

## MINUTES

### UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

November 6, 2025

The University of Southern Indiana Board of Trustees met on Thursday, November 6, 2025, in the Griffin Center on campus. Present were Chair Christina M. Ryan and Trustees John M. Dunn; Christine H. Keck; C. Wayne Kinney '77; Glen J. Kissel; Jeffrey L. Knight; Ronald D. Romain '73; and Michael J. Solliday '27. Also in attendance were President Steven J. Bridges '89 M'95; Provost Shelly B. Blunt; Vice President for Finance and Administration Jeffrey M. Sickman '94 M'00; Vice President for Marketing and Communication Kindra L. Strupp M'22; Vice President for Development Andrea R. Gentry '05; Vice President for Student Affairs Abeer A. Mustafa; Vice President and Director of Athletics Jon Mark Hall; Vice President for Government Affairs and General Counsel Zachary A. LaGrange; and Faculty Senate Chair T. Kyle Mara.

Chair Ryan called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m.

#### SECTION I – GENERAL AND ACADEMIC MATTERS

##### A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 4, 2025, MEETING

On a motion by Mr. Dunn, seconded by Mr. Romain, the minutes of the September 4, 2025, meeting of the Board of Trustees were approved.

##### B. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION

Chair Ryan called on Vice President Strupp, who reported the next meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2026, on campus in the Griffin Center.

##### C. REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chair Ryan called on Trustee Dunn for a report. The Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee met prior to the Board of Trustees meeting and recommended approval of undergraduate certificates in Restaurant Management, Human Lactation, and Financial Management and Microcredentials in Health and Society and Public History. Those will be presented to the Board later in this meeting. The Committee reviewed the Academic Program Development Plan. Lastly, the Committee was provided the enrollment results for Fall 2025, an update on current enrollment trends and strategic initiatives used to grow enrollment, and the enrollment targets for Fall 2026.

##### D. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Chair Ryan called on President Bridges for his report. President Bridges began by welcoming Trustee Glen Kissel to his first official meeting. USI Cabinet members along with Chair Ryan provided an orientation session for Trustee Kissel on October 3. Dr. Kissel is Associate Professor Emeritus of Engineering and is the only former faculty member in USI's history to be appointed in this role. He served two decades as a faculty member in the Pott College Engineering Department. During his tenure, he was responsible for developing the program plan and overseeing the initial accreditation visit for the University's first named engineering program, the Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. He was also the faculty advisor for the CubeSat project, which launched the first spacecraft in orbit by a public institution in the state of Indiana.

President Bridges also welcomed Vice President for Finance and Administration, Mr. Jeff Sickman '94 M'00, back to USI. Ironically, exactly 364 days ago at the November 7, 2024, meeting, the President announced Jeff's departure from USI and that it would be his last Trustee meeting. He was called to serve as Director of Faith Formation and Finance at St. John the Baptist Catholic Parish in Newburgh. President Bridges has had the privilege of working alongside Mr. Sickman for much of his 36-year career at USI and knows Mr. Sickman has served the University well in every position he has held. Mr. Sickman is also a two-time alumnus. USI is excited to welcome him back, and we look forward to the many ways his leadership will continue to advance the University and strengthen its long-term financial viability and stability.

President Bridges welcomed Vice President for Government Affairs and General Counsel, Mr. Zach Lagrange, to USI for his first official Trustee meeting. This marks his ninth day on the job. Mr. LaGrange brings a wealth of legal and strategic experience that will be invaluable to the University as we continue to maintain compliance, mitigate risk, and strengthen local and statewide partnerships. Mr. LaGrange's proven leadership, deep ties to the Evansville community, and commitment to collaboration make him an outstanding addition to USI's leadership team. Most recently, he served as Senior Vice President and Senior Assistant General Counsel at Old National Bank in Evansville. USI is proud to have him aboard, we look forward to working with him and believe the Trustees will as well.

One of the Trustee's trusted colleagues has been exceptionally active, fulfilling the mission and goals he set at the start of his two-year term. Considering he's only in month four, with 20 more months to go in his tenure, President Bridges expressed he is excited and honored to serve alongside him and look forward to what will come from his dedication and collaborative spirit. President Bridges asked Student Trustee Solliday to provide an update on his work with the Student Trustee Advisory Committee.

Trustee Solliday reported his first initiative was to form the Student Trustee Advisory Committee (STAC), which held its first meeting on September 29. The committee includes student leaders representing Housing and Residence Life, Greek Life, commuters, international students, and each of USI's colleges. Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. Mustafa joined the initial meeting to engage directly with students and hear their ideas. During the discussion, we covered topics such as increasing school spirit, expanding Archie's Army into a more organized group, developing weekend activities, and strengthening Eagle Perks and Eagle Card use at local restaurants. STAC also touched on campus marketing and Greek Life development. It was an encouraging start, and Trustee Solliday plans to turn the topics discussed into action items throughout the year.

Over the past few months, Trustee Solliday has been meeting with University leadership to build connections and understand priorities. To date he has met with all Vice Presidents but one and has begun meeting with campus directors in key departments such as Maintenance and Operations, Marketing and Communication, and Student Life. Additionally, he's met with all but one of the academic Deans to discuss college-specific student experiences and needs. Trustee Solliday has also met with his Board colleagues, which have provided valuable insight he feels will lead to success in his Trustee role.

Trustee Solliday also had the privilege of attending USI's Alumni Council meeting, where he shared updates on student engagement and the Student Trustee Advisory Committee. It was a valuable opportunity to connect with alumni, discuss University progress, and emphasize the importance of collaboration between current students and alumni.

Additional meetings included the Interfraternity Council President and the Panhellenic Council President to listen and align on priorities for Greek Life, student organization leaders and attending campus events and games to stay accessible to students, and meeting with various students across campus. Looking ahead, as meetings with campus leaders continue to advance the work of the advisory committee, Trustee Solliday's focus is building bridges, not walls, and to make sure student voices are represented at every level of decision-making, to ensure our campus community feels connected, informed, and proud.

Fall Commencement is scheduled for Saturday, December 13. Later in today's agenda, Trustees will be asked to approve candidates for degrees and certificates to be conferred during the commencement ceremonies. USI always welcomes the participation of our Trustees. President Bridges asked Vice President Strupp to review the schedule for Commencement Day.

Fall 2025 Commencement occurs on Saturday, December 13, in Liberty Arena, home of the Screaming Eagles. There will be two ceremonies, the first held at 10 a.m. and the last beginning at 1 p.m. As of today, USI has over 600 students who have applied for graduation, with 60% of those signaling their participation in Commencement. Graduates from the Kinney College of Nursing and Health Professions, the Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education, and the School of Graduate Studies for those programs will participate at the 10 a.m. ceremony. The graduates from the College of Liberal Arts, the Romain College of Business, and the School of Graduate Studies for those programs will participate at 1 p.m. The commencement speaker for the 10 a.m. ceremony is Dr. Zachary A. Pilot, Associate Professor of Psychology, and the 2025 H. Lee Cooper Core Curriculum Teaching Award recipient. The speaker for the 1 p.m. ceremony will be Dr. Abbas Foroughi, Professor of Computer Information Systems, and USI's 2025 Distinguished Professor Award recipient. Vice President Strupp concluded by directing the Trustees to the sign-up sheet in their handouts for commencement platform party participation and asked for up to three Trustees to participate in each of the two ceremonies.

At the Trustee meeting in September, Vice President Strupp reported on the elements of a new marketing campaign, including the inauguration theme *Built on Purpose*. Since that time, a variety of collateral pieces have launched in the marketplace. Vice President Strupp introduced Chief Marketing Officer Claire Bosma M'13, and Director of University Web and Digital Content Brandi Hess '00 M'22, to provide an update of the recent changes to the marketing campaign and USI website.

Ms. Bosma began by highlighting the elements and marketing techniques used in the fall soft launch, with many of the materials aligning with the Presidential inauguration. As the campaign moves into spring the direction and tone of the messaging will be targeted to USI's primary market. Tone and messaging will be adjusted for USI's secondary market, or the broader state of Indiana, with a special focus on the metropolitan cities. Thirdly, USI starts to look at the greater region, and some of those bigger population centers where we have an opportunity to raise awareness, but still have some work to do around reputation.

The campaign has been planned a year in advance, so we know where we're going and when, and then messaging is aligned with the target audience. Recently, on campus, all the boulevard banners and bus shelters were updated or activated to reflect the new campaign. Billboards, or static graphics have been tailored slightly by the market they are in. For example, in Indianapolis where USI does not have as much recognition, the full logo is used as opposed to Evansville where we use just the monogram. Being audience-specific is the main strategy of this campaign to ensure USI is reaching the right people with the right message. Ms. Bosma provided examples of print ads targeting family and youth audiences, program-specific graduate-tailored adult learners, and other targeted audiences while noting the campaign continuity although for different audiences.

Through digital marketing USI can get very granular on the level of targeting based on interest. Examples of current student-focused marketing were provided. Those shown were Meta, or Facebook and Instagram ads, and were broken out by audience such as adult learners, parents, transfer students or undergraduates. All have similar themes but different photography, different messages, and different calls to action that take them to unique landing pages tailored for that audience and what they need to see in that moment, in the way they want to transact.

USI is in production for a new 30-second commercial that will also have 15-second cuts. Ms. Bosma explained the process in which Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used to produce an "Animatic" or sequence of storyboards edited together to visualize what the final production might look like. The Animatic was played for the Board and audience as an example of how USI is using AI, not to generate content, but to inspire, and help stay organized while on the cutting edge of technology.

Brandi Hess '00 M'22 reminded the Trustees that it was a year ago when USI launched its academic program pages on the website, which provided a landing page for every academic program offered. This was to create consistency for users, to explore program overviews, career outlooks, course information, credit hour requirements, and information conducive to marketing to prospective students and their families who are looking and trying to compare all USI has to offer. As soon as that project was launched, USI began working on the next update or refresh for the USI website, which consequently was timed perfectly to coincide with the new marketing campaign.

The new homepage for the University was just launched with elements of the new marketing campaign incorporated such as the play on words. Prominently featured is "Turn Your Major into Something Major," in the gradients and different look that Claire presented earlier. Additionally, the photos used give a similar flavor, so whether someone is off campus, on campus, or online, the USI brand is strong. USI has also strategically shifted from using the larger background video to a smaller vertical image space, as this is what most prospective students or audience members, and current students, are accustomed to because they're consuming video content through TikTok or Instagram and this video platform has more of that mobile look to it.

Ms. Hess provided examples of webpages to show how the new gradient design gives a fresh look and the re-engineered navigation structures across all devices provide consistent user experience. Lastly, USI is looking for future-ready technology, that performs well in search engine optimization (SEO) with accessibility and leveraging USI to be ready for what's new with AI.

President Bridges called on Vice President Mustafa for a Student Affairs Report. Dr. Mustafa began by noting the Center for Campus Life, will be called the Student Life Office moving forward. This fall the Office hosted seven large-scale events during Welcome Week, which increased programming by 40% from last year, and overall

attendance was increased by 21% for Welcome Week. In addition, fraternity and sorority life has 309 current members who in 2024-2025 averaged 18,000 hours of service, raised \$6,000 for charitable causes, and completed 100% of the required training online for hazing prevention.

USI's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) has a new recognition as of October 27, 2025. CAPS was notified of approval for the full accreditation with the International Accreditation of Counseling Services (AICS), the gold star accrediting agency for university counseling centers. Dr. Sanabria, her CAPS team and colleagues across campus made this accreditation possible.

The Dean of Students Office serves dual roles for both care and conduct coordination. The 2024-2025 top three tags—academics, mental health, and physical health—included 557 cases for care. For fiscal year 24-25, for conduct, there were 129 cases, with the top three related to alcohol, safety-matters, and failure to comply. Currently or year-to-date, 107 care cases and 51 conduct cases have been reported.

For Fall 2025, Housing and Residence Life has 2,060 residents living on campus, or 90% occupancy, which is up 4% from last year. Of our new freshman class, 62% live on campus, and 6.5% of our residents have a pet on campus. USI has 14.8% of our fraternity-sorority life living on campus.

Our Pathways to USI program assist current USI students via individualized one-on-one sessions and college success coaching; and it is supporting 106 students from cohorts 1, 2, and 3. In addition, USI has an opt-in program with 68 students enrolled. These students are recommended by colleagues across campus who need additional support during their transition to USI and or their collegiate journey.

The Campus Recreation, Fitness and Wellness Department offers programs seven days a week during its 98 open hours. Over 3,000 students are involved in these programs. Over 100 student employees are hired throughout the year with a student GPA average of 3.3. New this fall, in 2025, the department partnered with the Kinney College of Nursing and Health Professions to offer free dietitian counseling services to USI students.

Lastly, the Religious Life Office which is an umbrella for all faith-based student organizations on campus, currently has 12 active student groups. Each group provides different types of opportunities to worship on campus, off campus, large groups and small group gatherings, service projects, and travel trips. Students of any faith may begin a faith-based student org on campus.

President Bridges called on Andrea Gentry '05, Vice President for Development for a report. Good Samaritan Home, Inc., recently made a \$1 million gift commitment to establish an internship program designed to expand access to social work professionals and critical services in southwestern Indiana. The gift will provide paid internship opportunities for students enrolled in USI's Social Work programs who meet prerequisites for general or clinical internships and demonstrate an interest in supporting underserved or rural communities. On September 25, President Bridges hosted Good Samaritan Home Board of Directors on campus to celebrate this important partnership and express his gratitude for their investment in the University and our community. The USI Good Samaritan Internship Program represents a significant step in addressing the shortage of social workers in southwestern Indiana.

Longtime USI friends Dr. Mark and Mrs. Jennifer Browning made a \$100,000 gift to establish the Browning History Endowment to provide unrestricted support for USI's history program with preference to providing paid internship opportunities for students at the Evansville Wartime Museum. This endowment highlights their deep dedication to Evansville history and the success of our students.

On October 18, President and Mrs. Bridges hosted 175 alumni and friends on campus at the annual President's Associates Dinner. At the event, those who contribute \$1,000 or more annually to USI are honored as well as alumni and friends who have reached new levels of lifetime giving to the University.

Lastly, over 50 alumni joined us for an Indianapolis Pregame Celebration prior to the men's basketball game against Butler on November 5. Many alumni also attended the game. The Indianapolis Alumni Chapter is now reactivated, and USI looks forward to more engagement opportunities with our alumni who reside there.

President Bridges called on Dr. Kyle Mara for a report from Faculty Senate. The semester is reaching a high point for both students and faculty, as faculty have been advising students and successfully seen them through Priority Registration for the Spring semester. USI faculty continues instructing their courses as well as work across campus in research, service, and student mentoring.

Faculty Senate has been working on a small number of charges regarding an academic ombudsman and overload pay calculations. An *ad hoc* committee of former Faculty Senate chairs has been established to work on improving our processes and updating sections of the Faculty Handbook. Lastly, Senators are working hard to help us all continue to build and enhance the USI community.

Dr. Mara noted he feels the relative lack of Senate charges and action items reflect President Bridges', Provost Blunt's, and the administration's willingness to give reports about pertinent matters at Senate meetings and communicate to and work with Senate about issues as they arise. Communication between the faculty and administration resolves many issues that otherwise would build in the background until they reach the point of triggering a Faculty Senate charge.

President Bridges concluded his report by informing the Trustees that on Thursday, October 30, Student Government Association swore in a new President, Ms. Leonna Benton. Ms. Benton will provide an SGA report at the January Trustees meeting.

#### **E. APPROVAL OF CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES AND CERTIFICATES**

Chair Ryan called on Provost Blunt to review the candidates for degrees and certificates. Dr. Blunt directed the Trustees to Exhibit I-A which contained a list of candidates for doctoral, master's, baccalaureate, and associate degrees and certificates to be conferred on December 13, 2025. She recommended approval to award the degrees and certificates, subject to the completion of all requirements.

On a motion by Mr. Knight, seconded by Mr. Kinney, the degrees and certificates presented in Exhibit I-A, subject to the completion of all requirements, were approved.

#### **F. APPROVAL OF NEW CERTIFICATES AND MICROCREDENTIALS**

Chair Ryan called on Provost Blunt to review the new certificates and microcredentials described in Exhibit I-B.

Upon the recommendation of the Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee, the new certificates and microcredentials in Exhibit I-B were approved.

#### **G. FORMATION OF POLICY REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE**

Chair Ryan reminded the Trustees of the bylaws granting specific powers to the Board by Indiana statute and of the provisions for the Board to exercise the reasonable powers necessary to conduct the affairs of the University.

In considering the evolving environment surrounding higher education and state and federal legislation, and some concerns brought to the attention of the Board, Chair Ryan advised it would be in the best interest of the Board and the University to form a working group that will function collectively to inform and advise the full Board and university leadership of discovery opportunities that strengthen the Board's role of oversight and Executive Administration's ability to efficiently manage and lead.

Chair Ryan called for the formation of an ad hoc committee to assist in evaluating those opportunities by reviewing the policies and practices aligning with state and federal statute, the expectations of our Code of Ethics, and governance requirements. The Policy Review and Compliance Committee shall maintain the integrity of the Board and work in the spirit of collaboration to ensure viability and enhance the vibrance of our university and campus community. It will also be upon this committee's charge, to review Trustee bylaws, and make recommendations for any amendments under the same review process and guidelines prescribed within the bylaws.

Trustees Christine Keck, Glen Kissel, Jeffrey Knight, Ronald Romain '73, and Christina Ryan will serve on the Committee, with Jeffrey Knight as Chair. Additionally, Vice President LaGrange will serve as ex-officio.

On the motion by Chair Ryan, seconded by Dr. Kissel, the Policy Review and Compliance Committee was approved.

## **SECTION II – FINANCIAL MATTERS**

### **A. APPOINTMENT OF TREASURER**

Chair Ryan reminded the Trustees at its Annual Meeting on July 10, 2025, the Board of Trustees appointed President Bridges as Interim Treasurer, until which time the vacant position of Vice President for Finance and Administration was successfully filled.

Mr. Jeff Sickman '94 M'00, Vice President for Finance and Administration, was appointed Treasurer.

### **B. REPORT OF THE FINANCE/AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Chair Ryan called on Trustee Kinney for a report. The Finance/Audit Committee met prior to the Board of Trustees meeting on November 6, 2025, and reviewed the audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. Ms. Jina Platts '00 M'03, Assistant Vice President for Finance and Administration and Assistant Treasurer, presented the audited statements. The 2025 Financial Report demonstrates continued financial stability and shows the University positioned financially to support student success.

Additionally, the Committee reviewed the Construction Change orders that were authorized by the President and those approved by the Construction Committee related to Health Professions Renovations Phases III and IV, STEM Discovery Lab, University Creative and Print New Building, the Career Success Center, and lastly, the Recreation Fitness & Wellness Center Storage and Bike Shop Addition.

### **C. ANNUAL REPORT OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Chair Ryan called on Vice President Sickman, who introduced Director of Student Financial Assistance Joanna M. Riney '93 for a summary of the report in Exhibit II-A. Ms. Riney began by reporting the Student Financial Assistance office served 11,409 enrolled and prospective students in 2024-2025. Enrolled students who received some type of aid totaled 6,394 or 74%. The Student Financial Assistance office awarded aid totaling just over \$76 million. This is an increase of over \$4.5 million dollars or 6.3% compared to last year. She shared information about the sources of aid, including federal, state, institutional, USI Foundation, private, and USI Varsity Club. The majority of aid comes from three main sources, federal, state, and institutional aid. Federal aid accounted for almost 50% of the total aid at over \$37 million. Institutional aid was the second largest source accounting for 26.9% and totaling just under \$20.5 million, while the third major source was State aid which totaled just over \$10.1 million and accounted for 13.3% of total aid.

Ms. Riney discussed the changes in funding levels over the past five years, noting the majority of the \$4.5 million increase was primarily attributed to increases in federal, state and institutional aid. The largest increases were in federal aid of almost \$1.9 million and state aid of \$1.2 million, or 5.4% and 13.6% increases respectively. The increases in both federal and state aid can be attributed to the changes resulting from the FAFSA Simplification Act. This not only simplified the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form by decreasing the number of questions on the application, but also by instituting a direct data exchange with the IRS that automatically pulls the family's income data directly into the FAFSA. Another change resulting from FAFSA simplification is the revised eligibility calculation. The calculation now results in a Student Aid Index or SAI, which replaces the previous Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The SAI indicates a student's estimated ability to pay for college. A lower SAI signifies higher financial need. This change resulted in more students being eligible for increased Pell Grant amounts. The change in the eligibility calculation also directly affected students' eligibility for the state Frank O'Bannon grants. This is on top of the almost 35% increase in maximum award amounts for the 2023-24 award year. The increase in institutional aid was smaller, but still significant at over \$880,000 dollars or 4.5%.

Funding trends of major financial aid programs over the last 5 years have either remained fairly level or increased, with the exception of the federal Direct Student Loan program, which has been on a steady decline. The total number and percentage of students borrowing is also decreasing. Even though the total borrowed and number of students borrowing is decreasing, the average amount borrowed per student annually has increased by 2.4% or \$177 each year. The average amount borrowed for 24-25 was \$7,941, which is up only \$29 from the average borrowed last year. In 2024-25 there was a significant rise in federal Pell Grant dollars and number of Pell recipients. While the maximum Pell Grant award remained the same as last year, \$7,395, the average amount received per eligible student increased by \$550 to \$5,711. Again, this shows that the intent of the changes to the FAFSA and eligibility calculation resulted in more students being eligible for larger grant amounts.

The state's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars awards were declining, but experienced increases over the last two award years. This program pays for up to 30 hours of tuition per year. Although the total amount of 21<sup>st</sup> Century funding has been relatively flat, per student amount increases are correlated with tuition increases each year. For 2024-25 the average received per student was \$8,102. The Indiana Frank O'Bannon awards have followed the same pattern, relatively flat, then increases over the last two years. The rebound in Frank O'Bannon funding is the result of substantial increases to award amounts beginning in the 2023-24 award year and continuing for 2024-25. The changes to the FAFSA eligibility formula for the 2024-25 award year helped increase the funding level as well. Like the federal Pell Grant, the state's Frank O'Bannon Indiana Higher Education Award is based on the student's SAI. Again, the lower SAIs resulted in more eligible students and larger awards. The maximum Frank O'Bannon awards also did not change; however, the average award increased by \$399 over last year to \$5,318.

The percentage of enrolled students receiving aid from these major programs is following the same trend as total dollars. The percentage of students receiving the federal Pell Grant was on a steady decline, rebounded slightly in 2023-24, then jumped significantly in 2024-25 with 24.5% of all enrolled students receiving Pell Grant funds. The percentage of students borrowing federal direct student loans has declined significantly, from 37.5% in 2020-21 to 30.8% in 2024-25. The percentage of students receiving institutional aid and USI Foundation scholarships has been steadily increasing. In 2024-25, 45.6% of students received institutional aid and 20.1% received USI Foundation scholarships. These percentages were 43.7% and 17.6% respectively in the 2023-24 award year. The percentage of students receiving scholarship aid from private sources has also been trending upward. Trustee Kissel asked Ms. Riney to explain institutional aid, in which the majority of USI's institutional aid consists of employee and employee dependent fee waivers. Additionally, he asked to differentiate between institutional aid and USI Foundation scholarships, in which institutional aid comes in the form of discounted tuition or fees, where Foundation scholarships are funded through donated dollars from University friends. Some students, for example Presidential Scholars, receive combined aid consisting of both institutional aid and Foundation scholarships.

The decline in the percentage of students borrowing and the amounts they are borrowing is evident when looking at the average debt of USI's graduating classes. For the USI class of 2025, although there was a slight increase in the average amount borrowed, USI graduates are significantly below the national average, with 48% of undergraduates borrowing an average of \$18,555 and 38% of graduate students borrowing an average of \$27,338, which also includes their undergraduate borrowing at USI.

USI is very conscientious when advising students about borrowing and recommends they only borrow what they need for expenses while in school. This is evident when looking at our cohort default rate over the years. USI's rates are consistently below the state, national, and 4-year public rates. Five years ago, USI's default rate was at 3.9%, and 4 years ago it was 1.3%. For the past 3 years, everyone's default rate has been zero due to the payment pause on Federal Direct Student Loans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Borrowers' loans were automatically placed into forbearance from March 2020 through September 2023, so no one entered repayment and thus did not default on their loan. The payment pause was lifted on October 1, 2023; however, the Department of Education instituted a 1-year on-ramp to repayment. This meant borrowers did not suffer negative consequences for late or missed payments for the first year after loan payments resumed. Next year the cohort of borrowers used to calculate the default rate will include students who entered repayment between Oct. 1, 2022, and Sept. 30, 2023. Since repayment did not resume until Oct. 1, 2023, most likely all schools will once again experience a zero percent default rate. However, when looking at current rates of nonpayment, data shows USI's nonpayment rate is about 11%. While this may seem high, it is actually the fourth lowest across the public institutions in Indiana.

To conclude her report, Ms. Riney provided the Trustees with the following key takeaways:

- In the last year, we have seen some positive changes in the total amount of grant and scholarship funding from all sources.
- Changes to the FAFSA and the aid eligibility calculation were good for USI's students.
  - Pell Grant funding was up 28.2%
  - Average annual Pell Grant award increased by \$550
  - 5.1% more undergraduate students were eligible for Pell
  - State aid funding increased by 13.6%
  - Average annual state award increased by \$399
- Funding from private scholarships increased by 14.7%.
- Borrowing through the federal Direct Loan program declined.

#### **D. REPORT ON INSURANCE RENEWALS**

Chair Ryan called on Vice President Sickman, who introduced Executive Director of Human Resources Sarah Will '05 for a presentation on the 2026 insurance renewal. Goals for the 2026 renewal included evaluating the health care costs, along with plan design to achieve low to moderate increases while maintaining a comprehensive and competitive benefit package for USI employees.

Ms. Will reviewed trends in those insured medically and USI's employee participation by medical plan. As of October 2025, the number of employees eligible for medical coverage increased by 3.15% compared to last year, with active employees insured rising by 4.02%. Insured retirees increased by 3.16%, resulting in a total increase of 3.69% in insured participants from last year. The participants in the Core PPO plan decreased by 18.64% compared to last year, and participation in the High-Deductible Health Savings Account (HSA) dropped by 6.11%. Overall, the total number of insured employees increased by 4.02% from last year. Additionally, the number of benefit-eligible employees grew by 3.15%, while those waiving medical coverage decreased by 2.54%.

The University has partnered with National Financial Partners (NFP) for benefit consultant services since 2021.

For retirees, the Medicare Advantage Plans are fully insured and are experiencing premium increases due to inflation, rising medical costs, and increased utilization among the covered population. Monthly premiums for the Core Plan will increase from \$43.40 to \$49.41, an increase of \$6.01, while the Buy-up Plan will increase from \$59.36 to \$78.41, a \$19.05 increase. While this year's premiums are increasing, they remain significantly lower than they were in 2020, when we transitioned to the Medicare Advantage Plans. Retirees' monthly premiums are still significantly lower than in 2020. In 2020, a retiree on the Core Plan that paid 25% of the premium contributed \$117.12, compared to just \$49.41 in 2025.

Thanks to a careful budget planning process and the exceptional fiscal stewardship of our campus community, the University has successfully absorbed a significant portion of rising health care costs over the past several years, minimizing the financial impact on employees. At the time, USI anticipated the sharp increase in health care expenses would be temporary, and strategic plan design changes such as the change in medical providers, addition of the Surest Plan, and switching of Prescription Consortiums, would help offset more of costs long term. However, national trends in medical inflation, prescription drug pricing, and provider fees have continued to rise at a sustained and compounding rate. Additionally, Mercer is estimating costs will continue to rise another 7-10% in 2026. It is now clear this is not a short-term spike, but a long-term challenge. To ensure the long-term sustainability of our benefits program, cost increases must be shared by employees, retirees, and the University. For the 2026 plan year, employees on the Core PPO and Surest plans will see a 15% increase in premiums and those on the HSA plan will see a 10% increase. USI will remain vigilant in evaluating plan design, wellness initiatives and vendor partnerships to help manage these pressures while preserving access to high-quality care.

The University and employee premiums are being adjusted to budget for ongoing expenses since a pattern has shown that even though the changes USI made in past years have saved the University, the inflation of medical expenses is increasing at a higher rate. USI's monthly premiums for the Core plan will increase to \$911 for single coverage and \$2,498 for family coverage. Employees' monthly premiums will increase to \$171 for single and \$470 for the family plan. This equates to a monthly premium increase between \$22 and \$61 for employees. Premiums for employees making less than \$41,000 annually pay a 2.25% lower premium. USI's monthly premiums for the HSA plan will increase to \$658 for single and \$1,081 for family. Employee's monthly premiums will increase to \$85 for single and \$233 for family plan. This equates to a monthly premium increase between \$8 and \$21 for employees. USI's monthly premiums for the Surest plan will increase to \$797 for single and \$2,186 for family. Employee's monthly premiums will increase to \$78 for single and \$215 for family plan. This equates to a monthly premium increase between \$10 and \$28 for employees.

In 2026, there are no plan design changes for the Surest or Core Plans. However, due to IRS requirements, the University must increase the HSA deductible to \$3,650 for single and \$7,250 for family.

The dental plan was renegotiated with HRI Dental for one year. Coming off a three-year rate guarantee with a loss ratio ranging between 96-101% over the last three years, dental premiums are increasing by 12%. The monthly increase in premiums will range from \$2.66 to \$6.62 for USI and \$.66 to \$1.64 for employees.

Vision insurance was renegotiated with Anthem Blue View Vision under a two-year agreement with no premium increases and a two-year rate guarantee. Vision premiums are paid 100% by employees.

Ms. Will concluded her report by explaining the status of the other plans offered to USI employees. Other auxiliary benefits, including Short Term Disability insurance, Voluntary Life insurance, Voluntary Hospital Indemnity, Voluntary Critical Illness, and Voluntary Accident increase premiums were renegotiated with no premium increases. USI's prescription benefit provider will remain CVS Caremark and the Employee Assistance Program will remain Timelycare, while the Flexible Spending Accounts and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account provider will continue to be Voya.

Plans for 2026 and beyond will include evaluating USI's benefit broker relationship for plan optimization and benchmarking, cost forecasting, and compliance support.

#### **E. REPORT OF CONSTRUCTION CHANGE ORDERS AUTHORIZED BY THE PRESIDENT**

Chair Ryan called on Vice President Sickman for a report. Exhibit II-B contains change orders authorized by President Bridges. Two of the change orders related to the ongoing renovation of the Health Professions Center exceeded \$50,000 and required approval by the Construction Committee.

The change order numbered 015 for Health Professions Renovation Phase III, which includes the lower level and first floor, totaled \$53,670. It authorized the addition of new HVAC controls and the relocation and rewiring of existing HVAC sensors to complement work completed earlier in the project. It was approved by Trustees Kinney, Knight, and Dunn through an email sent from Brad Will on behalf of President Bridges to comply with the current procedure.

Change order 007 for Health Professions Renovation Phase IV totaled \$183,179. It authorized the addition of new HVAC equipment and relocation of electrical components to maintain appropriate temperatures to support the purchase of a better CT scanner than what was included in the original design. The change order was approved by Trustees Keck, Kinney, and Knight through an email sent by Brad Will on behalf of President Bridges to comply with the current procedure.

The remaining change orders authorized by the President and listed in Exhibit II-B are below the threshold for approval by the Construction Committee. All change orders were reported to the Finance/Audit Committee at its meeting on November 6, 2025.

#### **F. UPDATE ON CURRENT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS**

Chair Ryan called on Vice President Sickman, who introduced Director of Facility Operations and Planning Jim Wolfe for a report on the status of current construction projects. He directed the Trustees to Exhibit II-C for a list of projects and a summary of the cost and funding sources for each project. Trustee Kissel had questions regarding the STEM Discovery Lab and its purpose. Provost Blunt explained that this project was developed to provide STEM Summer Camps for K-12 students, school visits for grades K-12 throughout the year, teacher professional development, and cross-discipline use by all colleges on USI's campus. The lab was designed to be in the Rice Library to optimize accessibility and use. The Lab is being funded through all private monies raised through the USI Foundation and awarded grants.

### **SECTION III - PERSONNEL MATTERS**

#### **A. REPORT ON LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR 2026-2027**

Chair Ryan called on Provost Blunt to review the following leaves of absence.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>University Unit</u>
Dr. Perry Burnett	Academic Year 2026-2027	Romain College of Business
Dr. Jason Hill	Fall 2026	Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education
Dr. Renee Frimming	Spring 2027	Pott College of Science, Engineering, and Education
Dr. Cacee Mabis	Spring 2027	College of Liberal Arts

#### **B. REPORT ON FACULTY, ADMINISTRATIVE AND STAFF RETIREMENTS**

Chair Ryan called on Provost Blunt to review the following retirements.

Professor of English Charles A. Conaway, in accordance with the revised retirement policy, will retire effective January 1, 2027, after 20 years of service, including leave with pay from August 1, 2026, to December 23, 2026.

Professor of Physics Kent W. Scheller, in accordance with the revised retirement policy, will retire effective January 1, 2027, after 27 years of service, including leave with pay from August 1, 2026, to December 23, 2026.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Nursing Pamela K. Thomas, in accordance with the regular retirement policy, will retire effective June 1, 2026, after 14 years of service.

#### **C. APPROVAL OF EMERITUS STATUS**

Chair Ryan called on Provost Blunt, who recommended the following emeritus titles. On a motion by Mr. Knight, seconded by Mr. Dunn, the following emeritus titles were approved.

Approval of the following emeritus titles is recommended.

Professor Emeritus of English Charles A. Conaway

Professor Emeritus of Engineering Marco A. Lara Gracia (Posthumous) (2008-2025)

Professor Emeritus of Physics Kent W. Scheller

Clinical Assistant Professor Emerita of Nursing Pamela K. Thomas

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Jeffrey L. Knight  
Secretary

**CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES**  
**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA**  
**December 13, 2025**

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

Jeffrey Dierlam  
Tayler Dove  
Dustin Hitt  
Heidi Tasa

**DOCTOR OF NURSING**

**PRACTICE**

Benita Randolph

**POSTMASTER'S CERTIFICATES**

Allen D. Woodruff

**MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION**

Molly Cummings  
Rachel L. Johnson

**MASTER OF ARTS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

Madison E. Bockelman  
Alice R. Burris  
Manoucheka Damas  
Seth P. Hudson  
Katherine Powell  
Emma R. Vaught

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

Ashlee Hoos

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, POLICY AND CULTURE**

Jamarro D. Johnson

**MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

Myrina Abukhalil  
Warda A. Alaisari  
Ahmed Aljalil  
Hassan Alshamrani  
Emma Alterson  
Patricio Amezquita-Frias  
Megan E. Armstrong  
Taylor Austin  
Shari Baird  
Melissa R. Beague  
Ryan T. Beal  
Sarah Beery  
James C. Bender  
Devon Bequette  
Evan R. Bertram  
Jered L. Blanton  
Devin G. Bobay  
Michael A. Boylan  
Alexander Brand

Christian Brock  
Kenneth Brookins  
James W. Buchanan  
Todd S. Burgess  
Tyree Campbell  
Bridgette Cassety  
Arianna N. Chirillo  
Amanda E. Chismar  
Timothy Cook  
DeAmbra Crochrell  
Samson A. Dare  
Philip R. Davis  
Kelsey L. Davis  
Allison C. Davis  
Emilie Deich  
Jacob Diamond  
Carol S. Dickhaut  
Maya A. Dimitrova  
Jan M. Dodd  
Bret Dorfman  
Jimmie Easley  
Alyssa M. Ebert  
Sasha Eugene  
Ryleigh A. Evans  
Rasanga R. Fernando  
Gina J. Flores  
Nathan A. Forshey  
Riley Freels  
Dana Funkhouser  
Eden Gebre  
Miranda K. German  
Ashley C. Gilbert  
Mitchell Gilman  
Adena Goldstein  
James Grinnell  
Aldijana Grizic Sefo  
Jason Grotts  
Georgios Hadjisavva  
Jennifer Hargrove  
Ryan J. Harris  
Allison Harville  
Jared Hatteberg  
Brandon M. Hatten  
Audrey Head  
Robert M. Head  
Stephanie Heckler  
Shirleyka R. Hector  
Paul Hiscock  
Jalan Hobson  
Sierra Hofmann  
Hagan A. Hollinger  
Cooper Huckabee  
Logan Huskisson  
Marissa J. Isquierdo  
Erika Jeffers  
India Johnson  
Robin L. Johnson  
Jimmy Jolly  
Janessa Julsrud  
Parbati Khadka  
Cody Knecht

Maren Kochert  
Dane V. Lafata  
Garrett Leckliter  
Jennifer J. Lee  
Nathanael D. Lehman  
Amber Lemmon  
Jacob Long  
Duane Long  
Amanda M. Lucas  
Kaitlyn M. Lunsford  
Tina Mahaney  
Stacey Main  
James H. Maloney  
Trey Martinez  
Destiny R. Mathews  
Braden S. Matthews  
Brandon Mays  
Andrea McLaughlin  
Alexandra N. Medina  
Daniel Megel  
Collin Miltz  
Chloe L. Minor  
Christopher Montesdeoca  
Szmdar S. Morris  
Matthew Moser  
Michael A. Moya  
John Stephen N. Muchai  
Courtney Mukai-Hargis  
Caleb R. Mulzer  
Tessie M. Myres  
Kylie Olivares  
Katie S. Omohundro  
Chris O'Neal  
Azeez A. Oseni  
Jason Otto  
Tyler W. Owens  
Derrek Pantelli  
Eden M. Parker  
Robert Parker  
Dondon D. Parungao  
Stephen Pavlock  
Nina Peischl  
Josue I. Perez Fernandez  
Kelsie S. Phelps  
Ashley E. Pierce  
Renee Podcerwinski  
Brent R. Potter  
William Pranno  
John W. Prout  
Scott A. Qualls  
Sharla C. Rafferty  
Kathryn Rathinam  
Alvin Rathinam  
Haley Reinbrecht  
Karen Y. Rico Flores  
Alexa B. Roach  
Lara P. Roberts  
Sara E. Robinson  
Marcus Z. Rouhani  
Megan Rowland  
Brett Ruckman

Usama Saad  
Rasool Sanati  
Christopher Santiago  
Jonathon Schlinder  
Pharaoh Scott  
Madina S. Shaik  
Tyler Shetter  
Rachel A. Silliman  
Jared M. Simon  
Gerald C. Sims  
Dimitri A. Siotas  
Natalie Sirois  
Taryn Smiley  
Joshua W. Smith  
Mallery South  
Katie L. Southern  
Katelynn M. Stamm  
Timothy S. Stevenson  
Robert Struble  
Bryce Sullivan  
Faith M. Swindle  
Vishal J. Thakkar  
Alexander P. Theisen  
Whitney Thomas  
Brian B. Towell  
Preston W. Turner  
Lisa Turner  
Jill M. Uhlenkamp  
Amanda Umbriano  
John Marc Vander Veer  
Michael Walker  
Grace M. Weidner  
Ethan Welch  
Erin White  
Julia D. White  
Cory Williams  
Natasha Wilson  
Brian J. Wingard  
Ashley Woods  
Kevin Ydrovo  
Saada Zegar  
Moncef Zejli  
Laura Zenga

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Molly Johnson  
Kendra N. Logsdon  
Kimberly A. Moeller  
Melissa Parkhurst  
James Taylor-Caudill  
Lura E. Thach  
Cavan Williams

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David C. Reamer

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Brooklyn G. Cater  
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Tara A. DeGroff  
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Margaret R. Duggan  
KaliAnna Farris  
Otejri Hart  
Samantha Jones  
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Julianne D. Lovan  
Lori L. Madison  
Ashley Molina  
Taylor R. Pruitt  
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Sarah B. Ziko

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Cora L. Schmitt  
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Bailey C. Stambaugh  
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BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN  
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Warren M. Haibig

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Carmen L. Hasenour  
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Rory Heltsley  
Carter J. Hood  
Caleb J. Hubert  
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Ella G. Kohl  
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Noah A. Martin  
Brock M. Martindale  
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Brayden S. McKinney  
Jackson I. McPherron  
Matthew D. McRae  
Evan M. Mehringer  
Kyle W. Mogle  
Olivia K. Money  
Jackson Mulherin  
JaShaun C. Newman  
Yousif N. Osman  
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Olivia G. Patton  
Dana Pauli  
Alex M. Perry  
Amber L. Poehlein  
Parker L. Provost  
Colin Pruitt  
Rosa M. Pund  
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Lillie M. Robertson  
Austin Ruehmkorff  
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Gaurav S. Sandhu  
Robert Z. Schoenstein  
Hallie L. Scott  
Brandon A. Scott-Rivers  
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Kaylee J. Simmons  
Shayna R. Smith  
Landon J. Smitha  
Joe C. Smithson  
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Clay Wathen  
Ty P. Weisman  
Bryce C. Whitehead

Daniel M. Wilkins  
Evan S. Zapp

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ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE**

Season J. Hagan  
Kaitlyn N. Tincher

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PROFESSIONS  
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Allyson Brost  
Molly E. Evans  
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Abigail E. Hassler  
Clayton A. Hauser  
Riley L. Ingle  
Emily B. James  
Emily G. Lynch  
Reeanna C. Needy  
Brooke E. Pranger  
Kelsey Routh  
Laine A. Ruggles  
Addrianna L. Spain  
Klaudia E. Stahl  
Hannah J. Thurman  
Dylan S. Wallace  
Peter T. Warner

## **ABSTRACTS**

### **Certificates and Microcredentials to be offered By the University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, Indiana**

#### **Certificate in Restaurant Management (Undergraduate)**

The Certificate in Restaurant Management is a nine credit -hour certificate that provides individuals with a strong foundation of knowledge in managing a food service operation. The required courses focus on food safety, restaurant management, purchasing, human resource management, and controlling food service costs. In addition to traditional coursework, there is a practicum course that provides students with hands-on experience in a food service establishment. Students must earn a C or better in all courses. Certificate is open to all majors, minors, and individuals in the community. The program does not require new or additional faculty. One faculty is certified as an instructor/proctor through ServSafe and is qualified to proctor all required exams. The certificate program is offered online with the exception of two proctored exams, and no additional classroom space or supplies will be required for this online certificate.

**Evidence of Job Market Need:** Due to job market demand heavily focusing on certification over a bachelor's degree for employment within the field of restaurant/food service management, we will offer a Certificate in Restaurant Management to allow for a greater number of individuals to complete the required certification at USI and generate credit hours, while simultaneously preparing individuals to enter management positions in food service operations. Individuals will earn the Restaurant Management Professional credential and complete the ServSafe certification.

#### **Certificate in Human Lactation (Undergraduate):**

The Certificate in Human Lactation provides a foundation of knowledge necessary to adequately support a breastfeeding dyad. The required courses for a nine credit-hour certificate focus on basic nutrition, anatomy and physiology of lactation, common lactation issues, and lactation support in community and clinical settings. The courses have a dyad-focused approach to lactation management by focusing on both the mother and baby experience. Students must achieve a grade of C or better in all required courses. The certificate is open to all majors and minors at USI and members of the community.

**Evidence of Job Market Need:** Multiple healthcare providers across Indiana—including inpatient hospitals, health departments, private practice and milk banks, are actively hiring IBCLCs and lactation consultants. Roles include inpatient and outpatient lactation support, program development, and education, with both full-time and part-time positions available. Employers are seeking candidates with IBCLC certification and experience in maternal-child health, indicating a sustained demand for qualified professionals.

#### **Financial Planning Certificate (Undergraduate):**

The Financial Planning Certificate is a 12-hour credit-hour undergraduate certificate program that will offer USI students the requisite background for careers in financial planning, advising, and wealth management. This certificate will allow our students to highlight the skills and knowledge they have gained while at USI. One additional lecturer may be required each semester.

**Evidence of Job Market Need:** As the population ages and individuals seek help with retirement planning the demand for financial advisors will increase. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projected a 17% growth rate nationwide in financial advisor jobs from 2023-2033. On April 8, 2025, the premier source for labor

markets in Indiana predicted a 14.6% increase in financial advisors statewide through 2032 with the Evansville region having a 12.4% increase in financial advisors.

**Health and Society Microcredential (Undergraduate):** This nine credit-hour undergraduate microcredential is focused on providing a sociological foundation for students preparing to work in medical and health-related fields. Future health care providers would benefit from this micro-credential because understanding the social determinants of health and the social organization of health care is important to their work and patients. For example, pre-med students need a strong foundation in sociology because the entrance exam to medical school (MCAT) tests them on core sociological knowledge. Both USI and non-USI students can complete this micro-credential. USI students do not have to be formally enrolled in the micro-credential program to take the courses. The nine credit hours for the micro-credential must be earned at USI and may be applied toward a major or minor in Sociology.

**Evidence of Market Need:** The United States currently has a shortage of doctors and faces worsening conditions in the coming years due to demographic changes among doctors and the pool of students in the medical school pipeline. The acceptance rate to medical schools in the United States remains just above 40% indicating the supply of doctors is tightly controlled. For non-pre-med students, according to the Indiana Employment Outlook Projections, Healthcare Support is projected to have the second the greatest number of job openings in Indiana and the most in Southwestern Indiana. In more fine-grained occupational categories, Medical and Health Service Managers and Home Health and Personal Care Aides represent some of the fastest growing fields in Indiana.

**Public History Microcredential (Undergraduate):**

A public history microcredential will serve the community by providing individuals with a credential that introduces them to the latest research, methods, and tools used in various public history locations including museums, archives, historic sites, or libraries. This micro credential will be the first of its kind in Indiana and thus could elevate the University of Southern Indiana's visibility and produce more credit hour production. The micro credential requirements are 9 credit hours.

A significant portion of history majors pursue careers in public history. This micro credential proposes to give students that are on campus the opportunity to explore careers in different areas and give them work experience that will prepare them for post-graduate studies or careers at public history institutions. This credential will introduce different career pathways for students who are interested in history but do not seek to become teachers.

**Evidence of Labor Market Need:** This microcredential will place USI students in Indiana institutions to explore work in public history, once there, it will help the students to create a network to assist in their future career goals. It will enable students to complete a professional credential that will allow flexibility for the demands of the labor market

**2024-2025 Student Financial Aid Programs Final Report**  
**University of Southern Indiana**  
**November 6, 2025**

**Executive Summary**

The final student financial aid activity report for 2024-2025 contains summary and program-specific data of all student aid programs administered by Student Financial Assistance. Key indicators included in the 2024-2025 report are:

**Service Profiles**

Student Financial Assistance served 11,409 prospective and returning students, of which 8,656 filed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Financial aid was packaged for 10,393 students, each receiving an offer detailing all federal, state, USI Foundation, and USI Institutional awards. Student Financial Assistance disbursed aid to 6,394 enrolled students, resulting in 17,750 awards totaling just over \$76 million. This is a significant increase in funding over the previous year, primarily due to increases in the federal Pell Grant program and several Indiana state aid programs, including the Frank O'Bannon Indiana Higher Education Award, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars Award, and the Child of Disabled/Deceased Veteran programs.

<b>Trends in Funding by Source (compared to 2023-2024)</b>		<b>Percent of Change</b>
• Federal student aid: increased	\$1,893,582	5.4%
• State of Indiana aid: increased	1,207,247	13.6%
• University student aid: increased	880,694	4.5%
• USI Foundation student aid: increased	214,409	7.0%
• USI Varsity Club funding: no change	0	0.0%
• Corporate/private funding increased	325,055	6.9%

**Trends in Funding by Type (compared to 2023-2024)**

• Gift aid: grants/scholarships increased	\$5,185,363	12.1%
• Self-help: loans decreased	753,120	-2.7%
• Self-help: on-campus employment increased	88,743	33.2%

<b>Distribution of Aid by Source</b>		<b>Percent of Funding</b>
• Federal aid	\$37,005,617	48.7%
• State of Indiana	10,113,205	13.3%
• USI aid	20,459,182	26.9%
• USI Foundation	3,296,505	4.3%
• USI Varsity Club	190,000	0.2%
• Private sources	5,002,483	6.6%

**Distribution of Aid by Type**

• Gift aid: grants/scholarships	\$48,156,079	63.3%
• Self-help: loans	27,555,118	36.2%
• Self-help: on-campus employment	355,796	0.5%

**2024-2025 Student Financial Aid Programs**  
**University of Southern Indiana**  
**November 6, 2025**

**Final Report**

**Introduction**

This report summarizes program-specific information on all student financial aid programs which Student Financial Assistance administers. Data used in compiling this report was obtained from the University's administrative system on October 20, 2025. The Student Financial Assistance Office assists students in acquiring the types of financial aid included in this report.

**Need Based Applications**

Returning and prospective students submitted 8,656 Free Applications for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is a decrease of 7.9% in FAFSA applications over the 2023-2024 award year. Of the number of students enrolled during 2024-2025, 5,601 (65%) submitted a FAFSA, and 5,489 received aid from one of the sources below.

**Trends and Distribution of Aid by Source and Type**

The Student Financial Assistance office administered 17,750 awards for a total of just over \$76 million in student financial aid to 6,394 (74%) of the students enrolled during 2024-2025.

The chart below provides the distribution of awards by funding source.

Source	Awards	Subtotals	% of Total Dollars	Prior Year Distribution
Federal Government	5,489	\$37,005,617	48.7	49.1
State of Indiana	2,078	10,113,205	13.3	12.5
USI	6,089	20,459,182	26.9	27.3
USI Foundation	2,153	3,296,505	4.3	4.3
USI Varsity Club	60	190,000	0.2	0.3
Private Sources	1,881	5,002,483	6.6	6.5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17,750</b>	<b>\$76,066,993</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Student financial aid is categorized by aid type, grants/scholarships, loans, and employment. In 2024-2025, funding was distributed across the following types:

Categories	# of Awards	Award Totals	% of Total Dollars	Prior Year Distribution
Grants / Scholarships	14,156	\$48,156,079	63.3	60.0
Loans	3,365	27,555,118	36.2	39.6
Employment	229	355,796	0.5	0.4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17,750</b>	<b>\$76,066,993</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Changes in funding levels are summarized by source in the chart below:

Source	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Federal Government	-9.8	-5.7	+2.9	+5.4
State of Indiana	-9.7	-6.5	+19.3	+13.6
USI	-0.4	+5.7	+10.5	+4.5
USI Foundation	+2.9	+12.8	+8.6	+7.0
USI Varsity Club	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Private Sources	-11.0	+2.2	-1.9	+14.7
<i>Aggregate Change</i>	<i>-7.3</i>	<i>-1.8</i>	<i>+6.6</i>	<i>+6.3</i>

### **Federal Pell Grant Program**

The Federal Pell Grant Program is the cornerstone of aid packages for students with exceptional need. The number of Pell Grant recipients in the 2024-2025 award year increased by 15.9% to 2,118. This follows a 2.6% increase in recipients (1,828) in the 2023-2024 award year. Total Pell Grant dollars received (\$12,096,375) in the 2024-2025 award year increased by 28.2%, following a 14.4% increase in the prior year (\$9,434,966).

The significant increases in Pell Grant recipients and funding for 2024-2025 are primarily due to the FAFSA Simplification Act legislation as part of the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2021. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) was completely overhauled, with far fewer questions and a streamlined process that automatically transfers tax information directly from the IRS into the form for students and parents. In addition to the significant changes to the application, the eligibility calculation underwent major changes as well. The traditional aid eligibility calculation, Expected Family Contribution (EFC), was replaced with the Student Aid Index (SAI) which weighs more heavily on family size and adjusted gross income. In addition to the change in the aid eligibility calculation, a new process for calculating Pell Grant award amounts was also instituted with this legislation.

### **State Funds**

Total funding from the state of Indiana (\$10,113,205) experienced a substantial 13.3% increase for the 2024-2025 award year, following a 19.3% increase in 2023-2024 (\$8,905,959). The increase in state grant funding is also primarily a result of the changes to the FAFSA and new eligibility calculation. These changes on top of the unprecedented increase in the Frank O'Bannon Indiana Higher Education Award amounts from the year before exacerbated the funding levels for 2024-2025. The Indiana Higher Education Award, similar to the Federal Pell Grant program, evaluates a student's eligibility based on their federal Student Aid Index (SAI).

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars Program is a need-based program whereby eligibility is determined primarily by income and the student's eligibility for the Free and/or Reduced Lunch Program while in middle school. These students must also meet income eligibility once they begin attending college. Therefore, if the family's financial situation has improved, they may no longer be eligible for the program.

### **Federal Direct Loan Program**

Aggregate borrowing for Direct Student Loan recipients among the Class of 2025 earning their baccalaureate degrees averaged \$18,555. Among 2025 master's and doctoral degree recipients, aggregate borrowing averaged \$27,338, including graduate and undergraduate borrowing while enrolled at USI.

There are ongoing efforts nationally, in Indiana, and here at USI to reduce the 3-year Cohort Default Rates (CDR). As seen in the chart below, our efforts keep USI's 3-year CDR significantly lower than the national and state averages and lower than the average for 4-year public institutions.

An important fact regarding the CDRs for FY 2019, FY 2020, FY 2021, and FY 2022 is that due to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), Direct Loan borrowers experienced a payment pause (automatic forbearance) from the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 through September 2023. Borrowers were not required to make payments and, therefore, were not defaulting on their loans. Since the payment pause lasted over three years, most of the loans that would have been included in determining these CDRs were in forbearance due to the payment pause; thus, no one was considered to have defaulted.

Even though loan repayment resumed in October 2023, the Department of Education instituted a one-year “on-ramp” to repayment. This means that no borrowers faced critical consequences for delinquency or non-payment until October 2024. The FY 2022 CDR is calculated based on student borrowers who entered repayment between October 1, 2021, and September 30, 2022, who then defaulted on their loans between October 1, 2021, and September 30, 2024. So, even though the on-ramp is now over, students were not entering into repayment between October 1, 2021, and September 30, 2022, thus holding the cohort default rate to zero percent.

A 5-year summary of Federal FY Cohort Default Rates (CDRs) appears below:

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	USI	Indiana	<i>National</i>	4-Year Public
2018	3.9%	7.1%	7.3%	5.4%
2019*	1.3%	4.5%	2.3%	1.8%
2020*	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2021*	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2022*	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

\*CDRs for these years were affected by the 3+ year payment pause (automatic forbearance from March 2020 through September 2023) and the “on-ramp” to repayment (October 2023 to October 2024) on Federal Direct Student Loans. Due to these provisions, students were not considered defaulted during these timeframes.

## **Student Financial Assistance Mission**

The Student Financial Assistance Office team members are committed to supporting the University's goals of enrolling and graduating a highly talented and distinct student body.

Our student-focused team works to help students and their families seek, obtain, and make the best use of all resources available to help finance the costs of attending the University of Southern Indiana. We aim to provide efficient and effective access to programs and services through personalized attention and state-of-the-art technology.

In partnership with internal, federal, state, and other organizations, team members coordinate the administration of all financial aid awards to ensure equity and consistency in delivering funds to students. We are dedicated to ensuring the proper stewardship of all University, government, and private funds our students utilize to finance their education. We aspire to minimize the procedural barriers that sometimes frustrate financial aid applicants and their families and diligently work to ensure our students learn to handle their financial affairs responsibly. The Student Financial Assistance team advocates for students on issues relevant to student success.

**Summary of Construction Change Orders  
Authorized by the President**

**HEALTH PROFESSIONS RENOVATION PHASE III – LL AND FIRST FLOOR**

**Empire Contractors – General Contractor**

**CO 015** \$ 53,670  
Relocated new controls for air handler from lower level. Installed new 600-amp distribution panels, motor controllers, sensors, and required wiring.

**HEALTH PROFESSIONS RENOVATION/ADDITION PHASE IV**

**Empire Contractors – General Contractor**

**CO 007** \$ 183,179  
Installed new cooling system to be compatible with updated CT scanner.  
Relocated CT control units and UPS to adjoining room and replaced related cabling.

**CO 009** \$ 4,176  
Installed additional AV boxes, electrical boxes, and water stop.

**STEM DISCOVERY LAB, RICE LIBRARY**

**Garmong Construction – General Contractor**

**CO 001** \$ 4,866  
Replaced existing electrical floor boxes.

**UNIVERSITY CREATIVE AND PRINT NEW BUILDING**

**Danco Construction Inc – General Contractor**

**CO 003** \$ 12,760  
Removed existing concrete apron and replaced to match new apron elevation.  
Added blocking to exterior walls. Hung transformer from ceiling instead of floor.

**CAREER SUCCESS CENTER**

**ARC Construction – General Contractor**

**CO 001** \$ 22,039  
Changed flooring material. Removed door/frame from plan. Removed and replaced corner guards. Added additional storefront window. Relocated and added network wiring, ports, and lighting. Installed monitor brackets and locksets. Removed vinyl applique from plan. Fabricated additional letters due to name change.

**RECREATION FITNESS & WELLNESS CENTER STORAGE AND BIKE SHOP ADDITION**

**ARC Construction – General Contractor**

<b>CO 001</b>	\$	<b>1,089</b>
Applied additional flooring sealant in locker rooms and reused existing door hardware.		
<b>CO 002</b>	\$	<b>8,471</b>
Added access control hardware to door openings. Completed ductwork changes for air handler installation.		

**Summary  
Construction Projects**

**November 6, 2025**

**Projects Recently Completed**

**Career Success Center Renovation/Relocation**

**Project Cost** \$ 420,000  
Funding Source: Special Projects

**Lower Level New Paint and Flooring, Rice Library**

**Project Cost** \$ 245,000  
Funding Source: FY24 State Repair and Rehabilitation

**Athletics Academic Center, Rice Library**

**Project Cost** \$ 150,000  
Funding Source: Special Projects

**Projects Under Construction**

**Health Professions Renovation/Addition Phase IV**

**Project Cost** \$ 50,000,000  
Funding Source: Legislative Appropriation - 2023

**Wright Administration Renovation/Addition**

**Project Cost** \$ 32,000,000  
Funding Source: Legislative Appropriation - 2023

**Recreation Fitness & Wellness Center Storage and Bike Shop Addition**

**Project Cost** \$ 2,500,000  
Funding Source: Legislative Appropriation - 2019

**University Creative and Print New Building**

**Project Cost** \$ 2,500,000  
Funding Source: Legislative Appropriation - 2019

**Center for Applied Business Technologies, Romain College of Business**

**Project Cost** \$ 1,300,000

Funding Source: USI Foundation

**STEM Discovery Lab, Rice Library**

**Project Cost** \$ 730,000

Funding Source: USI Foundation

**Projects In Design**

**University Home Improvements and Updating**

**Project Cost** \$ 1,250,000

Funding Source: USI Foundation