

THE UB GSE MAGAZINE SPRING 2022

# Learn



**New center brings  
Black history education  
to the forefront in Buffalo**



SPRING 2022 • ISSUE 4

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**On The Cover:** The Freedom Wall, installed at the corner of Michigan Avenue and East Ferry Street in Buffalo, features portraits of 28 notable civil rights leaders from America's past and present.

**Land Acknowledgment Statement**

A pledge to peaceably share and care for North America's five Great Lakes

We would like to acknowledge the land on which the University at Buffalo operates, which is the territory of the Seneca Nation, a member of the Haudenosaunee/Six Nations Confederacy. This territory is covered by The Dish with One Spoon Treaty of Peace and Friendship, a pledge to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. It is also covered by the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, between the United States Government and the Six Nations Confederacy, which further affirmed Haudenosaunee land rights and sovereignty in the State of New York. Today, this region is still the home to the Haudenosaunee people, and we are grateful for the opportunity to live, work and share ideas in this territory.

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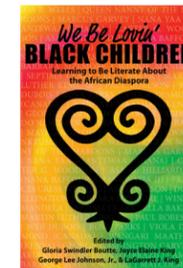
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## ED ARTIFACT

# Brightening the School Year: The History of the Highlighter

BY DANIELLE LEGARE

Chisel or bullet tip, yellow or pink, liquid or gel—everyone has unique preferences when using a highlighter to mark passages on a page. While many students and educators highlight to better process information, others take hold of the tool to identify key facts and ideas to return to later.

Brightening classrooms and study sessions

for almost 60 years, the highlighter marks books and

printed materials with vivid, translucent colors. And the device's history is almost as

vibrant as its neon ink. Francis J. Honn, then vice president of technology at Carter's Ink,

invented the highlighter by accident in 1963 while trying to create a new nonpermanent marker for children. While experimenting with colors and chemicals, he noticed that swiping water-based fluorescent yellow ink over black print helped call attention to—rather than camouflage—the words. He named it the Hi-Liter. According to The New York Times, by the 1970s, highlighters were preferred over pens to mark text.

Highlighter pens still remain popular. Students highlight their schedules to remember where to go and at what time. Teachers and administrators highlight words on pages to remember critical details when creating lesson plans or reviewing new policies.

The tool has evolved in today's increasingly digital world: Google Chrome gives internet surfers the option to add a highlighter extension to their web browsers. Microsoft and Adobe users can translucently color text in electronic documents. Thanks to Amazon, highlighting stimulating snippets of text in eBooks is only a couple of clicks away.



**Highlight the remarkable.** Phyllis Robinson. While Bili Bernbach is often credited for sparking the creative revolution it was Phyllis Robinson that was the mastermind behind much of the work. As America's first female copy chief she penned many campaigns for Volkswagen, Polaroid and Chirbach's.

In 2018, the highlighter pen took on a new, innovative purpose. The pen company Stabilo launched its advertising campaign, "Highlight the Remarkable." The campaign showcased historic black and white photographs with notable women, previously overlooked in the background, highlighted in bright yellow ink, proving the highlighter's ability to identify meaning and significance in various forms and contexts.

# Dear GSE Alumni and Friends



I write this letter to you as Buffalo continues to reel from the mass shooting, perpetrated by an individual consumed with vile and depraved beliefs. This event took place just days before our 91st commencement—a moment of celebration and reflection. It is a challenge to reconcile both moments.

While GSE has much to be proud of and excited about—our enrollments are growing, our aid to students expanding, our research dollars increasing, and our ranking among the best graduate schools of education improving—we have heavy and broken hearts. We are mindful that the evil perpetrated in Buffalo is part of a much bigger problem confronting our nation.

Prior to this mass shooting, we witnessed several states joining in common purpose to undermine equity and/in education. The anti-CRT efforts, anti-trans efforts, anti-tenure efforts, book banning efforts and “don’t say gay” efforts should be an affront to anyone who believes in the power of democratic and pluralistic public education and the importance of equity and inclusivity within our schools. GSE has and will continue to be a loud and unified voice for equity, inclusivity, civility and justice. We will continue to amplify these values through our teaching, research, outreach and engagement. In this issue, we introduce you to several faculty who embody these principles.

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GSE is pleased to welcome to our faculty Dr. LaGarrett King. Dr. King, associate professor of social studies education, is also the founding director of the UB Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education. The center, both a research and professional development entity, seeks to investigate and provide solutions for more effective education around Black history and race.

In addition to meeting Dr. King, this issue also introduces you to two other early-career scholars: Dr. Chris Proctor and Dr. Stephen Santa-Ramirez.

Dr. Proctor, assistant professor of learning sciences in the Department of Learning and Instruction, leads GSE’s efforts to infuse computer science education into K-12 curriculum. These efforts are both timely and important.

Dr. Santa-Ramirez, assistant professor of higher education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, conducts research that focuses on campus racial climates and first-generation students’ sense of belonging. I’m sure you will find the Q&A with him to be illuminating.

GSE’s commitment to public engagement and interdisciplinarity continues. In February, GSE co-hosted, along with UB’s Law School, a panel on critical race theory, “Clarifying the Conversation.”

In March, GSE partnered with the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences to offer a research networking event. The purpose of this initiative was to help connect researchers in engineering and computer science with researchers in education, counseling and information science with the hope of creating new research teams.

As you read these and the other stories in this edition of LEARN, please keep Buffalo close to your heart and please continue to fight for equity, diversity, justice and inclusion.

In solidarity,

Suzanne Rosenblith



Qinghua Chen, PhD '22, worked with Claire Cameron, associate professor of learning and instruction, and Krystal Starke, PhD student in the Department of Learning and Instruction, alongside several of Cameron’s graduate students and neighbors, to create artwork that remembers the names of the ten people who lost their lives on May 14 in the mass shooting that occurred in a Tops Supermarket in the City of Buffalo.

Photo courtesy of Krystal Starke

# GSE in the News

Headlines from stories that featured our faculty and students

**THE WASHINGTON POST** quoted Nathan Daun-Barnett, chair and associate professor of educational leadership and policy, in an article on how Williams College plans to eliminate loans and work-study employment from its financial aid packages and replace those funds with grants.

**TIME** interviewed Stephanie Fredrick, assistant professor and associate director of the Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention, about youth suicide in the Hulu limited series **"The Girl from Plainville."** The article was picked up by **YAHOO! NEWS**.

A study titled **"Reconceptualizing School Safety to Create a Safer Learning Environment for Black Students"** by Kamontá Heidelburg, assistant professor in counseling, school and educational psychology, was featured in **NEWS MEDICAL LIFE SCIENCE** and **PHYS.ORG**.

An article in **DIVERSE ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION** titled **"What We Can Learn From San Diego State University"** quoted Raechele Pope, senior associate dean for faculty and student affairs, chief diversity officer and associate professor in educational leadership and policy.

A piece that ran on **SPECTRUM NEWS 1** Rochester titled **"Did the pandemic lead to increased graduation rates across New York?"** interviewed Nathan Daun-Barnett, chair and associate professor in educational leadership and policy.

**"Is Cocomelon Damaging Our Kids' Brains?"** a piece published in **IN GOOD HEALTH WNY's** Healthcare Newspaper, quoted Claire Cameron, associate professor in learning and instruction.

A letter to the editor that ran in **THE BUFFALO NEWS** expressed the opinion of more than 100 local students who were part of the **Western New York Youth Alliance for Education**, a program founded by GSE.

NPR station **KCUR** in Kansas City interviewed LaGarrett King, director of the UB Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education and associate professor in learning and instruction, for a piece titled **"Kansas City Black students frustrated with how their history is taught."**

**THE JOURNAL OF BLACKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION** published a news item reporting that GSE has announced the establishment of the **Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education**.

**TECHREGISTER.COM** published UB's year-end research roundup detailing 17 of the year's most important discoveries, which included the Teacher Residency Program in a research feature called **"Education | The next generation — of teachers."**

Raven Baxter, a GSE alumna known as "Raven the Science Maven," was named to the **FORBES 30 Under 30 — Science (2022)** list.



# BOOK STACKS

## Books and chapters published by members of the UB GSE community



**"We Be Lovin' Black Children: Learning to Be Literate About the African Diaspora"** was co-edited by LaGarrett King, associate professor of learning and instruction and director of the Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education. It was published by Myers Education Press in 2021. The book discusses what we must do to ensure that Black children across the world are loved, safe and that their souls and spirits are healed from the ongoing damage of living in a world where white supremacy flourishes. It offers strategies and activities that families, communities, social organizations and others can use to unapologetically love Black children.



Stephen Santa-Ramirez, assistant professor of educational leadership and policy, co-wrote chapter seven, "Reimagining Institutionalized Support for Undocumented and DACA College Students: A Critical Approach," in the book **"Racial Equity on College Campuses: Connecting Research and Practice"** published by SUNY Press in 2022. The book aims to allow expert scholars and practitioners to translate research-based findings into actionable recommendations related to racial inequities in higher education in three key areas: university leadership, teaching and learning, and student and campus life.



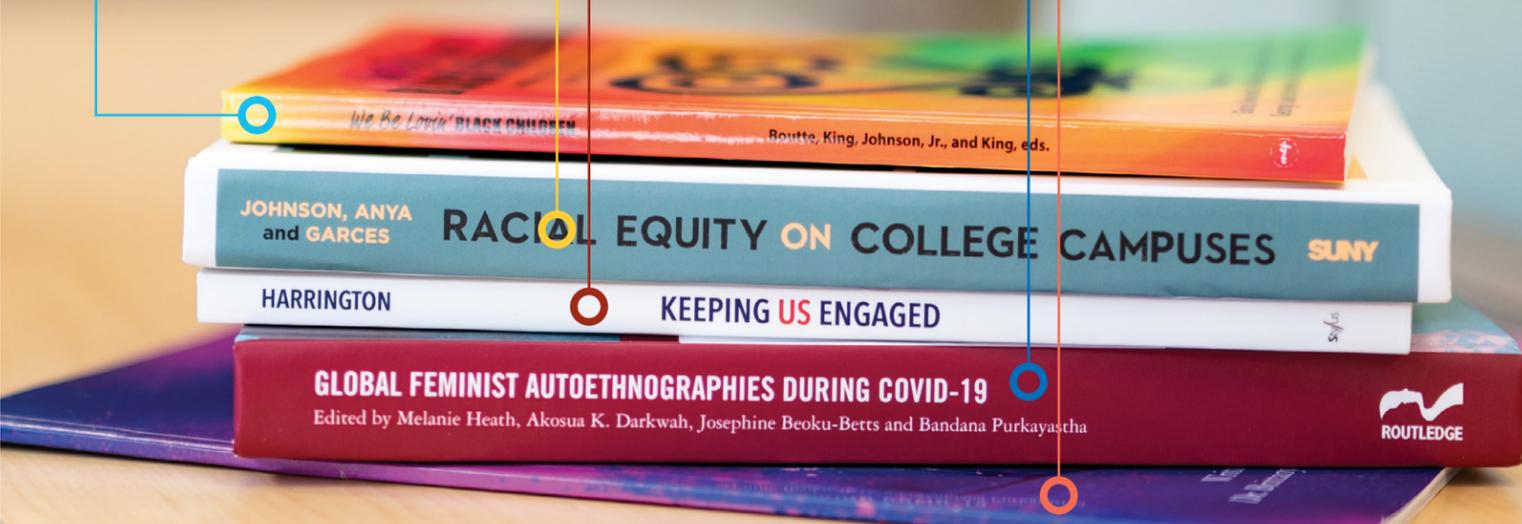
GSE doctoral student Danielle Lewis was one of 50 student writers who contributed to the book **"Keeping Us Engaged,"** which offers faculty practical strategies to engage students that are research-grounded and endorsed by students themselves. Her contribution was part of chapter two, "Power of Relationships," and focused on creating a professional network among advisees.



Sarah A. Robert, associate professor of learning and instruction, co-wrote chapter 12, "Invoking Abuelita Epistemologies for Academic Transformation in the Coronavirus Age: Autoethnographic Reflections from a Motherscholar Collective," in the book **"Global Feminist Autoethnographies During COVID-19"** published by Routledge in 2022. The book bears witness to displacements, disruptions and distress of tenured faculty, faculty on temporary contracts, graduate students and people connected to academia during COVID-19.



GSE alumna Brittany Patterson, PhD '15, wrote and self-published **"The FIGHT,"** a new book to help young people resolve and defuse conflict, in 2021. The book aims to create discussions about the challenging situations everyone encounters and provide clear lessons in thoughtful decision-making that can easily apply to people from all backgrounds.



# Computational thinking: What is it?

Chris Proctor reevaluates what computer literacy means for today's students

BY ANN WHITCHER GENTZKE

Digital technologies are embedded in just about every aspect of our lives. Yet their impact on young learners is often too narrowly interpreted, according to Chris Proctor, assistant professor of learning sciences and a researcher in the fields of computer science education, curriculum and instruction, and new literacies.

Proctor, who came to UB in 2020 after earning his PhD in learning sciences and technology design from Stanford University, seeks a broader, more inclusive understanding of computational literacy for K-12 students. This means not only researching the “pathways and challenges in developing students’ computational skills and concepts,” he wrote in a recent article published in *Educational Researcher*. It’s also about being “inclusive of students’ identities and their communities.”

“If we have a pluralistic country—with all kinds of different people and different cultures and different local communities—we ought to have all kinds of different computational practices and communities of practice that reflect this,” Proctor said in an interview. His research includes looking at how interactive storytelling, for instance, can support young people in equitably achieving computational literacy. This kind of academic preparation goes far beyond mastering specific software or being generally comfortable with computer equipment, he explains. Rather, it’s about “making meaning together using texts. The kind of text we’re working with is computers

and computer code and computer programs, instead of books and newspapers and other forms of printed text.”

Proctor, who taught both middle school computer science and high school English before pursuing his PhD, enjoys bringing his pedagogical insights to his doctoral students in the Department of Learning and Instruction. As a classroom teacher, Proctor saw himself as a scholar-practitioner; this self-perception continues today. “From the first year of teaching, I was building software tools and using them in my classroom,” he said. “So I was engaging in design-based research before I even knew exactly what that was.

“I think *praxis* describes this process really well. It’s the argument that a division between doing the work and studying the work is not helpful. On the other hand, the practical without theorizing is probably not going to be very effective, especially in teaching.”

## RESEARCH AREAS

Computer Science  
Education  
Curriculum and Instruction  
Information Science  
Access and Equity  
Assessment  
Digital Media and Learning

Design Experiments  
Literacy  
Educational Technology  
Race, Inequality and Education  
Learning Design  
Linguistic, Discourse and Sociocultural Context



On the shelf are **three woodcut pieces of art** made by Proctor’s close friends. “I’m really drawn to woodcuts,” said Proctor, whose collection includes a mid-20th-century woodcut from Japan. “In the 19th century, the Japanese woodcut tradition was that many different artisans would be involved—perhaps 40 or 60 people, each with their specialty. In the 20th century, it changed to the much more Western idea of the individual artist.”

**Tea** represents collaboration and hospitality, two characteristics important to Proctor. He keeps an extensive collection—and a teapot—ready for the next opportunity to sit with, meet and host his students or other faculty and staff comfortably, creating a welcoming environment.

**This hammer**, inherited from his late father, symbolizes his dad’s passion for woodworking and making. Proctor learned woodworking and how to use tools from his dad, who often gifted hammers to loved ones, including his godson. When Proctor’s father reached the end of his life, his godson wrote a moving letter expressing that the hammer had been a source of empowerment for him. Proctor’s brother continued the tradition when he married. He gifted all of his groomsmen, including Proctor, with hammers in honor of their father.

# BREAKING THE MOLD

## LaGarrett King Ignites Racial Literacy and Black Historical Consciousness at UB



BY DANIELLE LEGARE

It's 11 a.m. on a Saturday in February. Almost 200 graduate students, teachers, faculty members and history lovers from around the globe gather on Zoom to spend an hour together learning about Black history and racial literacy. As the learners wait for the presentation to begin, Beyonce's "Love On Top" plays in the background. Smiling faces fill the virtual audience, some of whom have pens and notebooks in hand, others swaying to the beat of the music.

Black History Nerds Saturday School, a professional development series for anyone interested in learning about Black history and race, is now in session. LaGarrett King is the self-proclaimed "HNIC," or Head Nerd in Charge.



King is an associate professor of social studies education and the director of the new Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education at the University at Buffalo. He is also the mastermind behind these sessions.



## BLACK HISTORY NERDS SATURDAY SCHOOL

Once Saturday School starts, King creates a warm, engaging space and encourages introductions and conversation. Comments fill the chat: "Good morning!" "Greetings from Philadelphia!" "Hello from Buffalo!"

A community is quickly established. Everyone has a seat at the table to share perspectives and ask questions about Black history when King hosts an event. "I'm a nerd. If you get up in the morning, grab your coffee and get on the computer to learn about Black history on a Saturday—and you're a teacher—you're definitely a nerd as well. I like to learn from other people, so I invite folks to do workshops about certain Black history or racial education topics for teachers and others who want to learn more—whether it's more content knowledge or a pedagogical approach," he explained.

This week's presentation, "Historical Literacy as Racial Literacy," is with Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz of Columbia University's Teachers College. She salutes the audience: "Good morning, nerds. Nerds unite!"

Throughout the hour-long presentation, attendees learn about the meaning of racial literacy from Sealey-Ruiz. She explains that racial literacy is a tool, a tour guide, a way

to heal. And racial literacy is a way to teach, which is perhaps most relevant to today's audience of educators.

"Racial literacy in teacher education calls for self-reflection and moral, political and cultural decisions about how teachers can be catalysts for societal change—first by learning about systems of injustice and then explicitly teaching their students about what they have learned through the use of dialogue, critical texts, journaling, and helping to develop their critical thinking and conversation

skills around the topics of racism, discrimination and prejudice," she said.

She asks for self-reflection from the audience: "What were you taught about race and racism as it relates to world history? Where and from whom did you learn what you know?" Many nerds chime in. Some announce they learned from their grandparents, others from American writer and activist James Baldwin. A few express that they learned about racism's relationship to history during humanities classes in high school, while others share that they waited until college for lessons taught by Black professors. One nerd reveals that learning about race didn't occur until adulthood.

**"What were you taught about race and racism as it relates to world history? Where and from whom did you learn what you know?"**

As the session concludes, audience members clap, snap their fingers and jump out of their chairs with gratitude. With a smile plastered across his face, King is equally appreciative of Sealey-Ruiz's presentation. In just one hour, she offered rich, detailed lessons about history and teaching, and gave attendees suggestions for further learning and self-reflection.

What is the cost of gaining a deeper understanding and new perspectives through the Black History Nerds Saturday School? Nothing. It's free for anyone who wants to enrich their Black history education.

Illustrations from The Freedom Wall in Buffalo, NY. See page 17 for details.

## The Heart, Soul & Brains of a New GSE Center

Black History Nerds Saturday School is one of many events hosted by the new Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education. A hub for research and professional development, the center has one fundamental mission: defining Black history education.

How are Black history and race taught and learned around the world in K-12 schools, teacher education programs and other educative spaces? King hopes to move the needle in answering these questions.

The development of the center and its lineup of events are timely. In 2022, critical race theory is under attack, books addressing race have been banned in school libraries, and teachers in many states are no longer permitted to talk about race in the classroom. Administrators, policymakers and educators need resources and clarity to best serve students and make informed decisions about teaching history and race.

King joined GSE in January 2022. Before his move to UB, he founded a similar center—the Carter Center for K-12 Black History Education—at the University of Missouri. His efforts there were celebrated: He was awarded the Isabella Wade Lyda and Paul Lyda Professorship, supporting his Black history education research.

Now at UB, King is the heart, soul and brains behind GSE's new center. He is hyper-focused, generating a six-month schedule of events and programming after only a few weeks at UB. When speaking about his work, he's serious yet smiling, focused yet funny. It's clear his mind never stops. Research, teaching and making an impact in the community are passions and priorities.

"Doing the work," as he says, is always top of mind.

Dawnvyn James, kindergarten teacher and doctoral student in the Department of Learning and Instruction, knew she wanted to work with King after attending and presenting at his past events. James, who will serve as a graduate assistant in the center beginning in the fall 2022 term, often wonders about the many thoughts and ideas

perpetually floating through his mind. "He always has a goal in mind. He's always thinking of something new—and it's going to be successful, whatever it is," she said.

As he moves forward in his new role at GSE, he is focused on getting the center off the ground to provide Black history education and support to those who need it the most. "I envision the Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education as a very prominent space where K-12 educators, policymakers, teachers and other university personnel come to help us understand the effectiveness of how we should approach notions of Black history education, as well as try to understand the nuances of race and racial literacy," he said.

Suzanne Rosenblith, GSE dean and professor, recognizes the significance of his efforts. "By focusing his work on Black history and Black history curriculum, LaGarrett is telling an important story. He is telling the story of people who have been completely omitted from the historical record even though they have had these amazing contributions to education in the United States. And I think this work is critically important," she said.

While Rosenblith believes that King's work has the potential to impact teachers around the world, she thinks that the center and its programs are especially needed in the greater Buffalo area. With Buffalo's racial and ethnic diversity, she hopes that local teachers will find new inspiration, tools and techniques from attending the center's events.

King is confident that the center will help teachers and administrators find ways to amplify the ignored voices of Black people throughout history through K-12 curricula. "The problem is that our U.S. history curriculum dehumanizes those who are people of color. If we understand notions of Black history, then maybe our society will understand Black people," he said.

**"Doing the work," as he says, is always top of mind.**



From left to right: GSE Dean Suzanne Rosenblith, Dr. Dann J. Broyld of the University of Massachusetts Lowell, Dr. LaGarrett King, and Dr. Langston Clark of the University of Texas at San Antonio pose at the Welcome to Western New York event in March 2022.

## King's principles include:

**1. Power and Oppression:** Highlight the lack of justice, freedom, equality and equity that Black people experienced throughout history.

**2. Black Agency, Persistence and Perseverance:** Explain how Black people fought and survive oppressive acts against them. These acts were proactive and reactive as well as aggressive and subversive.

**3. Africa and the African Diaspora:** Stress that narratives of Black people are contextualized within the African Diaspora.

**4. Black Emotionality:** Feature narratives of Black people and their various emotions including rage, joy, love, laughter and pleasure. These emotions define Black people's humanity and existence. These histories exist even in times of oppression.

**5. Black Identities:** Depict a more inclusive history that seeks to uncover the multiple identities of Black people through Black history.

**6. Black Historical Contention:** Recognize that all Black histories are not positive. Black histories are complex, and histories that are difficult should not be ignored.

**7. Black Community, Local and Social Histories:** Teach Black history through regular persons who made a difference in their communities and state. This approach to history removes the messiah complex. It also identifies people who may not have been the most popular or respectable, but who fought for the everyday person.

**8. Black Futurism:** Use lessons from Black histories to reimagine the contemporary and future.

## Relearning and Teaching History

Originally from Baker, Louisiana, King was interested in social studies and history from the time he was young. "As a child, I always thought that what we were learning didn't make sense or was incomplete. For me, it just didn't make sense that white plantation owners and their enslaved people were just happy-go-lucky," he explained. "It just didn't make sense that people didn't fight back from all the aspects of oppression. As a young kid, you don't have the language to express it, but you know something's wrong."

He was hungry for clarity—a complete picture of history. He dug into his parents' encyclopedias to read about different periods and pieces of Black history. Over time, it started to click. "I don't know exactly when I fell in love with Black history. I just knew it wasn't in our schools," said King.

King went on to earn his bachelor's degree in secondary social studies education from Louisiana State University. After graduating, he became a classroom teacher in Texas and then Georgia, with a period spent teaching at Booker T. Washington High School, the alma mater of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. After an eight-year teaching career, he returned to Texas to enroll in the curriculum and instruction PhD program at the University of Texas at Austin.

"When I became a teacher, I always tried to provide different perspectives in all the social studies courses that I taught, and then

when I was getting my PhD, everything just started making sense," said King. "I started to learn the history of Black history—something that we've been dealing with as a country since the 19th century. And while a lot of things have changed, a lot of things are still the same. So, I felt that my research needed to delve into Black history, and more broadly, I wanted to answer the question: What is Black history? Because we have not answered that question as a country."

**"I wanted to answer the question: What is Black history? Because we have not answered that question as a country."**

In graduate school, he read seminal texts on Black history, like "The Mis-Education of the Negro" by Carter Godwin Woodson. He studied slavery and oppression. The connections between these past events and the present notion of anti-Blackness in our society became clearer. And his passion for history—and desire to solidify the definition of Black history—grew. "History is not about patriotism. History is about helping us understand our humanity. That's the good, the bad and the indifferent," he said.

## Continuing the work. Breaking the mold.

King's career led him to Clemson University and the University of Missouri before arriving at UB. Throughout the journey, he has held tightly to his vision and goals—one way to carry them out: providing mentorship to students and educators.

Greg Simmons, doctoral student in the Department of Learning and Instruction, sought out King's guidance while teaching Black history at Columbia

Greg Simmons and Dawnavyn James

Battle High School in Columbia, Missouri. After speaking to Simmons over the phone, King came to observe him in the classroom, gave him feedback and ultimately suggested that he explore transitioning to another teaching space to make a more significant impact.

From there, their relationship blossomed, and King became Simmons' mentor. "When I talk to my fellow grad students, either at Mizzou or elsewhere, and I tell them how he is, they tell me I hit the lottery," said Simmons. "With a lot of professors, our success as PhD students is tied in with their success. A lot of folks just focus on the academic part of the relationship, but LaGarrett is concerned about the whole person."

Dawnavyn James echoes Simmons' sentiments by explaining that King has shown her an example of how to support colleagues, students and the community. From her perspective, King is not only a lecturer but an opportunity creator. Once King discovered her interests, he consistently reached out with professional networking opportunities to advance her career growth. Now, she does the same for coworkers and friends. "He really values community and wants to help ... and it's genuine," she said.

In addition to extending mentorship, King has carried out his mission through his research, including developing his Black historical consciousness principles. He felt compelled to create the framework because of the archetypal focus on oppression and liberation in Black history curriculum.

"People were always oppressed, but then they fought against that oppression. And they were always reactive instead of proactive. That's the general sense of it. And then, sprinkled here and there, you learn about certain exceptional human beings," he said.

"I wanted to come up with a Black history framework that school districts can utilize, to not only teach about oppression and liberation but also just teach about the humanity of Black people. Through researching Black history textbooks and Black history curriculum and reading about Black historians, I found that there are principles that schools and school systems need to realize when they are developing Black history curriculum."

Through his framework, King aimed to break the mold of stale state curricula to help students, teachers and administrators realize a more robust depiction of Black history.

Since its development, King's framework has been featured in Education Week and scholarly journals, such as Urban Education and Race Ethnicity and Education. The principles have also been implemented in school districts in Kentucky, Missouri, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Ohio, Texas, New York and throughout Canada. These guidelines are intended to help all teachers, regardless of race or background. According to Simmons, he and King work well together because they share a pragmatic view of education. "We know white teachers are going to teach Black history, so we can either help

them to do it well, or we can leave them alone and then it could go really poorly," said Simmons. "It's not a question of if white people should teach this; it's a question of when. We think about things and develop pedagogical approaches to help support them in that work."

King also offers support in his most recent book, "Teaching Enslavement in American History: Lesson Plans and Primary Sources," co-authored with Dr. Chara Bohan and Dr. Robert Baker, both faculty at Georgia State University. Published in May 2022, the book provides lesson plans and guidance for educators navigating topics such as the middle passage, the Constitution's position on enslavement, African cultural retention and resistance to enslavement.

## Looking back and looking forward: Mother Africa

As Rosenblith sees it, King has already advanced GSE's equity, diversity, justice and inclusion efforts through his work and the center's programming. "He is a great example of GSE's commitment to public scholarship," she said. "I think the mission of a school of education in an urban setting at a research-intensive university is to help improve the lives of individuals and communities through our research, teaching and engagement. And that's exactly what he does."

This summer, the center's programming continues with its signature event, the Teaching Black History Conference. From July 22-24, hundreds of teachers will convene in Buffalo or virtually to learn about the best





curricular and instructional practices surrounding Black history education. And everyone's invited: community educators, parents, school-aged students, librarians, museum curators and history lovers.

## mother AFRICA

This year's theme is Mother Africa, sparked by King's long-ago observation that children are first introduced to Black people in school through enslavement. "When we do that, we miss out on thousands of years of history, and there are implications to understanding Black people as 'your slaves.' But, if we understand them as different ethnic groups in Africa, you get to understand their humanity," he said. "You get to understand various cultures. You get to really understand how they got to the Western world."

The conference will feature elementary, middle and high school workshops as well as general, university and adult education sessions. The event will also focus on understanding the continent today: "It is not only just the mother and her children, right? The Caribbean, the U.S., the U.K.—All these places that Black people travel to throughout the diaspora are not simply based on slavery, but based on African explorations around the globe ... All

those things are extremely important for us to get back to where it all started so that we can get to the crux of humanity."

Keynote speakers will include Joy Bivens, director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Dr. Nwando Achebe, Jack and Margaret Sweet Endowed Professor of History at Michigan State University; Dr. Gloria Boutte, associate dean of diversity, equity, and inclusion and Carolina Distinguished Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of South Carolina; and Dr. George Johnson, professor at South Carolina State University.

"So, these people who were newly 'free'—and many were illiterate—decided to do two things: write history and right history."

This spring, enthusiasm about the new center is palpable in GSE. With the center comes a new era in instruction as the university now is a hub for developing historically conscious and racially literate students, teachers and community members around the globe.

King is excited, too. His wife, Dr. Christina King—also a new faculty member in GSE's Department of Learning and Instruction—and two children, Preston and Presley, join him on this new journey. They have begun exploring the intersection of Black and Buffalo histories by learning more about Buffalo's Underground Railroad sites and public art projects, like the **Freedom Wall**, which depicts historical figures who have fought for civil rights and social justice, including Rosa Parks, Malcolm X and W.E.B. Du Bois.

While he looks forward to his work as the director of the center and a social studies education associate professor, his passion extends further than formal roles. He is inspired by the past when extending mentorship and guidance that will impact future generations.

"I'm always standing on the shoulders of people, all the way back from the 19th century. They said, 'when we got out of slavery to emancipation, we started Sunday schools. Literacy was one of the reasons why we started Sunday schools. And one of the things we picked for literacy was history books,'" he said. "So, these people who were newly 'free'—and many were illiterate—decided to do two things: write history and right history. That, to me, is very inspirational. And I hope that I add just a little bit to their legacies moving forward."

## The Freedom Wall:

Located at the corner of Buffalo's Michigan Avenue and East Ferry Street, the Freedom Wall depicts portraits of 28 prominent American civil rights leaders who have impacted our nation's struggles for social and political equity. The mural was created in 2017 by Buffalo-based artists John Baker, Julia Bottoms-Douglas, Chuck Tingley and Edreys Wajed.

Through a partnership with the Albright-Knox Art Gallery Public Art Initiative, the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor and neighborhood stakeholders, the artists came together to celebrate and share the unique stories and histories of past and present leaders, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and King Peterson.

This project aims to encourage conversations about previous journeys toward equality and freedom and the actions that still must occur to create a just and equitable world.



Registration is now open.

## 5<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL TEACHING BLACK HISTORY CONFERENCE



## mother AFRICA

Each year, hundreds of educators, parents, librarians and others who share a love of Black history convene to learn the best curricular and instructional practices in Black history education. Interactive sessions are led by teachers who share strategies in teaching Black history. Attendees also enjoy keynote speakers who present on topics related to the conference theme. This year's theme is Mother Africa. Participants can join us in Buffalo or online.

July 22-24, 2022

For more information on participating in the conference, visit:

[ed.buffalo.edu/black-history-ed](https://ed.buffalo.edu/black-history-ed)



# Cycling to transform teaching and learning in teacher education

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

In the years after Noemi Waight, associate professor of science education, moved to Buffalo from Illinois, she got to know her new home by bicycling with community groups. The experience gave her the idea to take graduate pre-service students on cycling explorations to learn more about their community and the science resources that can make classroom lessons more culturally and historically relevant.

The concept came to fruition four years ago when she first collaborated with Sarah A. Robert, associate professor and director of social studies education. Each fall, the two Graduate School of Education faculty members lead science and social studies education students on a bicycle journey through Buffalo. The ride allows students to explore destinations that illustrate the city's

social history, like the Underground Railroad, along with science-related points of interest like the Niagara River at Broderick Park. "This collaboration was born out of this idea that we wanted our students to learn about their communities, to uncover the assets within urban communities," said Waight. "I wanted my students to be able to teach beyond the walls of the classroom and be able



GSE students and faculty learned more about Buffalo's community and history during the annual "Uncovering STEM Phenomena and Social Studies Understanding in the Buffalo Urban Community" cycling outing.

to access the STEM phenomena that is in the community." They call the annual outing "Uncovering STEM Phenomena and Social Studies Understanding in the Buffalo Urban Community." Coordinated with the cycling nonprofits Slow Roll Buffalo and East Side Bike Club, last year's ride drew 55 students and lasted three hours. "We talked about redlining and the history of institutional segregation. Then, we rode to the other side of Main Street [and saw] the lack of trees, the amount of vacant land from demolished homes and disinvested neighborhoods. It was clear that they were learning about this in the classroom and then bearing witness to it on the bicycle," said Seamus Gallivan, co-founder of Slow Roll Buffalo.

Waight and Robert also decided to show students historical landmarks, like the Colored Musicians Club, the Buffalo Maritime Center and the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor. Robert hoped that visiting these destinations would inspire students to consider new approaches to social studies education. "Consistently, social studies is ranked as the least favorite subject among high school students," Robert said. "We have this challenge to create a more enlivened social studies curriculum."

The most recent cycling trip inspired GSE students to reflect on their experiences and future teaching approaches. One student said the instruments on view at the Colored Musicians Club connected to learning about sound waves in the physics curriculum: "This example provides the crossover of science and social studies ... an out-of-the-box way to teach science and how it may relate to our community and its history."

Another student elaborated on a social-studies-related idea: "Going to school in such proximity to African American history would inspire students to learn about African American history, heritage, culture and place in American society ... It was truly a great reminder that field trips don't necessarily

require buses or need to be an all-day affair. Rather, field trips can take place just across the street from the school. But teachers clearly need to be in the know about a community's history and landmarks."

The cycling journey exemplifies Waight's belief that communities and neighborhoods around schools are assets and can be thought

**"This collaboration was born out of this idea that we wanted our students to learn about their communities."**

of as lab spaces, with historical, cultural and science elements that should be included in lessons. "It makes the environment even richer for learning," she said. "Science is really about doing. When students get to do science, they are higher performers."

Robert shares a similar philosophy. Throughout her career, which has taken her to universities in Wisconsin, California and Argentina, she has integrated firsthand, field-trip experiences into her teaching. "Revealing real-life examples of textbook explanations about segregation, redlining and urban revitalization should also help improve the reputation of social studies," she said. Now,

cycling adds new depth to her approach.

Waight and Robert plan to continue using bicycle excursions with their students to explain the importance of developing curricula that reflects subject concepts and their connections to lived experiences and local neighborhoods. "The students are having a very different experience of the city when we're on bikes than if we were walking," said Robert. "The bike has just opened up the students' eyes to spaces that they think they know."



Photos courtesy Noemi Waight

## Paying it forward: Supporting first-generation undocu/DACAmented students. A conversation with Stephen Santa-Ramirez

BY DANIELLE LEGARE

GSE assistant professor of higher education, Stephen Santa-Ramirez, experienced a light bulb moment while working as the assistant director for multicultural and LGBTQA+ affairs at the University of Texas at Arlington.



As a first-generation college student—and as a result of his social justice and racial advocacy work—he realized he wanted to support students in a new way. He decided to pursue a PhD program, allowing him to investigate first-generation students’ experiences and the policies that adversely affect students of color in higher education.

Now, Santa-Ramirez is still motivated to advocate for first-generation students and provide guidance for faculty and staff: “For me, it’s important to pay it forward to others navigating the same journey. I hope to alleviate some of those pressures from them—because I already went through it.”

### Q Your research focuses on Latinx first-generation undocu/DACAmented students. Who are these students?

A Many first-generation students I work alongside identify as undocumented or as someone who’s a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) beneficiary, a benefit from the executive order from Barack Obama’s administration in 2012. They may have family members or parents who have attended postsecondary education in other countries, but, unfortunately, many degrees don’t transfer when they come to the United States. They may have been brought here at a young age or came here and overstayed their visas, so they are considered undocumented in this country. Even though they’re considered undocumented, they hold some documentation and temporary legal status in the country. They get a temporary Social

Security number, work permit and other benefits. Still, it’s not a pipeline program toward citizenship.

If you’re fully undocumented, you don’t have a work permit, and your experiences may look different.

### Q How can colleges and universities support these students?

A The students I’ve worked with have expressed the importance of creating scholarships to help with funding. Undocumented students with or without DACA are not eligible for federal aid and, in most states, they are ineligible for state aid. This hinders their college access.

“When we’re thinking about different support services and programming initiatives, we need to think intentionally about the intersectional identities our students hold.”

It’s also important to have peer mentoring programs. Many institutions offer mentoring programs for first-year students or students of color—and they’re great. However, undocumented students navigate college very differently.

### Q How can faculty offer support?

A Faculty need to get to know the students—not necessarily by asking them about their legal status—but by building trust. At the beginning of the semester, make it clear that office hours are a place where we can talk about personal issues. We can talk about things you need, based on your situation, whatever that situation may look like.

### Q What about student affairs staff and administrators?

A For administrators, a lot of the conversation focuses on certain identity groups. When we talk about Latinx students, or we talk about Black students, or we talk about Asian students, we usually talk about them like a monolith. They’re not all the same. When we’re thinking about different support services and programming initiatives, we need to think intentionally about the intersectional identities our students hold.

Maybe they don’t need a pizza night; maybe they need arts and healing workshops, or free legal services, or counseling from counselors who understand the experiences of undocumented communities.

### Q What resources are available to learn more?

A I published a chapter in the SUNY Press textbook, “Racial Equity on College Campus: Connecting Research to Practice.” We highlighted universities doing good work in dream centers or immigrant and refugee centers and the initiatives those institutions have implemented to support undocumented and DACA students. [Mydocumentedlife.org](http://Mydocumentedlife.org) and [unitedwedream.org](http://unitedwedream.org) are also great resources.



Stephen Santa-Ramirez is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy. His experiences in higher education and student affairs include work in multicultural and LGBTQA+ affairs, residential life and housing services, and migrant student services. In addition to teaching at GSE, he has taught at colleges and universities throughout the U.S.



## It's a match: UB speed-networking event facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration

BY DANIELLE LEGARE

On a 19-degree day in early March, the sun poured into Davis Hall's expansive second-floor windows. Faculty from the Graduate School of Education and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences convened for lunch, conversation and collaborative research exploration. Rather than planning a research talk or formal introductory meeting, the fast-paced "Exploring Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Funding Opportunities" event allowed faculty from both decanal units to obtain more information about each other's research in less time—a kind of "speed networking."

X. Christine Wang, GSE professor and interim associate dean for interdisciplinary research, and Shambhu Upadhyaya, SEAS professor and associate dean for research and graduate education, organized the event after recognizing that both schools desired additional opportunities to explore and accelerate meaningful joint research projects.

"We're very excited this is happening on a beautiful sunny day. I feel this weather today is a metaphor for our two decanal units. You know, it's funny—we're hopeful but cold, and the temperature hasn't risen yet," Wang said during her opening remarks. "There are clear desires and ongoing efforts for the two units' collaboration, but we're not there yet. This event is designed as the beginning for us to build up the infrastructure to support our collaboration."

Suzanne Rosenblith, GSE dean, and Kemper Lewis, SEAS dean, mixed and mingled to show support. "I'm so happy that we're able to come together today to do some networking ... It's a really good time for us to bring together our strengths," said Rosenblith.

Dean Lewis was equally enthusiastic about the opportunity to spark scholarly connections between the two units: "This issue of collaboration is not only part of the DNA of these two units; it's part of our university. It's not just rhetoric, either. There are 12 units, so there are 12 deans, and we get together often," he said.

While eating salads and sandwiches, faculty took turns standing up and introducing themselves and their research interests. With each introduction, more common research areas came to light. Heads nodded, and smiles grew in excitement with the discovery of converging interests.

Letitia Thomas, SEAS assistant dean for diversity, was eager to learn more about her colleagues. "These chances for interdisciplinary work can only move us forward and make the work that we do richer because we have different points of view," said Thomas, who is also a graduate of GSE's educational administration MS program.

As the group socialized, ideas sprang into action. Two rounds of fast-paced networking sessions focused on specific research themes including:

- Support for diverse learners
- Cognitive or noncognitive learning processes
- Informal and community-based learning
- Mental health, wellness and social-emotional learning

- Ethical and responsible research in engineering and computer science
- Robust intelligence in social contexts
- Human-centered computing
- Advanced technological education

Faculty shuffled throughout the room, sharing business cards and one-page handouts detailing their research interests and the funding opportunities they wished to pursue. When interests aligned, they sat together to discuss new ideas and long-term project plans. "I discovered that Zhanpeng Jin, a faculty member in computer science,

could really improve the technology side of my grant proposal, and then I could apply for funding through the National Science Foundation," said Wang.

Creating opportunities for cross-decanal exploration is important to Wang. "University research is a big part of our work, but when we have meetings, we often talk about programs, service or administrative work. This is one of the few opportunities where we have designated space and time to just talk about research," she said.

Faculty from both schools agreed. "I'm so glad that [Upadhyaya and Wang] came together to do this ... I think what GSE brings in is that we really need to be more invested in our communities," said Thomas. "Working with GSE faculty will help our engineering faculty see and appreciate that and incorporate it into the work they're doing. Those are the kinds of things that we want our faculty to be more intentional about."

According to Wang, this event will be the first of many. She and Upadhyaya plan to continue facilitating collaborative cross-decanal research events at UB. They envision potential partnerships with other UB units including School of Public Health and Health Professions, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and the School of Management.

Based on the shared topics at the event, Upadhyaya and Wang are currently planning a series of brown bag sessions in the coming school year. "These sessions are intended for our two schools to continue sharing research and building collaborations," said Wang.

**"This issue of collaboration is not only part of the DNA of these two units; it's part of our university."**

# Reimagining higher education: GSE doctoral student Allen Williams aspires to improve institutional equity

BY DANIELLE LEGARE



One week before Allen Williams began his undergraduate career, Michael Brown—an unarmed, Black teenager—was fatally shot by a police officer in Williams’ hometown of Ferguson. The riots and protests that ensued after Brown’s death shaped Williams’ experiences at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He became involved with the African American Student Union and focused on social justice issues.

During that time, Williams, a first-generation college student, realized he wanted to pursue a career in higher education to better understand the impact of equitable leadership and mentorship on college students. He wondered: “How do we commit to creating equity-minded leadership at all levels of higher education?”

He completed his master’s degree in higher education management at the University of Pittsburgh. Shortly thereafter, he found the perfect position as a program coordinator and coach in [UB’s Intercultural and Diversity Center \(IDC\)](#), where he contributes to its mission of celebrating cultures and identities, providing cross-cultural educational opportunities and advocating for social justice.

Williams considered this role to be a period of exploration, allowing him to focus on the areas most important to him: developing programs and events that foster equity and inclusion for students on college campuses. “We embrace culture and traditions through food, music, arts and crafts ... It’s an explosion of culture, connections and community,” he said.

Working in the IDC reaffirmed his interest in confronting the social justice issues facing college students. “I think about the progress we’ve made in some areas but also about the queer folks, trans folks of color and undocumented students—and the big issues and challenges that they still face,” he explained. “How do we continue to push forward to think about folks in the margins?”

Grappling with these questions gave him the momentum to enroll in GSE’s [higher education PhD program](#).

A standout moment: his doctoral seminar course with Margaret Saltee, associate professor of educational leadership and policy. “It was an opportunity to reckon with what higher education currently is, but also to reimagine what it can be,” said Williams.

After his first year in the program, Williams remains committed to his goals. He hopes to establish more equitable infrastructures in higher education to increase the achievement outcomes of all students.

While he may not realize it, Williams is already achieving this objective through his work in the IDC. He recently helped expand the center’s hours to better serve students unable to visit during regular business hours. As a result, attendance has significantly increased.

What’s next for Williams? He will continue working to achieve equity and inclusion on college campuses, but the exact plan is not yet determined.

“I’m like Natasha Bedingfield,” he said. “The rest is still unwritten.”

# GSE alumni and husband-and-wife team recognized in new UB competition

BY MICHELLE KEARNS

Athlete Viewpoint, a company founded six years ago by Graduate School of Education alumni Michael and Jennifer Cross, was selected as a finalist in the new [“UB Fast 46”](#) competition. Named in honor of the University at Buffalo’s 1846 founding, the competition recognized 46 fast-growing alumni-led or owned businesses. Athlete Viewpoint ranked 21st in the competition. The company earned the ranking because of its success in helping university athletic departments manage thousands of student-athlete evaluations.

Results were announced at an awards ceremony and reception held last year at UB’s Center for the Arts. “It was really nice to press pause for an evening and celebrate what we’ve built together,” said Jennifer Cross, BA ’92, EdM ’94, who is also the founder and managing director of Perceptive Leadership Services, a consulting and executive coaching business.

The husband-and-wife team began to nurture the skills needed to start their company while studying college counseling and student personnel administration at GSE. While enrolled in the program, Jennifer Cross worked as a graduate assistant for Barbara Ricotta, now UB senior associate vice president and dean of students and a longtime mentor. Jennifer Cross credits her UB graduate school assistantships and internships for cultivating her “soft” people skills that have been a key to her success. “People call them soft skills, but there’s nothing soft about them,” she said.

Her assistantships also allowed her to gain hands-on management practice in the Student Union, overseeing student employees, events and the information desk. “That practical experience that I got in those two years of my program, that’s the stuff I lean on over and over again, every day,” she said.

After completing her assistantship, Jennifer Cross was hired as a full-time reservation coordinator in the Student Union. Ricotta knew she was perfect for the job because of her enthusiastic and caring demeanor. “She’s a dedicated, amazing professional, always looking for ways to improve and learn new things ... What always impressed me about her

was her genuine interest in students—their issues, their problems and how she could help make things better for them,” said Ricotta.

As her career unfolded, along with her husband’s, they left Buffalo. Jennifer Cross worked in the University of Michigan’s New Student Programs Office, coordinating fall welcome week events for more than 5,000 first-year students. She continued in various university leadership positions in student services and development before pivoting in 2002 to launch a consultancy.

Athlete Viewpoint first materialized in 2016 while taking classes in an “altMBA” program created by entrepreneur Seth Godin. She was assigned the project of creating a business model for a company. While some students in her cohort examined famous entities like Google, she drew from her husband’s professional knowledge and experiences to create something unique.

As an athletic director for new business development at Penn State University, Michael Cross, BA ’91, EdM ’93, noticed problematic patterns during his 25-year career. He knew the student-athlete surveys weren’t executed uniformly. Some questionnaires missed opportunities to collect student feedback that could help improve departments. Sometimes the findings weren’t disseminated so staff could respond.

Jennifer Cross took note of these challenges for her assignment. “I did my business model on the idea of creating an outsource company that would facilitate the student-athlete feedback process for athletic directors,” she said.

Six months after she finished the program, she and her husband launched Athlete Viewpoint to help athletic departments collect and analyze data. The reactions were encouraging: “We got great feedback from our earliest users,” said Jennifer Cross. “They also made many suggestions about how to make it better.”

In 2021, their success led them to join forces with Game Plan, a North Carolina-based provider of educational content, mentorship and career services for student-athletes. The two companies will provide

a broader array of services for athletic departments by working together, said Jennifer Cross.

While Michael Cross continues to work

“What always impressed me about her was her genuine interest in students—their issues, their problems and how she could help make things better for them.”

at Penn State, he is also on the Game Plan board of directors. Jennifer Cross is Game Plan vice president of professional services and managing director of Athlete Viewpoint. In her new role within the larger company’s infrastructure, she will work with athletic directors to support student-athletes and create healthy department cultures.

She looks forward to the collaborative opportunities ahead with new clients. “We can get under the hood with a partner and say, ‘OK, let’s really start to pick this apart, do some broad investigation, gather a lot of feedback and input, and then put together a plan to move the needle in a positive direction,’” she said. “That’s a piece that I’m really excited about because it will merge my work in analytics with the consulting that I’ve been doing for a long time.”



# GSE panel discussion clarifies the conversation about critical race theory

BY DANIELLE LEGARE

As debate and misinformation about critical race theory spread across the nation, the Graduate School of Education and the School of Law held a virtual panel on Feb. 25 to shed light on the current public discourse concerning this academic concept.

The panel, “Critical Race Theory: Clarifying the Conversation,” was organized by GSE’s

3. Gwendolyn Baxley, assistant professor of educational leadership and policy
4. LaGarrett King, associate professor of learning and instruction, and director of UB’s Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education
5. Athena D. Mutua, professor of law and Floyd H. and Hilda L. Hurst Faculty Scholar
6. Tolulope F. Odunsi, lecturer in law
7. Anthony L. White II, social studies teacher at PS #31 Harriet Ross Tubman School, and GSE doctoral student and instructor in learning and instruction



“One point I am going to clarify around this conversation is this notion that we are indoctrinating students when we talk about race, racism and anti-Blackness. I find that young people are already making meaning of their experiences, making meaning of structures of oppression and privilege and power inside of school but also outside of school, and they are using mediums such as TikTok, Snapchat and Twitter, and leveraging memes and gifs, to understand and analyze their experiences,” Baxley said. “Young people are engaging in this kind of reflection in other spaces outside of schools, leveraging their own agency, leveraging their own political consciousness and using other methods to explore these areas.”

The group advanced the conversation by considering how the fields of law and education can work together to meet the challenges our country faces regarding how

“What we’ve begun to see is not only the banning of CRT, but the banning of critical teaching methods more generally, and especially those centered on issues of race and racism.” –Anthony L. White II

standing committee for Equity, Diversity, Justice and Inclusion. The event was open to the public and drew about 350 people.

In her opening remarks, Raechele Pope (1), GSE senior associate dean for faculty and student affairs and chief diversity officer, explained: “Recently, critical race theory has become a target of political activism, leading to significant confusion about what critical race theory is and what role, if any, it plays in education. This coordinated effort against critical race theory has led legislatures in many states to ban CRT and prohibit and sanction teaching about racism and the racial history of the U.S.”

Julie Gorlewski (2), professor and chair of the Department of Learning and Instruction, moderated the event. The panelists included:

Throughout the 90-minute event, the faculty experts exchanged views on the current conversations and state legislation focused on critical race theory in education.

“What we’ve begun to see is not only the banning of CRT, but the banning of critical teaching methods more generally, and especially those centered on issues of race and racism—and I think this is dangerous,” said White. “It’s dangerous for the development of our students who will be the social and political actors and leaders of our nation and future, and it’s dangerous for the well-being of our society as a whole.”

Baxley agreed and added that these bans are intentional strategies to suppress the truth and maintain and retain control by dominant groups.

we teach and learn about race and racism in K-12 schools.

One of White’s suggestions: “I think that at least some coursework in law and policy analysis, including from a critical perspective, should be a requirement in every teacher education program because teachers are going to have to be impacted by and beholden to legislation.”

As the discussion concluded, Gorlewski ended the event with a note of optimism. “My hope is that the dialogue will continue in ways that promote equity and diversity, justice and inclusion through the power of public education,” she said.

# To help Black students feel safer, schools must embrace their cultural identity

To create a safer learning environment for Black students, schools should turn to culturally relevant and Afrocentric policies and practices that better incorporate their identity in the school culture, according to a new University at Buffalo-led study.

BY MARCENE ROBINSON

The research, published earlier this year in *School Psychology International*, suggested that practices such as allowing Black students and their families to co-create school rules, removing zero-tolerance discipline policies, creating mentorship programs that pair Black students with Black adults and promoting the use of mindfulness among students could have a positive impact on the educational experiences of Black youth.

Black students are more likely than any other racial group to experience exclusionary discipline such as suspensions and expulsions. The discipline gap exists as early as preschool, as Black preschool children are nearly four times more likely to receive suspensions than white preschool children, according to the United States Department of Education.

“Black students are more likely than any other racial group to experience exclusionary discipline such as suspensions and expulsions.”

Black students also report feeling less safe at school than white and Asian students, even when controlling for neighborhood factors, said lead author Kamontá Heidelberg, assistant professor of counseling, school and educational psychology at UB GSE.

“Ensuring a school environment that is physically and psychologically safe for students is critical for them to learn and grow, particularly for minoritized students continuously oppressed by systemic barriers,” said Heidelberg. “Culturally incongruent curricula, discipline disparities and bias from school staff are all part of the schooling experience for Black students. School safety must be reexamined and reconceptualized

to promote a safe, secure and welcoming environment for Black students.”

Heidelberg and his co-authors—Chavez Phelps, assistant professor at Georgia State University; and Tai A. Collins, associate professor at University of Cincinnati—suggest

numerous interventions to help foster a safe learning environment for Black students.

Among their recommendations:

School staff should highlight the accomplishments of Black people throughout society to better teach Black students about their history and help promote pride in their racial identity, allow Black students and their families the opportunity to co-create school rules to better fit their norms and values, and provide anti-bias and racism training to school staff so that they can understand the intricacies of the Black experience in the U.S. and better discuss race and racism with students.

Schools should also use data to identify the teachers who are most likely to issue discipline and the students who are most often targeted. Additionally, schools should replace zero-tolerance discipline policies and the use of school security measures—which can push Black students out of school into the criminal justice system—with compassionate conflict resolution interventions such as classroom agreements and meetings to make amends.

The researchers also recommend mindfulness as a powerful tool to help empower Black youth to manage stress and their emotions. They add that school-based mentorships with Black adults help protect Black students from institutional barriers by



Kamontá Heidelberg, Assistant Professor of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology.

helping them foster positive relationships with adults who are not their caregivers, make better life choices, and build their self-esteem and pride in their identity.

“Every Black student deserves to feel that they are seen and valued, and that they are



Creating school-based mentorships with Black adults helps Black students build self-esteem and positive relationships with adults, according to Heidelberg’s research.

safe in a world that rarely allows them to have such experiences,” said Heidelberg. “Schools are faced with an ultimatum and must decide to either be a part of the solution and better support the experiences of Black students, or to maintain the status quo and further oppress Black students.”

# GSE Bulletin Board

## FACULTY AWARDS AND HONORS



**Blythe Anderson**, assistant professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction, was named a finalist for the 2021 Timothy and Cynthia Shanahan Outstanding Dissertation Award and was also named a 2021 Emerging Scholar by the Reading Hall of Fame.



**Julie Gorlewski**, chair and associate professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction, has been awarded the Taylor & Francis 2022 Outstanding Journal Article Award for her article, "Ripple Effects: How Teacher Action Research on Culturally Relevant Education Can Promote Systemic Change," published in ATE's journal, *Action in Teacher Education*.



**Heidi Julien**, professor of information science, has been invited to serve on the editorial board of the *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (ARIST)*, which is a publication of the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T).



**LaGarrett King**, associate professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction, received the 2022 Society of Professors of Education Outstanding Book Award for his contributions to the book, "We Be Lovin' Black Children: Learning to Be Literate About the African Diaspora."



**Amy Reynolds**, professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, was recognized by the National Academies of Practice for her work as part of UB's Interprofessional Educational Leadership team.



**Margaret Sallee**, associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, was awarded a Spencer Foundation grant to conduct a study to assess how stimulus funding, the expanded Child Tax Credit and other forms of aid shaped student-mothers' decisions and participation in higher education.



**Stephen Santa-Ramirez**, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, was selected as a 2022 ACPA-College Student Educators International Diamond Honoree for his outstanding research and service in student affairs. He is also a recipient of the 2022 National Academy of Education (NAEd)/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship.

## STUDENT AWARDS



**Lauren Hennings**, curriculum, instruction and the science of learning doctoral student, was awarded the 2022 Durand Scholarship, named after Henry J. and Bonita R. Durand. The award is given to a graduate student facing financial obstacles that stand in the way of completing a graduate degree.



**Danielle Lewis**, higher education doctoral student, was recently awarded a SUNY PRODiG fellowship. This two-year fellowship supports late-stage doctoral students who want to explore academic careers and gain teaching experience at SUNY comprehensive colleges.



**Chazz Robinson**, higher education doctoral student, was selected as a Julian Park fellow in UB's College of Arts and Sciences. He will work with Ewa Ziarek, Julian Park Professor of Comparative Literature, to research and facilitate African American graduate students' engagement in diversifying curriculum and university culture.



**Anthony Vargas**, higher education and student affairs master's student, was awarded the Outstanding Graduate Student Award from the American College Personnel Association Coalition for Multicultural Affairs. He received the award in March at the ACPA 2022 Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, for his equity and inclusion efforts on college campuses.

## ALUMNI AWARDS



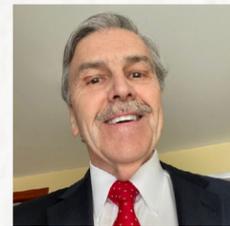
**Tiffany M. Nyachae, PhD '18**, was selected for the 2022 inaugural International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS) Emerging Scholars Program by the Wallace Foundation Grant Committee. The research funding will allow her to work with youth and teachers in Buffalo in the summer.



**Carl Lam, EdM '16**, was recognized as one of Buffalo Business First's 30 Under 30 Class of 2022 honorees. The list celebrates young professionals positively impacting their industries and communities every year.



**Raven Baxter, PhD '21**, was named to Forbes magazine's 30 Under 30 North America 2022 Science list.



**Douglas Regan, EdD '83**, was awarded the 2022 Irving Schwartz Distinguished Retiree Award by the School Administrators Association of New York State.

## SCHOOL AWARDS

**UB's Graduate School of Education** climbed to No. 53, up six spots from last year and 35 spots in the past four years, in the U.S. News & World Report America's Best Graduate Schools rankings. Among public universities in the rankings, UB is No. 42 in education and is ranked third overall in the state.

## CENTERS

**The Fisher-Price Endowed Early Childhood Research Center** achieved renewal of its National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation.

## WELCOME TO GSE

**Charlie Baxter** was named GSE's director of assessment and data analytics.

**William Bogdan** has been named assistant director of enrollment communications in GSE's Office of Admissions.

**Katheryn Ross-Winnie** has been named associate director of advancement.

**Lauren E. Turner** has been named GSE's assistant director of alumni and constituent engagement.

## ROLE CHANGES

**Danielle LeGare** has been named director of content for GSE's Communications and Marketing team.

**Ben Poremski** has assumed the role of assistant to the chair for the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology.

**Jennifer Rosseland-Bates** has assumed the role of business liaison in the Dean's Office.

## NEW ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS



**Julie Gorlewski**, associate professor in the Department of Learning and Instruction, has been named senior associate dean for academic affairs and teacher education for GSE, effective summer 2022. In this role, Gorlewski will oversee all matters related to academic affairs for GSE and lead a newly reorganized Office of Educator Preparation.



**Erin Kearney**, associate professor, will assume the role of chair for the Department of Learning and Instruction in the fall of 2022.



**X. Christine Wang**, has been named associate dean for interdisciplinary research, effective fall 2022.

**35** ↑ Spots Up From 2020 Ranking  
U.S. News & World Report 2023 Best Graduate Schools

# Events



**Black History Nerds Saturday School** is a monthly professional development series for PreK-12 schoolteachers and others interested in learning more about Black history and race. These one-hour sessions help develop Black history content pedagogical knowledge and are hosted by the **Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education**.

**FEBRUARY 5**



Dr. Jarvis Givens from Harvard University presented **The Art of Black Teaching**.

**FEBRUARY 12**



Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz from Teachers College, Columbia University, presented **Historical Literacy as Racial Literacy**.

**FEBRUARY 19**



Dr. Leonard Moore from the University of Texas at Austin presented **Teaching Black History to White People**.

**FEBRUARY 26**



Dr. Ghody Muhammad from the University of Illinois at Chicago presented **The Hill Project: A Black Studies Curriculum**.

**MARCH 11**



Dr. Roderick Carey, assistant professor at the College of Education and Human Development, University of Delaware, presented **How Black Boys Perceived Their Mattering During the "Dual Pandemics": Race, Schooling, and Adolescents' (In)Significance Throughout Health and Racial Crises**. Carey was the last presenter for the 2021-2022 Dean's Lecture Series.

**MARCH 11**



**The Researching Race Professional Development Series** is for academics and autodidacts interested in learning about race, racism and research. Sessions include topics ranging from theoretical frameworks and framing, methodologies, epistemological and ontological positioning, subject selection, writing, dissertation and research. This series is hosted by the **Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education**.

**MARCH 15**



Dr. Ramon Goings from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, presented **The Reality of Researching Race in Your Dissertation: Strategies for Success and Keeping Your Sanity**.

**MARCH 26**



Dr. Dann J. Broyld, associate professor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, presented **Borderland Blacks: Two Cities in the Niagara Region During the Final Decades of Slavery**, which was the main lecture given at the Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education's Welcome to Western New York event hosted in conjunction with Entrepreneur Appetite.

**MARCH 29**



The 2022 Bobinski Lecture Series, presented by the Department of Information Science and supported by The George and Mary Bobinski Lecture Fund, featured Tracie D. Hall, the tenth executive director of the American Library Association. Hall presented **Race, Redlining and Resistance: Libraries in the Making of the Next Civil Rights Movement**.

**MARCH 30**



The annual **Student Research Symposium** is an opportunity for students from all disciplines within the Graduate School of Education to share their research, meet professionals in their field and prepare for upcoming conferences. This year's symposium theme was **Seeds for Change: Evidence-Informed Research and Practice in 2022 and Beyond**.

**APRIL 26**



New York State Commissioner of Education **Betty Rosa** discussed the state of education in a post-pandemic world with GSE's alumni, students and faculty in a virtual presentation. This presentation was co-sponsored by GSE and the Graduate School of Education Alumni Association.

**FEBRUARY 16**



Pulitzer-Prize winner and New York Times Magazine staff writer **Nikole Hannah-Jones** spoke on Feb. 16 as UB's 46th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Speaker as part of the 2021-2022 UB Distinguished Speakers Series. Dean Suzanne Rosenblith moderated the discussion.

Joe Cascio Photography



# BOLD MEANS LEARNING TO GROW.

At UB, we've proven we can do anything when we come together. Our students have boundless ambition. Our faculty have unstoppable drive. And we're fueling the future with discovery and innovation. The *Boldly Buffalo* campaign is on course to raise \$1 billion. [buffalo.edu/campaign](https://buffalo.edu/campaign)

**BOLDLY BUFFALO**  
THE CAMPAIGN FOR UB

# Faculty Retirements

**Kathleen (Kayte) Conroy** retired after 22 years of working at the University at Buffalo. Before academia, she worked in numerous community agency settings as a clinician and supervisor, providing counseling and

was an internationally known disordered gambling specialist. Conroy has been an invited guest speaker for a variety of audiences in local, regional, national and international settings for conference presentations, lectures and workshops. She has also been actively involved with leadership roles in several community organizations

and spearheaded a local chapter for a professional organization in the counseling field. As a drug court task force member, she was actively involved in the development of the nation's first Therapeutic Diversionary Gambling Court system located in Amherst, New York.

A few highlights at UB include her instrumental role in the development of a distance education cohort for the rehabilitation counseling program that launched in 2008, as well as serving as interim program director for the master's degree in rehabilitation counseling and long-term program director of the advanced certificate program in rehabilitation counseling. She played a critical role in the development of three advanced certificate programs, and she enjoyed many years of teaching a variety of

graduate courses in CSEP.

Conroy earned a dual bachelor's degree and two master's degrees before going on to complete a doctorate in counselor education, all from UB, while raising three children.

"Dr. Kayte," as she is known to her students, is a first-generation college graduate and second-generation Irish-American who resides in Western New York. She is the mother of three and has two grandsons, with another on the way this fall. They will keep Kayte busy during retirement in addition to her provision of counseling services to clients at her private practice.

Of all her accomplishments, Conroy is most proud of her faculty role in the process of shepherding and empowering hundreds of students during the development of the professional and clinical skills needed to launch successful careers in the counseling field.



**Tim Janikowski** came to the University at Buffalo in 1999, after 11 years on the faculty at Southern Illinois University. Upon arriving in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology (the word "School"

## Tim Janikowski

had not yet been added to the department name), he became the director of the rehabilitation counseling program. In 2004, he chaired the committee that created the mental health counseling program and became its first director. Most recently, he served as director of the counselor education doctoral program. Along the way, Janikowski served as CSEP department chair for eight years and was elected president

of the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association. Janikowski enjoyed teaching and taught every course offered by the rehabilitation counseling program and most of the mental health counseling courses. He advised hundreds of students and supervised their clinical placements, theses, qualifying papers and dissertations.

An accomplished scholar, Janikowski published numerous journal articles and a textbook on disability, rehabilitation and addiction. Outside of the department, Janikowski consulted with the Social Security Administration as a vocational expert witness for many years. He is looking forward to his retirement and "being of help" (his personal and professional motto) to his expanding family (grandson #2 is on the way).



vocational services to various populations.

Her career in academia began as an adjunct professor at UB in the undergraduate social sciences interdisciplinary degree program, where she was once a student and is now a proud alumna. Several years later, Conroy reconnected with the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology (CSEP), where she was also once a student and is now an alumna. She added the position of clinical coordinator for the rehabilitation counseling and mental health counseling programs to her adjunct teaching role until she accepted a full-time clinical faculty teaching position in CSEP.

Over the course of her career, Conroy was certified as a rehabilitation counselor, licensed as a mental health counselor, and

**Jeremy D. Finn** SUNY Distinguished Professor, came to the University at Buffalo in 1976 after earning his PhD from the University of Chicago in educational measurement,

Council, Educational Testing Service and International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

A national education expert on K-12 policy, Finn has been recognized as a National Assessment of Educational Progress Scholar at Educational Testing Service and NSF/ASA Fellow at the National Center for Education Statistics.

Throughout his career, Finn has researched the effect of class size on learning, academic performance, graduation rates and future employment. He was a principal investigator in the most extensive randomized study done on class size in American education to assess whether there is a connection between class size and other life characteristics such as employment and mortality rates.

An esteemed and prolific scholar, he has published extensively in top-rated journals on the topics of school and classroom conditions affiliated with student performance and dropping out. He has given invited

addresses on these topics to educators, researchers and policymakers in the United States and abroad.

"As the longest-serving faculty member at UB, Dr. Finn has touched so many students' minds with his statistics courses. When it comes to the issues of class size and student engagement, he is the go-to person for research or policy guidance," said Jaekyung Lee, GSE professor of counseling, school and educational psychology.



**Valerie (Val) Nessel**, associate professor, is retiring after a 14-year career in the Department of Information Science. After a long stint living in mining towns in several provinces in Canada, Nessel went back to school in 1999 to pursue her master's and then PhD in library and information science at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. Because of her research interests in the

## Val Nessel

intersection between information behavior and information literacy instruction with elementary school students, Nessel came to UB GSE and the Department of Library and Information Science in August 2008, thrilled to be working at a university where the disciplines of LIS and education were closely aligned. Also appealing was the city of Buffalo with its affinity to Canada as she came on her own, leaving her husband and university-aged daughters in Montreal. (Once retired, Nessel and her husband can finally live in the same country, city and house!) As an assistant professor, Nessel continued her research with young students, focusing on information literacy instruction of third-grade students in the Buffalo Public School System.

In 2010, as a direct result of teaching her first of several hybrid courses where she experimented with (then) new technologies such as Eluminate—using them in ways

not done so before, and having been a mature student who had returned to school after 17 years away, pursuing graduate studies in a discipline completely new to her where she had to learn everything from the ground up—Nessel developed a new research interest: helping faculty members who were uncomfortable with technology. After receiving tenure in 2014, she began working with the Office of the Vice President and Chief Information Officer (VPCIO) to provide a voice for those faculty who were uncomfortable with the rapid changes in technology but did not know to whom to turn. In 2017, she was named the inaugural UBIT Faculty Fellow in recognition of her work. As Faculty Fellow, serving as a liaison between UB faculty and IT professionals, she developed and ran the UB Faculty IT Liaison Program, led focus groups and usability studies for new technologies to inform IT support, and served as emcee at UBIT townhalls, as well as participated in other activities. Along with serving on many GSE and departmental committees, as well as being the MS-ILS program director for three years, Nessel also served as chair of the UB Faculty Senate IT Committee for several years, and most recently served as co-chair of the UB LMS (learning management system) review committee.

Working at UB has given Nessel incredible opportunities to grow and learn and has prepared her for an active retirement. She

plans to carry on with her work in UX design outside of academia. She is especially interested in exploring its use with indigenous communities with whom she will be working as a volunteer. She also hopes some amateur theater is in her future. What is definite is that she will continue to learn new things and, as she tells her students every week, she will make sure to "enjoy the learning!"



# @academics all aTwitter #Educating in 280 characters or less

BY BETHANY CERCONO

On March 21, 2006, at 9:50 p.m., the first-ever tweet, “just setting up my twttr,” was posted by Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey. Since then, Twitter has become the place for people to learn what’s happening “now” in their social circles and around the world. With the ability to quickly share snippets of information (even faster when using hashtags), academics have taken to the platform to share their own ideas, opinions and accomplishments with students, fellow researchers and the general public.



In under 280 characters, our GSE academics have shared tweets on problems faculty parents might face during the COVID-19 pandemic, a personal TIME Magazine feature on the depiction of suicide in a popular Hulu series, and even selfies with their beloved fur babies.

Whether it is through gifs, memes, emojis or our scholastic UB way of writing, our academics are engaged on Twitter—giving researchers and students from institutions all around the world a glimpse of what we’re up to here at GSE.



# IN MEMORIAM

## Emeritus Faculty

**RON GENTILE**, a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Department of Counseling, School and Educational Psychology, died April 20, 2022. He was 81. Gentile taught educational psychology at GSE for 35 years, from 1969 to 2004.



Gentile, who always knew he wanted to teach, started out in chemical engineering at the Drexel Institute of Technology in Philadelphia. He soon determined engineering wasn't for him and enrolled at Pennsylvania State University, where he earned his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in psychology. After completing his doctoral work, he narrowly missed going to Vietnam: the ROTC graduate instead served as captain in the U.S. Army

Medical Service Corps at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in Washington, D.C. In 1969, after two years at the hospital, Gentile came to UB.

His research and teaching spanned a wide range of educational psychology topics from behavioral and emotional issues to cognitive and memory processes, as well as improving testing and grading practices. He produced over 80 publications, including five books, almost all with direct implications for teaching. His most recent publication, “Learning from Video Games (and Everything Else): The General Learning Model (Elements in Applied Social Psychology),” was co-authored with his son, Douglas Gentile, professor of psychology at Iowa State University.

He remained passionate about his work after three decades in the field. He shared a simple philosophy with his students: “Each of us has to be humble. We’re never done learning how to teach.”



## Alumni

### 1950s

- Bernard A. Cesar, Sr.**, EdB '51, of Amherst, N.Y. | Jan. 30, 2022
- Anthony C. Ben**, JD '54, EdM '51,, of Lockport, N.Y. | Feb. 16, 2022
- Charles A. O'Brien**, EdM '56, EdB '54, of Williamsville, N.Y. | Jan. 7, 2022

### 1960s

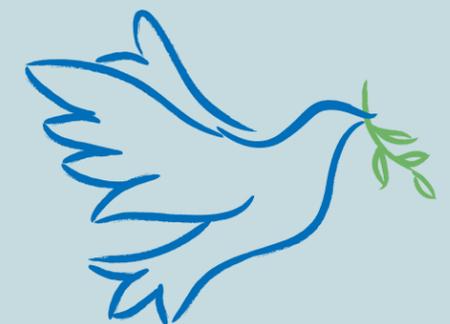
- John F. Pasquariello**, EdM '60, of Lancaster, N.Y. | Jan. 25, 2022
- Maryln Zahler**, EdM '63, of Buffalo, N.Y. | March 4, 2022
- John C. Stofa**, EdB '64, of Cincinnati, O.H. | April 23, 2022
- Mary K. Twist**, EdM, '64, of Lackawanna, N.Y. | Jan. 31, 2022
- Charles M. Breinin**, EdM '66, BA '56, of Tonawanda, N.Y. | March 22, 2022
- John C. Berkhoudt**, EdB '67, of Buffalo, N.Y. | Jan. 3, 2022
- Sarah Marie Dinatale**, EdM '67, of Amherst, N.Y. | Jan. 13, 2022
- Dr. Charles F. Adams, III**, EdD '69, EdM '67, of Fayetteville, N.Y. | April 2, 2022
- Dr. Bertram C. Lindemann**, PhD '70, EdM '68, of Montclair, N.J. | Nov. 24, 2021
- Joan M. Walker**, EdM '68, BA '63, formerly of Lakeview, N.Y. | Jan. 10, 2022
- Russell B. Osborn**, EdM '66, JD '52, of Buffalo, N.Y. | Feb. 19, 2022

### 1970s

- Grace A. Flanagan**, EdM '70, of Buffalo, N.Y. | March 24, 2022
- Liz Lyons Friedman**, EdM '73, of Buffalo, N.Y. | April 10, 2022
- Frank Austin**, EdM '74, of Orchard Park, N.Y. | Dec. 27, 2021
- Sylvia R. Nelson**, EdM '76, of Williamsville, N.Y. | Jan. 16, 2022
- Dr. David Kunle Akanbi**, EdD '77, of Nigeria, Africa | Nov. 13, 2021
- Barbara “Bambii” Brody**, EdD '76, EdM '73, BA '71, of Oneonta, N.Y. | July 26, 2021
- Barbara F. DiCamillo**, EdM '77, of Buffalo, N.Y. | April 16, 2022
- Glenda C. Sleeper**, EdM '77, of East Aurora, N.Y. | Jan. 3, 2022

### 1980s

- William L. McGee**, EdD '84, formerly of Potsdam, N.Y. | Nov. 6, 2021



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The signature light tower in the atrium at the medical school building, the home of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, was illuminated bright orange in June 2022 in observance of Gun Violence Awareness Day. (UB Photo/Meredith Forrest Kulwicki)

