Education for a socially just world
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If you examine the linguistic history of the word “crisis,” you’ll discover the Greek word krinein, “to separate, decide,” and krinesthai, “to explain.” At the heart of a crisis, then, is the impetus to make decisions and articulate the rationale behind them.

In this issue of our college magazine, you will find stories of students, faculty, alumni, and donors working at the crossroads of what we might call “educational crises.” From social justice education to psychometrics to high school social studies, our community is invested in making the critical decisions that make our world more liberatory.
A pioneer in the field of social justice education, Maurianne Adams put UMass Amherst on the map as the premier research institution for critically examining systemic oppression in educational and societal contexts. By all accounts, she was instantly viewed as a luminary when she joined the School of Education faculty in 1982. Adams’ influence endures to this day, not only in the litany of books, articles, book chapters, and courses she produced, but in the form of a landmark estate gift of $646,000.

Adams’ gift is emblematic of one of her favorite quips, “We are all works in progress.” The funds are reserved to support a variety of initiatives in the Social Justice Education (SJE) Program, all of which are testaments to the ongoing nature of emancipatory research and praxis. SJE faculty, alumni, and students will have increased opportunities to collaborate, attend conferences, and conduct research thanks to Adams’ generosity.

The beauty in Adams’ support of the SJE program is that it elicits memories about the astonishingly rich life she led. Adams was a true mainstay on campus, holding various leadership roles from 1973 to her retirement in 2008. An academic at heart, Adams continued to teach part time for another seven years, until 2015. She died at the age of 82 on October 6, 2020, after a long battle with cancer. As a tribute to her legacy, her closest colleagues, collaborators, and friends reflect on what she meant to them.

A LEGACY UNMATCHED
When an undergraduate student picks up Readings for Diversity and Social Justice and learns about transgender oppression and LGBTQ+ rights for the first time, Adams (and her many co-authors and co-editors) present an entirely new discourse and framework for experiencing the world.

“When you were around Maurianne your mind was exploding with insights and curiosity and a thirst for more,” said Wurren Blumenfeld, a former student of Adams’ who went on to co-edit Readings as well as teach in the SJE program.

Adams’ influence is also responsible for galvanizing cultural inclusivity in the student body at large, according to Claire Hamilton, associate provost and director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at UMass Amherst.

“Our undergraduates enter UMass with a deeper and shared understanding of cultural diversity because of Maurianne’s leadership and contributions.”

In the end, Adams’ tenacity as a thinker, scholar-practitioner shaped the SJE program into what it is today: a space of dialogue where people of all backgrounds can come together to unpack their differences in concert with one another.

Katja Hahn D’Errico, one of Adams’ closest friends and frequent co-lecturers, espouses this idea. “They taught weekend seminars together, focusing on topics like antisemitism or religious oppression. History, said Hahn D’Errico, would position her German heritage at odds with Adams’ Jewish heritage. Nevertheless, the two women were able to better understand their identities in relation to one another, through the power of conversation and reflection. When this happened, especially in the classroom, pedagogy and lived experience coalesced. “We were teaching with our lives,” said Hahn D’Errico.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

MAURIANNE ADAMS’ LEGACY CONTINUES IN THE COLLEGE THANKS TO A TRANSFORMATIONAL GIFT TO THE SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION PROGRAM.

THE SAGE
When it came to helping others get their foot in the door with a conference paper, grant proposal, or even professional development, nobody was better than Adams at encouraging others to fulfill their innate potential.

“Maurianne recruited me to be a reviewer for Equity & Excellence (in Education),” Katja Hahn D’Errico, one of Adams’ closest friends and frequent co-lecturers, said. “They taught weekend seminars together, focusing on topics like antisemitism or religious oppression. History, said Hahn D’Errico, would position her German heritage at odds with Adams’ Jewish heritage. Nevertheless, the two women were able to better understand their identities in relation to one another, through the power of conversation and reflection. When this happened, especially in the classroom, pedagogy and lived experience coalesced.”

TEACHING AND READINGS
A quick glance at Adams’ curriculum vitae tells the story of a prolific scholar, someone adept at publishing interdisciplinary research for more than 40 years. However, two of her publications warrant special attention: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice (3e) and Readings for Diversity and Social Justice (4e), both published by Routledge.

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For Jamila Lyiscott, co-founder of the Center of Racial Justice and Youth Engaged Research (CRI), Adams’ influence is central to the research agenda of CRI.

“Maurianne’s unapologetic centering of social justice in education is foundational to the ideologies that CRI is built on,” said Lyiscott. “She made social diversity in education a necessary gen ed course at UMass Amherst, which created pathways for how we at CRI conceptualize racial justice as not a siloed matter in education, but one that should permeate all facets of students’ lives on campus.”
“That was cutting edge at the time—it examined different manifestations of social oppression,” says Ximena Zúñiga, professor of social justice education. “At the time, most people in higher education focused on racism, sexism, and classism. Maurianne helped us expand its focus to include oppression of elders, youth, religious identity, and transgender identity.”

Zúñiga added, “She felt strongly about the pedagogical value of engaging students with different forms of injustice—cognitively and experientially—to foster deeper learning and intersecting social justice commitments.”

Adams’ command of educational theory was indispensable to the editorial process, says Lee Anne Bell (‘82EdD), one of her longtime co-editors. Bell recalled that Adams’ insistence on specificity—on explaining how theories actually translate into practice—prompted everyone involved in the first edition of Teaching to meticulously refine their prose. “She could write the longest sentence I’ve ever seen,” joked Professor Emerita Pat Griffin, an original editor of Teaching.

“The model was to bring the content to life through personal identity and experience,” he said. “We would talk about the ‘isms,’ and then we would have a panel to talk about things like meritocracy, white supremacy. It was about vulnerability with your students.”

THE NEXT GENERATION

From the outset, the Social Justice Education program was intended to be a complete project, a collection of courses and degree requirements that never changed. Rather, it was a “work in progress,” a palimpsest of new theories, case studies, and engagements with the social fabric of contemporary society. As Professor Emerita Barbara Love recalls, Adams continually urged SJE faculty to remain skeptical about the curriculum and learning outcomes of their program. “We were always thinking deeply about who…we were admitting to the program,” said Love. “There was no ‘typical applicant’…and that meant we were always thinking about what adjustments to make, what guidelines to change.”

Rani Varghese (‘13EdD), now an associate professor in the College of Education at NYU, revisits his experience every time he develops a new course.

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Adams was known to:

 › Drive local politics in Amherst forward,
 › Shower her dog, Max, with love and attention;
 › Enjoy a bite of flan or a sip of vinho verde;
 › Cultivate an extraordinary home garden;
 › Educate visitors to her home about artisan cheeses;
 › Discuss the pros and cons of Wagner’s operas with friends;
 › Help her husband John sail their boat off the coast of Maine;
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 › Help her husband John sail their boat off the coast of Maine;
 › Enjoy a bite of flan or a sip of vinho verde;
 › Shower her dog, Max, with love and attention;
 › Drive local politics in Amherst forward, including working with the Amherst community land trust and writing public histories of the town.

MAURIANNE ADAMS WITH A COHORT OF SJE STUDENTS.

ADAMS’ LIFE

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THE MAVEN

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PUBLISHING PROWESS

8 BOOKS

10 YRS. EDITOR OF EQUITY & EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

50 JOURNAL ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

WROTE FIELD-DEFINING TEXTS including Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice and Readings for Diversity and Social Justice

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READINGS FOR DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Co-Directed the Readings for Diversity and Social Justice (DEI) initiatives are one of the most prominent aspects of our cultural zeitgeist, especially at institutions of higher learning. However, it wasn’t always commonplace to deconstruct ideology, oppressive norms, and systems of inequity, especially in higher education curricula. There was instead a tendency to focus on the canon, and to supplement reading lists with a few selections addressing one or two forms of social injustice.

When Adams came to the School of Education in 1982, she was immediately plugged into conversations led by Dean Bailey Jackson about organizing a doctoral program for SJE. Adams supported these initiatives while also presenting the social justice education methodology to the university at large. She advocated in earnest for a general education diversity requirement, which was instead a tendency to focus on the canon, and to supplement reading lists with a few selections addressing one or two forms of social injustice.

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Tests are ingrained in every aspect of modern life, whether you are taking a personality quiz on Buzzfeed or answering questions in a job interview. “I personally feel much safer on the road knowing that everyone has passed their driver’s test,” says Francis O’Donnell ’19PhD, a graduate of the Research, Educational Measurement, and Psychometrics Program in the College of Education.

Standardized tests in K-12 and postsecondary education, on the other hand, have a contentious reputation in the public eye. Cases of biased content reveal an array of systemic educational inequities. “Teaching to the test” has negatively influenced curriculum design. And, in the past five years alone, the SAT and ACT have been called into question, with colleges and universities adopting “test optional” admissions policies.

The field of psychometrics aims to right all of the wrongs associated with tests. “Tests become bad when they are being misused, when their policies aren’t culturally responsive, and when they are developed without stakeholder input,” says O’Donnell. “But, strictly speaking, tests are just information. We want to know what a student is learning.”

O’Donnell is a psychometrician for the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) in Philadelphia. She focuses on medical education assessments—in other words, the tests that aspiring doctors take at the end of their courses and clinical rotations.

NBME tests are quite popular in programs across the United States. One of the main reasons, O’Donnell says, is that it’s really, really difficult to write a good test question. “Medical students also want to know how they are doing in relation to a national cohort,” she explained. “We do a lot of analysis to provide that information.”

The guiding principle of O’Donnell’s work is an attempt to make test results more meaningful. Students want to know the broader context of their performance, as in the case of national comparisons. Score reports should also provide other key details, O’Donnell said, including an overview of weaknesses and steps to take for improvement.

O’Donnell devotes her time to figuring out how to convey all of that information clearly. Periodically, she conducts focus groups and interviews students and instructors about their perceptions of NBME assessments. Pairing those findings with rigorous data analysis, she discovers opportunities to cultivate equity. One way she is translating theory into practice is by co-chairing the National Council on Measurement in Education Mission Fund Committee, where she awards grants to researchers working on improving the fairness of assessments.

At UMass Amherst, O’Donnell developed her passion for research. Being accepted to the psychometrics program was a “defining moment” in her life, she said. Working with the likes of Stephen Sireci, Craig Wells, Lisa Keller, and Jennifer Randall was a major motivator.

O’Donnell’s dissertation examined strategies for communicating test results to K-12 students in ways that were both clear and encouraging. “It was a dream to work on a dissertation that combined psychometrics and linguistics,” she said. Growing up in Novo Hamburgo, Brazil, O’Donnell spoke Portuguese as her native language, and began learning English as a child. Linguistics remain important to her to this day, as language is one aspect to consider when making test results meaningful to students.

O’Donnell credits the extensive experience she gained at UMass with preparing her for NBME. “Providing data that helps students thrive and educators do their job, those things are very meaningful to me,” she said.
MAKING ROOM FOR
VOICES

AT AMHERST REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, SAMANTHA CAMERA ’01MEd FRAMES EDUCATION AS A PLANE OF INFINITE POSSIBILITY.

Story by Wes DeShano
Photos by Jon Crispin

F
or Samantha Camera ’01MEd, ethnography is emblematic of education itself.

“We have to think about the knowledge that students arrive with,” says Camera, who teaches anthropology, history, and social science electives at Amherst (Mass.) Regional High School (ARHS). “If we as teachers can honor and learn from that, we can create a curriculum that speaks to who students are.”

Camera is an enthusiastic and experienced curriculum designer. When she began teaching at ARHS, she moved to revise the content covered in anthropology and psychology, wrote curriculum for Latin American history and world religions, and collaborated on the creation of courses in African history and modern world history. Her motivation was a deep-rooted desire to make learning a genuine experience, something that students not only find interesting, but want to engage with on a meaningful level.

“I zeroed in on history and social studies because I found more room for voices,” says Camera. “For me, teaching is about finding out what students are curious about, and then writing a curriculum that commits to hearing all of those stories and voices. It’s founded in the possibilities.”

As a master’s student in the College of Education, Camera encountered faculty members passionate about unpacking those pedagogical possibilities. One of her mentors in the Secondary Teacher Education Preparation (STEP) program was Robert Maloy. Another key influence was Robert Sinclair, a professor in the Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies Department. Both Maloy and Sinclair encouraged Camera to build on the ideas she had about experiential learning and fostering learning environments based on active listening.

“They loved my capacity to understand difference,” Camera noted. “They allowed me to be exactly who I am.”

My whole purpose of being here is to honor their desire to learn.

Even after 20 years of teaching at ARHS, Camera still loves every minute of working with students. Her role has expanded in that time—she was promoted to interim assistant principal at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic—but she still insists on teaching a course every semester. “It keeps me thinking about the needs of students,” she says.

Making the transition from educator to administrator did prompt a welcome change in reference, Camera said.

“I began to see the big picture in different ways, especially beyond the curriculum,” she said.

When the pandemic forced schools into emergency remote learning, Camera prioritized establishing technology training programs for faculty. She also focused on providing mental health resources to mitigate burnout. The process is still ongoing and requires immense creativity in planning, she said, but the overall atmosphere at ARHS is one of optimism.

Camera’s next goal is to earn her principal’s license, which requires completing a rigorous accreditation program over the next two years. Her passion for creating great curricula— and motivating others to do so—keeps her anchored.

“I like helping people shift their lens and how they see the world,” she said. “I want my students to understand the importance of building rapport with community members.”

“One of the central tenets of ethnography is “thick description,” the act of embedding yourself in a cultural community and recording in rich detail everything you witness, from customs and traditions to the minute social interactions that define everyday life. Camera encourages her students to adopt this mindset when completing community engagement projects.”
FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR IMAMATUL KHAI'R ‘23MED IS A TEACHER ACTIVIST FROM MADURA ISLAND, A SMALL ISLAND LOCATED OFF THE NORTHEASTERN COAST OF JAVA IN INDONESIA.

Prior to enrolling at UMass Amherst to earn her master’s degree in bilingual, ESL, and multicultural education, she worked for Saghara Elmo, a community-school literacy organization in Madura. Working with multilingual students was a powerful lesson in educational equity, Khair said, because speaking only in English didn’t achieve the engaged learning she knew her students were capable of.

“I thought I should find another pedagogical approach for multilingual learners like them,” she said.

In the College of Education, Khair is actively researching multilingual interventions for the Indonesian education system. Her passion for STEAM disciplines constitutes an overall framework for her research on multiliteracies.

“I am now more able to see classroom teaching in more socially constructed ways,” she said, and, “more importantly, being responsible for bringing my students’ cultural and linguistic assets into their learning.”

STUDENT AND ALUMNI

NYOMI DOTTIN ‘21

“I always feel loved every single time I walk into this building. I always tell people the College of Ed is one of the happiest places you can go on campus.”

After graduating with her degree in early childhood education, Nyomi immediately pursued her master’s degree in children, families, and schools so she could deepen her knowledge of teaching pedagogy prior to entering the classroom. She credits the incredibly uplifting community in the College of Education with providing the support she needed to enroll in graduate course work.

KERRI JOHNSON ‘23

“I’ve realized how much I like listening to people and helping them. That’s the best thing about this major—the versatility of it.”

An unforgettable internship with the Make-A-Wish Foundation in Springfield, Mass., gave Kerri, a community education and social change major, a renewed sense of purpose as an educator. It was the process of listening to a child’s wish, and then brainstorming how to make it a reality, that helped her recognize the impact that educators can have beyond traditional classroom settings. Kerri intends to apply her experience in the future as a guidance counselor or academic advisor.

LING CHEN ‘24PHD

“It’s a really nourishing environment. Not only the faculty, but my advisor is extremely supportive. I think the breadth of the research interests of the students helps me think about my research from different perspectives.”

Working as a coordinator for the college’s Center for Student Success Research gave Ling the perfect platform for conducting research on the interplay between college access, application behaviors, and success outcomes. Her interest in educational equity motivates her to dig deeper into the transition phase between high school and postsecondary education in the United States.

JIM EWERS, JR. ’81EDD

“The college was a melting pot of people and passion. These folks had definite ideas about education and where they wanted to be. To be able to be a part of that educational culture really made an indelible mark on my career.”

A seasoned leader in student affairs administration, Jim held vice president positions at four Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) throughout his 31-year career. His commitment to shared governance stems directly from his time in the college, he said, and equipped him with the leadership traits to build connections with students and colleagues alike.
Justin Coles, PhD

Assistant Professor, Social Justice Education
Director of Arts, Culture, and Political Engagements
at the Center of Racial Justice and Youth Engaged Research

Justin Coles’ research agenda converges at the intersections of critical race studies, urban (teacher) education, language and literacy, and Black studies. Coles has published in many academic journals, such as the *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Urban Education*, and *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*. This year, he was named co-chair (three-year term) of the Hip Hop Theories, Praxis & Pedagogies Special Interest Group by the American Educational Research Association. He was also named a Writing Fellow by the William T. Grant Foundation, where he will focus on Theories of Blackness, Indigeneity, and Racialization in Research to Reduce Inequality in the Lives of Young People.

“Yes, there are major in-your-face things that can happen, such as large scale protests, but a lot of social justice work over the years has been in very simple, sort of subversive, acts. I believe in my role as the Director of Arts, Culture, and Political Engagements, that’s what we want to uncover — the subtleties of resistance.” — JUSTIN COLES
Faculty Reading List

These are a few of the books and e-books published by our faculty in the past year:


Robert Maloy, senior lecturer II, and Torrey Trust, associate professor of math, science, and learning technologies, published an open access eBook (Building Democracy for All) that became one of only 13 resources included in the 2021 curricular materials guide published by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Sonia Nieto, professor emerita, received the Governor’s Award in the Humanities in recognition of her lifetime dedication to public, bilingual, and multicultural education reform. Nieto was also granted the Lifelong Educator of the Year Award by the National Association for Bilingual Education.

Trust was co-author of an article on “emergency remote teaching” that became the most-read publication of all time on EDUCAUSE Review.

Sangeeta Kamat, professor of international education, was named the Grace Lee Boggs Faculty Fellow of the Center of Racial Justice and Youth Engaged Research.

Stephen Sireci, distinguished university professor, received a four-year, $3.8 million grant from The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) for research on adult numeracy and literacy. The study, which is part of the Building Adult Skills and Attainment Through Technology Research Network, aims to develop and pilot literacy and numeracy assessments for adult learners.

Enrique Suárez, assistant professor of math, science, and learning technologies, co-authored a first-of-its-kind report with National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS-STEM) Science and Engineering in Preschool through Elementary Grades: The Brilliance of Children and the Strengths of Educators makes the case that engaging learners in science and engineering at an early age helps prepare them for important decision-making later in life.

Theresa Austin, professor of language, literacy, and culture, was selected to join a cross disciplinary research group in the European Union to expand applied linguistics work. Along with 57 other researchers, Austin will explore the ethical dimensions of emerging technologies and their impact on literacy, language, and linguistics.

Ivon Arroyo, associate professor of math, science, and learning technologies, and Mariamus Di Stefano, assistant professor of language, literacy, and culture, were granted a seed award by the UMass Amherst Institute of Diversity Sciences for their project “Multi-Racial Bilingual Personalized Digital Futures for Mathematics Learning,” a collaboration with Beverly Woolf of the Manning College of Information and Computer Sciences.

Professor Florence Sullivan, associate professors Darrell Earnest and Jennifer Randall, and senior teaching faculty Neena Thota, of the Manning College of Information and Computer Sciences, received a three-year, $500,000 grant from the National Science Foundation. Their project aims to create a culturally sustaining assessment tool that will be used to evaluate elementary students’ computational thinking. This study supports the overarching goal of making computer science education more accessible and inclusive.

Sarah Fefer, associate professor of school psychology, published a new book for families titled Helping Your Family Thrive: A Practical Guide to Parenting with Positive Behavior Support. The publication honors Fefer’s mentor and co-author, the late Meme Hieneman, PhD.

Jamila Lysicott, assistant professor of social justice education, was awarded the 2022 Ernest D. Morell African Diaspora Emerging Scholar Award by the Comparative & International Education Society. In addition to working with Black American, Black Caribbean, and Afro-Brazilian communities, Lysicott will begin a new project with fellow CEJ faculty this summer—strengthening bonds with schools and communities across Ghana through a Fulbright-Hays Group Study Abroad Award.

Sade Bonilla, assistant professor of higher education, published an article in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Her research suggests that ninth-grade ethnic studies courses have a transformational impact on student achievement and outcomes, including high school graduation rates and college enrollment.

Michael Krezmien, professor of special education, received a $75,600 grant from the Senator Charles E. Shannon Jr., Community Safety Initiative (CSI) Grant Program to conduct research on addressing youth violence.

Krezmien, Associate Professor Alexandra Lauterbach, and Professor John Hosp have partnered with colleagues at Arizona State University to develop a program to prepare special education professionals, and teach, conduct transdisciplinary research, prepare special education professionals, and advance knowledge in the field.

Beverley Bell, assistant dean of educator preparation and, Betsy McEachern, chair of the Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies, were awarded two grants totaling $60,000 from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to build high school pathways for students interested in teaching careers. Bell and McEachern will partner with staff at Holyoke (Mass.) High School and Hadley (Mass.) Public Schools to develop opportunities for students interested in pursuing teaching careers.
Leveling the (Financial) Playing Field

THE CIRONES HAVE ENDOWED AN EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP TO SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION OF TEACHERS.

Story by Wes DeShano
Photos by Jon Crispin

T’S DIFFICULT to know exactly how students feel when they open a financial aid letter. Relief? Validation? Joy? Possibly...disbelief? No matter the reaction, when a scholarship is added into the mix, that sense of excitement is amplified tenfold.

For Nanci Benedetti Cirone ’70, there is no greater delight than rewarding students who have worked diligently to make their college dreams a reality.

From 1980 to her retirement in 2007, Cirone worked at Dartmouth Medical School (now the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College) as the director of financial aid. She worked tirelessly to support students by determining their eligibility for loans, scholarships, and financial assistance.

Today, Cirone is continuing to cultivate philanthropic support at her alma mater in the form of a planned estate gift. Along with her husband, the reaction, when a scholarship is added into the mix, that sense of excitement is amplified tenfold.

"College provided us with all the opportunities we have today," said Cirone. "We both feel very strongly about providing access to education for those who wouldn’t be able to afford it otherwise."

The Cirones are both first-generation college students. Nanci grew up in the small city of North Adams, Mass., with Al only a few miles south in the town of Adams. Cirone was the youngest of four siblings. She recalls her parents being cautiously optimistic when it came time to breach the topic of higher education.

"We had very little, as far as finances were concerned," she said. "But, I remember my mother and father saying, ‘where there’s a will, there’s a way.’" Cirone’s mother was a strong influence, and her father wanted her to be independent. "We both felt that we had to work for everything we got, and that’s the way we were raised," said Cirone.

"I loved every minute of it."
—NANCY CRONE, ON HER CAREER IN FINANCIAL AID

"I'm still in touch with them," Cirone says of her AXO sisters. “Bringing a big university down to a small group, it really gives the feeling that you are part of something bigger than yourself."

Coming from a relatively small community, Cirone immediately found her niche at UMass Amherst. She joined Alpha Chi Omega sorority, where, along with other like-minded young women, she pursued her passion for education and athletics. She graduated with more than a degree in health and physical education; she left Amherst with an abiding sense of community.

"I was always trying so hard to work with kids who really weren’t interested in the idea of moving."

Transitioning from teaching to financial aid was a tough decision, Cirone said, but she appreciated how she could still make a transformative impact on students’ lives.

Speaking with the Cirones, it’s immediately clear that the couple is on the same page when it comes to philanthropic giving, as they seamlessly build on each other’s thoughts in the course of a conversation.

"We think the College of Education at UMass is a tremendous facility," said Al. "You need to get good, qualified people in there to be exposed to the faculty and staff. Teachers are going to have some tremendous rewards, some disappointments, but I believe the rewards will far exceed the disappointments. You’re making the world a better place."
Remembering
College of Education
Dean Dwight W. Allen

Dwight W. Allen, EdD, the visionary and influential former dean of the UMass Amherst College of Education, passed away on October 16, 2021, at the age of 90.

The author of nine books, Allen was known for his innovative approaches to leadership and educational reform, whether it was taking faculty and students on retreat to Pikes Peak in Colorado or canceling classes for weeklong symposia or “Marathons.” A dedicated mentor, he recruited a significant number of graduate students of color to the college, and helped lay the groundwork for what would become the college’s social justice mission.

Allen came to UMass in 1968 after nearly a decade as professor and director of teacher education at his alma mater, Stanford University. At Stanford, Allen and his colleagues had developed microteaching, a pioneering training strategy in which educators taught for brief periods (often videotaped) and received constructive feedback from colleagues and students.

Allen’s iconoclastic initiatives at the College of Education included the admission of students with unconventional credentials, giving more involvement in governance, allowing them to create their own curricula, and eliminating traditional grading. He also launched the legendary Marathons, when classes were canceled, and students, faculty, alumni, and guests engaged in open discussions on pedagogy.

Allen attracted talented people to the college who then went on to influential careers not just in education but across the spectrum. Richard Holzman ’70PhD met Allen when he was a doctoral student at Columbia University, but Allen convinced him to transfer to UMass. “He always saw students as faculty and faculty as students, because we were in a community of learners,” Holzman says. “But the discourse that we had was to be translated into action that was transformative, that changed things, that made things for the better.”

Marjorie Harrison ’81PhD was also drawn to the college by Allen’s innovations. “UMass was a profound influence in terms of helping me develop the confidence to try things. Allen really set the standard and the College of Education was an amazing place.”

After leaving UMass, Allen served as a professor at Old Dominion University until his retirement in 2008. He was also devoted to education reform internationally, serving as a technical advisor for the United Nations Development Program in China and as a consultant to the Department of Defense Dependent Schools in Germany, and consulting with educational institutions in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, India, South Africa, Israel, Uganda, Malawi and Greece.

Long after his tenure at UMass Amherst, Allen’s students and colleagues remember him with enormous fondness. “He reinforced my belief that leadership is all about serving rather than being served,” says former UMass professor Ken Blanchard, co-author of The One Minute Manager and Simple Truths of Leadership. “Dwight Allen as a leader was an educational breath of fresh air.”

In 2001, former student Steven Gluckstern ’74PhD showed his admiration by endowing the Dwight W. Allen Professorship of Educational Policy and Reform, thus highlighting Allen’s influence on the college in perpetuity.

Remembering
Patricia Crosson

Crosson was an extremely hard worker but she is remembered more for her “tell it like it is” candor, her boundless energy, intense sense of fair play, and great sense of humor.

Crosson lived in Massachusetts communities around the University of Massachusetts Amherst for over 40 years and on Martha’s Vineyard for the last 12 years. She earned her master’s and doctoral degrees from the UMass Amherst School of Education (now the College of Education). She began working at UMass in 1985 in the School of Education, eventually earning her rank as a full, tenured professor. From 1989 to 1991, she served as deputy provost and associate vice chancellor for Academic Affairs and from 1994 to 1997, she served as interim provost and vice chancellor for Academic Affairs. Crosson went on to become the director at the Center for Educational Policy in the School of Education, before retiring and being named professor emeritus in 2001.

“Pat was a professional mentor and friend of mine for the last three decades,” said Shane Hammond ’92PhD, graduate program director. “Her impact on the system of higher education in Massachusetts is immeasurable, and her legacy leaves an indelible mark on all of those in her constellation of family, friends, and colleagues.”

Stephen Sireci, distinguished university professor, recalls Crosson’s immense generosity as a leader and colleague.

“Pat was so smart, powerful, and supportive. As Provost, she was a great listener and leader. Of course, those two things go hand-in-hand, but her insight was exceptional and she always listened with a smile. The University prospered under her leadership. When she returned to our department [Educational Policy, Research, and Administration {EPRA}], she personally helped me understand and navigate the tenure system when I was going up for review. Pat was always available for support, and I was always grateful she was in our department. She was one of the great leaders of EPRA, the College of Education, and the University. The world could use more leaders like Pat right now. I remain in grateful appreciation of her modeling of what a good colleague should be.”

“She remains a model for me on how to be a leader, how to be an authentic and caring human being, and how to bring out the best in others,” said Joseph Berger, former director of the Center for International Education and current provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at UMass Boston. “Pat lives through the ongoing ripple effects of the kindness and wisdom she imparted on so many of us.”
01 The Undergraduate Advising Center was given a home in Furcolo W144!

02 The Education Club’s fall Book Drive was a huge success, collecting 1,229 books and donating them to six local schools and charities.

03 It felt amazing to reconnect with colleagues when the university moved back to in-person instruction. A visit from the babyBerk food truck helped!

04 Sally Campbell Galman partnered with Dr. Marie Pierre Moreau of Anglia Ruskin University Cambridge on a graphic installation of comics-based/arts-based research on “carers” in higher education. This piece is one illustrated vignette of many featured in the project, which began gallery shows in the United Kingdom in 2022. The project was funded by Advance HE.

05 Paul Bocko ‘22PhD co-chaired a theme at the 2022 World Environmental Education Congress that explored education and place-making.

06 Associate Professor Sara Whitcomb is spearheading the BIRCh Project, a collaboration with UMass Boston to improve behavioral health interventions in Massachusetts schools.

07 Torrey Trust, Bob Maloy, and Allison Butler (Communications) developed a critical media literacy choice board about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Education Week featured their work in an article about resources for discussing the war.

08 Marsha Jing-Ji Liaw ’19PhD is Visiting Scholar in the Language, Literacy, and Culture Program through February 2023. She works as the education director for the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School.

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