The roller skate depicts “movement, a journey and joy”—key elements in the story of higher education and this issue of illume.
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 Letters mailed to the editor may be published in the magazine unless the author states it is not for publication. 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.
As a child, I did not appreciate reading and saw it as a chore, but my mother, a devoted reader, stressed its importance. She knew the role reading played in life and its advancements. Neither of my parents went to college, but they were wedded to me and my siblings earning degrees. They had witnessed the results of what was possible with an education, and they wanted us to have a different life. Higher education provided that. With it we would be offered different life opportunities that would result in different life realities. Not just in terms of income and career choices, but independence, autonomy, engagement and more.

College not only changed me, but it changed my future family. My wife and I were able to expose our children to places and cultures where they met people, experienced differences and saw things that shaped and enhanced their understanding of the world and themselves because of our college educations.

Unfortunately, the value of higher education is under the microscope as national discussions occur about student debt and its return on investment. The value of higher education itself, however, gets lost in this abyss when a dollar amount is attached to it as opposed to it being a life-altering, transformational opportunity. Overwhelmingly, the people I have met from across this globe, who have been afforded the opportunity of some form of advanced education, have benefited from attending these institutions and said their lives were changed forever.

Higher education, however, requires a leap of faith in yourself. You will not acquire the knowledge needed for your future success in a month or two. You will need to apply yourself; you will need to be engaged; you will need to be disciplined to reap the benefits education offers. You will need to invest time and money into your future through two, four or more years of late-night studies, a few failed assignments, substantial intellectual gains and, yes, possibly debt.

As a society, we are willing to invest $30,000 in a new car that depreciates 20% in value the first year of ownership, but we balk at investing that same $30,000 in our futures through education. Unlike a car, however, education increases in value. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education says those with college degrees will earn an additional $1 million during their working lives than their peers who hold only high school diplomas or GEDs.

Education, however, is not shiny or tangible like a new car. You cannot drive education around, but it will take you farther in life, providing unlimited mileage. Understanding the value of education requires a belief in the investment. Such faith in higher education, however, and trust in public institutions in general, is on the decline, according to a Gallup poll released July 11, 2023. In 2015, 57% of Americans said they had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in higher education. In 2018, that slumped to 48%. Today, it is an anemic 36%. As someone who has dedicated his life to higher education and the advancement of all young people, I find this disturbing and fear for the future of our society.

I echo the alarm Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Chris Luxey sounded concerning Indiana’s college-going rate among high schoolers which plummeted to 33% between 2015 and 2020. He noted in an article published in The Statehouse File August 2022 that “education beyond high school is at the heart of economic and social mobility, and civil society.”

In 1965, the University of Southern Indiana was established to address this very concern and concurred in the belief that access to education was a right that needed to be available to everyone. It offered a pathway to an excellent education through a public institution, at a time when there was a strategic system in place that prohibited a public university from existing in the same city as a private institution.

When my mother realized my reading comprehension was not where she thought it should be, she did not give up on me, she enrolled me in a reading course. We did not have the money for this additional spending, but she persisted, understanding it was an investment in my future that would one day pay off. She was right about the transformative power of education, but what she might not have foreseen was the generational, intellectual wealth that would accrue because of it, paying dividends to her grandchildren, great grandchildren and more. It is this generational ripple effect higher education offers that elevates and benefits whole societies, and one worth making today and tomorrow.
Celestial Celebration

USI is gearing up for a phenomenal experience as the moon crosses over the sun on Monday, April 8, 2024, at 2:02 p.m. To celebrate the eclipse, we’re hosting a free and open to the public two-day event—Solarpalooza—with speakers, science exploration, education, entertainment and food trucks.

The event kicks off the day before on Sunday, April 7, 2024, with trailblazing electrical engineer and retired NASA astronaut Joan Higginbotham in the Screaming Eagles Arena as part of the Roman College of Business Innovative Speaker Series funded by USI Foundation. The day of the eclipse—April 8—will be a full day of experiential learning and engagement, food and music on The Quad.

“We have ordered 25,000 solar eclipse glasses,” said Dr. Kent Scheller, Professor of Physics and event organizer. “You will be safe watching this event. That’s first and foremost.” High school students considering USI and their family members will have an opportunity to learn more about academic opportunities at USI and tour campus and housing as part of the event. Learn more at USI.edu/solarpalooza.

Grab your mountain bikes and head to USI! The University, in collaboration with Trekku Inc. and Trail Heads, is creating a two-phase mountain biking experience. Phase one, completed during summer 2023, includes a one-acre mountain bike park on the west side of campus. The bike park features three downhill flow trail runs complete with dirt jumps and bermed corners, offering beginner, intermediate and expert level experiences.

Phase two includes a 2.75-mile Campus Loop and 0.5-mile Broadway Connector Trail, as well as trailhead kiosks and trail signage. The new single-track loop, with beginner-level features, will be constructed on more than 30 acres of wooded property adjacent to campus apartments. Work is expected to begin this fall.

“These trails will be a nice addition to our quality-of-life offerings for students and the rest of our campus community, as well as being an outdoor recreation asset we can offer to the local community,” said Jim Wolfe, USI Director of Facility Operations and Planning.
Stalking Audubon

Art for Science’s Sake: Stalking John in a one-hour documentary titled to his life and work has resulted contributions to the study of birds and experts about the naturalist’s grade school and high school, but “We learned about Audubon in a variety of Audubon biographers Dr. For the last 10 years, Leigh Anne Howard, Communication and Television, have traced the footsteps of 19th century America mammoth book, The Birds of North America, a four-volume work of 435 color plates presenting one of 78 remaining plates out of 435, since Robert Havell Jr., artist and printmaker, made many of the engravings for Audubon’s The Birds of America book. Prints pulled from the original engravings without the direct involvement of Havell or Audubon are called etchings. Only five other institutions are known to have produced nutrition from an original Audubon copper plate. First to Pull an Audubon Plate in 175 Years

In July 2002, Michael Audubon, Professor Emeritus of Art, was the first person to pull an impression from Audubon’s Tell-Tail Godwit copper plate, one of 78 remaining plates out of 435, since Robert Havell Jr., artist and printmaker, made many of the engravings for Audubon’s The Birds of America book.

The curtain is rising

USI Theatre, a program of the Hagemann Performing Arts Department, has lined up an array of entertaining plays for its 2023-2024 season that will delight audiences and provide students with a wide range of theatrical performances, from musical to drama, contemporary to classic. Performing Arts students design and engineer the sound and lighting, create the costumes, design/build/age the sets and act. Once a year, students perform alongside professional actors in a Repertory Project play, where they gain valuable experience and begin to build their professional network.

Get your tickets by calling 812-465-7110 or scanning this QR code.

Focus

Nationally Scored

USI’s online sport management graduate degree program was ranked 10th nationally by Intelligent, an independent organization that ranks colleges and programs across the country using aggregated publically available data without advertising or affiliate relationships with schools. The program also received the award for Best Intercollegiate Athletic Focus.

Attention Thesis Authors

The Rice Library Scholarly Communication Unit wants researchers worldwide to have access to USI alumni’s academic theses through SOAR (Scholarly Open Access Repository).

By giving permission to the Library, at no cost to you, Rice Library will scan your thesis (which is currently only available in print in the University Archives) and upload it to SOAR. The benefit of SOAR is that your thesis will have a permanent link that you can share with friends and family, and serve as a showcase of USI scholarship.

For more about SOAR, visit USI.edu/scholarly-works. To include your work in SOAR, contact Peter Whiting. Scholarly Communication Librarian, at pwhiting@usi.edu or 812-465-1280.

DRAcula

by Keith Hinnant

Directed by Eric Althofe

Performance Center, October 12-15, 2023

EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR

by Lauren Gunderson

Directed by Joshua Robinson

Performance Center, November 16-17, 2023

RUTH, A ONE-ACT OPERA

Composed by Hugh Hagemann

Directed by Joshua Robinson

Performance Center, January 28-29, 2024

RIDE THE CYCLONE

A musical by Jacob Richmond and Brooke Maxwell

Directed by Joshua Robinson

Performance Center, October 12-15, 2023

VANITIES

by Jack Heifner

Directed by Joshua Robinson

Mallette Studio Theatre, March 29-30, 2024

THE WOLVES

by Sarah DeLappe

Directed by Eric Althofe

Performance Center, April 18-21, 2024

After the COVID-19 induced hiatus, the College of Liberal Arts is planning to bring back “A Toast to the Arts” in February 2024. The event will include, among other things, a silent auction where paintings, sculptures, ceramics and more can be bid on—with all proceeds benefitting the Society for Arts & Humanities, which supports the academic and artistic enrichment of the US College of Liberal Arts. For more information call 812-464-9455.

Art Gala Returns

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Putting NASA to the Test

In the past summer, USI students ventured west to partner with the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) at the California Institute of Technology to test a project the group has been working on since October 2022.

Mechanical engineering major Kassidon Hatfield; electrical engineering majors Briston Bundy, Melanie Cedeno and Miguel Pinto; civil engineering major Derrick Thompson and physics major James Hunnicutt traveled with Dr. Jenna Kloosterman, Assistant Professor of Engineering and Physics, to take measurements of a new Terahertz frequency amplifier designed by JPL.

The goal for the students was to test the amplifier using optics they designed on USI’s campus. “The scientific goal of the entire project is to develop better instruments to measure and study the star formation process, which is traced by atoms and molecules that radiate in the Terahertz region of the electromagnetic spectrum,” said Kloosterman.

“The frequency light oscillates once every one trillionth of a second, [about 25,000 times higher in frequency than an AM radio]. This frequency is below visible and infrared light on the electromagnetic spectrum, but higher than microwave.” Another exciting prospect about the project, she added, is that it could be used on future balloon and space missions conducted by NASA.

We Need Your Feedback!

We are refreshing illume and would like your input on what you enjoy most or least, what you want more of and a few other questions in a brief survey.


Go to USI.edu/magsurvey2023 for a chance to win one of three USI hoodies from the Campus Store or scan this code.

Alumni, please update your contact information and mailing preference by visiting USI.edu/AlumniUpdate.

The mission of USI’s Art Collection has always been to provide educational and aesthetic experiences for the University community and all who visit campus, says Susan Colaricci Sauls M’16, Director of University Art Collections. Now, a project to digitize its collection will be extended to a virtual, global audience, thanks to a $25,000 gift from USI Foundation Board member Neal Franklin and a $5,000 gift from John Lawrence ’73 to underwrite the project. While this process opens access to the collection to more viewers, it also aids in preservation efforts and allows art researchers access. The artwork will be accessible online through the University Archives and Special Collections.

Art Anywhere Anytime

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Dream Launchers

A bus driver turned entrepreneur had an idea for a device that helps patient care technicians turn patients on the bed more safely and comfortably but didn’t know how to make it a reality until she connected with Steven Stump ’99 M’09, Director of the Center for Applied Research (CAR). He assisted her in applying for a grant which helped fund startups and entrepreneurs in the state of Indiana and connected her with USI engineering students and a USI alum to help build the device’s first prototypes.

Four prototypes were fabricated for Miller, and she received a patent for it in January 2023. She continues working with CAR and student project technicians for turning her vision into a reality.

CAR helps connect businesses with University resources, including access to 600 faculty members, four USI colleges and 70 academic programs. The Center also helps individuals, organizations and communities become more successful through product development, market research, organizational strategies, environmental studies and more. If you have a business idea, scan this QR code.
USI’s Solar Splash Team scored Most Improved Team and cinched third place in the world championship of collegiate solar boating, hosted in Springfield, Ohio. The team earned points in seven categories including technical reports, visual displays, workmanship, slalom, sprint and endurance.

This year’s team was mechanical engineering majors Jacob Mills ’25 (pictured), Kyle Echert ’26, Mariah Fulton ’25; electrical engineering majors Zoe Tucker ’26, Landon Gates ’24; civil engineer major Alexandria Brown ’26.

THE BIG PICTURE

Photo by Zoe Tucker

usi.edu/illume
Growing up I did not believe college was for people like me. People who grew up without a father and got in trouble with the law. People who moved every few years into another abusive stepdad’s home. People whose mother cried to them not knowing where their next meal was going to come from. People whose mother was scarred from childhoods like mine. But I had a terrible history, no money and no means to begin my path, so I decided to join the Army for the educational benefits and to gain the self-discipline I desperately needed.

Shortly after we entered the most impoverished portion of my childhood, when I was 15, I began hanging with the wrong crowd and getting into trouble. I drank alcohol, smoked marijuana and got in trouble with the law. My grades suffered.

We moved when I was 15, and I changed schools. Uplifted from my old friends and the trouble we got into together, I realized I had an opportunity to start over. It was tough to break old habits, but by surrounding myself with people who thought and behaved differently, I realized I was being offered an opportunity to start over. It was tough to break old habits, but by surrounding myself with people who thought and behaved differently, I realized I was being offered an opportunity to start over.

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I began thinking about my future. I wanted to be a physician so I could help young people who came from childhoods like mine. But I had a terrible history, no money and no means to begin my path, so I decided to join the Army for the educational benefits and to gain the self-discipline I desperately needed.

I left for basic training to be a medical laboratory technician. My stepping stone to becoming a doctor one day. Within three weeks, however, I suffered four hip stress fractures. It was a year later, living with those fractures, that I was ultimately honorably discharged. I never wanted to leave the Army; it showed me how mentally tough I was and that I could do anything I set my mind to. I wanted that without the Army, my chances of becoming a physician were out of reach.

Thankfully, I retained my military educational benefits and began thinking college was possible.

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I knew how important and influential a child’s early years of development are to their future. My older brothers experienced much more abuse than I did. One has been in and out of prison and the other experiences mental health issues. Although I love my mother, her choices eventually led to her incarceration.

Her choices, however, are not my choices, and I consider myself lucky. Without perseverance, the Army and USI, I would not stand a chance at getting accepted into a medical school somewhere. That is a gift I could not have received elsewhere.

USI has bridged the gap between where I was and where I want to be. It has helped me prove to myself that I am able to do what I set out to do — despite the circumstances. I am so glad I am included in this community. Every day I wake up knowing I am lucky to be where I am, and fortunate to earn an education so I can one day give back.

The importance of role models like my grandparents cannot be overstated. Acknowledging and appreciating this profound impact strengthens our emotional well-being and moral development. All of these are critical to fostering intergenerational bonds that are imperative to the holistic development of future generations. I only hope my grandchildren feel I have impacted their lives half as much as I know James and Sallie impacted mine. I am thankful and grateful for having them as part of my village.
WHAT IS YOUR MAJOR AND GRAD YEAR?
Radio and TV, 2025

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PRE-GAME HYPER SONG?
I enjoy the beat of rap music as well as the lyrics because they motivate me to get excited to perform well. I’m also inspired because the music we listen to as a team before meets, such as “Crossfaded” by Don Toller, serves to inspire and unify us.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE A USI STUDENT-ATHLETE?
The first aspect of being part of something bigger than myself is being part of a team. In my life I will be part of many teams: family, work, friendships, etc. Collaboration and trust between teammates help everyone grow, mature and excel.

WHAT’S THE BIGGEST LESSON YOU’VE LEARNED SO FAR IN YOUR USI ATHLETIC CAREER?
Winning the Indiana Cross Country State Championships in my senior year of high school helped me understand the opportunity before me as a runner and as a student-athlete. I’ve learned every experience in life presents a challenge that I now welcome because I’ve discovered that hard work, persistence and determination propel me to achieve my best in every endeavor of life.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION YOU GET ABOUT BEING A STUDENT-ATHLETE?
That student-athletes have no time for a social life. Although student-athletes do not have the typical social experience of most college students, we become a family of sorts with our teammates. We develop relationships that will last a lifetime.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE A USI STUDENT-ATHLETE?
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HOW DO YOU BALANCE ACADEMICS AND ATHLETICS?
Balancing academics, athletics and work is a challenge I’m grateful to have because it prepares me for a life that will require such skills in different arenas. By learning to manage my time well, I’ve been able to better complete all the tasks before me. For example, I have become dedicated to running early in the morning because it enables me to accomplish one of my goals and gives me motivation for others. I think I will always have to be motivated and creative in balancing aspects of my life, and I see this stage of life as an important training for the future.

AS A MEMBER OF USI PRODUCTION STAFF FOR ESPN+, WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?
My role is multi-faceted, but I enjoy operating the camera at the USI sport games the most. I’ve also enjoyed learning to work the tricaster and hope to learn more about any camera they assign me to operate. Working for ESPN has inspired me to learn as much as I can in hopes of integrating these skills into my future career.

WHAT IS THE TRAINING PROCESS LIKE FOR CROSS COUNTRY?
Each member of the cross country and track team has certain mileage goals they must meet each week and are monitored by our coaches. We do various workouts that are assigned to members of the team according to the team’s needs. Our workouts vary depending on whether we are in school or on break. They target the skills the coach thinks we need to improve, which changes throughout the season. This is all in an effort to address our weaknesses and improve our strengths as a team.

WHAT’S YOUR INNER THOUGHT PROCESS WHEN RUNNING?
I really try to zone out and “zen” during runs. It’s a beautiful feeling when you’re locked in and focused during a run.

HOW HAS USI GOING DIVISION 1 IMPACTED YOU AS A STUDENT ATHLETE?
USI’s entrance into NCAA Division I is an occasion for pride since it is the highest level of competition. Personally, I am as motivated for Division I as I was previously for Division II, and I am happy that USI is able to compete at the highest level. Unfortunately for me and my teammates, we will not be able to compete in NCAA championship events due to the 4-year waiting period. Despite this restriction, I am grateful for being able to compete at the Division I level.
Dogs are a customer’s best friend. That’s the discovery Ali Oliver ’14, Marketing Director at Midwestern Pet Foods, Inc.—an Evansville-based corporation that has eight different brands under its umbrella—and her marketing team made this past spring.

It’s no secret that people love dogs—from cute photos to countless viral videos, puppies have been known to provide happiness and comfort at times when it’s most needed. They can even make someone more inclined to buy a certain product.

Oliver’s team learned this when deciding on a new packaging design for the rebrand of their Earthborn Holistic line’s top-selling dog food. Using new technology provided by USI, they discovered bankable insights: people flocked to the bag with an image of a friendly pup and ignored nature scenes or landscapes. The pup provoked a positive emotional response detected by the eye-tracking glasses’ heat sensor mapping and made the customer more likely to purchase the product. “They could not take their eyes off of this dog,” Oliver said. “We knew then that we might need to rethink this situation because this is what people look at—the dog. It helped make the decision for us.”

USI’s Biometrix Discovery Lab in the Romain College of Business, (funded by USI Foundation in 2017, and one of the only such labs housed in a business college) emphasizes research into human attention, arousal, cognition and emotion that is collected through eye tracking glasses, screen-based eye-tracking software, facial expression analysis and electrodermal activity sensors.

“We apply biometric technology, some AI driven, some not, to allow students, faculty and organizations in our community to discover insights into human behavior they otherwise may never uncover [through traditional methods, such as surveys],” said Dr. Chad Milewicz, Associate Professor of Marketing, Chair of the Economics and Marketing Department and Director of the Biometrix Discovery Lab.

The technology used in the lab can detect the appeal of visuals using screen-based eye-tracking software and hardware to track the movement of the viewer’s eyes on a screen. This provides deeper insights into how placement of images and content in videos, websites, games, 3D environments and more hold the attention of people. In the field, similar data is gathered through eye-tracking glasses that record what people look at and for how long in stores and businesses.
Implementing biometric technology used in USI’s lab.

the company that developed the Executive Officer of iMotions, said Peter Hartzbech, Chief analyze people’s emotional, deeper than what surveys or behavior, you have to go much “To really understand human can be detected.

in eccrine sweat gland activity that joyful or otherwise emotionally something—the lab can also measure emotional response measure emotional response in any video to test the impact of USI’s Teaching and Learning Lab, Cybersecurity Operations

Evaluating emotional responses in real-time is currently being done by students and faculty at USI, primarily through the Biometric Discovery Lab. As Dr. Sabinah Wanjugu, Assistant Professor of Marketing, explains, "The technology is incredible," Milewicz said. "It’s ridiculous. You hear about that, but this was proof we just hadn’t experienced. You have zero time to grab someone’s attention."

It would take less than a second to look at the dog (on the package) and bounce from here to there—a second! grab someone’s attention.

and rewarding than when

New lessons will be learned, fresh insights gained. As long as biometric research is consistently pursued, there will always be discoveries to be made.

"The technology is incredible," Milewicz said. "But it’s human creativity and the desire of

students, educators, researchers and community partners to explain and to discover that will allow the lab to grow and have a positive impact at USI and beyond."
As media outlets spew news of rising crime, cost of housing and more, do you ever find yourself nostalgically longing to live in a community of bygone days, where neighbors know each other, shout a cheery hello, lend a hand and the doors aren’t locked day or night? Do you wonder if a community like that could even exist today, given the state of crisis ours are in?

“We have fewer and fewer people who can afford their housing,” says Dr. Silvia Rode, Director of USI’s Center for Communal Studies. “We have plenty of data showing people are lonelier than they ever have been, that more and more elderly people are in need of care and, as individuals, we are leaving too large of a footprint that is destroying our environment. We can overcome these challenges, however, by looking at examples of communities that provide alternatives.”

By researching past communities through the University’s Center for Communal Studies, academics and laypersons alike are discovering alternative ways to build future communities.

The Center houses written documentation collected from more than 500 communities; contains 15,000 images and 243 oral histories; and has the historic and experimental town of New Harmony, Indiana, in its back yard—a living laboratory for communal living. Established in 1976 under the leadership of Dr. Donald Pitzer, Professor Emeritus of History, the Center is the foremost research repository in the United States for historical communal groups, intentional communities and utopias.

“The Center offers students, scholars and active communitarians lessons in utopianism and intentional communities around the world,” says Rode, who wants to see greater collaboration between academics and community-minded individuals.

“We sponsor conferences, lectures and workshops and the communal studies minor designed for scholars and the community at-large to address some of the contemporary challenges facing humanity and seek out habitation models for the future.”

Since the 1950s, housing has been designed with single families in mind, a model that today is marred by shortages, cost increases and sustainability issues.

“Single-family homes may very well become a model of the past,” says Rode. “Intentional communities—where groups of people choose their structural identities—be it financial, environmental, multicultural, religious or spiritual in nature—may be the way of the future.”

Such communities already exist in pockets around the world. The birthplace of Harmonist George Rapp (who founded New Harmony, Indiana, as a communal experiment in 1814) Iptingen, Germany, with its greater population of 6,787 has transitioned to renewable energy with locals setting the price for energy. The ecovillage of Findhorn, Scotland, serves as a transformational learning community. In Berkeley, California, an intergenerational cohousing project negotiated limited equity arrangements with the city. In Padanaram, Indiana, conceived in the 60s as a religious community, the members share land and responsibilities equally. And on USI’s campus is a model 640-square-foot Minka House, a living-learning lab designed to promote living well and aging in place (read about it on page 38).

While the Harmonists and Owenites gave rise to the Center, today’s studies and collections promote community development, sustainability, eco-friendly living and conflict resolution. “Why not reimagine living practices that combine communal traits from long ago with new technologies?” says Rode. “Data from alternative living communities in rural or urban landscapes can offer viable solutions to more affordable housing, a healthier environment, care-partnering and a positive inter-dependency. Communities are organic and therefore changing. But, as long as people are willing to learn from the past and from each other, we can transform society. USI’s Center for Communal Studies can lead the way into how we live in the future.”

By C. L. Stambush
Mountains to Climb: The Path Alice Walks

Alice Burris always intended to earn a college degree; it just took her 39 years to achieve what she started in 1984. But then, nothing in Alice’s life went according to plan; at least, not her plan.
A 57-year-old, Alice has faced some mountainous hurdles in life, beginning with an unexpected pregnancy during her first semester at USI when she was 18, then a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS) when she was 36 and disabled by it at 41, followed by the sentencing of her oldest son to 38 years in prison. It was the last one that propelled her to return to USI in pursuit of a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice with the goal of going on to law school so she can fight some wrongs she sees in the penal system.

“I am a firm believer in God having a plan for me,” she says. “It’s not just about fixing the police or fixing the prosecution, it’s the system. It was never designed for people of color. We were not even considered people when the Constitution was written. There are too many wrongfully convicted people. That is what God has placed on me to work on.”

Alice knows her son is not an angel. Before his current charges, he had work for me to do and I needed to get the time. But in the case of her son’s current incarceration, Alice does not believe he is guilty of the charges he was convicted of—possession of and dealing in methamphetamines.

“I'm old school. I prefer the classroom,” says Alice. “I write. I couldn’t believe it when I saw students typing on tablets. I need to write. I need to see the teacher. I need a textbook.” When her biology class did not come with a textbook, she wrangled one, nonetheless. “I said [to my instructor], I need a book, so he gave me his book.”

The spring, semester-long program puts students into small cohorts. The groups meet weekly to participate in workshops, listen to speakers and learn about leadership opportunities. At the end, each group selects a member to talk about their experience and Alice was elected to speak for her group. “I spoke on how much I learned from them and that we can always learn and hone our skills no matter our age, and to not be afraid to do so,” she says.

Returning to USI as a 53-year-old, first-year student, Alice discovered the paper trail of her past haunted her future. “I only had that one answer, I got in or if I was ONG, what did I do?” she says.

Alice and her oldest son

The Word

There is a mirror in Alice’s home office filled with affirmations. It is the source of her annual word for the year selection; one word to guide her and be her touchstone through any challenges the year brings. As she gazed at the potential pronouncements early in January 2020, one kept rising up before her: Persevere.

Alice had been entertaining the idea of returning to USI for a college degree, and the word was a message to her. She filled out the application, telling no one her plans. A few weeks later, while attending a church conference in Florida, she learned she had been accepted as a returning student. “I was shocked, but I don’t know if it was because I get in or if I was ONG, what did I do?” she says.

Doubling raced her. “I asked myself, ‘Do I really want to devote four years to getting a degree?’ Her mind raced through all the reasons not to go back to school. She had MS and experienced relapses that upended life. Her grandson lived with her part of the week. She had not been a student in decades. “I knew, spiritually, that was the enemy giving me all the reasons why not to [go back for my degree],” she says. “I remember praying about it and God telling me he had work for me to do and I needed to get this done.”

Then COVID-19 shut the world down and she wondered again if it was a sign. “I thought to myself, Lord, am I supposed to go [to college]?” she says. “But do you know what [answer] I got? Persevere.”

To keep her on her educational and life course, Alice had “Persevere” imprinted on a bracelet she wore daily. That May, on Mother’s Day, she wrote to her three children telling them since they were all grown and had families of their own, it was time for mom to do what mom needs to do, and she was going back to school. Their support was unwavering, as well as that of her mother, whom Alice had always leaned on. “She was my biggest cheerleader,” Alice says.

The Journey

Alice arrived on campus in August 2020, in the shadow of COVID-19 but with the zeal of every first-year student. “I was right there. I wanted to be in. I’m a freshman and I’m going to act like a freshman,” she says. “When I came back, my goal was to be a part of everything I could.”

She quickly learned of USI’s Emerging Leaders (EL) program which offers first-year students the opportunity to develop leadership skills, engage with and contribute to the USI community while creating new friendships. She applied and was accepted. Alice’s contribution to the group came from years of job-related leadership experience, having spent 15 years in retail management positions for various clothing and merchandising store chains. Her last job, before MS prevented her from working, was as a branch manager for a bank.

Despite years of experience, Alice credits her 18-year-old peers in the program with teaching her. “I learned so much from the young people. Yes, I have children,” she says, “but it is different talking to people outside of your family. Hearing their perspectives helped me become a better listener and leader.”

The faculty taught some classes via Zoom and textbooks were not always part of the course, as financially conscientious faculty sought cost-saving measures for students where possible.

Alice's mom

The Jo u r n e y

Each group selects a member to talk about their experience and Alice was elected to speak for her group. “I spoke on how much I learned from them and that we can always learn and hone our skills no matter our age, and to not be afraid to do so,” she says. Returning to USI as a 53-year-old, first-year student, Alice discovered the paper trail of her past haunted her future. “I only had that one answer, I got in or if I was ONG, what did I do?” she says.

Alice chooses to sit up front and actively participate in class discussions. She brings to the conversations not only her professional and personal insights, but also her community activism experiences as a Court Appointed Special advocate (CASA) volunteer for 11 years and a member of Congregations Acting for Justice and Empowerment (CAJE). “I share what I have done with the other students, but only if it is appropriate to the context of the classroom discussions,” she says.
The Supportive

Alice’s first year at USI was a flurry of settling into a new life while balancing the old one, studying, participating in EL and more, but her sophomore year took a dive. "I couldn’t keep up. I felt like I was always behind and playing catchup," she says. "Then someone told me about TRIO. I wasn’t sure what it was but said, well okay, it’s a program. I’m going there." She applied and was accepted.

Through USI’s TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) Alice found the help she needed to address her test anxiety which in turn helped reduce stress that exacerbates the disease attacking her central nervous system. "Because of the MS, cognitively things are slowed down, and it takes me longer to process. There are some days I’m just not there. I have tremors. I can’t write full, then I have nothing to give anyone else, not even myself," she says. Alice was diagnosed with MS 21 years ago, when she woke one day with blurry vision in her left eye and a headache. Her ophthalmologist determined she had optic neuritis and referred her to a neurologist. Since then, she has lost her vision in that eye two more times, experiences leg tremors that make walking impossible, fatigue, numbness and tingling, pain, muscle spasms, stiffness and weakness, depression and anxiety, problems thinking, learning and planning. "MS is a devastating disease. A relapse can come on so quickly," she says.

The night before her final exams this past spring, she was home studying for a test in Criminological Theory when the next thing she knew, it was morning. "I wasn’t feeling myself but knew I had a final and went [to campus]," Alice says. "I got to the DR office to take the test and Michelle asked, ‘Are you alright?’ I remember her mouth moving but I don’t know what she said." An ambulance was called, and Alice was taken to the hospital where doctors determined her MS medication levels were off. "I was having absences seizures, where you just stare," she says.

During Alice’s USI journey, many across campus have stepped up to support, encourage and care for her. Jada Hogg, Outreach Coordinator and Student Mentor in the Multicultural Center (MCC), runs a program called Women Unlocked, designed to connect and empower African American women to create opportunities and build relationships that will have a positive impact on their success. Alice credits Hogg for teaching her about the value of self-care. "She taught me that if I am not okay, if I am not full, then I have nothing to give anyone else, not even myself," she says.

Alice was diagnosed with MS 21 years ago, when she woke one day with blurry vision in her left eye and a headache. Her ophthalmologist determined she had optic neuritis and referred her to a neurologist. Since then, she has lost her vision in that eye two more times, experiences leg tremors that make walking impossible, fatigue, numbness and tingling, pain, muscle spasms, stiffness and weakness, depression and anxiety, problems thinking, learning and planning. "MS is a devastating disease. A relapse can come on so quickly," she says.

When a relapse happens, as it did last March, Hogg went out of her way to be there for Alice. "She showed up at my door with everything off the Captain D’s menu," Alice says. "We ate and prayed together.

If God wanted me to go back to school, he was going to make sure that I could do what I needed to do and had the people in my life to help me do it."

While navigating life with MS possesses problems, Alice prefers to focus on the positives and opportunities she’s experienced as a student at USI, including the academic relationships she developed with faculty particularly Dr. Caroline Julain, former USI Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice. The two developed a close relationship. "She was the first one who encouraged me. She said, ‘Oh, you can do this,’" Alice says.

To broaden students’ understanding of the criminal justice field, Julain purposefully exposed students to professionals in law enforcement careers, so students get an idea of the jobs in the field. "It’s not just what they are learning in the classroom, but for them to see real practitioners who do this work every day and for them to see the potential jobs they may not be familiar with in the major," she says. "Practitioners like to come and share their knowledge and their stories, but they also like to come so students can ask questions and start imagining themselves getting a job in the field. In fact, many of my students have had the opportunity to job-shadow or intern with guest speakers."

In Fall 2021, Julain invited Alice to present at the Southern Criminal Justice Association Annual Conference in Daytona Beach, Florida. An experience Alice describes as "awesome." But the work she was hired to assist Julain with in her research into the effect COVID-19 had on Veterans Treatment Court proved more than Alice could handle. "That has probably been one of the hardest things for me while at USI, to have to say no to some things I want to do and would be helpful in the law field, such as internships. But I know for me to get into law school, my grades need to be high and my LSAT score too," she says.

The Calling

As Alice heads toward graduation in December 2022, she sees the light at the end of that first tunnel. "I love the Criminal Justice program. When I came back, I knew that was what I wanted to study because of my son," Alice says. "Quite naturally, my son is at the top of my list, but there are so many others I’ve found out about through my work with CAJE."

Alice’s son has served more than four years of his 38-year sentence, but her work is just beginning. "There are no words to describe how I feel—powerless, frustrated and mad," she says. "I tell my son, you are in prison, but I am too.

With her mission in mind, Alice is not taking any chances when it comes to graduating within her four-year timeframe. In fact, she is set to graduate a semester early and has maintained a 3.0 GPA or higher each semester since returning to USI. To stay on track, Alice consulted with her academic advisor as well as other USI administrators to be sure she was getting the courses and requirements she needed. "I’m here to tell you that for this degree, everything is on the table," she says. "It is that important to me."

Because of the unpredictable nature of MS, Alice is keenly cognizant of the fact that if she does not complete the work today, it might not get done. "I don’t know what tomorrow will be. That is why I strive to finish my degree, because I want to graduate, even though I don’t want to do it in the cold.""}

This past January, Alice selected a new motivational word: Authentic.

The word fits with her feelings about the friendships she’s developed with students, faculty, staff and administrators. "They have been the highlight of my experience at USI because I’ve learned from everybody," she says. But USI has provided Alice with more than meaningful relationships and intellectual rigor. "In college, you learn who you are. USI has been good to me and I’m very indebted," she says. "It is my privilege to be able to learn and it will be my responsibility to help right wrongs any way I can."
BIRD BOX

THE USI STORY OF THE FALL AND RISE OF EASTERN BLUEBIRDS
By Barbara Goodwin

BEFORE THE RESEARCH

Nurrenbern and Steinkamp were part of more than a million immigrants who fled Germany to the United States in the 1830s to escape economic hardship. When the families arrived in Evansville by paddle boat from Cincinnati, Ohio, they discovered a town boasting 36 houses, a cemetery, two churches and a small main street with thriving businesses, including a newspaper and mail services. Penniless (having been robbed of their savings on the paddle boat), they learned the land they had purchased to farm was a densely populated hardwood forest of Cypress and White Oak trees.

The families felled the trees and sold the wood to pay for supplies needed to make their dream of owning and farming their land come true. Subsisting on the wild boar and bear that roamed the thick forests, they prospered, leaving a farmstead legacy more than tenfold their original purchase.

Birth of the Birdboxes

By the spring of 1966, as the first University buildings went up on Nurrenbern land, the bears and boars that once roamed the woods were long gone; white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, rabbits and an amazing diversity of birds now filled the woods. When Dr. Alton Lindsey, a pioneering ecologist and one of the scientists on the 1928-30 Byrd Antarctica Expedition, visited the campus he walked the acreage and concluded the University had the greatest botanical diversity of any campus he had visited, except, perhaps, the Redlands Campus in California. A former professor of then Dean David L. Rice, who later became USI’s first president, Lindsey warned Rice he would “retroactively flunk” him if he didn’t manage the property carefully.

That same spring, Rice presented an “inspirational slide show” about the University to the Westwood Garden Club that included future needs and hopes for a nature center. This piqued Club members’ interest, and Doris Eicher, who grew up encouraged to love the outdoors, envisioned a trail system that would connect with Burdette Park. The Club approached Rice about creating trails for the students and community in the wooded areas surrounding campus. Given the green light, the women of the Club enlisted Boy Scout Troop 371 to carve our 5.5 miles of wooded trails that wove around the campus’ bluffs and creek beds.

Many members of the Westwood Garden Club participated in the Audubon Society’s annual Great American Bird Count, counting birds they spotted from their yards. Helen and Richard Buck and the Eicher family counted birds on the University’s campus as well. Both families delighted in having bluebird houses on their property to hear their expressive range of sounds, from plaintive to scolding to warbling.

In 1972, however, the woods no longer rang with the birds’ unique songs, and bird counters noted in their reports that the story of USI’s Bluebird Trail project and the ornithological research of those blue feathered friends begins more than 150 years ago when Bernhard Nurrenbern and John Henry Steinbank took a chance and bought 160 acres—sight unseen—for $1.62 per acre. Land that would eventually be donated by Mary Nurrenbern, the great-granddaughter of Bernhard Nurrenbern to Southern Indiana Higher Education, Inc. (SIHE) on which to build today’s University. Originally a conservation effort to save the songbirds in the 1970s, the project evolved into a long-term study of how climate and environmental problems affect nature.

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Richard Buck and Virgil Eicher
the local eastern bluebird count had sharply declined. The reason: unusually harsh winters and loss of habitat attributed to rapid urban development on Evansville’s west side. If the birds were to survive and thrive in the region, they would need their own “urban development.”

Banking on their friendship with Rice, himself a bird enthusiast, Helen Buck and Doris Eicher sent a letter proposing building bluebird houses on the trail the Boy Scouts created, noting the “bluebirds prefer to nest in holes in wooden fence posts or in cavities in older trees. Authorities agree that boxes built to specification and mounted about fence-post height on the edge of timber or underbrush will attract and encourage the bluebirds to nest. We would be grateful for your permission to proceed with the Bluebird Trail.”

Rice loved the idea and instructed the Club to meet with Paul Grimes, the University’s Superintendent of Buildings and Ground, to determine their location on the trail, with the understanding that if the campus grew, the trail would have to be relocated.

Members of the Westwood Garden Club and Audubon Society of Evansville met to put together 22 bluebird houses with donated wood. Virgil Eicher and Richard Buck put the boxes up on the trail and everyone was eager to see what would happen. The Club knew bluebirds can lay eggs up to three times a year, if the conditions are right.

The first year, the boxes contained six baby bluebirds. Bypassing their success, the Garden Club members spent the rest of the year learning as much as they could about the identification, migration habits, feeding and hatching needs of birds. Their trail logs described a does sitting out of the flock between boxes six and seven, a Camomile in bloom, a gronding dog and a variety of snakes and turtles laying eggs by Reflection Lake. But they also noted a deadly competitor: the house sparrow. They were taking over the bluebirds’ nesting boxes.

The invasive nonnative sparrows were introduced in the United States in the mid-1870s as a means of controlling the caterpillar population that were destroying Blackwood trees. By the 1970s their population had exploded, and the aggressive little birds were taking over the nesting sites of native birds such as purple martins, tree swallows, chickadee and eastern bluebirds. They harassed, attacked and killed these native birds and destroyed the eggs in the nests they invaded.

To stop the carnage, the Garden Club members altered their bluebird box design and began removing the sparrows’ nests found in bluebird boxes. They also plugged the holes as soon as the bluebirds finished nesting to prevent other birds from using them.

The Buck and Eicher families began speaking to local groups, churches and schools about the observations on USI trails and their conservation efforts on behalf of the eastern bluebird. Donations poured in. The Eichers put together 25 boxes from 1978-1981.

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Activity and Leisure: Many of the AI devices are designed to eliminate daily life chores in order to make life easier and more enjoyable. They include contactless flush toilet and sinks, a central charging station, a timer-activated coffee maker, all-in-one washer/dryer unit and more.

Safety: Ensuring health and safety in the Minka begins with an ADA-graded entry up the walk and into the home. Inside, the bed sensors turn lights on and off as a person gets in/out of bed in the middle of the night, a timer-controlled medicine dispenser unlocks the correct medication compartments at the time prescribed, the lift chair gives a boost and the shower has a zero-entry threshold.

Social Connectedness: Human engagement is key to emotional well-being. SHURI, a telepresence robot connected to a tablet and guided by someone remote, allows in-home visits with family, friends and even physicians. Fur-friends are family too, and an automatic pet feeder helps ensure they don’t go hungry.

Physical and Mental: The Minka includes JOI, a system specifically designed to help people with dementia, that creates personalized “joy pops” through photos and videos. The air purifier filters out 99.97% of airborne particles and an aromatherapy device provides scents selected to stimulate mood. Outside, there are raised flowerbeds and more for engaged activity.

Student Involvement: In addition to the involvement of health profession disciplines in the Minka, senior engineering students designed and constructed an accessible patio and porch addition, a walkway to a rain garden and a rain garden water catchment system. A senior project in computer information systems conducted research and wrote white papers defining the need for all devices to be operational under one management system.

In the heart of USI’s vibrant campus stands the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well, a federal and Bronstein Foundation funded initiative of USI’s Bronstein Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness, a USI Foundation initiative. Minka is Japanese for “house of the people” and it’s a model for what homes can be for those seeking to age in place. Equipped with smart technology controlled by artificial intelligence (AI), it’s designed to support multiple ages and abilities.

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The Deans of USI’s Four Colleges Share Personal Insights From Their Lives That Sum Up the Value of Education.

**The Deans of USI’s Four Colleges Share Personal Insights From Their Lives That Sum Up the Value of Education.**

Being prepared for life, especially adulthood, was a discussion my parents had with me many times growing up. We discussed the costs and the possible real-world challenges I might face. They shared their experiences with me. My value for education, including higher education, is rooted in those discussions. My family members mostly worked in healthcare and frequently discussed the “blood and guts” of complex healthcare issues, often literally, at the dinner table. When it came time for me to make choices about what I wanted to do with my life, I knew I had to do something that was not only meaningful to me but also helped and empowered others.

My many years of education have instilled in me the knowledge, skills and competencies to work on complex healthcare challenges, complicated diseases and to share evidence for effective treatments. I am thankful to the educators and mentors who helped me through many years of my education. I learned that not only can education be life-changing, but the outcomes of that education can also be lifesaving.

**Dr. Julie McCullough**  
Dean and Associate Professor of Nutrition  
College of Nursing and Health Professions

My grandfather on my father’s side passed away when my father was 12. My father’s family were farmers in India who had lost their farmland during the British colonial rule. My grandmother didn’t have access to formal education and so it largely fell upon my father to try and find ways to support his mom and siblings. He was a sharp student in school, often called upon by his classmates to help with homework and he very generously obliged. His classmates’ parents took notice of this giving side of my father, and in turn, helped him and the family. Education (literally) opened doors to the kind of life that my father, his siblings and my grandmother were able to lead. In turn, it made my life possible. Education is thus very personal to me, and my mission, as an educator and administrator, has always been to increase access to the kinds of competencies that can be life-changing—the kinds of competencies that the Romain College of Business is continuously striving and innovating to build.

**Dr. Sudesh Mujumdar**  
Dean and Professor of Economics  
Romain College of Business

As I began my undergraduate studies, I quickly learned the value of higher education through my newfound independence. I was able to enroll in courses that further explored my interest of natural history discovered through backpacking and camping with the Boy Scouts. My university’s geology program delivered new experiences to me, including field trips,rix shand activities and a global perspective. In the summer of 1994, I was a student in an immersive capstone for seven weeks in southwest Montana offered by another institution.

Through learning by doing and intensive training, I gained the ability to construct geologic maps, through field observations, identify the distribution of natural resources, mitigate environmental threats and work as part of a team to solve problems. My success would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of faculty, staff, friends and family, and inspired my quest to deliver meaningful educational experiences to students at the University of Southern Indiana.

**Dr. William Elliott**  
Interim Dean and Professor of Geology  
Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education

After college, I got a job at IBM minding a network of computers. One day, my boss asked me to lunch. I met him in his office, and as he was grabbing his blazer, we made small talk. I mentioned something about being an English major. He looked at me, nonplussed. “You weren’t an English major?” I said, “I was,” I said. “Didn’t you read my transcript?” (He hadn’t.) Back when I filled out the employment application, I wrote “E-N-G” on the line that asked for my college major. It was a short line, and while I meant “English,” I think IBM read it as “engineering.” After I got the job, I felt like an impostor at times, working alongside others who I assumed had studied computer science and engineering. But I was as good at my job as any of them. I excelled in training because I was an imaginative reader who asked good questions. I could size up and communicate problems quickly. As I stood there, my boss pulled my file and read through it. “Well, I’ll be!” he said. “So, what now? Am I fired?” “Ha! No,” he said. “Heck, I was a music major.”

The point’s implicit, but it’s consistent with my message that a liberal arts degree is a great workforce degree.

**Dr. Del Doughty**  
Dean and Professor of English  
College of Liberal Arts

Learning by Doing Workforce Wonder Around the World Dinner Talk

Dr. Julie McCullough  
Dean and Associate Professor of Nutrition  
College of Nursing and Health Professions

Dr. Sudesh Mujumdar  
Dean and Professor of Economics  
Romain College of Business

Dr. Del Doughty  
Dean and Professor of English  
College of Liberal Arts

Dr. William Elliott  
Interim Dean and Professor of Geology  
Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education

Dr. Julie McCullough

Dr. Del Doughty

Dr. William Elliott

Dr. Sudesh Mujumdar

Dr. Julie McCullough
Representing 16 nations from around the globe, 60 USI International alumni came together in Osnabrück, Germany, for a 30-year reunion. The international reunion emphasized three important milestones for USI: 1) USI has graduated 52,000+ students since its founding in 1965, 2) the Center for International Programs celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2023 and 3) USI’s longest standing international partnership was established more than 30 years ago with the University of Osnabrück and the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück.

“When we engage with alumni and help them connect with each other and their University community, it reminds us that creating these meaningful relationships provides a greater understanding of the world, making it smaller and more accessible.” Janet Johnson M’05, Director of Alumni Engagement and Volunteer USI

The city of Osnabrück, called the Peace City because of its historic significance, is not only Evansville’s sister city but home to the University of Osnabrück and the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück. USI and these institutions have shared a 30-year exchange partnership, in which more than 400 students, faculty and staff have crossed over the Atlantic Ocean to engage in an exchange of ideas and knowledge.

During the visit, USI’s President Ronald Rochon and Dr. Susanne Mencel-Radl, President of the University of Osnabrück, and Dr. Andrea Braun von Reinemund, Vice President for International Affairs from the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück, renewed their commitment to the partnership.

A portion of the sales will go toward River City Pride, Evansville’s LGBTQ+ organization, whose board he served on. Stacie (Wagner) Bartel ’92, elementary education, is a founding member of River City Pride and serves on the board, which had recently achieved 501(c)3 status.

Jeffrey Simmons ’80, economics, political science, is Vice President of Business Development at Greenfield Banking Company in Greenwood, Indiana.

Bruce Doudley ’88, elementary education, was inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in May 2023.

Anthony Goodwin ’89, radiologic technology, graduated from Harvard Medical School with a postgraduate certificate in May 2023.

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.

Class notes and photos can be found at usi.edu/AlumniUpdate.

Classy View
information technology corporation, IDVA, in March 2022 as Principal, Digital
Senior Consultant at Antea Group
biophysics, geology, is discussing aspects of training in low light
Eric Crayner '95, political science, is Lead Firearms Instructor for the
Indianapolis 500 winner, rode in the Indianapolis 500 Parade Lap May 2023.
Lora (Traylor) Edwards '09, mathematics, is Senior Global Human
Business administration, is Associate Professor at Universitat
is a Partner for FORVIS in Indianapolis, Indiana. She is the Louisville-
Lucas county. He has a business partner along with multiple
information technology corporation, IQVIA, in March 2022 as Principal, Digital
Come see the 3D printed gears andGs that I made with the 3D printer in the new
Travis Gilmore '99, radio and television, is Hepatitis Manager of East IT
consulting in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Jennifer [Clements] Williams '03, accounting, is a Partner for FIORES in


   2000s

Norma (Lanuza) Unser '00, public relations and advertising, is Lead Governor, Al Unser Jr., two-time Indianapolis 500 winner, under the Indianapolis 500 Parade Lap May 2023.
Jason Beckwith '00, international business, is Lead Program Manager at Bud’s Harley-Davidson Sales Incororporated in Evansville.

Jennifer [Clements] Williams '03, accounting, is a Partner for FIORES in Louisville, Kentucky. She is the Louisville-Southern Indiana Market Leader for the firm’s Nonprofit, Education & Public Sector Practices.

James Clasdoth '03, health services, individudal studies, is an Emergency Physician with Pandires Community Hospital in Washington, Indiana.

Eric Cagle '04, elementary education, has been promoted to Superintendent of North Gibson School Corporation in Princeton, Indiana.

Bradley Youseman '04, public relations and advertising, is Sheriff of Owscego County Sheriff's Office in Owosso, Michigan.

Sara (Dunnewold) Nethery '05, elementary education, is a Professor of Nursing at Ivy Tech Community College in Evansville.

Michael LaGrange '06, engineering, is Operations Director at Nix Custom Fabrication Incorporated in Evansville.

Jeffrey Mitchell '06, biology, has started his own Podiatric Medicine business as a Physician at Andy’s Foot Centers of America in Franklin, Tennessee. He now has a business partner along with multiple office groups growing and expanding in the Nashville area.

Chad Dockery '07, history, is the Director of Athletics at Baden Memorial High School in Evansville.

Morgan (Lawwell) Suggs '07 M23, sociology, accounting, certified to announce her most recent degree from USF. She is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society and a Controller/ Court Deputy at Chapter 13 Bankruptcy Trustee for attorneys Robert Hugray.

Stephen Sins '08, radio and television, is a University of Kentucky alum who is a producer of a major television show.

Bretta Connors '08, mathematics, is a Mathematics Teacher at Davidson Academy in Nashville, Tennessee.

Jacklyn Oakley '09, biology, is the Lead Environmental Project Administrator at Indepth Environmental in Evansville.

Joshua Lichtenfeld '09, journalism, is a Senior Consultant at Siegel Gluck in Merriamsville, Indiana.

Melissa Schmitt '08 M10, special education, elementary education, is Owner of Schmidt Centers in Evansville, Indiana.

Stephan Bailey '10, engineering, is Senior Designer/Engineer of USG Appliance in Evansville.

Kimberly (Schoendiek) Caronese '10, public relations and advertising, early childhood education, is Clinical Director at Ros机械设备. She is a member of the Connecticut Bar Association, and a Director of the Vanderbilt Law School Alumni Association.

Amanda Goss '10, English (teaching), is a High School Teacher at Heritage Christian School in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Eric Beaver '95, political science, is the lead civilian instructor for the training section of the Lexington Police Department in Lexington, Kentucky. In the photo (center, blue shirt), he is discussing aspects of training in blue light conditions with members of a recruit class.

Elizabeth Broad '93, biophysics, geology, is a Senior Consultant at Amn Group US in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Brent “Andy” Julian '94, political science, is High School Teacher at Heritage Christian School in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Mike Wicker '94, English (teaching), wrote and published another novel titled "Wishing Well." He wrote 28 books, 25 are in a series of thrillers, and three books are not in that series. Two of my novels, Invincible and Vampire Children of the Night are under movie options by a group from Hollywood.

Many of my books can be found in libraries around the country and various bookstores.

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Amanda Goss '10, English (teaching), is a High School Teacher at Heritage Christian School in Indianapolis, Indiana.
Jacquelyn (Taylor) McCann ’15 M’18 is incorporated in Newburgh, Indiana. is Director of Sales of ZeroCarb LYFE in Brandon Shaw ’14 ICU Mobile in Akron, Ohio. and is an incoming freshman at USI for the fall semester.

Micaiah Kinkis ’15, sport management, is a Realtor for REA First Advantage Realty Incorporated in Newburgh, Indiana.

Jacquie (Taylor) McCain ’15 M’18, biology, engineering management, is a Swiss Process Facilitator at Astrazeneca in Mount Vernon, Indiana.

Kathi Miller ’14 ’20, Health Services, business administration, is Chief Executive Officer at Lawrence County Memorial Hospital in Lawrenceville, Illinois.

Teresa Bowling ’14, Sociology, criminal justice studies, graduated from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Leadership Academy and has been assigned as a Counselor for the 54th Indiana State Police Recruit Academy. and is a incoming freshman at USI for the fall semester.

Adam Brothers ’14, Management, marketing, is Director of Development at ICU Mobile in Akron, Ohio.

Brandon Shaw ’14, sport management, is Director of Sales of Zinc Calling in Evansville.

Micaiah Kinkis ’15, sport management, is a Realtor for REA First Advantage Realty Incorporated in Newburgh, Indiana.

Keith Miller ’15 M’20, Business administration, is Chief Executive Officer at Astrazeneca in Mount Vernon, Indiana.

Officer at Lawrence County Memorial Hospital in Vincennes, Indiana.

Senior Process Facilitator at AstraZeneca in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Ziemer, Stayman, Weitzel & Shoulders, LLC in Evansville. Ziemer, Stayman, Weitzel & Shoulders, LLC in Evansville.

Irelane Enoch ’21, Biology, is a Clinical Specialist at Skyline Medical in Evansville, Indiana. Sturgeon ’18, Communication, is a Community Health Social Impact Student at The Willows Good Samaritan Healthcare in Louisville, Kentucky.

Denton Ice ’16, Communication studies, earned his real estate license and began a new career. Tucker Sings as a local estate professional. He and his wife also welcomed their third child their first daughter in August 2022. “I am thankful for the place God has me and my family and look forward to seeing what the future holds.” [9]

Anton (Heinsohn) Logan ’16, social work, tied for her husband published their one-year wedding anniversary by visiting Athens, Greece. [8]

Elizabethovan Smetith ’16 M’21, sport management, is an Associate Attorney at Zimmer, Trayer, Wetzel & Shoulders, LLC in Evansville.

Rachel (Tate) Cavas ’15 M’18, Sociology, is a Golf Professional at Bloomington Country Club in Bloomington, Indiana.

Alexandra (Floral) Mahoney ’18, exercise science, is Assistant Athletic Trainer at Franklin College of Indiana in Franklin, Indiana.

Kyla Pryor ’18, Health Services, is Administrative Assistant in Cardiology at Riley Hospital for Children through Indiana University School of Medicine (Indianapolis, Indiana). She also is engaged to Cameron Haynes [9].

Anthony Sanders Jr. ’20, Business Administration, is an Associate Professor of Quality Assurance at Cardinal Health in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Jacob Archibald M’19, Biochemistry, German studies, is a recipient of a Nicholas-Scholars, which manufactures liquid and powder detergents in the Republic of Kazakhstan. 2020s

Sabrina Sturgeon ’19, Communication studies, is Project Coordinator for Indiana Excellence at Council of Independent Colleges in Washington, D.C.

Logan Tedrow ’19, History, political science, is an Associate Attorney at Ziemer, Trayer, Wetzel & Shoulders, LLC in Evansville.

Jessica (Culman) Tedrow ’19, Biotechnology, Criminal justice, is a Resident Physician at Indiana University Vincennes Psychiatry Residency in Vincennes, Indiana. She graduated from Indiana University School of Medicine and was a recipient of the Patricia A. Kiewer Award in May 2023.

Kristian Washington M’19, Business administration, is an Associate Director of Finance and Administration at University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois.

Drelin Julkes ’20, Individualized studies, is Director of Inclusion at Camp Fire Wilani in Springfield, Oregon.

Crisis Team Responder at Southwestern Illinois Behavioral Healthcare.

Abby Sink ’22, Public relations and advertising, is Compliance Specialist at Skyline Medical in Evansville, Indiana.

Ilyas Batyrshayev M’21, Biochemistry, German studies, is a Business Teacher at Lincoln Elementary School in Evansville, Indiana. She also is the founder of a company which donates profits to charities in and around Johnson County.

Abby Sink ’22, Public relations and advertising, is Compliance Specialist at Meetings & Events International in Evansville.

Justin Clifford M’23, Business administration, is Chief Strategy Officer for Lorain Health Rural Electric and North Central Electric Cooperatives in Burbank, Ohio.
Marriages

Lauren (Leather) Fallis ’04 M’05, social work, and Kyle Fallis ’21, accounting and professional services, were married July 2022. The couple lives in Indianapolis.

Jennifer (Sickel) Taylor ’04 M’18, public relations and advertising, art, engineering management, and Noah Taylor were married February 2023.

Colton Vincent ’18, psychology, and Paige (Glotz) Vincent ’18, health services, radiologic and imaging sciences, were married July 2022. The couple lives in Evansville.

Paul Blanford ’17, business administration, and Holli (Melton) Blanford ’10, business administration, and Evansville. Joseph (Olney) Olney ’22, biology, and Janiese (Dash) Brooks ’19, psychology, healthcare administration, welcomed their third child, Leighton Millicent in March 2023, little sister to London (teaching), and Jordan Davison welcomed Hazel in April 2023.

Rong (Luo) Meng ’13, radiologic and imaging sciences, were married May 2023. The couple resides in Evansville.

Blanford ’17, political science, were married September 2022. The couple resides in Henderson, Kentucky.

Jocilyn (Dev) Brooks ’19, nursing, and Carrington Brooks were married October 2022. The couple resides in Evansville.

Reid Edwards ’20, economics, finance, Emily (Miller) Edwards ’22, food and nutrition, were married May 2022. The couple was engaged in September 2020, on the first floor balcony of the Roman College of Business. The couple resides in Olney, Illinois.

Rowena (Linda) Mendez ’21, elementary education, and Erick Mendez were married July 2022. She is a middle school Science Teacher at Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, and the couple resides in Evansville.

Sarah (Branden) Rose ’23, nursing, and Connor Rose ’23, biology, were married November 2022. The couple resides in Evansville.

Beth Hobgood ’22, mechanical engineering, Sydney (Hippe) Hobgood ’22, biology, were married May 2023. She is attending Indiana University School of Medicine, and he has a mechanical engineer at RTM Engineering Consultants in Evansville.

Lauren (Brady) Patz ’05, biological sciences, and Alexander Kipp were married September 2022. The couple resides in Evansville.

In Memoriam

Index “Madeleine” Dominey ’72, social science (teaching), of Santa Monica, California, died December 5, 2022. She was Director of Religious Education for Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church and involved in travel, visiting all 50 States and some countries overseas. Madeleine enjoyed photography and loved her dog “Teddy”.

Stephanie (Smith) Satterfield ’73, elementary education, of Evansville, died February 15, 2023. She taught at Lockyear Business College, and was a cheerleader for Evansville High School. Over the years, she helped many people receive their GED. She retired from State Orthopedics after 17 years.

Deborah (Macintire) Stroop ’75 M’05, mathematics, industrial management, of Evansville, died February 5, 2023. She worked for British Yards’, Redpath, Vectron and most recently, Mitchell, before retiring. She was an active and devoted member of the church, a supporter of Vanderburgh County 4-H, a member of the Vanderburgh County Extension Homemakers and Farm Bureau Board of Directors.

Cathy (Williams) Besing ’76, business education, of Evansville, died July 7, 2023. She was a compassionate woman, loved to travel and explore unusual places, and was a doting mother, grandmother, sister and aunt. Cathy was an accomplished pianist, aerial lover and Heidi Klock is in karate. Cathy loved her family and considered her students as second family. She was an amazing mom and dedicated wife who loved her family and friends. She loved to be with her family and friends and had an unrivaled knowledge of college athletics, as well as an encyclopaedia of sports.

Lora (Mattie) Altstadt ’73, elementary education, of Evansville, died July 21, 2023. She loved to provide a welcoming environment at the many events held at the Altstadt family home and pool in Floyds Fork, Kentucky. Included in these events were holiday in the Park and family events at the Pool. With the help of many people, she was able to raise a family and provide a home for them all.

Joseph (Olney) Olney ’22, biology, and Janiese (Dash) Brooks ’19, psychology, healthcare administration, welcomed their third child, Leighton Millicent in March 2023, little sister to London (teaching), and Jordan Davison welcomed Hazel in April 2023. One of her favorite things to do is live to cook and bake for others. Cooking and baking brought me so much joy. She also enjoyed spending time with her two grandkids and attending their school and sports events. She was an avid reader and loved God’s word.

Mary Lynn (Williams) Bell ’75, elementary education, of Evansville, died March 7, 2023. She was a kind and gentle woman who was also a very good friend. Whether she was saying the rosary for your or speaking a few words (she did not like to be shown), she was always your biggest cheerleader wanting you to take every opportunity in life to venture out and have fun.

Bronda Helfing ’75, elementary education, of Evansville, died February 10, 2023. She taught at Lockyear Business College, and was a cheerleader for Evansville High School. Over the years, she helped many people receive their GED. She retired from State Orthopedics after 17 years.

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Karen Donald Black ’81, English, of Evansville, died May 15, 2023. She was an amazing mom and dedicated wife who loved her family and friends. She was an amazing mom and dedicated wife who loved her family and friends. She loved to be with her family and friends and had an unrivaled knowledge of college athletics, as well as an encyclopaedia of sports. Kathy loved her nephews and was considered a second mother to them. She also had an enduring love for her dogs.

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Barbara enjoyed travel, painting, book club, playing cards with her friends and sharing her love of art with her grandchildren.

Russell “Rusty” Rich '78, political science, of Savannah, died Aug. 8, 2023. He held the rank of captain in the U.S. Army where he was stationed in Ft. Hood, Texas, served in Seoul, South Korea, and was a member of Disabled American Veterans. Rusty worked in human resources, social services and the insurance industry. He was also a member of the World War II Society. Rusty was a historian and enjoyed collecting watches and fountain pens.

Cynthia Abney ‘93, communications, of Oakland, California, died Feb. 2, 2023. She was a selfless individual who gave her heart and soul to her family and loved ones every day. Cindy was a wonderful, loving soul, artist, adventurer, lover of plants, animals and all living things.

Christine “Christ” (Robertson) Hoehn ’89, elementary education, of Mount Vernon, Indiana, died Feb. 15, 2023. She was a lifelong elementary school educator, a foster parent and worked at Harrison State Park. She enjoyed spending time with family and friends, researching genealogy, canning, traveling, fishing, being in nature, working at the State Park and her monthly garden club.

Timothy “Tom” Vechevich ’93, computer information systems, of Evansville, died July 3, 2023. He was the Seasonal Employer for Vanderburgh County’s Summer Program and was the first person to serve as student affairs coordinator. He continued to work very hard without a complaint, in spite of side effects from radiation and chemotherapy treatments. He coached youth baseball, wrestling and golfing with his dad, working crossing passes with his mom and playing video games with his daughter.

Linda (Hayes) Einkelt ‘80, elementary education, of Evansville, died June 3, 2023. She believed in education and enrolled at USI after her children grew up. Linda started working at the St. Luke’s School and retired as Manager of Human Resources for several years before retiring. She enjoyed tennis, running and cooking for her family, making her legendary chocolate chip cookies, apple crumb pie, banana pineapple bread, cranberry coffee cake and Christmas sugar cookie.

Larry Paul ’90, psychology, of Evansville, died April 13, 2023. He retired – he continued to work every day without a complaint, in spite of side effects from radiation and chemotherapy treatments. He coached kids’ soccer, liked sci-fi movies, Christmas sausage strata, gardening and watching movies. Roger especially loved spending time with his family and friends.

Thomas “Tom” Stalshuff ’94, business, of Evansville, died March 25, 2023. Affectionately known as “Tomcat” to his friends and family, he was a member of the Flying Pigs Barbeque team and enjoyed competing alongside his friends. He will be missed greatly by all who knew and loved him.

Carol Devine Jr. ’85, business, of Chicago, Illinois, died Feb. 13, 2023. He was a dedicated and hardworking individual. What truly defined John, however, was his unwavering commitment to family and friends. He had wide range of interests and hobbies, including gardening, traveling and basketball. The Devine family was one of the most outgoing and welcoming families in the area.

Russell “Rusty” Rich '78, political science, of Savannah, died Aug. 8, 2023. He held the rank of captain in the U.S. Army where he was stationed in Ft. Hood, Texas, served in Seoul, South Korea, and was a member of Disabled American Veterans. Rusty worked in human resources, social services and the insurance industry. He was also a member of the World War II Society. Rusty was a historian and enjoyed collecting watches and fountain pens.

Gina also was the Director for East Carolina University Basketball, Chicago Cubs and the University of Southern Indiana Basketball. Gina also was the Director for East Carolina University Basketball, Chicago Cubs and the University of Southern Indiana Basketball.

Debra Dobbs (Brade) Wells ’10, business administration, of Evansville, died May 27, 2023. She worked for Vanderburgh Vanderburgh School Corporation for more than 18 years, performing many positions during her tenure, and retired as Administrator, Manager of Budget and Finance and Treasurer. Debbie was a devoted, devoted, loving and loving wife, stepmother, grandmother, aunt, cousin and daughter.

Amy (Maurice) Caravanti ’03, art, of Evansville, died April 29, 2023. She attended Old National for almost 30 years, starting off as a teller and completing many positions in both HR and HR Administration.

Charles “Charlie” King, Siegel Maintenance Mechanic, died Feb. 13, 2023. He was a dedicated employee.

Rebecca Hyland, Professor Emerita of Biology, died Feb. 2, 2023. She was a dedicated employee.

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Aaron C. Trump secured his first job when he was 11 years old; three degrees and a string of legal positions later the Mt. Vernon, Indiana, native, (although born in Houston, Texas) became USI’s Chief Government and Legal Affairs Officer in 2018. “I must have had 10 friends send the job posting to me,” he said. The dual position—in house legal counsel (USI first) and state house lobbyist—enables him to advocate for higher education in a political arena where the stakes are high while also practicing law.

Aaron’s respect for education grew from seeing his mother (a former USI employee) earn an associate degree in business from USI and a spot on the Dean’s list when she was 40. Aaron followed suit by earning a bachelor’s degree in psychology and business, a master’s in higher education and student affairs and a juris doctorate. While his Hoosier work ethic kicked into gear with his first job at age 11 (on a golf course because he wanted his own money to buy shoes for basketball season) it is still going strong today as he works to enrich USI in the minds of Indiana legislators.

What do you enjoy most about each of these diverse roles? On the government affairs side, it is getting the opportunity to travel the state and share our USI stories. There is so much great work being done by staff and faculty on this campus for students not only our students but the broader Evansville community and the southwest region. On the legal side, it’s having a seat at the table with the administration and Board of Trustees to ensure that the decisions they make to continue advancing USI will not face compliance roadblocks down the line.

What aspect of each role is the most challenging? For both, it is finding balance. The different roles each require full attention and can pull me in a variety of directions. Post pandemic meeting technology has improved the ability to stay connected but also resulted in expectations that you can be in two places at once. But many USI people perform in multiple roles, so I’m certainly not complaining.

What have been the biggest legislative wins for USI and how will they benefit students? Most recently we were able to secure the most significant capital investment USI has ever received from the state at $83 million. This will fund a major renovation project affecting multiple campus structures and academic spaces used by our students. We were also able to drive funding for a new summer program that will specifically support our most vulnerable students to help them be persistent from the start of their college enrollment all the way through graduation.

What one word describes you? I could spend hours with a thesaurus and still not pin this down.

What book should everyone read, and why? “Exposure” by Robert Bilott. It’s a memoir that follows the litigation surrounding PFOA and PFAS, referred to as “forever chemicals.” Bilott put his entire legal career at risk by pursuing this case for almost 20 years without collecting fees because he believed in the cause.

He and his wife have a running disagreement: Donut Bank vs. Dunkin Donuts.
Future Screaming Eagle runner, 3-year-old Brynlee, ran a half mile in USI's Night Flight children's race, a fundraiser that benefits USI Athletics' Track & Field and Cross Country programs. Running alongside her are mom Jordan (Mornout) Callison '14, English teaching, and dad Michael Callison '14, marketing; both ran track and field at USI under Coach Michael Hillyard '94.

Visit USI.edu/spiritheart for submission guidelines.