The egg is simultaneously fragile and strong—a concept that conveys feelings of many alumni before and after their education at USI. It represents all who dare for new beginnings.
INSPIRING GROWTH
I enjoyed this article about Seeds of Change. I started a youth mentoring program last year in April here in Spencer County, Indiana. My wife is a USI grad and sent me this article. I have started through my mentoring program a community garden named Gary’s Place. We supply veggies to anyone in need and have supplied the families in our mentoring program. We also have our mentor/mentees work in the garden and they seem to greatly enjoy it. Our goal with the garden was to hand out 2000 lbs of veggies and as of today we have sent out 7,309 lbs of veggies and still going. Thank you for this article, it has really inspired me.

Steve Buse
Hatfield, Indiana

DISAPPOINTED
Editor. This was not your best work. Much of it sounded like the political tripe in the Evansville Courier. I appreciate your objective news in the back, since I attended in the 70s and there seems to be someone I know passing. The harder I worked, the better I did. Kids of other colors or races were in my classes. Some did better than me, some not. When I graduated and took State Boards and got my license to practice, they never looked at anything but my grades, clinical experience and my involvement on campus. That’s the way it works in real life. Some kids tried to be the Editor, but they chose you. That’s life. I don’t have them on the street with a bull horn complaining. I am asking you to focus on what will make a young person more effective in their work, family and community and drop the politics.

Dennis Webb
Newburgh, Indiana

SHINING EXAMPLE
Your story on Courtney Johnson is fantastic! I love the analogy with farming, and the photos are great. I am so grateful that you could shine a light on this extraordinary young man.

Keep up the good work!

Lee Ann Shafer
Evansville, Indiana

WE ASKED ALUMNI WHY THEY CHOSE USI

“I started at USI because of the affordability of the education. However, I stayed at USI because of the quality of interactions I had with the professors and students. The professors continued to push me to become a better student and individual.”

Joel Beech ’12 Marketing

“I had a child at age 18 and stayed close to home. I could still play baseball and work at the PAC while getting a quality education.”

Christopher Moore ’98 Political Science

“I moved to Evansville the first time I met them in Ghana. They had a very high acceptance rate and warm group. I was interested in pursuing my education at this high level... so I started my undergraduate, head about the MPA program and it happened.”

Shadrach Mensah M’17

“We asked alumni why they chose USI. My first visit was for my freshman orientation, and I immediately fell in love with USI! I found it was the perfect place for me from the first day I received.”

Chelsey Burton Sullivan ’99 Elementary Education

A SPARK PLUG
Your Spring issue of illume is fantastic. Thank you!!!

Barbara Marr
Evansville, Indiana

WELL DESERVED
I just wanted to say thank you for featuring Larry Back and his work with NAMI in the most recent issue of illume. He’s a wonderful man who has helped me personally through my own mental health struggles. He definitely deserves the recognition.

Danielle Norris ’11 M’14
Evansville, Indiana

THINGS THAT MAKE US PREEN
We invite readers to comment on articles and start conversations by bringing unique perspectives to relevant magazine topics. Correspondence and comments will not be limited to letters mailed to the editor, but may be from email or social media networks. Letters mailed to the editor may be published in the magazine unless the author states in writing that publication is not desired. Letters should be kept to 250 words, and may be edited for style, length, clarity, grammar and relevance to USI issues. Letters to the editor should be sent to magazine@usi.edu.
Legacy is a weighty word. It connotes authority, tradition, birthright and privilege. As such, we often equate it to foundation of a legacy, one he unwittingly delivered with each smoky arrow.

For him, smoking was solitary. But for me, it was laying the my own imaginary rings.

With red tips to signify a lit fire, I emulated my father, “puffing” my own imaginary rings.

I absorbed, to decode the impact it has on our well-being and that of others, before we embrace or banish them. For legacies to be healthy, let us first think about what we are capable of drifting silently into our psyche, of affecting our thinking, our perceptions, our lives, either negatively or positively. When we are not being intentional in our actions and words, they can have unintentional consequences on others. It was never my father’s aim that I smoke. Thankfully, he quit, one day putting down his cigarettes and never picking them up again. No longer seeing him smoke, a different legacy was formed, and I never became a smoker.

As children, we are unaware of how others’ actions, attitudes and values influence and shape us. But as adults, we owe it to ourselves to vigilantly scrutinize what we have absorbed, to decode the impact it has on our well-being and that of others, before we embrace or banish them. For legacies to be healthy, let us first think about what we are imparting. Let us be intentional and deliberate.

We all have the power and authority to create a legacy. Let us do so responsibly and thoughtfully when igniting little fires in future generations through our words and actions.
Every picture tells a story, or is that a picture’s worth 1,000 words? We don’t want you to write 1,000, just a line or two, putting some words into the mouths of these Screaming Eagles. Be creative, fun and succinct in writing your caption and send it to magazine@usi.edu or C. L. Stambush, editor, University of Southern Indiana, 8600 University Boulevard, Evansville, Indiana 47712.

Last Pen a Caption winner

USI has been home to many feral cats over the years, and students have wanted a program to help the cat colonies that call USI’s campus “home.” Now, a student-led initiative (with support from the Dean of Students’ office and Feline Fix), to trap, neuter and release has been launched to control the feral cat population. “It is just horrible seeing how many strays and kittens are brought [to shelters] every year,” said Payton Broshears ’22, who organized the program. “It really changes your perspective to go into a place like VHS and to know some of these cats are going to be euthanized based off the sheer numbers.” The traps are harmless; simple wire cages baited with food that shut after the cat enters. “The goal is to use humane traps to capture the feral cats, give them vaccines and spay/neuter them, and then release them back to their former habitat. This ensures the cats do not continue to breed rampantly and will not have problems with starvation, over population and help prevent diseases within the cat colonies,” said Dr. Sarah Stevens, Director of Honors Program and Living Learning Communities. “We also expect to catch raccoons, opossums or even foxes, which will be released after eating their free meal in the cage.”

The University of Southern Indiana is one of five institutions nationwide receiving funding from Heart to Heart Hospice Foundation to create a scholarship endowment. The scholarship is awarded to students based on academic ability, with preference given to students pursuing a career in hospice care and/or advance care planning. “The dying process is often overlooked during the healthcare education experience, and we are honored to help teach these students about allowing people to reach the end of their life’s journey with peace, dignity, compassion, hope and comfort,” said Jacqueline Fehd, Executive Director of Heart to Heart Hospice of Evansville.

USI’s athletic department is doing just that, with a new Aquatic Center for our new competitive sports coming in fall 2022: Men’s and Women’s Swimming and Diving varsity athletic programs. “There is a strong and passionate swimming and diving community in our region, and we are thrilled to implement a new program to allow students to represent USI in the sport they love,” said Jon Mark Hall, Director of Athletics. The teams join USI’s 17 existing varsity athletic programs competing for conference and national championships at the Division II level. Swimming is the eighth most popular sport for girls and the 10th most popular sport for boys nationwide, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations. In 2018-2019, 4,383 girls participated on 239 teams and 3,944 boys participated on 233 teams. The new Swimming and Diving teams will compete in NCAA Division II and Great Lakes Valley Conference competitions. Currently, the GLVC houses 10 men’s and nine women’s swimming and diving teams, and more than 400 student-athletes are expected to participate in the 2022 conference championships. USI expects to field a roster of 25 men and 25 women for the combined teams made up of students primarily new to USI.

Elite Heart Lifting Scholarship

In the memorable words from the film Field of Dreams, “Build it and they will come,” USI’s Athletic Department is doing just that, with a new Aquatic Center for our new competitive sports coming in Fall 2022: Men’s and Women’s Swimming and Diving varsity athletic programs. “There is a strong and passionate swimming and diving community in our region, and we are thrilled to implement a new program to allow students to represent USI in the sport they love,” said Jon Mark Hall, Director of Athletics. The teams join USI’s 17 existing varsity athletic programs competing for conference and national championships at the Division II level. Swimming is the eighth most popular sport for girls and the 10th most popular sport for boys nationwide, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations. In 2018-2019, 4,383 girls participated on 239 teams and 3,944 boys participated on 233 teams. The new Swimming and Diving teams will compete in NCAA Division II and Great Lakes Valley Conference competitions. Currently, the GLVC houses 10 men’s and nine women’s swimming and diving teams, and more than 400 student-athletes are expected to participate in the 2022 conference championships. USI expects to field a roster of 25 men and 25 women for the combined teams made up of students primarily new to USI.
**HEERF III Funding**

USI received a third round of federal stimulus funding under the American Rescue Plan, totaling approximately $17 million. Not every college or university will receive funding. Students who are experiencing financial difficulty that is directly related to COVID. The Financial Assistance office began accepting applications from needy students in early summer and will continue through fall or until the funding is expended. All students, including incoming freshmen, have been notified of the funding and we encourage students to apply early.

**Adult Learner Program Launches**

It was ever a time to return to college to earn or finish a degree, now might be it. The University has initiated an innovative infrastructure for adult learners to obtain additional education credentials with $2.5 million awarded to USI by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Through a cohesive approach, USI and its collaborators will address the needs of employers seeking talented employees with skills that transition to a future workforce environment.

USI has established a Center for Adult Learner Success to provide support and guidance in terms of student financial assistance, admissions, registration, advising and IT support. The center will work toward three strategic goals: to identify, to enroll and to graduate adult learners. Strategies include creating multiple pathways that allow adult learners to achieve educational goals, identifying multiple access points to efficiently complete educational credentials and creating effective communications to market to adult learners. The end goal is to establish a center meeting the needs of the state and developing skills in a way that prepares individuals to tackle changing workforce needs.

USI joined a new program called the Indiana Nursing Home COVID-19 Action Network (NHCAN) Extension of Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO). The 16-week program offers nursing home leadership weekly calls from experts and the opportunity to discuss the challenges their facilities face. The calls provide COVID-related best practices and guidance, implementation and quality improvement techniques and case-based discussions to identify successes and challenges experienced at the facility-level.

The program is headed by Indiana University School of Medicine and IU School of Public Health, and USI is collaborating directly with them to lead a cohort of facilities in Southern Indiana through the program.

**Action for Elders**

USI employees have been busy writing, illustrating and publishing.

**School Crossing: MariVi Master Navigator**

Independent, 2020

Amy Ubelhor, Assistant Director of Creative/Designer, illustrated the children’s book that follows the experiences and challenges MariVi encounters as a bilingual/bicultural child.

**Critter Invasion**

Young Dragons Press, 2021

Dr. Clarissa Willis, Associate Professor of Education, published a picture book for children to help them learn to deal with anxiety and nightmares.

**What is Happening in Your Community? Why Community Development Matters**

Lexington Books, 2021

Dr. Matthew Hanka, Associate Professor of Political Science, published a book exploring the fluid and dynamic change of communities over time. USI faculty Dr. Trent Enghs, Associate Professor of Political Science, and Dr. Anne Statham, Professor Emerita of Sociology, co-authored chapters four and one, respectively, with Hanka.
NEW COURSES OFFERED

RELIGIOUS STUDIES MINOR

Fascinated with cultures around the world and the role religion plays in them? You are not alone. To satisfy interests, the College of Liberal Arts has created a new minor in religious studies aimed at understanding, comparing and analyzing religious beliefs, institutions and practices and resident issues. This is an interdisciplinary program which brings together courses and faculty from many departments, such as philosophy, political science, history, economics, English and art.

LONG TERM CARE

USI’s new graduate certificate in administrator in training is a post-baccalaureate program offering residency training to nursing home administrators, qualifying them for national and Indiana nursing home administration licensure exams. The certification, offered through the Master of Health Administration Program and the College of Nursing and Health Professions, is a nine-credit course that provides candidates with exposure to all nursing home operations, business and regulatory practices and resident issues.

AG BUSINESS

No matter what discipline a Romain College of Business (RCOB) student pursues, from banking to marketing, at some point in their career they’ll likely encounter farming. Food, after all, touches all our lives. In keeping with the RCOB theme that “everything has a business side,” the College has launched a set of agricultural business courses—drone technology and farm/ranch management—to meet the needs of students and farmers. “Indiana is the 10th largest agricultural producing state in the U.S. with a net farm income of over $2.1 billion. The Tri-state also includes Illinois and Kentucky who are ranked sixth and 24th (respectively) in cash receipts,” said Dr. Cathy Carey, Dean of the Romain College of Business. “According to the USDA, almost half of employment opportunities in food, agriculture, renewable resources and the environment will be in management and business, and there are no other agribusiness programs offered in the southern region of Indiana to support this industry.”

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COMING SOON

The long-awaited phase II renovation and expansion of USI’s Screaming Eagles Complex, formerly the Physical Activities Center (PAC), and the new Aquatic Center are finished. The Complex houses newly renovated offices for the Athletics Department and Kinesiology and Sport, a weight room, classrooms, labs, student lounges, and locker rooms for men’s and women’s Soccer, Baseball, Softball, and men’s and women’s Track and Field teams. The new 1,200 square foot Kinesiology and Sport Instructional Performance Center features hands-on lab space that enhances student learning for performing, teaching and providing corrective feedback for strength training exercises, as well as a Bod Pod, underwater weighing and DEXA to measure health and fitness. The weight room is five times the size of the previous facility and equipped with technology-based racks that provide instant feedback on bar velocity, power output and work.

The new 25,000 square-foot Aquatic Center features a 25-meter by 25-yard pool for the USI community’s recreation, with eight competitive lanes and three warm-up lanes for the new swim and dive teams’ practices and competitions, with spectator seating, including ADA spaces.

Outside the Complex is a stainless-steel sculpture, The Screaming Eagle, designed by John McNaughton, Professor Emeritus of Art, and Joan Kempf de Jong, Professor Emerita of Art and Design, and a gift of Terry and Ron 81 Boren and Tim Mahoney, Instructor Emeritus of Economics.

Pumped Up for Action

Winter is just around the corner and it’s time to start thinking about ways to keep our minds and bodies active! The RCOB is excited to announce the launch of the new Ag Business courses—drone technology and farm/ranch management—designed to meet the needs of students and farmers.

These courses are designed to introduce students to the world of agricultural business, including topics such as rural management, farm economics, and policy. By exploring these subjects, students will gain a deeper understanding of the agricultural industry and the role it plays in our society.

The new courses will be offered in the fall semester of 2023, and are open to all RCOB students, regardless of major. For more information about these courses, please contact Dr. Cathy Carey, Dean of the Romain College of Business, at careyc@usi.edu.

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A significant part of returning to the interactive, in-person life we enjoy on campus pre-pandemic involves vaccinations. Making it easy for students, staff, faculty and administrators to be vaccinated against COVID-19 was essential for USI’s plan to fully reopen campus this fall. During the Spring Semester and over the summer, the University Health Center hosted several vaccine clinics in its offices and the Screaming Eagles Arena. The Health Center became an official public vaccine site for the state in July, allowing anyone to make an appointment to be vaccinated with the FDA-approved Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. It takes a team to coordinate and achieve this kind of wholistic strategy, and with the help of USI’s College of Nursing and Health Professions faculty, nursing students, Health Center employees and the campus community, we are striving to keep everyone safe. You can make an appointment at USI.edu/covidsshots.
STUDENT P.O.V.

Ben Pfingston ’21 Psychology

High Stakes

As the youngest of four siblings and the first of them to graduate from college, I have always had to push myself to achieve my goals. Since my first semester at the University of Southern Indiana, my dream has been to be accepted into a Psychology PhD program. Because of this, my entire college experience has been high-stakes. It was imperative for me not only to attend and graduate from university, but to be highly accomplished while doing it.

Looking back, the pressure to do well in school is nothing new. I’ve always been the scholarly black sheep in my family. In elementary school, my siblings largely occupied themselves with video games and sports, I spent much of my time reading piles of books. Moving to middle and high school, my three older siblings took primary general education classes, while I found myself in all honors classes and high school, my three older siblings took.

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At times, this was frustrating. I wished more than anything that my parents could fully understand how hard I was working. Additionally, the pressure to do well, compounded with my parents’ struggles to help me, elevated my stress. However, with time, I sought out faculty and staff at the University who were able to relate and assist more. With their support, college was much less daunting than it could’ve been.

Despite all of the pressure and struggles associated with my family and first-generation status, I am thrilled to say I accomplished all of my goals. I graduated summa cum laude and as a University Honors Scholar, and I have been accepted into the University of Oregon’s Psychology PhD program, which I began this fall. Although I knew the path ahead would mean tough decisions and high pressure, I was excited to move forward, knowing I am making my parents, siblings and community proud.

I had a traditional college experience, graduating from high school in June and moving into a high-rise dorm on a University campus that August. I graduated after four years of classes, seniority, and an exciting senior year on a steering committee well-known for running a famous bicycle race. My summer jobs during college included housekeeper, dishwasher, and house cleaner with the experience used for spending money through the school years.

I stayed to pursue a master’s degree in College Student Personnel Administration where I learned the importance of seeing college students as whole persons—not just tuition dollars, seats filled in classrooms or beds in dormitories. She emphasized college was from a “one-size fits all” experience, and the importance of acknowledging diversity and recognizing the social and emotional needs of students.

My first experience with adult learners came from my family. My three older sisters were all married by the time I was 12 years old. My oldest sister had interrupted her college experience to marry and start a family. When her two sons were teenagers, her desire to return to college was strong, and she was happy to see that Indiana State—where she began college—opened its campus in Evansville (ISUE). It offered her the chance to finish the degree she had begun many years earlier. Starting slowly with general education classes, she took one night class. She could maintain her role as mother and farm wife and still work toward a degree. She knew she would

have to pay all college expenses and began working part-time in sales and clerical work to cover tuition, books, gas, etc.

Jane, then in her 30s, worried she wouldn’t succeed because of the time she’d spent since her last college class. Her years as a P.E. teacher and Junior League member, however, brought experience in volunteerism, leadership and communications that gave her a strong advantage in every class. One class assignment involved creating a survey and making phone calls to gather opinions and data. Jane later turned this classroom exercise into a 22-year career in marketing research after graduating from Indiana’s newest university in 1986—the University of Southern Indiana.

Today, there is no USI alum prouder than my sister Jane. Her college journey was much more difficult than my traditional experience, and her story continues to inspire me. I have worked with adult learners for over 20 years, helping them navigate college classes toward graduation. I know that many face challenges of limited time and limited funds and often do not get support from family and co-workers as they juggles time commitments and competing priorities.

Nevertheless, they thrive. Just as Jane found value in her life experiences in leadership and volunteerism, many adult students bring strengths and motives that traditional students often lack.

1. Adult learners know exactly why they are in college and have specific goals—often to enhance career opportunities.

2. Adult learners know how to set priorities, manage time and other resources to reach their goals.

3. Adult learners can integrate classroom learning with lived experience from family, career and community activities.

4. Adult learners rarely make excuses and blame others for their failures, rather they the attend class, participate in discussions and meet assignment deadlines.

My career in higher education has rewarded me with the opportunity to work with adults like my sister, seeing them survive and thrive at USI. Through it all, I never lost sight of the fact that adult learners are “whole persons” with life stories, challenges, goals and grit.

Lee Ann Shafer
WINNING MESSAGES

Great coaches know the path to winning attitudes and teams is through relationships. Thirteen of our current coaches were once USI student athletes themselves. Their coaches relayed messages and advice that resonates with them still—things they pass on to their players. A sampling of them had this to share:

“Coach Tony Colavecchia told me, ‘Believe in yourself and trust your abilities.’ This philosophy is one of our program’s core beliefs.”

Eric Schoenstein ’93
Head Women’s Soccer Coach

“Coach Jaylen Quarles ’17 M’19, former USI Baseball outfielder and designated hitter, never expected a career home run so soon after graduation, but a Facebook message from Dan Marcacci ’12, a former USI Baseball player and member of the 2010 national championship team, offering him a job in Tianjin, China, had him sliding across home plate.

“Arriving in China in Fall 2019 to work for D-BAT, a baseball training organization out of Addison, Texas, with facilities and operations globally, Quarles was tasked with teaching children ages 3 through 11 the fundamental skills of the sport that molded him. “In China, baseball is more like PE class,” Quarles said. “Parents want their kids to try something new, and this is typically their exercise for the day.”

“Coach Bennett fortified our confidence as individual players and as a team. He truly cared and invested in us in a loving way. Today, as a coach of young women that same age, I try to make sure each of my players not only truly feels confident in her strengths, but she also feels loved and respected.”

Randi Raff ’05
Head Volleyball Coach

“Coach Steggie valued hard work over talent. He instilled the belief in us that, if we worked hard enough, then we could accomplish anything we set our minds to. Steggie would do anything for his guys, and in turn, they would run through brick walls for him.”

Mike Hilliard ’93
Men’s/Women’s Cross Country/Track & Field Head Coach

“Coach Tom Ashman told me, ‘The quality of your relationships is the best predictor of future relationships. Who would you call in the middle of the night if you were ill? Who would call you to share life achievements such as weddings, family additions?’ Having people on that list gives you a sense of comfort knowing you have invested in strong relationships.”

Stan Geordl ’99
Men’s Basketball Coach

Where are they | NOW?

Talent Quarles ’17 M’19, former USI Baseball outfielder and designated hitter, never expected a career home run so soon after graduation, but a Facebook message from Don Marcacci ’12, a former USI Baseball player and member of the 2010 national championship team, offering him a job in Tianjin, China, had him sliding across home plate.

“Coach Jon Mark was like a father figure to most of us, so we always listened to him and tried to represent him as best we could. One of the most important pieces of advice was, ’Be a good teammate and represent the school and the community with pride.’”

Chris Crawford ’02
Head Men’s Tennis Coach

“The most memorable advice I received is when Coach Stein told me ‘There’s a time when basketball ends. Everyone’s playing career comes to a stop at some point. The best thing you can do is enjoy every second that you’re given to play the game you love, and never take it for granted.’”

Stephanie Carpenter ’14
Women’s Basketball Assistant Coach
Until the mid 1960s, there was a statewide agreement among university presidents and many politicians in Indiana that no city would have a public, higher education institution where a private college existed. That was the situation in Evansville. But the people hungered for an affordable education option, one that didn’t force them to leave the life they knew to earn it. One that kept them in the community with family and loved ones as they obtained an education, gaining knowledge needed in the workforce. Supported by citizens and city leaders, the University dared to go against the gatekeepers and fought for the establishment of today’s USI. The institution, however, would be nothing without the students who dared to make a better life for themselves.

By C. L. Stambush

The Class of 1971, the University’s first graduating class, is 50 years old this year. Many who enrolled were nontraditional students fresh from the fields of Vietnam’s war zones in the late 60s. Others were young mothers or innocent high schoolers seeking to make something of their lives. In this section, we proudly share the first graduating classes’ reflective stories of triumph and the voices of many alumni over the decades.

They said it couldn’t be done.

They said it shouldn’t be done.

They were wrong.

by C. L. Stambush

Rebels with Causes

Dared to Do It

BELS WITH CAUSES
I was 22 years old when I first enrolled. The school was located in an old grade school building somewhere near Fulton Avenue. I had just returned home from military service in Vietnam and was being enrolled through the Veterans Administration's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Without this program, I would not have gone to college.

My first class was during the summer; an English class. All the students in the class had just completed their senior year in high school and here I was, an older military veteran who had to stand in the back of the room because back injuries prevented me from sitting in a chair.

In the fall, when the school moved to the University's current location, I met several of my grade school friends who I had not seen for many years. They had also just returned from Vietnam, and they were also just beginning their college education. It was nice having peers at school.

Dr. Edward Marting [Professor Emeritus of Accounting] provided me much needed career guidance. He set me on a path to a very successful career...

Edward Daum ’71
Accounting

I was graduating from Cannelton High School, Cannelton, Indiana, in 1967 at 17 years old. The motivation for male high school grads to attend college in 1967 was the Vietnam War, which was at full throttle, and yes, there was a draft if you weren’t enrolled in college full-time. I had two college options: a basketball scholarship at a startup college or an ISUE academic tuition scholarship. I chose basketball and spent my first college quarter at Northwood Institute, where I made it to the final cut but didn’t make the team. I moved back to Cannelton and enrolled at ISUE/USI.

During my first and a half years at ISUE/USI, I worked 30-35 hours a week at Arby’s on the east side—full time during the summer—and dated my high school sweetheart, Cindy. We married in October of my senior year. I joined the Army Reserve in June after graduating, because I would have been drafted in July.

My ISUE/USI degree helped me secure my first job, helped me move into management for two years and allowed me to be a “personnel specialist” in the Army Reserve. I had a successful 30-year career in sales. I’m proud to see how amazingly far the University has advanced in 50 years.

Charlie Scheidegger ’71
Marketing
I started my “life’s great educational adventure” in a two-room brick country school in Posey County. It was during this time I came to love history and geography. I liked Native American Indian culture and found arrowheads in the fields by our house.

When I graduated from Mt. Vernon High School in 1960, I had no plans of attending college. After four years in the Army National Guard, during the height of the Cold War, I worked at Zugy and Whirpool until 1966. I never forgot my love of history, geography and anthropology.

In 1966, I started thinking seriously about my future. I’d heard motivational speakers challenging me with “everyone has a purpose and a gift for doing something to make the world a better place.” The ISUE campus would be the catalyst that allowed me to help change things for others.

I wondered if I could attend... if I could afford it. I went to ISUE’s office on St. Joe and said I wanted to enroll. A pleasant young lady reached into a filing cabinet and pulled out some papers. After filling them out, she said, “You are now a student this fall. What would you like to take?” I took ancient Greek, Roman, English, Russian and of course, American history classes, and later, educational courses. My senior year, I did my student teaching at Harrison High School in 1970. Because of my experience at ISUE/USI, I was able to share my love for history and fulfill my dream of challenging the minds of many students.

Gerald “Jerry” King ’71
History

To understand the character of the class of ’71, it’s important to understand the changing world we were born in to. Our parents grew up in the Great Depression where the highest education usually obtained was a high school diploma. Their parents often had no more than an eighth-grade education. College was for rich people only.

We Baby Boomers started arriving at the end of World War II—and there were lots of us! I remember, as far back as kindergarten, waiting my turn to play with a toy only to have the teacher call time before it was [ever my turn]. Education, however, was changing. By the time I was ready to graduate from grade school, I had to decide whether I wanted to take the college or business lane in high school. I chose the college lane, although I had no idea how I could afford it or where I could go.

In my sophomore year, Indiana State University started an extension in Evansville, and for me it was a golden ticket to higher education. To finance my education, I had to gamble on the future with student loans, small scholarships and the occasional part-time job. I studied English. I loved writing and hoped to have a career in it.

I graduated and reality set in, the economy was in a recession. I had a classical education, looking for work in blue collat Evansville. After months of searching, I found a job with the local welfare department as a caseworker. The doors that were opened [by my education] have never closed.

Karen Markham ’71
English
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

CLASS OF 1971

Remembering 54 years ago, when I enrolled at ISUE as an “older” student. I was 33 at the time and enrollment was in the old Centennial Gymnasium. I was scared to death and would have run out the nearest door, had I not shot my mouth off to so many people about going to college. I was just lucky enough to get Eric von Fuhrmann’s table to enroll in his English class and Dr. Donald Pitzer’s history course. [Professor Von Fuehrmann] asked what I had written in the past 16 years. “Uhuh, grocery lists and notes on the refrigerator.”

Patricia Hougland Phillips ’71
Elementary Education

In one of my 400-level biology courses, students had to write multiple essays on various topics during the semester. Since the goal was to make an argument, and mechanical issues (bad grammar, poor punctuation, misspelled words, etc.) affect clarity, the grade was always based on the strength of the argument (evidence and logic) and then reduced for excessive mechanical issues. One frustrated student whose most recent essay score was reduced by a full letter grade due to mechanical issues told me that doing so was unfair. When I asked why, he said because I didn’t have the standing—after all, I was not an English prof.

Dr. James Bandoli, Professor Emeritus of Biology 1982-2014

In an upper-level class, students had a large, semester-long project due as their final assessment. One student failed to turn the project in, stating all files on his computer had become corrupt after his roommate used his laptop to watch a very niche and specific type of pornography. It’s a bit too graphic to share, but did provide for an interesting excuse, real or not.

Dr. Amie McKibban, Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology 2009-current

I remember excuses ran in fads. One year it was grandmothers dying and funerals to go to—possibly legitimate—but one student had a lot of grandmothers who died in just one semester. Another year the fad was car accidents and broken-down cars. By the end of that semester, however, I concluded that if there had been that many accidents on the highways to USI, they would be littered with disabled vehicles and assorted car parts and tires.


PALLADINO’S LIST

Faculty have heard it all. Everything from pornography and drugs to questionable deaths in this family have been proffered as excuses for not delivering an assignment on time or attending class. We asked current and retired faculty to mine their memories for the richest excuses; here are three of our favorites.

Additionally, Dr. Joseph Palladino, Professor Emeritus in Psychology (1981-2005) polled his USI peers in 2002 and published a piece on the subject in Eye on Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology’s magazine, the most precious appear here.

The dog ate my homework.

My dog needs surgery and I have to be there early for the workup, so I will be too tired to be in class today.

My dog had surgery last week, as you will recall, and I have to have the staples removed today.

I can’t find my keys, I think my dog ate them. You know, the one who had surgery two weeks ago.

My stepsister’s mother-in-law’s cousin died in California and I had to go.

I finished my paper days before it was due, then I tore my thumb and it is really, really bad. I can’t write as much now, so I can’t finish the paper.

I don’t have to class because I was away for Spring Break and it was warm. Now it is cold and it is too much change.

A dissapointed student calling to say a family member died and she had to drive out of state. She could have driven to USI, but she was never absent.

Dr. Anna McKibbon, Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology 2009-current

A distraught student called to say a family member had died and she would not be able to make the exam or to take any ... for not letting the faculty member know they would miss a class. They said they were allowed only one phone call.

A student who was arrested and jailed missed class but provided a note from the bailiff.

A student who was hungover called at 2 a.m. on a Monday morning. The obviously inebriated student slurred the following message: “I’m going to be too hungover to take the exam at 10 a.m. in the morning. I’d like to take a makeup.”

Dr. James Bandoli, Professor Emeritus of Biology 1982-2014

A student was excused and went to a lecture class but provided a note from the student.

A student told a faculty member at lunch that she was excused. The student seemed to ill and slightly intoxicated. I was going to not seeing her at lunch that student would likely to take a makeup.

Dr. Amie McKibban, Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology 2009-current

24 | Illume

25 | Illume
Robert “Bob” Roeder ’71 (1947-2021) was 8 years old when his father died, leaving his mother pregnant with her youngest son, to raise three children alone. Watching his mother do the sum from Social Security checks into separate envelopes to cover church donations, food and utilities for the month (in that order of priority), made an impression on Bob. “To help mom out, at age 16, I started working about 30 hours a week at Tommy’s Key Market, located at Third Avenue and Virginia Street (in Evansville) he wrote in his book, A Lifetime of Memories.

Reading and learning were priorities in the Roeder household, and his mother wanted him to be the first in their family to graduate from college. But, when he graduated high school in 1965, an affordable college degree wasn’t yet possible in Evansville. So, he took a job at Whirlpool earning $2.25 an hour as a timekeeper, working nights and waiting for Indiana State University—Evansville’s (ISUE) to open its doors on September 15, 1966, in the Old Centennial grade school building. Mead Johnson leased the institution to the foundation for $1.

“I had attended Centennial for kindergarten, seventh and eighth grades, and now my first year of college would be in that same building,” he wrote.

Bob wanted to help the Redressing University thrive, and approached Dr. David L. Rice, President, about a job on Iran Board being created. “While all of us were there for the academic opportunities, the real opportunity was for enhanced growth and learning in campus activities where leadership roles would be provided to students,” he wrote.

Scouring other universities in the state for ideas, Bob discovered they all had a place for students to gather and engage with each other. To encourage and demand the same, the University transformed an old house into the Temporary Union Building (TUB).

Upon graduation, he received the Outstanding Student Achievement Award, and in 1975 was the first recipient of the USI Distinguished Alumni Award. Bob was a Commencement speaker and received an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree.

Over the last five decades, Bob’s engagement helped ensure USI grew and evolved through his many leadership roles. But his real legacy are the organizations he helped create that have served students yesterday, today and for decades to come.

“THERE IS A MISTAKE ADDED UP TO LIFE-LONG PASSION.”

By C. L. Stambush

When 15-year-old sophomore Wanda Jean Best was given the opportunity to choose one of her high school classes in 1936, she picked bookkeeping. “I thought, oh, good! I’ll get to work in the library,” said Dr. Wanda Best Hibbitts, Professor Emerita of Business.

That miscalculation instilled the now 100-year-old (April 26, 1921), retired USI faculty member with a love for accounting and put her on the path to teaching the discipline for more than 40 years, despite not being allowed to earn a degree in it and told “there were no opportunities for women in accounting.” Instead, she earned a degree in business education and “took accounting courses on the side.”

After graduating college in Owensboro, Kentucky, she taught bookkeeping (accounting) in a high school, quickly learning it wasn’t for her, as well as night classes in a business college. When she discovered one of the premier business colleges (Lyceum Business College) in Evansville, she applied, remaining there for the next 27 years until she “saw the writing on the wall.”

There was a time when universities didn’t teach business courses, and business colleges flourished. But a new discipline—major of business administration—was taking hold, and Wanda knew the need for MBA to teach an avenue, seeing that business colleges were starting to go under.

When there was just one hitch: women weren’t allowed in the program at the first institution she wanted to attend. Not to be deterred, she applied to Indiana State University and was the first woman to be accepted into its MBA program and the first woman to graduate.

Scouring other universities in the state (Indian State University–Evansville’s door in 1921 and was a welcomed addition to the seven-member faculty.) “I had no trouble getting on with just an MBA, they were so short-staffed and needed help so badly,” she said with a chuckle.

The first year she taught a little bit of everything: statistics, accounting, typing and maybe one other that she can’t recall. “We all taught overload. Students piled in when we opened because so many people were in need of an education they could afford.”

True to the times, Wanda’s first students were “all white,” with classes limited to 15. “Most of them were older students,” she said. “They were the ones who recognized how badly they needed an education.”

Dr. Hibbitts’ memories of USI’s early days brim with energy and excitement.

Buildings sprang up like wildflowers and were filled with faculty because of a growing student population. Between 1949 and her retirement in 1980, she student body expanded from hundreds to thousands, and themoved offices four times. What she recalls best was USI fighting for its independence. Other Indiana institutions were not in favor of it. “The only way we got our independence was because [then Governor Robert Orr] was from Evansville,” she said.

Today, Wanda’s moments are reflected by the cards she received in April from former students when she turned 100. More than a 100 arrived, most with handwritten letters updating her on their career paths—some having already retired. “It’s impossible for me to thank every one of them individually. I just so appreciate of their letters. I just can’t believe it.”

What she can believe is how well they’ve all done in their careers. “They’re all doing so well,” she said. “I’m so proud of all of them."

By C. L. Stambush

A MISTAKE ADDED UP TO LIFE-LONG PASSION.

Other Influencers

“Dr. Robert was the first faculty member who I listened to at ISUE, and I believe this was the broadcasting program.” (Eva West, Mass Communications/History)

“By the time you’re a senior, you start to figure it out.” (Janet Bosley, Accountancy)

“I owe everything to her. Fun fact about her—did you know she never stopped smiling? Even when she is stressed and mad at you.” (Dr. Jessica Jensen, French and International Studies)

“Professor. She is the reason I did not quit when I was struggling in the business LLC my freshman year. I cried in his office a couple times...” (Michael Buchanan ’71, Business Administration)

“Her passion for the history of USI was so infectious and everyone was so appreciative of her knowledge and her stories.” (Dr. Michael fashioned)

“His life stories were so interesting and he never made me feel less in my struggle to figure it out.” (Theresa Henderson ’18, Management)

“Other than my parents, she is the person I was closest to and she was my guidance counselor when I came to USI, Accounting. She taught me that if I try hard, I could believe in myself to figure it out in time.” (Theresa Henderson ’18, Business Administration)

“Your story and your life have inspired me, to this day, as if I were still in class with her.” (Dr. Ira J. Brandy, French and International Studies)
The campus landscape and students’ lifestyles have witnessed some winds of change over the years. What started as a commuter campus with open pastures and packed lunches, has flourished into a hub for student life, filled with no shortage of places to eat, hang out, do laundry and study. What has changed—according to responders, aside from preferred music formats being 57% vinyl in the 70s to 60% apps in the 20s—are the ways students spend their out-of-class time.

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Don’t procrastinate! Take advantage of your time to get ahead on things.

Take time to reflect on where you are currently in your life vs. striving for the next thing.

Relax and enjoy the situations of the moment—experiences pass too quickly.

Reach out early for internships. It’s never too soon.

Don’t settle for black and white. There is a whole world of gray out there...that’s where life is.

Study what you enjoy, but commit yourself to all of your classes and learn as much as you can. Have fun, make friends, stick with them.

Step out of your comfort zone.

Don’t stress, it will all work out.

Hang in there. As potentially tough as it is to get through a class and a program, it is even tougher to look back on an incomplete dream.

Ask twice as many questions. Learn, learn and learn some more.

Try new things, get involved and get out of your comfort zone. That’s where the magic begins.

Don’t be scared to change your path. If something isn’t sitting right, sit with yourself for a little while and consider all options. There is an entire world of options and paths.

Explore, explore, explore! Join clubs, expand your circle of friends, ask questions in class, be the best version of yourself.

Hang out in the Pyramid and snack on French fries.

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ONE CLOSED DOOR LEADS TO AN OPENING

For many University students, campus resources are essential. For Stephanie Buchanan, this was a time before the internet. The resources were just as important to her at the end of her USI journey as they were when she first stepped on campus.

“Oddly enough, it was a setback that became my big break after USI,” Buchanan explains. “I had an internship at a company, which led to a job offer. Two weeks before I graduated, the company rescinded the offer, which left me scrambling for a job.”

Unsure of what she should do next, she turned to USI Career Services.

“Most resources available were postings in the Career Center, papers on bulletin boards and quite possibly the most important were the instructors and staff,” says Buchanan. “These resources were instrumental in my ability to find opportunities to advance my career search while at USI.”

THE RIGHT FOOTING

Starting a new journey can be as full of doubt as opportunities. For nursing graduate Verena Sink Bailey ’19 M’21, the transition was something that solidified his pursuit of a career in nursing and in helping inform others.

“When the coverage from myself and my fellow student journalists was rudimentary (we were still learning), it was impossible to cover a story like a pro,” he says. “The news helped inform many on our campus, as this was a time before the internet. The responsibility of accurate and timely news reporting caused me to pursue journalism as a career, which I was fortunate enough to begin in my hometown.”

His work while at USI landed him an internship with the Evansville Courier & Press, which I was fortunate enough to begin in my hometown.”

Though the tragedy of the crash and the events that day were impactful in many ways, Beck noted the experience was something that solidified his pursuit of a career in journalism and in helping inform others.

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THE RIGHT FOOTING

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“Starting an educational journey is anxiety inducing at any age. USI stood out to me because not only were the [advisors] I talked to incredibly friendly and helpful, but they made it easy for me to navigate the enrollment,” says Sink Bailey. “It felt like family from the beginning.”

That acceptance helped Sink Bailey find a path she had not considered before. While in high school she’d dreamed of becoming a physician, her plans changed when she enrolled at USI after raising her family. Her eldest child was born with multiple disabilities and the nurses who cared for him opened Sink Bailey’s eyes to the role of nurses in healthcare.

“As a young person, I had no idea what the role of nurses was in the care of a patient,” she says. “As an adult, I learned my passion for medicine actually stemmed from the role nurses play.”

Her nursing professors solidified her choice, showing her they were invested, devoted and dedicated not only in teaching but in their students as well. Those qualities helped Sink Bailey finish her nursing undergraduate degree and convinced her to earn her master’s at USI.

“I’m very proud to be a USI alumna. I have referred several students and will continue to do so for anyone wanting to begin their journey of secondary education,” says Sink Bailey, who works in a major hospital.

“Maybe, one day after I obtain my doctoral degree, I will come back to USI as a professor to give back all the support and love I have received.”

Note: This was a tragic day for the University family as USI student Charles Bergwitz, two former students Daniel Spring and Daniel Morton, and the fathers of two students, Robert Hays and Harry Tenbarge all died. Two instructors from the Continuing Education Department, William Copodagli and Lynn Jackson, were conducting a seminar in the Drury Inn at the time of the accident. Both survived the injuries.
Shifting TIMES: 1971 vs. 2021

Shopping:
- Sears catalog vs. Amazon
- Handwritten, mailed letters vs. Texts
- Landlines vs. Smartphones
- Face-to-face vs. Virtual
- Gasoline per gallon: 40¢ vs. $3.13
- Average auto MPG: 13 vs. 30
- Platforms, Birkenstocks, toe socks vs. Flatforms, Crocs, Converse, Tevas, no show socks
- Distressed jeans, leggings vs. Bell bottoms

Communicating:
- Written, mailed letters vs. Email
- Country Western, rock, soul vs. EDM, hip hop, rap
- National network channels vs. 1,761+ networks, cable, satellite, internet
- Reality shows, 24-hour news, anime, docudramas vs. Digital/cloud-based storage
- Subscription delivery vs. Free streaming on personal devices
- Photo albums vs. Social media
- Typewriters vs. Computers
- Lloyd Expressway vs. Division Street
- Lloyd Expressway vs. Division Street
- Lloyd Expressway

Research:
- Handwritten, mailed letters vs. Google, Siri
- Typewriters vs. Computers
- Distressed jeans, leggings vs. Bell bottoms

Television:
- Daytime soap operas, variety shows, game shows vs. Reality shows, 24-hour news, anime, docudramas
- Home-cooked meals vs. Subscription delivery
- Subscription delivery vs. Streaming on personal devices
- Distressed jeans, leggings vs. Bell bottoms

Cost of Evansville Homes (average):
- $13,000 vs. $145,000
- Gasoline per gallon: 40¢ vs. $3.13
- Average auto MPG: 13 vs. 30
- Platforms, Birkenstocks, toe socks vs. Flatforms, Crocs, Converse, Tevas, no show socks
- Distressed jeans, leggings vs. Bell bottoms

Nurturing and high-school science teacher Harolyn Torain ’71 had been in her profession for 21 years when she learned the value of accepting opportunities when asked to be the first alumna and first African American to serve on USI’s Board of Trustees. A humble, quiet woman—one of four children her parents insisted all earn educations beyond high school—she didn’t seek to sit at the table where decisions with lasting impact are made. Although she preferred the classroom, being part of USI’s board was the best experience of her life. “You are not sitting around voting on things on a whim, these are things that make a difference in the life of the University. The life of the students and faculty," she said.

Torain recalls her time as a student in the 60s, starting out in the Centennial building before the current campus opened, as freeing and fun. “I'd drive to campus and stay all day,” she said, hanging with friends and studying. Torain, a Black woman, was a traditional student surrounded by older people returning from Vietnam, young mothers and few people of color sharing one community. “I saw different levels of seriousness about the work,” she said, “but we all get along well.”

Appointed by USI’s President David Rice (1987-1996) to the Board in 1990, Torain recalls his leadership and caring nature. “When I was a student, I used to talk to him about things I was concerned about on campus. Maybe me having the guts to talk to him was the reason he selected me for the board.”

Torain served on USI’s Board for 16 years (1990-2006), during a time of rapid, dramatic growth and witnessed many firsts, such as Dr. Linda L. Bennett becoming the first female president and Dr. Ronald S. Rochon, the first African American provost. Buildings sprang up and courses and degree opportunities were charted. Four new graduate programs and 11 new academic majors were created. “You had to be ready to foresee the needs of the future,” she said. ’There were so many people doing wonderful work who helped me so much. I smile every time I think of them.”

The Harolyn Torain Multicultural Leadership Scholarship offers $5,000 to any high school student who meets the criteria. USI.edu/torain

The National Multicultural Leadership Scholarship offers $5,000 to any high school student who meets the criteria. USI.edu/torain

Harolyn Torain, USI Board of Trustees 1990-2006

“Make a positive difference in the lives of others.”

– Harolyn Torain, USI Board of Trustees 1990-2006

Life Lessons

“I learned that it’s okay to express opinions even if you aren’t right.”

— Caitlin Bommelje ’22, psychology

“I may not take a class here and you don’t teach me, it taught me perseverance.”

— Betty (McFadden) Scott ’72, elementary education

“That was smarter than I gave credit for, and that I was college material.”

— Tonya Vrenchak ’03, psychology

“Science is not just for white boys!”

— Margaret Cliche ’94, biology

“I learned that no matter what, you can achieve anything you set your mind to.”

— Terry Sullivan ’17, early education

“Never be too old to go to school.”

— Jane Thomas ’14, adult baccalaureate nursing

“Don’t expect anything just because you went to college.”

— Terry Sullivan ’17, early education

“Science is not just for nerds!”

— Imogene (Schmitt) Kurre ’73, biology

“I was college material.”

— Roberta (Mitrisin) Rolley ’11, health services, M’14, health administration

“I learned that you can achieve anything with hard work and determination.”

— Roberta (Mitrisin) Rolley ’11, health services, M’14, health administration

“We are all figured out at 18!”

— Anthony “Tony” Goodwin ’89, radiologic technology

“Don’t sign up for that credit card just to get a free t-shirt.”

— Lisa Thomson M’14, adult gerontology nurse practitioner

“Never underestimate the people who aren’t accepted.”

— Roberta (Mitrisin) Rolley ’11, health services, M’14, health administration

“Life is about making the best of whatever kind of life you have at 40.”

— Cheryl (Dykstra-Devore) ’70, health services, M’74, health administration

“Don’t expect anything just because you went to college.”

— William “Bill” Nadeau ’96, art

“The advantage of many opportunities is the growth and positive attitude of the individual.”

— Laura (Dorsey) Gardiner ’72, bilingual education, A.A., early childhood education

“Bring something to your course everyday. Learning is a two-way street.”

— Warren Fleetwood ’97, English
And the beat goes on...
Dr. Leigh Anne Howard of its mission. Universities are often associated with its role in the world. Although today the University is often associated with its role in producing a skilled workforce, this conception for any university only features part of its mission. Universities are places where students and faculty come together as a community of scholars to share IDEAS, evaluate information and engage in English. The main reason I decided to come to the United States is that a college degree is a key to a successful career. The education system in the U.S. is not only learned English, but also expanded my knowledge. I would like to get a job related to an international organization to support developing countries. I believe my experience here will be good for it. I decided to study in the United States because of its renowned universities. I believe getting a master’s degree from a university in the U.S. opens many doors, wherever you are. I chose USI to pursue my master’s degree because I had family here at the time, and I am so glad I did. I met so many amazing people from all over the world. I had amazing conversations with them and also learned so much from my professors. I feel like I achieved a lot in my time here, both personally and academically. This has been an amazing experience for me, and I will cherish the memories I made here forever.

Open Dialogue
Education in the U.S.A.

The main reason I decided to come to the United States is that a college degree is a key to a successful career. The education system in the U.S. is not only learned English, but also expanded my knowledge. I would like to get a job related to an international organization to support developing countries. I believe my experience here will be good for it. I decided to study in the United States because of its renowned universities. I believe getting a master’s degree from a university in the U.S. opens many doors, wherever you are. I chose USI to pursue my master’s degree because I had family here at the time, and I am so glad I did. I met so many amazing people from all over the world. I had amazing conversations with them and also learned so much from my professors. I feel like I achieved a lot in my time here, both personally and academically. This has been an amazing experience for me, and I will cherish the memories I made here forever.

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Open Dialogue
Education in the U.S.A.
White cotton gloves are still available in the Lawrence Library but are going out of fashion when handling archival documents. They dull the handler’s senses and easily snag and tear fragile artifacts. The Library’s mixed collection of artifacts, paper and artwork like “sweater weather and overcasts skies,” so the temperature is kept between 55-64 degrees with 50-55% relative humidity and low, indirect lighting.

Student research projects mirror those conducted in museums, archives and historical societies to deliver real-world skills. Students research exhibits, translate text and content, develop programs, input data into professional museum software, preserve manuscripts and more.

Eleven student archivists (with majors in history, English, accounting, anthropology and business administration) have worked a combined 35 semesters to create 10 exhibits.

Seeing a man slice pages from a 14th-century manuscript the year before he graduated Lawrence on a lifelong quest to preserve rare books and illuminated manuscripts. Since then, he’s amassed an extensive collection, donated or loaned to USI for research. Along with the Aakhuses, their contributions make up two-thirds of the artifacts.

One-third of the 250 artifacts in holding are manuscripts (handwritten) and printed leaves, consisting of 950 individual pages and dating from 800 CE. The oldest object in the holding is a Greek Bell Krater from mid-4th century BCE.

Ancient objects contain secrets from the past, and the artifacts in the Lawrence Library are whispering about past lives through a thumbprint left in the clay of a Roman jug, circa 150 CE, unearthed in North Africa. Scholars can examine such prints to determine if the creator was male or female. Some believe the items are capable of more than this and claim the painting of St. Dorothea (14th century) makes noises.

Stepping into the John M. Lawrence ’73 Library, in the bowels of the Liberal Arts Center, feels a little...quiet, at first. But on closer examination, you’ll discover an eclectic trove of rare, ancient manuscripts and artifacts showing mysteries of ancient lives and nine cultures around the world.

The hidden gem is named after alumni John Lawrence ’73, accounting, an international expert and collector of medieval manuscripts, who, through his friendship with the late Patricia "Patty" Aakhus, Associate Professor of English, established the subset of the University’s collection. It employs one to three student archivists each year, enabling them to gain hands-on experience conceiving and curating museum-quality shows and running the day-to-day operations, overseen by Susan Colaricci Sauls M’16, Director of University Art Collections.
The tens of thousands of alumni who have participated in Commencement since 1971 know the pride, joy and anticipation experienced waiting for their names to be called and their degrees finally conferred after years of sacrifice and effort.

There’s a backstory: the hours and spirit invested by multiple departments across campus to ensure the event is spectacular; and so much more. Every aspect of Commencement is tended to by someone who cares enough to make this day as special as it’s meant to be. One employee recorded her duties during setup week.

A Herculean Event

The tens of thousands of alumni who have participated in Commencement since 1971 know the pride, joy and anticipation experienced waiting for their names to be called and their degrees finally conferred after years of sacrifice and effort. But there’s a backstory: the hours and spirit invested by multiple departments across campus to ensure the event is spectacular and flawless. From the faculty and deans who grade and report eligibility, to the Registrar’s Office where names and spellings are triple checked, to the Custodial and Physical Plant employees who hang boulevard banners and clean before and between ceremonies, to IT which livestreams each ceremony on USI’s YouTube Channel, to Special Events which run the show by noting details and renting programs, ensure safety, facilitate media, feed hungry volunteers, place plants and wrangle volunteers, to Creative and Print Services, Public Safety, Disability Resources, Alumni Relations, University Communications and more which design programs, ensure safety, facilitate media, feed hungry volunteers and so much more. Every aspect of Commencement is tended to by someone who cares enough to make this day as special as it’s meant to be.

Class notes may be edited for length or clarity. We reserve the right to select which ones are included.

Tara (Cheffs) Elliott ’04, management and marketing, M’05, business administration, is a lead service agent at American Financial Corp.’s new Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Insurance (IDOI). She has more than 20 years of experience in the insurance industry, at American International Group. [4]

Laurine Jones ’01, art, retired as a USI photographer in 2021. Six months into a new phase in life, she’s considering what to do next, savouring the time she did before earning her degree, or carving her success and her own legacy and identity. “This is just part of my list, which I choose not to call a ‘bucket list,’ since I don’t plan to kick a bucket. I plan on enjoying more time for myself and large family.” [5]

Nick Mitchell ’04, chemistry, was selected as the 2021 Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellow in Chemistry. He is an assistant professor of Chemistry at Virginia Tech.

Jennifer Murphy (Bedworth) ’16, an English major from Limavady, Northern Ireland, who worked as a nurse in Oregon before going back to school in 2020. “I chose to go back to nursing school in the fall of 2020, working from home, often travelling no further than her backyard when COVID-19 hit the nation last spring.” [6]

Amanda Lachocki ’97, nursing, built a home in Denver, Colorado, completed her Master’s in Psychology at the University of Denver, and was an intern at Kaiser Permanente in Denver. She’s the Assistant Director of Annual Giving at Franklin College in Franklin, Indiana. [7]

Colin Jeri ’15, English major, business administration, was selected as the 2021 Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellow in Chemistry. He is an assistant professor of Chemistry at Virginia Tech.


Harry Lyon ’75, communications, won the Radio Media Operation Award 2021 and was inducted into the National Black Radio Hall of Fame Museum.

Amanda Lechlitner ’07, psychology, retired as a USI Counselor designation through the Department of Insurance (KDO).

Lauren Blatt ’12, English, and economics, is a film writer/director who is producing his first feature film, completely independently. It is a dark comedy horror film that deals with issues such as mental health, body image and social issues.

Lynette (Imel) Carter ’92, Spanish studies and political science, gained the Mark andProfessional Services, earned the Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor designation through the American College, and is a Senior Vice President at John Hancock Financial Corp. in the Ex%xoffice.

Chad Higgins ’98, accounting, M’04, business administration, has been appointed to the Ligonier Financial Corp.’s new Chief Executive Officer. Starting August 1, 2021, in Ligonier, Indiana.

The masses and their care were attended to, with action steps, assigned responsibilities, due dates and maps—ensured all details were attended to, to IT which livestreams each ceremony on USI’s YouTube Channel, to Special Events which run the show by noting details and renting programs, ensure safety, facilitate media, feed hungry volunteers, place plants and wrangle volunteers, to Creative and Print Services, Public Safety, Disability Resources, Alumni Relations, University Communications and more which design programs, ensure safety, facilitate media, feed hungry volunteers and so much more. Every aspect of Commencement is tended to by someone who cares enough to make this day as special as it’s meant to be.

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Lynette (Imel) Carter ’92, Spanish studies and political science, gained the Mark and
Brandon Whidby ’05, marketing, was promoted to vice president, Senior Chief in the U.S. Navy.

2010s

Samantha Wells ’10, accounting and professional services and finance, M’18, business administration, accepted a position as a Lead Accountant with Supportive Insurance in Vincennes, Indiana.

Katie [Fischer] Hell ’12, art, awarded and illustrated her first children’s book titled My Day at the Art Museum, which tells the story of a young girl and her family’s experience visiting an art museum.

Kristin (Boe) Reagan ’13, sports management, is living and working in the Itasca Bank and Trust Co. to go with perfecting his photography skills. “It’s turned 30 and has taken a huge interest in photography and videography. “It’s our family’s favorite place.”

2020s

Milti (McClain) Wasil M’20, healthcare administrator, was recognized with the Outstanding Caregiver Award from the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy.

Marriages

Travis Gillison ’15, radio and television, and Kristyn Proctor were married on August 29, 2020. They reside in Greenwood, Indiana.

Brooke Mounter ’16, business administration, and Ashley (Wright) Brooker ’15, business administration, were married on May 1, 2020. The couple resides in Martinsville, Indiana.

Tanya (Stamets) Peters ’13, individualized studies, and Brian Slone were married on October 15, 2020. The couple resides in Seymour, Indiana.

Births

Jeffrey Poling ’04, management, and Mary, of Kansas City, Missouri, welcomed Nicholas on November 2, 2020.

In Memoriam

George Potter ’71, history, of Jasper, Indiana, died January 2, 2021. He was a life-long hunting fanatic and enjoyed watching television and planting tomatoes.

USI Family

Retiring

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
Leila Robb, Instructor Emerita in English, 32 years

POTT COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, EDUCATION, AND ENGINEERING
Lisa Wilson, Academic Advisor Emerita, 30 years

Teresa Branese, Instructor Emerita in Teacher Education, 10 years

ROMAN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
Jong Rhim, Professor of Finance, 32 years

Maryellen Stiffel, Contract Assistant Professor of Mathematics, 14 years

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

Larry Beck, Senior Application Administrator, 27 years

Rebecca Bell, Senior Administrative Associate, 24 years

Patricia Beagle, Advisor and Coordinator of Career Services Special Populations, 14 years

David Gidley, Director Emeritus of Recreation, Wellness and Multisport, 20 years

Lawrence Jonas ’03, Photographer, 16 years

Terry Martin, Administrative Associate, 30 years

James Neighbors, Senior Maintenance Mechanic, 20 years

Kathleen McKenna, Principal Emeritus of Southern Illinoisan School, 14 years

Jong Rhim, Professor Emeritus of Finance, 48 years

Jong Rhim, Professor Emeritus of Economics, 32 years

Sunny Rahel, Lead Custodial Worker, 12 years

44 | illume

45 | usi alumni
Deborah (Jerral) Ervire ’74, accounting, of Still, Missouri, died December 9, 2020. She lived her life with grace and always faced challenges with courage and determination.

Michael Coebel ’74, history, of Newburgh, Indiana, died June 3, 2021. He enjoyed teaching Tai Chi, playing chess and making music with family. Michael was a talented musician who played in bands and was proud of his weirdinactive even though he lived in “The Burgh.”

Daniel Hayden ’75, business major, of Huntingburg, Indiana, died February 8, 2021. He lived in “The Burgh.”

Michael (Vlad) Chernivtsi, Ukraine, died February 27, 2021. He was a gentle man who loved his family, animals, learning and reading. He enjoyed teaching and sharing his passion for the game and was an official for tournaments too.

Charles Whitehead ’94, nursing, of Evansville, Indiana, died February 14, 2021. She was the Editor of the Fort Branch Sun Times for 18 years, a wonderful nurse and care manager for 21 years, and a devoted mother and grandmother, leaving them with wonderful memories of sleepovers, camping trips and the annual pilgrimages to Camp Ondessonk.

Harold Tepool ’80, technology, of Evansville, died June 23, 2021. He owned and operated O’Brian’s Sports Bar and Grill for over 15 years. Brian was a soft-spoken Christian man that thought of others before himself without complaint.

Eric “Daniel” Gourieux ’13, biology, M’19, engineering management, of Evansville, died February 16, 2021. He was passionate about life and lived it to the fullest. Daniel was a brilliant and talented person who loved to learn. His smile was infectious, and he always gave the best hugs.

Mamie (Duerson) Dulin, nurse, of Evansville, died January 27, 2021. He enjoyed writing poems, painting the guitar and photographing. He loved the weekends he spent with his son and family.

Brian Kerchief ’99, chemical engineering, of Evansville, died January 9, 2021. He was a retired elementary school teacher, member of the Huntington United Methodist Church, Business & Professional Women’s Club and Indiana’s Retired Teachers Association.

Raymond Trapp ’94, psychology, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, died January 25, 2021. He was a retired nurse and a devoted father, grandfather and neighbor, leaving them with wonderful memories of sleepovers, camping trips and the annual pilgrimages to Camp Ondessonk.

Catherine Weinzapfel, Director Emeritus of Career Counseling, of Evansville, died January 9, 2021. She was a retired elementary school teacher, member of the Huntington United Methodist Church, Business & Professional Women’s Club and Indiana’s Retired Teachers Association.

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An obelisk mounted on a wood plaque in the shape of Indiana is a prideful reminder of the financial leaders who came before him.
“When I hear Naked Eyes’ “Promises, Promises,” I am mentally driving west on the highway towards campus in our Pontiac Sunbird.”

Thomas MaVetty ’90
Art