

Morning Walk at USI



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On a recent November day, I awoke early to the bright morning sun shining through my apartment window. Glancing at the clock, I realized I had two more hours before my first class started. After merciless eating sprees over the recent Thanksgiving holiday and numerous nights of Netflix in bed, I decided was going to make use of this morning and take a walk around campus.

I sprung from my bed and got dressed quickly. Looking in the mirror, I knew I was a mess and I didn't want to run into classmates or professors. I decided to avoid main campus and walk USI's trail that wraps around the outside of campus. I turned up my Beats and started down the sidewalk.

Initially, I encountered several students on their way to classes. I walked past the Orr Center, the Forums, and the Health Professions building before nearing the traffic roundabout where all the cars were rushing in to get a parking place. There I was able to enter the trail and have time to walk by myself, listen to music, and gaze at campus from its wondrous outskirts, a view most do not observe daily.

On the very first part of the trail, I passed by USI's daycare center where students and faculty can leave their little ones during the day. Small children around 4 or 5 were laughing and skipping around on the playground outside their center. Seeing their joyous faces was contagious and I smiled at them as I passed by.

The day, though early, was quite sunny and particularly warm for this time of year in southern Indiana. I continued my walk past a wooded area and could see the backs of the Health Professions building and the Education Center. The parking lots were starting to fill up for the day.

Part of the trail became elevated and over the wooded side, I could see a small creek below me. I have gone to USI for 4 years and had never noticed that creek along the roadway. The trees had been leaved previously. Now that they were bare, I could see the creek and deeper into the woods.

The creek fed into one of USI's most beautiful spots, Reflection Lake. I had seen this lake several times but for some reason this morning it seemed more beautiful and majestic than before. The sunlight streamed into my eyes; squinted, I could see the two fountains in the lake sprinkling water droplets, creating a rainbow affect as they fell into the lake. I stopped and took pictures but they couldn't quite capture the experience.

Across the lake I could see the deck of the Liberal Arts building. Tables and chairs sat where students occasionally would eat and study outside between classes when the weather was nice. Next was the Business Education building, which has two balconies, one looking over the lake and the other over campus, two of the most beautiful views on campus.

I continued into the little white gazebo on the lake. Colorful flowers and bushes line the walkway. I had seen countless graduation pictures and even wedding photos taken here. I had wondered there a few times on my own and with friends. Freshmen year, I remember my philosophy professor holding class in that gazebo on sunny days.



Reflection Lake



"the Gem"

Morning Walk at USI Continued...

As I turned to walk back, I caught a glimpse of USI's iconic cone up the hill between the buildings. I had not ever seen it from that perspective. It was just as gorgeous as it was up close. In case you couldn't tell, I'm completely in love with my campus. Seeing the different buildings from behind, on the trail, was interesting to me instead of from the front as I did every day walking on main campus to and from classes.

I walked the trail back past the lake, past the woods, past the daycare center, past the roundabout. I was about to walk back to my apartment when I remembered one final spot I wanted to take in before getting ready for class; it was my most favorite place on campus, a place without a name, one I had stumbled upon on an adventurous stroll with a friend three years back. I self-named it, "USI's Hidden Gem."

This gem was something quite amazing, a place I had only visited a handful of times during my college career. It was out in the middle of nowhere, in the opposite direction of campus actually. To be specific, however, this place is located off a road towards the Support Services Building, a place where there are no classes and no one goes.

I ventured down to the gem, which is a giant rock formation hidden behind a densely wooded area. One driving by would not likely see it, even a pedestrian might not notice if he or she did not know it was back there. I have never encountered another person there, but there is an old wooden picnic table and a bench near the formation so I know someone else must discover it from time to time. The formation has a shallow creek that runs past. Water drips off the rocks and fills the creek. I had climbed the side of the formation and perched in one of its crevices my freshmen year; today I am not as ambitious.

In my recent visits, I had come to pray and to think. The gem is one of the most astounding sites I have ever seen in nature and is so peaceful. I continue to be amazed it is located on my campus, at USI, and no one I knew ever went there. As I took in the environment, I reflected on my time at USI and how much I had grown and changed since the first time I came to that spot until now. I realized how USI had become a large part of my life and had changed me, how I would soon be gone and on to the next part of my life. It was a surreal moment.

I escaped the moment to look at my watch; it was time to head back. It was almost time for class and I had to ready myself for the day. Alas, my morning walk had come to an end.

- Cailan Walters

#YouAreWelcomeHere

