GSE Welcomes

Dean Suzanne Rosenblith

SEE STORY ON PAGE 3
Dear GSE Family and Friends,

As the new academic year gets underway, I am reminded of the defining characteristics of a university and the importance of the free exchange of ideas. While our nation and the world reel from continued displays of hatred, intolerance and violence, I am confident that institutions of higher education can provide spaces in which people who disagree can debate, argue and critically examine their own and others’ ideas. I believe the Graduate School of Education, whose core values emphasize the power of education to transform lives, is a place guided by the highest professional standards and integrity. In GSE we believe in the civic mission of the university to cultivate a tolerant, respectful society where pluralism is cherished and flourishes.

In looking at our role in cultivating the next generation of citizens, I am so proud of the committed faculty in GSE. Like other schools of education, GSE faculty are expected to teach well, disseminate new ideas and knowledge through research, and contribute to their professional, university and local communities through outreach and service. But what I have come to understand in just a few months as dean of the Graduate School of Education, is that in our school, it is not only what faculty do, but why they do it that makes their work special and important.

One of our featured research stories focuses on the important work of Dr. Megan Holland, assistant professor from the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. Dr. Holland’s Spencer Foundation funded research contributes to the growing scholarship on college accessibility. To what degree are pathways to higher education, specifically the application process, impacted by race and socioeconomic status? We know that higher education affords students opportunities to engage with competing ideas and beliefs and we know that through the robust exchange of ideas our deliberative democracy is enhanced. Ensuring that barriers to accessing higher education are reduced is an economic, social and civic concern.

Another featured story discusses the research contributions by Dr. Gregory Fabiano, professor from the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology. Dr. Fabiano’s ongoing work examines effective ways to help fathers and father figures develop positive parenting skills for children with ADHD.

For many faculty, the lines between teaching, research and service are blurred with each informing the others. Dr. Ji-Won Son, assistant professor from the Department of Learning and Instruction, exemplifies these intersections in her summer math program. Through the generous support of the Cullen Foundation, Dr. Son provided math enrichment to girls throughout the city of Buffalo this summer.

Dr. Richard Lamb, associate professor from the Department of Learning and Instruction, featured in our last newsletter for his groundbreaking innovations in neurocognition, has teamed up with department colleague Dr. Elisabeth Etopio, clinical assistant professor and director of the Teacher Education Institute, to examine the ways in which virtual reality can help teachers more productively address student behavior issues in the classroom.

This publication includes additional stories highlighting the important and impactful work of GSE faculty, as well as other stories of interest. In our Alumni Spotlight, for example, we feature Dr. Juanita Hunter (EdD ’83, Curriculum Planning), the 2017 UB Alumni Association Community Leadership Award recipient, who is a longtime advocate for the homeless in the Buffalo community. I am heartened by the fact that it is not just GSE faculty who are engaged in impactful teaching, research and outreach, but that our alumni also feel this commitment.

While our nation confronts deep divisions, I am inspired by the work of our faculty and the commitment of our alumni and friends. If we agree that civility, tolerance and respect should prevail, then I invite each of you to critically reflect on your role in making our vision of a productive citizenry a reality.

Warm Regards,

Suzanne Rosenblith
Dean, Graduate School of Education
Suzanne Rosenblith was appointed the ninth dean of the Graduation School of Education after a nationwide search, and began leading the school in July 2017. Rosenblith succeeds the tenure of Jaekyung Lee (2013–17), who returned to the faculty as a professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology.

“Dr. Rosenblith stood out because of her impressive administrative experience, collaborative approach to leadership, creative ideas for approaching issues facing education programs nationally and clear vision for furthering the Graduate School of Education’s mission,” said Charles Zukoski, provost of the University at Buffalo. “That mission is to improve human development, education and the information environment through research, education and engagement.”

Rosenblith previously served as the associate dean of undergraduate programs in the College of Education at Clemson University, where she led the creation of numerous educational programs and a reorganization of the college. Rosenblith has also been a faculty member at Clemson since 2002, including most recently as a professor of educational foundations, and her prolific scholarship on the relationship between religion and public schooling is widely known.

“Dr. Rosenblith is an innovative academic leader who is known for her ability to bring big ideas to fruition,” said Satish Tripathi, president of the University at Buffalo. “With her distinguished record of programmatic success, she will surely advance scholarship in the Graduate School of Education and cultivate the next generation of counselors, librarians and educational leaders while serving as an outstanding advocate for our university’s far-reaching vision.”

Rosenblith is excited to become a member of the Graduate School of Education family. “The faculty in the Graduate School of Education have a long and impressive reputation for high quality and impactful research,” she said. “I am truly humbled to have the opportunity to work alongside them and extend the work already underway.”
How are Disadvantaged High School Students Navigating the College Selection Process?

The college application process is complicated, including how high school students obtain and use information to narrow down their college choices. This selection process can be especially challenging for students at racially and socioeconomically diverse high schools.

“It’s important to understand how students make college application decisions, and what influences them,” said Megan Holland, assistant professor from the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. “When students attend schools that are a mismatch, they are less likely to graduate, and it puts them at a distinct disadvantage.”

Holland interviewed 89 high school students at two suburban schools in the Northeast as they were navigating the college application process during their junior and senior years. Four years later, she followed up with a sample of those students to examine the role that high schools play in influencing the kinds of college information students have access to during the college selection process.

Through these interviews, Holland found that the resources and information inherent in social ties were key to transmitting information about college. The schools connected students to college information via ties to friends, counselors and college admissions officers, but these connections were not equal, leading to different college destinations by race and class. “This work sheds light on the internal processes of high schools that reinforce and reproduce inequalities,” said Holland.

Holland is currently working on a book, Two Paths Diverged: Race, Class and Inequality in the College Going High School, which she hopes will become a resource for educators who are interested in understanding how to better prepare all students for the college application process.

The book will offer policy suggestions to help alleviate the inequalities identified by Holland’s research, including: (1) schools need to be aware that one-size-fits-all methods of disseminating college information can be detrimental in schools where students come from different social backgrounds; (2) counselors need to consider that not all students assess and evaluate colleges in the same way, which contributes to some students being more vulnerable to college marketing; and (3) counselors need to meet students where they are and use varied strategies and methods to assist students in accessing information.

Grant-Funded Research Awards

The following are examples of recent grants that were awarded to faculty members in the Graduate School of Education. These externally-funded projects represent scholarly research that can have an impact on our educational communities.

“Randomized Controlled Trial of Second Step Child Protection Unit”

This study will assess whether Early Learning–Grade 5 Child Protection Unit lessons improve the ability to recognize, report and refuse unsafe situations.

AMANDA NICKERSON, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
- Committee for Children
- $500,000 (total costs)
- May 2017–July 2019
Can yoga, a 5,000-year-old physical, mind and spiritual practice, transform the lives of people across race, nationality, age, gender and economic status?

The Africa Yoga Project (AYP) was created in 2007 by Paige Elenson, an American on safari who was moved by the joy and connection she experienced while teaching yoga to a group of Kenyan acrobats. The acrobats also loved the experience and asked Elenson to return to continue teaching them yoga. Since that time, AYP has become a model for community empowerment and job creation throughout Africa. Over 6,000 people have participated in yoga classes across 13 African countries, and more than 200 youth, trained as yoga teachers, are earning a living wage by teaching these classes.

The success of the Africa Yoga Project caught the attention of Catherine Cook-Cottone, associate professor from the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology (CSEP) and a certified yoga instructor. Cook-Cottone led a team of researchers in 2013 to Kenya to see firsthand the impact of AYP. “We wanted to research the effects of the Africa Yoga Project,” said Cook-Cottone, “and detail the effects so we could empower the project and learn how to create access to yoga here in Buffalo.”

The research team conducted three studies on yoga teachers, child students and adult students, who were asked how the practice of yoga changed their lives. The overall findings revealed that there were personal benefits for the students and teachers related to confidence, coping skills, health, personal growth and self-compassion. The students and teachers also reported better relationships and a stronger sense of community.

A second research project was conducted by the team in Somalia and Kenya. Assisted by Wendy Guyker, clinical assistant professor from CSEP, a curriculum was developed for a trauma-informed yoga program for at-risk youth in these countries. The findings in this study indicated that participants experienced significantly reduced distress and symptoms related to trauma, as well as improved self-concept and growth mindset, and self-regulation.

Inspired by the positive effects of AYP, Cook-Cottone started the Yogis in Service program in Buffalo. The goal of this non-profit organization, officially formed in 2015, is to empower, inspire and develop the Buffalo community. Currently, 10 classes are being held weekly in locations throughout Buffalo and these classes are attended by hundreds of people each week.

Future research will determine the impact of the Yogis in Service program but for now, Cook-Cottone feels the program serves an important function in the community. “We’re providing yoga where there is no yoga,” she said. “When you give people access, you also give them an opportunity for success.”

“Effects of State Policy on High School Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Opportunities and Outcomes for Low-Income Underrepresented Minorities”

This study will illuminate the success/failure of state policy initiatives designed to increase and broaden participation in STEM fields at the high school level.

**LOIS WEIS, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**
**SEONG WON HAN, CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

- National Science Foundation
- $2,499,000 (total costs)
- August 2017–August 2020

“Comprehensive Meta-Analysis of Malleable Factors to Support Youth with ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder)”

This study will identify the treatments and situations that work best for parents, educators and treatment providers who support children with ADHD.

**GREGORY FABIANO, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR**

- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences
- $588,514 (total costs)
- July 2016–June 2018
How Can We Foster Equitable Mathematical Experiences for Girls?

MATHEMATICAL LITERACY IS A NECESSITY TO BE A FUNCTIONING MEMBER OF SOCIETY

There are significant racial and gender gaps in math achievement in the United States. More than half of low socioeconomic status, Black, and Hispanic students have demonstrated below average math skills, and women remain underrepresented in many STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields.

“It is at the middle school level that girls turn their attention away from mathematics to other fields,” said Ji-Won Son, assistant professor from the Department of Learning and Instruction. “In particular, during the summer, when school was out and non-school influences were dominant, gender gaps and achievement gaps among students of varying backgrounds grew largely.”

To address the summer gap problems, Son provided a series of free five-day summer math programs for 150 girls at three different locations in Buffalo. The programs emphasized hands-on, project-based and creative learning experiences, as well as personal attention, active learning and relationship building, with the goal to support and encourage interest in math by girls. The programs fostered equitable math practices while emphasizing relearning math concepts beyond what these girls would normally learn in their schools.

At the conclusion of the program, Son conducted interviews with all 150 girls to explore what and how they learned, and what they liked and disliked about the program. Overall, Son found that the program positively impacted the way students learned and viewed math.

“Across the board, the girls I talked to really enjoyed all the activities and learning through doing,” said Son. “Many students stated that their feelings about mathematics and fractions have changed since coming to the program.”

Son plans to apply for a grant to sustain the project in subsequent years. She is also preparing a research report and a book, which she hopes will become a resource for educators and researchers who are interested in finding a better way to foster equitable math experiences for all students.

Based on this research, Son offers educational and practical suggestions for practitioners and parents, including:

1. teachers need to provide hands-on, project-based learning experiences where students learn to investigate ideas, and need to engage in activities during the academic year to help students understand why math computations work and when to use each operation;
2. because one-size-fits-all methods don’t work, teachers need to give personal attention and emphasize relationship building to create equitable math practices for girls; and
3. parents need to consider how to provide instructional continuity during the summer, which will prevent learning loss.

Photo: Meredith Forrest Kulwicki
University Communications
Juanita Hunter (EdD '83, Curriculum Planning) received the 2017 Community Leadership Award from the University at Buffalo Alumni Association (UBAA). The Community Leadership Award recognizes outstanding accomplishments in making the university community a better place to live and work. Hunter was also the recipient of a UBAA Distinguished Alumni Award in 2005.

“I’ve received numerous awards throughout my career,” said Hunter, “but this one was special because it encompasses so many different areas I’ve been involved with.”

In a career that spanned 50 years, Hunter maintained the highest standards of excellence as an educator, researcher and leader in the nursing profession and within her community. For 20 years, Hunter taught in the UB School of Nursing and was instrumental in the creation of the nationally recognized UB Nursing Center for the Homeless (1987–93), which provided treatment for individuals at Buffalo shelters.

Hunter was the first African American to be elected president of the New York State Nursing Association, and in 1990 she was the first UB School of Nursing professor to be named a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. She was also selected as a distinguished lecturer by Sigma Theta Tau International, the Honor Society of Nursing. Hunter earned her master’s degree from the UB School of Nursing and her bachelor’s degree from the UB School of Social Work.

“I attribute my success to openness to learning and acknowledging your limitations,” said Hunter. “If you’re not having success in one area, you need to be willing to explore new areas that are a better fit.”

Since her retirement, Hunter has continued to be an advocate for affordable and effective health care through her involvement in local, state and national nursing organizations. Her most recent efforts include helping UB School of Nursing undergraduates screen individuals during their Million Hearts campaign, a program designed to prevent heart attacks and strokes within the Buffalo church community.

Being true to yourself is a rule that Hunter lives by. “The world has changed a lot during my lifetime but one constant is the importance of helping people.”

NEW Expedited School District Business Leader Online CERTIFICATION Program

The expedited School District Business Leader program was recently approved by New York State. This program is intended for those in the field who already hold School Building Leader or School District Leader certification and now want to acquire School District Business Leader New York State certification. The expedited certification is offered 100% online and takes approximately two years to complete.

The program is comprised of five courses (Collective Negotiations and Contract Administration, Personnel Administration in Schools, Governance and Policy for School Leaders, School Business Administration, and Public School Finance) and a 300-hour clinical internship. Admissions is rolling, so candidates can apply for entry in the spring, summer and fall. For more information, visit gse.buffalo.edu/online.
How Can Dads Become Better Parents to their Children with ADHD?

The belief that parents can shape positive behavior and experiences in their children, including children with behavioral challenges such as ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) is well known. Positive parenting programs have been around for some time but the traditional model that teaches positive parenting has been most typically used for mothers, creating a need for a program that would lend itself more to fathers.

The COACHES (Coaching Our Children: Heightening Essential Skills) program was created by Gregory Fabiano, professor from the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, to fill this need. This program uses sports as a way to attract fathers or father figures to join programs where dads attend workshops to learn and practice good parenting skills while their sons and daughters practice soccer skills.

“Parenting any child is hard work,” said Fabiano. “If you have a child with extra challenges, it’s even harder. Any good family-practices program has to start with a foundation of warm, positive, nurturing parent interaction. That’s one of the things we hope our program helps cultivate.”

The COACHES program has been used with elementary school students with challenging behaviors, as well as Head Start preschool students and their fathers. The program has now expanded into the Niagara Falls and Tonawanda City school districts, working with families with children in need of academic or behavioral support.

The workshops for fathers stress the importance of parents focusing on the positive behaviors of their children. The fathers begin practicing this skill immediately following each soccer game with the goal to make this skill a continuing part of their father/child interaction. “One of our goals in the program is to make sure that the fathers comment more on the positive behaviors than the negative behaviors,” said Fabiano.

Fabiano and his research team have conducted a series of studies comparing his program to more typical parent-training programs that just feature group discussions. The bottom line is that the COACHES program makes the parents more effective and improves child behaviors.

“Dads showed up more often for our program,” said Fabiano. “They are more engaged. And they get better in their parenting. We see them become more positive with their kids.”
How Can Virtual Reality Assist Preservice Teachers in Understanding Real-Life Classroom Environments?

Teacher education programs typically include clinical experiences for preservice teachers with the goal of preparing them for the complex and unpredictable realities of the classrooms in which they will teach. However, virtual reality (VR) technology can now be used to simulate real-life clinical experiences.

“VR technology has the potential to engage preservice teachers in an immersive, controlled context,” said Richard Lamb, associate professor from the Department of Learning and Instruction. “The combination of control and authenticity makes VR a useful tool to enhance and complement traditional clinical experiences.”

Lamb and department colleague Elisabeth Etopio, assistant dean for teacher education, developed a study to compare and characterize interactive VR-based preservice teacher clinical teaching environments with those of real-life teaching environments.

Fifty-four college-aged students were randomly assigned to either clinical field or VR conditions. Seventh-grade students enrolled in a charter school in the Northeast were filmed for the classroom content used in the VR condition. Preservice teacher participants encountered classroom disruptions and had to respond and interact with the behaviors in proactive and responsive ways.

Although the VR condition is in its early stages, it was found that the brain, from a cognitive and physiological perspective, does not distinguish between highly realistic simulations such as those found in this study and real-life interactions. During the use of VR, the realism of the environment for the preservice teachers allowed them to learn from modeled real-life situations for transfer of theory into practice.

“This work has potential to provide preservice teachers repeated practice of targeted skills without adverse effects to actual students,” said Etopio. “It is our hope that enhancing clinical experiences of novice teachers will result in their development of stronger teaching practices, ultimately leading to improved instruction and increased learning of PreK–12th grade students.”

The benefits of virtual clinical experiences also include ease of access to a classroom, engagement in highly-realistic interactions in a soft failure environment, and standardization of scenarios for self, peer and program-based assessments of teaching and management skills, all of which can be embedded in the VR scenario and underlying program.
The Challenge of Information Literacy in the Era of Fake News

“Information literacy.” Sounds important, right? Sounds easy, too. After all, aren’t most of us “literate” and aren’t we all aware that we’re swimming in a sea of “information” daily? Unfortunately, that’s not enough. In a time of uncertainty about what’s true and what’s fake, helping people to develop information literacy skills may be one of the most urgent challenges we face. We need to help people ask: “Whose perspective is being represented here?” and “Is what I’m reading or viewing or hearing credible? Is it factual? Is it balanced?”

From a pragmatic perspective, information literacy may be defined as the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes required to access information effectively, efficiently and ethically. More broadly, information literacy ought to include knowing how to interpret and evaluate information, and how to use it to make meaning across a range of contexts: in decision-making, in creative activities, in academic pursuits, in daily life and in the workplace.

Information literacy is critical to positive health outcomes, workforce development and participative governance. Participatory citizenship depends on relatively sophisticated information finding skills, as well as the ability to discern objective truth from misinformation (“fake news”). Increasingly, governments are delivering information and services only online, which requires citizens to be at least minimally information literate in order to access that information. Information literacy is also recognized as an essential competency for job performance, since information gathering, manipulation and application are key work tasks. In short, those without good information literacy skills will be marginalized in private and public life, including employment.

However, information literacy remains elusive for much of the general population. Information literacy instruction is challenged because people tend to favor habitual practices, and very often act on the principles of convenience and efficiency, rather than more time-consuming and careful information searching. If a quick Google search has worked to price lawnmowers, why shouldn’t it also work to inform our political decision-making? We also know that source memory is fragile and easily confused—people have a hard time recalling the source of “facts,” of what they “know” to be true; thus, subjecting preconceived ideas or opinions to critical evaluation is a very tricky business. Another challenge is that there are widely-held but unsupported beliefs about the information literacy skills of “digital natives,” as well as inappropriate assumptions that experience with computing technologies without formal information literacy instruction will lead to information literacy.

So how do we move forward? Collaboration is critical among all stakeholders, including funders and policy makers; libraries and librarians; schools and teachers; and parents. Information literacy is an important policy goal with significant implications for individuals and the nation, and must remain on our practice and advocacy agendas.
UB Provost Charles Zukoski conferred degrees at the May 19 commencement ceremony of the Graduate School of Education. During the ceremony, three individuals were recognized for outstanding achievements: Julie Gorlewski was the recipient of the GSE Distinguished Alumni Award; Christine Kroll was presented with the Dean’s Service Award; and Lesthia Isaacs received the Delbert Mullens Thinking Outside the Box Award.

The ceremony also included the singing of the national anthem and the UB alma mater by a group of faculty and staff from the Department of Learning and Instruction called the Multiple Tonalities. A reception was held in the Center for the Arts Atrium following the ceremony for all of our graduates, award recipients, and their families and friends.

Photos: GradImages

### DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

**Julie A. Gorlewski**

Julie Gorlewski, PhD, is an associate professor and the chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning at Virginia Commonwealth University. Since receiving her doctoral degree in 2008, Gorlewski has been recognized as a leader in the field of education. She has worked directly with the New York State Board of Regents and the assistant commissioner of education to address the role of private corporations in the teacher certification process. Gorlewski’s scholarship matches her accomplishments as a leader. She has authored nine books (two of which received the Critics’ Choice Award for Excellence from the American Education Studies Association), 14 book chapters and over two dozen refereed research articles.

### DEAN’S SERVICE AWARD

**Christine Kroll**

Christine Kroll, PhD, serves as the assistant dean for online education for the University at Buffalo Graduate School of Education (GSE). In this role, Kroll oversees online strategic planning and policy, accreditation, program development, and instructional design for the Graduate School of Education. Kroll’s accomplishments have led GSE to rank in the top 10 of online programs nationally, according to the 2017 U.S. News & World Report rankings. During her tenure in GSE, Kroll developed the university’s first blended and fully online programs and is currently overseeing the development, offering and continuous improvement of 25 fully online programs. Currently, online learners account for 30% of the GSE student body.
The Graduate School of Education was well represented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) held in San Antonio, TX in spring 2017. The conference research theme was Knowledge to Action: Achieving the Promise of Equal Educational Opportunity.

GSE faculty, students and alumni participated in 72 presentations during the five-day conference, which included paper, poster, roundtable, symposium and invited speaker sessions. Fifteen GSE faculty members, 23 master’s and doctoral students, and 18 alumni authored or co-authored these presentations.

AERA, a national research society founded in 1916, strives to advance knowledge about education, encourages scholarly inquiry related to education, and promotes the use of research to improve education and serve the public good. The annual conference is one of the largest nationwide for educators.

HERE IS HOW WE SOCIALIZE! The social media conversation starts here:

You can connect with fellow alumni on UB Connect, www.ub-connect.com, the university-wide alumni online community. At UB Connect, you can search for jobs, update your contact information and share your accomplishments.

Another way to update your contact information and share accomplishments is through the GSE Keep In Touch page, gse.buffalo.edu/alumni/keep.

If you prefer, email your updates to Associate Dean Jenifer Lawrence at jlawrenc@buffalo.edu.