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On behalf of the UI First-Generation Task Force,
thank you for attending this year’s
1stGen@iowa Awards and Recognition Ceremony and thank you for
supporting first-generation students at the University of Iowa.

Thursday, November 11, 2021
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
2nd Floor Ballroom, Iowa Memorial Union
Awards Ceremony

Opening
Danielle Martinez, Director, Student Retention, Academic Support and Retention

Welcome
Dr. Kevin Kregel, Executive Vice President and Provost

Keynote Address
Dana Thomann, Lecturer, Department of Rhetoric

Presentation of 2021 1stGen@Iowa Awards
First-Generation Student Achievement Award
Award for Outstanding First-Generation Student Advocacy

Closing Remarks
Dr. Tanya Uden-Holman, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of the University College

2021 Award Recipients

First-Generation Student Achievement Award

Mary Aldugom is a sixth-year Ph.D. candidate in the Psychological and Brain Sciences department at The University of Iowa. She is a graduate student in the Communication, Cognition, and Learning Lab, where she examines how manipulations to instructional design can enhance mathematical learning in children and adults. Mary is a Chicago native and she completed her undergraduate work at North Park University. As an undergraduate, she was the president of the Psychology Club, the president of the Middle Eastern Student Association, and the Psychology department TA. At Iowa, she co-founded and co-directs Our Collective Brains, an organization in Psychological and Brain Sciences and Neuroscience that supports first-generation and underrepresented minority students. She was born to immigrant parents, and she is a first-generation American, college student, and graduate student.

Award for Outstanding First-Generation Student Advocacy

Danielle Martinez serves as the Director of Student Retention within Academic Support and Retention at the University of Iowa. She has a Master of Science degree in Student Affairs in Higher Education from Colorado State University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication and Public Relations from Central Washington University. In her role in Academic Support and Retention, Danielle coordinates campus-wide early intervention and student success initiatives, but she also provides support, guidance, and mentorship to undergraduate students. Prior to joining the Academic Support and Retention team, Danielle worked in Diversity and Social Justice Programs, Housing and Residence Life, and Student Success Programs at several institutions, including Colorado State University, the University of San Francisco, DePaul University, and the University of Iowa. She is particularly interested in student retention, intersections of social justice, identity formation, and practical application. Danielle has facilitated workshops and trainings for various institutions and organizations. She continuously provides support and empowers people through individualized assistance, while fostering systemic changes to create safe and equitable spaces for historically marginalized populations.

Mishma Nixon is a senior from Colombo, Sri Lanka. She is majoring in English and Creative Writing with a minor in Social Justice. She is the first of her extended family to attend college, and the first in her immediate family to graduate high school. As a first-generation and international student, she is determined to make the best out of her college experience and has been actively seeking out opportunities to learn and give back. She has held leadership positions in the Campus Activities Board, South Asian Student Alliance, and International Student Advisory Board. She is also a Writing Fellow at the UI Writing Center and a UI Honors Program admin and peer mentor. Mishma was awarded the Global Student Award in 2020, an Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) Fellowship for the year 2020-21, and has also received various awards through the English department and the UI Honors Program. Academically, she is interested in children’s literature and the intersections of social justice and literature. Her dream is to facilitate stories and promote access to diverse children’s literature for children who grow up in the global south so they have a chance to see themselves reflected on the pages of their books.

Carolyn Colvin is an Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education at the University of Iowa. In an ironic narrative, Carolyn was teaching at San Diego State University and learned of West Liberty, Iowa by watching NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw. Standing in the middle of West Liberty’s sunny Main Street, Brokaw described this rural midwestern community as home to immigrant residents for 75+ years. With a job offer at Iowa, Colvin traveled to West Liberty and a relationship was formed. Since 1993, she has directed an adult tutoring program for immigrant adults seeking to learn English. Often the adults brought their children to English class so over the years, Thursday evening classes became a family affair. In 2012, in a partnership with the West Liberty School District and supported by University funding, Colvin began collaborating with the UI Center for Diversity and Enrichment and family members of the WL immigrant community to recruit first-gen/students of color to the university. In the 13 years of the mentoring program, she estimates that 300+ West Liberty students have enrolled at the University of Iowa. This is a tribute to the talented students from West Liberty, terrific support from CDE, including TRIO, and faculty/staff who generously welcome these students to campus. Carolyn remains dedicated to recruiting West Liberty students to become teachers!