These two words have guided our path in good times and in bad, and they continue to light our way today. In a year unlike any other, our UNI family of faculty, staff, alumni, donors and friends came together to support our students. This was a difficult year for many reasons, but there were also moments that filled our hearts with joy and gratitude.

Forward Together.

Your support leads the way. The defining moments of a UNI education — the personal interaction with professors, the welcoming community, the friendships, the internships, the hands-on learning — will always be part of the experience here. You help make these things happen. And this year, you did it in record breaking fashion.

The University of Northern Iowa Foundation recorded its highest fundraising total in history, raising over $38.9 million in FY 2019-20. This was a 37% increase over the prior year and included 10,313 donors, corporations and foundations.

Thanks to your generous gifts, and the generosity of others in the Panther family, we were able to establish 47 new endowments, provide scholarship and program support, supplement the much-needed Student Emergency Fund for those affected by the pandemic, contribute to the Panther Pantry and focus on fundraising efforts for several large university projects. These impactful and transformative projects include the UNI@DMACC initiative, renovation and expansion of the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, phase one of UNI-Dome renovation with a new football team meeting room and modernization of the Industrial Technology Center.

We are proud, and so very grateful. Thank you for your continued support, your engagement and for believing in the power of a UNI education.

Forward Together.

Wishing you and your families the very best in 2021,

Jan Bittner
Chair, UNI Foundation Board of Trustees

Jim Jermier
Vice President for University Advancement, President of the UNI Foundation
Making our tomorrow stronger

UNI alumni and friends make history in their support of the University of Northern Iowa

The 2019-2020 fiscal year brought unexpected challenges to our world and UNI. Alumni and friends of the university demonstrated the Panther family is determined to ensure future generations of Panthers will be supported in their quest for a UNI education, giving a record $38.9 million to the university.

“We are extremely grateful for the support and passion our alumni and friends have for the University of Northern Iowa and our students,” said Jim Jermier, vice president for University Advancement and president of the UNI Foundation.

Fundraising in the 2019-20 fiscal year increased 37% over the prior year, exceeding 2018-19 fundraising by $10.4 million. Annual contributions to the UNI Foundation over the past five years have averaged nearly $26 million. In total, 10,313 donors, corporations and foundations gave to support UNI during the year.

During fiscal year 2020, $5.3 million in scholarship support was awarded by the UNI Foundation to 1,711 students. When COVID-19 pushed classes online in the spring semester, the foundation responded with a campaign to support UNI’s Student Emergency Fund, Panther Pantry and scholarships for those impacted financially by the pandemic. On Giving Tuesday Now, a national day of giving held in May 2020 by the Giving Tuesday movement to support organizations helping those dealing with coronavirus related hardships, more than 500 people donated a combined $50,000 for the #UNItogether Scholarships fund. Funds raised were distributed this fall in scholarships to students affected by the pandemic.

In addition to raising funds for scholarship and program support, the foundation focused on several larger university projects. The foundation is actively fundraising for the estimated $14.9 million renovation and expansion of the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. Groundbreaking is slated for 2022.

The newly launched UNI at DMACC 2+2 program will benefit from a $5 million fundraising campaign to support scholarships and the building fund for Des Moines Area Community College’s Urban Campus where the program is housed.

“Donors to the UNI Foundation are critical in our efforts to grow the Purple Circle,” Nook said. “Gifts to UNI also help enhance the university’s impact throughout Iowa, across the country and around the world.”

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-UNI President Mark A. Nook
“We are committed to endowment growth. As a university community, we want to do all we can to grow our support for students, faculty, staff and programs. Endowments help us achieve this goal.”
- Jim Jermier

Fundraising Results
Fiscal year ending June 30, 2020

Endowed $38,901,165
Non-Endowed $133,9 million

Endowed $38,901,165
Non-Endowed $16,804,872
Annual Fund $679,459

New endowments established during the 2019-2020 year

$133.9 million
The value of the endowment held by the UNI Foundation as of June 30, 2020

UNI alumna and former Iowa Lieutenant Governor Joy Cole Corning had the vision to bring nationally and internationally renowned speakers to our campus. The Joy Cole Corning Distinguished Leadership Lecture Series, created through an endowment established by Joy, provides students with an understanding of true leadership. In October of 2019, UNI welcomed Laura Bush, First Lady of the United States (2001-2009), as the next speaker in the series.
Few private entities have had the magnitude of impact on UNI’s campus as the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust. The Muscatine-based private foundation has made significant investments in scholarships, buildings, laboratories and classrooms at UNI since 1989. The breadth of the Carver Trust’s giving is remarkable, with dozens of grants spanning each of the university’s four academic colleges and touching the lives of all UNI students, faculty and staff.

2019 marked an incredible milestone as the Carver Trust exceeded $20 million in giving to UNI. This makes the foundation one of UNI’s largest private donors.

“The Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust’s partnership has allowed UNI to offer innovative resources to improve students’ educational experience,” said UNI President Mark Nook. “The Trust’s visionary investments over the past three decades have shaped the trajectory of the university and enhanced the quality of education UNI students receive.”

The majority of Carver Trust grants have been concentrated in the sciences, with investments in instrumentation, technology and teaching laboratories. Laura Strauss, head of the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, said the Carver Trust’s support has dramatically enhanced the department’s lab courses by expanding and improving lab infrastructure and helping secure industry-grade instrumentation. “The incorporation of these instruments in our lab curriculum has provided opportunities for valuable real-world experiences that serve our graduates well in the future,” Strauss said.

Other Carver Trust investments have supported capital projects, including the renovation of McCollum Science Hall in 2000, followed by the construction of the Jacobson Human Performance Complex in 2007 and the renovation of the Schindler Education Center in 2015.

Through the Carver Scholars program, the foundation has reduced financial barriers for students who have overcome difficult circumstances to pursue an education. Since 1989, the Carver Scholars program has granted $2.25 million to more than 500 UNI students, with each award averaging nearly $5,000.

“We look forward to the Carver Trust’s continued partnership to build distinguished academic programs that prepare UNI students for the professional challenges of tomorrow,” Nook said.

A 2015 Carver Trust grant allowed the UNI Department of Biology to purchase several synthetic cadavers, facilitating hands-on learning in anatomy and physiology.

A 2016 grant from the Carver Trust assisted with the UNI Museum’s conservation and study of an American Mastodon tusk unearthed nearly 100 years ago in Hampton, Iowa. The exhibit was completed in 2019.

A 2019 Carver Trust grant passed 30 consecutive years of grantmaking to UNI.

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As public health officials raced to understand the novel coronavirus in March of 2020, the University of Northern Iowa, like other universities around the globe, was forced to move to a virtual format. With that shift, students found themselves facing unexpected financial hardships — sudden job loses and unexpected travel home.

Immediately following the move to online learning, UNI’s Student Emergency Fund, administered through the Dean of Students office, awarded over $12,000 in emergency funding to students who had no where else to turn. The Student Emergency Fund, Panther Pantry and scholarship funds received broad support from donors.

There was an identified need to do more to keep students on the path to graduation. And thus was born the #UNItogether Scholarship.

UNI has always had a culture of caring. The #UNItogether scholarship is an extension of that, a scholarship that would help fill the gaps — where a student is suddenly not able to pay tuition or their U-bill. This scholarship was designed with the flexibility to help.

Funds were raised for the scholarship as part of #GivingTuesdayNow, a national day of giving in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The response was powerful.

Within a few days more than 500 people donated a combined $53,170 for the new UNItogether Scholarship, which will help mitigate tuition costs for new and returning students in the 2020-2021 academic year.

The Panther family stepped up to support our students.

Donors included Jennifer Zehner, who graduated from UNI in 2019 with an elementary education degree and is now working as a special education teacher in Cedar Falls. Zehner said that she couldn’t imagine the stress college students were now facing in a world upended by the outbreak and wanted to help.

The alumni community had supported her as she earned her degree, and Zehner said she wanted to pay it forward.

“This is the first time I am able to really start giving back to the place that completely changed my life,” she said.
The University of Northern Iowa expanded its footprint in the heart of Des Moines thanks to a new collaboration between UNI and the Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) — and the support of generous donors.

The partnership, known as UNI@DMACC, enables students to complete their first two years at DMACC and then complete their bachelor’s degree online through UNI. The UNI Foundation is fundraising for scholarships to offset tuition costs for participating students with the goal of offering a UNI degree for the price of DMACC tuition.

Located at DMACC’s Urban campus in downtown Des Moines, UNI@DMACC will provide diverse students with a convenient, affordable bridge to a four-year degree. The DMACC Urban campus is the first in Iowa with a majority of minority students, and UNI@DMACC marks the first partnership of this size and scale between a Regent university and community college. Many Urban campus students are place-bound working professionals who are considered “nontraditional” college students — the average age is 28, and 44% are first-generation college students.

UNI@DMACC received a $1 million boost in June thanks to Mark and Jill Oman, both UNI alumni and residents of West Des Moines.

Mark Oman, managing director of Oman Capital, is a first-generation college student who wanted to help others receive the same benefits that a bachelor’s degree provided him.

UNI@DMACC grew out of the 25-year partnership between UNI and DMACC on an elementary education 2+2 bachelor’s degree. The new partnership, launched in the fall, adds three programs: a Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS), Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in managing business and organizations and a BAS in criminal justice.

The initiative also establishes an office suite dedicated to UNI@DMACC in a new $24 million building at DMACC’s Urban campus. There, on-site UNI staff will provide services and support for students.

The new building is expected to be complete by the summer of 2021. The UNI Foundation is seeking $5 million in support of capital, scholarship and programmatic needs of UNI@DMACC.

Scholarships didn’t really interest Chris Hoins, ’95, when he arrived as an accounting student at UNI in the late 1980s. He and his Waverly high school sweetheart, Dawn, were planning to marry partially in an effort to receive more financial aid. They were self-sufficient and wanted to be treated as independents on their government applications.

Chris searched scholarship listings during those early college years, but nothing popped out — much to his detriment, he admits today.

“I’d look at my U-bill, and for whatever reason, $1,000 or $2,000 just didn’t mean much to me,” Chris said.

But after Chris and Dawn had their first child together, Chris was forced to put school to the side. He worked a full-time job while taking a class or two. By 1994, Chris had transitioned back to full-time schooling, and Dawn was working to support the family.

This time around, scholarships were much more appealing. Chris received a $500 scholarship from the Philip and Signe Jennings family, which helped carry the family financially to the finish line. Seven years after starting college — seven years of “scraping the bottom of the barrel,” as Chris puts it — he finally graduated with a degree in accounting and accepted a job at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Minneapolis. Dawn started her student teaching experience in 1996 as well. “It was like all that hard work paid off,” said Chris, who is the vice president of finance at Perforce, a software company in the Twin Cities.

Because of the assistance they received, Chris and Dawn wanted to give back to other students as soon as they were able. Less than 10 years after graduation, Chris and Dawn set up a scholarship with the UNI business college to help students like Chris — accounting majors who need extra assistance to complete their schooling.

“I want to help students who need help, just like we did,” Chris said. “Every year I get to do that. It’s exciting to be a part of the accounting program and its success, and it means a lot to me to give back.”

Chris and Dawn are energized every time they hear from students. It brings them back to their college days — working hard to get by, grateful for any assistance they received.

“It’s super rewarding to know there’s a scholarship with our names on it,” Chris said. “It’s helping someone who really does need the help.”

Donors, corporations and foundations gave to support UNI

Students received a scholarship because of gifts made to the UNI Foundation

Giving thanks by helping future students

Knowing the difference scholarship support can make, couple choses to pay it forward
Cedar Falls couple gives $10 million to UNI

Gift provides tremendous momentum as we look to UNI’s future

A $10 Million gift from David and Karen Takes to the University of Northern Iowa was announced in the fall of 2019.

“David and Karen have always shown strong leadership for UNI,” said UNI President Mark Nook. “They have invested their time, talents and treasure in this university. This new gift builds on their passion for the university and will make our campus even stronger going forward.”

David Takes is a 1981 alumnus of the university and a current member and past chair of the UNI Foundation’s Board of Trustees.

The couple’s gift will support multiple programs and projects at UNI. A portion will be invested in the Takes Endowment, an endowment they established in 2015 to support UNI business college students gaining international experiences and increase cultural intelligence. The gift will also support the UNI Mascot Outreach Endowed Fund which supports TC and TK, the university’s mascots, and the students who lead the mascot program.

Additional portions of the Takes’ gift will support future capital projects for the university.

“We are extremely grateful Dave and Karen are willing to show their commitment to the university and engage with us as we identify the next capital projects that are critical to UNI,” said Nook. “Knowing we have the support to explore projects that are central to UNI’s identity, Panther Athletics and the cultural vitality of the Cedar Valley and state of Iowa gives us momentum as we think about what our campus can look like for the future.”

Capital projects under exploration at UNI include the Campanile, the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center, the Industrial Technology Center and the UNI-Dome.

David is excited about what he sees at his alma mater — nimble academic program offerings and a high-quality student experience.

“As long-time residents of Cedar Falls and as a proud alum, we are extremely grateful for everything the University of Northern Iowa and Panther Nation have brought to our family and our community at large. The benefits we enjoy are truly priceless, and it is with this sense of gratitude that Karen and I make this commitment.”

-David Takes