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On the cover: A Tale of Two Companies. Fulbright’s key to Dr. David L. Rice’s 27 years of leadership at USI’s first president. Working with internal and external partners, he built lasting ties through collaborative relationships to transform the institution into an exceptional University.
I cried tears of joy just reading this article about our President at USI! What a wholesome and humble being.

Micalah Booher ’19

He’s a really great dude. Visited me in the hospital for more than five minutes. I still remember Jeanette (Maier-Lytle) from my time at USI. She is an asset to the university!

Shari Monroe ’87


Matthew Graham, emeritus professor of English, was named 2019 Indiana Post Laureate.

The UNITE CubeSat, a satellite designed, built and maintained by undergraduate students, just launched one year in orbit.

Back-to-back Bachelor of Science nursing courses (December 2018 and May 2019) earned 100% on their No. 1 Ex Noso literature exam in 2019.

Alex Stein ’19 signed a contract with the NBA G-League Canton Charge after being their first draft pick.

USI students raised more than $100,000 for Riley Hospital for Children in the 2019 Southern Indiana Dance Marathon, for the second year in a row!

Betteaira Spade, Ramps ’19, radio and television and Spanish, was one of two women to call the Great Lakes Valley Conference Men’s and Women’s Soccer Championship Tournament finals in the GLVC’s first-ever Spanish broadcast!

A FEATHER IN USI’s CAP

I still remember Jeanette [Maier-Lytle] from my time at USI. She is an asset to the university.

Holly Sobota ’07

Evansville, Indiana

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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 Letters mailed to the editor may be published in the magazine unless the author states it is not for publication.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.
On March 17, the University of Southern Indiana made an unprecedented decision to close its campus as COVID-19 continued its rapacious spread around the world and across our nation. The decision was both an easy one to make and a challenging one to accomplish. Easy because nothing is more important than the health and wellbeing of USI’s campus community—our students, faculty, staff and visitors. Challenging because the rapid shift to a virtual campus, to ensure students’ learning experiences remain whole and as uninterrupted as possible, required an all-hands-on-deck approach during difficult times. I’m proud to say that our faculty and staff have risen above and beyond the challenge, and will continue to do so, as we navigate this unknown territory.

Our mission and priorities remain as true today as they were 55 years ago when this institution first opened its doors—that of an engaged learning community committed to advancing education and knowledge. COVID-19 has not and will not derail USI from its goals or visions, it has merely altered the landscapes in which we achieve them.

For our students, this means all classes are online for the remainder of the semester. It is new and daunting territory for many, but it is a given that USI’s world-class faculty will be by each student’s side throughout this process to alleviate them of anxiety and fill them with confidence in their ability to embrace these times by adding a new level of skill to their vast knowledge.

To keep the University operating, faculty, administrators and staff continue to perform as many of their daily duties as possible remotely via virtual portals. This ability to adapt enables the institution to continue its work as seamlessly as possible until the campus reopens.

Closing the campus of an institution the size of USI requires our faculty, staff and administrators to put in long hours to create viable and imaginative solutions to shift learning and support services online in a relatively brief time span. The achievements made are nothing short of impressive and nothing less than anyone who knows our community would expect.

As illume makes its way to the printer after months of production, there may be unforeseen developments not addressed in this message. We all have questions and concerns, and USI’s website will be updated to keep our campus community informed of decisions and to provide new insights concerning COVID-19 and our response.

The University of Southern Indiana is a caring community and we are working to ensure our colleagues and students remain as whole as possible during these trying times. We step up to help each other. While the virus carries with it an uncertainty, one thing is certain, USI will prevail and return to normalcy as quickly as it is deemed safe for everyone to do so. In the meantime, stay safe, remain calm and caring of others, and maintain grace.

We will get through this together.

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Students/Faculty
Faculty have fully shifted all their classes to an online setting for the remainder of the semester.

The University continues to house and support those students who could not move home, including international students.

Employees
Hundreds of employees pivoted to working remotely to support faculty and students and maintain business continuity for the University.

Commencement
Commencement is not just an event; it is a milestone. While postponed and a new date has not been set yet, the University is committed to finding a time and place for all senior students to have the opportunity to participate in a commencement ceremony.

Refunds
Students who vacated housing due to COVID-19 will have their account credited for specified, unoccupied days. They will also be able to convert meal plans into a format that can be used until the end of the fall 2020 semester.

Website
For current information on University decisions and messages from President Rochon, visit USI.edu/covid-19.

illume Fall 2020
The next issue will be filled with stories of our students, faculty and staffs’ responses to this pandemic crisis.
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) will bring their three-story Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall to the University of Southern Indiana this April. The VVMF selected USI as one of 35 sites to accompany Education Center to the University of Southern Indiana, the Home of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund’s Wall project. The University of Southern Indiana has been a proud smoke-free campus since 2011, including Indiana has been a proud smoke-free campus since 2011, including the use of e-cigarettes and other vaping devices.

The SOCC Security Operations Center serves a couple of purposes, says Dr. Kennells Shemanske, associate professor of computer information systems in the College of Business. “It supports the school’s IT team in protecting our infrastructure from attacks and cyber threats. It also provides students an opportunity to gain real world experience in cybersecurity.”

The SOCC has been in operation for two years. During that time, it has employed about 20 students as cybersecurity analysts, investigating suspicious activity and mitigating threats across the network. Austin Steel ’20, computer science, works between 18 and 20 hours each week. Last fall he was among the first group of students to earn the college’s certificate in cybersecurity, “I’m pursuing a career in cyber forensics.”

“My experience in the SOCC helped me get an internship with the Vanderburgh County (Sheriff’s Office) working on a criminal case involving cyber forensics. This is a defensive growing market, with jobs popping up everywhere, says Steel. “I don’t want to stop working anytime soon.”

Partnering with Smoke-Free Evansville Coalition on the project, 15 of St. Clair’s students have gone into middle and high schools in Vanderburgh and Posey counties to make students aware of how dangerous the vaping products are. “Some kids don’t understand that e-cigarettes have nicotine and vitamin A. That’s why we’ve found responsible for lung illness,” she says.

Enticing young people to vape with fashionable designs, like Sour Patch and Mario Carts that are then placed near the candy in convenience stores. It’s also spawed a secondary industry of fake vaping devices from parents, such as target bags and wrappers designed to conceal e-cigarettes, and hoodie cords with vaping pens attached to one end while the other end is the vocalist mouthpiece. “Some kids are so afraid that they wake up in the middle of the night for a hit,” St. Clair says, noting they also sell hits to classmates.

As the tobacco industry seeks to hook smokers and ensure sales, St. Clair and her students are fighting to save lives through education. “This outreach education allows our students the opportunity to really make an impact on future lives,” she says.

The University of Southern Indiana has been proud smoke-free campus since 2011, including the use of e-cigarettes and other vaping devices.
When Dr. David L. Rice moved to town to be dean of Indiana State University’s Evansville (ISUE) campus in 1967, the 19th century Centennial School was only a temporary home for the University. But beyond the 100-year-old walls and windows, and the fact that the region produced the lowest number of postsecondary degrees in the state, Rice saw a bright future.

Rice’s vision and knowledge of people and what they were capable of came from his experiences growing up in a family with 14 children, attending school in a one-room school house, being a soldier in the Korean War, teaching in a public grade school, and being a professor and academic researcher for both the government and Ball State University. But it was his humble personality, exemplary listening ability, collaborative instincts and mind for understanding data that propelled him to transform USI into today’s academically renowned institution.

Between the institution’s opening in 1965 and Rice’s arrival two years later, enrollment swelled from 412 to 992, defying the naysayers’ rejection of the need for public higher education in the region and confirming his belief in the University. He began recruiting faculty from area colleges; later he enticed experts and researchers from private sector industries to join the faculty, always with the understanding their innovative ideas remained their professional property.

Rice strengthened ties beyond the faculty, as he listened to and collaborated with area businesses and educational institutions to create a path for community-wide success. When national consultants labeled Evansville as a risky business choice, he founded the Labor-Management Education Forum to allow employers and unions to find common ground. His partnership with Ivy Tech Community College, to have the University accept 30-hours of credits, led the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to insist other state institutions do the same.

Rice, known as a visionary, mediator, planner and consensus builder, knew potential when he saw it. Eighteen years after making this institution his forever-home, he lobbied for and led the University to independence in 1985.

As a young boy who once tutored younger and less-advanced students in a one-room school in Montgomery County, Indiana, he never lost his zeal for education. As a man and extraordinary leader, he propelled his dream of ensuring so many had access to quality education. But his reach went beyond the classroom and into the community, where he is credited for his impact on the economic development of Evansville and Southwest Indiana, a credit he always gave to others. Yet without him at the helm for 27 years (1967-1994), a more thriving community and vibrant University is difficult to imagine.
First- and second-year students in USI’s Occupational Therapy (OT) Program took to heart what it means to be part of an “engaged learning community” by participating in the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation’s Special Olympics Unified Champions Game Day. Elementary-aged students with disabilities were given the opportunity to participate in all the activities, no matter what their conditions, through the ingenious ideas of USI’s second-year OT students. They designed and built low-tech equipment such as wings for wheelchairs to assist in “flying” and modified Nerf launchers to make pitching a ball possible, instilling kids with independence. The students who created the adaptive equipment were doing field work that week and could not attend the event, so first-year students stepped in to work with the kids. “This has been an awesome experience,” said first-year OT student Kaysee Collins ’23. “It’s cool to be able to come out here and get to see the smiles on all their faces.”
In the current environment of change impacting higher education, and as the University of Southern Indiana’s second strategic plan (2010-2015) comes to an end, the development of USI’s third strategic plan is timely. A strategic plan serves to guide our actions by identifying the circumstances shaping our priorities, our purpose and desired future. Integral to this process are the specific ways the institution seeks to achieve its purpose and future state, and the measures that determine the effectiveness of the specified decisions and actions.

Our plan’s development, led by the Strategic Planning Committee, is guided by inclusiveness, transparency, collaboration and effective communication. It engages key stakeholders and includes students, employees, alumni, community partners, friends and retirees in the process. The foundational step in the development of any strategic plan is to identify an organization’s core values. Ours, combined with history, mission, vision and goals from USI’s past, are critical in USI becoming what it should be in the future. Constant change has always been the norm, but the speed of that change is greater than ever. Our third strategic plan will lay the groundwork for continuing to be a thriving University that contributes positively in all we do.

USI’s future, regarding what the institution seeks to accomplish through its mission, is represented by its vision. Our strategic plan’s goals will represent areas of emphasis for achieving our mission and vision based on an evaluation—an environmental scan—of the University’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and challenges. Our objectives will be measurable outcomes tied to our goals. The strategies we develop will indicate what must be done to achieve objectives in the context of the environmental scan. USI’s action plans will specify the steps needed to implement strategies and include information about who will do what, when and how.

Our current strategic planning process builds on information about core values, historical context, mission, vision and goals from USI’s 2010-2015 and 2016-2020 strategic plans. The accomplishments and insights resulting from the implementation of the previous strategic plans will be important influences in determining the objectives, strategies and action plans of USI’s third plan.

The plan is all encompassing. It defines who we have been, who we are now and what we desire to be. The fabric of this plan will be of value to all the key stakeholders of the University, the past and present family of the University, the community that impacts USI and those whom USI impacts.

The Strategic Planning Committee will identify mechanisms in which to track, report and evaluate outcomes, as well as identify a process for updating and revising the strategic plan, before it is presented to the USI Board of Trustees for approval at its July 2020 meeting.

Beginning 55 years ago, with the idea of public education in southwestern Indiana, to today, there has always been a vision for USI. We are where we are today because of a dream, a vision and the execution of a plan. In those early days, it may have been discussed in terms that were different than those we use today, and maybe less formal, but the heart of what happened was strategic planning.

This third plan finds us with challenges that require vision and the execution of a plan, so we share that in the same fashion we did in the early days. The new plan finds the environment in a different place but still presenting challenges; the way we navigate those challenges will be critical in USI becoming what it should be in the future. Constant change has always been the norm, but the speed of that change is greater than ever. Our third strategic plan will lay the groundwork for continuing to be a thriving University that contributes positively in all we do.

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Making a Big Splash on Campus

The future is looking fluid for the campus community as construction of the University’s Aquatic Center shapes up. The 25-meter by 25-yard pool will be a place for students, student athletes and USI community members to exercise, play and rehab injuries. David Enzler, director of Recreation, Fitness and Wellness, says the center plans to offer water sports—volleyball, basketball, log rolling—as well as group lifeguarding, scuba-diving, swimming and aqua-aerobics classes. If that’s not a USI community member’s thing, they might be interested in a soak in the whirlpool, attending a pool party or watching a basketball game or a movie on one of the big screens. The center, with its two locker rooms and seating for spectators to watch swim meets, is expected to open in 2021.
A Tale of Two Companies

by C. L. Stambush

April Ryan | journalist, speaking at USI’s 2020 Martin Luther King, Jr. Luncheon

Dr. Ronald Rochon | USI president, speaking at Remembering the Fallen

“I wanted to find out what path they were on. I wanted to know what led them in and out of the military and prison, because the two do not seem like they go together.”

Dr. Melissa Tackett | associate professor of criminal justice studies, talking about her research on mass incarceration.

“Colorblind individuals need a universal, independent language to enable them to communicate in and with society.”

Dr. Joseph Uduehi | associate professor of art education, speaking on color blindness, affecting 1 in 10 Caucasian men.

“I am what I consider a non-traditional student. After being in the workforce for several years, I decided to return to school to advance my career from a certified medical assistant to a bachelor’s-prepared registered nurse. There were many reasons I was hesitant about that decision: would I feel out of place, being almost a decade older than my classmates? Could I balance the responsibilities of school with my family life?”

Kristina Dewig ‘19 | College of Nursing and Health Professions Fall Commencement speaker

“I looked at these pictures and the eyes of these human beings that we have lost. It became personal, it became intimate, it became extremely relevant and brought it home for me. There were notes attached to the pictures, love notes from family and friends, saying they would never be forgotten, I miss you, I love you. All you have to do is think about your own family, your own son or daughter, your niece or nephew, your next-door neighbor, and you really begin to understand what families have and continue to sacrifice for us.”

Dr. Ronald Richmond | city manager, speaking at Remembering the Fallen

“A book in process is hypothetical. It is dangerous to talk about an in-process project because it could take years, and in the end go nowhere.”

Dr. Casey Pycior | assistant professor of English, talking about the novel-writing process.

“A Tale of Two Companies” by C. L. Stambush

If you are thinking of getting involved in the social justice movement, this is the time to do it. At this moment, on this day, act as if it were possible to change the world.”

Dr. Angela Davis | political activist, professor emerita at University of California, Santa Cruz, speaking on civil rights at Nelson Mandela Social Justice Day

Dr. Melissa Tackett | associate professor of criminal justice studies, talking about her research on mass incarceration.

“I am what I consider a non-traditional student. After being in the workforce for several years, I decided to return to school to advance my career from a certified medical assistant to a bachelor’s-prepared registered nurse. There were many reasons I was hesitant about that decision: would I feel out of place, being almost a decade older than my classmates? Could I balance the responsibilities of school with my family life?”

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The story behind VIV may have begun with a problem, but the solution started in the first grade where Austin Hoffman and Logan Schroering met and became friends.

Fast forward to 2015: Austin was a marketing senior in USI's Romain College of Business and Logan was noodling the idea of joining his family's plumbing business, when the two began kicking around an idea that was part of their cultural DNA.

Growing up in faith families, they'd witnessed the good that came from Sunday donations, but knew there were times people couldn't come to services. The pair wanted to create a way for people to give online when they couldn't attend.

Austin teamed up with USI classmate Mark Belcher '18 (who's also a friend of Logan's), to pitch the idea of developing an online donation system at Startup Weekend Evansville 5.0 (a business incubator held at USI between 2011-2019). The idea didn't win but it was one of the few to attract angel investors.

With financial support from the business community, Austin refined his donation idea to the point where he was ready to launch it via a website, but he knew nothing about web development or coding. With seed money in hand, he contacted a local web company about creating it. A 10-page document, a schematic-riddled paper revealed the hows, whys and whats it would take to create his dream site, along with a $135,000 price tag to build it.

Twenty-year old Austin and his idea sagged. How was he—or any entrepreneurial innovator—supposed to be able to create a company to surmount hurdles like that?

Allan Noe '91, marketing and former USI Tau Kappa Epsilon president, laughs big and dreams big. He and his wife, Kellie, have spent 22 years building a small empire of businesses based on digital payment systems through start-ups and acquisitions. Today, their company Approval Payment Solutions (APS) has 47 employees, 15,000 clients and generates $4 billion in processing volume annually.

The climb to this pinnacle began when he was fired after three days as customer support staff for a bank, and immediately rehired to replace his boss who had just quit. "I was just kind of launched to the wolves," he recalls. "I was told, 'The good news is, you're promoted. The bad news is, it's commission based. I nearly starved.'"

Sales became his life breath, and over the next 10 years he steadily refined his skills and knowledge in all things credit-card and check-processing related, advancing to higher roles as the companies he worked for were swallowed up by others. After the third corporate acquisition Allan said, "enough," and opened APS.

Partnering with banks, sales agents and merchants in all industries, the business grew from an office in Boonville, Indiana, with a sales force of three in 1998 to 100 by 2020. Over the years they'd acquired six merchant-payment-solution companies, putting APS in the top 40 in an industry of 3,800.

The $135,000 sticker price frustrated and motivated Austin to pivot and teach himself to build websites, enlisting childhood friend Logan to join him in the endeavor. Logan had an associate's degree from a community college and some credits from USI. His life was at a crossroads; he could join the family plumbing business, or…

When Allan entered the credit card industry 31 years ago, the marriage of the internet and ecommerce hadn't begun. The first online retail transaction wouldn't occur until 1994, possibly in Jeff Bezos' garage. As online selling became a behemoth, Allan took note of how mom-and-pop shops struggled in the wake of mega corporations setting up online stores. "They were failing because they didn't have a marketing strategy. They weren't good at social media. They weren't good at spending money for Google AdWords," Allan says. "In 2017, retail business shrank 9% while online sales grew 22%. Mom-and-pop can't keep up. They don't have
The opportunity to bundle these services is what VIV and APS say sets them apart and attracts business, but it takes more than a pretty website to keep their companies growing. VIV’s internal operations need someone to create such scenes to make the website look beautiful. Last quarter, we generated almost 1.5 million views on our sites.”

Allan met Austin and Logan when the VIV cofounders brought a local company to provide secure online payment processing for their growing client list. Initially, the companies collaborated on a referral basis, but as their working relationship strengthened, the possibility of a permanent partnership took shape. Austin and Logan’s ideas, work ethics and entrepreneurial attitudes impressed Allan. The VIV team was young (something that worked against them in a field of giants), they needed someone to create such websites, and VIV’s cofounders needed a local company to provide them with a website that’s ecommerce enabled and so forth.”

Allan realized that for APS merchants to have a fighting chance in a field of giants, they needed a great and secure website. They needed to be found on the first page in a Google search. They needed to be mobile optimized—since 82% of searches happen on smart phones. They needed someone to create such sites. The opportunity to bundle these services is what VIV and APS say sets them apart and attracts business, but it takes more than a pretty website to keep their companies growing. VIV’s internal operations need someone to create scenes to make the website look beautiful. Last quarter, we generated almost 1.5 million views on our sites.”

Allan (APS founder, VIV Managing Partner) and VIV designer Mark’s dad (Kyle Belcher ’87), were friends at USI. Allan met Austin and Logan when the VIV cofounders brought a local company to provide secure online payment processing for their growing client list. Initially, the companies collaborated on a referral basis, but as their working relationship strengthened, the possibility of a permanent partnership took shape. Austin and Logan’s ideas, work ethics and entrepreneurial attitudes impressed Allan. The VIV team was young (something that worked against them in a field of giants), they needed someone to create such websites, and VIV’s cofounders needed a local company to provide them with a website that’s ecommerce enabled and so forth.”

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Salome Apkhazishvili ’20 and Mariam Gamdlishvili ’21 have a lot in common. They are both USI Master of Communications candidates. Both Georgian. Both in their mid-20s. Both intelligent. Both ambitious. Both accomplished. Both recipients of Edmund S. Muskie internships. And both Fulbright U.S. Student Study Award recipients.

Since 1946, the Fulbright Program—administered by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs—has provided international graduate educational, research and teaching opportunities for more than 360,000 people from the United States and other countries, operating in more than 140 countries worldwide.
USI has welcomed seven Fulbright scholars in the past four years, earning graduate degrees in communications, language teaching, language and education.

While at USI, Salome and Mariam live, learn and share daily experiences alongside peers and mentors in an open, academic atmosphere where they exchange intellectual ideas that help mutual understanding.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FULLBRIGHT?

Salome
Horror, responsibility, opportunity, motivation and strong desire to never stop being a role model. These are the keywords I relate to being a Fulbright. At the same time, deep in your heart, there is a fear that you might fail, be a disappointment for others who believe in you. Along with these feelings is a tension you carry once you are officially notified that you are among the finalists of this very competitive and prestigious program. It's not a bad tension, it's a wake-up call that rings sharply when you start thinking of running from responsibilities.

Mariam
It is a huge responsibility. Being a part of the community full of leaders, Nobel Peace Prize and Pulitzer Prize winners is a huge responsibility. I feel that I am accountable in two countries—the U.S. and Georgia. And I think that, since I have accepted this challenge, I must succeed. It is interesting to see how this status of being a Fulbright influences people around you. Any time I say that I am a Fulbright or wear a Fulbright shirt, people get interested and usually are amused. But for me, it is a huge opportunity to develop and become a better version of myself by becoming a professional with world-class experience and be a “game-changer” in my home country.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU FACED AT USI?

Salome
The biggest challenge I still cope with is the high academic requirements at USI. Even though I have another master’s degree from back home, pursuing the same goal here is totally different. It is hard work.

Being on time, doing my best even if I feel that I’m not capable of doing it have been my challenges. It’s the hardest to deal with, but what I am most proud of myself for. I always beat my challenges by working as a journalist for five years. I knew that staying in my home country and living a daily routine was not enough for me to feel accomplished.

I decided to leave my family and my country. I had always wanted to see it be more tolerant of everyone regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual or religious orientation. Choosing this path meant giving myself the freedom to live for myself and by myself, to search and find a confidence I’ve always lacked.

I knew that my journalistic skills would not be enough to be competitive. I knew that earning another degree in communication would give me more opportunities in life.

Mariam
I have not faced significant challenges at USI so far since the Center for International Programs, led by Heidi Gregori-Gahan, makes the process of adaptation very smooth and easy. Everyone is eager to explain, help and assist anytime. In general, it was not easy to adapt to a new culture and environment. I came from a collectivistic culture, and the U.S. represents an individualistic society. There were some difficulties in the beginning with simple things needed for daily life, like housing, receiving my first stipend and banking, that work differently from the place I come from. However, I was lucky enough to have another Georgian Fulbright—Salome. She helped me a lot in overcoming all the challenges and getting used to the way of the American lifestyle, rules and norms. I reacted out to her immediately when the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi informed me about becoming a finalist. Since then, we have become friends.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE YOUR CAREER PATH?

Salome
The average Georgian women my age (I was 26 at the time) is married and some of them are parents. Withstanding the cultural pressure to follow the same path, I chose to create a different future for myself. I was not sure I’d achieved my best graduating at both a bachelor’s and master’s level, or by working as a journalist for five years. I knew that staying in my home country and living a daily routine was not enough for me to feel accomplished.

I decided to leave my family and my country. I had always wanted to see it be more tolerant of everyone regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual or religious orientation. Choosing this path meant giving myself the freedom to live for myself and by myself, to search and find a confidence I’ve always lacked.

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Mariam
Since my childhood, I was interested in history, cultures and international relations. My ultimate goal has always been to be a diplomat and serve my country—Georgia. Being exposed from an early age to different nations, cultures and societies shaped my future interest in diplomacy. During my college studies, I have been mentored by prominent Georgian policymakers and diplomats, who deepened my wish to become professionally engaged in the foreign policy sphere.

Right after finishing my degree, I started a career within the government of Georgia’s diplomatic service and was actively involved in the process of Georgia’s integration with the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. At that time, additionally, I got involved in the establishment of the United Nations Development Program in Georgia. After graduation, she worked as a strategic communications specialist in the office of the State Minister of Georgia before transitioning into a private thinktank research position.

Mariam always knew that she wanted her children to be educated and to have an international background. In the West was in her future plans in Kazakhstan (part of the former Soviet Republics), she received a doctorate degree in international relations and a master’s degree in European studies. As an undergraduate, she interned at the United States Embassy in Georgia, Georgia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection of Georgia, and the United Nations Development Program in Georgia. After graduation, she worked as a strategic communications specialist in the office of the State Minister of Georgia before transitioning into a private thinktank research position.

I felt that as a practitioner, I lacked both academic and theoretical knowledge of the field I was working in, and the United States was the right country to explore and study it.
of the first strategic communications structures in Georgia. Since the field and discipline appeared to be very new, it attracted me and I decided that I had to enhance my academic and theoretical knowledge and applied for the Fulbright Program.

WHAT HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES BEEN LIKE?

Salome
I always say that accepting the opportunity of living thousands of miles away from home was one of the best decisions I've ever made. It was like a new life we might be given in a video game; to explore, and ways to develop myself. Being exposed to a new type of culture—like the U.S.'s—and living here allows me an exceptional opportunity to learn more about myself and this country. Despite the heavy study workload, there is a lot to see and do here. I have never imagined. Mariam, even though there is a two-year difference between us (she is younger), reminds me of my mom and makes me and make sure I am okay. She may say I've given her the same amount of help. I tried to give her pragmatic advice, in terms of living on campus, studying and following the different cultural codes upon her arrival, however, she seems stronger than me when I recall myself during my first days on campus.

Mariam
The presence of Salome and other international students makes me feel like we have a small version of the world here at USI. The Center for International Programs organized a Global Ambassador’s retreat in September. It was a great event and opportunity to learn the amazing stories of students from all over the world. The existence of such bright, fascinating, moral and strong people gives me hope for a better world. Dr. Rechen gave a magnificent inspiring speech at one of the retreat dinners. His words made me feel like a part of the community that provides and shares “knowledge for life.”

WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST MOMENT FOR YOU AT USI?

Salome
Every September USI’s International Programs and Services office invites the Global Ambassadors and several other international scholars to beautiful New Harmony, Indiana, for the annual lead-ership retreat. Last year was my first time, and it will always stay in my memory. I met so many bright and beautiful minds there. Each of them with different stories but the same aspiration: to be a change the world needs. International students always make the best family whenever they meet, but this was a unique feeling of togetherness. It gave birth to the hope that one day the world might be a better place because of us.

Mariam
I was already mentioned. Salome and I became good friends here at USI, and I am very grateful for this. Salome helped me in the beginning with all the logistical and moving in stuff. She helped me understand the way life goes here and it is always eager to explain and assist. We try to support each other in studies by sharing and discussing the issues and topics related to communications. I love cooking, and we usually have dinner together and we even created a tradition of “baking Saturday,” where after class, we bake American pies and pastries.

WHERE ARE YOUR PLANS WHEN YOU RETURN TO GEORGIA?

Salome
I know that my international life would change after Mariam’s arrival to USI’s campus, but there are some things I could have imagined. Mariam, even though there is a two-year difference between us (she is younger), reminds me of my mom and grandmother who are always ready to take care of me, feed me and make sure I am okay.

She is such a mature and hardworking young woman. By staying always ahead of schedule, she’s like a wake-up call for me to keep striving for my best. On top of that, she is very generous.

Mariam
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WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO OR BECOME AS A PROFESSIONAL?

Salome
As a Fulbright foreign student, I have a two-year home residency requirement that means returning to Georgia upon completing graduation from USI in 2020 to serve my country. My plan is to continue pursing life and academic disciplines there the same way I do here.

As for career goals, I plan to meet with governmental and non-governmental organizations to offer my contributions to media-literacy fields. Considering the network I’ve built here and my strategic understanding of the field, hopefully, I will be a good resource for these organizations. I plan to return to my journalism career as a part time job, as well.

Mariam
After the completion of my degree and Fulbright, I will be reinforced with a new knowledge and world-class experience. I plan to return to the civil service of Georgia and continue to work on development of the government communications and strategic communication structures for the next five years in the reserves of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

If I don’t return to the civil service, I would continue to advocate for Georgia’s EU/NATO integration and raise awareness on this topic, as well as be involved in the projects related to disinformation and Russian propaganda within civil society and international organizations. I also plan to pursue a doctoral degree in international relations sometime after graduating from USI and completing my Fulbright.

21 US STUDENTS

7 FULL BRIGHT SCHOLARS AT USI

Tania Da Rosuaria Machinvesque Mozambique 2015 Communications
Sergio Pacome Yau Pre Cote d’Ivoire 2016 Language Teaching
Thaen Za Khai Burma (Myanmar) 2016 Communications
Kountala Jean de Dieu Somv Burkina Faso 2017 Language
Ibrahima Patina Yaro Burkina Faso 2018 Education
Salome Aphiashvili Georgia 2018 Communications
Miriam Gandishvili Georgia 2019 Communications

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Fulbright Scholarships

7 Fulbright Scholars at USI

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Fulbright Sch
Like his classmates, and so many others, Angermeier doesn’t think twice about access to a restroom, modern plumbing or clean running water. At least he didn’t before this project. “Growing up, I didn’t realize what was going on in the outside world, especially in developing countries,” he says. “This project has opened my eyes to what’s happening every day.”

The project is a waterless toilet system designed to improve sanitation conditions and to save lives of people living in developing worlds. It’s the brainchild of USI alumna Heather Deal and her company Three Bird Swan, responding to a quest put forth by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2012. It prompted inventors to find a solution to what the United Nations General Assembly had deemed a basic human right only a couple years earlier—access to sanitation—and launched a Reinvent the Toilet Challenge.

“As Americans, we don’t consider what not having a toilet is like,” says Deal ’03, public relations. She impressed the Gates Foundation with her early ideas and landed a spot in the competition, pioneering an early prototype and earning a second round of Gates Foundation funding in 2018. “I have three toilets in my own home; we go to the filling station and there’s a washroom. The idea that people, in this day and age, are still becoming ill and garnering diseases, even dying, because of a lack of sanitation, is foreign. It’s appalling.”

World Health Organization experts estimate that as many as two billion people worldwide don’t have basic sanitation facilities such as toilets or latrines. Around 673 million still defecate in the open—in street gutters, behind bushes or into open bodies of water. As a result, around 827,000 people in low- and middle-income countries die annually from befouled water, inadequate sanitation and unhygienic practices, including 297,000 deaths in children under the age of 5.

Today, Angermeier and his peers are optimistic that the work they’ve done over the past year may help lead to a solution. “It’s given me the drive to make sure this project is successful,” says Angermeier, who, along with his fellow students, joined Deal’s team last fall. It’s a convergence of skills, ideas and resources putting this group, and the University, at the forefront of innovative engineering, backed by one of the greatest philanthropists of our time.

Over the past year, Deal worked on phase two of her OMNUS (Operational Machinery Needed for Universal Sanitation) prototype, including testing and trial runs with the students. They, working alongside seasoned engineers from Three Bird Swan, represented a variety of engineering disciplines, including mechanical, manufacturing, electrical and civil. “I would never have imagined working on a project this massive or this impactful,” says Jarred Holland ’19, as he makes a minor adjustment to a metal conveyor moving small bits of paper into a combustion chamber. “But knowing that I’m going to make a positive impact on someone else’s life—that’s humbling.”
"IF THIS WORKS AS EXPECTED, IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO AFFECT MILLIONS OF PEOPLE, AND THAT'S EXCITING TO THINK ABOUT."

CALERA 19

A GOOD FIT

When Three Bird Swan secured a new round of Gates Foundation funding in 2018, Deal was living in Durham, North Carolina, where she’d completed work on the first prototype, as well as been hired as a consultant by other grant recipients. Eager to take the project to the next level, she made the move back to the Evansville area.

Deal and Dr. Paul Kubiak, professor of engineering and chair of USI’s Engineering Department, began talking about a partnership with the University that eventually led to the creation of a senior engineering project overseen by Dr. Art Chlebowski, assistant professor of engineering, and Dr. Jason Hill, associate professor of engineering. "Partnering with USI just made sense," Deal says. "I’ve worked with universities where they had too many commitments to dedicate any real time to a project like this. With USI, the transition has been seamless."

At this stage in the Gates Foundation competition, most Reinvent the Toilet grant recipients are large universities like the University of Toronto; Duke University; and Cornell University to build a life-saving toilet. "This sanitation project is one of the biggest sensor design projects that’s happened at USI," says Aaron Griffith ’79 who, like his cohorts, when he signed up for the project was unaware of the magnitude of what he and the others were embarking on. "It’s inspiring to work toward something that potentially has such a global impact," he says.

The team expanded its expertise, bringing on board Dr. Brandon Field, associate professor of engineering, who joined Hill in delivering insight and knowledge in areas like thermodynamics and biological testing. Students and faculty held conference calls with other grant recipients around the globe, bouncing ideas and collaborating on solutions. "There are so many moving pieces with regard to this prototype," says Deal. "You’ve got electrical, mechanical and environmental engineering all working together. It’s been such a huge benefit to have USI and this engineering team involved.”

Working together wasn’t always easy. Schedules didn’t line up, personalities were different—they had to learn to collaborate, share ideas and look outside the confines of their area of expertise—skills they look back on now as preparing them for real-world teamwork and collaboration. "It’s not about those individual roles—it’s about all five of us, working together toward a larger goal," says Griffith. "That consultancy spilled over into personal lives, as late nights on the project led to social gatherings and the group’s bond solidified."

Putting it all together

The OMNUS concept is a communal toilet that doesn’t rely on a wastewater system or electrical power grid to operate. Waste is repurposed as clean but non-drinkable water, with other byproducts captured as nutrient-rich fertilizer for crops. Its fuel is sourced from shredded paper fed into a combustion unit to produce heat that mixes with fecal matter, creating steam that is collected to create non-potable water. The key is to contain all the human waste, so it doesn’t pollute the surface or ground water," says Holland.

More than expert faculty and eager students have made the project a success so far. Perched on a hill at the edge of campus is USI’s Applied Engineering Center, a 16,000 square foot manufacturing facility containing $3 million of high-tech equipment, some of which is found nowhere else in the country. "It’s one of the best facilities I’ve ever worked in," says Deal. "I’ve been incredibly impressed with this facility.”

This is one of the first companies that has come into this space and used it repetitively and to its full potential," adds Chlebowski, touting the facility’s state-of-the-art equipment and software that engineers can use to model parts and processes. "Without all the tools and technology available in this facility, it wouldn’t have been possible for us to accomplish what we’ve done," says Caleb Kauk ’19 as he shows off a series of parts fabricated on site through 3D printing, water jet and laser cutting technologies.

All five seniors graduated in December and are employed with local engineering firms, including Holland, who accepted a full-time position with Three Bird Swan and will continue to work on the project. "It’s exciting to see what they’ve learned, their capabilities—they’ve become so sure of themselves," says Deal.

Since December, Three Bird Swan has continued to move the project forward with assistance from Chlebowski and the USI Engineering Department. In recent months the unit has been honed and the team hopes to advance the system to the next level—introducing wastewater.

Much rides on these trials as success will dictate securing a third Gates Foundation grant to fund the deployment of the unit to Durban, South Africa, a hub of real-world testing for many of the Reinvent the Toilet inventors. If successful, the unit will be shipped to the coastal city by early August, beginning a 100-day trial period before the region enters its cyclical manufacturing shutdown period, part of the nation’s energy conservation efforts. Deal, Holland and the rest of her team, will make the trip. Chlebowski will visit the site for two shorter periods at the start and end of the 100-day trial.

Phase three funding would not only cover the Durban field testing but also initial development of a version three of OMNUS with USI again heavily involved, including the opportunity for more senior design and student research projects. Chlebowski would be named co-principal investigator and the University a full research partner.

“This would be an exciting time for the project as we’d be moving from the initial research and testing phases into development of a manufacturing plan and business proposition,” says Chlebowski.

Angermeyer and the others don’t take much for granted these days—they’ve gained, the connections they’ve made, the jobs they’ve landed and the impact that hard work, dedication and a little imagination can have at a global level. They now know how lucky they are to be able to do something as simple as flush a toilet. "Growing up, I always wanted to help people out or find ways to contribute to the community," says Angermeyer. "Having the chance to do this with Heather and her team has been life-changing."
My undergraduate research experience with Dr. Kenneth Walsh was formative in my scientific career. Through his mentorship, I learned important laboratory skills and protocols that set me up for succeeding in graduate studies. I also learned how important scientific research communication is in order to better yourself as a scientist, as well as to work with the broader scientific community.

– Melissa Stacer ’15
Biochemistry

Doing undergraduate chemistry research with Dr. Phya Hewawitharanage at USI equipped me with hands on laboratory experience and ignited my interest and passion for chemistry. The individual, experiential learning was crucial to prepare me for graduate school. She saw potential in me that I could not see. She encouraged me to follow my curiosity and attend Virginia Tech to study for my PhD in chemistry. Now I am a research scientist at Solvay Specialty Polymers, a global materials manufacturer, and I can only say that my success directly stems from my undergraduate research experience and Dr. Phya’s support.

– Matthew Vincent ’13
PhD Chemistry

Participating in a systematic review with Dr. Urska Dobersek and a team of other researchers, I learned how to effectively search for and code research articles that were pertinent to our study. I was able to learn the importance of knowing how to utilize certain databases, assessing scholarly articles and how to work efficiently with a team. These skills that will set me up to be successful throughout graduate school and my life beyond college. Participating in research alongside her has opened several doors for me that may not have been opened otherwise.

– Katlin Kendall ’20
Pharmacology

As a research assistant for Dr. Melissa Stacer, I was able to learn how to code qualitative data into themes which my professor and I then presented at several conferences, including one in Hawaii. I wrote the results of my research with Dr. Stacer in my M.S. thesis and presented it at the annual Radiological Society of North America meeting. I then presented the results at several conferences, including the annual American Society of Radiologic Technologists meeting. I also learned how important scientific research communication is in order to better yourself as a scientist, as well as to work with the broader scientific community.

– Caitlin Siers ’15
Biochemistry

Working alongside Dr. Katie Efrain, I have gained skills that will be used in graduate school. I have learned how to conduct research and work with the public but the months of doing so as well. This opportunity gave me a much deeper understanding of what goes into a research project and what the finished project can do to help one’s community. I never knew how much it would matter that I was up for the challenge and the nine-hour roundtrip commute. “It was neat to come back after 10 years and work in the studio,” says Sutter. “That’s where I learned a lot of things that I still use today in making sculpture.”

– Laura Walker ’05
M’17
Communication, Visual Arts

The pair spent months fine-tuning their design, a film strip featuring iconic images of Florida movies and culture looping between two reels. Just selecting the scenes to fill the film’s frames took weeks. Modifying them to flow and fit properly was even more complicated. “It was a daunting task,” says Huebner.

Over the course of a dozen trips from Lafayette, Indiana, to Evansville, and with the assistance of several professional artists, Huebner and Sutter’s analog drawings into digital images. Students in the Applied Engineering Center (AEC) used a water jet cut the sculpture’s framework, and a local business produced the film strip’s intricate interior sections. “It was so large, just moving it around took hours,” says Sutter.

In July 2019, two years after Walker’s initial phone call, Huebner and Sutter loaded up their powder-coated puzzle pieces and made the 700-mile journey to Ocala for installation. “We never saw it all together until it was on the wall [at Marion Theatre] in Florida,” Huebner says. “It’s one thing to put it together in the studio, but it’s another thing to actually have it up in its environment,” adds Sutter. “It truly is a part of you that’s up there.”


– Laura Walker ’05 M’17

WEN LAURA WALKER ’05 M’17 BECAME THE HEAD OF Ocala, Florida’s CULTURAL ARTS AND SCIENCES DIVISION, she set out to commission a large-scale public art piece to complement the city’s World War II-era Marion Theater. The result—a 40-foot long ode to the Sunshine State’s cinematic past now adorning the building’s exterior—is more than a work of art. It’s a metal and steel symbol of collaboration, featuring USB from the opening scene to the closing credits.

The artist search, which involved candidates from across the country, eventually led Walker back to her alma mater and her former sculpture instructor, David Huebner. “You want to be able to pick someone who has that skill set, who’s worked in that scale, who’s provided projects that meet that same level of expertise,” she says of the selection process.

With the guidance of someone fully experienced that on their own without the guidance of someone who has been through it before. That guidance allowed me to make mistakes, learn from them and correct them, all while being able to ask questions throughout the process.”

– Marissa McNulty ’20
History

Working with Dr. Stella Ross has taught me not only how to conduct research and work with the public but the months of doing so as well. This opportunity gave me a much deeper understanding of what goes into a research project and what the finished project can do to help one’s community. I never knew how much it would matter that I was up for the challenge and the nine-hour roundtrip commute. “It was neat to come back after 10 years and work in the studio,” says Sutter. “That’s where I learned a lot of things that I still use today in making sculpture.”

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Though mosquitoes in Florida may not realize the many connections their sculpture has to the University of Southern Indiana; Sutter and Huebner are proud of the layered partnership that left a large, lasting mark in Ocala. “I’m honored and grateful,” Huebner says. “It was a huge learning process. There were a lot of firsts.”

By ERIN MEYER

By ERIN MEYER
BEHIND THE SCENE

The New Harmony Athenaeum rises out of the low farming fields along the banks of the Wabash River in southern Indiana like a beacon of inspiration. The ship-like design is the work of Richard Meier (who created the Getty Center in Los Angeles, California) and is considered one of his icons. The creation and opening of the Athenaeum in 1979 launched a revolutionary aesthetic, as it is considered the first white walled museum. “One can find every color of the rainbow,” Meier said. “White is… the color which intensifies the perception of all of the other hues that exist in natural light and in nature.”

Forty years later, the structure is still wowing visitors from around the world. In 2008, the Athenaeum received the American Institute of Architects’ “Twenty-five Year Award,” which is given to only one building per year. From its window along the journey from the ground floor to the roof terrace, visitors can take in the splendor of a gentle river, lush countryside and the small town that was once a utopian community renowned for its advances in education and scientific research, and still home to many artists.

1. It was named after a temple in ancient Athens, Greece, dedicated to Athena, the goddess of wisdom, where poets, philosophers and orators gathered to read and discuss their work.

2. A model of the Athenaeum and the original architectural drawings are part of the permanent architecture collection at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, New York.

3. The original conceptual design included a restaurant: a McDonalds.

4. During the Athenaeum’s construction, Meier worked from gallery four where he conceived the concepts for the Getty Center.

5. Design elements from the Athenaeum are included in the High Museum in Atlanta, Georgia, which was constructed two years after the completion of the Athenaeum.

6. The three-story, hard-angled, architectural promenade uses the Modern theories of spatial experiences centered around a moving observer and was designed for visitors to arrive by boat.
Livia Alexander ’18, art, the daughter of a longtime USI employee, grew up on campus. She remembers watching a VHS tape that captured her budding artistic skills, recorded at the Children’s Learning Center when she was 3 years old. “I was always just painting,” she recalls of the video. “I had this big rainbow, and I was so proud of myself.”

Twenty years later, the 2019 Efroymson Bridge Year Fellowship allowed Alexander time to grow her portfolio in preparation for graduate school. Her work, Mortal Flesh Exhibition, was exhibited in the USI Art Galleries.

“Her rainbows replaced by oil-on-canvas interpretations of serious, sometimes heart-wrenching topics,” Pryor said. “I thought her work was so fitting for the Children’s Learning Center, and she really stepped up and helped guide the people to her work.”

Livia, 18, is the daughter of a longtime USI employee, grew up on campus. She remembers watching a VHS tape that captured her budding artistic skills, recorded at the Children’s Learning Center when she was 3 years old. “I was always just painting,” she recalls of the video. “I had this big rainbow, and I was so proud of myself.”

Twenty years later, the 2019 Efroymson Bridge Year Fellow is back painting at USI. Her rainbows replaced by oil-on-canvas interpretations of serious, sometimes heart-wrenching topics, recorded at the Children’s Learning Center when she was 3 years old. “I was always just painting,” she recalls of the video. “I had this big rainbow, and I was so proud of myself.”

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Livia Alexander’s work at usi.edu/illume.

P

ople whose mothers are addicted to drugs, people who grew up in foster care. People who are expelled from high schools, get involved with the wrong people and end up pregnant at 15. It doesn’t mean it for those people. Most of her life, that’s what Tiffany Coles believed. “I had a bad childhood, and I don’t see that for myself,” she told a friend who brought up the idea of college. It seemed far-fetched. Impossible. Even now, one of her family had ever gone to college, let alone graduated. Still, something about the suggestion stuck—and became the catalyst for change Coles desperately wanted.

Pushing Through

At first, nothing happened. Coles, then in her mid-20s, visited USI and had some encouraging conversations. But despite the GED she’d earned, she still lacked the confidence to take the next step and apply. Two years passed before she decided to enroll—at a single mom of three, working full-time.

Tiffany Coles passes with her family after 2011 Fall Commencement. “Those first few years it wasn’t easy at all, but I just kept pushing through it because I really, really, really wanted this,” she says. “I didn’t want to lose this life I had, and I didn’t want my kids to ever get taken away from me.”

While working toward her bachelor’s degree in psychology and minor in social work, Coles often relied on USI’s Student Support Services. Former program director Heather Braun and current director Aaron Pryor mentored her with support, helped with assignments and offered encouragement, structure and motivation that had been missing all her life. “I really needed someone who was familiar with me and my situation to give me that push, like, ‘Tiffany, you’re been through a lot, but you’re here now and you can do it.’ And he [Pryor] gave me that,” says Coles. “I felt like they were my guardian angels. They really guided me. I don’t think I would have made it without them.”

But Coles’ own “passionate persistence,” as Pryor puts it, may have been her greatest resource.

“Tiffany would be the first to admit that certain aspects of school did not come effortlessly to her, but what I admire most about her is that she met every obstacle with her head held high, a smile on her face, a vision of the future in her eyes, and a watch that says ‘can’t’ and ‘won’t’ out of her vocabulary,” Pryor says. “With her mother and children there to watch, Coles reached the finish line of an emotional five-year journey at Commencement. ‘I just cried. I cried before, I cried after,’ she says. ‘It was extra beautiful for me because I look back at my life, and I’m just like, ‘Wow, things could have been way different.’”

Changing the Narrative

People like Tiffany Coles do go to college. People who are mothers (and fathers). People who refuse to stop growing. People who go back for what they missed, get involved in their future and end up graduating at 30. Degrees are meant for those people.

That’s what Tiffany Coles believes now.

“When you go to school and have a degree, you have something. That’s your ticket to a successful life. It’s your way to say, ‘Hey, I made it. Whereever I want to do, I can do it.’” Coles says. “I feel like the sky’s the limit for me now.”
Teaching my first composition class as a graduate student at Colorado State University, I was 23 years old and looked even younger. On the first day, I heard students whispering among themselves, speculating about how old I was. I was nervous anyway, and even more so on the day I was observed by a full-time faculty member. She was encouraging, but noted that I spent the class practically glued to the same spot, almost as if I was hiding behind my desk. She encouraged me to walk around more, even walking among the students as they did small group activities. It was as if I had to be told to literally break the invisible barrier I had built between myself and my students.

I now frequently walk around as the students work on class writing and group activities, and I have found that it makes them feel more free to ask one-on-one questions that they might not have asked if they were the ones who had to cross that barrier.

Dr. Molly Brost
Assistant Professor of English
Administration
College of Liberal Arts

I taught my students to use a method he called “active reading,” where you underline the important aspects of each paragraph and make notes in the margins. This substantially raised our understanding of the material in the book and made reviewing the book prior to discussion and exams much easier.

It’s a technique that has stuck with me a decade later. Today, I teach my students the same technique when assigning dense material for us to read. He was one of the toughest professors on campus, and to be quite honest, I had never read anything like those books before. He instructed us to use a method he called “active reading,” where you underline the important aspects of each paragraph and make notes in the margins. This substantially raised our understanding of the material in the book and made reviewing the book prior to discussion and exams much easier.

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The college is a unique place where knowledge and celebration with the entire USI community our differences and similarities.”

“Knowledge and celebrate with the entire USI community our differences and similarities.”

Stay in touch
Email us at Alumni@usi.edu.
Update your information and send photos via the form at USI.edu/AlumniUpdate.

Class notes may be edited for length or clarity. We regret that we may not be able to use all your information at usi.edu/illume.

UPDATE USI.edu/AlumniUpdate.
Class notes may be edited which ones are included.
STAY IN TOUCH EMAIL us at alumni@usi.edu.
UPDATE your information and send photos via the form at USI.edu/AlumniUpdate.
awarded an Emerging Business Award from the Southwest Indiana Small Business Administration.

Bill Normal ’97, accounting, has been appointed president of consumer packaging North American Division at Barry-Wehmiller, in St. Louis. He joined Barry-Wehmiller in 2002 as vice president of sales and marketing and was appointed senior vice president of consumer packaging-North American Division in 2006.

Rebecca Tyner ’97, biology, is the senior director of education strategy at Arche根本不切实际。fidel, Inc. of Charlotteville, Virginia.

Marc Hostetter ’95, biology, principal at Mount Vernon Junior High School, was recently awarded the prestigious Department of Education-Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Award.

James Myrick ’97, physical education (teaching), caught up with classmates. James Myrick ’99, physical education (teaching), and Reserve Patriot Award.

Last summer, up here in Michigan, a group of us got together for a BBQ with all our families. We are all super close just like back in the 90s at USI.” - right: Jason Woodel, James Myrick ’99, physical education (teaching), Nells Nadeau ’99, business administration, Winstead Church ’99, physical education (teaching), and Jason Woodel.

2000s

LeeAnn (Ryan) Boga ’00, accounting, is welcomed as the newest director of Friendship State Bank in Newberg, Indiana.

Kimbry (Davis) Nightingale ’00, sociology. MTSU, social work, has been named as an assistant general counsel by the Indiana Department of Child Services for the state’s north and south regions.

Michael Todd Treadway ’00, computer information systems, southwest Indiana Small Business Office.

2010s

Steven Gable ’10, biology, and Emily Henning-Cole ’12, political science, traveled to Paris, France, in December. They completed their medical residency in July 2021 and took position as a clinical instructor of anesthesiology at University of Kentucky. Gable is an academic advisor in the Triad College of Business at the University of Missouri.

Jeremy Tanner ’10, radio and television, is the senior customer success manager at USI.edu/illume.
Nicholas Voegel ’12, business administration, is the process facilitator at AstraZeneca in Mount Vernon, Indiana.

Caylin Blockley ’13, biology, has filled the role of director of alumni relations for the Jindal School of Management, the role of director of alumni relations and public relations, ’14, communication, has filled the role of director of alumni relations and public relations.

Chad Cook ’13, occupational therapy, has been added to the men’s wrestling staff at Kentucky Wesleyan College in Owensboro, Kentucky.

Caylin Blockley ’13, biology, is the process facilitator at AstraZeneca in Mount Vernon, Indiana.

Rachel Spalding M’18, nursing management, was hired as the new chief nursing officer at Good Samaritan Hospital in Evansville, Indiana.

Jordan Whitledge ’14, economics, ’ 16, business administration, was chosen to be part of the Mitch Daniels Leadership Foundation’s 2019-2020 Fellows Class of 20 Outstanding Young Leaders.

Jamie Adkins ’16, kinesiology and nutrition, ’17, occupational therapy, is a runner on the University of Louisville track team when she was a senior, competed in the 2000 U.S. Olympic Marathon trials in Atlanta, Georgia.

Amanda Birkimun ’15, art, is a writer with a concentration in graphic design, and her husband, Michael Baetsman, are expecting another baby girl in June 2020. Her big sister, Evelyn Baetsman sports a T-shirt to announce her upcoming role in the family.

Jayov [Sexton] Roth ’15, English, is the director of the strategic and growth development at the Essevors Christian Life Center and was recently named the Young Professional of the Year by the Southwest Indiana Chamber at its 2019 Young Professionals Conference held on August 2, 2019.

Kaci Turner ’16, biology, is a general dentist at Heartland Dental in the refueling center. She graduated 2015’s Omnibus class from the University of Louisville and is a member of the dental honor society, Omicron Kappa Upsilon.

Sarah (Beazley) Blazier ’16, communication studies, is a digital communications specialist for the City of Westfield in Westfield, Indiana.

Dylan Krohn ’16, marketing, is a new member of the Hope Volleyball team at J.C. Tudor King-Newburgh, Indiana.

Raven (Sprague) Pirtle ’16, nursing, and Nick Hubbs, CalPerry, became better parents. “We recently were asked to take in two new babies needing emergency placement and we decided to open our home to this opportunity.” [19]

Elliot Prusz ’16, accounting, is part of the internal audit staff at Kellhof Electronics in Jasper, Indiana. He married Megan Prusz September 7, 2019.

Kelli George ’17, health administration, is a radiography program manager for the Owensboro Community Technical College radiography program that continues to shine with success and state-of-the-art technology.

Nancy (Rios) Sprague, Jamacia.

Mollie (Fjeldli) Payne M’18, health administration, is a radiography program manager and we decided to open our home to this opportunity.” [19]

Lois (Bullock) McGill ’17, business administration, August 17, 2019.

Samantha Peters M’18, industrial management, and Eric Irving, September 10, 2019.

Micaela [Zapar] Argu ’19, health services, ’20, health administration, and Brennan Argu, August 9, 2019. [25]

Births

Connie [Greenwood] Davis ’04, business administration, and Travis Davis ’04, political science, welcomed Odessa Rios, Jamacia.

Travis Davis ’04, political science, welcomed Odessa Rios, Jamacia.

Samantha Peters M’18, industrial management, and Eric Irving, September 10, 2019.

Micaela [Zapar] Argu ’19, health services, ’20, health administration, and Brennan Argu, August 9, 2019. [25]

Marriages


Jason King ’97, accounting, and Natalie King, April 6, 2019. The couple resides in Huntington, Indiana.
Rachel (Runyon) Lortie ’15, occupational therapy, of Evansville, died August 12, 2019. “I have reached another milestone that I wanted to share with my USI family.”

In Memoriam

Andrew Cassidy ’75, accounting, of Tampa, Florida, died August 5, 2019. He honorably served his country in the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War.

Cecila Alan Malott ’72, marketing, of Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, died on December 21, 2019. He was a sales instructor, photographer and photo editor for the Philadelphia Inquirer for more than 20 years. He was a devoted fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and was very involved in the Boy Scouts.

Robin Clark ’90, social work, of Toledo, Ohio, died January 3, 2019.

Scott Huelshman ‘98, psychology, of Evansville, died September 24, 2019. She was a published poet and loved animals, was an avid reader and a devoted fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and was very involved in the Boy Scouts.

Lisa Kennedy-Kuhr ‘92, dental assisting, of Evansville, died September 24, 2019. As a long-time employee of St. Vincent Evansville, she was a respected and active member of the community. More than anything, Allan believed in people and inspired them to be their best.

Lisa Hodges ‘92, nursing, of Evansville, died July 15, 2019. He is survived by his wife Martha Neil (Steff) Kluh ‘79, dental hygiene.

Michael Klueh M’00, social work, of Evansville, died January 22, 2020.

Annie (Gogel) Gunselman M’98, secondary education, of Santa Claus, Indiana, died September 28, 2019.

Jerry Hodges ’72, nursing, of Evansville, died July 23, 2019.

Kristen Norman ’15, accounting and professional services, of Evansville, died November 21, 2019.

Jennifer (Sindell) Barnes ’13, individualized studies, of East City City, Florida, died September 29, 2019.
Dr. Sakina Hughes, assistant dean of the College of Liberal Arts, associate professor of history and director of USI’s Africana Studies Program, wants her students to hear voices—particularly “voices of diverse peoples from disparate walks of life.” It is through their stories that her students grasp racial, socioeconomic and sexual orientation experiences as an avenue to “challenge and critique all the –isms and phobia’s that plague our society.”

Outside the classroom, Hughes’ research investigates the world of African Americans and Native Americans through the lens of their roles as entertainers in the circus. Focusing on the 1800s to early 1900s, her research has led her to understand how participation in Wild West and minstrel shows allowed people of these groups to be legitimate entertainers, creating a space for themselves in society despite the prejudices against their races.

Driven by social justice ideas in and out of the classroom, Hughes teaches her students the history of traditionally neglected peoples while challenging them to think about the future we are all creating.

How does your research inform and shape your teaching, and in turn your students? At its core, my research is about re-writing traditional narratives to include people who were routinely left out of or neglected by the historical record. I teach this type of inclusion and corrective history in every class. It is essential and, in some cases, life-changing for students.

As a historian, with insight that history repeats itself, what lesson do you feel humans are doomed to keep learning? To respect everyone’s humanity, no matter who they are or where they come from. So many wars and atrocities have resulted in not recognizing this and I fear that with all the anti-immigrant rhetoric and rise in hate crimes, we are going further down that path. Once we are at a point in society where we can respect others, we will be on our way to solving most, if not all, of our problems.

What keeps you hopeful in troubling times? As a historian of the African American experience, including slavery, I study some pretty gruesome things and sometimes must grapple with the worst things people have done to each other. What gives me hope is that at every point in history where there has been oppression—extreme, horrific oppression—there have always been people—black, white, and of all colors and backgrounds—standing up to that oppression and showing how incredibly brave, inspiring, and good humans can be.

What book should everyone read and why? This might be the hardest question for me because there are so many good ones. W. E. B. Du Bois’ The Souls of Black Folk—the idea of Double Consciousness is so important in understanding race and identity—and Bell Hooks’ Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center. She teaches us how incorporating black women’s experiences into our understanding of feminism, we are able to be more inclusive of all men and women of all colors and backgrounds.

How do you want to be remembered by your students? As someone who made them think about the important things in life in regard to being a better citizen of our nation and of the world.

She loves to bake sweet treats with her 17-year-old daughter, who is a pastry chef extraordinaire.

Miss Simone and Bob Marley’s songs of resistance, social change, love and hope keep her encouraged.

She served as an expert on PBS’s American Experience “The Circus,” that’s streaming on Netflix.
Artist Alex Bailey ’14 returned to the USI Dowhie Ceramics Center last summer to begin creating an outdoor sculpture celebrating the USI Foundation’s 50th anniversary (1968-2018). Her piece, “Standing Together” is the largest she’s ever worked on. Made and fired in sections, the five round columns differ in heights that range from eight to 12 feet tall. Viewers will be able to walk among the columns, and she hopes the sculpture will “serve as a starting point for fostering empathy, and as a site to develop and nurture fellowship.”

Visit USI.edu/spiritheart for student submission guidelines.