

Celebrating
160
years
of education firsts

Education First

The University of Iowa College of Education Newsletter
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Research Conference Draws Educators Across the State

The annual Iowa Educational Research and Evaluation Association (IEREA) conference, which took place in Iowa City, drew dozens of educators from all areas of the state for informal poster sessions highlighting such diverse research topics as the cost of dropping out of high school and phonological awareness among at-risk kindergarteners.

Six of the posters presented were authored or coauthored by graduate students within The University of Iowa College of Education.

Jon Twing (MA '89/PhD '93), executive vice president at Pearson Educational Measurement and IEREA president-elect, said he enjoys the learning opportunities an informal poster session allows.



Lai (L) and Waltman (R) author award-winning project examining teacher beliefs and practices in high-stakes testing and test preparation.

"You get to engage with the author about why they did things a certain way," he said. "I always learn something and start thinking about something in a different way after reviewing the posters."

Emily Lai, a doctoral student in Measurement and Statistics, and **Kris Waltman** (BS '83/PhD '95), associate director of the Center for Evaluation and Assessment, earned the group's Distinguished Research Award for their project, "High-Stakes Testing and Test Preparation: Examining Teacher Beliefs and Practices."

Waltman, who coauthored posters with four graduate students, said she sees the conference as an important learning experience for graduate students.

"This was a valuable first step in learning how to share their work with others and will help them when preparing their presentations for the national conference this April," she said.

The conference's keynote speaker, Tom Houlihan, former executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, addressed the gap between the public's concept of "school reform" and teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of reform.

Twing said he believed the talk could help facilitate dialogue between teachers, parents, and school boards regarding, "what it is we want our schools to accomplish and how we should be going about doing it."

Remarkable Firsts

Celebrating 160 Years of Teacher Training in Iowa

The University of Iowa College of Education traces its roots to the foundation of the University itself. Early lawmakers made teacher training a priority for Iowa and the new University. Admitted into the Union in 1846, the new state needed teachers for its growing population.

Creating the University in 1847 at the state capital in Iowa City, the legislators mandated that the new institution admit 50 students each year for free instruction in teacher training. Teacher training was the only program specifically mentioned when the law creating the new University was approved on Feb. 25, 1847.

The first class of future Iowa teachers was impressive in its eagerness and enthusiasm, but many were children. Girls as young as 12 years old, and boys as young as 14, arrived for the first day of classes in the Normal Department.

Recognizing that future teachers need training in the classroom, the University established a "model school" open to students ages 5 through 16. It became a forerunner of the laboratory schools operated by the College of Education from 1913 to 1972. These concepts of classroom observation and student teaching continue to be vital components of teacher education at the University today.

The teacher training program was popular with students, enrolling more than half the University's students during its first decade of existence.

In the spring of 1858, the young University fell on difficult times, and money was found to keep only the Normal Department operating. The University can boast of never having given preference to men over women in enrollment. For the next two years, the Normal Department would be the only program operating at the University.

The College of Education continues this tradition of placing education first—exemplified through its innovative teaching methods, cutting-edge research, and wide-reaching service. The College recognizes these top accomplishments, activities, and merits of excellence in this monthly column.

Notable Early College of Education Firsts

1858—Five of the University's first six degrees conferred are granted to education graduates.

1872—The University creates the nation's first permanent college-level department of education.

1907—The School of Education establishes the first chair of pedagogy at a U.S. university



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Remarkable Outreach

Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author Visits with Student Writers Across Campus



Sunstein (L), McCourt (R) discuss teaching and writing with students across campus.

“Approaches to Teaching Writing” course as well as from the Department of English and the Iowa Writer’s Workshop to discuss

Thanks to Professor **Bonnie Sunstein**, some 50 student writers from across disciplines had a rare opportunity to discuss teaching and writing with Pulitzer Prize-winning author Frank McCourt this November.

Sunstein gathered students from her

the revision process and McCourt’s latest book, *Teacher Man*, which chronicles his 30 years as a high school teacher in New York City.

“The best thing about it was the meeting of all of these student writers from across campus, from across writing programs, who were all fans of Frank McCourt,” Sunstein said, adding that she and McCourt shared a lot of banter about teaching during his visit.

McCourt was on campus as a guest of the University Lecture Committee.

Andy Clinton, who recently finished his master’s degree in English Education, attended the talk and said he appreciated the intimate meeting with McCourt.

“I think the small, informal setting really allowed the talk to be different than the typical big lecture from a visiting writer, and I was glad to be part of it,” Clinton said.

Sunstein said she hopes to create similar small group discussions when other well-known authors visit Iowa City in the future.



Ho reveals inconsistencies in reporting testing results.

UITV Focuses on Testing

The most important large-scale policy questions in education—Are students learning? Are gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students decreasing?—are answered in part by test score trends. These trends can be reported in different ways. One popular approach is to look at the change in the percent of proficient students, where “proficient” is defined as scoring above a chosen cut score.

In a clear, lively presentation, Measurement and Statistics Assistant Professor Andrew Ho describes how misleading these trend statistics can be—they can be larger, smaller, and even undergo sign-reversal under a different choice of cut score. He explains the basis for this “pliability,” and describes alternative approaches to reporting and comparing score trends that avoid the troublesome properties of the proficiency-based reporting that has become widespread under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

For more information, visit www.education.uiowa.edu/tv/stats/

Watch

UITV

Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m.

Now Showing:

Trend-Flipping, Gap-Bowing, and Growth-Stretching: The Pliability of Popular High-Stakes Statistics

www.education.uiowa.edu/tv

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