

## **BUFFETT INSTITUTE ENDOWED COMMUNITY CHAIRS**

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute has established four endowed community chairs on the University of Nebraska (NU) campuses. Each of these professorships focuses on different aspects of early childhood development and reflects the interdisciplinary commitment of the Buffett Institute, a four-campus, university-wide research, practice, outreach, and policy institute. The Institute seeks to reflect the strengths of each campus, resulting in the creation of an unprecedented opportunity for scholars, practitioners, community members, and policymakers to come together on behalf of vulnerable young children and their families and the individuals and systems that support them.

The Community Chair represents a new role for faculty that goes well beyond teaching, research, and service to include campus leadership and responsiveness to the local community through translational and applied research. In many respects the Community Chair is a leader, catalyst, and innovator who serves as a conduit from the university to communities of interest as well as from those communities to the university. The resources and commitment of the Buffett Institute will be made available to the endowed professorships in order to strengthen and magnify their potential impact. They will also benefit from the synergy of working and planning with the senior staff of the Buffett Institute and with one another.

Two positions have been filled. David Dzewaltowski, who spent 30 years at Kansas State University in community health, kinesiology, and physical fitness, began work at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in January 2017. Julia Torquati, a University of Nebraska–Lincoln professor, graduate director, and interim department chair of Child, Youth and Family Studies in the College of Education and Human Sciences, was appointed as the inaugural recipient of the Community Chair in Infant and Child Mental Health at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in August 2019. The remaining chairs to be filled are at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

### **Specific Characteristics of the Appointments**

#### *Endowed and Renewable*

The community chairs are endowed faculty positions with five-year renewable terms. Appointment will be at the associate or full professor level, depending on qualifications, and will be tenured, if possible. In addition to a salary stipend, an annual amount to cover programmatic and research costs will be available.

#### *Time Allocation and Reporting*

The individual who holds this title is campus-based (Kearney, Lincoln, Omaha, and Medical Center), reporting to the chair of his or her home academic unit. Additionally, the holder of the endowed professorship will commit one-quarter of his or her professional effort to working with the Buffett Institute during the academic year. The time and scope of work will be negotiated with the executive

director of the Buffett Institute.

### **Description of Each Position**

#### *University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK)*

The Cille and Ron Williams Community Chair in Early Childhood Education will provide leadership in early childhood teacher education and outreach to the state. The endowed chair was established with a gift from University of Nebraska alumnus Ron Williams of Denver and his wife, Cille. The chair, established in partnership with the UNK College of Education, will participate in and initiate programs and research in conjunction with the Buffett Institute to enhance the skills and support of those working with children from birth through Grade 3 and their families in Nebraska.

#### *University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL)*

The Community Chair in Infant and Child Mental Health will contribute expertise in the areas of mental health and social-emotional development from birth through Grade 3. The chair will help educate families and other care providers to support mental and emotional development in young children. This position is established in partnership with the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies in the College of Education and Human Sciences at UNL.

#### *University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO)*

The Community Chair at the University of Nebraska at Omaha will draw upon the multiple academic disciplines supporting young children’s development from birth through Grade 3. Supported by UNO’s expertise and community engagement, this position will build on the extensive outreach that has helped establish UNO’s reputation as a leading metropolitan campus in the region and the nation.

#### *University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC)*

The Community Chair in Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Prevention leads research and programmatic efforts on childhood obesity, and works to address healthy eating and nutrition, and reverse the trend of childhood obesity in Nebraska and the U.S. The professorship is a partnership with the Department of Health Promotion, Social and Behavioral Health at the University of Nebraska Medical Center’s College of Public Health, the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, the university-wide Food for Health Initiative, and the Buffett Institute.

### **Community Chair Biographies**

#### *David Dzewaltowski, Community Chair in Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Prevention, UNMC*

David Dzewaltowski is a public health social and behavioral scientist who has contributed to the development of health behavior theory and evidence-based community interventions promoting physical activity and healthful eating in child care settings, schools, after-school programs, and diverse community organizations. His work has demonstrated that interventions can build the capacity of adults and children to influence the conditions of environments in which they live, learn, and play to promote healthful behavior. These projects have been funded by more than \$13 million from several health foundations, the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and resulted in over 100 scholarly papers and book chapters.

Dzewaltowski also was a founding member of the RE-AIM workgroup, whose goal has been to encourage program planners, evaluators, readers of journal articles, funders, and policymakers to pay

more attention to essential program elements that can improve the sustainable adoption and implementation of effective, evidence-based health promotion programs. He has been on the editorial boards of several scientific journals, such as *Health Psychology*; *Sport, Exercise and Performance Psychology*; and *Exercise and Sport Sciences Reviews*. He also contributed to numerous community advisory and scientific review panels in Kansas and nationally with the National Institutes of Health, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Sciences, USDA, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Concurrent with his research career, Dzewaltowski has more than 20 years' experience as a Kansas State University department head and as center director, which provided him with applied experience on how to lead organization change and partner with community agencies. He received his bachelor's degree from Western Washington University, his master's degree from West Virginia University, and his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa.

*Julia Torquati, Community Chair in Infant and Child Mental Health, UNL*

Julia Torquati is an award-winning faculty member with 25 years of experience in child development, child care, and nature-based environmental education in the College of Education and Human Sciences at UNL. Sherri Jones, the College's dean, said Torquati is a leader in her discipline and department, a valued mentor for students and junior faculty members, and has a strong record of active collaboration in her research and her teaching. Torquati's work integrates mental health into the full ecological system of very young children including their families, caregivers, teachers, and communities.

Torquati has published extensively on temperament, self-regulation, caregiving, peer relationships, adult-child relationships, and executive functioning, demonstrating her expertise in the emotional and social well-being of young children, Jones said. Torquati holds her Ph.D. and M.S. from the University of Arizona and her B.A. from Marquette University.

#### **About the Buffett Early Childhood Institute**

*The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska is an innovative research, practice, policy, and outreach institute that draws on the resources of the four University of Nebraska campuses. The Institute promotes the development and learning of children from birth through Grade 3. For more information, visit <http://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu>.*