

# illume

SPRING 2026 • UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA

*"We're showing kids that if they want to pursue STEM, there's a place for them."*

**NEW DISCOVERIES**

**6**

*"Collaborating with students from different disciplines pushes me to think beyond my major."*

**LAUNCHING FUTURE CAREERS**

**26**

# BUILDING THE PIPELINE

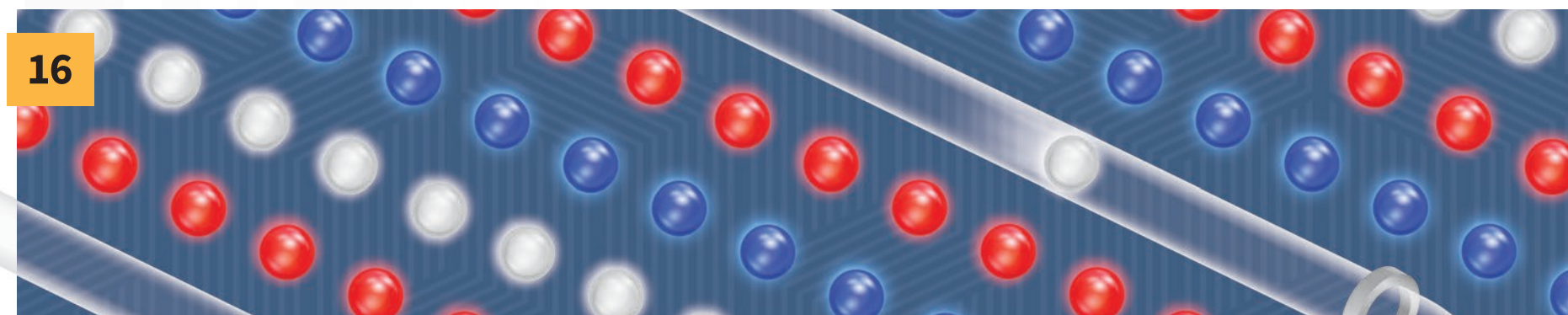
Connecting Education and Industry

**16**

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ILLUME • SPRING 2026

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*On the Cover: Building. Moving. Pushing forward. USI funnels its unique components into opportunities, connecting students to their futures. This issue of Illume follows the people building talent pipelines, partnerships, legacies and innovative programs that lay the groundwork for success.*

## illume

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## Brick by Brick



**WHEN I JOINED** USI last August, I walked onto our growing campus full of enthusiasm, anxiety and myriad questions. Most notably, "How the heck am I going to build a magazine?" And after that, "Will anyone besides my family read it?" Now, with my first full issue hitting mail and inboxes

alike, I can confidently say that at least a few friends have promised their readership too. Banter aside, I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to share these stories of University partnership, innovation and inspiration.

Connecting with the USI community and working alongside the talented creatives who bring their expertise and artistry to every page of *Illume* has already been both enlightening and rewarding. Though some of the answers to my questions are still under construction, I look forward to learning each day and adding my bricks atop the storied foundations of *Illume*.

**Addison E. Paul**  
Editor/Senior Writer

## LEARNING WITH LEGO LEAGUE

**LAST FALL**, USI hosted the 2025 FIRST LEGO League (FLL) Qualifying Tournament, bringing together more than 100 students from across the region for a day of robotics competition and STEM exploration. Coordinated by the Southwest Indiana STEM Resource Center, the tournament challenged teams to design, program and operate custom LEGO SPIKE Prime robots to complete archaeology-themed missions.

## NEW HEIGHTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL BUSINESS DAY

**A RECORD-BREAKING** 195 high school students from 13 schools across Indiana and Kentucky competed in the Romain College of Business' 2025 High School Business Day Case and Scholarship Challenge. Student teams presented solutions for a real-world business problem to a panel of judges, and participants also had an opportunity to test their knowledge of business concepts and terminology. The event wrapped with three skilled students earning scholarships from the Romain College of Business. This next generation of business leaders is ready to build big.

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## Madrigal Feaste Director's Final Bow

**THE 54TH ANNUAL** Madrigal Feaste marked a bittersweet moment for one of USI's most-enduring traditions. It was the final Feaste led by Daniel Craig, Associate Professor of Music and Director of the USI Chamber Choir, before his retirement. After more than 36 years of guiding and inspiring musicianship in the Philip H. Hagemann Performing Arts Department, Craig's final bow featured a special surprise. Over 150 alumni attended the event and took to the stage for a choral performance honoring Craig's impact on music education and the USI community.

## \$1 Million Gift for Graduate Nursing

**USI HAS RECEIVED** a \$1 million leadership gift from Larry Rutledge to support graduate nursing education within the Kinney College of Nursing and Health Professions. The gift will create an endowment providing scholarships in perpetuity for USI graduate students enrolled in the family nurse practitioner or acute care nurse practitioner programs within the Master of Science in Nursing program. The gift reflects a long-term investment in the preparation of advanced practice nurses who will serve communities throughout the region. In recognition of Rutledge's generosity, the new auditorium in the renovated USI Health Professions Center will be named Rutledge Auditorium.

## TASTE OF THE WORLD

**FROM FATAYER AND DUMPLINGS** to vitumbua and currywurst, USI students, employees and community members ate around the world at the 2026 International Food Expo. Hosted by the Center for International Programs and the International Club, or iClub, this year's Expo brought dishes from across the globe to plates right here on campus, encouraging the community to learn about other cultures and culinary traditions over shared meals.





## USI Art Students Sweep 2026 ADDYs

**USI ART AND DESIGN** students took home an impressive array of accolades at the American Advertising Federation of Greater Evansville ceremony this year, collectively earning nine EVVYs, four Silver ADDYs, two Gold ADDYs and two Judges Choice ADDYs. Competing with student and professional entries from across the Tri-state, these wins showcase the creative prowess of USI students and the excellence of the University's Art and Design Program.

Earning a whopping eight awards, Deanna Hardy '26 was excited and honored to be recognized for her photography work blending fine art and commercial design. "It's inspiring to see the level of work being produced," she said. "Even though I'm a student, I feel connected and welcomed into that larger creative community."

## NURSING 100% PASS RATE



**ALL BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING (BSN)** students who graduated in December 2025 have passed the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX®) on their first attempt. USI's 100% first-time NCLEX pass rate exceeds the 2025 National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) average rate of 87.6%. USI Nursing continues shaping future healthcare professionals and supporting the regional, state and national nursing workforce.



## NATURE'S CLASSROOM

**WORK IS UNDERWAY** on a three-year, \$150,000 grant from the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), with support from Toyota Motor North America and Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana, to expand outdoor learning opportunities for the USI community and beyond. The project will bring new educational features to the USI-Burdette Park Trail and the adjacent 730-acre nature preserve such as a large outdoor learning pavilion, trail extensions, interpretive signage and outdoor learning kits.

## SUPERCOMPUTING SUPERSTARS

**A TEAM OF** computer science students and faculty represented USI at SC25, the latest installment in the annual international supercomputing conference series. Their participation highlighted the growing national visibility of USI's Computer Science Program and the high-caliber research being conducted by students.

USI students Alyson Collins '26 and Maya Seshan '25 achieved significant recognition at the Association for Computing Machinery Student Research Competition, where their project was selected as one of the top 10 posters from a pool of nearly 500 projects submitted by computer science students worldwide.

## Booting Up Business Innovation

**USI HAS BEGUN** work on the Center for Applied Business Technologies, a state-of-the-art facility designed to give students experience with cutting-edge tech tools and produce graduates that bring market-ready skills to the business workforce. Housed on the first floor of the Business and Engineering Center, this project adds an AI Café and a variety of new lab spaces for experiential, technology-driven learning.

### FOCUS AREAS

- Artificial Intelligence
- Biometrics
- Analytics
- Immersive Technology

### INDUSTRY TOOLS

- IBM WatsonX
- Bloomberg Terminal
- Power BI
- Alteryx

Illustrative renderings provided by Hafer.

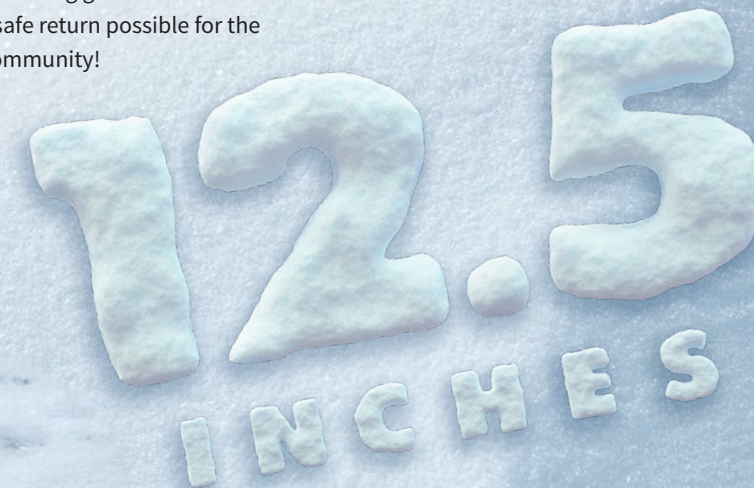
## WELCOME ABOARD

**INDIANA GOVERNOR MIKE BRAUN** has appointed two new members to USI's Board of Trustees to fill vacated seats. Along with the appointment of **Michael Solliday '27** as Student Trustee last summer, these appointments complete the nine-member board.

- **Dr. Glen Kissel**, Associate Professor Emeritus of Engineering, serving through June 2026
- **Barry Cox**, Owner of The Cox Group and President of Warehouse Services, Inc. (WSI), serving through June 2028

## Record-Breaking Snowfall

**THIS JANUARY**, Evansville saw its largest snowfall in over 20 years—12.5 inches in one weekend! According to records dating back through 1948, the 2026 snowstorm is second only to the 22.3 inches of snow the city saw in December 2004. USI Public Safety braved the winter weather to staff campus 24/7 while the Facility Operations and Planning grounds team created travel paths, making a safe return possible for the whole campus community!





# NEW DISCOVERIES

## STEM Discovery Lab Opens on Campus

By Addison E. Paul

**OPENING ON THE** first floor of the David L. Rice Library, the University of Southern Indiana's new STEM Discovery Lab will attract busloads of kindergarten through eighth-grade students to campus for hands-on learning. USI's Southwest Indiana STEM Resource Center (SwISTEM) manages the space, overseeing a catalog of specialized teaching tools and lesson-based science, technology, engineering and math activities.

Building on the University's strong foundation of K-8 programming, the lab helps elevate field trips for regional elementary and middle schools, adapts into a flexible classroom space and serves as an on-campus educational resource.

"When we were dreaming this up, we were getting targeted feedback from teachers about what would make this experience exceptional for the kids coming to campus," said Dr. Allison Grabert, Director of SwISTEM. "This was a way that we could bring them to

USI early in their education and tie in real-world applications for STEM."

Last spring, the University welcomed Evan Rebar, STEM Curriculum Development and Outreach Specialist, to design and lead lessons for the lab. Rebar doesn't have to hypothesize about meeting Indiana STEM standards; he already has first-hand experience. After teaching middle school math and science for over 10 years, he knows the ins and outs of state education requirements, engaging students in complex subjects and navigating classroom limitations.

"It was really interesting to get in on the ground floor and develop this, especially for kids who don't have as many field trip opportunities," said Rebar.

"I kept asking myself, 'How can we evolve this from a classroom space?' and 'How can we make this more fun?'"



### — FUNDING —

**\$200,000** CenterPoint Energy Foundation

**\$50,000** Alcoa Foundation

Additional funding support was provided by READI 2.0 and private donors.

### — FEATURES —

**4** Wall-Mounted Monitors  
Including **2** Touchscreens

**1,000+** Teaching Tools

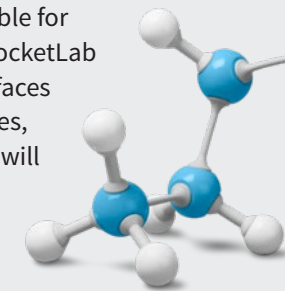
**40**-Person Capacity

**20** K-8th Grade Lessons and Activities



The STEM Discovery Lab has already piloted several successful field trips, including a trial lesson teaching third-graders about perimeter and area by having them design holes for a mini golf course. In just a year, Rebar has spent countless hours drafting lessons, testing activities and making trips to the hardware store, but this is only the beginning. From building earthquake shake tables to working with USI's Center for Applied Research on an augmented reality (AR) sandbox, Rebar brings a go-getter mentality to his new role.

Projected to host over 1,500 K-8 students annually, the lab makes cost-prohibitive and technical teaching tools accessible for kids. Equipment like versatile PocketLab sensors, Vernier LabQuest interfaces and a variety of scientific samples, models and demonstration kits will help bring concepts to life and inspire visiting students to engage with STEM fields.



"We're part of the very front end of this cradle to career model that the University is working to develop," said Grabert. "We're showing kids that if they want to pursue a STEM degree or career in this area, there's a place for them." ▼

### — PARTNERSHIPS —

National Environmental Education Foundation

Naval Surface Warfare Crane Division



## Running Since '79

by Addison E. Paul

**USI CROSS COUNTRY** has been leaving competition in the dust since the program began under Dr. Bill Stegemoller in 1979. As founder and first Head Coach, Stegemoller led the Screaming Eagles to 12 conference titles during his USI career, setting the pace for the team's future success.

Now, with the leadership of two USI graduates and former student-athletes, the program continues to build its legacy. Men's and Women's Cross Country/Track & Field Head Coach Mike Hillyard '94 and Assistant Coach Austin Nolan '20 M'22 embody the Screegle spirit that established USI Cross Country as a benchmark program.

A 29-time Great Lakes Valley Conference Coach of the Year and an OVC Men's and Women's Coach of the Year, Hillyard has inspired the team for nearly three decades. His wealth of experience helped lead Cross Country into a new era of Division I athletics where the program continues to excel.

"My timeline with the program dates back to March of 1985, when my parents brought me to campus to run in the ISUE Citizens Bank 5K," said Hillyard. "I was 15 at the time, and it was on that day that I met Coach Stegemoller as well as ISUE All-American runner Jim Nolan, Assistant Coach Nolan's dad."



As Assistant Coach, Nolan not only brings his athletic prowess to the track but continues a family tradition with USI Cross Country, following in his parents' stride as both an accomplished athlete and a coach, like his mother Tammy Nolan, who lead Women's Cross Country before Hillyard took over the role in 1996.

"Coaching Cross Country and being a small part of the history here at USI is a dream come true for me," said Nolan. "I truly wouldn't want to be coaching anywhere else, and I'm determined to continue pushing this program forward."

## SPORTS TICKER

### SEASON SWEEP

Women's Basketball swept all three games against Southern Illinois University Edwardsville this season, including their matchup at the OVC Tournament Quarterfinal held at the Ford Center. This year marks their third straight 20-win season, which also earned a first-round bye in the 2026 Women's National Invitation Tournament (WNIT).

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL  
OVC TOURNAMENT QUARTERFINAL

	72	FINAL
	44	

### EXPRESSWAY SERIES WIN

Senior designated hitter Micajah Wall '26 drove in five runs to lead USI Baseball to a commanding performance over the University of Evansville.

BASEBALL R H E

	4	7	1
	14	13	1

With a monster eight-run rally in the bottom of the sixth, the Screaming Eagles secured the opener of the two-game series.

### STAR PLAYER

Senior guard Ali Saunders '26 was named to the OVC All-Tournament Team for the second time in her career. This season, she racked up over 30 points in three separate performances, and Saunders was also a finalist for the 2026 Lilly Women's All-Star Game.

### ON THE RUN

Junior Alex Nolan '27 led USI Men's Cross Country and Track & Field to strong finishes, upholding the Nolan family legacy on the team. He earned the fastest eight-kilometer time in the 2025 OVC season and won gold in both the 3,000 and 5,000 meters at the OVC Indoor Championships.



### SUMMIT LEAGUE SPLASH

USI Men's Swimming & Diving hit a program milestone when Sam Smith '27 won the first-ever Summit League Championship in the Men's 200-yard butterfly race, setting a school record time of 1:47.77.

## Diving Into Graduation

**USI MEN'S AND WOMEN'S** Swimming and Diving made its inaugural splash in 2022. Now, four years later, the team's first freshman recruits are crossing the stage. Before launching this addition to USI Athletics, the University not only built the Aquatic Center in 2021, but Head Coach Cameron Kainer spent the months leading up to that premier season building the foundations of the program and the team.

"I'm so thankful for all the student-athletes who decided to join," said Kainer. "Our team's future is bright because of the good they've done, both on and off the pool deck."

## The Career of a Lifetime

**THIS YEAR**, Ray Simmons, Director of Athletic Communication, announced his retirement after a 37-year career devoted to Screaming Eagles sports. Since joining the University in 1989, Simmons has seen USI add seven intercollegiate athletic programs, secure a spot in the Ohio Valley Conference and transition to NCAA Division I membership, all while at the helm of Athletic Communication. In recognition of his exceptional career and his commitment to college athletics, Simmons will begin his retirement by receiving the College Sports Communicators (CSC) Lifetime Achievement Award this June.



# The Wii-ning Edge

**USI WOMEN'S SOCCER** plays hard on and off the field. Together, they build trust and camaraderie by bringing a team mentality to potlucks, game nights and activities like calm painting sessions and competitive Wii Sports matches. Head Coach Eric Schoenstein attributes the team's successes to their closeness, their dedication to team building reflected in peer coaching and shared meals. These players give each other tremendous energy and support—not just on the field, but on the bench, the bus and everywhere in between.

"You're not just playing for yourself; you're playing for other people on the team."

Eva Boer '27



"Everybody around you cares and wants you to succeed."

Hailey Robinson '28



"We had the most fun this year and we had a 10-game unbeaten streak. Our season shows how close we are."

Payton Seymour '26



© Nintendo

# Celebrating 50 Years of Women's Basketball

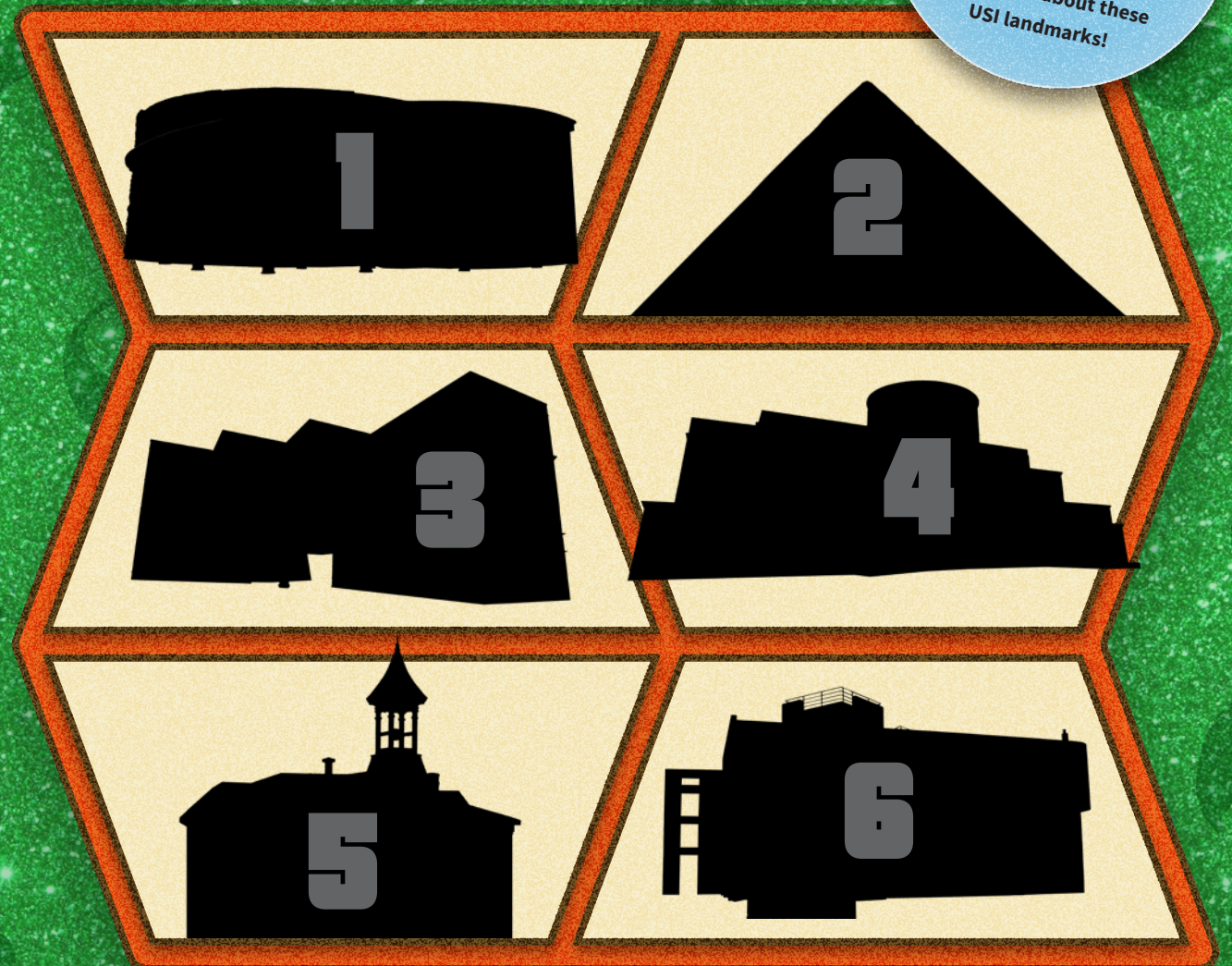
**THIS JANUARY**, USI Women's Basketball celebrated its 50th anniversary with a Homecoming game win and support from generations of Women's Basketball alumni in the stands. Former players gathered at Liberty

Arena, Home of the Screaming Eagles, to cheer on this season's team, marking the milestone for USI women's athletics with a reception after the victory.



# GUESS <sup>THAT</sup> USI BUILDING!

Can you identify the buildings based on their unique architectural features? Make your best guesses, then flip the page to check your answers and learn more about these USI landmarks!





1

## THE PERFORMANCE CENTER

Enclosing structural steel columns, **CanOlok vitrified clay pipes** from the Can Clay Corporation add history and style to the building's exterior. Suspended above the thrust stage, **35 Toyota Sienna dash panels** reflect sound during mainstage productions.



2

## THE CONE

Before its nickname became USI vernacular, the 97-foot-tall campus landmark was called **University Center Tower** prior to its completion in 2011.



3

## UNIVERSITY CENTER

Once the original campus library, University Center East boasts hidden gems like:

- **Artfully arranged chair legs** from the Jasper Chair Company
- The **Indiana limestone doorway** from the historic Orr Iron Company building
- The **bathtub** donated by the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity to commemorate ISUE's Temporary Union Building, also known as the TUB

4



## DAVID L. RICE LIBRARY

Designed by Kathryn Waters, Professor Emerita of Art, and John McNaughton, Professor Emeritus of Art, the relief on **Rice Library's facade** shows a student's view of the Liberal Arts Center from a library window.

5



## BOKELMAN #3 SCHOOL

Now nestled in the Bent Twig Outdoor Education Center, the historic single-room schoolhouse was **lifted and relocated to campus** by truck in 1993 as a cooperative effort with the Westwood Garden Club.

6



## THE ATHENEUM

Under USI's stewardship since 1985, Historic New Harmony in New Harmony, Indiana, welcomes guests at this **award-winning Visitors Center**. Its geometric architectural style adds a sleek contrast to the town's rustic roots.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

## Building Momentum

**EACH AND EVERY DAY**, USI works to build careers, partnerships and momentum. For over 60 years, we've been changing the game in regional higher education and growing to serve our community. Drive down University Boulevard and you'll see the physical proof. Renovations to the Byron C. Wright Administration Building and Health Professions Center are two of the most noticeable developments in USI's continued momentum. While these important construction projects may be the face of campus, they are not the heart of USI.

Our people—students, faculty, support staff, administrators, graduates, community partners, donors and families—drive our University's success. This institution has always been by the people, for the people. USI was founded by local business leaders who built public higher education opportunities from the ground up to support homegrown talent. This legacy is our blueprint for the future.

As a public University, we serve as an innovation engine for businesses throughout our region. External companies, large and small, can bring complex challenges to our campus and tap into the collective talent of our students, faculty and applied research resources. At USI, transformative and experiential learning are at the core of every classroom.

As President, it is my privilege to guide the University's momentum with resilient stewardship. Looking forward, the people of USI will keep making history by building community connections, intentional partnerships and professional pathways that reinforce our foundations. These enduring and emerging relationships show just how much impact USI can make when we build together.

**Steven J. Bridges '89 M'95**  
President

### INTENTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Trusted partnerships with Deaconess Health System, Amcor, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana, Old National Bank, AstraZeneca, Liberty Federal Credit Union and the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, to name a few, not only position USI for meaningful collaboration, but open doors for students' future careers.

### COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

USI earned its third consecutive Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, making this institution one of only 277 campuses nationwide that hold this designation.



### PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

USI graduates form a talent pipeline to strengthen and support Indiana's workforce. Education is a powerful tool to help our state grow, innovate and succeed.

**70**  
percent  
of USI  
alumni  
stay in  
state

# BUILDING THE PIPELINE

*Connecting Education and Industry*  
*By Addison E. Paul*

**NOT FAR FROM** the University of Southern Indiana campus, the AstraZeneca plant in Mount Vernon, Indiana, manufactures billions of lifechanging oral solid dose tablets for patients around the world. One of 28 international plants for the global biopharmaceutical company, this site supports economic growth for southwest Indiana.



As catalysts for regional development, the University and the company are both committed to shaping future leaders in biochemistry, engineering, management and more. Together, USI and AstraZeneca are building talent pipelines that carry students into new careers, fuel local industry and connect education to professional progress.

### DEVELOPING PURPOSEFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The trusted relationship between AstraZeneca and USI represents a broad scope of educational and professional outreach. From USI-led professional development training to AstraZeneca-sponsored experiential learning opportunities, this evolving connection reinforces the combined power of industry and higher education.

As a liaison for business relationships, Holly Sanders, Human Resources Business Director for AstraZeneca, sees clear advantages in partnering with USI. She seeks USI students and graduates because they demonstrate strong critical thinking skills, personal accountability and genuine curiosity about science, patients and impact.

"Over the years, the USI partnership with AstraZeneca has ensured a consistent pipeline of prepared, motivated candidates who are ready to contribute from day one," she said.

So, what does it take to develop the kind of trust that encourages a global company to work with the University time and time again?

According to Paula Nurrenbern M'20, Director of Corporate Partnerships and Career Success in USI's Outreach and Engagement office, it takes personal connections and purposeful partnerships.

"When you're working with any kind of corporate partnership, it's all about the relationship you build with the client," said Nurrenbern. "You have to be very intentional."

Partnering with nearly 100 entities annually, the Corporate Partnerships team facilitates relationships and programs to support USI's business connections, both within the region and across the nation. Nurrenbern connects businesses to over 50 USI training courses on subjects from interpersonal communication and project management to technical skills and computer software.

"What we do is customize the content to make sure we're addressing unique needs and helping people get the best professional development," she said. "They know they can trust us because we do it year after year."

Her team provides AstraZeneca with yearly training for new employees and broadens



From left: Holly Sanders, Keith Rawley '96 M'02, Alex (Goebel) Brauser '20 M'21, Logan Sullivan '20 and Raquel Denning '19 serve on the AstraZeneca Mount Vernon Scholarship Committee.

their access to educational development opportunities like master's degree programs and statistics courses.

"Expanding the partnership amplifies both talent development and community impact," said Sanders. "Together, we can co-create pathways that prepare students for high-value careers and ensure our teams have the skills needed to deliver for patients."

### SHAPING STEM STUDENTS

Student support is a cornerstone of many business relationships with USI, and in 2017, AstraZeneca approached the USI Foundation to start a scholarship program for students pursuing STEM fields. It's not just about monetary contributions, though; the scholarships offer a range of development through financial support, mentorship and career coaching.

"These scholarships are intended to see a student through their academic journey,"

said Taylor Gogel '13 M'19, USI Director of Development. "They support the same students throughout their education to ensure academic and professional growth as they plan career goals. Some of the previous recipients have gone on to be AstraZeneca employees."

Initially, AstraZeneca supported three students with these scholarships, but after hiring all three original recipients upon graduation, the company decided to expand the program to support four students annually.

Mount Vernon natives Alex (Goebel) Brauser '20 M'21, Lean Digital Data Analyst, and Raquel Denning '19, Asset Performance Management Senior Engineer, began their career journeys as USI students and two of the first AstraZeneca scholarship recipients. Pursuing degrees in mathematics as well as accounting and professional services, Brauser hadn't always imagined herself working in the pharmaceutical industry, but that changed after she learned more about AstraZeneca.

"The scholarship program sparked my interest in the pharmaceutical industry, and the following summer, I pursued an internship," she said. "Once I arrived on site, I saw the direct impact the work had on patients, which ultimately motivated me to build a career there."

Now, both USI graduates are working for the company full time and continually strengthening AstraZeneca's partnership with the University as members of the AstraZeneca Mount Vernon Scholarship Committee.

"It's one of the things I'm most proud of," said Denning. "It's been an amazing community effort to invest in the future."

The scholarship program doesn't just provide the means to an end; it provides a whole network

of potential. Applied learning experiences reinforce classroom knowledge, creating a pipeline that helps prepare students for the workforce.

"Having the unique perspective of both a former scholarship recipient and a current committee member is meaningful," said Brauser. "I'm excited to continue building and expanding this partnership for future students."

### BUILDING BUSINESS CONNECTIONS

While student support is often a key goal of USI's business partnerships, the University also serves as a reliable resource for regional industry. Within the past five years, the Corporate Partnerships and Career Success team has helped connect over 1,000 students

to internships at almost 570 businesses in the Tri-state. USI continually boosts the local workforce by preparing graduates to excel in their future careers.

As a company regularly represented at USI Career Fairs, AstraZeneca is one of the regional businesses looking to USI for prospective talent. The company's nationwide internship program helps students gain invaluable professional experience in a range of fields like pre-pharmacy and biochemistry, mechanical and industrial engineering, finance and business administration, and computer and data science.

As a scholarship recipient and former Reliability and Packing intern, Denning was able to apply the knowledge from her USI mechanical engineering degree to real challenges at AstraZeneca's manufacturing site. Her internship helped her develop a practical understanding of the company's mechanical engineering needs, which set her up for a full-time position and career success.



Alex (Goebel) Brauser '20 M'21 and Keith Rawley '96 M'02



## From Southern

Just two years after graduating from the University of Southern Indiana's Romain College of Business, Libby Fifer '24 is building an international career nearly 4,000 miles from home.

In February, Fifer relocated to Stockholm, Sweden, to begin an eight-month assignment with AstraZeneca as Associate Regional Circularity Lead for the SweOps Region. In this role,

## Indiana to Sweden

she is rotating through multiple sites while supporting sustainability initiatives across Sweden, Europe, the Middle East and Africa, gaining firsthand experience in global operations.

And her journey began with a local internship. While still a USI student, she spent more than two years as a Learning and Development Intern with AstraZeneca. That experience led to a full-time role as an Operations Global Graduate Associate, where she served as a Lead Digital Project Manager, followed by a position in Global Inventory Management in Wilmington, Delaware, the company's North American Commercial Headquarters.

"Being an intern gave me a meaningful head start," said Fifer. "It allowed me to demonstrate my capabilities and understand how AstraZeneca operates."

Now settling into life in Sweden, she credits the Romain College of Business for preparing her to lead and adapt, not just as a student seeking early career opportunities, but as a global professional at AstraZeneca.

"That foundation keeps paying off," said Fifer. "My responsibilities and impact continue to expand."

—Hendrix Magley

"I feel fortunate to be a part of AstraZeneca through USI," she said. "I'm grateful to be able to stay local and still be part of a global biopharmaceutical company."

## These programs were born from a desire to give back to the community while also helping build a strong local talent pipeline.

—Keith Rawley '96 M'02

Over the last five years, 14 USI students completed 20 internships at AstraZeneca, and several students stayed with the company for multiple semesters. Early career experiences like these not only lay the professional groundwork for individual students, they also build a stronger foundation for community impact.

"These programs were born from a desire to give back to the community while also helping build a strong local talent pipeline," said Keith Rawley '96 M'02, Senior Director of Digital Lighthouse and Operational Excellence for AstraZeneca. "As a proud alum of USI myself, I am thrilled to see this partnership grow."

### STRENGTHENING RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS

Whether it's professional development or student support, there's one thing that defines all of USI and AstraZeneca's partnerships: they're reciprocal. Mentoring future STEM leaders not only supports USI's academic mission; it also gives the company a direct connection when hiring skilled graduates from these programs.

With over 140 USI alumni currently working within the AstraZeneca network, the proof is in the professional pipeline. Logan Sullivan '20, Senior Continued Process Verification Analyst, recognized USI's natural relationship with AstraZeneca when he started at the company after graduating with his mathematics degree. After nearly six years with AstraZeneca, he's invested in helping that partnership evolve.

"The relationship is already good, but there's effort on both sides to advance it even further," said Sullivan. "We'll continue to push the boundaries of that partnership in positive ways."

Branching into outreach events like AstraZeneca Day at USI and sponsoring community STEM activities—like the *FIRST* LEGO League Qualifying Tournament and the Tri-State Science and Engineering Fair—AstraZeneca continues to shape STEM opportunities at USI. And as the company explores initiatives like externships and collaborative problem-solving experiences, the future of this connection is full of potential.

"Both institutions share a global mindset and a strong commitment to making a positive difference in the community we call home," said Rawley. "With these shared values and principles, I am confident our partnership will continue to thrive."

Business partnerships are about more than a single interaction or opportunity. Through constant collaboration and exploration, USI builds lasting relationships that enhance educational experiences, support local industry and shape the future of the regional workforce. The University continues connecting education and industry, and whether established or emerging, USI is always adding partnerships to the pipeline. ▼

USI alumni employed at AstraZeneca





## Sparking Innovation

**BEFORE STARRING IN** the "Progress Happens Here" commercial, Bennett Schirmer '27, center, started building a 3-D printed prosthetic hand to apply knowledge from his mechanical engineering major to a real project. Now, Schirmer and the prosthetic represent USI's adaptability and resilience, both on screen and behind the scenes.

"The engineering program here is incredible," said Schirmer. "I hope sharing projects like this gets future USI students interested in engineering."

But progress doesn't happen without challenges. Schirmer's project was still in its early stages during the shoot and needed further development to integrate with the galvanic skin response (GSR) sensor used as a prop in the commercial. Rather than fake it all for the camera, Schirmer researched how to write code for manual movement cues.

While the commercial crew converted a Business and Engineering Center lounge into a simulated robotics lab, Schirmer reprogrammed the prosthetic for the perfect shot. Even after the final cut, Schirmer continues applying his education and researching prosthetic control through algorithms that read brainwave activity.

"My experience at USI has helped transform me," said Schirmer. "I started as an interested student, but now I'm a problem solver, passionate about the real-world applications of engineering."



# LAUNCHING FUTURE CAREERS

## USI and Amcor Pilot Project Boosts Industry Experience

By Addison E. Paul



**EARLIER THIS YEAR**, the University of Southern Indiana launched a collaboration that gave students practical career experience and brought fresh perspectives to a regional business powerhouse. Partnering with Amcor, a global leader in developing and producing responsible packaging solutions, USI debuted a pilot program that merged new ideas with industry expertise.

"At Amcor, we are continuously seeking fresh thinking to develop the best packaging innovations for our customers and consumers," said Bill Norman, Amcor Rigid Packaging Solutions North America President. "This partnership allows us to do that while also supporting the workforce of tomorrow in the greater Evansville area."

In this semester-long project, a team of multidisciplinary USI students and faculty worked with Amcor experts to research, develop and test concepts for an

### The Challenge

Work together to build a business case, value proposition matrix and proof of concept for a new packaging design.

innovative packaging design. Six students representing all four USI colleges and the School of Graduate Studies gained invaluable experience with interdisciplinary collaboration in an industry environment.

"Collaborating with students from different disciplines pushes me to think beyond my major, and working on this project has strengthened my understanding of how design functions in a real-world manufacturing environment," said Ethan Reheman '27, a student team

designer. "I'm more prepared to enter the workforce with industry experience already on my resume."

With over 400 locations across more than 40 countries, Amcor has been building on its international presence in Evansville since the company completed its combination with Berry Global Group in 2025.

Students made regular trips to Amcor throughout the project, gaining a deeper understanding of how the company functions in a corporate setting. But this pilot isn't just about letting students peek behind the industrial curtain; it's an immersive project encouraging them to take ownership in the creative strategy and development of a product with the potential for international distribution.

"Working alongside peers and Amcor professionals provides unique firsthand experience," said Mason Eickhoff '26, a student team engineer. "It helps me view challenges from different perspectives and exposes me to new ways of solving problems."

### The Team

Jadison Robinson D'28, *occupational therapy*

Ella Rich '27, *marketing*

Mason Eickhoff '26, *manufacturing engineering technology*

Elizabeth Ketcham '27, *mechanical engineering*

Ethan Reheman '27, *studio art and design*

Lauryn Anderson '27, *marketing*

William Le '26, *graphic design*



Working alongside USI's Center for Applied Research (CAR) and a panel of professional mentors from Amcor, these pioneering students engaged in one of the University's foremost experiential education projects. Culminating in a final case presentation and feedback from Amcor mentors, this program pushed students to integrate their academic knowledge with typical business processes and packaging industry regulations.

**"I'm more prepared to enter the workforce with industry experience already on my resume."**

Ethan  
Reheman  
'27



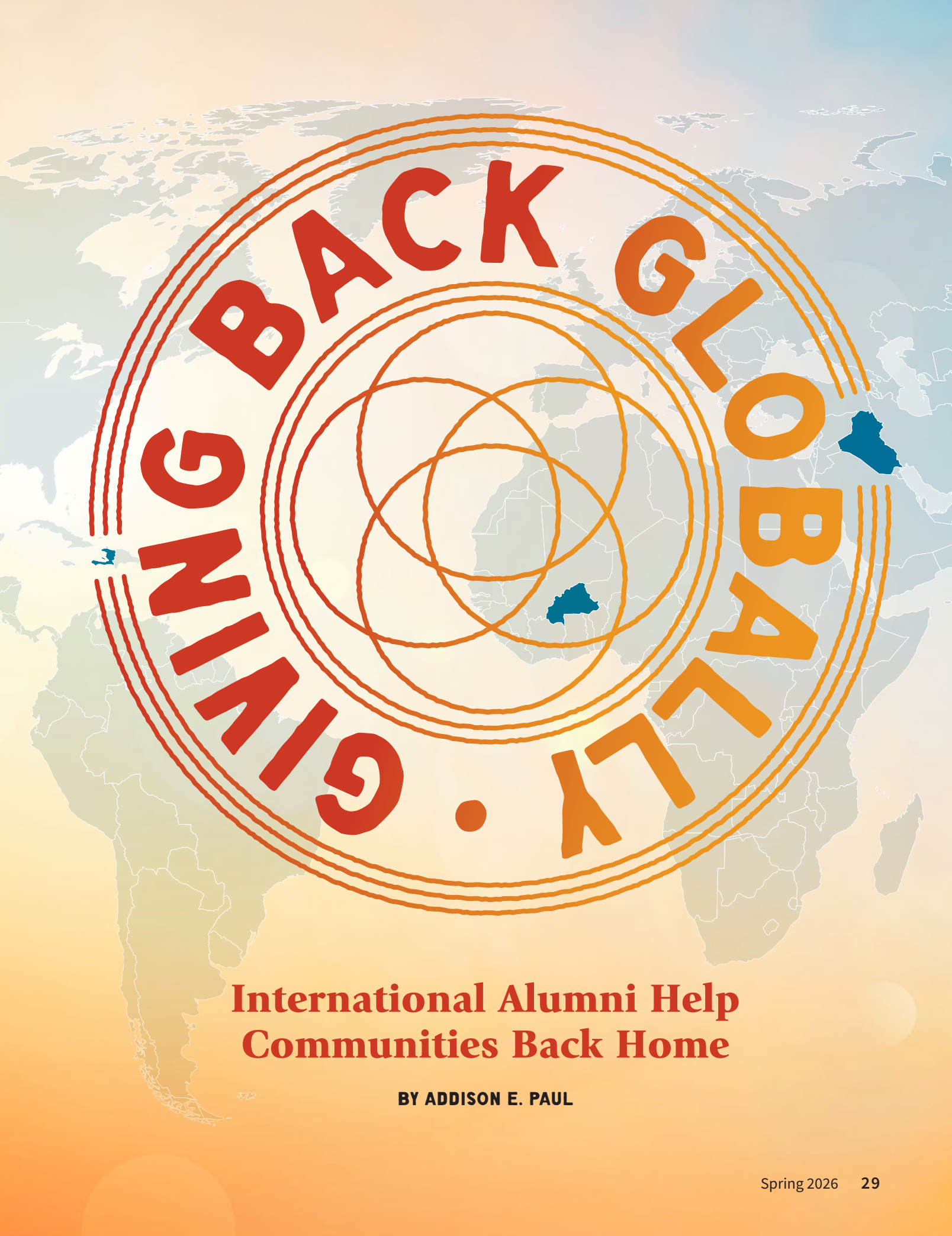
"The Amcor professionals bring a level of expertise to our group, teaching us what it looks like to solve realistic problems in their market," said Lauryn Anderson '27, a student team marketer. "USI has done a great job preparing me for the workforce, and this pilot program is the best hands-on experience."



### Industry Integrations

- Mechanical Engineering and Manufacturing Technology**  
*Functionality, 3-D modeling, building prototypes*
- Occupational Therapy**  
*Accessibility, understanding mobility limitations, product testing*
- Marketing and Economics**  
*Market research, refining consumer needs, business plan insights*
- Art and Design**  
*Aesthetics, industrial design sketching, product renderings*

Visit [USI.edu/illum](https://www.usi.edu/illum) for more exclusive content!



## International Alumni Help Communities Back Home

BY ADDISON E. PAUL

## WITH OVER 1,400

international alumni representing more than 130 countries, the University of Southern Indiana has transformed the lives of people across the globe—and inspired its graduates to do the same. Three trailblazing international alumni are using their USI experiences to spark change and build community resilience in their home countries.



## MESCHAC GERVAIS × HAITI

### Service Learner to Servant Leader

Giving back has always been a core value for Meschac Gervais M'15. Growing up in the Caribbean nation of Haiti, his family didn't have much, but his parents worked hard to give their children opportunities. That dedication to helping others became a tenet in his schooling, and Gervais first came to USI through the U.S. Department of State's Global Undergraduate Exchange Program, a scholarship combining nondegree study, community service, leadership development and cultural enrichment.

Gervais then chose USI to pursue his master's in public administration, earning a graduate assistantship where he led the development of the University's International Student Outreach Program. Inspired by the power of service and building community, he reached out to local nonprofits and recruited other international students to volunteer. Together, they gave back to the Evansville community by building houses with Habitat for Humanity, working with children at Patchwork Central, organizing activities with the Glenwood Neighborhood Association and much more.

"USI was the perfect environment," said Gervais. "The program gave international students service-



learning opportunities, but it was also a chance for the Evansville community to meet people from other cultures."

The practical experience Gervais gained at USI motivated him

to integrate service and applied education back home. He founded Haiti Enpak, a nonprofit focused on experiential learning and global leadership. Haiti Enpak engages youth with real-world projects to benefit their communities, teaching them to give back while applying problem-solving and leadership skills to find achievable solutions for local needs.

Though rising violence and sociopolitical unrest forced him to pause the program for student safety, he still has hope for the future of Haiti Enpak and his home country.

"I never give up on Haiti," said Gervais. "Someday, when it's a safer environment, I feel that there's still an opportunity. You have to decide what to live your life by, keep that at the center and try to make the world a better place."

## KOUNTIALA SOMÉ × BURKINA FASO

### Big Dreams, Bigger Impacts

For Kountiala Somé M'18, education is everything. In his village in Burkina Faso, Africa, Somé had to walk six kilometers if he wanted to attend school, and most children didn't advance past the early grades. He studied to overcome low exam pass rates, worked on plantations to earn his school fees and cultivated dreams of breaking educational barriers in his community.



Institute (BCI), a bilingual French and English school in Burkina Faso, specializing in economic sciences and business management. Combining the immersive and experiential learning styles reinforced at

BCI and USI, he founded the Dream Center for Young Leaders, an institute in Burkina Faso designed to prepare new graduates for integration into the job market. The Center helps students build leadership skills through a people-focused approach to learning, professional development and community engagement.

"We are an interconnected ecosystem," he said.

"When you benefit from support, you also want to become that support. If you make a commitment to doing good, good will always come your way."

From building facilities and mobilizing resources to teaching students and coaching professionals, Somé continues to share his dream of education and his drive for success with the future of his community.

Now a Doctor of Education in Teaching and Learning, Somé is living proof that big dreams lead to bigger impacts. He built a distinguished career in teaching, tutoring, translating and designing language learning curriculums, all throughout the pursuit of his four higher education degrees. But his dreams didn't stop there.

"My philosophy of teaching is experiencing," he said. "While getting my master's at USI, I started thinking about creating my own center to help students from my community build skills for internships and employment."

After earning his master's in second language acquisition, policy and culture at USI, Somé went on to teach at the Building Capacity

## SHAN SHERWAN HUSSEIN × IRAQ

### The Value of Empowerment

Shan Sherwan Hussein '14 M'15, dedicates herself to humanitarian work because she's seen its value firsthand. Born into conflict in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, she received life-saving humanitarian aid to combat malnutrition and provide access to schooling.



الله أكبر

From an early age, Hussein understood the necessity of education to change her life, and in turn, help change the lives of others. Now, as a research fellow pursuing a Master of Public Administration at Harvard Kennedy School, she works toward those goals every day. A bachelor's degree in economics and a master's in business administration from USI helped nurture her professional mission to protect and empower women, an ideology that's still limited within her home community.

"My time at USI was profoundly transformative," said Hussein. "It gave me a safe space to find myself and my calling to serve people."

In addition to working with survivors of gender-based violence around the world, Hussein used the business acumen from her USI education to push boundaries back home. She founded

Educate to Empower, a program providing lessons and workshops to help hundreds of Kurdish women build negotiation skills and improve their economic opportunities. From vocational experience to communication

tactics, Educate to Empower teaches women how to make conscious and strategic decisions for upward mobility.

Before starting her initiative, Hussein's USI professors instilled the concept that everything is a tradeoff, and she lives by that guidance every day. Practically all of her time outside of academic and fellowship responsibilities revolves around Educate to Empower, because for Hussein, helping empower women in her community is more valuable than anything else.

"Everything I've done in my life, I've done terrified," she said. "You have to celebrate the tiniest wins. It's not easy to help people transform their lives, but I've helped at least one person, and that makes a change." ▼

# BEHIND THE SCENE

**THERE'S SOMETHING MAGICAL** about the ring of the Vanderburgh County Old Courthouse bell. Whether it signals the start of your morning commute or reminds you to pause for lunch downtown, its familiar sound is a distinct and timeless echo of Evansville.

But after roughly four decades of use, the drop hammer that strikes the bell broke off its base in May 2025, leaving the Old Courthouse temporarily silent. Soon after, staff at the Old Courthouse reached out to the USI Center for Applied Research (CAR) with one question: could they help bring the bell back to life? Their answer? No doubt.

The original manufacturers provided a replacement striker; however, the new striker didn't quite match the bell's dimensions. That's where USI students stepped in, adapting the striker and restoring the bell's iconic ring.

—Kaylee (Johnson) Sima '20 M'22

1

The original 100-pound striker stopped working after approximately 7 million strikes. In 1985, it was rebuilt by William Leth, former lab technician in the USI Art Department, and Keith Benedict '87, mechanical engineering, M'99 industrial management, who later served as an instructor in mechanical engineering technology at USI. The University presented the renovated striker to the City of Evansville on December 24, 1985, and a plaque honoring their work is mounted on the bell's wooden base.



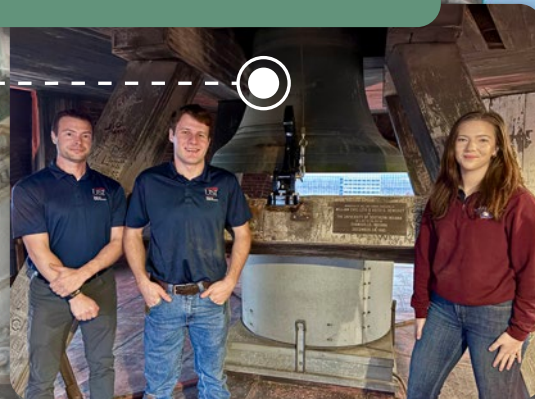
2

Starting in 2024, CAR provided ongoing maintenance to preserve the bell's functionality and extend its lifespan. This included rotating the bell to reduce wear and rebuilding the striker's shelf. CAR worked with local alumnus, Andrew Craney '22, owner of Wood Slab King in Evansville, to source a slab of red oak for the project.



3

USI students Mason Eickhoff '26 (center), manufacturing engineering technology; Evalynn Voyles '28 (right), manufacturing engineering technology; Reinard Stanislaus '28, mechanical engineering; and Ethan Payne '28, mechanical engineering, helped develop, test and install the adapted striker. Under the guidance of Steven Stump '99 M'09 (left), Director of the Center for Applied Research, the team spent a collective 40 hours on the project.



4



The strike of the bell is controlled in the "clock room," one story above the bell chamber. The striker is cocked into position by a drive pole, and from there, the bell chimes over the city of Evansville every half hour.

5

The first bell strike after months of quiet happened at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, November 25, 2025, nearly 40 years after USI presented the first renovated striker. The bell rang on its first try with no issues.





# BREAKING GROUND

USI ALUM MANAGES WRIGHT RENOVATION

By Addison E. Paul



**BUILT IN 1969**, the Byron C. Wright Administration Building is the University of Southern Indiana's oldest facility. After 57 years, five presidents, gaining institutional independence and seeing thousands of students pass through the three lecture halls, it's finally time to give Wright Admin a refresh.

Now, alumnus Nate Pullum '18 is back on campus coordinating construction for the updated facility. Pullum applies skills from his USI business administration degree in his role as a Project Manager and Estimator for Empire Construction, currently responsible for the Wright Administration and Health Professions Center renovations.

"I work with the USI team, our Empire team, architects, engineers and subcontractors to set up the project for success," said Pullum.

On the job, he employs management skills to keep construction running, anticipate equipment needs, track progress and build bridges between project administrators and construction

crews. His goal: stay ahead of the perpetual motion. Countless moving parts and changing conditions mean that Pullum is always adapting the plan, updating schematics and closing scope gaps to help crews on the ground.

"I check in with superintendents and try to catch potential issues before they occur," said Pullum. "But our crews in the field truly work the magic that leads to great buildings on USI's campus."

Projected for completion in late 2027, the renovation promises a revitalized two-story addition in place of the building's demolished north-portion, along with considerable renovations for the two-story south portion. This project also encompasses improvements in mechanical, electric, plumbing, HVAC and technology infrastructure, bringing Wright Administration up to speed with USI's growing campus.

"As an alum, it's cool to be on these projects," said Pullum. "I take pride in saying I'm on the team helping build USI's future."

With plans for crews to salvage some of Wright Administration's original bricks to repurpose, this renovation is just one more intersection where USI legacy meets the drive for progress. ▼



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our own  
history.*



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UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN  
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# LIGHTING a MATCH

USI MENTOR MATCH  
BUILDS CONFIDENCE  
AND CONNECTION



By Breanna Wyman

**AFTER TWO YEARS** as an information systems major at the University of Southern Indiana, Tanner Hux '27 knew he needed a change. A self-described "people person," Hux recognized that his career plans weren't the best fit for his talents, but like many college students reevaluating their futures, he wanted extra support to begin his new path.



Tanner Hux '27 and Laura Gobert '24

This past year, Hux made the switch to marketing and enrolled in USI's newly revitalized Mentor Match program to kickstart his experience. Housed within Alumni Engagement and Volunteer USI, the program gives students the foundation to build meaningful industry connections.

"I like developing relationships with people," said Hux. "When my professor reached out about the program, I figured it might give me the best option for leverage in this field."

With the world becoming increasingly more virtual, many college students may not instinctively seek a live person for career advice. However, having a mentor who's been through the same situation can help students build self-awareness, relationships and confidence they can carry into their careers.

"I have been promoting this program for years in my classes," said Dr. Nicolas Jankuhn, Assistant Professor of Marketing. "It is an invaluable but underused resource for our students."

Mentor Match works in collaboration with the Career Success Center to prepare students like Hux for life after college. The Center utilizes a software called Symplicity for its Career

Launch program, which enables students to search for jobs and internships. Symplicity has a mentoring platform that supports the Mentor Match program, and the new matching system went live in fall 2025.

With helpful resources and scheduling flexibility, the program is designed to fit any combination of student needs. Mentors can serve as a one-time resource for topics like exploring majors, resume reviews and interview questions, or provide long-term career advice.

Both mentors and mentees sign up via the Mentor Match website. From there, students take the lead, scanning the database of registered USI alumni, employees and community members in their field of interest. Once students choose their mentor, they initiate the contact process online, forming career connections at the click of a button.

For Hux, finding a match was only the beginning. Embracing his personability, Hux intends to pursue a career as an account executive in sales and wanted to connect with someone knowledgeable about people and businesses in the community. The program helped him find recent alumna Laura Gobert '24, whose public relations and advertising degree informs her work as the Events and Experiences Coordinator for the Downtown Evansville Improvement District (DEID).

The two initially met on campus and realized that though Gobert's role involves more community engagement, her experiences with social media and public relations helped Hux better understand the variety of options in his field. Gobert even broadened Hux's professional network, introducing him to Tommy Kautzman '24, an Inside Sales Representative at Heritage Petroleum, LLC. In addition to Gobert, Hux now corresponds with Kautzman, discussing sales tactics and career options that maximize his talents.

"I signed up to mentor because I wanted to give back and be a part of someone's success," said Gobert. "Seeing it all come together is very rewarding."

A strong professional connection goes both ways, so when Gobert needed volunteers for the DEID event Dog Day



**I SIGNED UP TO MENTOR BECAUSE I WANTED TO GIVE BACK AND BE A PART OF SOMEONE'S SUCCESS.**

**—LAURA GOBERT '24**

Downtown, she knew who to call. A member of the Kappa Alpha fraternity, Hux quickly mobilized his fraternity brothers to assist with activities, guest safety and distributing treats to visiting pups, which they plan to continue at future events.

"Community service is a big aspect of our fraternity, so helping at these events not only benefits me, but also my fraternity brothers," said Hux.

As a recent graduate, Gobert understands the daunting process of career development firsthand, and her motivation to mentor reflects her own student experiences.

While at USI, Gobert played an active role on campus and secured several internships, one leading to a full-time position when she graduated. She appreciates the impact of making professional connections as a student, along with the doors those connections can open.

"I wish this robust of a program existed when I was a student," said Gobert. "I would really have benefited from it."

Hux and Gobert's partnership is just one story of how Mentor Match is shaping this region's next generation of professionals. Since revamping the program in August 2025, more than 40 alumni have joined Mentor Match, forming a network to help future USI graduates build career confidence.

"I really enjoy the relaxed setup of the Mentor Match program," said Hux. "Meeting with Laura has already given me a lot of opportunities to grow personally and professionally."

Both Hux and Gobert follow up frequently, showing how USI brings community engagement and a culture of care to the forefront of student guidance. ▼

**Mentor Match is open to all current USI students. Alumni, employees and community members are invited to join the program as mentors.**

**Sign up at [USI.edu/alumni/mentor-match](https://www.usi.edu/alumni/mentor-match)**



## STAY IN TOUCH

Update us on your life events and send photos to [alumni@usi.edu](mailto:alumni@usi.edu) or by using the QR code.



Class notes may be edited for length or clarity. We regret that we may not be able to use all submitted photos and reserve the right to select which ones are included.

### 1990s

**1 Shelly (Boyd) Webb '90**, marketing, is Co-Owner of Hymn & Herd Winery in Rockport, Indiana.

**Colleen (Hudson) Kuda '91**, nursing, is Owner, President and a Registered Nurse at Advantage Private Nursing Services, Inc. in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

**Tess (Libbert) Fleming '93**, business administration, is a Digital Client Partner at IQVIA in Evansville.

**2 Scott Wilhelmus '94**, physical education, is Owner of Tri-State Hearing Healthcare, Red Rooster Stitchery and TrailHeadz Mountain Bike Racing in Evansville and Newburgh, Indiana.

**Christina (Hannum) Carpenter '96**, general science, is a Special Education Teacher Specialist at Harford County Public Schools in Bel Air, Maryland.

**John Butcher '99**, history, is Warehouse Manager at Peabody Francisco Mine in Francisco, Indiana.

### 2000s

**Nathan Baker '00**, business administration, is Vice President of Franchise Commercial Operations at Jackson Hewitt Tax Services in Sarasota, Florida.

**Matthew Lemming '00**, psychology, is Chief of Staff at Hogan Assessments in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**Jennifer Thompson '00 M'03**, psychology, social work, is a School Social Worker at Noblesville High School in Noblesville, Indiana.

**Melissa (Maddox) Hill '01**, elementary education, is Human Resources Training and Development Manager at Midwestern Pet Foods in Evansville.

**Dustin Hetrick '04**, philosophy, is Director of Reporting and Analytics at Elevance Health in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Hillerie (Welch) Kandul-Hughes '04**, public relations and advertising, is Director of Marketing and Communications at Northwestern Mutual/RCA Wealth Management in Evansville.

**Jaime Dilger '06**, business, is Talent Acquisition Program Manager at Kimball International in Jasper, Indiana.

**Sarah (Lubbers) Jankowski M'06**, occupational therapy, is a Psychotherapist at Associated Mental Health Consultants in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. She earned the Aurora Healthcare Star Award for helping save a life.

**Dynisha (Jones) Knight '07**, early childhood education, is Director at

New Generation Child Care Ministry in Elkhart, Indiana.

**Travis Tornatore '07**, journalism and computer publishing, is Marketing Manager at Diamond Valley Federal Credit Union in Evansville.

**Jamie (Renaker) Temple '08**, elementary education, teaches fifth grade at Brownstown Elementary School in Brownstown, Indiana.

**Nick Ficklin '09**, accounting and professional services, is Healthcare Director at Blue & Co., LLC in Louisville, Kentucky.

**Jessica Hudson '09**, nursing BSN, is Department Manager at Deaconess Henderson Hospital in Henderson, Kentucky.

### 2010s

**Aaron Walker '11**, art, is Operations Manager at Owensboro Museum of Fine Art in Owensboro, Kentucky.

**Ashley Chenevert '12**, computer information systems, is a Programmer at Gibbs Die Casting in Henderson, Kentucky.

**Jonathan Cusic '12**, mathematics teaching, is Superintendent at Eldorado Community Unit School District #4 in Eldorado, Illinois.

**Matthew Lindsey '12 M'18**, business administration, is Assistant General Manager at Vincennes Water Utilities in Vincennes, Indiana.

**Caylin Blockley '13 M'16**, public relations and advertising, communication, earned a PhD in Higher Education Administration and Leadership, and is a Professor of Communication Studies at Collin College and University of Texas in Dallas, Texas.

**Matthew Whitacre '13**, political science, was promoted to Major in the United States Army Reserve.

**William Harper-Hooper IV '14**, early childhood education, is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Montevallo in Birmingham, Alabama.

**Jared Hillenbrand '14**, accounting, is Investment Manager at CareSource in Dayton, Ohio.

**Justin Rutledge '14 M'24**, criminal justice, business administration, is Chief of Police at Mount Vernon Police Department in Mount Vernon, Indiana.

**Mike Schneider '14**, sociology, is Motor Patrol Deputy at Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office in Evansville.

**Landen Weidenbenner '16**, communication studies, is Senior Customer Experience Specialist at Kimball International in Jasper, Indiana.

**Evan Eagleson '17**, political science, is Regional Advocacy Director at ExcelinEd in Tallahassee, Florida.

**Nick Coudret '18 M'21**, kinesiology, exercise science, occupational therapy, is Program Manager in the gastrointestinal lab at BJC Health in Florissant, Missouri.

**Lacey Lee '18 M'21**, marketing, project management, is Senior Data Analyst at Gundir in Pleasanton, California.

**3 Katelyn Earl '19 M'24**, radiologic and imaging sciences, health administration leadership, is Senior Imaging Research and Development Engineer for anatomy and physiology modeling at Edwards Lifesciences in Irvine, California.

**Christian Ross-Gonzalez '19**, history, was promoted to Captain in the United States Army Reserve in October 2024.

**Abby Scully '19**, health administration, is Activities Director for Grand Brook Memory Care in Fishers, Indiana.

**Sabrina Sturgeon '19**, communication studies, is an AI Adoption and Innovation Specialist at the Council of Independent Colleges in Washington, D.C.

**Mason Ward '19**, art, is Marketing Coordinator at South Western Communications in Newburgh, Indiana.

### 2020s

**Emily Eckstein '20**, computer science, is Senior ServiceNow Helpdesk Technician at Hubert in Harrison, Ohio.

**Jennifer Leonhardt '20**, biology, is Associate Dentist at Maryville Family Dentistry in Louisville, Kentucky.

**Sydney (James) Fischer '21**, elementary education, is a Teacher at Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation in Evansville.

**Mindy Roeder M'21**, healthcare administration, is Vice President of Specialty/Surgical Services and Business Development at Schneck Medical Center in Seymour, Indiana.

**Erica Rozenboom '21**, nursing BSN, was promoted to First Lieutenant in the United States Army Reserve in June 2025.

**Emily Pelekai-Librea '22**, criminal justice, is Store Manager at Pets Plus in San Antonio, Texas.

**Riley (Hollinger) Trauger '22**, biology, is a Biology Teacher at Central High School in Evansville.

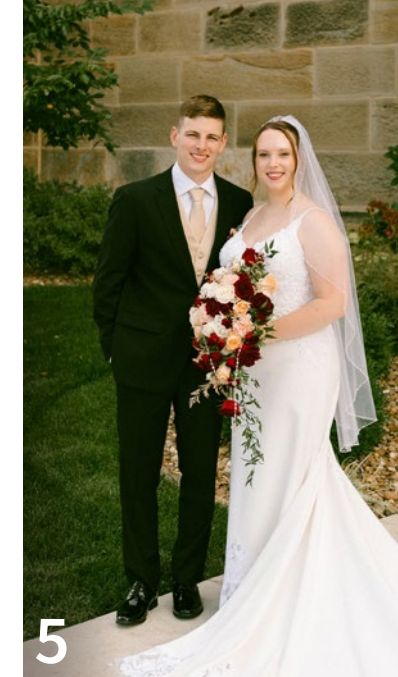
**Matthew Will '22**, sport management, is Director of Communications and Baseball Operations at Evansville Otters Baseball in Evansville.

**Molly Donoho '23**, social work, is an Academic Advisor at the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville.

**Savannah Mathews '23**, political science, is Development Coordinator at United Way of Southwestern Indiana in Evansville.

**Zach Broyles '24**, history, is Library Associate for Access Services at the University of Evansville in Evansville.

**Peyton Hopkins '24**, computer science, is a Software Engineer at United Leasing & Finance in Evansville.



**Audrey (Graber) Kessler '24**, finance, economics, is Senior Analyst at Sabic in Mount Vernon, Indiana.

**Scott Ruesch '25**, computer information systems, cybersecurity, is a Cybersecurity Engineer at Metronet in Evansville.

### Marriages

**Carrie (Allison) Hendryx '12**, elementary education, and Brad Hendryx were married October 2025 in Indiana.

**Sydney (James) Fischer '21**, elementary education, and Nathan Fischer were married September 2025 in Indiana.

**4 Gabrielle Emberton '22 M'24**, special education, curriculum and instruction, and **Joshua Cook '24** were married May 2025.

**5 Adrienne (Betz) Eckstein '23**, marketing, and Cameron Eckstein were married September 2025 in Indiana.

### Births

**Nicole (French) Hearn '07**, occupational therapy assistant, and **Quinton Hearn '10**, political science, welcomed Kaidence Hearn in July 2025.

**Andrew McGuire '08**, accounting and professional services, and **Abigail McGuire** welcomed Maxwell McGuire in February 2026.

**Jamie (Renaker) Temple '08**, elementary education, welcomed Hayes Temple in January 2025.

## Retiring

### COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

**Thomas Bordelon**, Professor of Social Work • 24 years

### KINNEY COLLEGE OF NURSING AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

**Ethel Elkins**, Associate Professor of Health Services • 17.5 years

**Pamela Thomas**, Clinical Assistant Professor of Nursing • 14 years

### POTT COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, AND EDUCATION

**George Ann Griffin**, Senior Instructor in Mathematics • 38 years

**Jean Moore**, Teacher Education Assessment Manager and Advanced Instructor in Education • 26 years

### ROMAIN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

**James Powers**, Computer Applications Training Coordinator • 24 years

### ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

**Scott Crane**, Custodial Worker • 15 years

**Joseph Gratz**, Assistant Director of Intramurals • 25 years

**Tamara Hall**, Senior Administrative Assistant for Graduate Nursing • 12 years

**Pamela Hopson**, Executive Director of Campus and Community Strategy • 47 years

**Gigie Hyneman**, Service Desk Analyst • 34 years

**Kathleen Oeth**, Circulation and Testing Center Management • 15.5 years





4



7



8



6

**7** Laura (Zaletel) Strain '17, health services, welcomed Josie Strain in October 2025.

**8** Brianna Taylor '19, psychology, welcomed Dante Russell in September 2025.

Marilyn (Adkins) Higdon '20 M'22, health services, business administration, welcomed Alexandra Higdon in August 2025.

Grace (Meece) Greulich '24, criminal justice, psychology, welcomed Tatum Greulich in January 2026.

## In Memoriam

Pamela Martin '71, elementary education, of Evansville, died January 12, 2026. Part of the first graduating class of Indiana State University-Evansville, she began her career as a teacher and eventual Director of Zion Lippe Nursery Center. Following her time working in education, Pam was a realtor for many years before retiring. She loved to travel, was a Master Gardener, a member of book clubs, volunteered with Posey County 4-H and was a member of the Women's Council of Realtors.

Kendrick "Ken" Yates '71, elementary education, of Evansville, died April 1, 2026. Proudly serving his country, he was a Sergeant in the U.S. Army. Part of USI's first graduating class, Ken dedicated his life to education. Beginning his career as a teacher, he later became

Assistant Principal at multiple schools before retiring as Principal of Elberfeld Elementary.

Janet Spahn '72, elementary education, of Evansville, died November 11, 2025. Janet was a devoted teacher in Diocese of Evansville Catholic Schools and at North Elementary in Poseyville. She was a member of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society, the National Educator Association and the Indiana State Teacher's Association.

Judy Compton '73, elementary education, of Evansville, died October 4, 2025. Though her career started in teaching, she found her true calling as a funeral preplanner at Alexander Funeral Home, where she spent 17 years. Judy was a talented artist whose creations were popular at local craft shows. Judy enjoyed music, dancing, nature, taking walks, movies and cooking. She loved family vacations at Hilton Head Island where many treasured memories were made.

Daniel Fink '73, biology, of Evansville, died December 11, 2025. A lifelong learner, he founded Dentasafe Dentistry, where he dedicated his career to providing exceptional care for patients and extended his generosity through charitable dental work. Beyond dentistry, Daniel also established Applewood Quarterhorse Ranch and pursued an interest in woodworking and crafting model ships. His greatest passion was his family.

Andrea Goin '73, history, of Evansville, died November 28, 2025.

She served as Director of Henderson County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for 20 years after spending 25 years working in social services. She was a member of Old North United Methodist Church and volunteered with Chemo Buddies. Andrea loved reading mysteries, traveling, listening to music and animals. Andrea was devoted to her family and was a wonderful cook.

Gary Isbell '73, art, of Evansville, died February 26, 2026. With a career as a talented graphic designer and photographer, he found his happiest moments in creating digital artworks and playing music. A self-taught guitarist, Gary was a bass specialist, playing in multiple bands. Gary was a creative cook and enjoyed taking walks with his golden retrievers.

Carolyn Waller '73, elementary education, of Evansville, died February 26, 2026. She began her career with EVSC and worked at Glenwood School and Tekoppel Elementary, where she dedicated over 35 years. Carolyn was a longtime member of First Baptist Church, where she helped in the kitchen, and she enjoyed spending time with friends in Civitan as well as her Bunco group.

Rosemary Beane '74, elementary education, of Evansville, died March 4, 2026. She pursued education for her career, teaching in the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation for many years before her retirement. Rosemary was a longtime member of Holy Spirit Catholic Church and a member of Alpha Delta Kappa.

Harold "Ted" Lipking '74, elementary education, of Evansville, died October 29, 2025. A devoted educator, outdoorsman and sports enthusiast, Ted taught mathematics and coached athletic teams at Boonville Junior High School for over 25 years. After receiving a heart transplant, he embraced a new chapter of life, always grounded in common sense and anchored by love for his family and friends.

Jimmie Johnson '75, political science, of Evansville, died July 17, 2025. A passionate traveler, he loved taking trips with his wife. Jim enjoyed researching his family genealogy and was a proud member of the Sons of the American Revolution. He was employed by American Electric Power, Rockport Plant in Material Management during its construction and Whirlpool Corporation until its closure, at which time he retired.

Patrice Malone '75, political science, of Louisville, Kentucky, died August 21, 2025. She was a member of New Zion Baptist Church and a retired paralegal. Patrice's dedication to literacy shone through her involvement in church reading programs. Those

who knew her will remember her warmth, intelligence and unwavering dedication to others.

Denis Hadley '76, business administration, of Boonville, Indiana, died December 30, 2025. He worked in Receiving at Schnucks for 39 years before retiring and becoming a full-time grandpa. Denis was a man of faith, enjoyed antiquing and was a passionate collector of Uhl Pottery. Also interested in genealogy, he researched his ancestors and turned the findings into books for future generations.

Jeffrey Hanssen '76, biology, of Greenfield, Indiana, died March 12, 2026. After earning his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, he owned and operated Westwood Veterinary Clinic for 40 years. Jeffrey loved hiking in state parks, birding, collecting rocks and reading. Jeffrey gave back to the community by participating in vet sciences with 4-H, and he was very active with the Hancock County Humane Society.

Mark Moog '76, accounting, of Evansville, died January 1, 2026. A lifelong servant of the Church, he began his ministry as a youth group leader. Before entering

full-time ministry, Mark worked for UPS for nearly 25 years. He later answered God's call to church leadership, serving in various roles until becoming Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Henderson, Kentucky where he shepherded the congregation for 18 years before retiring.

Nancy Allen '79, English, of Evansville, died December 17, 2025. She taught special education at Central High School for over 20 years and coached both local and state Special Olympics. She was also an Adjunct Instructor at USI and taught generations of children at youth programs for Westwood Church. Nancy also served as an interpreter for deaf people both locally and at many preaching conferences. As an avid cruiser, she traveled to many places and never met a stranger.

Jeff Sanders '79, chemistry, of Carmel, Indiana, died September 8, 2025. He dedicated over 40 years of his life to Mead Johnson as a chemist, contributing significantly to food product research. Jeff's love for his dog, Reese's, was profound. His enthusiasm for life extended to the great outdoors, where he fished, camped, kayaked and occasionally skied. A natural-

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## In Memoriam

Keith Benedict, Instructor Emeritus of Advanced Manufacturing, retired, died January 11, 2026.

Rosalinda "Linda" Hoops, First Lady Emerita of USI, retired, died on March 11, 2026.

Robert Jeffers, Instructor in Advertising, retired, died on January 28, 2026.

Angela "Angie" Martin '03, Help Desk Assistant, retired, died on April 4, 2026.

Edward Marting, Professor Emeritus of Accounting, retired, died on December 23, 2025.

Joyce (Watkins) Noelle, Public Safety Sergeant, retired, died on December 18, 2025.

Daniel Scavone, Professor Emeritus of History, retired, died November 7, 2025.

Curtis "Mike" Truitt, Security Staff Sergeant, retired, died January 20, 2026.

Jane Williams, Telephone Operator, retired, died March 6, 2026.

Julia Yancey '95, Manager Emerita of Payroll, retired, died February 19, 2026.

## Honorary Degrees

USI's Board of Trustees conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree for John L. Deem, Associate Vice President Emeritus for Student Affairs and Assistant Professor Emeritus of Accounting, for over four decades of service to the University.

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born mechanic, Jeff could often be found tinkering with home improvement projects.

**Glenn Boberg '80**, political science, of Evansville, died December 11, 2025. He had an unwavering love for family, followed closely by his love of friends, his cats and Germania Männerchor, of which he was a member for 46 years. Glenn was employed by the Vanderburgh County Parks Department for 28 years and was most proud of his contribution to the development of the Greenway.

**Linda Betulius '81**, business, of Cary, North Carolina, died February 10, 2026. As an "old-school" accountant, she held corporate positions as an individual contributor, always insisting things be done the right way. Linda took pride in keeping an immaculate home and yard, loved bourbon happy hours and enjoyed traveling with friends. Her loved ones will remember her fierce loyalty, unfiltered honesty and her unmistakable fire.

**Michael Gross '81**, psychology, of Newburgh, Indiana, died December 18, 2025. A veteran of the U.S. Army, he served as a paratrooper. He dedicated many years to his career at the Newburgh Power Plant, from which he later retired. With his own hands, he built the family home and especially cherished life on the river. He was a long-distance runner, often running in combat boots, and

he enjoyed swimming, biking, lifting weights and riding motorcycles.

**Michael Nance '82**, accounting, of Indianapolis, Indiana, died November 8, 2025. He obtained his CPA license and worked as a bank auditor for many years. Mike also owned the UPS Store in Speedway with his wife for over 14 years. One of his great accomplishments was serving on the Wayne Township School Board for 31 years, and he was an ISBA Legislative Liaison, working hard to improve his schools and community.

**Donald Breivogel Jr. '83**, accounting, of Evansville, died July 19, 2025. Beginning his career in public accounting, he eventually became Chief Financial Officer for both OneMain Financial and Atlas World Group, sharing his expertise as a charter member and active participant in the USI Accounting Circle. Don enjoyed bowling, golf and loved spoiling his grandchildren.

**Carl Lyles Jr. '84**, criminal justice, of Evansville, died March 28, 2026. A lifetime member of the American Legion, he served in the 25th Infantry Division for the U.S. Army in the Vietnam War. Carl Jr. began his career at Whirlpool before becoming a reserve deputy sheriff, retiring from Bristol Myers Squibb after 28 years. He enjoyed farming, collecting antiques, working with his church, spending time with loved ones, and in his retirement, working part-time at the Evansville Museum.

**John Bolger '86**, business administration, of Venice, Florida, died August 16, 2025. His professional journey spanned over 35 years in consumer finance, where he rose to the esteemed positions of Chairman and CEO of Credit Thrift Financial and President of Commercial Credit's Midwest Division. He enjoyed sports, fishing, boating, golfing and playing cards.

**Keith Benedict '87 M'99**, mechanical engineering technology, industrial management, of Evansville, died January 11, 2026. A two-time USI graduate, he also served the University as an Instructor Emeritus of Advanced Manufacturing until his retirement. Keith enjoyed creating things by hand in his machine shop and had a lifelong passion for firearms.

**Martha Lett '90**, mathematics, of Boonville, Indiana, died March 20, 2026. After many years as Office Manager at the Courier and Press, she went back to school to become a teacher, receiving a position at Castle High School where she taught geometry, calculus, trigonometry and advanced algebra. Martha enjoyed cooking, sewing, knitting, playing piano, dancing, collecting vintage jewelry, watching old cowboy shows and traveling with her daughter and son-in-law.

**Karen Brooks '91**, nursing, of Seymour, Indiana, died January 21, 2026. Karen dedicated her life to caring for others as a registered Nurse, a testament to her intelligence and compassion. She lit up a room with smart, funny and often sarcastic comments. An avid bingo player and skilled jewelry maker, Karen also enjoyed trivia, where her intellect was on display.

**Susan Kroeger '92**, nursing, of Evansville, died February 8, 2026. She served as a teller at Centurion Federal Credit Union and was an active member of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Daylight and Holy Redeemer Catholic Church, where she sang in the choir and was a Eucharistic minister. Susan was a loving mother and grandmother who treasured time with family.

**Maria (Anderson) Schulz '92**, accounting, of Evansville, died February 12, 2026. She was an accountant for many years, a member of Holy Redeemer Catholic Church and an avid reader. Maria enjoyed camping with her family at Lincoln State Park, and will be remembered as a loving wife, mother, grandmother, sister and friend.

**Connie Engelbrecht '93**, business, of Evansville, died February 14, 2026. She spent her life living and working on the family farm, where her leadership established Engelbrecht Orchards as a popular garden center and destination. Connie loved Halloween and organizing haunted hayrides. Her commitment to Vanderburgh County 4-H extended to guiding her children and grandchildren through their 4-H careers.

**Julia Yancy '95**, business, of Evansville, died February 19, 2026. A dedicated employee and caring coworker, she served in the USI Human Resources office for many years, eventually retiring as Manager Emerita of Payroll.

**Christopher Baker '99**, business, of Floyds Knobs, Indiana, died December 9, 2025. He was an avid golfer, sports fan and dedicated member of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Serving as Information Technology Project Manager at the National Processing Center for the U.S. Census Bureau in Jefferson, Indiana, Christopher was awarded the Bronze Medal for superior performance.

**Dennis "Denny" Bloodworth M'02**, industrial management, of Mount Vernon, Indiana, died December 23, 2025. After originally pursuing music education, a warehouse summer job led him to a career managing the Returnable Packaging Program for Whirlpool Corporation's Refrigeration Division. Denny treasured his loved ones and expressed his faith as the Minister of Music at Evansville Baptist Temple and Heritage Baptist Church.

**Angela "Angie" Martin '03**, social science, of Mount Vernon, Indiana, died April 4, 2026. Working at USI for over 30 years—most recently in IT support—she retired from the

University as a Help Desk Assistant. Angie was a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, a medieval reenactment organization. She loved to travel and she had a special affection for animals.

**Julie Duke-Hubert '04**, psychology, of Evansville, died February 24, 2026. With a background in business, she established a career as a remote Support Loans Analyst Senior at PNC Bank. Julie enjoyed watching movies with family, ghost hunting, playing darts and pool, collecting shoes and celebrating Halloween and Christmas. Known for coordinating her hair and outfits, she will be remembered for her social advocacy and caring nature.

**Adam Head '06**, information technology, of Mount Vernon, Indiana, died February 12, 2026. He was a go-to "tech guy," building a career in IT by working for several companies—most recently serving as a consultant for Deaconess Hospital—and operating his own business for several years. Adam proudly coached his son's robotics team, enjoyed cycling and had a love of photography.

**Audrey Lipking '06**, nursing BSN, of Evansville, died August 29, 2025. She dedicated her career to public health and patient care, serving in roles with the Vanderburgh County Health Department, St. Mary's Hospital and Medtronic before retiring in 2018. Her greatest joy came from caring for others and spending time with her family.

**Curtis "Mike" Truitt '07**, social science, of Evansville, died January 20, 2026. With a career devoted to service, he was proud of his time in the U.S. Navy and the 20 years he served as a Reserve Sheriff Deputy for Vanderburgh County. Mike later retired from USI as a Security Staff Sergeant. He was a member of

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Concordia Lutheran Church for over 70 years, and he enjoyed playing pool and fishing.

**Courtney (Price) Will '07**, healthcare administration, of Newburgh, Indiana, died March 26, 2026. A dedicated healthcare professional, she worked in wound care management at Ascension St. Vincent Evansville and outpatient integrated strategies in Carmel, Indiana for 12 years, most recently branching into medical sales. Courtney's faith was very important to her, and she had a big heart for rescue dogs, volunteering at the Warrick County Humane Society multiple times a week.

**Norma Hall-Thoms D'13**, nursing advanced practice, of Indianapolis, Indiana, died January 30, 2026. A dedicated nurse educator, Norma served as Dean of the College of Nursing at the University of Missouri–St. Louis and previously as Dean of the University of Indianapolis School of Nursing.

**Barbara (Andrews) Avis M'15**, social work, of Evansville, died April 8, 2026. Dedicating her life to helping others, she was a respected addiction counselor in the recovery community and a devoted member of NorthWoods Church. Barbara found her greatest joy in family, especially her grandchildren, and was an exceptional cook who brought people together through her meals.

**Ann Hopf '15**, nursing BSN, of Jasper, Indiana, died December 12, 2025. Her 40-year career at Memorial Hospital was spent extending countless other lives in the ICU and Cath Lab, as well as teaching advanced cardiac life support classes. She balanced her impactful career with interests like gardening, canning, classic rock concerts with friends and beach vacations. Above all, her greatest passion was raising her children and spending time with family.

**Ashley Mann '17**, special education, of Newburgh, Indiana, died December 13, 2025. Ashley was a rare and gentle soul. She was an exceptionally gifted artist with a free spirit and an open heart. She accepted everyone exactly as they were and had a special way of making people feel seen, valued and loved. As a teacher, Ashley poured her heart into positively impacting the lives of her young students with patience, encouragement and care.

**George Panayides M'25**, business administration, of Newburgh, Indiana, died March 15, 2026. A dedicated scout leader with Scouting America, he was very proud that both of his children were Eagle Scouts. George was passionate about diving and was a part-time diving instructor, and he received many awards for winning sailing races. He was a phenomenal cook and loved preparing food for his family, scouts and friends.

# TAILFEATHER

Embarking on his higher education journey in 1998, **BOB GOBER '25**, USI Electrical Controls Technician, has been a student for many USI professors' first classes and final lessons. But even after crossing the stage for his bachelor's in business administration, he's not finished, jumping right into the MBA program. An enthusiastic outdoorsman, Gober biked over 2,000 miles in the past two years, and his work clearing debris and installing signage on USI's diverse set of trails earned him the honor of 2025 Volunteer of the Year. From lifelong learning to rock climbing, Gober does it all with a smile.

## **What's something most people don't understand about your job?**

I'm on my computer most of the time, working on the implementation of new computerized maintenance management software. When people think of Facility Operations and Planning, they don't always expect that. If I go up to the fourth floor of Rice Library and I see those students working so hard, I want to support that. That's what we do in Facilities—we support this institution so that people can learn. And then they go out into the world and help others. That gives me great joy.

## **What motivated you to pursue higher education as an adult?**

As a young man, I was probably just a local knucklehead, but I felt the weight of responsibility when I first held my daughter. I immediately wanted to do better. I worked hard and got promotions, then I said, "What can I do next?" Go to school. It totally pivoted my world.

## **Do you have a go-to snack?**

Peanut butter. On celery, a cracker or sometimes just a spoonful. But it has to be crunchy.

## **If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?**

A tall, solid oak, because I like to be someone that people can rely on.

## **Do you have a favorite trail at USI?**

I would definitely say Bent Twig. It's so close to campus, but it's hidden, so it's like a world of its own. And we have signs now so you can navigate.

## **Why did you get involved with the Trails Committee sign project?**

If anyone wants to enjoy nature, we want to make it easier for them. The project seemed to be stalled, so I just said, "We need to get it finished." It was like 100 degrees out that summer and I might've fallen over from heat stroke, but you know, I work and I'm a student, so I only had a certain amount of free time.

## **What's the biggest lesson from your experiences as an adult learner?**

The information is so available. I've learned from my fellow students how quickly they can find information at their fingertips. I feel like that's my biggest advantage. I have the wisdom of age, but have learned to be immersed in this technology, to enjoy it.

## **Why do you love the sport of adventure racing?**

They give you a map and there are checkpoints, and you just have to get there. Navigate, bushwhack, hike, bike and paddle. You're in the woods for up to 24 hours, some in the dark, but honestly, that's the thing I love. When I ride a bike, I feel like a child again. I have so much fun. I wish everyone could find something that makes them happy. We need more joy in our lives.



# SCREAGLE PRIDE

**ASHER HALSEY '27**, a business administration major, exercised his legal prowess alongside other students on USI's Mock Trial Team during their case exhibition held in the Vanderburgh County Old Courthouse's historic courtroom. In its second year of competition, USI Mock Trial made advancements in teamwork, public speaking, critical thinking and litigation proficiency, teaching students how to build a case while building courtroom confidence. University alumni joined the proceedings as the judge and jury for the case, a Screagle community effort to support the future lawyers, leaders and professionals of the region.

