherine Willet
College of Medicine

Jill Zabih
College of Medicine



Varner Educator Laureate

Shaun Grammer, DMSc, PA-C

Chair, Department of Medical Sciences
Director, Physician Assistant Program
Associate Professor
College of Allied Health Professions

Dr. Shaun Grammer has dedicated his career to advancing physician assistant (PA) education, fostering innovation and prioritizing student success. Since entering education in 2010, he has consistently emphasized excellence in the classroom and the development of supportive, student-centered learning environments. His commitment to education, leadership and strategic vision has earned him the prestigious 2024-25 UNMC Varner Educator Laureate Award.

Dr. Grammer joined UNMC in 2018 as an associate professor in the College of Allied Health Professions (CAHP). His leadership trajectory quickly advanced, becoming the program director of the UNMC PA Program in 2019, and later the department chair of the CAHP Department of Medical Sciences in 2020. Throughout his career, he has remained deeply committed to enhancing educational experiences, ensuring that all students receive the highest quality instruction, resources and support necessary to thrive in a constantly evolving health care landscape.

His approach to education is rooted in innovation, creativity and a student-first philosophy. Whether through implementing new teaching methodologies, integrating emerging technologies or fostering a culture of collaboration, Dr. Grammer continuously seeks ways to improve educational outcomes. In the classroom, his focus has been on engaging students through dynamic learning strategies while also cultivating an environment where they feel valued and supported. As a leader, his role has expanded to include creative problem-solving, high-level strategic planning and a

commitment to empowering faculty and staff. His ability to balance educational excellence with administrative leadership has strengthened the PA program and positively impacted the broader CAHP community.

Dr. Grammer's influence extends beyond UNMC, reflecting his dedication to advancing PA education at a national level. In recognition of his contributions, he was named the 2022 Des Moines University College of Health Sciences Alumnus of the Year and currently serves as director-at-large for the PA Education Association (PAEA) Board. His leadership and expertise continue to shape PA education on a broader scale, ensuring that future health care providers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and professional foundation needed to succeed.

The Varner Educator Laureate Award is a testament to Dr. Grammer's dedication to education, his innovative contributions and his commitment to shaping the next generation of health care professionals. His work exemplifies the highest standards of excellence in teaching, mentorship and leadership.



I am truly humbled and appreciative to receive the Varner Educator Laureate Award. This recognition is a reflection of the collective efforts of so many dedicated individuals. I am deeply grateful to the PA faculty, staff and students, as well as the CAHP administration, for their unwavering support and commitment to creating an exceptional learning environment. The needs of our students in the classroom are continuously evolving, and I am excited to continue embracing innovation and support in education to ensure their success.



Previous Award Winners

EMERGING EDUCATOR

Dalton Nelsen (2023-2024)
College of Medicine

Jordan Rowley (2022-2023)
College of Medicine

Jasmine R. Marcelin (2021-2022)
College of Medicine

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL SERVICE (formerly called Valor in Educational Service)

Kathleen Scott (2023-2024)
College of Medicine

Renee Engler (2022-2023)
Great Plains Health, North Platte

Matthew J. Brooks (2021-2022)
College of Medicine, UNMC
& School of Music, UNO

James R. Newland (2018-2019)
College of Medicine

Robert Binhammer (2017-2018)
College of Medicine

Alan T. Richards (2016-2017)
College of Medicine

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

Amy C. Cannella (2023-2024)
College of Medicine

Michael P. Smith (2022-2023)
College of Medicine

Abbey Fingeret (2021-2022)
College of Medicine

Jason Langenfeld (2020-2021)
College of Medicine

Kristen Cook (2019-2020)
College of Pharmacy

Danish Bhatti (2018-2019)
College of Medicine

Kim Michael (2017-2018)
College of Allied Health
Professions

Tanya Custer (2017-2018)
College of Allied Health Professions

Paul Paulman (2016-2017)
College of Medicine

INSPIRATIONAL MENTOR OF EDUCATORS

Elizabeth Harlow (2023-2024)
College of Medicine

Jasmine R. Marcelin (2022-2023)
College of Medicine

Bunny Pozehl (2021-2022)
College of Nursing

Linda M. Love (2020-2021)
Academic Affairs

Lois J. Starr (2019-2020)
Munroe-Meyer Institute

Shannon Boerner (2018-2019)
College of Medicine

Shantaram S. Joshi (2017-2018)
College of Medicine

Shelby Kutty (2016-2017)
College of Medicine

INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION SCHOLAR

Teresa M. Cochran (2023-2024)
College of Medicine

Nada Fadul (2021-2022)
College of Medicine

William Hay (2020-2021)
College of Medicine

Claudia Chaperon (2019-2020)
College of Nursing

Elizabeth L. Beam (2018-2019)
College of Nursing

Cynthia Ellis (2017-2018)
Munroe-Meyer Institute

Devin Nickol (2016-2017)
College of Medicine

SCHOLAR IN EDUCATION RESEARCH

Sue Schuelke (2023-2024)
College of Nursing - Lincoln Division

Elizabeth Beam (2022-2023)
College of Nursing

Ka-Chun Siu (2019-2020)
College of Allied Health Professions

Kendra K. Schmid (2018-2019)
College of Public Health

Paul J. Schenarts (2017-2018)
College of Medicine

Gary Beck Dallaghan (2016-2017)
College of Medicine

VISIONARY LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Jennifer Adams (2023-2024)
College of Medicine

Diego Torres-Russotto (2022-2023)
College of Medicine

Tanya Custer (2021-2022)
College of Allied Health Professions

Teresa Barry Hultquist (2020-2021)
College of Nursing

Pamela K. Carmines (2019-2020)
College of Medicine
& Graduate Studies

Karen Gould (2018-2019)
College of Medicine

Lynnette Leeseberg Stamler (2017-2018)
College of Nursing

Maurice Godfrey (2016-2017)
Munroe-Meyer Institute

VARNER EDUCATOR LAUREATE

Allison M. Cushman-Vokoun (2023-2024)
College of Medicine

Maurice Godfrey (2022-2023)
Munroe-Meyer Institute

Justin Mott (2021-2022)
College of Medicine

Geoffrey A. Talmon (2020-2021)
College of Medicine

Amy Duhachek-Stapelman
(2019-2020)
College of Medicine

James R. O'Dell (2018-2019)
College of Medicine

Paul Paulman (2018-2019)
College of Medicine

Karen Honeycutt (2017-2018)
College of Allied Health Professions

David V. O'Dell (2016-2017)
College of Medicine



SPONSOR OF EDUCATOR LAUREATE AWARD **Jerald Varner, PhD**

Dr. Jerald Varner's lifelong passion for interprofessional education, combined with his love of the intersection between biology, medicine and engineering, inspired his decision to endow and support the Varner Educator Laureate Award.

Dr. Varner's career as an educator in the Electrical Engineering Department at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln spans 60 years. He specializes in bioengineering with the hope that his work will make a difference in people's lives.

Dr. Varner was a consultant for the National Institutes of Health for 25 years and actively consulted with other institutions. Additionally, he worked summers as a visiting researcher on the National Institutes of Health campus in Bethesda, Maryland, doing research related to the analysis of the electrical activity of the brain.

While active in research, his first priority and love is always in instructing students. To this end, Dr. Varner has received several teaching awards, including being awarded Outstanding Professor in Electrical Engineering for two years. Dr. Varner also currently funds the Varner Professorship in Pancreatic Cancer and Global Health in the College of Medicine, which is held by Dr. Chandra Are.



UNMCSM


Nebraska
Medicine



Members of the 2024-25 Impact Award Selection Committees

Academic Affairs would like to express our appreciation to the dedicated faculty who served on the award selection committees:

- \ Allison Ashford
- \ Teresa Barry Hultquist
- \ Elizabeth Beam
- \ Brian Boerner
- \ Matthew J. Brooks
- \ Jason Burrows
- \ Amy M. Cannella
- \ Cathrin Carithers
- \ Teresa M. Cochran
- \ Beth Culross
- \ Conor Dass
- \ Ally Dering-Anderson
- \ Amy Duhachek-Stapelman
- \ Cynthia Ellis
- \ Abbey L. Fingeret
- \ Karen Gould
- \ Elizabeth Harlow
- \ Teresa Hartman
- \ Karen Honeycutt
- \ Shantaram Joshi
- \ Nancy E. Krusen
- \ Jason Langenfeld
- \ Linda M. Love
- \ Jasmine R. Marcelin
- \ Analisa McMillan
- \ Jane Meza
- \ Kim Michael
- \ Justin Mott
- \ Dalton Nelsen
- \ Devin Nickol
- \ Missy Ofe Fleck
- \ Bunny Pozehl
- \ Jordan Rowley
- \ Sue Schuelke
- \ Jaimee D. Shropshire
- \ Ka-Chun (Joseph) Siu
- \ Michelle Strong
- \ Geoffrey Talmon
- \ Melissa Teply
- \ Merlyn Vogt
- \ Kate Wampler
- \ Jana Wardian



Academic Affairs would like to thank **Interim Chancellor H. Dele Davies, MD**, for his support of the UNMC Impact in Education Awards.

Ceremony Facilitators

Academic Affairs would like to express our appreciation to the **Interprofessional Academy of Educators** for their ongoing commitment to fostering a vibrant community of educators, as well as for their tireless efforts in bringing the award ceremony to fruition.

To learn more about the Academy, please contact one of the members:

Tanya Custer, PhD, MS, RT(R)(T)ARRT

Director

Analisa McMillan, PhD, MEd

Associate Director

Jana Wardian, PhD, MSW

Associate Director

Elizabeth Beam, PhD, RN

Education Researcher

Liz Husmann

Program Associate

AWARD PROGRAM SUPPORT

Our heartfelt gratitude to **Liz Husmann**, **Gabby Jensen** and **Alexis Zgud** for their coordination, outstanding logistical support and marketing efforts throughout the awards process. A special thank you to **Megan Blusys** for her expertise and guidance, and to **Jeff Robb** and **Strategic Communications** for their exceptional skills in public relations.



The UNMC Impact in Education Awards are the highest education-related awards conferred by UNMC. The awards recognize the dedication and ingenuity of our educators.

This publication is produced by the Office of Academic Affairs at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

987810 Nebraska Medical Center

Omaha, NE 68198-7810

402.559.5130

unmc.edu/AcademicAffairs

