Jaclyn Miller is a University of Northern Iowa Junior in Mathematics Education. In 3rd grade she decided that she wanted to be a teacher. “Many kids want to be teachers when they are little. Many grow out of this. I never did,” Jaclyn said.

She came to UNI because she liked the size and felt very comfortable when she came for a campus visit. She wanted a school larger than her high school but not so big that she felt like she would get lost in a crowd. UNI has given her this and so much more.

Jaclyn’s father, who passed away when she was in 6th grade, gave her the foundation for her love of mathematics. They were very close and would work on her math homework together. They had similar ways in which they would think about problems, how to approach them and how to solve them. This made homework time fun. It was also something that just the two of them could do. Pursuing a degree in mathematics is a way for Jaclyn to feel that she is able to stay connected to her father and honor his memory.

The decision to go into mathematics teaching was solidified Jaclyn’s senior year in high school when she took AP Calculus. Her teacher, Mr. Kollbaum, encouraged Jaclyn and her fellow classmates to think in different ways. He allowed each of his students to think about math in a way that made sense to them. He encouraged students to share their own line of reasoning because other students may think similarly, even if the subject matter was not taught that way. Jaclyn decided, “I want to be able to do that. I want to be able to create a math classroom that everyone enjoys going to. Math is so cool... because it explains so much about the world and how things work. There is nothing like it.”

Jaclyn’s UNI experience has been great. She admits that she was a little nervous when first coming to college because she did not know if her professors would be open to all her questions or if they would care. Everyone in UNI’s Math Department, and other departments, have shown her that they truly do care about her success. Jaclyn said that her professors are personable and passionate about helping young people. She continued, “Going to college, a student may feel like you are on your own. At least here, that is not the case at all.”

In Calculus III, which has been her favorite class, Dr. Adrienne Stanley would sometimes adjust the lesson plans for the day based on the needs of the students. If the students needed more instruction, help, or examples with a particular topic, Dr. Stanley would take the time to make sure everyone was ready before moving on. Jaclyn went on to say, “Dr. Stanley was really great about structuring her class so that people felt it was safe to ask questions and be wrong. This is sometimes really hard. Students often believe that they are the only ones who may not understand or have questions, when in reality, no one knows. She had a unique way of creating this kind of environment.” This is something that Jaclyn will strive for when she has her own students.

Outside of classes, Jaclyn participates in campus organizations and Peer Mentors. Jaclyn is fundraising co-chair of Kappa Delta Pi (an education honor society), vice-president of Kappa Mu Epsilon (the mathematics honor society), student di-
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-Jaclyn Miller, UNI Mathematics Education Major

ector of the Iowa Council of Teachers of Mathematics (ICTM), and was recently inducted into Omicron Delta Kappa (a leadership honor society). In Omicron Delta Kappa she will serve on a service subcommittee and partner with Northern Iowa Wishmakers. Each of these organizations serve others through activities such as fundraising for scholarships and networking with fellow math teachers at state conferences.

Last year, Jaclyn was a peer mentor for a freshman mathematics class. In this role, she was able to help students adapt to the UNI campus and college life. She led study sessions and offered office hours for students. Some students who would be hesitant to ask a professor for help feel more comfortable asking a fellow student. Jaclyn, on occasion, helped students draft emails to professors when they did not know how. Peer mentors are tasked with helping students with personal questions and getting involved on campus. In this role she took a group of students to UNI volleyball games.

One of the activities Jaclyn would recommend for students, especially incoming freshman, is the Panther Marching Band. Jaclyn participated in the marching band with her clarinet for her freshman and sophomore years. She also played saxophone in the pep band. She loved this time. She was able to meet new friends before classes even started because the band members arrive on campus before the semester begins.

Jaclyn was awarded an Iowa Space Grant Consortium STEM Education Scholarship this year. ISGC funds future STEM and STEM Education professionals to increase Iowa’s STEM professional pipeline.

Jaclyn’s goal is to graduate in May of 2020. In addition to teaching high school math, Jaclyn would like to pursue a Master’s in Education and volunteer at Every Step: Care and Support Services (formerly Amanda the Panda). Every Step is a grief organization in Des Moines that is run by volunteers to help families with the loss of a loved one. This organization helped Jaclyn and her mother after she lost her father and she would like to volunteer and help others going through similar times.

“I find it very fulfilling because it is very challenging. Once you get it, it is the best feeling. There is nothing like it for me,” Jaclyn said of pursuing a STEM career.