Welcome Pitt Education Alumni!

The University of Pittsburgh School of Education has one of the largest alumni networks at the University of Pittsburgh, with more than 32,000 alumni in nearly 90 countries around the world. Together, we support the well-being of students, families, and communities through our collective work across teaching, learning, health, and human development.

Stay engaged with Pitt Education:

• Join Pitt Commons to network with your peers and support current students at commons.pitt.edu.

• Update your contact information on the alumni section of the Pitt Education website so we can stay in touch.

• Support the school by making a philanthropic gift.

Contact Michael Haas, director of development and alumni affairs, at mbh26@pitt.edu or 412-648-1789.
Order of Events

5:30-6:30 p.m. Reception
    A buffet will be served.

6:30-8 p.m. Awards Ceremony
    Opening Remarks
    Robert Scherrer, EdD
    President, School of Education Alumni Society

    Presentation of Awards
    Valerie Kinloch, PhD
    Renée and Richard Goldman Dean, School of Education

    Scholarship Recognition
    Dean Kinloch

8 p.m. Event Concludes
Featured Presenters

Valerie Kinloch, PhD
Renée and Richard Goldman Dean, Pitt School of Education

Valerie Kinloch began her tenure as the Renée and Richard Goldman Endowed Dean and Professor of the University of Pittsburgh School of Education in July 2017. Under her leadership, the school has strengthened its commitments to equity, justice, and innovation by focusing on teaching, research, community engagement, academic programs, student success, faculty development, and alumni involvement. Among her many professional appointments, Kinloch is immediate past president of the National Council of Teachers of English, a fellow of the American Educational Research Association and American Council on Education, an elected member of the Board of Trustees of Johnson C. Smith University, and cochair of Remake Learning. Kinloch is the author and coeditor of numerous books and publications on race, place, identities, literacy, and justice, including “Where is the Justice? Engaged Pedagogies in Schools and Communities” and the critically acclaimed and award-winning “Harlem on Our Minds: Place, Race, and the Literacies of Urban Youth.” She holds a BA in English from Johnson C. Smith University, and an MA in English and African American literature and a PhD in English and Composition Studies with a cognate in Urban Studies from Wayne State University.

Robert Scherrer, EdD
President, Pitt School of Education Alumni Society

Robert Scherrer (EdD ’09) is president of the University of Pittsburgh School of Education Alumni Society. He is executive director of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, a regional education services agency serving the greater Pittsburgh area. In this role, he has developed and implemented a new strategic plan and supported school entities throughout the region. Previously, he was superintendent of the North Allegheny School District and a principal at Pittsburgh Allderdice High School and the Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy, both in the Pittsburgh Public Schools District. Scherrer earned his Superintendent’s Letter of Eligibility and EdD in administrative and policy studies from the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. He also holds a BS in business education, an MEd in business education, and Principal’s Certification from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
Award Categories

The Distinguished Alumni Awards Ceremony is held annually to celebrate the accomplishments of the outstanding alumni and students of the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. We are proud to recognize our school community with the following awards:

- Distinguished Student Leadership Award
- Outstanding Alumni EdD Dissertation Award
- Outstanding Alumni PhD Dissertation Award
- Departmental Distinguished Alumni Award: Educational Foundations, Organizations, and Policy
- Departmental Distinguished Alumni Award: Health and Human Development
- Departmental Distinguished Alumni Award: Teaching, Learning, and Leading
- Distinguished Early Career Award
- Distinguished Pre K-12 Educator Award
- Distinguished Alumni Award
Distinguished Student Leadership Award

Yuan Gao
PhD in Social and Comparative Analysis of Education, University of Pittsburgh

Yuan Gao is a third-year doctoral student in the social and comparative analysis in education program in the School of Education. Her academic interests include shadow education, parental education and involvement, and educational policy. She is a program coordinator for the Institute for International Studies in Education, a graduate student assistant in the School of Education's Office of Student and Career Services, and the vice president of the Council of Graduate Students in Education. Additionally, Gao is cofounder and current president of the International Student Peer Network (ISPN), a student organization in the School of Education. Under Gao’s leadership, ISPN has become a student-governed network that bridges students from different cultures, the School of Education, Pitt, and the Pittsburgh community. ISPN creates inclusiveness, fosters belongingness, and strengthens international diversity by serving about 300 participants through informative materials, short videos, and more than 20 events.

Outstanding Alumni EdD Dissertation Award

Julie Schultz (EdD ’22)
Program Director, Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) and Strategic Student Initiatives, The Ohio State University

As program director for STEP and Strategic Student Initiatives at The Ohio State University, Julie Schultz provides leadership for student success programs in the Office of Student Life that are focused on mentorship, high-impact practices, student development, and student retention. Prior to this role, she served as an associate dean of student affairs and the director of first-year orientation and family engagement at Carnegie Mellon University. Throughout her higher education career, Schultz has focused on student transition and success, student learning and development, family engagement, and retention initiatives. Schultz earned her bachelor’s degree in sociology and her master’s degree in higher education and student affairs from The Ohio State University and her EdD from the University of Pittsburgh. Her dissertation in practice, titled “Family is Forever: The Impact of Family Engagement in Higher Education on Black, Latinx and Low-Income Students,” was a mixed-methods study about engaging family members of low-income students and the impact on family members’ sense of connection to the university and knowledge of campus resources.
Emily Rose Korn Koren (PhD ’22)  
Postdoctoral Research Associate, Pullias Center for Higher Education,  
University of Southern California Rossier School of Education  

Emily Rose Korn Koren is a disability justice and educational equity scholar, professional question asker, and educator. She is a multiply dis/abled scholar who uses critical quantitative methods to study postsecondary and community education. Koren earned her PhD in social and comparative analysis in education from the University of Pittsburgh with a minor in quantitative research methods and a certificate in Latin American social and public policy. As a critical dis/ability scholar, her current research examines the intersection between ethnoracial and dis/ability identities, particularly in the context of Hispanic Serving Institutions. Koren is interested in disrupting normative understandings of mental health and learning dis/abilities. Her work is guided by the following question: How can work around race and racism in education be made more critical by thinking about ableism and disablism? In her current role as a postdoctoral research associate in the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California, Koren works on the NSF-funded Faculty Academic Careers and Environments in Service of Equity (FACE) project.
**Departmental Distinguished Alumni Awards**

**Educational Foundations, Organizations, and Policy**

**Roberta L. Schomburg** (PhD ’89)
Professor Emerita, Carlow University School of Education

Roberta L. Schomburg is a professor emerita at Carlow University, where she taught for 35 years. During that time, she was program director for graduate studies in early childhood education, director of the School of Education, associate dean in the College of Professional Studies, and coprincipal investigator for numerous educational projects and grants. Schomburg has presented, published, and consulted widely on topics and issues in early childhood development and educational practice. She has been a child development consultant for Family Communications, Inc., since 1982, and worked closely with Fred Rogers to develop children’s activities for the “Mister Rogers’ Plan & Play Book.” Schomburg is a senior fellow at the Fred Rogers Institute at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. She also is a child development consultant for Fred Rogers Productions, where she advises on the children’s PBS television programs “Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood,” “Donkey Hodie,” “Alma’s Way,” and other selected educational materials.

**Health and Human Development**

**Dennis Floyd Jones** (PhD ’88)
Founder and Executive Director, Youth Enrichment Services

Dennis Floyd Jones is the founder and executive director of Youth Enrichment Services (YES), a nonprofit organization founded in 1994 that designs and implements educational opportunities for minority and underserved children living in public housing and economically disadvantaged communities in Pittsburgh. Under Jones’ leadership, YES has evolved into a nationally recognized organization that addresses urban blight, academic underachievement, and drop-out rates. Jones recently retired from West Virginia University after serving for 32 years as an associate professor in the College of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences. Jones earned his PhD in health, physical and recreation education from the University of Pittsburgh in 1988. He also holds a BS in education from Concord College and an MS in sport behavior from West Virginia University.
Chantee L. Earl is a passionate university professor and a former high school social studies teacher with more than a decade of K-12 classroom teaching experience. As a clinical associate professor at Georgia State University in the College of Education and Human Development's Department of Middle and Secondary Education, Earl instructs emerging and seasoned classroom teachers on how to serve as educational leaders committed to justice and equity within their classrooms, schools, and communities. Additionally, Earl possesses an enduring reputation for distinguished service throughout the greater Atlanta metropolitan community and internationally, and she serves as codirector for the Center of Equity and Justice in Teacher Education. She leads an annual service-learning study abroad experience to the Dominican Republic, which is a nationally recognized example of how to align educators with community organizations to advance student learning and achievement. Through teaching, mentoring, and community service, Earl advances innovative instructional strategies, research, and teaching techniques that foster a spirit of inquiry, sharpen critical thinking skills, and emphasize the practice of citizen participation for both students and teachers.
Distinguished Early Career Award

Aaron Thomas (EdD ’17)
Superintendent, Cornell School District

As superintendent of Cornell School District in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, for the last 10 years, Aaron Thomas is proud of the work done within the district to expand academic, artistic, and athletic opportunities for students. Under his leadership, Cornell was named the #1 Overachieving School District of the Decade by the Pittsburgh Business Times. He has authored and received several grants for the district, including three 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants totaling more than $5 million to offer extended after-school learning opportunities for students. Thomas was a social studies teacher at Cornell High School from 2005-09, and later served as the school’s principal from 2009-13. He earned his Superintendent’s Letter of Eligibility and EdD in school leadership from the University of Pittsburgh School of Education. He also earned a BA in secondary education and an MS in instructional leadership from Robert Morris University, and his K-12 Principal Certification from Westminster College.

Nikki Cristobal (PhD ’22)
Cofounder and Executive Director, Kamāwaelualani

Nikki Cristobal is committed to using the knowledge she gained at the University of Pittsburgh to give back to her home community of Kaua‘i, Hawai‘i. She is the cofounder and executive director of the grassroots nonprofit Kamāwaelualani, which is dedicated to perpetuating Kānaka ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian) culture through public arts- and place-based learning. Cristobal also is the principal investigator of the Missing & Murdered Native Hawaiian Women’s and Girls Report, a report mandated by the Hawai‘i State Legislature and a part of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples international movement. Additionally, she serves as the institutional effectiveness researcher at Kaua‘i Community College and serves on four nonprofit boards that deliver educational and social services to populations that experience systemic inequities. Nikki is proudly a K-PhD public school graduate, a first-generation and Pell Grant college student, and a descendant of the first peoples and forced arrivant plantation workers of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i.
Distinguished Pre K-12 Educator Award

Marlon J. Mussington Sr. (EdD ’22)
Physical Education Teacher, Paul Cuffee School

Marlon J. Mussington Sr. has worked with at-risk or disadvantaged youth for more than 26 years. Prior to joining Paul Cuffee School in Providence, Rhode Island, in 2003, he served as a volunteer football coach, National Football Foundation academic coach, and teen director for the YMCA of Greater Providence. While at Paul Cuffee School, Mussington has consistently sought professional development opportunities that have stretched and challenged him, including anti-bullying conferences at Harvard University; certification in restraint training, which he uses to train school faculty and staff members; involvement in Origins Responsive Classroom work, which is the basis for the Paul Cuffee Lower School’s classroom management system; sponsoring a Biggest Loser Competition to encourage faculty and staff to make healthy life choices; and implementing a weekend backpack program to address the issue of food insecurity experienced by many of his students. Mussington received a national teaching award from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, earned his MEd from the University of Missouri, and his EdD in health and physical activity from the University of Pittsburgh.
Distinguished Alumni Award

**Randal A. Lutz** (BS ’90, MEd ’96, EdD ’04)
Superintendent of Schools, Baldwin-Whitehall School District

Randal Lutz is in his 11th year as the superintendent of the Baldwin-Whitehall School District in suburban Pittsburgh. Before assuming his current role, Lutz served in several other leadership roles in the district as middle school vice principal, principal, supervisor of curriculum and instruction, and assistant superintendent. Prior to joining Baldwin-Whitehall, Lutz began his career in the Bethel Park School District as a teacher of students in third and fifth grades. He received his bachelor’s degree in elementary education from the University of Pittsburgh, where he also earned his MEd and EdD in educational administration. Lutz serves on several boards and committees at the local, state and national levels, including the Board of Directors for The Brentwood Baldwin Whitehall Chamber of Commerce; Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators Board of Governors; American Association of School Administrators Governing Board; past president for SHASDA; and superintendent of record for Area V school districts. He also is active professionally through his membership in the Forum for Western Pennsylvania School Superintendents; Digital Promise/League of Innovative Schools; and AASA Learning 2025. Always looking to support the next generation of principals and superintendents in the region, Lutz is an adjunct professor at PennWest University and Point Park University.

**Silver Francis Oonyu** (MEd ’12)
Founder, Silver Memorial Inclusive Learning Center

Silver Francis Oonyu, a native of Uganda, lost his sight as a young boy after contracting measles. While he lacked access to special education services growing up, he found refuge as a teenager at St. Francis Primary School for the Blind. His experience inspired him to pursue his dream of opening an inclusive school for children with disabilities in his native country. Oonyu earned a master’s degree in special education and a graduate certificate in African studies from the University of Pittsburgh. After graduation, he returned home to found the Silver Memorial Inclusive Learning Center, or SMILE School. Serving about 200 children, the school provides an education that students are unlikely to find anywhere else in the region and includes instruction on how to use adaptive tools, including braille, mobility equipment, and assistive information technology. Oonyu also works as an educational consultant for special education, an assistant lecturer at Kampala International University School of Education, and program manager for Advocacy for Vulnerable Children’s Rights Uganda.
Scholarship and Fellowship Recipients

Thanks to the generous support of our alumni and friends, the School of Education can provide financial support for future leaders in education.

* To be awarded soon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholarship Fund</th>
<th>Recipients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deborah J. Aaron, PhD Endowed Fund</strong></td>
<td>Tristian Homze</td>
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<td><strong>Walter Barnes Sr. and Stella G. Barnes Scholarship Fund</strong></td>
<td>Hannah Uschock</td>
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<td><strong>Rita M. Bean Endowed Student Resource Fund</strong></td>
<td>Gianina Morales Morales</td>
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<td><strong>John R. Bender Endowed Scholarship</strong></td>
<td>Amanda Cooke</td>
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<td><strong>Peter C. Bennett and Rita Blasek Bennett Endowed Scholarship</strong></td>
<td>Connor Perry</td>
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<td><strong>Sherry Berkowitz Memorial Award</strong></td>
<td>Shayna Josowitz</td>
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<td><strong>Annette Crantz Briskman Endowed Scholarship in the School of Education</strong></td>
<td>Samantha Fitschen</td>
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<td><strong>Earl and Anna Broady Foundation Scholarship Fund</strong></td>
<td>Daren Ellerbee, Anika Jones</td>
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<td><strong>Dr. Jerlean E. Daniel Book Award</strong></td>
<td>Amoy Crosbourne</td>
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<td><strong>Ernest B. Dorow Endowed Scholarship Fund</strong></td>
<td>Hannah Uschock</td>
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<td><strong>The Katherine George Eberly Endowed Scholarship Fund</strong></td>
<td>Joanna Linares</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Equity &amp; Justice Scholars Award for Professional Development</strong></td>
<td>Chetachukwu Agwoeme, Charlie Diaz, Gerard Dorve-Lewis, Ogechi Irodi, Chelsea Jimenez, Dylan Kapit, Naeisha McClain, Sayeed Naqibullah Orfan, Alaysia Plair-Easton, Jennifer Ponce Cori, Deno Antonio Rowe, Christopher Wright, Alecia Young</td>
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<td><strong>Dr. Lillian M. Fehr Endowment</strong></td>
<td>Emma Vogler</td>
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<td><strong>Ethel B. Feldman Scholarship</strong></td>
<td>Finley Conway</td>
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<td><strong>Aimee Chesler Fredette Memorial Award</strong></td>
<td>Diana Houck</td>
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<td><strong>Bobbie Andrea Gaunt Endowed Scholarship</strong></td>
<td>Brandon Yee</td>
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<td><strong>Eli-Sar Graf Foundation Scholarship</strong></td>
<td>Payal Patel</td>
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<td><strong>Sarah F. and Elizabeth Graf Fund</strong></td>
<td>David Gorski, Alexia Medero, Payal Patel, Kyra Rettew, Isabel Tashima, Aminna Waheed, Alyssa Welshons</td>
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Endowed Fund for Graduate Study
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Anastasia Mazur
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Theresa Rinder
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Briana Roderiguez
Cherri Rogers
Stephanie Romanishan
Donna Ruff
Tyler Smida
Tiffany Smietana
Krisztina Soto Rios
Kelsey Thompson
Christa Togans
Hannah Uschock
Tierra Wilson
Samantha Wittenberg
Bing Xu
Manisha Yugeswaran
Elizabeth Young
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Teresa Sirianni Amelio Student Resource Fund *

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June E. Swank Education Fund
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Daren Ellerbee
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Susan Geer
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Danae Williams

Weimann Family Teaching Scholarship
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J. Orville Wood Scholarship
Sarelm Brooks
John Jendrzejewski

William A. Yeager Fellowship
Annette Han

Lois Lyden Zord and the Honorable Joseph Zord Jr. Endowed Scholarship
Tiffany Robinson
Manisha Yogeswaran

Eva K. Thomas Endowed Scholarship Fund for the School of Education
Emily Duque
Eli Gubernick
John Jendrzejewski

Wilma Nagy Ventmiller Endowed Fund
Hugo Perez
Our Mission-Vision

The following statement is the mission-vision of the School of Education. It encapsulates what we do, what we believe, and who we continually seek to become as members of the school community.

“We ignite learning. We strive for well-being for all. We teach. We commit to student, family, and community success. We commit to educational equity. We advocate. We work for justice. We cultivate relationships. We forge engaged partnerships. We collaborate. We learn with and from communities. We innovate and agitate. We pursue and produce knowledge. We research. We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures. We approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development. We address how national, global, social, and technological change impacts learning. We shape practice and policy. We teach with and for dignity. We think. We dream. We lead with integrity. We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.”