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## **Education Alumni Affirm Program Success**

*Summary: Accolades for education alumni affirm the quality of Morris's teacher education programs.*

(July 18, 2013)-Award-winning faculty, academic excellence, and small class sizes not only distinguish the University of Minnesota, Morris among public liberal arts colleges, but also set it apart as an ["education school."](#) And while Morris's latest accreditation review confirmed the quality of its teacher education programs, the recent accolades of five alumni provide additional affirmation of the programs' success.

According to Gwen Rudney, Division of Education chair and professor of education, Morris has met and succeeded in national accreditation standards since 1960. Morris's teacher education programs are organized, implemented, and assessed according to the rigorous requirements and standards of the [Minnesota Board of Teaching](#) and the [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education](#). In their [most recent accreditation review](#), the programs earned full program approval as well as high ratings in five assessment areas related to program assessment, design, implementation, and efficacy.

A unique component of Morris's teacher education curriculum is its [conceptual framework](#), which places the complex elements of a strong teacher education program within the context of a liberal arts institution. It is the primary feature of the school's teacher education curriculum. Another key factor is the Division of Education's commitment to placing student teachers in districts where it has worked to build and maintain positive relationships.

Kari Skildum '02, Saint Paul Rotary Teacher of the Year

Bill Whitman, retired Ysleta School District administrator and current student teaching supervisor, writes that, having evaluated numerous teaching candidates in his 21 years as an elementary principal, he finds Morris's student teachers to be "extremely well-prepared, professional, energetic, and displaying a high degree of confidence." He adds that "the coursework, framework, and field experience components of [Morris'] program are commendable."

The merits of Morris's teacher education programs are affirmed by the success of alumni. In this year alone, at least five were recognized for their contributions to the fields of early childhood, elementary, and secondary education:

Megan Fowler Zachman '06, KS95's Teacher of the Week,  
Lee Korby '04, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools Teacher of the Year,  
Kari Skildum '02, Saint Paul Rotary Teacher of the Year,  
Jill Skwira '06, Douglas County Provider of the Year, and  
Kevin Pope '09, Morris Area Teacher of the Year, Minnesota  
Teacher of the Year Semifinalist.

Kevin Pope '09, Morris Area Teacher of the Year, Minnesota Teacher of the Year Semifinalist—photo courtesy of the Morris Sun Tribune.

According to Pope, the Morris “education program really prepared [him] for teaching.” Pointing to challenging coursework, high-caliber faculty, and connections with accomplished practicing teachers, he adds that the care and quality exhibited by the program “is actually pretty rare.”

“Our program is pure Morris,” says Rudney. “The program is very focused on the person. We’re small but good, and we know our students—even after they graduate.”

Additional information on the programs’ most recent accreditation review is available [online](#).

Education graduates at 2013 Commencement.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.