

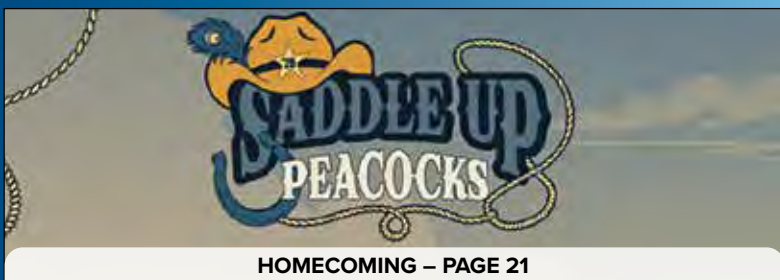
UPPER IOWA UNIVERSITY ALUMNI MAGAZINE

THE BRIDGE

FALL 2026



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On the cover: Student Government Association President **Emerson Bennett '26** prepares to address the Class of 2026 during Upper Iowa University's Commencement ceremony. Discover how one conversation changed the course of his life on page 28. Explore more Commencement coverage and photo galleries on page 25 or at uiu.edu/commencement.



OUR MISSION

Upper Iowa University provides quality educational opportunities accessible through varied delivery methods to inspire success and empower lives.

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Letter from the President

Dear Peacock Family,

As we begin another exciting academic year at Upper Iowa University, I am proud of all we accomplished together this past year. Our Peacock community continues to demonstrate resilience, innovation, and a strong commitment to student success.

From advancing initiatives through our Impact 2028 Strategic Plan to celebrating student achievements and expanding opportunities across the university, this year has been one of meaningful progress. The support of our alumni, donors, faculty, staff, and friends continues to create life-changing opportunities for our students.

That spirit of progress is reflected in our year-end campaign, *Momentum that Matters*. Every gift and every act of support helps move Upper Iowa University forward while strengthening the future for current and future Peacocks alike.

As we look ahead to the 2026-2027 academic year, we are excited to launch several new academic programs designed to meet the needs of today's students and workforce. New bachelor's degree programs in Digital Marketing, Public Health, and Project Management, along with a new MBA emphasis in Business Analytics, reflect our continued commitment to innovation and career-focused education.

This issue of *The Bridge* also highlights the many ways our alumni and supporters continue to make a lasting impact on Upper Iowa University through their generosity and dedication, including opportunities to create a legacy through our Heritage Society.

Thank you for your continued support of Upper Iowa University and for being an important part of our momentum and future.

With gratitude,



Kathy Franken '12
President and Chief Financial Officer
Upper Iowa University



Create a Lasting Legacy for UIU

The Upper Iowa University Heritage Society recognizes alumni and friends who have chosen to include UIU in their estate plans through planned giving. Their generosity helps ensure future generations of students continue to have access to the opportunities and experiences that define the Peacock community.

Legacy gifts support scholarships, academic programs, campus improvements, and student success initiatives that create lasting impact for years to come. Through wills, trusts, retirement plans, life insurance policies, and other planned giving options, Heritage Society members leave a meaningful legacy while helping shape the future of Upper Iowa University.

Their commitment reflects a shared belief in the power of education and the importance of investing in future Peacocks. To learn more about joining the Heritage Society and creating your legacy at UIU, visit uiu.edu/HeritageSociety.



Dennis Murdock '68, a member of the Upper Iowa University Board of Trustees and the newest member of the Heritage Society, joined in June 2026. He is pictured with Rio Johnson, recipient of the 2026-27 Dennis and Marlene Murdock Leadership Scholarship.



NEWS BRIEFS

Upper Iowa University Earns 2026-2027 Military Friendly School Designation

Upper Iowa University announced that it has earned the 2026-2027 Military Friendly School designation. Institutions earning the Military Friendly School designation were evaluated using both public data sources and responses from a proprietary survey. Over 3,200 companies participated in the survey. The 2026-2027 Military Friendly Schools list is published in the *G.I. Jobs* magazine and found at militaryfriendly.com.

Methodology, criteria, and weightings were determined by consultation with the Military Friendly®, in Military Friendly® Advisory Council, a group of independent leaders in the military community. Final ratings were determined by combining an organization's survey score, public data, and an assessment of the institution's ability to meet and exceed thresholds for student recruitment, retention, academic progress, graduation rates, career placement, and support services for veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses.

"The faculty and staff at UIU are profoundly grateful for the service, dedication, and sacrifices of our veteran students," said Brandy Branstetter, Director of Military and Veteran Affairs at Upper Iowa University. "It is our privilege to support veteran students and their families as they pursue their educational and career aspirations. We are proud to provide every student with a high-quality educational experience."

"Earning the Military Friendly® designation is more than a badge of honor; it is a reflection of an institution's deep-rooted values and strategic commitment to those who served. These schools don't just open doors for veterans and military spouses, they build sustainable pathways for academic success and long-term impact. Their support is transformative, proving that investing in military-connected students is both a moral imperative and a standard for educational excellence." — Kayla Lopez, Vice President of Memberships, Military Friendly®

Upper Iowa University Honors Faculty with 2025-2026 Roger & Alice Mangan Excellence in Teaching Awards

Upper Iowa University has recognized three faculty members with the 2025-2026 Roger & Alice Mangan Excellence in Teaching Award, honoring educators who demonstrate exceptional dedication to student learning and academic excellence.

Presented annually, the Roger & Alice Mangan Excellence in Teaching Award recognizes faculty members who go above and beyond in the classroom to inspire, engage, and support students. The award may be presented to up to three faculty members each year, including one adjunct faculty member, one tenure-track faculty member, instructor, or lecturer, and one tenured faculty member.



The award was established by UIU alumni Roger and Alice Mangan to celebrate outstanding teaching among UIU faculty. Roger Mangan, a 1962 graduate with a degree in history, was a wrestler, a 2014 Athletic Hall of Fame inductee, and currently serves on the UIU Board of Trustees. Alice (DeLong) Mangan, a 1961 graduate in physical education, helped organize UIU's first drill team.

2025-2026 Award Recipients

Tenured Faculty: Rachel Majewski



Since joining UIU in 2012, **Dr. Rachel Majewski** has helped students discover their passion for health, fitness, and human performance through innovative instruction and hands-on learning experiences. Known for her supportive teaching style and high expectations, she encourages students to think critically and apply classroom knowledge to real-world practice.

Majewski is a licensed and certified athletic trainer and earned her doctorate in Allied Health, Recreation, and Community Service from the University of Northern Iowa.

Tenure-Track/Lecturer: Staci Kinzebach



Dr. Staci Kinzebach joined UIU in 2024 and brings nearly two decades of experience in public education. Her expertise includes structured literacy, the Science of Reading, and literacy interventions for diverse learners. She is recognized for her commitment to preparing future educators through evidence-based teaching practices and professional development opportunities.

Kinzebach earned her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Northern Iowa and holds endorsements in English/Language Arts, Reading, ESL, and K-12 reading specialization.

Adjunct/Online/Center Faculty: Lena Mae Johnson



Dr. Lena Mae Johnson has served as an adjunct instructor at UIU's Baton Rouge Center since 2014, teaching social science courses while also serving as Coordinator of Admission and Title IX Confidential Advisor at Southern University Law Center. Her career reflects a strong commitment to student development, educational access, and community advocacy.

Johnson holds multiple advanced degrees, including an Executive Ph.D. in Public Policy from Southern University A&M College. In addition to her teaching and professional service, she is an advocate for increased educational

research and healthcare support for patients with Sickle Cell Disease and has authored several scholarly journal articles on the topic.

"The legacy Roger and Alice Mangan created through this award continues to highlight the incredible dedication of UIU faculty who inspire, challenge, and support students every day," remarked Ashley Gredys, Vice President for Advancement and Alumni Engagement.

Recipients of the Roger & Alice Mangan Excellence in Teaching Award are selected through a student nomination process coordinated by UIU Academic Affairs. Each spring, students are invited to nominate faculty members who have made a meaningful impact on their educational experience through excellence in teaching and student engagement.

Blue Stars Drum and Bugle Corps bring music, energy and community spirit to Upper Iowa University

For more than a month, the sounds of brass, percussion, and applause echoed across the Upper Iowa University campus as the Blue Stars Drum & Bugle Corps called Fayette home for its annual spring training.

From late May through June, more than 160 performers and staff members prepared for the demanding Drum Corps International (DCI) summer competition season while living, rehearsing, and becoming part of the UIU and Fayette communities.

The Blue Stars, one of the nation's premier drum and bugle corps, includes talented young adults ages 16 to 22 from around the world. Throughout their stay, corps members spent long days rehearsing at Harms-Eischeid Stadium and in facilities across campus, refining every detail of their production before embarking on a summer tour spanning more than 10,000 miles.

Their evening rehearsals became a unique opportunity for community members to experience world-class performances in their own backyard. Nightly practices at Harms-Eischeid Stadium were open to the public, drawing local residents, alumni, and visitors who gathered to watch the ensemble's progress throughout the month.

The Blue Stars concluded their residency with a special community performance on Sunday, June 28, showcasing the

results of weeks of intensive preparation. The performance offered friends, families, and community supporters an exciting preview of the program the corps would perform across the country during the Drum Corps International season.

The following morning, Upper Iowa University and the Fayette community came together once again to celebrate the corps during a community send-off. Faculty, staff, students, local residents, and Chamber of Commerce representatives gathered to cheer on the Blue Stars as they departed campus to begin their national summer tour.

Hosting the Blue Stars was a valued partnership reflects Upper Iowa University's commitment to community engagement and providing opportunities that enrich both campus life and the surrounding region. The partnership also brings visitors to Fayette and gives local residents the chance to experience the dedication, discipline, and artistry of one of the country's elite performing ensembles.

As the buses rolled out of Fayette, they carried more than talented musicians and performers—they departed with the encouragement and support of a community that had welcomed them as neighbors for the month.

To relive the Blue Stars' 2026 season through photos, videos, and performance highlights, visit facebook.com/bluestars.



FACULTY AND STAFF NOTES



Students in **Dr. Rachel Majewski's** Exercise Prescription course recently participated in a multi-day experiential learning project focused on health and physical fitness assessment. Working with volunteer clients from the campus community, students conducted health screenings, performed fitness

assessments, analyzed results, and developed individualized exercise prescriptions designed to improve overall health and fitness.

The project provided students with valuable hands-on experience while strengthening their communication, professionalism, and clinical practice skills. By applying classroom knowledge in a real-world setting, students gained a deeper understanding of the exercise prescription process and the importance of individualized programming.



Upper Iowa University alumni **Ashley Donovan '23** and **Terrell Powell '21** recently visited the Introduction to Personal Training course to speak with students about careers in the health and fitness industry. During a question-and-answer session, the alumni shared insights on certifications, client relationships, career preparation, and professional growth as personal trainers.

Students appreciated the opportunity to hear real-world perspectives from UIU graduates currently working in the field, with many noting that the experience strengthened their confidence in pursuing careers in personal training and fitness.



Master of Arts in Psychology (MAP) students continue to engage in meaningful capstone and research experiences as the culmination of their graduate studies. One example is MAP student Olivia Schoon, who is developing online training resources to support foster and adoptive families and professionals working in foster care. Drawing from her lived experience in foster care, Olivia's project focuses on creating accessible, practical resources for caregivers and providers supporting children and families.



The Psychology and Human Services Department continues to emphasize internships and applied learning experiences that help students build transferable workplace skills. Students are currently gaining experience at organizations and programs including advocacy centers, the UIU Strength and Conditioning Program, and the Peacock Pantry. Pictured is student, Brooke Steffans, who supports the UIU Peacock Pantry and is working to increase student access to food resources on campus and in surrounding communities.



Students in the Radio/Podcast Production and Television Production courses recently participated in experiential learning activities designed to connect classroom learning with industry practice. Local amateur radio operators visited campus to demonstrate the historical and emergency communication applications of ham radio technology for students in the Radio/Podcast Production course.



Students also traveled to Cedar Rapids to tour professional communication and media organizations, including ROCK 107.9/105.7, Metro Studios, and KCRG. The experience provided students with firsthand exposure to careers in broadcasting, production, and media communication while highlighting the many professional pathways available within the Communication Studies field.



Communication Studies students Savannah Weiss (left) and Tate Carlson (far right), alongside **Dr. NiCole Dennler** (center), recently represented the program at the NICC Career Fair, where they demonstrated the diverse career applications of a Communication Studies degree.

In addition, students and faculty participated in the Central States Communication Association conference in Minneapolis. Dr. Dennler contributed to two panel discussions focused on intersectionality in communication studies and professional development opportunities within the discipline.



Since January, the Henderson-Wilder Library has added 245 new items to its collection—more than were added during the previous five years combined. The library has also continued improvements to the Learning Commons, including repainting private study rooms, the back hallway, and the Kinney Room through the support of generous donations.



Additional highlights include the return of the historic 1908 gown following restoration for use in UIU's Passing of the Gown tradition and

the continued development of student-focused programming. Activities such as Finding Atticus help students strengthen research skills and better navigate library resources. Increased usage of library spaces and resources over the past year reflects the library's ongoing commitment to accessibility, student engagement, and academic support.



Dr. John Grummel continues to represent Upper Iowa University through national engagement in education and student success initiatives. He was selected as a 2026 Teacher Ambassador for Retro Report, a national organization that develops journalism-based classroom resources to support inquiry and discussion in secondary education. In addition, he attended the 2026 NASPA Annual Conference and served as discussant for the panel session Rooted in Care: Equity, Connection, and Persistence for First-Generation Students and Students of Color. His involvement in these initiatives reflects UIU's ongoing commitment to student engagement, equity, and educational innovation.

Dr. Melissa Reed, Director of the Health Administration Program and Assistant Professor of Healthcare Administration, recently published her research article, Impact of CMS LSC Surveys on HCFC Deficiencies in Alabama, in the Journal of Higher Education and Advancement. Her scholarship contributes to ongoing conversations surrounding healthcare compliance and quality improvement while highlighting UIU faculty engagement in applied research and professional practice.

Upper Iowa University has launched new MSC Link and MAP Link programs, allowing eligible undergraduate Psychology and Human Services students to earn graduate credit that also satisfies undergraduate degree requirements. Students may complete up to four graduate courses while still enrolled as undergraduates, creating a more affordable and accelerated pathway into the Master of Science in Counseling (MSC) and Master of Arts in Psychology (MAP) programs.



The Master of Healthcare Administration (MHA) program added an internship option for individuals interested in obtaining their Nursing Home Administrator license. The internship provides opportunities for students to gain practical, hands-on experience in healthcare settings. The addition strengthens career preparation while enhancing the program's flexibility and alignment with workforce needs in the growing healthcare sector.



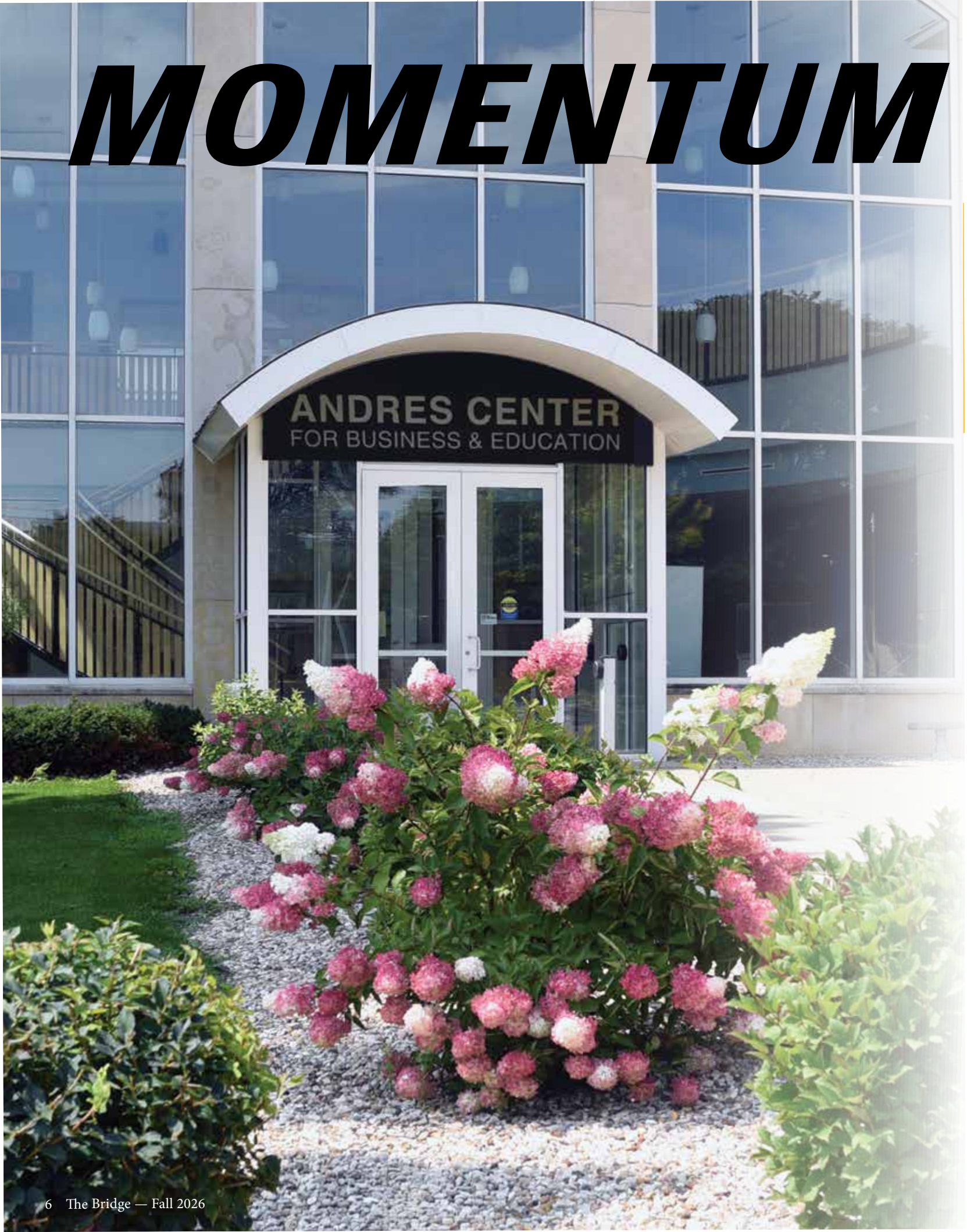
In May of 2026, **Dr. Scott Figdore**, Professor Emeritus, collaborated with Dr. William Norris, an expert on Iowa sedges (the scientific name of this genus is *Carex*). Norris reviewed UIU's recent collection of over 200 specimens of sedges in order to document them for his *Carex* of Iowa project. This project records county and location information for the 100-plus species of sedges that have been verified to occur within the state. His review confirmed that UIU specimens for 47 different *Carex* species have been documented as growing in Fayette County, Iowa. Seven of these species had not been recorded as growing in Fayette County prior to this study.

The photo shows a specimen from one of these rare species, *Carex praegracilis* or clustered field sedge. This specimen is likely the first record of this species growing in Fayette County; it was collected by Figdore from the Pleggenkuhle remnant prairie maintained by UIU.



The Master of Science in Counseling Program proudly celebrated its graduates during Upper Iowa University's Commencement Ceremony on May 9, 2026. The occasion recognized the hard work, dedication, and perseverance of students as they completed their academic journey toward becoming professional counselors. Faculty and staff extend their congratulations to the graduates and look forward to the positive impact they will make in their communities and within the counseling profession.

MOMENTUM



IN MOTION

IMPACT 2028

CONTINUES TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF UPPER IOWA UNIVERSITY

Higher education is changing rapidly, and Upper Iowa University is embracing that change with innovation, purpose, and a continued commitment to student success. As the university enters the second year of its Impact 2028 Strategic Plan, new academic programs, expanded learning opportunities, and student-centered initiatives are creating momentum that is transforming the UIU experience.

From launching workforce-focused degree programs to expanding support for adult learners and developing new educational pathways, every initiative reflects a shared goal: preparing students for meaningful careers while ensuring higher education remains accessible, affordable, and flexible.

“Impact 2028 is about creating meaningful opportunities for students while positioning Upper Iowa University for long-term success,” said President & CFO Kathy Franken. “Every initiative we launch reflects our commitment to innovation, student success, and preparing graduates for the opportunities of tomorrow.”

This momentum is evident throughout the university as UIU continues investing in academic innovation, workforce partnerships, student support, and lifelong learning opportunities that meet students wherever they are in their educational journey.

“Impact 2028 is about creating meaningful opportunities for students while positioning Upper Iowa University for long-term success.”

**Kathy Franken '12
President & CFO**

ACADEMIC INNOVATION DRIVING WORKFORCE SUCCESS

One of the cornerstones of Impact 2028 is ensuring students graduate prepared for careers in an evolving workforce. Over the past two years, Upper Iowa University has significantly expanded its academic offerings while creating innovative pathways that reduce costs and increase opportunities for students.

In May 2026, the university introduced its groundbreaking 90-credit Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, allowing students to complete their bachelor's degree more efficiently while reducing both time and tuition costs. The program can be paired with UIU's Master of Business Administration, allowing qualified students to earn both a bachelor's and master's degree in as little as four years.

The university also expanded its academic portfolio with bachelor's degrees in Business Analytics and Cybersecurity, along with MBA emphasis areas in Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity and an MPA emphasis in Cybersecurity.

“Innovation in higher education means anticipating where industries are headed and ensuring our students are ready to lead.”

Dr. Billie Cowley '03, '08
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Building upon that momentum, Fall 2026 will introduce four additional academic offerings: Bachelor's degrees in Digital Marketing, Project Management, and Public Health, along with a new Business Analytics emphasis within the MBA program.

What's Ahead for 2026-2027

- **NEW!** Bachelor's degrees in Digital Marketing, Public Health and Project Management
- **NEW!** MBA emphasis in Business Analytics
- Launch of ReEngage UIU for returning adult learners
- Introduction of uiuElevate for continuing education and professional learning
- Continued investment in student success and fundraising initiatives
- **NEW!** Pep Band bringing additional spirit to the Fayette Campus

Together, these programs prepare students for careers in some of today's fastest-growing industries while equipping graduates with the analytical, technical, leadership, and communication skills employers increasingly seek.

“Innovation in higher education means anticipating where industries are headed and ensuring our students are ready to lead,” said Dr. Billie Cowley '03, '08, Vice President for Academic Affairs. “These new programs reflect our commitment to providing career-focused education that combines flexibility, practical experience, and the skills employers need today and tomorrow.”

NEW PROGRAMS LAUNCHING THIS FALL

Digital Marketing prepares students for careers in social media strategy, digital advertising, content creation, search engine optimization, analytics, and brand management.

Project Management equips graduates with leadership, planning, budgeting, and organizational skills applicable across nearly every industry.

Public Health prepares students to improve community health through disease prevention, health education, healthcare systems, and population wellness.

The new MBA emphasis in Business Analytics builds upon the undergraduate Business Analytics degree introduced last year, preparing graduate students to leverage data for strategic decision-making and organizational success.



EXPANDING LEARNING BEYOND TRADITIONAL DEGREES

Upper Iowa University continues expanding educational opportunities beyond traditional degree programs.

The university will launch a Low Residency Master of Business Administration designed for international students through a partnership with Smart Adventures in Spring 2027. Students will complete coursework online while participating in an in-person residency weekend in Des Moines each semester, creating opportunities for networking, collaboration, and cultural engagement.

UIU is also launching uiuElevate, a new online platform designed to provide continuing education, professional development, workforce training, and future micro-credentials. Initial offerings will focus on teacher continuing education, employer partnerships, and non-credit learning opportunities that support lifelong learning.

Together, these initiatives extend Upper Iowa University's mission beyond traditional degree programs, providing flexible educational opportunities for learners at every stage of their careers.

STUDENT SUCCESS AT EVERY STAGE

Academic innovation is only one part of Impact 2028. The university continues strengthening the support systems that help students persist, graduate, and achieve their goals.

Launching this summer, ReEngage UIU will reconnect with former students who paused their education before earning their degree. Through personalized outreach and dedicated coaching, the initiative helps adult learners navigate financial questions, overcome barriers, and confidently return to complete what they started.

Meanwhile, donor support continues to expand opportunities for current and future students through scholarships, academic excellence initiatives, athletics, and resources that enhance the student experience across every learning location.

These investments directly support the goals of Impact 2028 by strengthening access, affordability, and student success while ensuring Upper Iowa University continues serving learners for generations to come.

BUILDING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

As Upper Iowa University enters the second year of Impact 2028, the university continues building momentum through thoughtful innovation, strategic growth, and an unwavering commitment to student success.

Whether introducing new academic programs, expanding workforce partnerships, creating more affordable degree pathways, or supporting students from enrollment through graduation, every initiative reflects the university's mission of preparing graduates to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Momentum is more than a theme—it is the direction of Upper Iowa University. With each new program, partnership, and opportunity, UIU continues building a future that honors its history while embracing the possibilities ahead. 



UIU 2004 graduate wins

If someone had told him he would graduate with a Communication Media Studies degree from a very small, nonprofit university in Fayette, Iowa, **Marques “Marq” Massengale ’04** would have laughed and explained that he was a Southern California native and such things didn’t happen. In reality, it wasn’t particularly easy for Marq to find his way to Upper Iowa University, but according to him, it’s a miracle he did because it led him to a career he loves.

“It was one of the best things that could have ever happened to me,” he said. And it wasn’t just because he was on the football team. The university surprised him. When Marq arrived in 2003, the difference between Fayette and his Southern California home was amazing.

“It’s so freaking different. But that’s what made it great for me. To be honest, I think it’s been great for many, because there are a lot of people that probably wouldn’t have gone to college or graduated and really developed into something if they hadn’t gone to UIU.” He added, “I loved and appreciated it for its small town vibes. I really did. It was so different than what I was used to. I saw there was a lot of good.”

Upper Iowa had another surprise for him: in his first year, off the football field, he ran headlong into a university professor who pushed him hard and wouldn’t let him give up. Dr. Melle Starsen was his adviser, and Marq said, smiling, that she wouldn’t allow him to concoct excuses for not getting work done and always expected him to do his best.

“I had gone to different colleges already,” Marq said, but he hadn’t stayed long at any of them. “I just had a bug where I just had to keep moving.” He admitted he was looking for something, but wasn’t sure what. And it took years and some negative experiences to find what he was really looking for.

“I’d never had anybody, outside of sports, show that they believed in me,” he said. Starsen saw through what he described as his “cocky jerk” persona in college—overconfidence, that he admitted, was really a facade covering up his insecurities. Dr. Starsen obviously wanted him to succeed.

He took many of his major’s classes with Starsen and she strongly encouraged

him. “She was the first person to literally make me feel like, ‘You’re better than this. What are you doing?’ Like when I would be a class clown, she would always be the one who asked, ‘What are you doing? Why?’”

“I say that now and in hindsight, that was big. It made me feel like I didn’t have to be this idiot. She was telling me, ‘You can be and do a lot more.’”

After graduating in 2004, Marq stumbled for a couple of years as he tried to decide what he wanted to do. Because he had been a dedicated college football player, he spent a year with European Football in Basel, Switzerland, but returned to California with the realization that he’d moved beyond football.

“I really had a tough time adjusting to life after I got back from Switzerland,” he said. “I had a couple opportunities and offers to go to different training camps. But I was like, no, I think I’m done. I really had a tough time figuring out what I was going to do.”

Returning from Europe without a career choice provoked some negative habits. He said, “I was partying a lot. And I was just really struggling with what I was going to do next.” Marq went back home to live with his mom and he “was broke than broke.” No money, no job. He said he’s very open about what happened “because I think it’s important.”

He was fresh out of a second DUI; he said, “I was on Craigslist and I found a job.” He grinned sheepishly and explained that job “was literally picking up poop in an equestrian center. But to this day, still the second-best job I ever had because I was sitting there with my iPod and some headphones just picking up poop.”

“Why would anybody gamble on you if you won’t even gamble on yourself?”

Marques “Marq” Massengale ’04

He recalled his days at UIU and realized “there were literally people working at the equestrian center that were making more money than me and I had a college degree.” The realization depressed him and he told himself, “I’ve got to find a career.”

Marq Massengale wins Emmy as feature producer on Amazon Thursday Night Football.



Emmy award!

Fortunately for Marq, people he knew were already in the production industry, including his best friend, Dustin Stern, who was field producing for FOX Sports West. Marq said, "Dustin saw that I had taken a strong interest in a video production class I was taking at Moorpark. Dustin said, 'I want you to come out with us on a shoot.' They were doing the promos/opens for all the West Coast teams, for all the SoCal teams, which were the Lakers, the Clippers, the Angels and the Dodgers."

Marq said, "I'd done some TV at Upper Iowa (in Dr. Starsen's TV production courses). Let me try it out. So I did that and I ended up helping him out just as a PA and I fell in love with the business." He added, "I got a lot of great opportunities."

The decision to work with his friend changed Marq's life and inspired him to take a huge chance that helped prepare him for the career he loves today.

Amazon had just picked up the Thursday night football contract and outsourced it to a production company called DLP Media Group. Marq said, "DLP is the gold standard. The founder, Mike Hughes, is one of the most brilliant creatives I've ever been around in my life. I worked with him indirectly before, and he was brilliant."

Hughes hired Marq as a supervising producer during the first year. Marq explained, "Amazon was just throwing money at it, but there was no real place for me as a supervising producer. Mike Hughes worked with another guy named Matt who basically did everything. He was hesitant to relinquish any of his duties at the time, so there really wasn't anything for me to do."

Marq began work anyway, helping with whatever he could, and he was asked to write some of the scripts for Thursday night football. He said, "I had never really done any before. Then they started asking me, 'Why don't you do the temporary voiceovers?' Marq went out on his own and bought a mic and a mic stand and also on his own, he began recording the temporary voiceovers in his office."

However, some of the footage shot for Houston "was just terrible" according to Marq. "Someone basically went to Houston and shot no black people. Houston is like 90 percent black. And they didn't capture the whole idea of these opens, which was to show off the vibe of the city."

So Marq went to Matt and explained that the Houston video "sucked." He went further and said, "I want to go reshoot it. Can I go do my own thing?" But Matt said no. However, Marq had already decided he could shoot better footage, and he took the big chance by booking his own flight. He told himself, "I'm gonna show them that I can do this. I'm going to make this happen. And that's basically been my career and my motto thus far."

The result was that he flew to Houston and, in 18 hours, reshot the entire project. Then he wrote a script on the plane back.

"I called another contact who got in touch with a very popular rapper out there and I got him to do the voiceover. And then I didn't tell

anybody this," Marq explained. "And when we were done editing it, I sent it for review. Everybody was like, 'What the hell is this? Who shot this?'"

The result was that the client, Amazon, loved it, Matt loved it, and Mike Hughes loved it. The next thing Marq knew, others were asking him, "Can we use some of your footage?"

The big chance had paid off. "Matt came to me the next day and he said from here on out, the door is open, just do your thing." I asked him what he meant.

"He said, 'Just go, the opens are yours. Do whatever you want. Knock yourself out.'" Marq had taken the responsibility for the reshoot on his own and proven to his supervisors he could do it. He had taken a precarious chance but it paid off. He explained, "Why would anybody gamble on you if you won't even gamble on yourself?"

He had created something from scratch. "You know, I can't paint. I can't draw. I can't build a chair, but I can make a show. I can make a commercial. I can do these things, and I love having my hands all over the creative aspect, I genuinely do, and this industry is perfect for 'degenerates' like me," he added, smiling.

"Again, I think at certain points, you know, along my life, and definitely my career, I have seized certain opportunities and that is what has gotten me to learn. No question."

Then, in 2020, Marq was nominated for a television Emmy award. He didn't win that year, but he kept working hard, kept trying to prove he had the ability to research, produce, write, shoot, and edit good programs. He admitted that he was determined to win the award, and in 2023 he was nominated again for an Emmy; that year, he won as a feature producer on Amazon Thursday Night Football.

However, Marq has more goals than just winning awards. Many of them were planted back in 2003, when he ended up at UIU and graduated in 2004.

"I'm Kobe chasing Jordan. Of course, you're never going to catch him because he's Jordan. But that should never stop you from trying. If I end up even just being in the conversation with some of the masters in the same business, the mission is accomplished. I want to be the go-to guy. I want to build a great life for my wife and my daughter. I want to be remembered. I don't want to be a headstone." Marq added, "I'm not scared of failing. I'm scared of being a failure." 🏀



Marq Massengale directing LeBron James at the 2025 Lakers Media Day.

From Iowa to the Netherlands: UIU Alumna Earns Fulbright to Advance Global Water Solutions

A prestigious grant opportunity fostered international partnerships in water management.



Kate (Shank) Giannini '06 is building an international partnerships to address some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

When Kate Giannini reflects on her career, one theme consistently emerges: meaningful solutions happen when people come together.

That belief has guided her work in watershed management, flood resilience, and community engagement—and took her across the Atlantic as a recipient of a prestigious Fulbright opportunity.

During the winter of 2026, Giannini traveled to the Netherlands, where she spent six weeks working with Deltares, one of the world's leading independent research institutes focused on water and soil. Through the Fulbright Specialist Program, she helped strengthen partnerships between American and Dutch researchers while exploring innovative approaches to flood mitigation, watershed management, water quality, and community resilience. Once Giannini received her grant contract, she traveled to the Netherlands where she stayed from December 30, 2025 through February 8, 2026.

For Giannini, the opportunity represents much more than international travel. It is the culmination of years spent connecting science, policy, and communities around a shared goal: protecting people and natural resources from increasingly complex water challenges.

Creating Connections Across Borders

Today, Giannini serves as a Program Manager with IIHR—Hydroscience & Engineering and the Iowa Flood Center at the University of Iowa. Her work focuses on building partnerships and helping communities better understand and address water-related challenges.



Kate presents to Deltares researchers and staff about IIHR—Hydroscience and Engineering and the Iowa Flood Center, opening the door to new opportunities for collaboration and connection. The two institutions are closely aligned in their research, innovation, and commitment to serving communities.

Her Fulbright project centered on strengthening collaboration between Deltares and leading U.S. organizations, including the Iowa Flood Center and IIHR. The initiative seeks to create lasting partnerships that promote knowledge-sharing, interdisciplinary research, and innovative approaches to water management.

The Netherlands has long been recognized as a global leader in water management. With much of the country situated below sea level, Dutch researchers and policymakers have developed sophisticated strategies for flood protection, climate adaptation, and water governance.

Giannini's project has created opportunities for experts from both countries to learn from one another. Over the course of the exchange, she participated in presentations, workshops, site visits, and collaborative discussions focused on flood risk management, drought resilience, watershed planning, nature-based solutions, and water quality improvement.

“A significant focus of my Fulbright experience was exploring broad watershed scale flood mitigation opportunities and



Bringing a little piece of Iowa to Delft! Kate Standing on the historic Oostpoort Bridge with the latest issue of Upper Iowa Bridge magazine.

piloting the FloodAdapt decision-support tool for the community of Columbus Junction, Iowa—the first inland community in the United States to use the software. As I worked through scenarios and applications, I was able to provide real-time feedback to the developers, helping them improve the model for a Midwest setting.

FloodAdapt is an open-source tool that helps communities and decision-makers understand and prepare for future flooding. Users can simulate flood scenarios and evaluate the effectiveness of different mitigation strategies, including wetlands, retention ponds, and both green and gray infrastructure. “It is an incredible tool, and I was excited to help explore its potential in Iowa,” says Giannini.

The Power of Collaboration

A central theme of Giannini's work is the belief that technical expertise alone cannot solve environmental challenges.

Her proposal emphasized the importance of communication, stakeholder engagement, and community involvement

“Looking ahead, I hope this is only the beginning. The new relationships built, and synergies between our two organizations align so well, I’m looking forward to what the future holds.”

Kate Giannini '06

Left, Kate's family was able to visit her in the Netherlands during her final week there. She is shown with her husband, Ryan, and their sons, Easton and Nolan, visiting the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, with Rembrandt's famous *The Night Watch* (1642) in the background.

Below, Kate holds a copy of *The Bridge* during her visit to TU Delft in the Netherlands—the country's largest technical university and a global leader in hydrology, engineering, and geosciences.



in decision-making. The exchange explored methods for reaching both technical and non-technical audiences while encouraging collaboration among researchers, government officials, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders. The project also highlighted the importance of mutual learning.

While Giannini shared lessons learned through U.S. watershed and flood management initiatives, she also gained firsthand insight into Dutch approaches to governance, nature-based infrastructure, and long-term climate adaptation. Those experiences helped inform future projects and partnerships when Giannini returned home.

A Global Impact

The long-term goal extends far beyond a six-week exchange. Giannini felt the collaboration served as a foundation for future research partnerships, educational initiatives, and joint projects that continue well after the Fulbright experience concludes. The project included plans to identify future opportunities for cooperation between institutions in both countries and to create pathways for ongoing dialogue and innovation.

“Looking ahead, I hope this is only the beginning. The new relationships built, and synergies between our two organizations align so well, I’m looking forward to what the future holds,” Giannini said.

Ultimately, the work reflects the broader mission of the Fulbright Program: fostering international understanding through the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and expertise.

A UIU Foundation

As a graduate of Upper Iowa University, Giannini's accomplishments reflect the impact alumni can have when they combine education with purpose and service.

The skills required to navigate complex challenges—critical thinking, communication, relationship-building, and adaptability—are the same qualities that have helped shape her professional success.

Today, those skills are helping her connect leading researchers, institutions, and communities across continents.

From Iowa to the Netherlands, Giannini's work demonstrates how collaboration can create meaningful change—and how one Peacock is helping advance solutions to some of the world's most important environmental challenges. 

DONOR DOLLARS AT WORK



SUPPORTING THE HEART OF PEACOCK ATHLETICS

Thanks to the generosity of Peacock donors, funds were raised to support the Athletic Training team and directly impact the health, safety, and performance of every student-athlete. These gifts helped provide essential resources for injury prevention, rehabilitation, recovery, and staff development. Support helped fund priorities such as stretch cage equipment to improve mobility and preparation, red light therapy devices to aid recovery and pain management, and Blood Flow Restriction training to enhance rehabilitation for student-athletes returning from injury.

Peacock student-athletes will have access to resources that help them recover more quickly, return to competition safely, and perform at their best. Way to go, Peacock supporters!



NEW WRESTLING MATS

Men's Wrestling is stepping onto brand-new mats this season! Thanks to the generosity of our donors, our student-athletes will train and chase championships on a surface built to withstand every takedown, scramble, and pin. After years of hard-fought practices and matches, the previous mats had earned their retirement. This important upgrade ensures our wrestlers have the quality equipment they need to sharpen their skills and compete at the highest level. A special thank-you to **Roger '62 & Alice (DeLong) Mangan '61** for their steadfast support of UIU Men's Wrestling.

HONORING A PEACOCK LEGACY

At Harms-Eischeid Stadium, the impact of donor generosity can be seen in both grand and deeply personal ways. The late Steve and Diane (Kincaid) Harms, both members of the Class of 1973, transformed the home of Peacock football through their visionary leadership gift. Today, Harms-Eischeid Stadium stands as a lasting testament to their commitment to Upper Iowa University, serving generations of student-athletes, alumni, families, and fans.



In tribute to their lives and legacy, family and friends created a memorial at the stadium entrance that proudly bears their name. Memorial benches, along with newly planted shrubs and flowers added this spring, provide a peaceful space where visitors can pause, reflect, and celebrate the enduring spirit of two beloved Peacocks. Their memorial serves as a lasting reminder that the impact of generosity extends far beyond a lifetime.

Those interested in honoring a loved one, classmate, coach, or mentor are invited to explore memorial ideas with the Office of Advancement & Alumni Engagement at alumni@uiu.edu or 563-425-5388.



SUPPORTING STUDENTS, ONE STEP AT A TIME

The UIU Exercise Science Program was thrilled to secure funds to purchase a new treadmill in the classroom, thanks to the Roger & Alice Mangan Excellence in Teaching Awards mini-grants. While it may look like a single piece of equipment, the treadmill represents something much greater: hands-on learning that prepares students for successful careers. With access to modern technology similar to what they'll encounter in clinics, wellness centers,

hospitals, and rehabilitation facilities, students gain practical experience while building the confidence and technical skills employers expect. Investments like this ensure UIU students learn in an environment that reflects today's professional standards. Every lab session becomes an opportunity to strengthen classroom concepts through real-world application, giving future exercise science professionals a competitive advantage as they enter the workforce.



BECAUSE OF YOU, WE SHINE

Your generosity doesn't just build buildings or fund programs, it changes lives. Every gift, no matter the size, helps a student chase their dreams, discover new opportunities, and find a home here at Upper Iowa University. Every improvement, every new space, every scholarship tells the story of your kindness and commitment. From all of us students, faculty, staff, and the entire Peacock family, thank you for everything you make possible.

OPENING DOORS THROUGH VISIBILITY

Thanks to the generosity of donors, Upper Iowa University is better equipped to meet future Peacocks where they are at college fairs, admissions events, workforce development events, national markets, and community gatherings like the Iowa State Fair and Fayette County Fair. Donor support helps purchase new marketing and display pieces, including signs, table materials, literature racks, new student orientation gifts, and booth signage used by Admissions and National Market Admissions teams.

These pieces may seem simple, but they play an important role in student access. A clear, welcoming display helps prospective students and families quickly learn who UIU is, what programs are available, and how a Peacock education can fit their goals and budget. For first-generation students, adult learners, transfer students, and military-connected families, that first conversation can be the beginning of a life-changing path.



We are grateful to the donors who made these outreach tools possible and helped UIU share its story with more students.

UIU FACILITIES ENHANCEMENT

Sometimes the most important improvements happen behind the scenes. This year, two Team Peacock cyclists raised funds to purchase a Milwaukee ProPress for the UIU Facilities team. The tool allows staff to repair copper piping safely and efficiently without using a torch, reducing fire risk, minimizing disruptions, and saving valuable time. It's a practical investment that will benefit the team responsible for maintaining UIU's 141-acre campus, 29 buildings, and more than 674,000 square feet of facilities.



MILITARY FAMILY SUPPORT

UIU President Kathy Franken '12 and Holly Wolff '10, '23, Executive Assistant to the President, dedicated their Team Peacock fundraiser to Military Family Fund. For military-connected students and their loved ones, donor support can make a lasting difference by providing resources, encouragement, and opportunities that help them succeed in and beyond the classroom. We are grateful to those who supported the Military Family Fund, directly impacting those who have served and the families who stand beside them.



FRESH NEW LOOK



Let's face it, when you look good, you play with a little extra swagger, and every edge counts when it's game



time. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, UIU student-athletes in football, women's basketball, volleyball, and softball are taking the field and court with a fresh new look. From updated uniforms to new gear, these enhancements help build confidence, strengthen team pride, and create a unified presence as our Peacocks compete. While the new look turns heads, it's also a reminder that our student-athletes have an entire community of supporters standing behind them every step of the way.

FUTURE STUDENT CAMPUS VISIT FUND



For many students, a campus visit is the moment college becomes real. Two Team Peacock cyclists chose to support the Future Student Campus Visit Fund, which helps remove transportation barriers for prospective students. By making campus visits possible, donors give future Peacocks the opportunity to tour campus, meet faculty, connect with current students, and picture themselves at Upper Iowa. For many, especially first-generation college students, that experience can be life-changing. Kudos to all supporters of future students at Upper Iowa.

ATHLETICS WRAP-UP

Peacocks to welcome four new inductees into Athletics Hall of Fame

Four new inductees to the Upper Iowa Athletics Hall of Fame have been announced. The honorees will be recognized as part of this year's Homecoming Ball on October 9, 2026. To learn more or RSVP, visit uiu.edu/HomecomingBall. The class of 2026 inductees are listed alphabetically below:



BRIAN BLACK '06
ATHLETE – WRESTLING

Life Science Major
• 3x NCAA National Qualifier
• 2x All-American

- Member of the 2002 team that finished at NCAA National Runner-Ups – highest team placing by any sports team in UIU history. Brian was an All-American that season.
- 2002 – D3 All-American (7th place)
- 2003 – D3 All-American (6th place)
- 2004 and 2005 – UIU transitioned to D2, not eligible for NCAA postseason
- 2006 – D2 National Qualifier
- 2x Academic All-American
- 2x Florida High School State Champion – Oviedo High School (Florida)



DON ERICKSON '91
COACH – BASEBALL

English/Psychology Major
• Played baseball at UIU for four seasons (1988–91)

- Recently retired after 30+ years at Reavis High School in Illinois
- IHSBCA Hall of Fame (2016)
- 565 career wins – most in Reavis High School history
- 10 conference championships
- 3 regional titles
- 7x SICA/SSC Coach of the Year
- 3x Reavis Coach of the Year



WHITNEY (KIEFFER) HOPP '15
ATHLETE – WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Accounting Major
• 108 starts and 3,400+ minutes played (2011–15)

- UIU all-time points leader with 1,748 career points
- Ranks 6th all-time at UIU in rebounds with 675
- Career shooting: 41% FG, 81% FT, 15.9 PPG
- 2x All-NSIC: First Team (sophomore), Second Team (junior)
- 2x All-NSIC Defensive Team (sophomore, junior)

- All-NSIC Freshman Team
- Fastest Peacock to reach 1,000 career points; only the second junior in program history to reach the milestone



CARL BROGHAMMER '14
ATHLETE – WRESTLING

Management Major
• NSIC Wrestler of the Year (2014)
• 3x NCAA Division II All-American (3rd place in 2011, 2012 and 2014)

- 2014: 42–4 record; NCAA Central Super Regional runner-up
- Program record holder for career wins with 142
- 82 bonus-point wins: 53 falls, 7 tech falls, 22 major decisions
- NSIC Rookie of the Year (2011); first UIU freshman All-American since Craig Campbell
- AWN All-Rookie Team No. 1 at 197 lbs. – only Division II wrestler ranked No. 1 on the team
- 14–3 record across three NCAA Championship appearances
- 4x NWCA Academic All-American
- Served 11 years as UIU assistant coach for Upper Iowa

Men's Basketball



Kyle Hrcir

The Upper Iowa men's basketball team finished the first season of the Casey Kasperbauer era with a 17-11 record and a 12-8 mark in GLVC play. The Peacocks made their 14th straight conference tournament appearance with their third straight since joining the GLVC. UIU started 7-0 in GLVC play, including an 87-80 upset win over No. 5 Missouri S&T in December.

Redshirt junior Kyle Hrcir picked up a multitude of accolades over the season. He became the first CSC Academic All-American® in the program's history and Upper Iowa's first GLVC Scholar Athlete

of the Year. Hrcir was an All-GLVC First Team selection, a two-time GLVC Player of the Week and won NABC/D2CIDA National Player of the Week for his performance in the upset win over the Miners.

Hrcir led the team in scoring with 474 points (16.9 per game) and rebounding with 253 (nine per game). He totaled 13 double-doubles, ranking 16th nationally. Against Missouri S&T on Feb. 5, Hrcir scored his 1,000th career point, becoming the 32nd player to achieve the feat for the program.



Trey Lewis

Point guard **Trey Lewis '26** was named the team's James R. Spalding Award recipient. Lewis averaged 14.4 points, 3.3 rebounds and 3.3 assists per game while ranking 18th in the GLVC in total points with 404. He also hit 1,000 career points against Drury on Jan. 31.



Jack Miller



Austin Hilmer

Jack Miller and **Austin Hilmer '26** joined Hrcir as CSC Academic All-District® selections. Miller was third on the team in scoring, averaging 11.3 points per game. Tate Petersen added 10.8 points per game, making a team-high 61 3-pointers.

Freshman Cael Reichter emerged as the team's top big man, scoring 8.4 points per game with 5.8 rebounds per game.

Women's Basketball

Peacock women's basketball finished the 2025-26 season with a 14-15 overall record and a 10-10 record in conference play. UIU



Ellie Foster

earned its fourth-straight conference tournament appearance, reaching the postseason in all three years since joining the GLVC. Upper Iowa is the only program to have both its men's and women's basketball teams reach the GLVC Tournament in each of the last three seasons.

The Peacocks had three all-conference selections, led by guard **Ellie Foster '26**



Ellie Foster



Ava Privet

with a First Team and a Newcomer Team selection. Junior Ava Privet was named Second Team All-GLVC, and Kendyl Lodermeier was named to the All-Freshman Team. Steph Cink was the team's James R. Spalding Award recipient. Foster, Privet, Bryar Duwe and Sydnee Nelson were also awarded CSC Academic All-District®.

Foster broke the school record for 3-pointers made in a season with 81, and Privet made the fifth-most in a season with 67. Foster's 431 points (14.9 per game) tied for the 11th-most in a season in program history, and Nelson's 115 assists (four per game) ranked eighth. Privet averaged 13 points per game while shooting a GLVC-best 93.4% from the free-throw line. As a freshman, Lodermeier added 11.4 points and 5.2 rebounds per game.

UIU's 14 wins tied for the fourth-most in program history, while a six-game winning streak early in the season matched the second-longest streak in program history. During that run, the Peacocks made a school-record 17 3-pointers against Quincy (Ill.) in a 96-92 overtime win in the conference opener.

Women's Wrestling



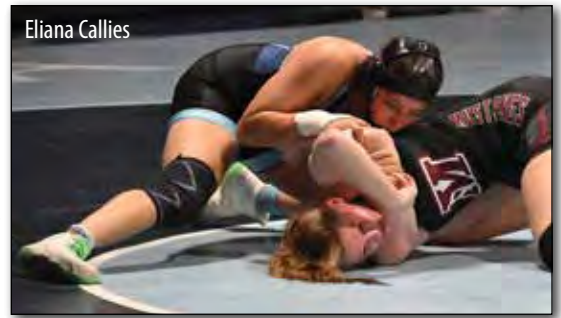
Kylee Shoop



Eliana Callies

Upper Iowa women's wrestling completed its first season under head coach Jay Tiedemann with a 2-5 record. The Peacocks hosted the program's first-ever home duals with the Upper Iowa Triangular on Jan. 30. Upper Iowa started the right way at home, picking up a 24-15 win against Morningside before edging Luther with a 21-20 tiebreaker victory. Freshmen Kylee Shoop (131) and Eliana Callies (160) both

highlighted the home triangular with 2-0 performances. Shoop tallied a 22-12 record on the season while Callies had a 23-17 record.



Eliana Callies

Shoop earned GLVC Wrestler of the Week for her performance at the UIU Triangular, and **Mya Mendoza '26** (160) earned the program's first GLVC Wrestler of the Week award on Jan. 7. The Peacocks totaled three NWCA Scholar All-Americans in Callies, Shoop and **Kylie Doty '26** (145). Callies was the team's James R. Spalding Sportsmanship Award honoree.

Baseball

The Peacock baseball team finished 17-30 with a 10-20 conference record in 2026. UIU earned its first GLVC sweep since joining the conference in 2023 against Lincoln (Mo.) with four wins. Senior **Jared Hoodjer '26** earned GLVC Player of the Week and National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association (NCBWA) National Hitter of the Week recognition for his 10 hits, three home runs and 17 RBIs in the series.



Jared Hoodjer

Brock Zimmer '26 and **Gabe Bombardier '26** also earned GLVC Player of the Week honors. Bombardier became the program's first-ever GLVC Player of the Week after his seven-hit, 13 RBI performance versus

Men's Wrestling

Upper Iowa men's wrestling posted a 7-6, 4-1 GLVC record in 2025-26 with a third-place finish at the conference championship duals. Senior **Ethen Doty '26** was a Super Region V runner-up at 149 pounds and won two matches at the NCAA Division II Championship after becoming the 107th NCAA National Qualifier in program history. Doty led the Peacocks over the season with a 25-8 record.

The Peacocks totaled a 3-1 home record, closing the regular season with a 46-0 win over Quincy and a 38-7 win over Drury on Senior Day. UIU had two shutout wins, marking the most since 2022.



Griffin Luke



Nick Mueller



Treyton Ackman

Doty and Griffin Luke (174) earned All-GLVC First Team selections. Doty finished a perfect 7-0 against conference competition while Luke went 5-0 in the GLVC regular season. Nick Mueller (165) earned a Second Team selection with Treyton Ackman (125), Tanner Arjes (141) and Preston Klostermann (157) earning Third Team honors. The Peacocks had four GLVC Wrestlers of the Week, tying 2023-24 for the most in a season since joining the conference. Those four athletes were Lawson Losee (174), Matthew Marcum (197), Braxten Westerndorf (184) and Luke.



Ethen Doty



Tanner Arjes



Preston Klostermann

The Peacocks totaled 11 NWCA Scholar All-Americans in Collin Altensey (157), Arjes, Cael Bridgewater (149), Owen Denstad (149), Kale Hansen (157), Klostermann, James Lovelady (141), Mueller, Jonah Luensman (141), **Dawson Schmit '26** (133) and **Chase Wickwire '26** (184). Altensey and Schmit earned CSC Academic All-District® honors.

ATHLETICS WRAP-UP

Newman (Kan.). Bombardier, Zimmer, **Isaiah Maes '26**, **Thane Meiners '26** and Kyle Hrnecir earned CSC Academic All-District® selections.



Senior pitcher **Gabe Olson '26** led the team's all-conference selections with an All-GLVC Second Team selection. Olson tallied an 8-2 record, which was one short of tying the most wins in a season in program history. He recorded the third-best total ERA in the GLVC at 3.93. Hoodjer earned an All-GLVC Honorable Mention selection, and freshman Jayce Klug was the team's James R. Spalding Award honoree.

Hoodjer led the team offensively with a .350 batting average, including nine doubles and nine home runs. Bombardier slashed .313/.387/.557 with a team-high 55 hits, 13 doubles and 10 home runs. Meiners, a senior shortstop, had a .311 batting average with 52 hits. Senior infielder **JJ Vargas '26** tallied 10 home runs to finish his career with 29 homers, one short of tying the program record for the most in a UIU career.

Softball

Peacock softball went 6-44 in the first season under head coach Rachel Rhode. UIU was led by All-GLVC Second Team selection, Dani Laughlin, with a .410 batting average. She tied for the seventh-highest batting average in a single season in program history.

UIU's highlight win of the season was against Augustana (S.D.).



Trailing 3-1 in the top of the sixth, senior **Sara Reid '26** hit a go-ahead 3-run homer. Reid also pitched all seven innings of the game, tallying five strikeouts to seal the 4-3 victory. The senior pitcher finished the season with a 4.19 ERA and 89 strikeouts.

Laughlin, Reid, Cara Farnam, **Kaitlin Foral '26** and Addyson Alber picked up CSC Academic All-District® honors. Farnam was the team's James R. Spalding Sportsmanship Award honoree.

Men's Golf

The Peacock men's golf team picked up its first All-GLVC selection since joining the conference in **Owen Davison '26**. The graduate earned All-GLVC Second Team recognition after averaging a team-best score of 75.5. Junior Christian Burkhart was the team's James R. Spalding Sportsmanship award honoree.



UIU also had Davison and Jack Miller earn GLVC Player of the Week honors this past spring. Davison won the award after winning the Wartburg Spring Invitational with a score of 138 (-6) and a career-low second round of 67 (-5). The Peacocks finished second at the Wartburg Spring Invite for their best finish of the season.

Miller earned the weekly award after his career-best third-place finish at the Iowa Central Spring Invitational. He shot a 141 (-1) with a career-low 70 (-1) in the second round. Miller and Burkhart were named CSC Academic All-District®. The Peacocks finished 11th at the GLVC Championships to wrap up the season.

Women's Golf

Addison Weber became the first All-GLVC selection for UIU women's golf this past season. She earned Second Team distinction after averaging a team-low score of 82.4. Weber totaled three top-five finishes, including a first-place finish at the William Penn Spring Statesman Shootout on April 8. The sophomore finished third at the Upper Iowa Spring Invite and fourth at the Wartburg Fall Invitational.



The Peacocks wrapped up the season with a 12th-place finish at the GLVC Championships. Senior **Lizzy Ellis '26** was the team's James R. Spalding Sportsmanship Award honoree. Weber, **Delaney Martin '26** and Brynn Bonefas '26 earned CSC Academic All-District® honors.

Women's Track & Field breaks four indoor school records



Haylie Hutchinson Aaliyah Comadore

UIU Women's Track & Field broke four indoor school records this past season, led by junior Haylie Hutchinson. Hutchinson broke the record in the 60m high hurdles with a time of 9.14 seconds, 300m run with a time of 43.37 seconds and in the triple jump at 11.18m (36' 8.25"). Freshman Aaliyah Comadore broke the school record in the long jump at 5.30m (17' 4.75") at the Luther Invitational.

Hutchinson broke the school records in the triple jump and 60m hurdles at the GLVC Indoor Championships. She finished ninth in the 60m hurdle preliminaries after being .01 seconds short of qualifying for the finals. Hutchinson was named the team's James R. Spalding Sportsmanship Award honoree for both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

The Peacocks had 12 athletes compete at the GLVC Outdoor Championships. Hutchinson had the highest finish of any Peacock with a 10th-place triple jump. Freshman Gracee Tompkins took 12th in the shot put. After the season, Hutchinson and distance runner Katie Kraft earned CSC Academic All-District® selections.

GLVC Academic Honors

The GLVC recognizes all athletes who have a cumulative 3.30 GPA for the academic year on its Academic All-Conference Team. The Peacocks totaled 222 athletes on this year's GLVC Academic All-Conference Team. This tied 2024-25's total for the most since joining the GLVC.

The conference recognizes each team from full-time and associate member institutions that have maintained a 3.30 grade point average for the academic year with a Team Academic All-GLVC Award. Upper Iowa had 11 teams achieve this academic milestone, with women's basketball maintaining the highest GPA for the academic year with a 3.75. The honored Upper Iowa programs are listed in order of highest GPA; Women's Basketball (3.75), Women's Volleyball (3.74), Women's Cross Country (3.73), Women's Golf (3.73), Men's Basketball (3.57), Women's Soccer (3.56), Softball (3.55), Women's Track and Field (3.52), Baseball (3.39), Men's Soccer (3.34), Women's Wrestling (3.30).

The recipients of the GLVC Council of Presidents' Academic Excellence Award exemplify the outstanding student-athletes in the GLVC. Each honoree has exhausted his or her eligibility in the intercollegiate sport in which they participated and maintained at least a 3.5 grade point average throughout their academic career. In addition, to be eligible for the award, the student-athlete must have competed in the GLVC for a minimum of two years and completed 96 credit hours. A student-athlete can only earn the distinguished honor one time in their career. Upper Iowa saw two student-athletes achieve a perfect 4.0 throughout their career; they are highlighted in bold in the list below.

GLVC Council of Presidents' Academic Excellence Award winners from Upper Iowa (42 total) included: Gabe Bombardier/Baseball, Devin Garbiso/Baseball, Nick Hartje/Baseball, Braden Herr/Baseball, Isaiah Maes/Baseball, Thane Meiners/Baseball, Brady Pickett/Baseball, Cameron Powell/Baseball, Paul Safranski/Baseball, Will Smith/Baseball, Brock Zimmer/Baseball, **Trey Kriener/Men's Basketball**, William Spielbauer/Men's Basketball, Eryn Sabelka/Women's Cross Country, Connor Andresen/Football, Eddie Burgess/Football, Brady Leonard/Football, Ryan McDonough/Football, Darryl Overstreet Jr./Football, Klay Seehase/Football, Gavin Sweeney/Football, Wes Willis/Football, Delaney Martin/Women's Golf, Florian Deick/Men's Soccer, Dexter Garrett/Men's Soccer, Alejandro Sanchez/Men's Soccer, Maile Kehano/Women's Soccer, Natalie Lima/Women's Soccer, Addyson Alber/Softball, Kaitlin Foral/Softball, Elliott Pomeroy/Softball, Sara Reid/Softball, Emma Tautges/Softball, Jillian Dodds/Women's Track & Field, Maile Kehano/Women's Track & Field, Carolina Regalado/Women's Track & Field, Eryn Sabelka/Women's Track & Field, McKenna Diermeier/Volleyball, Lydia Imbrogno/Volleyball, Reese Martin/Volleyball, **Martha Pace/Volleyball**, Dawson Schmit/Men's Wrestling

The GLVC Brother James Gaffney Distinguished Scholar Award is named after Brother James Gaffney FSC, former President of Lewis University for over 28 years and two-term Chair of the GLVC Council of Presidents. The award is presented annually to student-athletes competing in GLVC-sponsored sports who achieve a 4.0 grade point average during the course of the academic year.

GLVC Brother James Gaffney Distinguished Scholar Award winners from Upper Iowa included: Kyle Hrnir/Baseball, Kyle Hrnir/Men's Basketball, Eric Kenesie/Men's Basketball, Trey Kriener '26/Men's Basketball, Bryar Duwe/Women's Basketball, Josie Foster/Women's Basketball, Katie Kraft/Women's Cross Country, Eryn Sabelka/Women's Cross Country, Connor Andresen/Football, Nathan Behne/Football, Klay Seehase/Football, Gavin Sweeney/Football, William Benedict/Men's Golf, Delaney Martin/Women's Golf, Florian Deick/Men's Soccer, Binh Truong/Men's Soccer, Kyler White/Men's Soccer, Natalie Lima/Women's Soccer, Addyson Alber/Softball, Cara Farnam/Softball, Taylor Hamaker/Softball, Katie Kraft/Women's Track & Field, Bailey Nordyke/Women's Track & Field, Carolina Regalado/Women's Track & Field, Eryn Sabelka/Women's Track & Field, Morgan Block/Volleyball, Abby Buchanan-Kenzinger/Volleyball, McKenna Diermeier/Volleyball, Lydia Imbrogno/Volleyball, Carley Jonker/Volleyball, Reese Martin/Volleyball, Alexis Moses/Volleyball, Martha Pace/Volleyball, Kale Hansen/Men's Wrestling, Dawson Schmit/Men's Wrestling, Eliana Callies/Women's Wrestling.

FALL SCHEDULE – HOME EVENTS

- **Saturday, Aug. 15** | 10:00 a.m. – Men's Soccer vs. Waldorf – Scrimmage
- **Sunday, Aug. 23** | 2:00 p.m. – Women's Soccer vs. Wartburg – Scrimmage
- **Thursday, Aug. 27** | 2:30 p.m. – Women's Soccer vs. Roosevelt
- **Saturday, Aug. 29** | 2:00 p.m. – Football vs. Jamestown
- **Sunday, Aug. 30** | 12:00 p.m. – Women's Soccer vs. Southwest Minnesota State
- **Saturday, Sept. 12** | 12:00 p.m./2:30 p.m. – Women's/Men's Soccer vs. McKendree
- **Wednesday, Sept. 16** | 5:00 p.m./7:30 p.m. – Women's/Men's Soccer vs. Lincoln
- **Wednesday, Sept. 23** | 5:00 p.m./7:30 p.m. – Women's/Men's Soccer vs. Maryville
- **Friday, Sept. 25** | 6:00 p.m. – Volleyball vs. Lewis
- **Saturday, Sept. 26** | 10:00 a.m./12:30 p.m. – Women's/Men's Soccer vs. Rockhurst
- **Saturday, Sept. 26** | 5:30 p.m. – Volleyball vs. UIndy
- **Saturday, Oct. 3** | 1:00 p.m. – Football vs. Missouri S&T
- **Tuesday, Oct. 6** | 6:00 p.m. – Volleyball vs. Clarke
- **Wednesday, Oct. 7** | 5:00 p.m./7:30 p.m. – Women's/Men's Soccer vs. Truman State
- **Friday, Oct. 9** | 6:00 p.m. – Volleyball vs. Rockhurst
- **Saturday, Oct. 10** | 1:00 p.m. – Football vs. Truman State – Homecoming
- **Saturday, Oct. 10** | 5:00 p.m. – Volleyball vs. William Jewell
- **Sunday, Oct. 11** | 11:00 a.m./1:30 p.m. – Women's/Men's Soccer vs. Drury
- **Saturday, Oct. 17** | 12:00 p.m./2:30 p.m. – Women's/Men's Soccer vs. UIndy – Senior Day
- **Wednesday, Oct. 21** | 1:00 p.m. – Men's Soccer vs. Jamestown – Senior Day
- **Saturday, Oct. 24** | 1:00 p.m. – Football vs. William Jewell
- **Friday, Oct. 30** | 6:00 p.m. – Volleyball vs. Quincy (Ill.)
- **Saturday, Oct. 31** | 3:00 p.m. – Volleyball vs. Illinois Springfield
- **Saturday, Nov. 7** | 3:00 p.m. – Volleyball vs. Truman State – Senior Day
- **Saturday, Nov. 14** | 12:00 p.m. – Football vs. UIndy – Senior Day

For the full schedule visit, uiupeacocks.com

New Coaches

Upper Iowa will have two new head coaches for the 2026-27 academic year.



Jeancy Matumona-Bau was elevated to the head coach position of Men's Soccer after spending the last two seasons as an assistant coach.



Erica Walsh is named UIU Cheer & Dance Coach. She joins us from Astoria High School in Oregon, where she served as Head Cheer Coach.



HOMECOMING 2026

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5

BLUE PRIDE WORLDWIDE

Everywhere | All day!

Show your Peacock pride by decorating your home, office, dorm, classroom, business, or windows in this year's "Saddle Up, Peacocks!" theme. Share your creation with #UIUHomecoming and spread the blue and white spirit!

Monday is **DENIM DAY**, dress yourself in your favorite country-western themed attire!

FAYETTE CAMPUS BBQ

Peacock Pavilion (Tailgate Area) | 5-6:30 p.m.

Everyone is welcome to enjoy an outdoor, picnic-style meal featuring all your favorite BBQ classics! Bring a lawn chair or blanket and settle in for a delicious meal and good company. Students may use their meal swipe. All other guests, meals available for purchase.

PEP RALLY, CORONATION & BONFIRE

Peacock Pavilion (Tailgate Area) | 7 p.m.

Celebrate a favorite UIU Homecoming tradition as we recognize the Homecoming Court and crown the 2026 King and Queen. Enjoy music, a bonfire, and plenty of Peacock spirit! In the event of inclement weather, the festivities will move to Pete's Bar & Grill in downtown Fayette.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

UIU VOLLEYBALL

Dorman Gymnasium | 6 p.m.

Cheer on the Peacocks as they take on Clarke! Pack Dorman Gymnasium in blue and white and help us kick off Homecoming Week with plenty of energy.

★ PAINT & SIP

Pete's Bar & Grill (Downtown) | 7 p.m.

Let your creativity run wild with Abbie Brainard '23 as you paint and personalize your own white cowboy hat! All supplies are provided. Free for students; \$20 for all other guests, including a complimentary drink ticket. **RSVP required.**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

UIU SOCCER

Harms-Eischeid Stadium | 2:30 p.m. & 5 p.m.

Cheer on Men's and Women's Soccer as they battle Truman State for victories. Bring your Peacock pride and help fill Harms-Eischeid Stadium!

POWDERPUFF FOOTBALL

Harms-Eischeid Stadium | Right After Soccer

Cheer on fellow students in a fun-filled showdown for campus bragging rights! Expect school spirit, friendly competition, and plenty of laughs.

★ **NEW EVENTS!**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

WELCOME HOME DINNER

Pete's Bar & Grill (Downtown) | 5:30 p.m.

Reconnect with old friends and fellow Peacocks at this complimentary Homecoming gathering. Join President Kathy Franken, her husband, Chuck, and members of the UIU Board of Trustees for an evening of delicious food, great conversation, and Peacock pride as we welcome alumni home to UIU.

Casual attire; RSVP required.

★ LINE DANCE

Pete's Bar & Grill (2nd floor) | 7:30-10 p.m.

Giddy up, Peacocks—it's time to dance! All skill levels are welcome for an evening of line dancing, fun, featuring local celebrity musician and Fayette native, Steve Schroeder. A cash bar will be available, and elevator access is provided. RSVP encouraged.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

★ ALUMNI ASSOCIATION MEET & GREET

Alumni House | 9 a.m.-11 a.m.

Connect with Alumni Association Board members and fellow Peacocks over light refreshments. Swap stories, make new connections, and celebrate your shared UIU experience. RSVP encouraged.

6TH ANNUAL GOLF FUNDRAISER

Big Rock Country Club | 9 a.m.

Hosted by members of SOB and FOXES, this annual tournament is open to all and has proudly raised nearly \$30,000 for the Peacock Athletic Fund over the years. Sign up with a group of four or come solo and we'll match you with other golfers.

To sign up, contact Rick Knipper '73 at 319-530-2343 or Bill Roths '74 at 319-240-9411.

Registration begins at 9 a.m., with a shotgun start at 10 a.m.

MAKE YOUR MARK AT UIU

Henderson-Wilder Library | 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Leave your mark on UIU by adding your handprint to the third-floor library wall! This free activity is open to alumni, students, and employees, with all supplies provided.

★ 50TH REUNION RECEPTION & LUNCH

Harms-Eischeid Stadium Suites | 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Celebrate a milestone 50 years in the making! The Class of 1976 is invited to reconnect with classmates, share favorite memories, and celebrate the friendships and experiences that made their time at UIU so special. Enjoy a relaxed afternoon in the Harms-Eischeid Stadium Suites, complete with a delicious luncheon and cash bar, as we honor this golden milestone together. **RSVP required.**

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SHOWCASE

Liberal Arts Building | 1-3:30 p.m.

See experiential learning in action as UIU students share insights from internships, research projects, study abroad, career exploration, and professional experiences. Learn more about the Excellence in Experiential Learning (ExcEL) Honors program, celebrate student success, and connect with the next generation of leaders and learners!

Want to be part of the Showcase? Contact Miriam Skrade, Director of Honors & Experiential Learning at miriam@uiu.edu.

HOMECOMING BALL

"NIGHT OF THE PEACOCKS"

Student Center Ballroom | 5 p.m.

You won't want to miss the Homecoming Ball, "Night of the Peacocks," a signature evening filled with elegance, celebration, and Peacock pride! Enjoy a hosted cocktail reception, delicious dinner, lively games, and special surprises while reconnecting with the Peacock family. The evening will also honor the outstanding achievements of the 2026 Athletics Hall of Fame Inductees. More than a celebration, the Homecoming Ball supports the UIU Excellence Fund, helping provide valuable resources and opportunities for today's students.

Cocktail attire/black-tie optional; RSVP required.

UIU VOLLEYBALL

Dorman Gymnasium | 6 p.m.

Cheer on the Peacocks as they face Rockhurst! Pack Dorman Gymnasium and help start Homecoming weekend with a big UIU victory.

SCHEDULE CONTINUES >



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

ALUMNI AWARDS & HONOR CLASS BREAKFAST

Student Center Ballroom | 8-10 a.m.

Celebrate the outstanding achievements and service of our Alumni Award honorees while honoring the 50th Anniversary of the Class of 1976 and their lasting UIU legacy. Hosted by the Alumni Association Board of Directors, this complimentary breakfast is a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with classmates and friends while recognizing the Peacocks who continue to make Upper Iowa proud. Registration begins at 8 a.m., with the program at 8:30 a.m.

Peacock spirit attire encouraged; RSVP required.

★ ALL-CLASS MORNING MIXER

Pete's Bar & Grill (downtown) | 8-10 a.m.

Start Homecoming Saturday with your Peacock family! Reconnect with friends while enjoying complimentary breakfast burritos, a drink ticket for a Bloody Mary or mimosa, and a cash bar. Alumni celebrating milestone anniversary years will also receive a special surprise. Come fuel up and get ready for a big Homecoming day! Freewill donations appreciated. RSVP encouraged.

LIVE MUSIC

Tailgate area | 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Ramp up for the big game while enjoying live music, proudly hosted by the Peacock Tailgate Association. The featured performer will be announced soon! RSVP encouraged.

HOMECOMING PARADE

Fayette Campus | 10:30 a.m.

Celebrate one of UIU's most beloved Homecoming traditions as the annual parade fills campus with Peacock pride! The parade will travel around campus, through the Peacock tailgate area, and finish near Victory Gate.

Want to join the fun? Float entries are free and open to all!



ALUMNI HOUSE TAILGATE PARTY

Alumni House | 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Kick off game day with your Peacock family at the Alumni House! Reconnect with friends while enjoying a Bloody Mary Bar, refreshing drinks, game-day snacks, and yard games. Soak in the fall atmosphere and plenty of Peacock spirit before cheering on UIU! Freewill donations welcome.

HOMECOMING FOOTBALL GAME

Harms-Eischeid Stadium | Kickoff at 1 p.m.

Let's cheer on the Peacocks to victory vs. Truman State! Our Homecoming Grand Marshal will participate in the coin toss, plus, Hall of Fame Inductees, Alumni Award honorees, and the 50-year class will all be recognized on-field during the game.

UIU VOLLEYBALL

Dorman Gymnasium | 5 p.m.

Let's cheer on the Peacocks vs. William Jewell and close out this incredible day with another win!

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

UIU SOCCER

Harms-Eischeid Stadium | 11 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.

Wrap up Homecoming by cheering on Women's and Men's Soccer against Drury. Wear your blue and white, fill the stands, and help the Peacocks finish the week strong!

BOOTS, HATS & WESTERN FLAIR ENCOURAGED ALL WEEK LONG!





SAVE THE DATE

NIGHT
OF THE
Peacocks

HOMECOMING BALL
— 2026 —

Friday, October 9th | 5:00 PM
Fayette Campus | Student Center Ballrooms

For more information & RSVP, visit:
GO.UIU.EDU/HCBALL

2026 HOMECOMING SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Support UIU Homecoming 2026! Proceeds benefit the UIU Excellence Fund, supporting students and emerging needs across the University.

BLUE DIAMOND – \$25,000

- Logo/photo recognition in program & online
- Homecoming Ball table for 10
- 8 football VIP suite passes
- 8 tickets to each athletic event
- Reserved parade entry
- Commemorative gift
- Blue Diamond Donor Club membership

DIAMOND – \$10,500

- Logo/photo recognition in program & online
- 8 Homecoming Ball tickets
- 6 football VIP suite passes
- 6 tickets to each athletic event
- Reserved parade entry
- Commemorative gift
- Alexander Club membership

PLATINUM – \$5,500

- Logo/photo recognition in program & online
- 6 Homecoming Ball tickets
- 4 football VIP suite passes
- 4 tickets to each athletic event
- Reserved parade entry
- Commemorative gift
- Limestone Club membership

GOLD – \$3,000

- Name recognition in program & online
- 4 Homecoming Ball tickets
- 2 football VIP suite passes
- 2 tickets to each athletic event
- Reserved parade entry
- Commemorative gift
- 1857 Club membership

SILVER – \$1,000

- Name recognition in program & online
- 2 Homecoming Ball tickets
- Reserved parade entry
- Commemorative gift
- True Blue Club membership

BRONZE – \$500

- Name recognition in program & online
- Sponsor-rate Homecoming Ball tickets
- Reserved parade entry
- Peacock Patron Club membership

READY TO SPONSOR?

Contact Ashley Gredys, Vice President for Advancement & Alumni Engagement at gredysa@uiu.edu or 563-425-5348.

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YOUR HOMECOMING STARTS HERE

Full schedule • Tickets • RSVPs • Event details

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Spotlight on IT: The Team that Keeps UIU Connected

Whether you're attending an online class, logging into your student portal, connecting to Wi-Fi in a residence hall, or sending an email to a professor, there's an entire team working behind the scenes to make it happen.

The Upper Iowa University Information Technology Services (ITS) Department serves every student, employee, and campus location by maintaining the technology that powers learning, communication, and daily operations. While much of their work goes unnoticed, their impact touches nearly every aspect of university life.

Currently, the ITS team is managing approximately 11,000 user accounts across multiple systems, over 1,500 devices, and has handled 3,100 helpdesk tickets in 2026.

More Than Tech Support

ITS is often thought of as the group that resets passwords or fixes computers—but their responsibilities extend far beyond the ITS helpdesk. Areas of responsibility include the following:



Every day, the team works to ensure technology is reliable, secure, and ready whenever students, faculty, and staff need it.

Every day looks different.

No two days are exactly alike.

One moment, an ITS staff member may be helping a student regain access to an account. The next, they're troubleshooting classroom technology before a lecture begins, installing computers for a new office, monitoring campus cybersecurity, or preparing technology for a major campus event. Many projects happen quietly behind the scenes, often before anyone realizes they are needed.

Supporting Every UIU Education Center

Whether someone is taking classes in Fayette, at one of UIU's education centers, or online from anywhere in the world, the ITS team helps create a seamless experience.

From maintaining internet connectivity and learning platforms to supporting faculty and staff across multiple locations, their work keeps the university connected.

Keeping Information Safe

One of ITS's most important responsibilities is protecting university data. The department continually monitors systems for security threats, manages software updates, educates users about phishing scams, helps ensure sensitive information remains protected, as well as keeping up with trends in the technology field and remaining informed about current security events.

While cybersecurity challenges evolve every day, the team's proactive work helps keep the university running safely.

Projects That Make a Difference



Behind the Tech: Meet UIU's IT Support Team



Pictured, front row from left: Cheryl Beaver and Diana Hildebrand. Back row from left: Zach Hruska, Matt Cowley, Eric Shogren, Terry Smid, Alex Sass and Yuzhang Wu. Not pictured: Jennifer Kula and Ryan Young.

Team Peacock Pedals with a Purpose, Raising More Than \$26,000 on RAGBRAI

After hundreds of miles and countless memories, Team Peacock officially completed their cycling journey on RAGBRAI, Iowa's premier bicycle ride, in July 2026. Team Peacock generated over \$26,000 for university scholarships, athletic programs, special projects, and more, thanks to the generosity of alumni, friends, UIU employees and other donors! This amazing achievement was made possible not only by our riders but also by the individuals and businesses who stepped up as sponsors, enabling the team to purchase essential items along the way.

If RAGBRAI is on your bucket list, save the date for next year's Team Peacock adventure, set for July 28-31, 2027. For all the details, visit us online at uiu.edu/TeamPeacock.



COMMENCEMENT '26

Upper Iowa University's Commencement ceremonies were held at the Fayette Campus on Saturday, May 9, 2026. To view all photos, visit UIU.EDU/COMMENCEMENT.







A Celebration of Achievement

Upper Iowa University honors the accomplishments of the Class of 2026 during Commencement ceremonies on the Fayette Campus.

Upper Iowa University celebrated its Class of 2026 during commencement ceremonies on Saturday, May 9. The day honored the hard work, perseverance, and accomplishments of 324 graduates from all UIU locations as family, friends, faculty, and staff gathered on the Fayette Campus to celebrate this important milestone.



President Kathy Franken '12 addressed the graduates, saying, "You have worked tirelessly to reach this point, and we are all incredibly proud of all that you have

accomplished. No matter your reason for this accomplishment, as you continue to write your story, remember that leadership is defined by the actions you take, the inspiration and empowerment you provide others, and making a collective difference."



The commencement keynote address was delivered by **Judge Jeanie Vaudt '76**, a District Court Judge for Iowa's 5C Judicial District in Polk County, Iowa. A 1976 UIU

graduate, Judge Vaudt has dedicated more than three decades to public service and the judiciary and currently serves as president of the Iowa Judges Association.

Vaudt addressed the graduates, saying, "Graduates, as you embark on this journey into the unknown, do not let something or someone do your thinking for you; show up,

work hard and volunteer; treat others the way you want to be treated; have gratitude, not an attitude; find a mentor and be a mentor; establish some hobbies; and be creative. You are now poised to achieve your hopes and dreams, thanks to your Upper Iowa education."

The 10:00 a.m. ceremony celebrated graduates from the Department of Accounting, Agricultural Business and Finance, Department of Business, Management and Marketing, Department of Science and Mathematics, as well as the Master of Business Administration and Master of Healthcare Administration programs.

The 1:30 p.m. ceremony honored graduates from the Andres Department of Education, Department of Humanities and Social Science, Department of Psychology and Human Services, along with graduates from the Master of Arts in Psychology, Master of Education, Master of Public Administration, Master of Science in Counseling, and the Second Chance program.

The ceremonies were held outdoors at Harms-Eischeid Stadium on the Fayette Campus, where graduates crossed the stage surrounded by family, friends, and the Peacock community in celebration of their achievements. 



Finding His Path Forward

How one conversation, caring mentors and a willingness to grow changed Emerson Bennett's life.

Before arriving at Upper Iowa University, **Emerson Bennett '26** wasn't sure his future included higher education. Growing up in North Liberty, Iowa, sports—especially football—were his focus, and he questioned what came next beyond the playing field. “In high school, I honestly struggled with school because I didn't really see the purpose in it,” Bennett said. “It felt more like something I had to do rather than something I enjoyed.”

Then came an unexpected conversation that changed everything. While riding RAGBRAI with his father, Bennett met former UIU instructor Elissa Wenthe, who encouraged him to visit the Fayette campus and shared a message that stayed with him: “If you're a curious person, the Upper Iowa faculty will do their best to help you discover yourself.”

Years later, Bennett's father reflected that those words “could not have come at a more important moment” in his son's life. That brief conversation led Bennett to Upper Iowa University—the first step in a journey neither he nor his father ever expected. As a kicker hoping to continue playing football, Bennett wanted a university where he could pursue both athletics and academics without becoming lost in a crowd. That confidence grew during his campus visit, where he met Dr. NiCole Dennler and Dr. Paul Skrade. They answered his questions, made him feel welcome and helped him picture himself at Upper Iowa. “What really stood out to me was when they said they would not let me fail,” Bennett recalled. “That was not just something said to recruit a student—it genuinely felt like they meant it.”

Once on campus, the curiosity sparked during that chance RAGBRAI conversation continued to grow. “The professors played a big role by encouraging me to ask questions and think about things in new ways,” he said. “Over time, I became more comfortable stepping outside my comfort zone, trying new things, and being open to different ideas.”

That curiosity opened doors Bennett never imagined. Through football, campus involvement and serving as Student Government Association (SGA) president, he grew into a confident leader. “When I became SGA president, I realized I had a responsibility to step up and become a better version of myself than I had been the year before,” he said.

The road wasn't without challenges. During his sophomore year, Bennett tore the labrum in his kicking hip and spent months in rehabilitation. The injury tested him physically and mentally while strengthening his

determination. “That experience taught me a lot about perseverance and resilience,” he said. “There were times when I wasn't sure what my future in football would look like, but I kept showing up and doing the work.”

Along the way, Bennett found mentors and friends who helped shape the person he became. “Dr. Dennler made her classes engaging in a way that made me actually look forward to learning and getting up early for class,” Bennett said. He also credits friends **Brady Leonard '26** and Logan Rosauer for their support throughout his time at UIU.

On Commencement Day, Bennett had the opportunity to address his classmates, expressing gratitude to those who had helped shape the person he had become and introducing a video celebrating the graduating class. “Standing on stage at Commencement definitely made me reflect on how far I had come—from someone who wasn't even sure college was the right path for me to graduating and speaking in front of my classmates. Its been an amazing experience,” he said.

That moment also gave Bennett a deeper appreciation for his father's decision to thank the faculty and staff who helped shape his experience through heartfelt letters. “I think it shows how much he values the people who invest in others,” Bennett said. “Looking back, I do appreciate it more because it reflects how much he cares about the relationships and support systems that helped shape my experience.”

Of everything he gained at UIU, Bennett says one lesson stands above the rest: You don't have to have everything figured out when you arrive. “College taught me how to manage my time, balance different commitments, and take ownership of my decisions,” he said. “That experience helped me figure out what I was interested in and ultimately led me to the path that was right for me.”

Dr. NiCole Dennler, associate professor of communication, witnessed that transformation firsthand. “I have seen this young man grow into an amazing person,” Dennler said. “I could not be prouder of all the opportunities he took during his UIU experience. He showed the world what he was truly made of.”

Four years later, Bennett has come full circle. What began with a simple conversation during RAGBRAI became a journey of discovery—proof that curiosity, caring mentors and a community that believes in its students can change the course of someone's life. 



“They would not let me fail.”

Emerson Bennett '26



Surrounded by the people who believed in him, **Emerson Bennett '26** celebrates Commencement with his immediate family (left to right): Jana Bennett, mother; Emerson, Ray Bennett, father; and Grayson Bennett, his brother, along with many other family members and friends.

The Power of a Scholarship at UIU

Inside the 2026 Honors & Awards Banquet, where a scholarship is never just tuition, it's a belief in who a student can become.

On Saturday, April 11, Upper Iowa University gathered on the Fayette Campus for its annual Honors & Awards Banquet. More than \$500,000 in scholarships was awarded across 252 individual recognitions for the 2026–2027 academic year.

“The Banquet is truly a momentous occasion that brings together our outstanding Peacock students to celebrate their achievements,” said Dr. Billie Cowley, Vice President of Academic Affairs. “These scholarships tell a student that someone outside their own family believes in their future.”

For Ashley Gredys, Vice President for Advancement & Alumni Engagement, nights like this one are the reason the work matters. “There is nothing more rewarding in this work than watching a scholarship change the trajectory of a student’s life,” she said. “Advancement isn’t just about raising dollars, it’s about connecting people who want to give back with the students who need it most, and watching that relationship grow long after the check is written.”

New This Year

Four new scholarships made their first awards this spring, the Burnell Smith Scholarship Fund, the Jennifer McCoy Memorial Scholarship, the Arguilez Memorial Scholarship, and the Excellence in Experiential Learning Honors Award (ExcEL) program, each one a unique way of turning love, loss, or gratitude into something lasting.

Every Scholarship Tells a Story

Step back far enough, and UIU’s scholarship program looks less like a list of awards and more like a family tree of intentions. Some exist to keep a name alive, the Jennifer McCoy Memorial

Scholarship, the Arguilez Memorial Scholarship, the Stevens Family Endowed Scholarship, Jacob D. Burling Memorial Scholarship, the Michael David Selgelid Memorial Scholarship and others were all born from grief that families chose to turn outward, toward students they’d never meet.

There is nothing more rewarding in this work than watching a scholarship change the trajectory of a student’s life.”

Ashley Gredys, Vice President for Advancement & Alumni Engagement

Others carry a family’s name forward across generations, the Andres Business and Education Scholarships, the Knight Endowed Scholarship, and the Roger & Alice Mangan Wrestling Scholarship, all reflect alumni who saw their own UIU story as something worth multiplying.

Some are built around access itself: the Kauten Scholars Program for rural communities, the Dennis and Marlene Murdock Adult Learner Scholarship, and the May Davig Endowed Scholarship for non-traditional learners all exist to make sure a zip code, an age, or a life already in progress never closes the door on a degree.

And some scholarships honor service of a different kind. The American Legion of Iowa Foundation Scholarship supports veterans, active-duty service members, and their families, while awards like the Eischeid Athletic Scholarship, the William

Prochaska Endowed Scholarship, and the Dr. Larry Seals Scholarship recognize the discipline it takes to compete at the highest level while staying on track in the classroom.

To view all photos from the Honors & Awards Banquet, visit [GO.UIU.EDU/HonorsAwards26](https://go.uiu.edu/HonorsAwards26). To support an existing scholarship or start a new one, visit uiuedu/Scholarships, or contact Ashley Gredys, Vice President for Advancement & Alumni Engagement, at alumni@uiu.edu or call 563-425-5388. 



Burnell Smith '59 (center) and his daughter Kathy Phelan (right) present the inaugural Burnell Smith Scholarship to Tyler Nolder, a junior from Grundy Center, Iowa.



LaVerne McCoy '98 (right) and sister Martha Brock (left) present the first-ever Jennifer McCoy Memorial Scholarship to Aaliyah Comadore, a sophomore from McKinney, Texas.

A Legacy of Brotherhood

Richard O. Bovey '67 honors his brother and his mentor

For Richard O. Bovey, '67, Upper Iowa University was more than just a college. It was the place that shaped the trajectory of his life. It was where he found mentorship under Dr. Charles B. Clark, a Marine Corps officer and scholar who provided the discipline and guidance Richard needed. It was where "Cornfield College," as he and his classmates affectionately called it, became home. But it was also a place defined by family legacy. Three years before Richard arrived in Fayette, his brother, Tom, had already established the family's footprint at UIU, earning his Bachelor of Science in 1964 and captaining the football team with distinction.

When Richard began thinking about how he wanted to give back to UIU, his thoughts didn't center on his own memories. They turned to the two men who most profoundly shaped his character: his mentor and his brother. The result is a meaningful gift of nearly \$32,000 to Upper Iowa University's Military Family Fund, a program that provides critical support to students who are actively serving, veterans who have served, and their families.

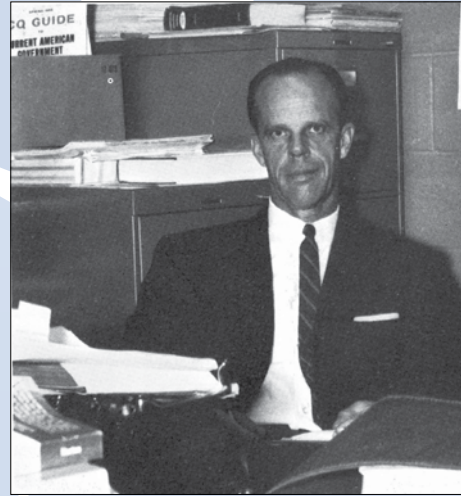
Tom Bovey: Setting the Standard

Tom Bovey '64, was a standout figure at Upper Iowa University. As captain of the football team, Tom demonstrated the leadership qualities that would define his life. He led by example, earning the respect of his teammates and coaches through his dedication, work ethic, and character. But Tom's service didn't end on the football field. His military background became a defining part of his life and legacy, embodying the values of duty, sacrifice, and commitment to something greater than oneself. "Tom set the standard," Richard reflects. "He showed me what leadership looked like, both at UIU and in his service to our country."



Tom Bovey '64

Dr. Charles B. Clark: A Scholar, Coach, and Disciplinarian



Dr. Charles B. Clark

The second pillar of Richard's UIU experience was Dr. Charles B. Clark. To Richard, Dr. Clark was more than a professor. He was a formative influence who shaped Richard's character and career. As a Marine Corps officer, Hall of Fame Lacrosse Coach, and scholar, Dr. Clark

embodied the values of discipline, service, and leadership. "Dr. Clark was a true scholar, coach, and disciplinarian," Richard recalls. "He gave me the foundation I needed to succeed, and I wanted to honor that legacy by supporting students and families who have sacrificed for our country." The connection between Dr. Clark's Marine Corps values and Tom's military service runs deep in Richard's mind. Both men represented the same core principles: duty, honor, commitment, and the willingness to serve something greater than oneself.

“Dr. Clark was a true scholar, coach and disciplinarian. He gave me the foundation I needed to succeed, and I wanted to honor that legacy by supporting students and families who have sacrificed for our country.”

Richard Bovey '67

and Mentorship

with a gift to UIU's Military Family Fund

A Creative Path to Giving

What makes Richard's gift particularly remarkable is not just its impact, but the creative way he chose to make it. Richard owned a whole life insurance policy that he had purchased decades ago. Sometimes policies can accumulate loan debt over the years, which may result in a modest net cash value. Richard recognized an opportunity to transition the policy into a more impactful use that aligned with his current philanthropic goals. Rather than simply surrendering it, Richard worked closely with the UIU Advancement team to find a strategic solution. By transferring ownership of the policy directly to Upper Iowa University, he was able to transform an idle asset into immediate, tangible support for students while simplifying his estate by removing the burden of policy management. Importantly, the gift created a lasting tribute to his brother, Tom, and Dr. Clark's enduring influence, allowing Richard to see his impact during his lifetime.

From Cornfield College to the World

After graduating from UIU, Richard studied comparative law while living at the International Students House in London through the Notre-Dame London Law Program. As a "wide-



Richard Bovey '67 and his wife, Michele pictured in London, England.

“By honoring both his brother Tom and Dr. Clark, Richard is ensuring that future military-affiliated students receive the support and opportunity they need to succeed.”

Ashley Gredys, Vice President for Advancement & Alumni Engagement

eyed Midwestern boy with little exposure to international life,” Richard found himself immersed in a vibrant global community. It was there that he met his future wife. They remain happily married to this day. This global perspective, combined with the foundational values he learned from Dr. Clark and the example of leadership set by his brother Tom, helped Richard build a successful career as an attorney in Lafayette, Indiana. Yet he never forgot where he came from. To this day, Richard keeps a UIU plate featuring Alexander Dickman Hall displayed by his fireplace, a daily reminder of “Cornfield College” and the people who shaped him there. “Richard’s gift is a testament to the power of mentorship and the bonds of family,” says Ashley Gredys, Vice President of Advancement and Alumni. “By honoring both his brother Tom and Dr. Clark, Richard is ensuring that future military-affiliated students receive the support and opportunity they need to succeed.” Richard’s gift is more than a financial contribution. It is a story of brotherhood, mentorship, innovation, and enduring love for Upper Iowa University. Richard’s story reminds us that the best way to honor the people who shaped us is to invest in the people who will follow us. 

More Than Twenty Years in the Making

Justin D. Howard, MPA '22, '24, spent more than two decades working before he ever set foot in a UIU classroom, proving it's never too late to begin.

By the time **Justin D. Howard '22, '24** walked across the stage for his bachelor's degree, he had already put in more than 20 years in the workforce, often three jobs at a time. He built his education into the life he was already living.

After earning an associate degree in 2015, Howard started researching four-year options and found Upper Iowa University's Alexandria, Louisiana center. "The classes were hybrid, in person, Zoom, or online," he said. "This is what drew me to Upper Iowa." He enrolled in 2021, still in the shadow of COVID-19, and attended classes year-round to finish his Psychology degree by 2022. "I wish I had joined UIU sooner rather than later," he said. "The Alexandria campus was a perfect fit for me."



Justin D. Howard '22, '24
MPA, UIU-Alexandria

pandemic. He wasn't only marking his own finish line. Upper Iowa University's mission has always been to provide quality educational opportunities, accessible through varied delivery methods, in order to inspire success and empower lives, and Howard is that mission in motion: a student who worked full time, built a life first, and found a university flexible enough to meet him inside it.

It's the same story carried by thousands of Peacocks before him, and one that current and future students are living right now, whatever their age, wherever they are, however long it takes them to walk through the door. "Some have joined our school and are continuing their education," Howard said. "It is refreshing to know others can join and we all can prosper."

Coming Home to Fayette

This fall, Howard plans to visit the Fayette Campus for the first time, years after earning both of his degrees through the Alexandria center. "I cannot wait," he said. "It means a lot because I can honestly say Upper Iowa is my home."

Opening the Door Wider

When it came time to pursue his Master of Public Administration, with a concentration in Healthcare Management, Howard was named a recipient of UIU's SOAR Scholarship, support built to keep working adults like him moving toward a graduate degree instead of putting it off. "It made me feel good to know that I could continue," he said. "I was excited, but serious about finishing with the investment that Upper Iowa bestowed upon me."

A Career Built on One Word: Continuing

Howard's career spans mental health, veteran advocacy, youth development, and now healthcare coordination. Asked what ties it all together, his answer was simple. "The thread is continuing," he said. "When things are easy or difficult you must continue." In 2024, the same year he completed his MPA, Howard also earned a Professional Life Coach Certification and a Track II Organizational Board Certification.

A Story So Many of Us Share

In 2022, Howard stood before UIU – Alexandria's combined Commencement, honoring the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022 together after many graduates had chosen not to walk during the



Howard speaks with local youth, part of the same spirit of service that has carried through his career and his time at UIU.

CLASS NOTES

1970's

Margaret (Buckner) Lawson '70, Chicago, Illinois, retired in December 2025 after 44 years from Winnetka Toes as a Podiatric & Surgeon. After graduating from the Illinois College of Podiatric Medicine in 1981 and completing three additional years of postgraduate studies, she established the practice in Winnetka, Illinois. Margaret has served on the UIU Board of Trustee since 2012.



Bill Roths '74, Cedar Falls, Iowa, received the Bernie Saggau Award of Merit during the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) Boys State Wrestling Tournament in Des Moines on Feb. 21, 2026. The award is the IHSAA Board of Control's highest

honor, recognizing outstanding leadership, service and support. Bill accepted the award alongside his wife, Mary.

1980's



Marty McKowen '83, was inducted into the Iowa Basketball Hall of Fame in March 2026. After retiring following 43 years as head coach at Wapsie Valley, McKowen ranks among Iowa's top 10 all-time winningest coaches with a 670-314 record, including eight consecutive state tournament appearances and the 2020 Class 1A state championship. He and his wife, **Martha "Marti" (Deaton) McKowen '83**, have three children, Jon, Brooks and Brittney, and 11 grandchildren.

Alan Tweedy '78, Waukon, Iowa, proudly accepted a prestigious Basketball Hall of Fame honor on behalf of his late wife, **Deb (Kaune) Tweedy '77**, who was inducted into the Iowa Girls' High School Athletic Union Basketball Hall of Fame during the March 7, 2026, induction ceremony in Des Moines. Family and friends gathered to celebrate her remarkable legacy. A standout athlete at West Central High School, Deb earned two All-State honors, led her team to a third-place finish at the 1972 state tournament, and was the tournament's leading scorer. She later played on UNI's first intercollegiate women's basketball team before transferring to UIU, where she co-captained the women's volleyball and basketball teams. After earning her degree, Deb devoted 41 years to teaching in the Allamakee Community School District. She passed away in 2018 after a courageous battle with cancer, leaving a lasting legacy as an educator, coach and outstanding athlete.



Pictured are family members who accepted the award on Deb's behalf. Back row left to right: Charmaine Tweedy, Seth Tweedy, Alan Tweedy '78, Josh Tweedy, and Marcus Tweedy '12. Front row - JJ, DeeDee and Charli Tweed.

Pictured are classmates and friends who gathered to celebrate Deb's honor. Left to right: Ron Patterson '84, Janis (Young) Stavnes, Bob Krueger, '77, Jean (Wilwert) Krueger, '76, Jeff Stavnes, '76, Alan Tweedy '78, Sharon Miller, Jon Miller '75, and Cindy Patterson.



1990's

Julie (Lerch) McCready '90, Elgin, Iowa, retired from Farmers Savings Bank in Elgin after 25 years as a Customer Services Representative. She previously served as the Head Cashier and Head Teller.

Bob Lape '90, '18, Oelwein, Iowa, retired after 32 years of teaching at North Fayette, North Fayette Valley, and Oelwein. He has coached football for 36 years. In 2014, he was voted the 2A Coach of the Year. Also in 2014, he coached NFV to the state championship game and led them to victory, becoming the 2014 2A State Champions. In 2023, he was inducted into the IFCA Football Coaches Hall of Fame. Bob has also coached softball for 32 years. He took the 2004 North Fayette softball team to the state tournament. He was inducted into the IGCA Softball Coaches Hall of Fame in 2022. Bob and his wife, **Renee (Chapman) Lape '93**, are the parents of 3 children and have 2 grandchildren.

Melanie (Struhar) Lee '91, Fitchburg, Wisconsin, has been named to the Wisconsin Law Journal's 2026 Construction and Real Estate Powerlist, recognizing the state's most influential attorneys in the field. Lee is chair of the Construction Law Team and a member of the Real Estate Practice at Reinhart Law in Madison, Wisconsin.

Scott Conrad '97, Spencer, Iowa, has accepted a new position as a Commercial Lending Assistant Vice President at Farmers Trust and Savings Bank located in Spencer.

Travis Mueller '97, Amana, Iowa, has been hired as the Baseball Director of Player Development at the University of Iowa.

Heather (Beard) Schrock '99, Urbana, Iowa, accepted a position with the University of Iowa, as a Sponsored Research Specialist in the Division of Sponsored Programs in the Office of the Vice President of Research. She and her husband, **Mike Schrock '99, '21**, currently reside in Urbana, Iowa.

2000's



Kelly Larson '00, Decorah, Iowa, is the CEO of Ceres Robotics, a space robotics company in Mountain View, California.

CLASS NOTES

Joe Corley '01, Lawndale, California, has published a book called "Crown of Concrete: There can only be one King!" The book is a gritty urban crime drama about loyalty, ambition, and betrayal, and is available on Amazon.



Jesse Montalto '04, Monroe, Louisiana, has been named Offensive Coordinator/Receivers Coach at the University of Louisiana Monroe. He spent the past eight seasons as head football coach at Iowa

Central Community College, leading the program to eight consecutive bowl games.

Jesse, his wife, Marcie, and their two children are relocating to the Monroe area.



After spending 18 years teaching in the Independence Community School District, including 15 years in Family and Consumer

Tia (Williams) Shaffer '05, Arlington, Iowa, received the 2026 AAFCS Iowa Affiliate Distinguished Award at the organization's annual conference in Ames, Iowa. She currently serves on the 2026 Midwest Connections Regional Conference committee.

Sciences, Tia is now an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo, Iowa.

Michael Cordero '07, Covina, California, has accepted a position as the Division Dean of Kinesiology, Health, and Athletics at San Bernardino Valley College in San Bernardino, California. Michael spent the last 21 years coaching and 14 years teaching at Coalinga College in Coalinga, California. Michael and his wife, Monica, reside in Covina, California.



Jennifer (Strelow) Friedly '08, Waterloo, Iowa, has been named Chief Operating Officer for UnityPoint Health, Waterloo, Iowa. Jenni brings 16 years of operational experience and has served as the Market President for UnityPoint Health since 2023.



Welcome to the Peacock family, little ones!



Janelle (Fedeler) Soppe '04, West Union, Iowa, and her husband, Travis, are the parents of a son, Blaize Theodore, born on November 27, 2025. He weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces and was 20.25 inches long. Janelle and Travis reside in rural West Union with their five sons.

Janelle is the Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Distance Education Enrollment/Business Services Coordinator at UIU.



Dom Hillesheim '18, Chicago, Illinois, and his wife, Abbi, welcome their baby boy, Auggie Charles, on February 6, 2026. He weighed in at 6 pounds and was 20 inches long. Dom is currently a Partnership Activation Specialist for the Chicago Bears.



Mollie (Franzen) Mohs '21, Wadena, Iowa, and her wife, Holly Mohs, proudly introduce their daughter, Maisyn Renee, born June 15, 2026.



Troy Blackburn '13, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and his wife, Morgan, welcomed daughter Lillie Martini on December 13, 2025. Lillie was 8 pounds, 13 ounces and was 21 inches long.



Bronwyn (Miller) '19 and Garrett '19, '21 Johnston, are proud parents of Leightyn Georgina, born November 2025.



Jason '12 & Jackie (Berry) Olsgard '13, Greeley, Colorado, announce the birth of

their daughter, Jamilyn Elizabeth on July 9, 2025. She weighed 9 pounds, 1 ounce and was 21 inches long. Jamie joins siblings, Jordyn (6) and Jayden (3).



Alyson (Carroll) '20 & Laith Smith '21, Morning Sun, Iowa, welcomed a baby girl, Hallie James, on September 15, 2025, at 11:59 am. She weighed 7 pounds, 2 ounces and was 19.5 inches long. Miss Hallie decided she was ready to come into this world a little early. Don't let the hat fool you, she has a FULL head of hair.

2010's

Devon Gurnett '13, Des Moines, Iowa, has accepted a new position as Director at the National PCA Hub. He and his wife, Elizabeth (Vogel) Gurnett '14, currently reside in Des Moines with their daughter, Sage.

Brianne (Fenton) George '17, Mishawaka, Indiana, has been honored by the South Bend Regional Chamber of Commerce as a 2026 40 under 40 recipient. She has been with the South Bend Police Department since 2017 as a Crime Analyst. In 2022, Bri transitioned to the Director of Intel. Bri and her husband, Alex George '17, reside in Mishawaka, Indiana, where Alex is a Research Protocol Specialist for the Mayo Clinic.

Ashley (Lahr) Kuennen, '17, '19, Fayette, Iowa, has accepted a role as the Special Education Director and 504 Coordinator for New Hampton Community School District. She previously taught Special Education at the Oelwein Community School District. Ashley and her husband, Josh, reside in rural Fayette, Iowa, and have two sons.

Major Thomas Stubbs, Jr. '18, of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development Police, has just completed the FBI's National Academy. The National Academy is a professional course of study for U.S. and international law enforcement managers, nominated by their agency heads for demonstrated leadership qualities. The

CLASS NOTES

officers and their agency's participation are proof of their dedication and commitment to better serving their communities. Major Stubbs is also an adjunct instructor at UIU.

Bridgett (Madden) Leatherberry '18, '19, Owatonna, Minnesota, has accepted a position as a Funeral Director/Mortician at Michaelson Funeral Home in Owatonna, MN, where she continues to help people honor their loved ones. She is licensed in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa and holds a pre-need life insurance license.

Angelica Amancio De Paulo '19, Thatcher, Arizona, led Eastern Arizona College Women's Basketball to the 2026 NJCAA Division I National Championship. Now entering her fourth season as head coach, De Paulo has guided the Lady Monsters to sustained national success, including three consecutive NJCAA Final Four appearances, multiple conference and regional championships, and a national title. A former WBCA Two-Year College Assistant Coach of the Year, she has earned numerous coaching honors, including ACCAC Coach of the Year, Region 1 Coach of the Year, and West District Coach of the Year. Under her leadership, many student-athletes have gone on to compete at NCAA Division I and II programs, including Baylor, Kansas, Arkansas, and Florida.

2020's

Jayde Blue '20, '21, Dyersville, Iowa, accepted a position with KWWL as Account Executive.



Ean Popenhagen '21, Elkader, Iowa, graduated from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy on December 19, 2025. He was part of the 323rd graduating class and completed the academy's rigorous 16-week training program. Ean will be returning to his duties as a Deputy Director & Park Ranger for Clayton County Conservation, as well as assisting with law enforcement in the county. Ean is pictured with ILEA Director Brady Carney and Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird.

Serianna Machesney Dehmloew '21, Huntley, Illinois, founded and created her online business, "Cross-Country Confidence Productions." She was also recognized at DigiFest Temecula 2026 with her short film, "Thrive: Finding Cross-Country Confidence in All Aspects of Life," by winning the People's Choice Award and the Standout Award for Personal Story.

Austin Curtis '22, Saint Charles, Illinois, received his master's degree after graduating from UIU and currently works for Sales Empowerment Group as a Sales Development Representative, while also playing semi-professional soccer. Austin and his wife, Lauren, reside in Saint Charles.

Nick Peck '22, Austin, Texas, released his first novel, "Only Way Out," loosely inspired by real-life experiences. He has also signed a publishing contract with Manhattan Book Group.

Logan Cockerham '22, Oelwein, Iowa, is enrolled at the University of Iowa – Tippie College of Business Master's of Accounting Program.

Ashlyn (Hubbard) Beyer '23, Osage, Iowa, has been teaching Middle School Special Education at the Osage Middle School for the last 8 years. Ashlyn and her husband of 4 years, Larry, currently reside in Osage with their 3-year-old daughter, Loralynn.

Genna Chenoweth '24, '26, Hedgesville, West Virginia, has accepted a position as the Associate Director of Alumni Relations with the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland.

Belle Wagner '25, Medina, Ohio, has accepted a position at the Greensmith Garden Center as the Greenhouse & Plant Care Assistant Manager.

Jillian Dodds '25, Madrid, Iowa, has accepted a position at Adel-DeSoto-Minburn Schools in Adel, Iowa, as a Kindergarten Teacher.

Do you have something special to share?

Submit a class note today online at uii.edu/alumniupdate, or contact the Alumni Office at alumni@uii.edu.



Wedding Day Bliss Congratulations!



Payge Hora '23 & '26, Gilbertville, Iowa, married Dakota Hora on November 1, 2025. Payge currently works at Upper Iowa University as the Alumni Engagement & Marketing Specialist.



Austin "AJ" Friedrich '21 & Mackayla (Olsen) Friedrich '20, Belle Plaine, Minnesota, were united in marriage on Friday, December 12, 2025.



Jordan Roths '17, West Des Moines, Iowa, married Megan Roths on April 10, 2026. They currently reside in West Des Moines.



Jordan '22, '24 & Katie '21, '23 (Crogon) Baumler, University Park, Iowa, were married on June 27, 2026. Jordan is a Financial & Compliance Analyst for PPI and Katie is a softball Coach and Admissions Assistant at William Penn University.



Elizabeth Tank '21, Jacksonville, Florida, married Bryce Davis on January 17, 2026. The couple opened Panther Taekwondo on the west side of Jacksonville, Florida. Future plans include obtaining certifications in Autism and Sensory Disorders to become the first martial arts school in Jacksonville, Florida, to provide total inclusion and equity.

Education Built Around Life: Lilian Maswai's Journey

How Lilian Maswai '13, '15, built a global banking career; and what her story means for the working parents and career builders who make up so much of the UIU family.

There is no single path to becoming a UIU graduate, and that is exactly the point. Some alumni walk across the stage at a Fayette commencement having lived the traditional college experience, full immersion, residence life, the on-campus foundation this institution was built on. Many more earn their degree through UIU's online and distance learning platforms, reaching students across the country, fitting coursework into a job, a family, a calendar already full before the first class even begins. **Lilian Maswai, '13, '15**, belongs to that second group, and her story is one that many UIU alumni, whatever path they took to get here, will recognize as their own.

A Degree Built Around a Full Life

Maswai came to the United States from Kenya and was working full time at Bankers Trust in Des Moines as an international banking specialist when she decided to pursue her bachelor's degree. She was not choosing between work, family, and school. She needed all three to work at once. "Upper Iowa University offered the flexibility I needed while working full time and raising my family," she said. "The evening and online class options fit well with my schedule, especially as I worked with teams across the globe."

She is candid about how hard those years actually were. "Balancing full time work, parenting, and coursework was extremely challenging," she said. "Many nights I slept very little so I could finish assignments, prepare my children for school, and still show up fully for my job." What got her through was structure, not heroics. "I wrote every assignment and class schedule on a calendar posted on my fridge so I could stay focused."

It also took a village. Throughout those years, Maswai was raising three her children, while keeping both her career and her coursework moving forward. "My family and friends encouraged me constantly," she said. "Their huge support, and my determination not to give up, kept me going. In the end, it paid off."

Why She Came Back

After finishing her bachelor's degree, Maswai took only a single semester off before re enrolling at UIU for her MBA. "I was already familiar with UIU's rhythm and expectations, and I felt confident I could take the next step," she said. "With my family's continued support, returning for my MBA felt like a natural progression."

One course stayed with her well beyond graduation. Her International Trade professor ran the class like a live global operation, shifting deadlines without warning and requiring final presentations over Skype with small student teams. "At the time, we felt stretched," she said, "but looking back, I'm grateful. That experience became a pedestal for my professional life, preparing me for the fast paced, unpredictable realities of global banking and trade operations."



Maswai pictured with her two sons and newborn daughter. During this time Maswai was also a student at UIU

From Des Moines to Global Leadership

After earning her MBA, Maswai gave her employer her notice and stepped forward without another job lined up. “I didn’t want to settle for a role that didn’t match the level of growth I had achieved,” she said. “I trusted the skills I had built, the discipline I had developed, and the momentum I was carrying.” U.S. Bank found her, and Minneapolis became home. Today she serves as Vice President and Operations Manager for International Banking, leading a global operations organization that supports trade finance, service delivery, and operational excellence across onshore and offshore teams.

She draws a direct line from the classroom to the role she holds today. “Earning my degrees from UIU gave me both the academic foundation and the personal discipline needed to advance in international banking,” she said. “UIU strengthened my confidence, expanded my analytical skills, and positioned me to take on larger responsibilities that ultimately led me into global operations leadership.”

For Every Alum Still Juggling It All

Maswai’s message to current students and fellow alumni balancing work, family, and ambition is the same one that carried her through: “Responsibilities will always be there, but opportunities will not. You don’t have to pause your life to pursue your education, you just have to be willing to reorganize it. If you build a routine, lean on your support system, and stay focused on why you started, you can move forward even in the busiest seasons of life.” 

“UIU strengthened my confidence, expanded my analytical skills, and positioned me to take on larger responsibilities that ultimately led me into global operations leadership.”

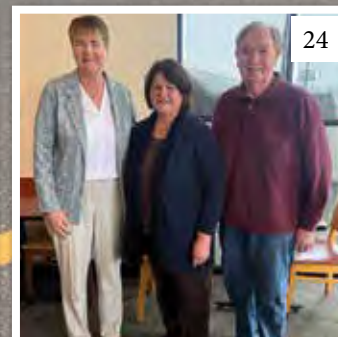
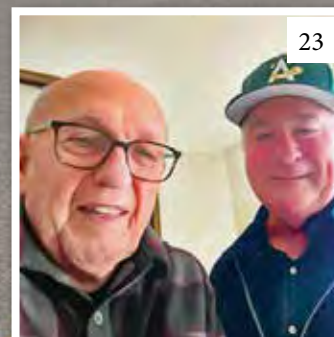
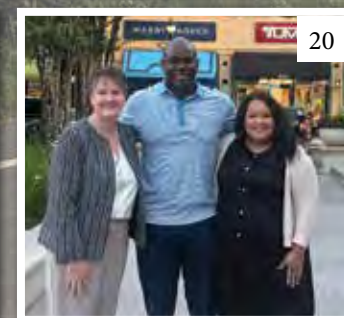
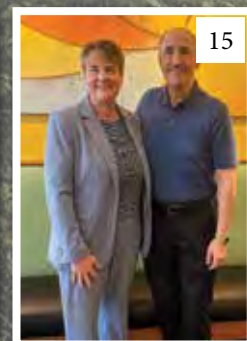
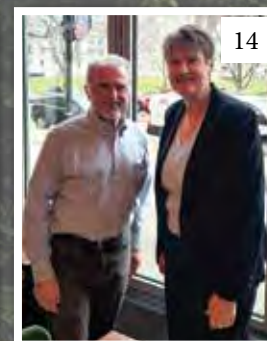
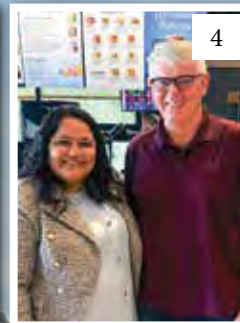
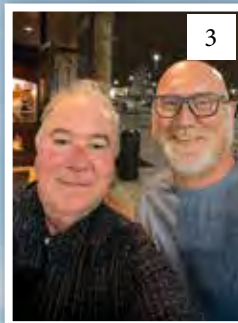
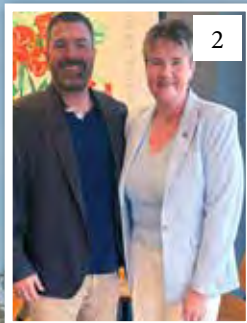


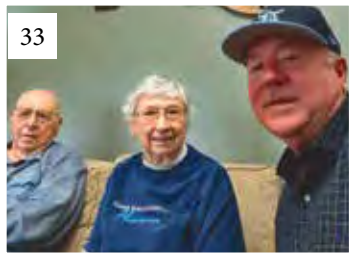
Lilian Maswai '13, '15
U.S. Bank, Vice President
and Operations Manager for
International Bank

ON THE ROAD WITH ALUMNI

Over the past few months, President Franken and our Advancement & Alumni Engagement team have had the pleasure of meeting with fellow Peacocks across the country—from living rooms to local landmarks—sharing memories, celebrating UIU pride, and building meaningful connections.

If you're interested in meeting with a member of our team to talk more about your UIU experience, engagement, or philanthropic interests, we'd love to connect with you. To arrange, reach out to us anytime at alumni@uiu.edu or 563-425-5388.





1. (Left to right) Ashley Gredys, Vice President for Advancement & Alumni Engagement, **Donna (Beard) Hartman '75**, and **President Kathy Franken '12**, in Plano, Texas in May 2026.
2. **Charles Callahan '10** (left) and President Franken (right) in Cypress, Texas in May 2026.
3. **Craig Dumolien '95** (right) visited with Mark Danker, UIU Development Officer (left), in Kansas in February 2026.
4. Ashley Gredys (left) pictured with **Dan Kruse '85** in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota in June 2026.
5. The late **Don McGuire '63** (left) and Ashley Gredys (right) enjoyed a lovely visit in Spring Lake Park, Minnesota in June 2026.
6. Mark Danker (right) poses for a quick photo with **Ed Jesle '67** (left) and **Nate Mendoza '07** (middle).
7. **Fred Lembke '72** visits with Mark Danker in Marshalltown, Iowa in January 2026.
8. **Jann (Schellhammer) Henkes '78**, enjoyed a birthday lunch with Ashley Gredys in Apple Valley, Minnesota, in June 2026.
9. (Left to right) **Jeff Stavnes '76**, Janis Stavnes, President Franken and **Bill DeLauro '78** visited in Golden, Colorado in March 2026.
10. **Jon Osborn '03** (left) snapped a quick photo with Mark Danker (right) in Fayette, Iowa in February 2026.
11. President Franken (left) was delighted to visit with **Erik Sorensen '09** (right) in Urbandale, Iowa, in May 2026.
12. President Franken (left) connected with **Keela Johnson '99** in Rosemont, Illinois in February 2026.
13. **Kenneth Erickson '83** (left) had a great visit with President Franken in Dubuque, Iowa in March 2026.
14. Ralph Kauten (left) and President Franken (right) enjoyed a lovely visit in Madison, Wisconsin, in March 2026.
15. President Franken (left) visited with **Tom Conley '91, '92, '97** in Des Moines, Iowa in May 2026.
16. President Franken (left) poses for a photo with UIU Board of Trustee member, John Falb in Ankeny, Iowa in May 2026.
17. (Left to right) President Franken enjoyed her time with **Jackie (Barry) '12 & Jason Olsgard '11** at their office in Johnstown, Colorado in March 2026.

18. **Kris Eglin '01** (right) visited with President Franken (left) in Westminster, Colorado in March 2026.
19. **Lilian Maswai '13, '15** (right) visited with Ashley Gredys (left) in Andover, Minnesota in June 2026.
20. (Left to right) President Franken, **Deo Sanders '03**, and Ashley Gredys connected in Woodlands, Texas in May 2026.
21. President Franken (left) connected with **George Katsenes '71** (center) and his wife, Barbara, in Houston, Texas, in May 2026.
22. Mark Danker (right) posed for a photo with **Sasha (Dinsdale) Robertson '11** in California in April 2026.
23. Mark Danker (right) connected with **Merlyn Albaugh '60** (left) in Chesterfield, Missouri in March 2026.
24. (Left to right) President Franken visited with **Dorinda '89** and **Tom Pounds '98** in Cedar Falls, Iowa in March 2026.
25. **Sheila (Stewart) Bryan '69** (left) snapped a photo with President Franken (right) in Oelwein, Iowa in April 2026.
26. **Keith Freeseemann '77** (right) connected with Mark Danker (left) in Yorba Linda, California in April 2026.
27. (Left to right) Jan Naylor, **James Wessles '66**, President Franken and her husband, Chuck, are all smiles during their visit in Lakewood, Colorado in March 2026.
28. **Ronald Stevens '70** (left), President Franken (center), and **Mary Ann (Jacob) Stevens '69** (far right) enjoyed a lovely lunch in Greeley, Colorado in March 2026.
29. **Travis Mueller '97** (right) and Mark Danker (left) chatted in California in April 2026.
30. **Jamie (Luchtel) '01 & Ryan Van Erem '00** visited with Mark Danker (middle) on the Fayette Campus.
31. Left to right: **Mario Madera '12, Jason Fowler '02, Alvin Graham '02**, Mark Danker, **Rudy Casillas '12** and **Ronnie Kurihara '09** posed for a photo in Southern California in April 2026.
32. Mark Danker (left) connected with **James Scherf '03** in St. Olaf, Iowa.
33. (Left to right) **Ron Kauffman '60** and **Carolyn Hatle '60** pose for a photo with Mark Danker in Marshalltown, Iowa in January 2026.
34. Mark Danker (left) connected with **Tyler Warner '06** (right) in Holton, Kansas in February 2026.

IN MEMORIAM

*In honor of their memory, we proudly recognize these
Peacocks and their special connection to Upper Iowa University.*

Donald D. Brattebo '53

6/23/2026, Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Roger B. Bowen '55

7/9/2026, North Liberty, Iowa

Shirley A. (Paul) Nefzger '55

5/11/2026, Earlville, Iowa

Larry L. Wiebke '60

4/5/2026, Van Horne, Iowa

Don D. McGuire '63

7/12/2026, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

James F. Wiley '64

3/5/2026, Spring, Texas

Pamela J. Whitmore '65

4/27/2026, Buckingham, Iowa

Diane (Frieden) Klemp '66

6/3/2026, Elgin, Iowa

Gary C. Foster '70

5/29/2026, Manchester, Iowa

Howard J. Hubbell '70

5/18/2026, Guttenberg, Iowa

Robin "Rob" A. Rissell '70

5/1/2026, Waukegan, Illinois

John F. Simmons '74

6/26/2026, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Lois Y. (Wilcox) Gambill '74

3/30/2026, Council Bluffs, Iowa

Sandra L. (Parkhurst) Brokl '74

12/17/2025, Pensacola, Florida

Robert D. Albert '76

4/19/2026, Alba, New York

Jean M. (Zeman) Larson '76

2/22/2026, Livermore, Iowa

Ervin Johnson '76

10/19/2025, Highland Park, Michigan

Robert M. Chittenden '76

9/26/2025, Grafton, Virginia

James L. Perry '77

3/29/2026, Erlanger, Kentucky

James M. Beckworth '82

3/29/2025, Blythewood, South
Carolina

Anita C. Swanson '84

3/1/2026, Duluth, Minnesota

Michael C. Young '93

2/17/2026, Wylie, Texas

John J. Clauson '08

3/15/2026, Waukon, Iowa

Alexiah M. Love '09

3/6/2026, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

FORMER FACULTY**Victor E. Clark**

4/9/2026, Sequim, Washington

Thomas F. Batell

1/31/2026, La Crosse, Wisconsin

Christopher Sodoma

1/17/2026, Cocoa, Florida

FORMER STUDENTS**Cecelia J. (McLavey) Waskow**

8/2/2026, Sumner, Iowa

Roger W. Torson

6/14/2026, Marion, Iowa

Janet (Oleson) Barnhart

6/5/2026, Greene, Iowa

Thomas H. Madden

4/26/2026, Chicago, Illinois

Armando "Mando" G. Santa Anna

3/15/2026, Arcadia, California

Kenneth W. Popenhagen

2/3/2026, Ankeny, Iowa

FRIENDS OF UIU**John O. Falb, Sr.**

7/24/2026, The Villages, Florida

Eleanor (Herz) Swent

5/24/2026, Palo Alto, California

Wayne Bicknese

1/13/2026, West Union, Iowa

**Millicent "Milly" K. (Davies)
Churbuck**

1/8/2026, Fayette, Iowa

Joel T. Noennig

8/22/2025, Norwood Young America,
Minnesota

'IN MEMORIAM' SUBMISSIONS

Should you learn of the passing of a fellow Peacock,
please notify the Alumni Office via email at
alumni@uiu.edu or send us a note to

Office of Alumni Advancement & Engagement

P.O. Box 1857, Fayette, IA 52142

2026-27 ALUMNI CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Peacock alumni and friends of Upper Iowa University are invited to attend all of our gatherings. Reconnect with fellow alumni, reminisce about your UIU experience, make new friends and, most important, have fun. We hope to see you at an upcoming event!



- September 30, 2026 – Fall Internship & Career Fair (Fayette, Iowa)
- October 5-11, 2026 – Homecoming Week (Fayette, Iowa)
- October 8-10, 2026 – BUSH Fraternity Reunion (Fayette, Iowa)
- October 13, 2026 – Presidential Meet & Greet (Iowa City, Iowa)
- October 15, 2026 – Presidential Meet & Greet (Cedar Rapids, Iowa)
- October 28, 2026 – 5th Annual Peacock Power 24-Hour Challenge (Online)
- November 2, 2026 – Presidential Meet & Greet (Dubuque, Iowa)
- November 11, 2026 – UIU Veterans Day Program (Fayette, Iowa)
- November 19, 2026 – Alumni Speaker Series: featuring Tom Conley '91, '92, '97 (online)
- December 1, 2026 – Peacock Holiday Party (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
- December 1, 2026 – Giving Tuesday (Online)
- December 2, 2026 – Peacock Holiday Party (Madison, Wisconsin)
- December 3, 2026 – Peacock Holiday Party (Green Bay, Wisconsin)
- January 17, 2027 – Mike Olson Alumni Wrestling Dual (Fayette, Iowa)
- January 23, 2027 – Cheer & Dance Alumni Reunion Day (Fayette, Iowa)
- January 28, 2027 – Presidential Meet & Greet (Scottsdale/Phoenix, Arizona)
- February 6, 2027 – Men's & Women's Basketball Alumni Day (Fayette, Iowa)
- February 15, 2027 – Presidential Meet & Greet (Dallas, Texas)
- February 18, 2027 – Presidential Meet & Greet (Houston, Texas)
- March 12&13, 2027 – NCAA Division II Wrestling Championships, hosted by UIU Peacock Social on March 12 (Cedar Rapids, IA)
- March 15, 2027 – Presidential Meet & Greet (Alexandria, Louisiana)
- March 16, 2027 – Presidential Meet & Greet (New Orleans, Louisiana)
- March 18, 2027 – UIU Baton Rouge 15th Anniversary Celebration (Baton Rouge, Louisiana)
- March 23 & 24, 2027 – 11th Annual Giving Days (Online)
- April 3, 2027 – Peacock Night at the Black Hawks (Waterloo, Iowa)
- April 8, 2027 – Peacock Mix & Mingle (Minneapolis, Minnesota)
- April 10, 2027 – Annual Honors & Awards Banquet + Donor Gathering (Fayette, Iowa)
- May 8, 2027 – UIU Commencement - Fayette Campus, includes Alumni's Second Chance Commencement participants (Fayette, Iowa)
- June 11, 2027 – 32nd Annual Peacock Golf Classic (Fayette, Iowa)
- July 28-31, 2027 – Team Peacock rides RAGBRAI (across Iowa)



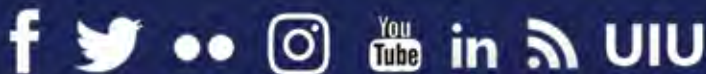


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We count on your help for the accuracy of our alumni records.
To submit an update to your name or address, please visit
uii.edu/alumniupdate.

8 WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED TO UIU!

1 Get social and share your memories!

- Facebook: facebook.com/uiualumni
- LinkedIn: **Upper Iowa University Group**
- Instagram: [@upperiowa_alumni](https://instagram.com/@upperiowa_alumni)
- The Bridge Online: uiubridge.com
- Flickr: flickr.com/upperiowauniversity

2 Attend an Event – Reconnect with fellow Peacocks through virtual and in-person alumni events.

➤ uii.edu/alumni-events

3 Refer a Student – Know someone who would thrive at Upper Iowa? Submit a referral and help grow the Peacock family.

➤ uii.edu/alumni/referral

\$4,000
TO A NEW
STUDENT AS
A RESULT OF
A REFERRAL

4 Earn a Master's Degree with SOAR – Ready for what's next? Earn your master's degree through the SOAR program.

➤ uii.edu/SOAR

\$200 PER GRADUATE
LEVEL COURSE

5 Volunteer for the Speaker Series – Share your career journey through the Alumni Speaker Series and inspire current students.

- uii.edu/alumnispeakerseries
- careers@uii.edu

6 Career Resources – Alumni have lifetime access to career support, including resumes, interviews, networking, mentoring, and job search assistance.

➤ careers@uii.edu

7 Update Your Information – Keep your contact information current and share your milestones with us for the Class Notes section in The Bridge.

➤ uii.edu/alumniupdate

8 Give a Gift and Leave a Legacy – Support future Peacocks by making an online gift.

➤ uii.edu/give

