

UNITED FACULTY

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United Faculty Announces 2026 Faculty Award Winners

Two win Above and Beyond Awards for exemplary non-tenure track faculty



Kendra Kahl



John Preston

Cedar Falls, Iowa – United Faculty, the faculty labor union at the University of Northern Iowa, awarded two **Above and Beyond Awards**, worth \$1000 each, in honor of exemplary non-tenure track faculty members. The 2026 winners are:

- **Kendra Kahl**, Assistant Professor of Instruction from the Department of Art, has been coordinating the Theatre for Youth & Communities program and teaching courses like Creative Drama, Methods of Teaching Drama & Theatre, and Theatre for Youth since 2022. Kahl has an MFA in Theatre for Youth and Community from Arizona State University. Her recently directed productions at UNI include “POPPED!” And “Gretel! The Musical.” She is also faculty adviser to Alpha Psi Omega, the national theatre honor society at UNI. Her nominator for the award wrote “I have seen her teach her students with clarity and purpose, giving them opportunities to move far beyond what they might have expected from their college experience.”
- **John Preston**, Assistant Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, graduated from UNI with a BA in Philosophy in 2012, and returned to UNI as a professor in 2023, after completing his doctoral degree in philosophy at the University of South Florida. He teaches courses such as Philosophy of Law, Justice and the Good Life, Political Philosophy, and Ethics for Professional Life. His nominator for

the award wrote “Dr. Preston stands out for his generosity of spirit, boundless energy, and skilled pedagogy.”

United Faculty also recognized **Jennifer Garrett** (Communication Sciences & Disorders) and **Michael Graziano** (Philosophy and World Religions) as **2026 Department Heads of the Year**.



Jennifer Garrett



Michael Graziano

For the **2026 United Faculty Member of the Year**, UF selected **Kenneth Elgersma** (professor of Biology). Elgersma is a veteran faculty leader at UNI who is now completing his term as Chair of the Faculty, and who previously served as president of the UNI Faculty Senate.



Kenneth Elgersma

United Faculty also recognized two **2026 Student Organizations of the Year** – **UNI Proud** and **UNIdos** – both of which have been instrumental in keeping the spirit of diversity, equity, and inclusion alive at UNI after the state of Iowa prohibited public universities from supporting any DEI initiatives.



UNI Proud



UNIdos

The awards were presented at UF’s annual “Sunday Fun Day” for faculty and their families at UNI’s Wellness and Recreation Center on May 3.

United Faculty, established in 1976, is the chief negotiating agent for the University of Northern Iowa’s faculty, and is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors/American Federation of Teachers (AAUP/AFT).

For more about United Faculty, see <https://ufaculty.uni.edu/>.

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