



2023-2024

PROFILES EXCELLENCE





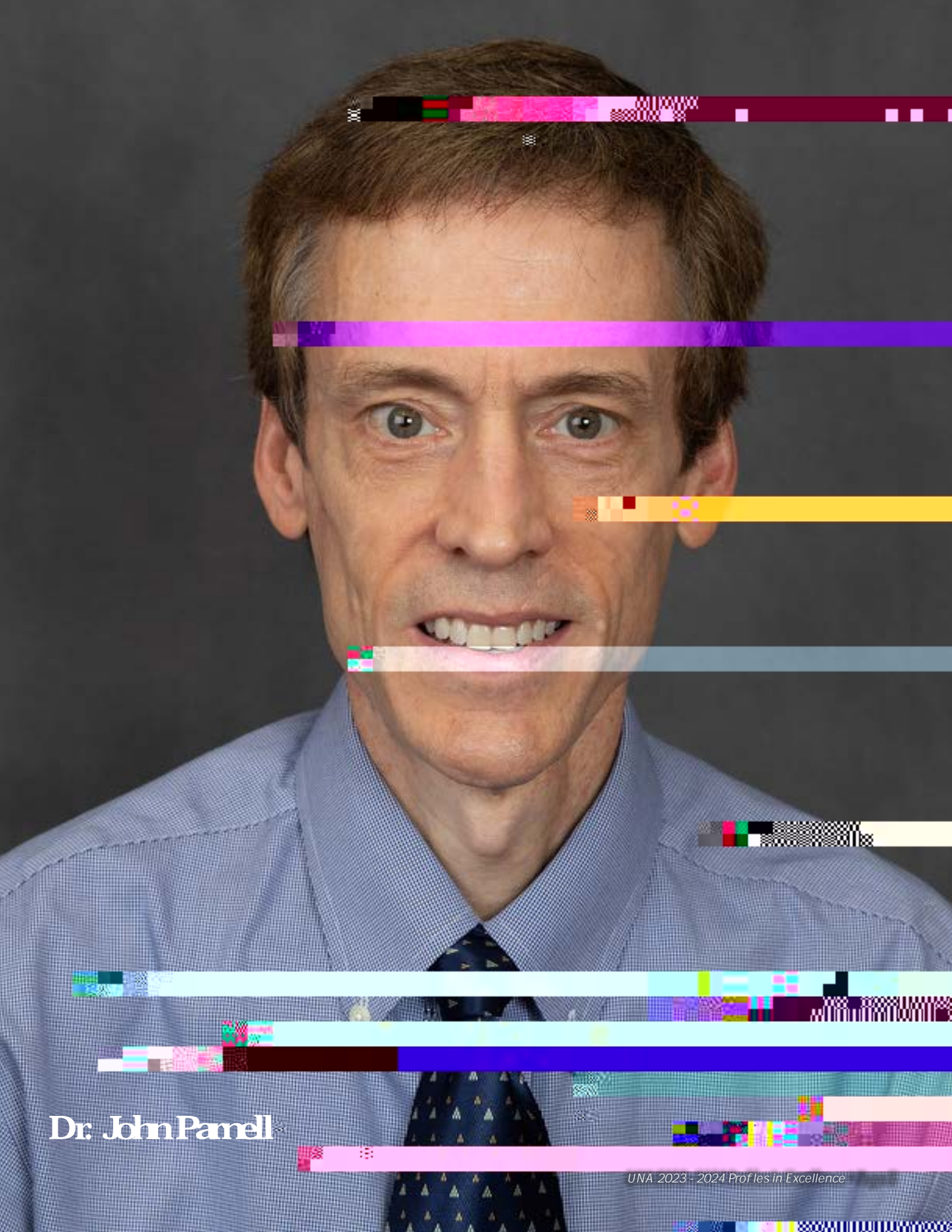
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**Dr. Nikki Davenport** is an assistant Professor of Nursing in the Anderson College of Nursing and Health Professions. She is the 2023-2024 recipient of the Lawrence J. Nelson Award for Teaching by Faculty.

Here she is in her own words.







**Dr. John Parnell**



# OUTSTANDING SERVICE

**Dr. Michael Pretes** is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Geoscience in the College of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering. He is the 2023-2024 recipient of the Outstanding Service by Faculty award.

Here he is in his own words.

**Q: It is difficult to characterize your service to your discipline, so I'm curious about what drives you to serve.**

**A:** Academia is a community that functions through interaction. Some of this is informal, but some is institutionalized in professional organizations and societies, and those need volunteers to serve in various capacities. Academic societies promote the discipline and provide opportunities for students and faculty to interact and exchange ideas. Serving as an officer or on a committee is a great way to advance the discipline, learn more about it, and meet a lot of people. And it can also be quite fun! I encourage readers of this to volunteer for something!

**Q: You are a first-generation college graduate, how was this encouraged your success and, what, if anything have you had to overcome along the way?**

**A:** I was a first-generation student at a time (early 1980s) when there were not a lot of support services on university campuses. I had to make my own way and figure things out by myself, so that built confidence and helped me learn to navigate complex organizations. Neither of my parents attended college, and English was a second language for both of them, so they did not know what semesters or final exams were, and I had to explain that to them.

**Q: What prompted your love of geography? And when did you realize that it was going to be your educational and lifetime pursuit?**

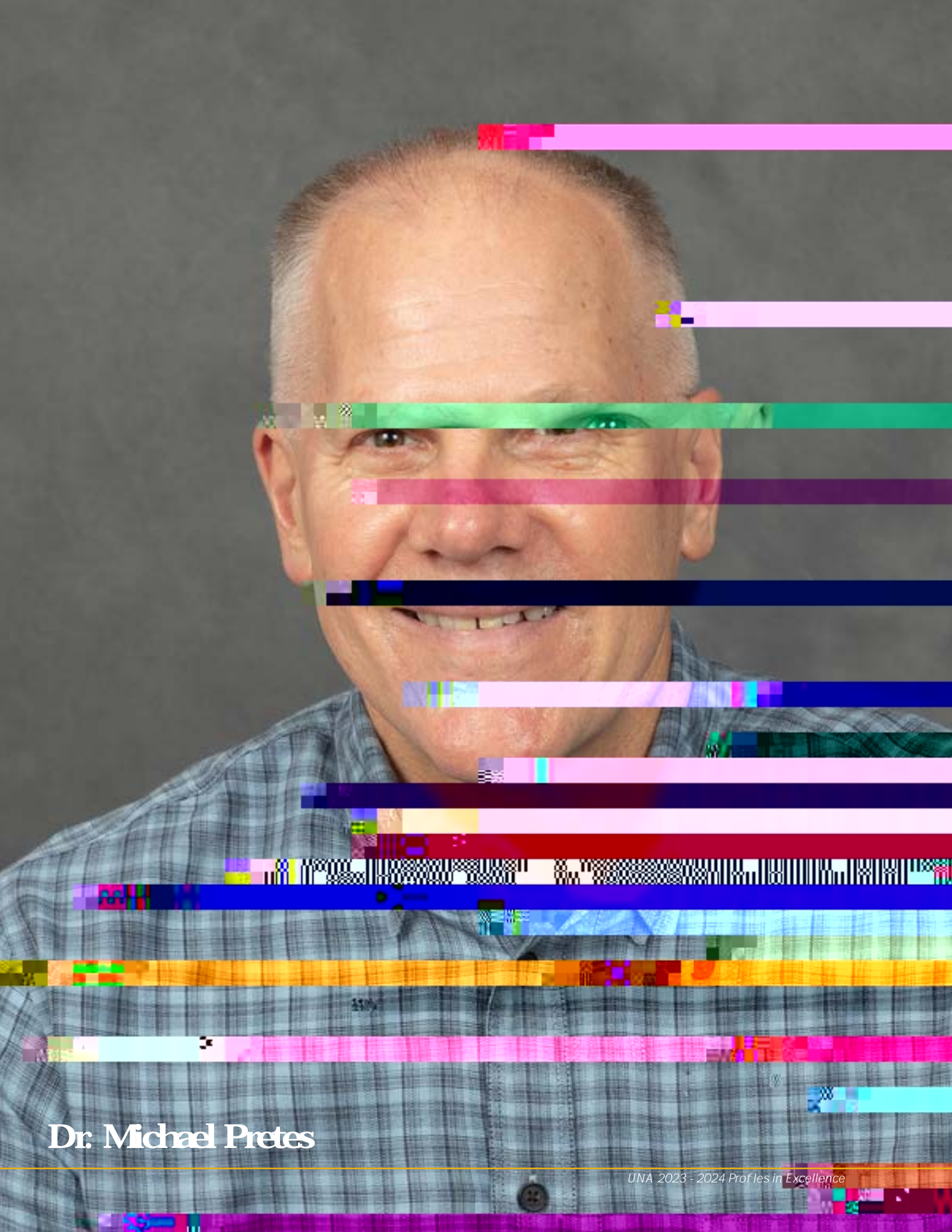
**A:** I started out in Political Science and did my BA and MA degrees in that field. While living in Finland and traveling in Europe and Russia, I saw Geography as a more embracing field and one that incorporated my main interests in things like economic development, tourism, resource management, and national parks. I was living in Europe at the time that the Soviet Union was collapsing, the Berlin Wall was coming down, and the Cold War was ending. Geography was essential for understanding these events. I still keep a foot in the Political Science field by teaching a Geopolitics class at UNA, which combines Geography, Political Science, and International Relations.

**Q: Of all the places you have traveled, and of all of the things you have done to contribute to the field of geography, tell me what stands out to you. What makes you proudest to have accomplished?**

**A:** I am most proud of all the students that have taken my classes and who have graduated! I love to see students graduate and move on to their careers. I still keep in touch with many former students, including some from almost 40 years ago!

**Q: Finally, what does it mean to you to receive the Outstanding Service by Faculty award?**

**A:** Service is not usually something that one does alone and in secret, so I see this award as not only recognizing my work but also that of my department, college, university, and the broader community. We all work together to serve.



**Dr. Michael Pretes**



**Dr. Heather Rhodes** is an Associate Professor of Finance in the Department of Economics, Finance, and Data Analytics in the Sanders College of Business and Technology. She is the 2023-2024 recipient of the Outstanding Advising by Faculty award.

Here she is in her own words:

**Q: As an advisor, you share that you see the students in the full context of their lives outside of just their academics. Why is this so important?**

**A:** Our students are more than just 'students.' They have lives outside of UNA. Most of them work. Some have spouses and



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