N ews headlines tell a grim story of education in the U.S. Politicians rail against public education and argue for defunding institutions of learning from preschool through college. Television shows and movies depict caricatures of incompetent, boring, and negligent teachers. Social media create an echo chamber filled with unsubstantiated claims and harsh criticism of education.

I regularly speak to students and alumni who bemoan public perceptions of education in our country—with good reason. We are persistently faced with a narrative that does not match what we know to be true.

We enter this field because we know the awesome power of education to transform lives and societies. Many of us have been inspired by exceptional teachers. Many have experienced the opportunities that education affords. Let’s change the narrative on education. Let’s challenge disrespectful claims that “those who can’t, teach.” Let’s fight public discourse that undermines the value and questions the purpose of higher education. Let’s amplify the voices of educators above those of the media and politicians. Let’s make an undeniable and visible impact through education scholarship.

We do this through the work we pursue and through a commitment to telling our authentic stories as educators. And we are not alone. In this issue of Michigan Education, I am pleased to share some of these positive stories that speak to the dedication of educators and the impact of their work.

We share the inspiring work of three Michigan teachers who each received recognition in the past year for their innovative approaches to teaching. Jeffrey Austin of Skyline High School, Michael Chrzan of Henry Ford Academy, and Holly Hereau of South Redford Thurston High School are leaders who advance their profession as they serve the needs of their students.

This issue also features an interview with alumnus William Behre, who is completing his first year as president of Slippery Rock University. Behre discusses problematic narratives in higher education regarding perceptions of the value of college, affordability, debt, state appropriations, and equitable access. Behre is an outstanding advocate for postsecondary education.

A common criticism is that the pursuits of higher education are theoretical and are not applicable to the needs of the majority of people. Our faculty dispel that myth every day.

We’re also excited to introduce a new collaboration among our School of Education, the Michigan Department of Education, the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, Michigan State University, and the Center for Educational Performance and Information. This initiative, called the Michigan Education Research Institute, will propel education research in our state, leading to more informed policy decisions and improved outcomes for children and youth.

The collection and interpretation of data advance practice as much as they do policy. Professor Matt Ronfeldt and his colleagues are partnering with the Tennessee Department of Education to determine the role of effective mentor teachers in the outcomes of novice teachers. Their work demonstrates the skill and expertise required to be a successful educator. Their efforts to help schools identify and coach exceptional mentor teachers is indicative of the impactful work of educational research.

Our donors are our partners in changing the narrative. While their gifts nourish our work and enable our students, donors often lend their own voices to our efforts to tell the real stories of education. I am delighted to honor them in this issue. This is a particularly appropriate time to celebrate their contributions, as we have just concluded the university-wide Victors for Michigan Campaign. We are proud to announce that SOE supporters contributed over $60 million in gifts, bequests, and private grants that fund students, academic programs, and research efforts.

I am grateful to all who donated during the campaign and continue to give generously to the school.

How do you change the narrative? Whenever I learn about the work of any member of our community—anywhere in the world—I realize new ways to bring about change. Leveraging our diverse roles and perspectives, we can change the prevailing discourse on education. I look forward to the day when educators and education are universally afforded the respect they deserve.
Hurricane Heroes
Two SOE faculty work with a Florida school district to assess the needs of Puerto Rican hurricane survivors

Michigan Education Research Institute
Powerful partnering in service of our state

Why do Mentors Matter?
Uncovering the data that reflect the impact of mentor teachers

SOE Alumnus William J. Behre is President of The Rock

From the Classroom to the Community
Alumni honored for their impact

Family Practice
Mother and son alumni educators focus on meeting the needs of all students and families

SOE Happenings
Class Notes
Victors for Michigan Campaign
The Back Page
A group of SOE undergraduate students participated in an Alternative Spring Break project in Chicago. Working with 826CHI—a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting students ages 6 to 18 with their creative and expository writing skills, and to helping teachers inspire their students to write—the SOE team worked with kids through the after-school writing program and field trips for Chicago Public School students.

Above  Dr. Cathy Reischl hosted a delegation of international faculty members in the area of English Language Education. Faculty participants from Cambodia, Estonia, Mexico, Mongolia, Panama, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Thailand visited the SOE as part of an international TESOL/U.S. State Department Exchange Program titled “Administrator Best Practices that Support Student-focused Teaching, Autonomy, and Leadership.”

Above A delegation of students and faculty members from the School of Psychology of Beijing Normal University visited U-M this winter. This visit was part of an extensive exchange between the two institutions, which has also included study trips to China led by Dr. Kevin Miller. The exchange has led to cooperative research and ideas that are shaping both universities, including the development of the Global Education pathway of the Education for Empowerment Minor.
Top and Middle The 2019 Graduate Student Research Conference hosted by the Graduate Student Community Organization and Becoming Educators of Tomorrow presented the theme “Embracing Tensions for Equity: Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice in Education.” The conference featured a keynote panel featuring SOE’s Charles Wilkes, Dr. Maren Oberman, and Dr. Alistair Bomphey, as well as guest scholar Dr. Maisha Winn from UC-Davis. Breakout sessions included paper presentations, roundtables, a workshop, a panel discussion, and poster presentations by graduate students.

Bottom The 2019 Winter Wonderland Dance Party drew SOE students, faculty, staff, and their families. This annual tradition is especially popular with the youngest members of the SOE community, who rock the dance floor until their bedtimes.

Top More than 500 K-12 students participated in the annual MLK Children & Youth Program organized by Dr. Henry Meares, Assistant Dean for Recruitment, K-16 Relations, and Special Projects. Since 1998, students in the state of Michigan have come together for this event to enjoy entertaining and enriching learning through a range of cultural and educational activities.

Bottom Guadalupe Valdés, Bonnie Katz Tenenbaum Professor of Education at Stanford University, presented the 2019 annual Womer Lecture. Her remarks, titled “Preparing English Language Learners to ‘Play the Game’: Reconceptualizing the Teaching and Learning of English in Schools,” challenged the notion that language is an ordinary school subject that can be curricularized easily or successfully.
OUTSPoken, presented by Becoming Educators of Tomorrow, is a night of poetry, performance, spoken word, and storytelling that provides a space for all in the SOE community to share their stories. OUTSPoken was hosted concurrently with Campus Visit Day, providing an extraordinary opportunity for new and prospective students to learn about the community they are joining.

Above Undergraduate creative writing mentors in Eli Zemper’s EDUC 365 class hosted a group of students from South Redford Thurston High School as part of the Interactive Communications and Simulations International Poetry Guild project. Their English teacher, Rachel Bomphray (MA ’14, TeachCert ’14), says of the project, “It makes my students feel heard and it has inspired me to encourage a culture of creative writing in my classes.” The students and their college mentors got into small teams and created multi-voice poetry during their on-campus visit.

Above As the cradle to career campus located at Marygrove in Detroit takes shape, frequent open meetings with community members allow the partner organizations developing programming to share updates and receive feedback. Partners include the University of Michigan, The Kresge Foundation, Detroit Public Schools Community District, Starfish Family Services, Marygrove College, Marygrove Conservancy, IFF, and the Detroit Collaborative Design Center.
Middle  Undergraduates in Dr. Simona Goldin’s ED 118 course corresponded with penpals from alumnus Michael Chrzan’s high school class for several months before meeting face to face in the Tribute Room. They discussed their experiences and aspirations, and they shared their thoughts about what makes an ideal school. Through this collaboration, the high school students and undergraduates realized that their overall needs and goals had more commonalities than differences.

Bottom  Fifth graders from Brick Elementary School visited the Marine Hydrodynamics Lab (a facility of the Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering department) to test their Hōkūle‘a-style canoe models in the Wind Wave tank. The event was the culmination of a curriculum on wayfinding written by doctoral student Gabe Dellavecchia and Dr. Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar. They are researching the incorporation of literacy resources in project-based learning.

Left  The Center for Education Design, Evaluation, and Research (CEDER) is partnered with the Bosch Community Fund to standardize, scale, and evaluate their BE3ST teacher grant program. The program awards mini-grants to teachers to fund ambitious STEM projects. Ann Arbor teachers Sarah Schemanske and Sarah VanLoo ran an elementary robotics competition this winter with the assistance of the program.

Top and Above  SOE community members expressed their commitments to diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity (DIDE) through an “Arts Showcase.” Using artistic installations and performance art, attendees and artists had opportunities to engage in dialogue about their creative pieces, artistic processes, and personal experiences.
Hurricane Heroes

Two SOE faculty work with a Florida school district to assess the needs of Puerto Rican hurricane survivors
E ach weekday, from September to December 2017, 26 new students arrived at a school in the Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) system, ready to begin their first day of study on the mainland. The district and surrounding community welcomed them wholeheartedly; the students and their families, they knew, had come to Orange County to escape the disastrous effects of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

“Tell your neighbors, tell your friends—these children are welcome with open arms,” said OCPS Superintendent Barbara Jenkins. The governor of Florida, Rick Scott, worked to remove bureaucratic hurdles for students to enroll, and for Puerto Rican teachers to apply to work in OCPS. In fact, OCPS stationed its own human resources officers at the Orlando Airport to greet arriving families. They enrolled students in schools and offered interviews to parents and family members for personnel positions, including teaching jobs as well as bookkeeping and custodial positions.

An estimated 3,500 Puerto Ricans entered the district during that period, and the stories of their hardship and courage are numerous. Many of them left loved ones behind; some arrived as unaccompanied minors, planning to stay with family. Just being in a classroom again was difficult for some students, since many schools across Puerto Rico had been closed since the hurricanes.

Eager to assist the recently arrived students, Awilda Rodriguez, Professor in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, and Enid Rosario-Ramos, Professor in Educational Studies, conducted research to gain a better understanding of the educational transitions and disruptions the students faced. In partnership with OCPS, they looked to assess the district’s response to the influx of hurricane-displaced students and their families.

“We wanted to understand the transitions of the Puerto Rican students who were coming from a different education system,” says Rodriguez. “This was a phenomenon that was playing out in the media and we wanted to understand and give a context to this issue.” Rosario-Ramos adds that they had already been engaging with OCPS due to their interest in the influx of Puerto Ricans to Florida who had entered the state because of financial challenges in Puerto Rico.

“Then the hurricane came,” says Rosario-Ramos, “and we realized that the district’s needs could have shifted. So we asked them how we could best serve them in this new context, since it was an influx of more people, in a shorter period of time, and with different needs.”

The pair composed the following research questions, traveling to Florida several times in 2018 to conduct interviews and collect data:

1. How did recently arrived Puerto Rican students and their families perceive their educational opportunities and navigate educational systems in OCPS? What supports did they rely on to make their transitions?
2. What policies and strategies did the district employ to receive and support newly arrived Puerto Rican students? What, if any, challenges did district personnel perceive in responding to the influx?
3. How did school personnel (e.g. teachers, counselors, school administrators) respond to the influx of Puerto Rican students resulting from the hurricane crisis? What, if any, challenges did school personnel perceive in responding to the influx?

Partnering with five OCPS high schools, the pair interviewed 90 people who were district employees, administrators, teachers, students, family members, and community leaders. They collected school documents as well. Their findings centered around three main themes that shaped the families’ transitions and the district’s response to the newly arrived Puerto Ricans: addressing incomers’ basic needs, providing academic support to displaced students, and navigating graduation and postsecondary transition requirements.

Basic needs—including housing, employment, relationship supports, and emotional needs—were the most urgent concerns that needed to be addressed for the hurricane survivors. The school system recognized this and offered food and clothing, school supplies, social workers, employment support, and additional aid. “Organizations and individuals also mobilized their resources to help these people, who left behind every-
thing, to establish some normalcy,” says Rodriguez. “There were kids who even came on their own to stay with families on the mainland, and so the community opened its doors to them, literally, in order to help the kids continue their education. At the same time, the families in Puerto Rico didn’t know when the schools were going to reopen or be repaired from the damage.”

“This is generally part of the district’s narrative,” says Rosario-Ramos. “With the actions they took, there were some successes, and some missed opportunities, but they remained focused to ensure that the students and families’ basic needs were met.”

One unanticipated necessity the researchers uncovered was the mental health needs of the students and families who had recently arrived. In particular, there were not enough Spanish-speaking mental health professionals to provide support to the large group of incoming families. Despite this challenge, district personnel steadfastly focused on their primary goal, which was to provide a welcoming environment. But there was a downside: the additional work of helping students establish a sense of belonging led to a heavy burden on the Spanish-speaking school employees.

When it came to counseling and mental health services, both professors explain that the district was challenged by the new demands of the community. Says Rosario-Ramos, “Teachers, clerks, social workers, Spanish speakers, and district leaders all felt unequipped to handle the trauma that students felt from dealing with the destruction of the hurricane and being separated from their families. The district leaders felt that, in hindsight, this was a missed opportunity.”

“Heavy burden on the Spanish-speaking school employees”

“You have people needing a lot of things,” explains Rodriguez, “but they also deal with food insecurities and the trauma that they had in Puerto Rico. Some had survivor’s guilt. Moving to Florida did not just remove these things. There was a lot weighing on these students.”

The second theme the researchers uncovered involved providing academic supports like academic counseling, language support, and technology assistance. Though administrators minimized “red tape” across the district, families reported receiving inconsistent support when it came to the willingness of personnel to help them with their transitional needs. Personnel, in turn, felt challenged supporting students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, perceiving the school systems in Puerto Rico to vary in the quality of instruction in the disciplines as well as in English language.

Graduation requirements also differed between Puerto Rico’s and Florida’s educational systems. This led to general uncertainty for families and school staff. The third theme identified by Rodriguez and Rosario-Ramos was navigating graduation requirements and postsecondary transitions. OCPS had described the newly arrived students as hardworking and dedicated across the board, but even with that dedication, juniors and seniors faced the biggest challenges since the uncertain location of their families made it hard for them to prepare for postsecondary education.

Graduation requirements varied between the two locales in terms of credit hour and testing requirements. Furthermore, a lack of clear communication about the option to obtain a diploma from Puerto Rico instead of from Florida posed yet another challenge to graduating students.

“For me, it was also surprising to learn about the state policy context,” says Rodriguez. With these families moving into an “English-only” state, it presented a number of challenges. Students who needed to satisfy state requirements, for example, could only be tested in English. This led to them facing a number of issues, especially if they were seniors who were not English-dominant speakers. They had already faced trauma in the hurricane and its aftermath, then they moved to a new place, and now they were facing tests as well.”

The academic performance of the Puerto Rican students was shaped by a need to fuse together their old and new lives while seeking to have their basic needs met. Rosario-Ramos and Rodriguez credit the OCPS for successfully garnering the resources needed to help students acclimate to their new
schools and to encourage the integration of their families into the community. The district accomplished this by reducing barriers to school enrollment and by using an “open arms” policy while assisting with their basic and emergent needs. Rosario-Ramos commends the district’s history of welcoming students: “They had the ability to know what works well, and they were also open to ideas and policies that would help them communicate that legacy.”

Both professors note that the frequency of natural disasters—and thus the numbers of environmental refugees—is increasing. For this reason, school districts are now in a good place to examine best practices for integrating displaced students and families so that their academic and social growth will prosper. Their project, they hope, will allow districts like OCPS to develop these best practices.

Rosario-Ramos and Rodriguez credit the OCPS for successfully garnering the resources needed to help students acclimate to their new schools and to encourage the integration of their families into the community.

As for next steps, Rodriguez says they will go beyond the “deep dive” they took into the five OCPS schools. “Now we want to do a wider take and a survey to understand the broader lens on the experience of Puerto Rican students across the district. We’ll take a more quantitative approach on understanding, particularly, students returning to the island. When power was restored and schools opened, many students went back.” Using this mixed-methods approach, the researchers explain, allows them to provide data and analyses that respond to the situation using a lens that is both deep and wide.
Just like a novel reveals itself page by page, numbers have a story to tell. When considering education data in particular, the story is textured and complex, since numbers can affect and reflect entire communities and the families within them. Education research has the potential to shape the story of our whole society, which is why Michigan Department of Education (MDE) interim State Superintendent Sheila Alles has called it to the forefront.
As the leader of the MDE, Alles believes that “becoming a top-10 education state in 10 years takes a knowledge of what is happening in our schools now, learning what has proven successful, and using that to develop better practices.” To this end, the MDE has partnered with experts across the state to create a research hub to collect and share data that will help educators and students alike. This new collaboration includes the SOE, the U-M Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, the Michigan State College of Education, and the Center for Educational Performance and Information.

Launched in November, the newly formed group is called the Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI). This collaboration offers policy leaders a chance to partner with top national experts in policy analysis, educator preparation, and school organization. MERI will facilitate research projects in education and make data accessible across the state, with the hope of improving education for Michigan’s students. The U-M contribution involves two key units: the School of Education and the Michigan Education Data Center, which is housed at the Ford School.

The division of MERI at the Ford School will be co-directed by Dr. Susan Dynarski, Professor of Public Policy, Education, and Economics. She holds appointments in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education and the Ford School. With her colleague Dr. Brian Jacob, Dynarski will oversee the Michigan Education Data Center’s clearinghouse for research files and for all research applications coming to the state of Michigan. The center is expected to dramatically improve access to Michigan’s K-16 education data, which will aid researchers and policymakers who are working to solve education policy challenges.

“One of MERI’s first large projects will involve a multiyear implementation study of the state’s competency-based education pilot. Competency-based education, or CBE, is a new student-centered approach to learning in which students receive individualized support and opportunities that dovetail with their individual mastery levels. It is meant to reach students based on their learning styles while also keeping them engaged. The project, led by Michigan State University and MDE, will include surveys of principals, teachers, and students, as well as school site visits. MERI researchers hope that the results from the study will help the Michigan Department of Education understand how to best meet the needs of schools and districts that are transitioning to competency-based models. They also aim to gain understanding of broader educational successes and obstacles in their unique contexts.

About the MERI project, its important work, and its future goals, Dean Elizabeth Birr Moje says, “This collaboration will empower and equip our leaders with the research they need in order to make evidence-based decisions that advance just and equitable learning opportunities, assessments, and educational systems for all children in Michigan.”
Despite the fact that mentor teachers have always been important in education, it took a lot of persistence for Professor Matt Ronfeldt to uncover usable data about their work. He’d been curious for years about the ways in which they impact the future effectiveness of preservice, or intern, teachers, but his research was not without its challenges.

“Put simply,” he explains, “my project started out five years ago with my research questions, and each one was met by data issues.” He was looking to determine how much of an effect a mentor teacher could have on a preservice teacher. He also wondered how mentor teachers were selected, and how the selection process could be improved.

Ronfeldt surmises that the data access challenges he encountered partially explain why there is still very little large-scale research available about the impact of mentor teachers. Still, he pursued his line of inquiry by linking data from mentor teachers’ annual evaluations with teaching evaluations from their interns at the end of their first year of independent teaching. He also wondered how mentor teachers were selected, and how the selection process could be improved.

Ronfeldt focused on working with various partners in different labor markets to create his own data system that would allow him to explore his research questions, while also looking to his community to investigate other solutions. But he was never able to build a data set that would allow him to investigate the relationship between the instructional effectiveness of cooperating teachers and the candidates they mentor.

That’s when he learned what the Tennessee Department of Education was doing. Tennessee was interested in pursuing more research on preservice teacher preparation. The state maintains a robust centralized, statewide data system where its teachers were already linked to their teacher education programs. “It was truly a data and partnership opportunity that was rich, and one that would allow me to study the research questions that I had,” he says. “I had a hard time building data systems on my own that would link these different facets, so this was a breakthrough.”

Ronfeldt approached the Tennessee Department of Education about analyzing the effectiveness of “cooperating teachers” in relation to preservice teachers, and their partnership grew. Together, they were able to join forces to finally uncover some answers.

But even with the robust data systems in Tennessee, the links between cooperating teachers and the interns they mentored were not yet made. The first step was taken by the Tennessee Department of Education, which approached each teacher education program in the state to see if they would be willing to identify and share data about their cooperating teachers. That process alone took

Why do Mentors Matter?
Uncovering the data that reflect the impact of mentor teachers
“We are now piloting initiatives that use historical evaluation and administrative data on teachers to help teacher education programs identify teachers they may want to recruit as mentors according to their county, grade, and specialization. We are using this data to identify and recruit more mentor teachers who are likely to be more instructionally effective.”

a year. The team then determined how to link each cooperating teacher to the appropriate preservice teacher, and then get the evaluation date for each person, keeping in mind that the latter’s evaluation takes place a year after the original service as a student teacher.

“Being able to link these people to build the data sets took a lot of work,” Ronfeldt says, but eventually they were able to draw some conclusions, with the caveat that they are still working to gain access to more of the state’s teacher education programs.

When asked how our own state of Michigan is faring in this process of data collection, Ronfeldt explains that Tennessee’s teachers are all evaluated with a standardized and state-approved rubric, and that 90 percent of teachers are evaluated on the same rubric (the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model), while Michigan teacher evaluation systems are more local, less centralized, and less standardized. Still, he adds, “it is getting easier in Michigan to obtain centralized statewide data, but Tennessee is far ahead of the curve. There are actually a handful of states who are moving forward on building systems like theirs, fortunately.”

The team, which includes Stacey Brockman (a U-M graduate student) and Shanyce Campbell (a former U-M postdoctoral fellow), finds support for the idea that mentor teachers pass along their teaching skills to the preservice teachers who work with them. In other words, the performance of a new teacher correlates with the performance of the cooperating teacher with whom they trained.

While Ronfeldt explains that this is a “logical” conclusion, the fact that the data backs it up is significant. It’s especially relevant because a nationwide conversation is taking place about teacher preparation programs needing to improve, particularly when it comes to the skill and professionalization of teaching.

Alongside the national conversation comes the pressing need for skilled mentor teachers, and Ronfeldt and his team have been able to present data that has led to positive changes in this arena. In the above instance, they provided evidence to support Tennessee state policy that now focuses on minimum evaluation standards for cooperating teachers.

Another practical outcome, says Ronfeldt, is that “we are now piloting initiatives that use historical evaluation and administrative data on teachers to help teacher education programs identify teachers they may want to recruit as mentors according to their county, grade, and specialization. We are using this data to identify and recruit more mentor teachers who are likely to be more instructionally effective.”

Ronfeldt and his team are doing this work by creating a list of ideal recruits in partnering districts according to prior performance and experience, and then randomly assigning which Tennessee counties receive the lists. Currently, the list is determined by observation ratings, years of experience, and scores on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, which measures the impact teachers have on their students’ academic progress. “In order to get causal effects, it’s best to do random assignment to help remove other, non-causal explanations,” he says. “For example, if we let districts elect to use the lists, then it might be that the districts that seek out the lists already recruit more effective cooperating teachers.” The team first wants to know if there are any positive effects of receiving the list of ideal recruits. The preliminary research is positive. So far, it shows that using the lists has been successful. The districts and counties that received the lists were able to recruit more instructionally effective and more experienced cooperating teachers compared to the ones that did not receive the list.

So far, these results have proven that counties can better target their cooperating teacher recruits. “It seems obvious, but we didn’t even know if there were enough teachers out there in the needed subjects, grade levels, and counties that we could recruit to help to meaningfully increase the number of instructionally effective cooperating teachers,” Ronfeldt says. “So this is significant.”

The team also plans to focus on the outcomes for preservice teachers, and will look at whether preservice teachers in the specially selected counties also end up feeling better prepared as a result of the lists, if they are more likely to get hired, and if their instructional performance on state evaluations are better. Next year, the research team is also hoping to include more teacher preparation programs in the pilot study to see if they can repeat this success at a larger scale. They call this work the Mentors Matter: Placement Initiative.

“Individual programs often keep information about who their mentors are, but the information is not typically shared across programs, so centralized, cross-program data sets about teacher education are not common.”

To underscore the importance of mentors, the team has worked with the Tennessee Department of Education and various partners to support the development of a training program that helps mentor teachers with their coaching skills. The program is called the Mentors Matter: Training Initiative. “This initiative focuses on a coaching intervention,” says Ronfeldt, “and the state has developed this initiative, which we piloted and will be scaling up this year. The initiative randomly assigns some mentors to get additional training on questioning skills, which is a specific teaching skill assessed on the state’s evaluation rubric. The idea is to focus on training mentors about the best way to coach preservice teachers on questioning specifically, so that it can be targeted as an area to evaluate for performance gains. By randomly assigning the training, we can see if the mentors with training in questioning will coach their interns differently. We also want to see if the interns perform better down the road.”

With so much to discover about the significance of effective mentor teachers, this research area is ripe with possibility. As Ronfeldt affirms, “At the end of the day, it’s the students who we all care about. So we’d love to see them benefit from this work.”
The theme of this magazine issue is “changing the narratives in education.” Here at SOE, we have observed that negative images overshadow the positive, that our stories aren’t being told in our own voices, and that we need to take a greater role in shaping public discourse on education. As an educator and administrator, what do you see as problematic “stories” that are told about education and how would you like to see those narratives change?

My focus for the last decade or so has been on higher education. There are multiple troubling narratives that higher education leaders must address.

1. The value narrative – Many people question whether or not higher education is worth the time and investment required. Too often, this issue is reduced solely to a discussion of salaries upon graduation. It’s widely documented that college graduates earn upwards of a million dollars more in the course of their lifetimes than a high school graduate. But that is only part of the story. Education is statistically correlated with improved lifestyle behaviors, including reduced incidences of absenteeism, improved health, lower probability of committing crime, and fewer welfare and unemployment claims. Yes, education enriches the lives of students and increases their lifetime income, but it also benefits society since these individuals generate increased tax revenues and have less demand for taxpayer-supported social services.
In your inaugural address, you discussed some of the ways that Slippery Rock University, as a public institution, is responsible for serving the public good. When you speak to the SRU community, policymakers, media, and donors, how do you convey the value of Slippery Rock and other public universities?

Public universities have a mandate to serve the whole population, not just the children of elites. We are the nation’s single greatest lever for social mobility. Smaller publics often struggle making this message clear to our constituents, particularly when we are seeking donor support. For years, donor support was not seen as necessary because the state supported a substantial portion of the university’s expenses. Today, Slippery Rock receives only about a quarter of its operating budget from the state. To remain accessible, we must keep our tuition low (in-state tuition at SRU hovers at around $10,000 per year). The best way to convey our value is to demonstrate our outcomes. About a third of our students are Pell grant-eligible, meaning they have significant financial need. About a third are the first in their family to go to college. When we show that we can help these students be successful, people have a greater understanding of our value.

The dissertation that you completed at the SOE focused on educator interventions in school violence. From bullying to fatal attacks in American schools, this topic is frequently in the news and often contentious. Proposed solutions have included increasing surveillance, investing in mental health supports, and even arming teachers. Do your research findings support any specific actions to mitigate school violence?

It has been a long, long time since I did violence research, but I do follow the public narrative. In 2018, there were 113 people killed in school shootings. This is tragic. Last year there were more than 500 deaths by accidental or negligent discharge of a firearm. This means that one is more likely to die from an accidental shooting than an intentional school shooting. Purposefully adding guns to schools, especially secondary schools where student behavior can be volatile, seems to me to be a recipe for disaster. I believe the risk of unintentional killing may outweigh any benefit. This simple analysis does not even look at the changed relationship between teachers and students that might occur if guns were introduced to the mix.

Investing in mental health support is critical beyond its application to violence issues. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “between 13 percent and 30 percent of American school-age children experience mental health disorders, including 1 in 7 children between the ages of 2 and 8.”

At colleges across the country, professional staff report a steady increase in the number of students with severe psychological problems. There are no easy or inexpensive answers to addressing this issue, but the price we’ll pay if we do nothing is a hundredfold.

One of your commitments throughout your higher education career is to assure that colleges and universities serve low-income and first-generation college students. How are you doing that work at SRU?

This is an ongoing effort at SRU, as it is in most places. It is an effort that involves constant research and self-evaluation. At SRU, we’re working to better understand our students’ experiences. For example, when students leave, they often cite cost as a reason. We need to understand what that really means. Is it that they truly do not have the money to attend? Or is it that they have the money but do not see SRU as worth the cost? While we have to study these issues at a macro level, they are solved on an individual, micro level. We are working to build a system that remains fair to all, but that adjusts to individual circumstances. This is challenging work, but very important if we are to serve a wider array of learners.
Jeffrey Austin (AM '13) was honored by being selected for the statewide Innovative Educator Corps (IEC). The IEC is a new recognition program for Michigan teachers who employ an innovative educational program, methodology, or strategy to help prepare their students for future career success in high-demand fields. “Being acknowledged for this award is about recognizing what students do and what they have been able to put in,” says Austin, who teaches English and directs the writing center at Skyline High School.

Austin explains that three main factors led to this acknowledgment. He credits the students who help him run the center for their strong mission and drive for more socially just and equitable schooling, both for the center and the community at large. He also credits Skyline students and faculty for their efforts in gaining more buy-in for writing across the curriculum practices, especially in subject areas like science and medicine. With the state of Michigan getting ready to release literacy essentials requirements across content areas, their efforts were timely. Lastly, he praises the tutors’ efforts toward improving college preparation and career readiness services within the center.

““There are many teachers who made a difference in my life, which is a real testament to the work that teachers do. One of them was my fourth and fifth grade teacher, Bill MacDonald. I don’t think he ever knew this, but I learned from observing him and being around him. He showed me that you can put kindness and empathy at the center of your work and trust students to do amazing things in their work. He really cared and understood how to build relationships with students by giving them timely and meaningful feedback. Instead of giving a stamp and saying ‘good job,’ he took the time to talk to you as a reader, writer, and thinker. He was dynamite. In 1992, this guy was culturally responsive even before a lot of people were thinking about it.” – Jeffrey Austin
The writing center’s work in the community, and the fact that it gives back to the community, sets it apart. Operating without a dedicated budget, it has been able to partner with 826 Michigan, Eastern Michigan University’s Office of Campus and Community Writing, and U-M’s Sweetland Writing Center, where tutors spend time engaging with ideas about ways in which to apply a social justice and equity lens to their work.

To develop this work further, Austin praises the efforts of the center’s student leaders who work diligently on earning grant and award money. “I have students writing grant applications to the Parent Teacher Student Organization and even insurance companies,” he explains. “Or we win awards that bring in some funding, like our recent recognition from the National Council of Teachers for English for creating the best literary magazine in the state.”

The center has decided to invest that entire award in helping other Washtenaw County schools start their own writing centers. Tutors have presented proposals to principals and teachers across the county; they signed up five schools in just three weeks, with the expectation that more will join soon. The center plans to offer coaching, mentorship, and resources. In addition to learning how to navigate community relationships, Austin hopes that students “will see their potential and discover how to advocate for themselves and things they believe in.”

Reflecting on the current public narrative around teaching, Austin explains that he has worked in other fields, but that they “didn’t do anything” for him. “Here, I can make a difference and a change,” he said. “And if you really want to make a change, this is the place to do it.”

Michael Chrzan (BS ’16, TeachCert ’16) has intentionally continued to make the SOE a part of his life. He has used his enduring connections to enrich the experiences of his students at an inner-city charter school in Detroit, including bringing them to the SOE recently to visit with undergraduates in Dr. Simona Goldin’s ED 118 class. The triumph of his students is his focus, and is what he believes led to his recognition as Teach for America’s teacher of the year in Detroit.

“One of the things that the committee chair mentioned to me was his admiration of the perspective I take to teaching,” Chrzan says. “In my work, it’s not just the content that’s important. It’s the broader, institutional perspective. Approaching students from a wider perspective is what teaching is and what education should be. Education is a way out of a low-income environment, and it was my mother who always stressed this. It is a key that helped me decide what to do with my life, and I want to pass that access on to my students. I want education to be for others what it was for me, and this is what guides my philosophy.”

In addition to his upbringing, Chrzan credits some important teachers with helping him develop his approach. “I have had so many teachers who were great,” he says. “Among the most impactful were the ones who didn’t focus solely on the content. It wasn’t just the content that they taught. Of course, that was the reason they were in my life, but it was me that they were teaching. This was true across many subjects that I took, like choir, physics, and advanced math.”

Chrzan believes that the national narrative about teachers and education is at an “inflection point.” As a math teacher, he borrows the terminology from his field, and it refers to the point on a curve at which a change in direction occurs. The general public, he says, understands that teachers try to provide their students with everything they need, but that teachers alone cannot be held solely responsible for the outcomes of young people. In addition, he says, the idea that teachers are already well enough compensated is becoming less common. “In all,” he says, “I want to be another teacher among the national trend of teachers demanding what is best for us. By doing this, we can be our best selves for our students and help them become their best selves too.”

“Teaching was always the clearest way for me to see how I could make a positive impact in the world. If we find what we love to do, there will always be some way that we can take that love to inspire others and make a way for them.” – Michael Chrzan
Alumna and longtime SOE mentor Holly Hereau (AM ‘05, TeachCert ’05) was honored with the 2019 High School Teacher of the Year award, given by the Michigan Science Teachers Association (MSTA). In its Teacher of the Year selection process, MSTA looks for teachers who model best practices, demonstrate innovative teaching strategies, and who are excellent role models and an inspiration to students and teachers.

A teacher at South Redford Thurston High School, Hereau’s students are currently working on a watershed project on the district grounds, gathering information about local water quality. Her class planned the project with the help of the Dan Wolz Clean Water Education Grant. She has also been actively engaged in the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) in her district’s schools as well as working with her peers at the state and national level.

The NGSS Standards, which align with the philosophies of Project-Based Learning, have become more important to state efforts in science education, and Hereau’s cutting-edge work on NGSS is what, she says, may have led to this award. “I had been looking at Project-Based Learning ever since my mentor teacher led me to do it,” she says, “so when the NGSS Standards were released, I knew I had an opportunity to lead and to connect with my science educator community so that we could pilot new ideas to be able to professionally develop other teachers.”

In fact, the mentor of her own mentor teacher helped to create the standards, so Hereau recognizes their impact on her work. These new standards, she notes, feature “equity-based education that allows students to focus on a problem they are curious about, while being guided to figure it out.”

Prior to teaching, Hereau worked in research. “I had always loved science, and I had always coached,” she says, “but when I was in graduate school, I had a teaching assistantship and realized that I liked teaching more than I liked doing research.” She enjoyed connecting with people and interacting with them. As she got to know the students she taught during her assistantship, many of whom were non-majors, she realized that she could help them grow in other areas, including critical thinking. “I saw that something had to change, and I just thought that I could possibly do something with that.”

Working on NGSS as an early adopter, she says, gave her the chance to bring awareness of these challenges to others in the science teaching community. “A lot of things are starting to line up, and it’s such an important shift happening with science becoming more about teaching students how to think rather than memorizing facts. This new wave is allowing some students to have success that wouldn’t traditionally have had success—and I think that’s wonderful.”

“Whenever I can, I talk to people about what we do as teachers. I talk to teachers, too. When a colleague goes on social media and says ‘Yay! Snow day!’ it makes me wonder if we should really be talking about that. Instead, we should be confirming that we like our work and our planning. It’s not the easiest road, especially when we’re surrounded by people like us, to reach out to people unlike us, but I am always trying to jump in when I see someone with a misconception about teachers or teaching.” – Holly Hereau
Reflecting on their family’s three generations of educators, Shelley (BSED ’75, TeachCert ’75) and Ryan (ABEd ’09, TeachCert ’09) Bruder understand that they are part of a lineage that has already been teaching for more than 50 years. And what they have come to realize is that helping children grow is their greatest calling. For them, teaching the academic disciplines comes second to making connections with their students.

Alumnus Ryan Bruder has been an educator for 10 years, with five years spent in the classroom, two years as Lead Teacher and Project-Based Learning Coordinator at A2STEAM @ Northside, and three years spent as an elementary principal for Dexter Community Schools. Reflecting on his upbringing as the child and grandchild of educators, he says, “I never knew specifics, but I always understood that my mom went through challenges and triumphs as a principal. I was always proud of her relationships with families and kids, and I really strive to achieve that in my own work. Her advocacy for children was something I always admired.”

Having observed the evolution of her field over several decades, alumna Shelley Bruder notes that the biggest change has involved the roles an educator plays. “Now, you’re not ‘just’ a teacher or an administrator,” she says. “You’re oftentimes playing a role in the medical field, or you’re a social worker, or a nutritionist. Often we’re providing food for families or before- and after-school care. This is all happening in order to meet the needs of children and their families now—not just the children. I see families under more stress, and this all rolls into what teachers pick up now as part of their work.”

Ryan Bruder adds that socioemotional learning is a priority at his school: “As far as the narrative I would like to share about my field, it is that we are now prioritizing growth in the areas that can affect learning, and not only the typical areas of ‘just math’ or ‘just reading.’”

Furthermore, he acknowledges that the complex work of educators to attend holistically to student needs requires specialized knowledge and skills in order to be done successfully. “It’s true that schooling is a common experience, and so we all feel knowledgeable about it in some ways,” he says. But attending school or being a parent of a child in school does not provide the preparation required by classroom teachers or administrators, who must manage the diverse needs of their students.

As a field instructor for the SOE, Shelley is proud that she sees future teachers receiving excellent instruction and committing to meeting the developmental needs of their students. “They are making this choice with their eyes open,” she says, “and people who go to the School of Education are bright. Their choices show me what we can look forward to in the future.”

That focus on the future is exactly what has kept Shelley in the field for this long. “Society, in general, needs to remember that those little people in school right now are going to eventually be the people who run the world,” she explains. “Kids need a foundation that is built by our conscious thoughts about how we teach, what we teach, and when we teach.”

She understands the great responsibility that comes with the fact that school might be the single most secure environment children have in their lives. Shelley says, “Here, they learn how to be a friend, how to be kind, how to work with people who are the same and different than they are…it’s incumbent upon us to teach that.”

The Bruders’ careers are distinguished by their focus on nurturing the whole child. As the youngest educator in his family (for now), Ryan reflects on the ways in which he carries the torch: “It’s very easy to devote time and resources to academic content, but as a staff we are working to emphasize the socioemotional health of students. Just like everything else in the world, things have changed, and it’s our job to be responsive to the needs of our stakeholders—the students, staff, and families.”
After 37 years with public schools in Michigan, Texas, Illinois, California, and Iowa, Susan Chaffee Boulter (AB ’57, TeachCert ’57) retired in 1997. Over the next seven years, she assembled a reading program called SYNC-LINK® LEARNING, which is available at synclinklearning.com.

Peter George Dunbar (BSEd ’88) is teaching Hospitality, Tourism, and Recreation at Georgian College in Barrie, Ontario.

Naomi E. Ervin (BSN ’64, MPH ’68, PhD ’80) recently completed the second edition of her textbook Advanced Public and Community Health Nursing Practice. It was published by Springer Publishing Company. The coauthor of this edition is Pamela Kulbok, who is professor emerita of the University of Virginia.

Bette Rae Schwartz Feinstein (AB ’63, TeachCert ’63) has been an independent bookseller for over 40 years. She now lives in New Jersey. She has two children and six grandchildren. She is an avid needleworker and quilter.

Quentin Gessner (AM ’53, EdS ’66) worked at U-M Extension Service as the director of conferences and institutes from 1964 through 1972, later serving as its assistant director. He was also president of the U-M Alumni club in Tucson, Arizona. Several years ago, he began to send notes to his 13 grandchildren on topics like self-discipline, character, and conflict resolution. These messages were gathered and placed into a book titled Notes from Grandpa—available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble—which he hopes will assist parents and grandparents who are helping their kids deal with the critical issues of life.

Since June, Andrea Goldblum (AM ’89) has been working at the University of Cincinnati as the Title IX Coordinator and Executive Director of Gender Equity and Inclusion.

Elizabeth Hopkins’ (AM ’07, TeachCert ’07) business, Hopkins Education Services, has been in operation for three years. She founded this company with her husband, Katie Dove Fox (ABEd ’02, TeachCert ’02) was a state finalist for the 2017–2018 Maryland Teacher of the Year award.
Corey, who was also a teacher before starting the business. They are proud to announce that Colorado Parent magazine voted Hopkins Education Services a 2018 Top 5 tutoring and special needs provider for the greater Denver area. What makes the company successful is its commitment to putting kids first and addressing the needs of the whole child through a mindfulness lens. They are excited to see where 2019 leads them!

Adria Libolt (AM ’76) is grateful to the School of Education. Because of her master’s degree, she taught at a high school and later at Lansing Community College. She also worked at Capital Literacy for several years, training tutors and managing a database. Additionally, she had a career in the Michigan Department of Corrections. Her first book, A Deputy Warden’s Reflections on Prison Work, tells of some of her experiences (2012, wipandstock.com). Her second book, Food: An Appetite for Life, was published in January 2019 by White Bird Publications (whitebirdpublishers.com). It includes essays and experiences about cooking and eating.

John Arthur Seeley (PhD ’78) received his doctorate from the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education. He is now retired and living in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

IN MEMORY

Former faculty member and alumna Gwendolyn Calvert Baker (ABEd ’64, TeachCert ’64, AM ’69, PhD ’72, LLDHon ’97) passed away at age 87 on March 7, 2019 in Sarasota, Florida. Baker earned three degrees from the School of Education: a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, a Master of Arts in Educational Administration, and a Doctorate in Education. She was a nationally known educator, international leader of multiculturalism in education, and an activist for women and children’s issues. She taught in Ann Arbor Public Schools before joining the School of Education faculty. As an associate professor, Baker was also appointed Director of Affirmative Action Programs at U-M. In recognition of her accomplishments, the University awarded her an honorary law degree in 1997, and she was honored again in 2014 with the naming of the Gwendolyn Calvert Baker Collegiate Professorship of American Culture and Screen Arts.

Baker lectured on a national level and directed programs serving minorities and women at the National Institute of Education in Washington, DC. She served as Vice President and Dean at Bank Street Graduate College of Education in New York City; President of New York City Board of Education; National Executive Director of the YWCA of USA; and President and CEO for the U.S. Committee for UNICEF. Baker was highly service driven, having served on many corporate and nonprofit boards. She traveled widely, enjoyed reading, collected fine art, relished fine dining, loved the opera and the theatre, and spent time golfing, playing tennis, and swimming.

Alumna Norma Blechman Gastwirth (ABEd ’65, TeachCert ’65) of Bridgehampton, New York and Wellington, Florida, passed away peacefully on May 14, 2018. Norma is survived by her husband of 53 years, Stuart; sons and daughters-in-law, Andy (Laura), David (Lauren), and Jason (Vanessa); eight grandchildren (Brian, Julia, Caroline, Michael, Sam, Chloe, Olivia, and Madison); and brothers Max and Stephen. A funeral service was held on Thursday, May 17 at Riverside-Nassau North Chapel in Great Neck, New York.

Alumna Judith G. (Bertolin) Huber (ABEd ’62, TeachCert ’62) passed away on December 14, 2018. She was born on March 4, 1940, grew up in Downers Grove, Illinois, and taught elementary school for many years in San Diego, California. Huber was a member of the Alpha Xi Delta Sorority at the University of Michigan. She is buried next to the graves of her parents at the Clarendon Hills Cemetery in Darien, Illinois.

Alumna Lore Reeber (ABEd ’54, TeachCert ’54) passed away on February 9, 2019. She was raised in Detroit, attended Denby High School, and came to the University of Michigan in 1950 where she studied elementary education and was affiliated with Kappa Delta Sorority. Lore was offered a Regents’ Alumni Scholarship upon acceptance to the university, which covered her tuition for four years; without this, she would not have been able to afford to attend. This was a driving force in encouraging Lore and husband, John, to give back to the School of Education in support of need-based scholarships, which they have supported for more than 30 years. Lore taught in various school districts in Michigan over the course of her 30-year career, and raised two children with John. The couple enjoyed 63 years of marriage and spent the majority of their retirement years in Sun City West, Arizona. John is very grateful for Lore’s education and teaching career, from which, he says, they have benefited tremendously.
Victors for Michigan Campaign

Campaign impact by the numbers

Goal: $60,000,000

$63,375,970
Total gifts, pledges, and private grants raised

6,140
Donors

$12,503,204
Committed to student support (20% of dollars raised)

72
Donors who are on the SOE faculty or staff
Students received scholarship support during the campaign: 1,243

SOE spaces renovated:
- Lounge
- Classrooms
- Barondes conference room

Endowment grew by 69% ($27,183,068 to $45,826,559)

30 New Endowments created

Champions for Education
Victors for Michigan Campaign

The Victors for Michigan Campaign raised more than $63 million for SOE initiatives that increase student support, fund groundbreaking research and public scholarship, and help to maintain and update the SOE's building, classrooms, and technology. The Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation played a key role in this record-breaking effort by providing a $1 million cornerstone gift at the outset of the campaign in August 2013.

"Considering the Towsley Foundation’s long partnership with the University of Michigan, our engagement with the School of Education, and Lynn Towsley White’s service on the Dean’s Advisory Council, this gift was a natural fit," explains Del Dunbar, Towsley Foundation President. "The Foundation was pleased to be able to support SOE’s work. This work impacts not only students, teachers, and families across Michigan, but aligns closely with our own objective of improving the lives of people and communities."

Established in 1959, the Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation was created by Margaret Dow Towsley with stock from the Dow Chemical Company. Margaret was the daughter of Herbert H. Dow, founder of Dow Chemical, and Harry was a physician and professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases at the University of Michigan from 1934 to 1971. The couple were longtime residents of Ann Arbor, where they raised five daughters and were active members and philanthropists within the University and Ann Arbor communities.

Lynn Towsley White, the youngest of the Towsley daughters, has served on the Board of Trustees of the Foundation since 1967 and was president from 2000 through 2016. She is now the chair of the foundation. White has also served on the SOE’s Dean’s Advisory Council since its inception in 2007. As a retired teacher of middle school mathematics and a science and faculty advisor to the middle school student government at Stone Ridge Country Day School of the Sacred Heart in Rockville, Maryland, her experience and insight is invaluable to the School. White has another connection to the SOE as well. As a graduate of University High School, White spent her early years in the hallways and classrooms of the building on East University Avenue that now houses the School of Education.

The Towsley Foundation gift was directed toward supporting three specific areas; appropriately, one of these areas was building and facility updates. Originally opened in 1924, the “U High” building that now houses the SOE is a campus and community landmark. However, its spaces have not always been amenable to the work of 21st-century students, teachers, and researchers. Funding from the Towsley Foundation has helped to create more flexible and hospitable classrooms, lecture halls equipped with state-of-the-art technology, and improved spaces for research and collaboration.

The second area of focus for the Towsley gift was teacher education in the form of Professor Deborah Ball’s TeachingWorks initiative. The goal of TeachingWorks is to create a system for teacher preparation and support that will make skillful beginning teaching that disrupts inequity the rule rather than the exception. TeachingWorks offers professional development, training, seminars, and consultations to support teacher educators in learning practice-based methods to prepare beginning teachers.

"The Towsley Foundation invested in TeachingWorks at a crucial time in our development," Ball says. “Their support enabled us to begin launching partnerships with teachers and teacher educators across the country—partnerships that now number more than 70 and are transforming how teachers are prepared for our nation’s most important profession.”

(left to right) Dr. and Mrs. Towsley with daughters Margaret Ann (Ranny), Susan, Janis, Judith and Lynn (1990)
“Because of the foundation’s early vote of confidence,” Ball continues, “we have been able to build relationships with key partners and constituents, and develop materials and assessments to ensure that tomorrow’s teachers have the skills, capabilities, and dispositions to recognize and support the brilliance of each child in their classrooms.”

The final component of the Towsley gift was earmarked for community engagement. Because the SOE’s reach extends far beyond the building itself, the School receives regular requests from schools, districts, and other organizations to assist with various education-related projects. While the SOE is committed to engaging with its community partners, these efforts are often limited by the availability of faculty time and monetary resources. Funds from the Towsley Foundation have been used to expand these engagement efforts through such programs as Community Seminars and an ongoing partnership with the Detroit School of Arts.

This support will also be used to expand the SOE’s commitment to Detroit through the development of The Teaching School on the Marygrove College campus. This unique model will advance Detroit’s ongoing discussion about public education by creating a shared space in which all those involved in educating children will work in unison on developing the teaching profession. The project will result in a new, scalable, and replicable model for training teachers that also provides an exceptional learning experience for students.

“The Towsley Foundation is invaluable to the School of Education as we work to improve the lives of children, youth, and communities by addressing pressing educational issues and preparing educators to develop just and equitable educational opportunities,” says Dean Elizabeth Moje. “Their generous support enables us to honor our building’s proud history while securing its future by developing 21st-century learning spaces for our students. It also makes possible our robust community partnerships in Ann Arbor, Detroit, Grand Rapids, and throughout Michigan that directly benefit children, teachers, and schools. We are grateful for the value that the Towsley Foundation adds to our programs and opportunities, and for the special role its chairperson Lynn White plays as an advisor to the school.”

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**New Gifts, Endowments, and Bequests**

**Joan (AB ’87) and David (BGS ’85) Evans** have given a gift to TeachingWorks to support the development of a comprehensive framework for tracking on important measures of impact. With this investment, TeachingWorks will support teacher preparation partners with in-program assessments of their candidates as well as develop disciplined protocols and rubrics to track on the ways partners are taking up practice-based teacher education to improve teacher preparation and the teaching profession more broadly.

**Joan Nelson Neil** (AB ’52; TeachCert ’52) established the Joan Nelson Neil ESL Support Fund. This fund will provide financial assistance to teacher education students who are seeking their ESL endorsement. The costs for this endorsement are above the standard tuition for teacher certification. This fund serves to encourage students who choose this path because, according to Professor Cathy Reischl, “They intend to learn specialized skills to support K-12 English learners to learn both language and content knowledge.” In giving this gift, Neil shared that her ultimate goal is to “reach more children who would benefit from special services.”

**Ida Malian** (AM ’71, PhD ’77) has provided for the School of Education and the Pediatric Transplant Program with a generous bequest. The Ida Malian Pediatric Transplant Education Fund created a partnership between the SOE and the pediatric liver and kidney transplant experts at C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital. This team is committed to improving educational outcomes for pediatric organ transplant recipients and advancing scholarly activities to inform best practices in caring for these children.

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**The John Monteith Legacy Society**

Just as the University of Michigan founders had a vision that would create an educational system of the future, so do the members of the John Monteith Legacy Society.

Recognition in the John Monteith Legacy Society is automatic upon receipt of notice that the University of Michigan is named as a charitable beneficiary in your estate plan.

Members of the John Monteith Legacy Society receive:
- a subscription to Leaders & Best, the Office of University Development’s donor publication
- an engraved memento
- invitations to donor appreciation events

Contact the Office of Development and Alumni Relations to learn more about becoming the newest member of the John Monteith Legacy Society.

734.763.4880 | rumseyk@umich.edu
Imagine a child who travels across the state for frequent appointments and procedures as he prepares to receive a new kidney. How might his pressing medical needs affect his lifestyle? What might change about his participation in school? How might he play differently with his peers?

The demands placed upon a pediatric organ transplant patient are multifaceted, painting a complex picture of clinical and socioemotional needs. Children who receive a new organ have a specific clinical protocol to follow, which necessitates changes in their lives and may lead to social challenges caused by time spent away from classmates. On top of their clinical regimen, hospital time, and psychosocial needs, young transplant recipients face unique educational needs. Alumna and donor Dr. Ida Malian (AM ’71, PhD ’77) realizes the challenges faced by these children and their families.

As the former Director of Educational Training at Michigan Medicine’s Children’s Psychiatric department, Malian witnessed how the confluence of educational, psychological, and medical services helped children transition back to school. An expert in special education, her interest was piqued by a news report about a girl who needed a liver transplant. Malian was determined to apply her expertise to this cause.

One of her first steps was to contact the SOE because “it was the natural and logical resource,” and the C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital, whose pediatric transplantation program was already beginning to emphasize the educational transitions of their patients. She also encouraged the staff at Mott to add in community liaisons—people who help bridge the gap for young patients transitioning from treatment to the other aspects of their lives. “Next, I made an appointment with Dean Moje, who said that this was going to be a beautiful collaboration.”

Helping pediatric patients felt like Malian’s calling. “What’s interesting here,” she says, “is that these young transplant patients look the same when they go back to school, or even healthier, but they have a lot of unseen needs when it comes to ensuring that they receive a good head start as they return to school.”

This was the work she knew she wanted to do—but she also knew she couldn’t do it alone.

Dr. John C. Magee, Director of the University of Michigan Transplant Center and Surgical Director of the Pediatric Kidney and Liver Transplant Programs, explains that none of the transplantation process works in isolation: “The neat thing about transplantation is that it involves a whole team of people who are skilled and interdependent. This involves partners with expertise in medicine, nursing, social work, psychology, pharmacy, and dietetics. Much of what we do in transplantation is the education of the child and the family. Our overall goal is to help kids go back to their normal lives and to help them reach their potential. This is key. Given all of their needs, and school is among them, Ida’s gift addresses an unmet need.”

Two of the pediatric transplant team members at Mott, Dr. Emily Fredericks and Dr. Melissa Cousino, are psychologists who specialize in the care of pediatric transplant patients and their families. They collaborated with Dr. Miranda Fitzgerald of the SOE to create a packet of resources to help empower families to advocate for their children at school. Malian’s gift to the transplant education program made this work possible. “This packet has helped families realize how to request special education services, and it helps them see that their child is running into common challenges,” Fredericks says. “We find, anecdotally, that this leads to the children feeling more supported.”

The packet also provides teachers with information to help them be aware of situations their student could face within the classroom, especially when it comes to schoolwork and social interactions. “As clinicians, we need to support these young patients in so many aspects. These packets enable us to make the most of the limited time we have with them in the clinic,” Cousino explains.

Feedback from teachers has been largely positive. Most report that the information in the packets is clear and that it helps to facilitate valuable conversations. The packets help parents
understand the options available to their children, including Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). They also expand educators’ knowledge about the needs of students in transition, from the hospital back to school, during the transplant process. “We write each packet for different audiences, including parents, patients, and educators. So all of the information is explained to the readers from their angles,” Fitzgerald says.

Two new community liaisons will also join the team as part of the Ida Malian Pediatric Transplant Education Program. One will be a pediatric transplant psychology fellow; the other will be a trainee from the SOE. This program will help patients navigate their educational needs before and after surgery. “It will allow us to expand beyond the clinic,” says Fredericks, “and we’ll be able to expand to school personnel as a result of the School of Education’s efforts. With Ida Malian’s help, we have been able to prepare strategies to better gauge student academic progress, determine the number of students who have received assistance, and uncover the best ways to help with their overall functioning.”

The strength of this collaboration comes from combining expertise across campus. Fitzgerald explains: “I want to stress the significance of the fact that the new community liaison program offers a fellow on both sides: pediatric psychology and education. This is about utilizing their combined knowledge to work with parents, and it will really help families since they will have access to both of them.”

“There are many opportunities to have a greater reach as well,” adds Cousino. Sometimes students are even more stressed about school than they are about their upcoming surgery or appointments. So working with the liaisons and teachers to avoid these penalties provides them relief in an already stressful time.”

Transplant Director John Magee stresses that pediatric transplantation is about setting up patients for a lifetime of wellness, which includes attaining an education. “In adults,” he says, “the patients enter and exit as adults. In pediatrics, our goal is to transition patients from youth to becoming successful adults. We are working to maximize this, and so far the school aspect has been underemphasized. Truly, our work is all part of a 70-year plan. In fact, when we transplant a 1-year-old, my plan is to be in a position to have to worry about them saving for their retirement.”

Malian says: “This project encompasses the SOE’s mission, which is ‘to generate, study, and teach strategies, practices, and tools for addressing educational problems and to prepare practitioners, policymakers, and researchers who can develop equitable and just educational opportunities.’ When I look at the School of Education’s com-

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Malian says: “This project encompasses the SOE’s mission, which is ‘to generate, study, and teach strategies, practices, and tools for addressing educational problems and to prepare practitioners, policymakers, and researchers who can develop equitable and just educational opportunities.’ When I look at the School of Education’s com-

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Though it rarely makes headlines, the untold story of the annual fund is felt deeply. A significant portion of the support received during the Victors for Michigan campaign was directed to the School’s annual fund, the Fund for Excellence. During the campaign, 5,604 donors gave 17,685 individual gifts totaling $2,513,055 in unrestricted support through the Fund for Excellence.

These gifts benefit the work of the School and the experiences of its students by allowing us the flexibility to direct support where it is needed, when it is needed. This support allows us to lift up our students who find themselves facing sudden financial hurdles that would otherwise prevent them from finishing their degrees. The fund assists in launching new initiatives and partnerships. And it supports outreach efforts to engage more deeply with the communities in which we work.

Among its many achievements this past year, the Fund for Excellence helped launch a new student organization, the Student Philanthropy and Community Corps (“the Corps”). Under the direction of Higher Education master’s student Frank Suárez-Román, the Corps was formed to create opportunities for participating undergraduates and graduate students to engage in and support the SOE community in the areas of student development and philanthropy.

Research shows that university and college students are more likely to support their alma maters if they are engaged and philanthropic as students. Furthermore, it is important for students to understand the role that philanthropy plays in their own educational experiences.

The Corps conducted an initial survey of students, which found that most students would consider contributing financially to the SOE if they knew their gift would create social impact and ensure that other students could have the same great experiences they’ve enjoyed at the SOE. When given a choice of which annual fund goal they felt deserved to be a top priority, they voted to increase gifts for need-based student support. In response, the Corps organized an online campaign asking the SOE faculty and staff community to raise $1,000 for this purpose. Within 24 hours, the goal was met.

The Corps also creates opportunities for SOE students to engage with one another, outside of their cohorts or programs of study. For example, the Corps organized a “Friendsgiving” event in the Lounge, just before Thanksgiving, to encourage SOE students to form a community that crosses education disciplines.

The Corps is in its second full year, and although its founder has graduated, current Higher Education master’s student Krystle Bednark plans to continue leading the group. Bednark says, “The main focus of the Corps right now is to inform students of the impact that philanthropy has had on the School of Education. To that end, we are currently planning an event that will raise awareness of how these gifts have contributed to the public good. We are also working on recruiting new members and are excited to bring our ideas to life that will foster community and promote philanthropy at the SOE.”

The loyalty and generosity of Fund for Excellence donors have positioned the school for success year after year. As new alumni are introduced to the importance of annual support, donors who have given for decades pave the way for exceptional educational experiences. Manager of Annual Giving and Alumni Relations Erica Jenkins says, “My hope is that our current students and recent graduates are learning how the contributions of annual donors have impacted their experiences and that they are inspired to become donors themselves.”

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“Without my studies at the University of Michigan, I would not have the tools or confidence to pursue this important work.” — Rae

“Because of your donation, I am able to model the example of hard work and progression through education for both my students and my children.” — Natasha

“This scholarship means so much to me because it’s helping me receive an education that will prepare me to be the best teacher I can be. I have gained so much from being a student at the University of Michigan and in the School of Education. The philosophies I have gained regarding pedagogy will stay with me throughout my career and I am beyond thankful for this experience. Your support has helped make this experience possible, and I cannot thank you enough.” — Noa

“Without this scholarship, I do not know if it would be possible to further my education at this time. I am incredibly grateful for your generosity and passion to help others like myself.” — Kailyn

“This scholarship has made it possible for me to not only pursue my dream career but to help young minds pursue their own dreams.” — Neena

“It is my greatest ambition to be able to pass on my knowledge to my students and to be an inspiration to them in the classroom and a leader in their lives. Your generosity has facilitated my dreams.” — Joseph

“Receiving this scholarship not only validates the work I’ve done and the effort I’ve put into getting where I am, but allows me to focus more of my time on my studies and improving myself. Words can’t capture how much it means to me that other people consider me a worthy investment and want to support my education.” — Katherine

“In helping me achieve my goals, you have caused a ripple effect to my future students so that I can help them achieve their goals. Thank you for your continued support and belief in educators for the future citizens of our country.” — Brianna

“I hope to inspire a new generation of lifelong learners, and that is made possible through this wonderful scholarship. I am very thankful for the amazing opportunities this scholarship has afforded me.” — Cecilia

“This award has not only supported me financially, but also emotionally. Academic work is challenging and rewards are infrequent. But this award has been a reminder that I am capable. And for that reason, most of all, I thank you.” — Nicolas

Thank You and Go Blue!
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