The University of Iowa Press director reflects on 25 years at Iowa

Holly Carver attributes the success of a university press to an ability to answer three key questions: Is an editorial decision good for the press? Is it good for the book? Is it good for the author? “If you can answer yes to all three, you’re probably going to do well,” Carver said.

In 25 years at The University of Iowa Press, the last 11 as its director, Carver frequently responded yes, with positive results. As some university presses shut down or struggle financially, the UI Press is operating well within its budget. With The Press on good financial footing, Carver, 62, announced her retirement in July.

“I wanted to leave when it felt like I was still doing a pretty good job,” Carver said. “I want The Press to be considered having achieved a level of efficiency and collegiality based on solid publishing decisions that ideally will last.

“I also want The Press to have a strong identity tied to the mantra of good books for good people.”

Graduate College Associate Dean Dan Berkowitz was named interim director for the fall semester. Graduate College Dean John Keller plans to hire a permanent director by spring 2011.

“I am grateful to Holly for her valuable contributions to The UI Press,” Keller said. “She provided great leadership and friendship to everyone who was affiliated with The Press during that time.

“Her legacy will be the 441 books she acquired for the Press. Indeed, she accomplished her goal to publish good books for good people.”

The Press publishes 45 to 50 titles each year and has about 750 titles in print. Carver says The Press publishes only five percent, at most, of the queries it receives. That selectivity has paid off during the current economic climate.

One of Carver’s favorite UI Press books is Sunday Afternoon on the Porch: Reflections of a Small Town in Iowa, 1939-1942, a collection of photographs by Everett W. Kuntz, who stored away thousands of negatives he forgot about until shortly before his death in 2003.

“While in high school in northeast Iowa, near Decorah, he snapped photos around a small town,” Carver said. “He couldn’t afford to print them until 50 years later when he was dying. His photos are so luminous, graceful, and endearing, like a peaceful little time capsule.”

In August, The UI Press was named one of 17 innovative university presses by The Huffington Post. The Press is the state of Iowa’s only university press.

Carver credits her former staff for The Huffington Post distinction and the overall success of The UI Press. “I have been incredibly lucky to work with such professional, high-achieving colleagues,” Carver said.

Carver came to The UI Press as a managing editor in 1985. The Texas native served as interim director for two years before becoming director in 1999.

“The vision I had was three-pronged: connect to the state of Iowa with nature books, connect to the University’s mission with fiction, literary nonfiction, and poetry, and connect to the scholarly mission with academic books,” Carver said.

Dean John Keller and Holly Carver at a reception held in her honor October 19, 2010.
The Graduate College has selected the winners of its most prestigious dissertation prizes: the D.C. Spriestersbach Dissertation Prize, the Graduate Deans’ Distinguished Dissertation Award.

Five graduate scholars will be formally recognized for their exemplary research next spring at a UI ceremony held in conjunction with the James F. Jakobsen Graduate Research Conference.

Amrit De (physics) and Vanessa Simmering-Best (psychology) received top doctoral honors with the D.C. Spriestersbach Dissertation Prize. The award carries a $2,500 award.

John Loperfido (civil and environmental engineering) and Michael Waugh (economics) earned the Graduate College Deans’ Distinguished Dissertation Award.

The winner of the L.B. Sims Outstanding Master’s Thesis Award will be announced in the spring.

The Spriestersbach Prizes are named for D.C. Spriestersbach, dean of the Graduate College from 1965-1989. When the prize was founded, Spriestersbach hoped it would “serve as tangible evidence—‘gold standards’—of the outstanding work of which graduate students are capable and to which all others should aspire.”


Loperfido, who received his Ph.D. in civil and environmental engineering in 2009, won the Graduate Deans’ Distinguished Dissertation Award in mathematical, physical sciences and engineering for his dissertation, *High-Frequency Sensing of Clear Creek Water Quality: Mechanisms of Dissolved Oxygen and Turbidity Dynamics, and Nutrient Transport*.


John Loperfido installs a water quality monitoring station as part of his current project, “Water quality impacts of urbanization, climate change, and storm water best management practices in the Chesapeake Bay basin” at the U.S. Geological Survey.

Located in Clarksburg, MD, this station is used to monitor nutrient and sediment pollution. Data from this and three other stations in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area will help provide an understanding of the effects of urbanization and storm water best management practices on nutrient and sediment pollution delivered from urban areas to the Chesapeake Bay.
Dean’s Fellow’s book “Corpitos” sheds light on Tex-Mex border turbulence

By Travis Varner
University News Services

For her latest book, Stephanie Elizondo Griest got to know a French chef-by-day/bounty hunter-by-night, a Tejano dedicated to helping the Mexican residents of shantytowns, and a hermit who took a vow of silence in 1982 and communicates only by writing notes.

A second-year graduate student in The University of Iowa Nonfiction Writing Program, Griest believes everyone has a story, and the opportunity to meet intriguing people and share their stories is what draws her to writing.

“Experiencing the unique lives of so many subjects is what’s amazing about nonfiction writing,” she said. “To succeed in this trade, to find these unique individuals, you have to be open, immensely curious, and willing to talk to absolutely everyone.”

With a Dean’s Fellowship from the UI Graduate College, Griest is pursuing her Master of Fine Arts degree and writing about social justice in south Texas. Her forthcoming book is tentatively titled “Corpitos” in honor of her hometown, Corpus Christi. The goal of her project is to publicize the ramifications of social issues like immigration and the drug war.

“At least two Mexicans are killed for every pound of marijuana smuggled into the United States through Mexico,” Griest said. “I want people to know the devastation it has brought to Mexico and south Texas, and I hope to do that by writing about it.”

Griest’s writing career began in journalism in the late 1990s, when she reported on politics for The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Associated Press. She has since published three books: Around the Bloc, on her experiences in countries influenced by communism, 100 Places Every Woman Should Go, a best-selling travel guide for women, and a memoir, Mexican Enough: My Life Between the Borderlands.

Activism and engagement are important aspects of Griest’s life. Earlier this year, she volunteered as an instructor at a UI workshop designed to help veterans tell their stories in creative and compelling ways, and to offer a catharsis for dealing with painful events.

“Teaching at this workshop was a way to show gratitude for the sacrifices these veterans have made,” Griest said. “Using writing as a healing force was a beautiful experience.”

Griest’s goal is to teach writing in a university setting while continuing to share stories, including a few of her own. She has plenty of tales to tell, growing up with an extended family that includes cowboys on her mother’s side and “traveling hobos” on her father’s.

“I knew from a very early age that I wanted to tell these and other stories,” Griest said. “There’s never been any question that writing is what I want to do for a living.”

For more about Stephanie Elizondo Griest’s publications, visit www.aroundthebloc.com.
You can also read her blog at http://aroundthebloc.wordpress.com.

From an early age, Stephanie Elizondo Griest has envisioned a career in writing.
Henry awarded for exemplary service

Joe Henry routinely goes the extra mile to make a difference in the lives of graduate scholars.

In 25 years as an outreach coordinator and counselor at The University of Iowa, Henry has maintained an open-door policy for UI students and has worked long hours at graduate recruiting fairs.

Constantly committed to the success of his students, Henry has walked extra miles equal to several marathons.

“My philosophy of life incorporates embracing transformative educational experiences as an ongoing way of life, which ultimately helps students ask better questions and make more informed decisions,” said Henry, recruitment and outreach coordinator for the Graduate College and its Office of Graduate Ethnic Inclusion (OGEI).

“This all hopefully serves to enhance our existence and the quality of our journey.”

Henry, a 20-year Graduate College staff member, plays a vital role in increasing underrepresented populations in graduate education. In recognition of his contributions, Henry received a University of Iowa Outstanding Staff Award on Oct. 6, 2010. During a reception at the Graduate College, Henry witnessed his impact on many of the students he helped recruit to the UI. Two dozen students packed a university conference room, many arriving early and leaving late.

“It was an incredible feeling of being valued, seeing the large turnout with my own eyes. It wasn’t anything that was said, but more what was demonstrated by the people who chose to come and celebrate,” Henry said. “I was really speechless in so many ways. This has turned out to be the way I’ve wanted to spend my professional time, supporting prospective graduate students and watching them become young scholars who also will care about others and influence those who will come after them.”

Nicholas Yanes, a Dean’s Graduate Fellow and Ph.D. candidate in American studies, was one of the first students who arrived to congratulate Henry.

“What makes Joe stand out is, just like the OGEI, he understands the value of building a community that one can rely on for support while still understanding that students are here to focus on their degrees and move on in their careers,” Yanes said.

Henry, a St. Louis native, sets a positive example by maintaining regular contact with students, addressing questions about academic, programs, application processes, funding and social life at the UI, and directing them to other campus resources. He also serves as a senior mentor in the SROP/McNair Program, which is part of the Graduate College’s summer undergraduate research efforts. In this role, he forms rich relationships with students that often extend into their graduate careers.

Henry’s work building a positive rapport with students begins well before they enroll at the UI.

Over the years, he has often been one of the first recruiters to arrive at the Graduate and Professional Schools Fair, sponsored by Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO).

“On numerous occasions, Joe Henry was still talking to students as we attempted to ‘close down’ the gym so that we could get ready for a basketball game,” said Joe Marion, career counseling director at SUNO. “In addition, he has sponsored visitation trips for me and several SUNO students to visit The University of Iowa to learn about opportunities for advanced studies there.”

While Henry goes the extra mile to help students, they return the favor by succeeding.

“It’s rewarding and fulfilling when your connection with a person evolves into a mentorship relationship, because of the trust that was placed in you and the positive results that were achieved,” Henry said. “It’s a special feeling when you observe that magical moment when the student balances the larger picture with their special interests and realize why they want to become scholars.”

(From left) OGEI Ambassadors Kevin Pinkston, JoAnna Arguello, Candyce Briggs, Karletta White, and Khirin Carter are vital parts of OGEI’s success. OGEI staff member Joe Henry (right) directs the ambassador program.
Casas makes career advances, appreciative of support received at Iowa

With scholarship offers from Ivy League schools Yale and Cornell, Rachel Casas did not envision attending graduate school in “Middle-of-Nowhere Iowa.”

However, the California native surprised herself with her decision to enroll at The University of Iowa. Casas had a place in her heart for America’s Heartland thanks to her 2003 experience in the UI’s SROP/McNair Scholars Program.

Diana Bryant and Joe Henry, staff members in Iowa’s Office of Graduate Ethnic Inclusion, left a lasting impression on this talented scholar. Bryant is the SROP/McNair Scholars Program coordinator.

“The SROP experience with Diana and Joe had a personal touch. I felt like they cared about it,” said Casas, who attended two other SROP programs before coming to Iowa City. “Diana went above and beyond to make me feel like this could be a place where I’d want to live. Joe did the same.”

Casas’s decision to come to Iowa was cemented by the opportunity to work with Daniel T ranel, director of Iowa’s neuroscience Ph.D. program and a mentor with the SROP/McNair Scholars Program.

“Dan e-mailed me all this information, including his publications. I thought, ‘This is an interesting person,’” Casas said. “I also talked to my undergraduate advisor at California State University, Northridge, who said this would be a good experience for me and if I didn’t know about Dan T ranel, then I had better do some research, because he’s one of the biggest names in neuropsychology.”

Under T ranel’s guidance, Casas, who earned her Ph.D. in psychology in 2010, looked at the validity of interpreter-mediated neuropsychological testing among a growing Hispanic population.

After one year of research in Puerto Rico, she determined that interpreter use makes test results unreliable and imprecise.

Casas said interpreter use is increasing with the exponential growth in both the Hispanic population and the population of monolingual Spanish speakers who have a limited English proficiency.

“There are not enough (Spanish-speaking) neuropsychologists available to provide services,” said Casas, who received a Dean’s Graduate Fellowship at the UI.

“This is happening at a time when Hispanics are at an increased risk for neuropsychological disorders. They’re also at an increased risk for heart disease, diabetes, and stroke.”

As Casas explored her research at the UI, T ranel provided mentoring and support throughout the process that was marked by both professionalism and approachability.

“Dan is kind of like a neuroscience dad. He’s there to support me, but he’s giving me tough criticism that I need,” Casas said. “At the same time, he intentionally picks out my strengths and tries to foster them. He never cuts me down. He’s incredibly stable. You know exactly how he’s going to respond to you.”

Casas has taken her research pursuits back to California, where she holds positions as a postdoctoral scholar at both UCLA and USC, with fellowship funding from the Foundation of Psychocultural Research.

“My job is to work as an interdisciplinary bridge builder to help facilitate communication between neuroscientists and socio-cultural researchers to develop projects that are more ecologically valid and more representative of the diversity of the United States population,” Casas said.
Having worked as a social work practitioner, Elithet Silva-Martinez came to Iowa to pursue a Ph.D. in social work. With her past professional expertise in hand, Silva-Martinez listened to survivors’ accounts of intimate partner violence—their strengths, how their children helped them survive, and their faith.

Silva-Martinez, who earned her doctorate in 2009, conducted 27 interviews with nine battered Latina women—all originally from Mexico and ranging in age from 19 to 50—who lived in an eastern Iowa community of 3,300 residents. Based on this and additional research, Silva-Martinez wrote her dissertation, *Understanding from the inside: A critical ethnographic view of the help-seeking behaviors of battered immigrant Latinas in Iowa*.

“The voices of the participants in this research came through very clearly,” Silva-Martinez said. “It is overwhelming to be experiencing intimate partner violence, while at the same time living in a foreign country, having to speak a different language, and trying to pursue what many call ‘The American Dream.’”

After completing her respectful yet intimate dialogue with the women, Silva-Martinez identified multiple factors practitioners and social work educators should consider while developing an understanding of help-seeking among battered Spanish-speaking immigrant Latinas.

The main points are:

- These women encounter many barriers when they decide to seek help. It is essential to acknowledge that multiple factors affect help-seeking among battered Latinas.
- Their status as Spanish-speaking immigrants has an

School of Social Work serves Iowa with distance education program

For more than four decades, The University of Iowa School of Social Work has served the state of Iowa with a distance education program.

The UI is doing its part to address the pressing need for more social workers in Iowa by offering its Master’s Degree in Social Work (MSW) at three off-campus sites across the state: Des Moines, Sioux City, and the Quad Cities. Each site provides a structured sequence of courses, as well as opportunities for individualized plans of study based on an adult learning model. The MSW Program prepares social workers for advanced social work practice and leadership in one of two concentrations: family-centered practice and integrated practice.

“This tiny little faculty from the School of Social Work is running all of that across the state of Iowa,” said UI Associate Professor Mercedes Bern-Klug, one of 18 faculty members in the School of Social Work.

The School of Social Work has offered the MSW Program in Des Moines and the Quad Cities for more than 40 years. In 1999, the UI re-implemented a three-year, part-time program in Sioux City. This program was renewed—after a 15-year hiatus—to help address a shortage of professional master’s level social workers in western Iowa.

“Our distance education sites allow the School of Social Work to meet a critical need for master’s level social workers in Iowa, to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse and aging population, and to work with families as they struggle in these difficult economic times,” said Jeanne Saunders, associate professor of social work and director of the Master’s program.
immense impact on their help-seeking processes.

- The way people in the host community perceive and treat these women affects many aspects of the women's lives, especially their processes of seeking help.
- Living in a rural town in the context of new immigration gateways makes it difficult for battered Latinas to access help.
- Their silence is not necessarily an indication of powerlessness.

“These are strong women working hard for themselves and their children,” said Silva-Martinez, assistant professor at the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Puerto Rico. “We need to work in partnership with each woman to determine which resources will be helpful in her situation.”

Silva-Martinez shares her study results at national and international conferences, as well as with her students at the University of Puerto Rico. She is also embarking on a study of the experiences of battered women from the Dominican Republic who immigrated to Puerto Rico. She intends to submit a grant proposal to the National Institutes of Health to fund the study.

Silva-Martinez was inspired to study intimate partner violence during her experiences as a social work practitioner from 2002-2004 for the Puerto Rican government’s Women’s Advocate Office.

In 2005, she relocated to the U.S. to study at The University of Iowa. Although the transition from her native country was challenging, Silva-Martinez found a supportive community at the UI’s School of Social Work.

“The School of Social Work stands out in that it puts into practice the discourse of promoting an inclusive community,” Silva-Martinez said. “At the School of Social Work, students can find a culture of solidarity. The solidarity and support I received from the faculty and staff helped tremendously in my completion of the program.”

UI Associate Professor Susan Murty was her Ph.D. mentor, a positive influence, and a supportive presence. “As a Latina, immigrant student, I can say that Dr. Murty was instrumental in my academic progress and also in my journey in Iowa,” Silva-Martinez said. “Without a doubt, Dr. Murty is a faithful reflection of what it means to promote diversity through her work as a scholar and community member.”

Murty, impressed with Silva-Martinez’s work, remarks about her former advisee’s academic achievement. “The critical ethnographic research methods she chose perfectly matched her research topic. Her thorough analysis of the stories the women told in their own words revealed the experiences of these women in a way no other methods could have.”

Candace Nelson is a student in the Sioux City cohort. Nelson completes most of her coursework online, but a few times each semester, she attends classes in person, traveling nearly 100 miles from her home in Hartford, S.D., to the UI’s center in Sioux City, housed at Briar Cliff University.

“The online part is fantastic,” Nelson said. “You are able to be at home with your family while essentially being in the classroom at the same time. I don’t have children, but those who do are still able to put their kids to bed and not miss as much family time.”

All distance-learning students are required to complete two research projects. Nelson has had the opportunity to do her projects at a South Dakota hospital where she works. Her first project was examining how family members felt after being present during a critical part of their loved one’s care. She has also worked on developing a protocol for a hospital social worker in a department other than her own.

For more, visit www.uiowa.edu/~socialwk.
Letter from the Dean

The National Research Council (NRC) released a thorough national assessment of doctoral programs at public and private universities this fall, and I would like to commend our top-rated programs for their achievements.

Sixteen programs at The University of Iowa rank in the top one-third compared to their peers, which is a substantial reflection on the quality of graduate education on our campus.

Fifty UI doctoral programs were evaluated in two separate assessments and received “range” ranking scores based on 20 program characteristics, such as time to degree, student completion rate, publications per faculty member, diversity of faculty and students, and post-graduation employment.

Nine of our doctoral programs rated in the top third in a data-driven analysis, including economics, electrical and computer engineering, free radical and radiation biology, industrial engineering, mechanical engineering, molecular physiology, psychology, and sociology.

Twelve programs rated in the top third in an evaluative assessment of the data by external faculty, including chemistry, civil and environmental engineering, free radical and radiation biology, geosciences, history, industrial engineering, microbiology, molecular physiology, nursing, political science, psychology, and sociology.

The NRC evaluated data from 5,000 programs at 212 institutions. The Graduate College compiled data for the report during 2005-06, and, with program approval, submitted it in 2007.

The NRC evaluation of our Ph.D. programs was generally consistent with the results of an internal assessment conducted last winter by the UI’s Task Force on Graduate Education.

The data, though dated, is a snapshot in time and provides additional information about our graduate programs and, along with our own internal assessments, suggests ways to improve the quality of graduate education at the UI.

The Graduate College and its programs are taking a deeper look at the data to identify relative strengths and weaknesses and areas of improvement. Many of our programs have made positive changes since the data was submitted to the NRC.

First ACT scholar selected

The ACT Scholars Program, co-directed by ACT and The University of Iowa Graduate College, has selected Krystle Oates as its first scholarship winner.

Oates is a returning student in the UI’s educational measurement and statistics doctoral program. As an ACT scholarship winner, she will receive an annual nine-month stipend equivalent to a half-time research assistantship ($20,000), benefits, and full resident rate tuition scholarship.

ACT, founded in 1959 as the American College Testing Program by UI education leaders E.F. Lindquist and Ted McCarrel, celebrated its 50th anniversary in October, 2009, by committing $5 million to The University of Iowa Foundation to endow the ACT Scholars Program.

While pursuing graduate degrees at the UI, recipients will also gain on-the-job training at ACT. “For me, it opens so many doors of opportunity to really get an idea of what the everyday life of a measurement and statistics professional is like,” said Oates, who received a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics at Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA. “This will give me hands-on experience, so I know what to expect. Plus, I’ll already be a little seasoned in my field.”

ACT Scholars must be nominated by their departments in several areas of study, including education, business,
Postdoc office offers The Network

The Graduate College has expanded its presentations for the 2010-2011 Professional Development Series, now called The Network. The Network connects graduate students and postdoctoral researchers with a variety of experts across the UI campus who can assist and promote their professional success.

To launch the series, workshops and seminars have been presented by the Graduate College, the Division of Sponsored Programs, the Office of the Ombudsperson, and the Project on Rhetoric of Inquiry (POROI). Events are scheduled each month through April, 2011.

Topics for workshops vary, including sessions on securing external funding, managing conflict, writing dissertations, submitting a thesis electronically.

“The focus of the job market is much more complex these days,” said Minnetta Gardinier, an associate dean of the Graduate College. “We’re trying to ensure students get exposed to things outside dissertation work.”

For a complete list of The Network’s offerings, visit www.grad.uiowa.edu/the-network.

Postdoc Scholar Firdevs Duru

On Dec. 25, 2003, the Mars Express spacecraft entered Mars’ orbit, carrying a radar designed and constructed at The University of Iowa to study the ionosphere of Mars.

Using data from this instrument, UI postdoctoral scholar Firdevs Duru, a native of Turkey, has gained a national and international reputation as one of the leading experts on the Martian ionosphere.

The radar—called MARSIS (Mars Advanced Radar for Subsurface and Ionospheric Sounding)—maps the distribution of water in the upper parts of the crust, and performs subsurface geological probing, surface roughness and topography characterizations, and ionospheric sounding. Don Gurnett, professor of physics and astronomy at the UI, is the MARSIS co-investigator and Duru’s mentor.

“Mars is one of the closest planets and is probably the most similar to Earth,” said Duru, who earned her Ph.D. in experimental high energy physics at the UI in 2007. “The discovery of water in the form of ice, the possibility of subsurface water reservoirs, along with the discovery of plumes of methane in the Martian atmosphere might indicate the possibility of life in the past.”

Read more about Duru’s work at http://postdoc.grad.uiowa.edu/postdocs-at-iowa-old

The Graduate College thanks ACT for the generous commitment it has made to graduate education through this funded scholarship and professional training program.

For more information on this and other student funding opportunities, visit the Graduate College online at www.grad.uiowa.edu/aid-youre-nominated-for/ACT-scholars-program-fellowships.
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