



**Illinois Wesleyan University**  
**Digital Commons @ IWU**

---

Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine,  
2018-present

Office of Communications

---

Winter 2021

## Volume 30, Number 3, Winter 2021-22

Office of Communications, Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwu\\_magazine](https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwu_magazine)



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Office of Communications, Illinois Wesleyan University, "Volume 30, Number 3, Winter 2021-22" (2021). *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine, 2018-present*. 12.

[https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwu\\_magazine/12](https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwu_magazine/12)

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

WINTER 2021-22

# ILLINOIS WESLEYAN

UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE



TONY  
AWARDS

CBS

Bringing Broadway Back

BILL DAMASCHKE '85

TONY  
AWARDS

# JOIN THE CLUB!



The generosity and continued support of **Gift Club** donors enables Illinois Wesleyan University to remain one of the premier institutions in the nation. Club levels are determined by the total dollars given to the University during our fiscal year (Aug. 1 through July 31). Gift Club donors are identified in the Annual Report and a live online donor honor roll updated instantly when your gift is received.

[iwu.edu/giftclubs](http://iwu.edu/giftclubs)

## GIVING LEVELS

### **New Century Giving Society**

\$172-249\*

### **John Wesley Powell Society**

\$250-499

### **University Fellows**

\$500-999

### **President's Club**

\$1,000-2,499

### **Quadrangle Club**

\$2,500-4,999

### **Phoenix Grove Society**

\$5,000-9,999

### **Hedding Fellows**

\$10,000-24,999

### **Preston Wood Sr. Fellows**

\$25,000 or more

*\*The minimum giving level of the New Century Giving Society represents \$1 for every year since Illinois Wesleyan was founded in 1850.*







# INSIDE THIS ISSUE

VOLUME 30 | NUMBER 3 | WINTER 2021-22

## ON OUR COVER:

**Bill Damaschke '85** meets with media after accepting the Tony Award for Best Musical at the 74th annual Tony Awards on Sept. 26, 2021. Photo courtesy of Cindy Ord.

## FEATURES

### 14 Bringing Broadway Back

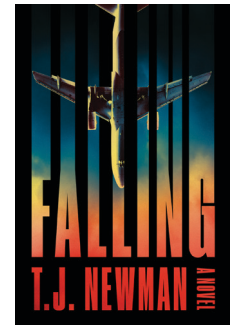
A lifetime of experiences prepared **Bill Damaschke '85** to serve as producer of a Tony Award-winning musical that echoes real life as Broadway bounces back from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 18 Taking Off

A series of rejections didn't stop **Torri "T.J." Newman '06** from writing a story that has become a *New York Times* bestseller and landed a seven-figure movie deal.

### 22 At Home Among the Spires

As Illinois Wesleyan celebrates the 25th anniversary of its association with the Pembroke Program and the University of Oxford, **Rachel McCarthy '21** shares a firsthand account of her experience studying in the "City of Dreaming Spires."



Page 18

## DEPARTMENTS

- 2 *From the President's Desk*
- 3 *Inside IWU*
- 10 *Authors and the Arts*
- 13 *Homecoming 2021*
- 26 *Alumni Update*
- 28 *Alumni Association News*
- 32 *Hart Career Center*
- 34 *Tiny Titans*
- 35 *Titan Celebrations*
- 36 *In Memory*



## From the President's Desk

It's no surprise that all of us are still affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, at the opening of the academic year, we were taken by surprise — because of our very high vaccination rates — by an outbreak larger than what we had experienced last year. Simply stated: the Delta variant changed the equation; the majority of cases among our students were in vaccinated individuals. The good news is: they were very mild. We redoubled mitigation strategies, and have been COVID-free in recent weeks. Our planning group is monitoring and strategizing for developments that may lie ahead.

Despite the complexities of COVID, there are exciting things happening on campus! You will see in this magazine a report on the launch of The Petrick Idea Center. This major new facility will serve as a catalyst and impetus for creative thinking across the campus.

As I reported in the last alumni magazine, a number of departments and programs have also been rethinking their curricula to best suit today's students. Particularly promising is the initiative to broaden the School of Nursing into a more comprehensive program of health sciences. Research shows that this generation of students, with their experience of the pandemic, are increasingly interested in health care, public health, and the like.

*“The disruptions of the past two years, due to COVID, have definitely taken a toll on students, faculty and staff. It would be irresponsible not to acknowledge that reality. But, overall, I believe IWU has managed this difficult time well, with understanding, collaboration and grace.”*

— PRESIDENT S. GEORGIA NUGENT

We are also working with faculty in our business-related programs to consider how they might develop closer collaboration, presenting a more comprehensive program to the many students in business majors. We're excited about the possibilities for a program that has been so central to Illinois Wesleyan to take a next step in its development.

As the higher education environment changes, we are also exploring more opportunities for collaboration. We have joined a consortium of approximately 100 small liberal arts colleges that has developed a very interesting new model. They are developing specialized courses online in certain fields which, added to the fundamental IWU liberal arts curriculum, offer attractive majors we would otherwise not be able to offer. We are testing this possibility, to see whether it meets student interests and needs.

The disruptions of the past two years, due to COVID, have definitely taken a toll on students, faculty and staff. It would be irresponsible not to acknowledge that reality. But, overall, I believe IWU has managed this difficult time well, with understanding, collaboration and grace. I want to also acknowledge and recognize that. We look forward to a much brighter future — one in which it will be possible for me to meet, face to face, with many Illinois Wesleyan alumni!



**S. Georgia Nugent**  
*Illinois Wesleyan University President*



## IWU MAGAZINE STAFF

### EDITOR

*Matt Wing*

### GRAPHICS EDITOR

*Ellie Harman*

## CONTRIBUTORS

### DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

*Ann Aubry*

### WEB CONTENT SPECIALIST

*Kristen Buhrmann*

### VIDEOGRAPHER/PHOTOGRAPHER

*Nick Helten*

### DIRECTOR OF ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS

*Katie Gonzales*

### STUDENT WRITER

*Kailee Galloway '23*

### Office of Communications

(309) 556-3181

### IWU Admissions Office

(800) 332-2498

[www.iwu.edu](http://www.iwu.edu)

*Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*

[iwumag@iwu.edu](mailto:iwumag@iwu.edu)

*Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*

(ISSN 1071-7757) is published quarterly by:

Illinois Wesleyan University, P.O. Box 2900,  
Bloomington, Illinois 61702-2900.

Periodical postage paid at Bloomington,  
Illinois, Post Office, and at additional  
mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

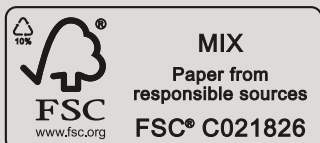
*Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*

P.O. Box 2900

Bloomington, Illinois 61702-2900

Printed by Taylor Print & Visual

Impressions, Inc., Bloomington, Ill.



# Inside IWU

FEATURED NEWS, EVENTS AND VIEWS FROM THE IWU CAMPUS

## IWU Unveils Plans for The Petrick Idea Center

**P**resident **S. Georgia Nugent** announced plans for The Petrick Idea Center, a new 50,000 square-foot facility on Illinois Wesleyan University's campus that will serve as a nerve center for interdisciplinary innovation, collaboration and creativity, grounded in the liberal arts.

Announced at the President's Homecoming Reception on Oct. 1, 2021, the project will be funded entirely through donor support, with a significant lead gift from the building's namesakes, **Dave '67** and **Ellen (Reid) Petrick '68**. The Petricks are engaged and generous donors who have been instrumental in supporting the development of the University's initiatives centered on innovative thinking in product design.

"Ellen and I are thrilled to be lead donors for The Petrick Idea Center, a project that represents a culmination of our passions and dreams," said Dave Petrick. "It's our hope that this space will positively impact students whose majors span the academic spectrum. We believe that everyone has a bit of an entrepreneurial spirit, and through the development of The Petrick Idea Center, students from across campus will have access to the resources and support needed to advance new products, services and initiatives in the 'do well, do good' spirit of former President Minor Myers Jr. Ellen and I loved attending Illinois Wesleyan as students, and we love what Wesleyan has grown to become for current students. It's our vision that this project will give Illinois Wesleyan a competitive edge as the University recruits and educates the leaders and problem solvers of tomorrow."

A lifelong entrepreneur and former member of the Board of Trustees, Petrick currently serves as chairman of Bretford Manufacturing of Franklin Park, Illinois. Founded by Petrick's father and uncle in 1948, Bretford produces technology furniture products for schools and businesses. In addition to the Petricks' lead gift, **Marc '94** and **Noel Talluto** are also providing a significant investment in the project.



(Above) **Ellen (Reid) Petrick '68** and **Dave Petrick '67** are providing the lead gift for The Petrick Idea Center, a new campus facility that will foster a living, learning and creating community on Illinois Wesleyan's campus.

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

"I'm extremely excited," Marc Talluto said. "I'm hopeful that The Petrick Idea Center will help merge the passions that students have with the capability to succeed in pursuit of those passions. It's going to be great for students, for the community, and for the alumni who come back to support it."

Currently projected to be approximately the size of State Farm Hall on Illinois Wesleyan's campus, The Petrick Idea Center will serve as a living, learning and creating community by uniquely integrating a state-of-the-art innovation space open to the entire campus with a residential space for approximately 75-100 students. The innovation space will include flexible meeting spaces for collaborating, conceptualizing and vetting new ventures. It will also include a state-of-the-art makerspace equipped with tools for fabrication and creative projects.

"Today's students prefer to learn by doing," Nugent said. "Possibilities for new kinds of learning through doing, making and creating are reasons why I'm especially excited to announce The Petrick Idea Center. The possibilities for liberal arts plus professional learning, and for experiential learning, will advance even further at Illinois Wesleyan in a visionary way enabled by an extraordinary, generous and visionary gift from Dave and Ellen Petrick."

Programming held within The Petrick Idea Center will purposefully bring together students from across the

University's disciplines to think broadly about people's needs and creative, ethical ways to fulfill them. Mentoring programs will allow students to leverage one another's expertise, and the expertise of faculty, alumni and community members, to innovate boldly and with the greatest chances of success.

"Students, faculty and staff from all disciplines who want to use their entrepreneurial spirit to innovate and make a difference in the world will have access to the makerspace and all of its amenities and services."

— JOHN QUARTON

**John Quarton** has been appointed the inaugural director of The Petrick Idea Center and will provide leadership for the project while overseeing innovation and entrepreneurship across the University in partnership with companies, alumni and the community.

"Students, faculty and staff from all disciplines who want to use their entrepreneurial spirit to innovate and make a difference in the world will have access to the makerspace and all of its amenities and services," Quarton said. "Enthusiastic alumni and community partners who want to support the University and support students in their entrepreneurial endeavors will also have access. The facility will also include live and learn residential opportunities that will allow students to take their innovation, design, creativity and entrepreneurial passions to levels they never would have previously imagined, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is a real differentiator. This will create a distinctive and relevant experience not offered at many universities across the country, and it will be one of the first facilities of its kind at this scale at a university, grounded in the liberal arts."

Illinois Wesleyan University has partnered with Yazdani Studio of CannonDesign, a Los Angeles-based architectural firm, to conceptualize The Petrick Idea Center. The facility will occupy the southwest corner of the Eckley Quadrangle, including the current site of Gulick Hall. Groundbreaking is slated for 2023, with the building ready for use in 2025.



(Above left) **Marc Talluto '94** speaks during the announcement of plans to build The Petrick Idea Center during the President's Homecoming Reception on Oct. 1, 2021. (Above right) **John Quarton**, inaugural director of The Petrick Idea Center, addresses attendees of the President's Homecoming Reception.



## Tillman-Kelly '09 Reviews Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Illinois Wesleyan

In November, student, faculty and staff organizations devoted to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) hosted a series of campus conversations, allowing the community to reflect and determine action steps in response to a report and recommendations for Illinois Wesleyan prepared by **Derrick Tillman-Kelly '09**.

"Last spring, as many colleges and universities in America considered anew their histories and their current environments in light of diversity, equity and inclusion, Illinois Wesleyan did the same," **President S. Georgia Nugent** wrote in distributing the report to campus. "Students, in particular, spoke out about their concerns, and their hopes. Their voices were heard."

Enlisted as a consultant for his alma mater, Tillman-Kelly has previously served as a director of the University Innovation Alliance, a national coalition of public research universities committed to increasing the number and diversity of college graduates in America, particularly low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color. Tillman-Kelly researched the recent history of IWU with regard to issues of diversity and interviewed campus stakeholders.

"Illinois Wesleyan University's long history is one of mixed results with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion," Tillman-Kelly wrote. "There have often been strong institutional statements in support of such efforts, but less success in following through on those statements or objectives."

He provided a range of recommendations to address both historical and current concerns. Most notably, and fully endorsed by University leadership, is a cabinet-level officer with responsibility and authority to advance diversity, equity and inclusion at Illinois Wesleyan — with the understanding this is not a "silver bullet." Tillman-Kelly urged clear and reasonable expectations for the role, and suggested realigning DEI-related campus services to report to this new vice president.

A summary of other recommendations — and progress so far — also accompanied the report to the campus community, including:

- **Continue to pursue a diverse faculty** — Efforts include search advocacy for all campus personnel to foster awareness of potential unconscious bias in the search process and participation in the Consortium for Faculty Diversity. Since 2019, 45% of full-time faculty hired are Black, Indigenous or people of color.



President S. Georgia Nugent



Derrick Tillman-Kelly '09

- **Invest in course development and redesign** — A \$100,000 Presidential Innovation Fund has been established to advance the campus commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion and to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- **Consider change in Associate Dean of Curricular and Faculty Development to support diversification of the curriculum** — The role will be split into two positions next term.
- **Enrollment Management** — Geographic considerations include an enhanced focus on Chicago and St. Louis areas; ongoing staff training will be evaluated for effectiveness.
- **Re-examine and simplify DEI committee structure** — Focus on objectives rather than activities.
- **Campuswide training requirements** — Reconsider possibilities for the most effective practices.
- **Accountability** — Examine faculty and staff discipline options and explore options for restorative justice; a process is underway for more transparency regarding bias incidents and reporting.

In her introduction, Nugent noted the report was intended as a "snapshot of campus perspectives at an important juncture in the history of race and diversity at the University, contextualized within a broad overview of institutional history."

"The objective is to frame and to open honest, constructive dialogue and to spur constructive action regarding diversity at this institution."

## Center for Engaged Learning Serves as Resource Hub in The Ames Library

Student engagement and success is the impetus for Illinois Wesleyan University's newly launched Center for Engaged Learning. Located on the first floor of The Ames Library, the Center for Engaged Learning is a central hub for key educational support services including the Action Research Center, Writing Center and Tutoring Services.

"Libraries continue to evolve to support campus initiatives," said University Librarian **Stephanie Davis-Kahl**. "The mission of the library has not changed. We've just opened our doors to our colleagues who are also working toward providing our students with the educational support and opportunities we hope all IWU students take advantage of. Having a central location for these services — writing, tutoring, research assistance, experiential learning — communicates our attention to the entire student experience."

A strategic initiative of the Office of the Provost, the Center for Engaged Learning's mission is to promote and strengthen opportunities for students to participate in distinctive programs in the classroom and the community while also ensuring access to faculty, staff and peers who can help to support their success in the classroom and beyond. Planning for the space was guided by student focus groups, a faculty/staff task force, and discussions with colleagues at other institutions.

Spanning the width of The Ames Library's first floor, located off the main entrance, the Center for Engaged Learning features digital monitors, white boards and comfortable, accessible seating for independent and group study and tutoring sessions. Soft bleachers in the center of the space enable students to learn while stand-

ing, sitting or even laying down.

"It's a major improvement to an already lovely space," Davis-Kahl said. "We are so lucky to have a beautiful library building, and we are doubly lucky that our colleagues in Physical Plant have worked with us to change the layout to meet the needs of students over time. The new space is bright and inviting, and has personalized touches from IWU history and collections."

Works from the Campus Art Collection adorn the Center for Engaged Learning's walls, including The Corner Office installation by **Lizette Toto '21**, winner of the University's Hope Ellen Pape President's Club Award in the Fine Arts. Also included in the space is an exhibit honoring the Ames family, curated by University Archivist and Special Collections Librarian **Meg Miner**, which reflects on the family's long-standing relationship with Illinois Wesleyan and their leading role in establishing the library.

Looking ahead, Davis-Kahl said, "Our vision for the future is that our campus community comes to love the space, that they seek out the support available to them from the people who are dedicated to helping them become engaged learners and teachers."

A celebration of the new Center for Engaged Learning took place in The Ames Library on Sept. 29, 2021.



(Above) Students read in the Center for Engaged Learning, a newly refurbished and repurposed space inside The Ames Library.



### MAX L. STARKEY AWARD

(Left) **Nora Espino** (left) was presented the Max L. Starkey Award by **President S. Georgia Nugent** at an annual academic year kickoff event on Aug. 16, 2021. Espino has worked at Illinois Wesleyan for more than 17 years and currently serves as a custodian in the Center for Natural Sciences.



## Illinois Wesleyan Recognized in State, National Job Placement Ranks

For the second consecutive year, Illinois Wesleyan's job placement ranked No. 1 in Illinois and No. 7 nationally, according to Zippia's 2021 list of the "Best College in Each State for Getting a Job."

Using U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard data, the career advice website sorted schools based on job placement ratings, looking at employment levels 10 years after students graduated. Among IWU graduates, Zippia calculated a job placement rate of 95.5%.

Zippia's list of "The Best Small Colleges for Getting a Job," published in 2020, ranked Illinois Wesleyan No. 5 in the U.S., and Zippia's most recent list of "Small Colleges with the Highest Earning Graduates," published in 2018, ranked Illinois Wesleyan No. 1 in Illinois. Using College Scorecard data, Zippia calculated the average earnings of graduates 10 years after entry into the workforce and found that IWU graduates average \$60,500 — more than \$25,000 above the national median.

IWU was additionally named one of the nation's best institutions for undergraduates, according to *The Princeton Review's* 2022 college guide, "The Best 387 Colleges."

Only about 14% of America's 2,700 four-year colleges are profiled in the book based on data it collects annually from administrators at hundreds of colleges about their institutions' academic offerings. *The Princeton Review* does not rank the colleges in the book from 1 to 387.

IWU was ranked No. 89 among national liberal arts colleges in the *U.S. News & World Report* 2022 rankings of "Best Colleges." In addition, IWU is ranked among "Best Value Schools" — those with highly ranked academics and a low net cost of attendance after need-based financial aid. Illinois Wesleyan is also listed among the "Top Performers on Social Mobility," based on opportunities and outcomes for economically disadvantaged students.

Also in the 2022 rankings, Illinois Wesleyan was the top-rated nursing program at any private, liberal arts university.

#1

**BEST COLLEGE**  
IN ILLINOIS  
FOR GETTING A JOB

## IWU Welcomes Strong Incoming Class, Enrollment Increases

Illinois Wesleyan welcomed 473 new students to the University for the 2021-22 academic year. Total enrollment increased by 1% to 1,653. Official enrollment figures were computed after the 15th day of classes.

"We are delighted to welcome a robust and diverse incoming class to campus this fall," said **President S. Georgia Nugent**. "Despite unprecedented challenges facing higher education, our recruitment and retention efforts continue to buck nationwide trends. This success is a credit to dedicated faculty and staff who truly care about teaching and mentoring our students."

The incoming class includes 163 students — 34% of the total class — who self-identify as students of color, representing the most diverse class in school history.

Students from 15 countries, 25 states and Washington, D.C., make up the incoming class. A record-high total of 66 new students from McLean County enrolled this fall, a 14% increase over last year's McLean County new-student total. Illinois Wesleyan also welcomed 40 new transfer students, including five from Heartland Community College.

"Over the past four years, we have seen a dramatic increase in enrollment by students from McLean County thanks in large part to the \$30,000 McLean County Scholarship Guarantee, made possible by the Illinois Wesleyan Associates," said Vice President of Enrollment and Marketing **LeAnn Hughes**.

Academic quality held strong this fall, with an average GPA of 3.83. The incoming class consists of 113 first-generation students and 40 who had a close family member or relative attend Illinois Wesleyan.

Illinois Wesleyan continues to recruit and retain high-caliber students, with an 87% retention rate — 5% above the national average — according to College Scorecard data.



(Above) Illinois Wesleyan welcomed 473 new students to campus as enrollment increased by 1% to 1,653.



## Lewis Named Chief Information Officer

**L**eon Lewis became Illinois Wesleyan University's chief information officer on Aug. 1, 2021. He serves among senior leadership on **President S. Georgia Nugent's** cabinet.

Lewis brings more than 20 years of experience developing and executing information technology strategies and programs within higher education. He previously served as vice chancellor of information technology, institutional research, at Arkansas State University-Beebe. In that role, he led initiatives and fostered collaboration to ensure that IT services provided students with access to the resources needed to excel at the institution, while exceeding standards to support the educational and professional goals of faculty and staff.

"We are fortunate to welcome Leon's vision and leadership to Information Technology Services, whose importance has become increasingly apparent during the rapid shifts of the past year," said **Matt Bierman**, vice president for business and finance. "He brings experience in providing strategic, tactical and operational management in a variety of higher education settings."

Lewis said he was drawn to Illinois Wesleyan by its rich history and looks forward to many years as part of the IWU family.

"With a strong commitment to education, student success, and all aspects of diversity, I quickly realized that this was the type of institution that I would like to be part of," Lewis said. "I am excited to join you in creating an environment that holistically supports and academically challenges our students."

Lewis has a master's degree in computer engineering/internet engineering from Marlboro College, a former private liberal arts college in Marlboro, Vermont. He completed a Certified Government Chief Information Officer (CGCIO) certification at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned a bachelor's degree in business administration/computer information systems at Western Carolina University.

Lewis succeeds **Jerry DeSanto**, who served as interim chief information officer for the previous year.



Leon Lewis

## Mathison Named Director of Alumni Engagement

**K**aylee (Kurtz) Mathison was named Illinois Wesleyan's director of alumni engagement on Sept. 1, 2021. Mathison previously served as assistant director of alumni engagement for reunions at IWU since 2019.

"I am very excited to work with our alumni in this new capacity," Mathison said. "In the past few years, I have been blown away by the Illinois Wesleyan alumni community's passion. Our alumni are generous donors of their time and treasure, and I look forward to working with them to sustain and grow alumni engagement opportunities."

In her former role, Mathison managed reunion committees and coordinated unique reunion experiences. Her responsibilities included event planning, volunteer outreach and fundraising to meet class giving goals. In 2020, IWU reunion giving totaled over \$1 million.

"Kaylee has shown her skills and ability to manage multiple programs through her years working with and building the reunion program," said IWU Vice President **Steve Seibring '81**. "We look forward to watching her flourish in this even more expansive role."

In the new role, Mathison will manage all alumni engagement events and University-sponsored volunteer groups. She will work in conjunction with the Alumni Association Board of Directors and the alumni engagement team to coordinate local events such as Homecoming, as well as regional events and affinity group activities.

"It is such an honor to continue creating lasting relationships with alumni and celebrate their accomplishments and engagement with the University," Mathison said. "I am so pleased to continue and grow in this capacity."

Mathison earned a bachelor's degree in communication and public relations from Monmouth College in 2018 and a master's degree in higher education administration from North Park University in 2020.

Prior to her time at IWU, she served as a transfer admissions counselor at Lincoln College.



Kaylee (Kurtz) Mathison

## Illinois Wesleyan Achieves Record Number of Academic All-America Selections

Illinois Wesleyan University continued its rich tradition of Academic All-America success with a school-record number of selections during the 2020-21 academic year. A total of nine Titans were named Academic All-Americans over the past year.



Administered by the College Sports Information Directors of America (CoSIDA), the Academic All-America program recognizes student-athletes' athletic and academic achievements. Nominees for Academic All-America honors must be starters or important reserves on their respective teams, completed one calendar year at their current institution, and own a 3.30 or higher cumulative GPA. CoSIDA recognizes Academic All-America teams consisting of student-athletes participating at all levels of NCAA competition.

"These nine student-athletes — and all of our Academic All-Americans throughout the years — truly represent what Illinois Wesleyan University is all about: academic and athletic excellence," said Illinois Wesleyan Athletic Director **Mike Wagner**. "Our student-athletes embrace the academic rigor at IWU on a daily basis while also competing for championships at the conference and national level."

With nine student-athletes recognized during the 2020-21 academic year, Illinois Wesleyan has had 142 Academic All-Americans (62 first-team selections, 42 second-team selections and 38 third-team selections) dating back to 1970. IWU has additionally had seven student-athletes named Academic All-Americans of the Year. IWU ranks 24th among all

schools in terms of total selections, and ninth among Division III institutions.

Illinois Wesleyan's Academic All-Americans recognized during the 2020-21 academic year included: **Emmett Zima '21** (football); **Matthew Leritz '22** (men's basketball); **Andrew Abel '21** and **Rob Wuethrich '21** (men's golf); **Kendall Sosa '21** (women's basketball); **Janaye Godfrey '21** (women's lacrosse); **Ellen Gilbert '22** (women's swimming and diving); and **Ayana Blair '21** and **Kelsey Wyman '21** (women's track and field).

More information on Illinois Wesleyan's Academic All-America success and other Titan Athletics news is available at [www.iwusports.com](http://www.iwusports.com).

CoSIDA began the Academic All-America program in 1952 and, since then, has honored thousands of deserving student-athletes from numerous sports across all divisions with Academic All-America scholar-athlete honors. CoSIDA currently sponsors Academic All-America programs for men's soccer, women's soccer, football, volleyball, men's basketball, women's basketball, baseball, softball, and men's and women's track and field/cross country. Many other sports are eligible through the at-large program.

# 142

## ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS SINCE 1970

### NELSON-BROWN WINS NO. 500

(Right) **Kim Nelson-Brown** earned her 500th win as Illinois Wesleyan's head volleyball coach on Oct. 13, 2021, in a 3-1 victory at Carroll University.





## BOOKS

**Hal Graff '69** penned *Bobby Ross and the White Stones: From Sinner to Salvation*, a story following a Hollywood star protagonist on a journey guided by a guardian angel. *Bobby Ross and the White Stones* is available on Amazon.

**Gary V. Johnson '75** penned *Luck is a Talent: The True Story of a Trial Lawyer's Experience Defending an Innocent Man Charged with Murder*, a memoir of Gary's four decades as an attorney. Much of the book centers on Gary's defense of a man charged with murder who was eventually exonerated in a landmark case that was instrumental in ending capital punishment in Illinois. Gary is a partner with Camic Johnson Ltd., an Aurora, Illinois, law firm. *Luck is a Talent* can be purchased on Amazon or at [www.luckisatalent.com](http://www.luckisatalent.com).

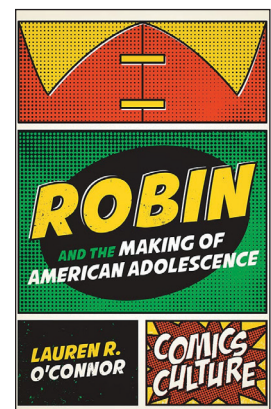
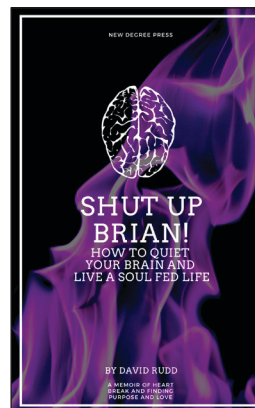
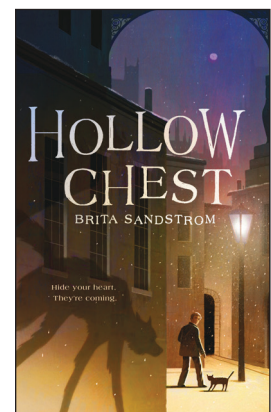
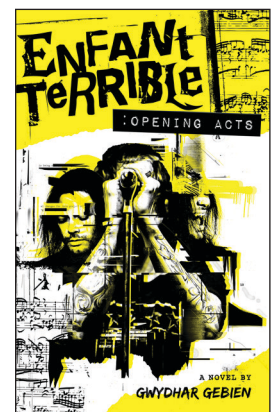
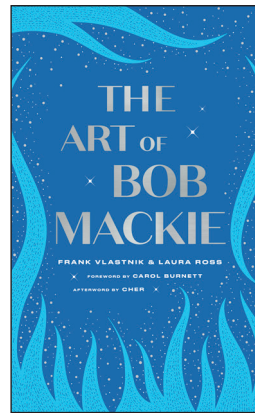
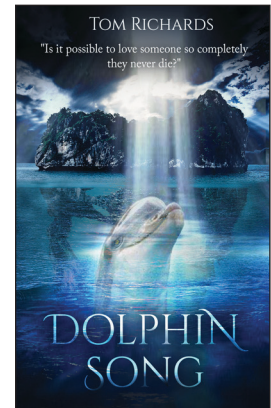
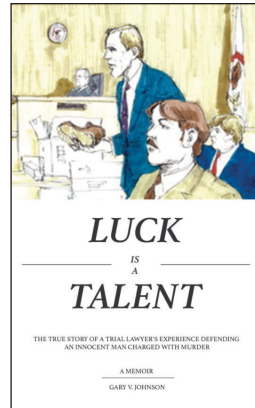
**Jerrilyn McGregory '71** has written *One Grand Noise: Boxing Day in the Anglicized Caribbean World*, published by the University Press of Mississippi in July 2021. *One Grand Noise* is the first comprehensive study of how Boxing Day is celebrated across the Caribbean and explores the holiday as part of a creolization process from slavery into the 21st century. *One Grand Noise* is available in hardcover and paperback versions from the University Press of Mississippi.

**Tom Richards '78** is the author of *Dolphin Song*, a sweeping tale that follows the journey of an Irish-American family caught up in a storm of tragedy. The book is an extension of a screenplay Tom wrote with collaborator Liam O'Neill, who died in May 2020 of COVID-19. Liam had encouraged Tom to adapt the screenplay as a book to help secure production finance, which Tom eventually completed, even after his friend's death. A story of romance, Irish legend and magic, *Dolphin Song* is available on Amazon. More information is available at [www.tomrichards.ie](http://www.tomrichards.ie).

**Frank Vlastnik '87** is the co-author of *The Art of Bob Mackie*, a comprehensive and authorized showcase of the legendary fashion designer's life and work, published by Simon & Schuster in November 2021. The coffee table book features hundreds of photos and dozens of never-before-seen sketches from Mackie's collection, and includes a foreword by Carol Burnett and an afterword by Cher. *The Art of Bob Mackie* is widely available.

**Shay (Sizer) Mason '95** is the author of *Rest for the Weary: Finding Freedom from Fear in the Heart of the Father*, in which she shares her personal journey out of fear into freedom. The book includes Christian wisdom from beloved writers C.S. Lewis, Henri Nouwen, Dallas Willard, Andrew Murray and others. Shay is a Chicago-area native living in North Carolina, an overcomer of autoimmune disease and obsessive-compulsive disorder/anxiety, and a firm believer in God's healing love. *Rest for the Weary* is widely available.

**David Rudd '96** has written a memoir, *Shut Up Brian*, to be published by New Degree Press in Spring 2022. The work features a cast of internal characters: Brian, who plays David's brain; Harper, his heart; Gustavo, his gut instinct; Boyd, his body; and Sojourner, the hero of the story as David's soul. The book explores the intersections of childhood trauma and its impact on our adult relationships, confronting and overcoming fear to live a life of abundant love, and learning to quiet the brain and live more from one's soul. Pre-sale for *Shut Up Brian* is scheduled to begin in January 2022.





**Laura (Engelhardt) Powell '99** is the author of the *Capitol Hearts* trilogy, a series of contemporary Christian romance novels. The first book in the trilogy, *Facing Love*, was released in August 2020. It was followed by *Finding Home* in December 2020 and *Freeing Grace* in August 2021. All three works can be purchased on Amazon. In addition to writing, Laura teaches private voice and piano lessons.

**Gwydhar (Bratton) Gebien '04** is the author of *Enfant Terrible: Opening Acts*, the fictional story of Damen Warner, frontman of a metalcore band who has hit the skids. His record label has dropped him, his manager has gone missing, and now his agent won't return his calls. In a last-ditch effort to revive his career, Damen returns to Chicago on the promise of playing Lollapalooza, and his life quickly spirals. Antagonizing everyone in his path, Damen struggles to reinvent himself and come to terms with his estranged family as he plummets to rock bottom. *Enfant Terrible* is widely available, including at [www.enfantterriblenovel.com](http://www.enfantterriblenovel.com), where it can be read for free.

**Lauren O'Connor '09** is the author of *Robin and the Making of American Adolescence*, published by Rutgers University Press in August 2021. The book is both a character history of Batman's sidekick and a cultural history of the American teenager. *Robin and the Making of American Adolescence* is widely available.

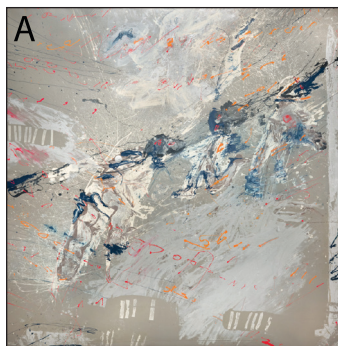
**Brita Sandstrom '11** penned *Hollow Chest*, a novel for middle grade readers published by Walden Pond Press, an imprint of HarperCollins, in June 2021. *Hollow Chest* is a modern folktale of the darkness around and inside us, and the courage it takes to keep hope alive. Brita's debut novel is widely available.

Associate Professor and Chair of Accounting and Finance **Robert Irons** is co-author of *The Preamble as Policy: A Guidebook to Governance and Civic Duty*, a new book focused on the significance of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. *The Preamble as Policy* intends to show the Preamble to the Constitution is more than just an introduction, but rather a statement by the framers of what the government must do for its citizens. *The Preamble as Policy* is available at the Peter Lang Publishing website or Amazon.

Instructional Professor and Writing Center Director **Anna Scanlon** has published two book chapters. She co-authored a chapter titled "Graduate Tutor Professional Development — and Collaborative Leadership — in an Undergraduate Writing Center," in *Redefining Roles: The Professional, Faculty, and Graduate Consultant's Guide to Writing Centers*, available through Project Muse. She also authored the chapter titled "Starving for Beauty: On Anorexia and Mimetic Desire," in *René Girard, Theology, and Pop Culture*.

## ART

Artwork by St. Louis native **Oliver Lee Jackson '58** (A) is currently presented in a solo exhibition at the St. Louis Art Museum. The free exhibition opened July 16, 2021, and will run through Feb. 20, 2022. It features work created over the span of five decades, and offers an opportunity to trace the evolution of Oliver's career. A 120-page catalog, featuring work



from this exhibition and a 2019 exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., is forthcoming.

Illinois Wesleyan's Merwin Gallery hosted *Boundaries*, an exhibit featuring work from 16 local artists responding to interviews of children who were held at U.S. immigration facilities. Alumni and faculty who presented work in the gallery included: **Spencer Sauter '70**, **Dustin Springer '13**

(B), Associate Professor of Art **Connie Estep**, Adjunct Assistant Professor **Claire Hedden**, Interim Director of the School of Art and Associate Professor of Art **Julie Johnson**, Assistant Professor of Art **Joshua Lowe** and Emeritus Professor of Art **Kevin Strandberg**. The exhibit, which ran from Oct. 11 through Dec. 3, 2021, also included a gallery talk on Oct. 21, 2021, featuring Emeritus Professor of English **Kathleen O'Gorman**, who, along with her daughter, visited numerous detention centers on behalf of the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law and, along with others, took the declarations of detained children to document their treatment, and worked to improve their situations.



## ARTICLES AND PAPERS

Authors **Ria Patel '21**, **Julia Chen '21**, **Julie Xu '21**, **Emily Erdmann '19**, **Zoeephina Laughlin '20** and Assistant Professor of Biology **Richard Alvey** published "Complete Genome Sequence of the Anabaena Myophage Elbi" in *Microbiology Resource Announcements*, a journal of the American Society for Microbiology.

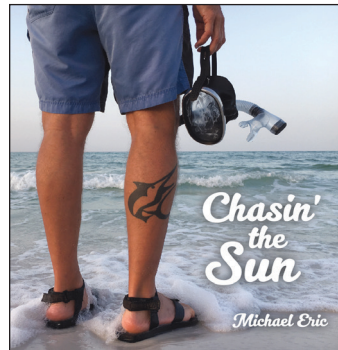
Authors **Ariel A. Bradley '23**, **Zoeephina Laughlin '20**, **Saralex Torres '22** and Associate Professor of Biology **Loralyn Cozy** published "Draft Genome Sequences of the Three Massilia Strains AB1, ST3, and ZL223" in *Microbiology Resource Announcements*.

Illinois Wesleyan Information Literacy Librarian and Associate Professor **Chris Sweet** published a column, "Overdue: Incorporating social justice into the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," in *College & Research Libraries News*.

Assistant Professor of Accounting **Michael McLaughlin** co-authored an op-ed in *The Roanoke (Virginia) Times* titled "The cost of childhood poverty is high for us all," in October 2021. Michael and co-author Lawrence Eppard, a professor at Shippensburg University, conclude "it is much cheaper to prevent poverty than to pay to address its consequences." Using available data on Virginia residents, Michael estimates that "for every dollar spent reducing child poverty, society saves at least seven dollars with respect to the economic costs of poverty."

## FILM

**Sarah Weinstein Edwards '96** was nominated for a Mid-America Emmy for short-form content for *Classical BTS: Nomin Zolzaya*, which was featured as part of an Illinois Public Media docuseries. It follows the personal journey of Illinois Symphony Orchestra Principal Cellist Nomin Zolzaya, who first found a love for the cello as a young girl growing up in Mongolia. The nomination comes one year after Sarah



and collaborators won a Mid-America Emmy for their feature documentary *Illinois Country*. Sarah is a senior producer and director for Champaign-Urbana PBS affiliate WILL-TV.

**Brooke Trantor '11** is the co-writer and director of *Oh, Baby!*, a short comedy about a 30-something woman having a baby on her own. The film was an official selection at the Florida Film Festival and Blackbird Film Festival, and winner of best comedy at the iNDIE Film Fest, in 2020. *Oh, Baby!* made its West Coast premiere at the Dances With Films film festival in Los Angeles in September 2021, and later screened at the Calabasas Film Festival, Santa Fe Independent Film Festival and San Diego International Film Festival.

## PODCAST

Illinois Wesleyan Professor of English **Joanne Diaz** is the co-host of *Poetry for All*, a podcast for poetry aficionados and novices alike. In each episode, Joanne and co-host Abram Van Engen read a poem, discuss it, and read it once more. *Poetry for All* debuted in August 2020, and Joanne and Abram have published 26 episodes as of September 2021.

## MUSIC/PERFORMANCES

**Lynn Lupo '81** is the lead vocalist for Heartless, a Heart tribute band, which performed at the Phoenix Band Shell in Delavan, Wisconsin, The Wharf in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and Septemberfest in Schaumburg, Illinois, in September 2021. Lynn has over 30 years of experience in musical performance, including a 12-year run fronting the cover band, Phoenix.

**Mike Baltz '87** released his second album, *Chasin' the Sun*, a collection of "TropRock" songs, in October 2021 under his stage name Michael Eric. The songs are mostly autobiographical, drawing upon Mike's experiences living in the Bahamas. The album is available for purchase and streaming at [chasinthesun.hearnow.com](https://chasinthesun.hearnow.com). Mike also shares his passion for island and marine conservation in a regular column for *PHlocker's Magazine*, a monthly online publication geared toward fans of Jimmy Buffett.

**Kirsten (Arnold) Chambers '97**, an internationally acclaimed soprano, wrote and performed with her husband their love story, *A Life Made in Music: The Love Story of Kirsten and Keith Chambers*, for

Permian Basin Opera, September 23 and 25, 2021, in Midland, Texas. The story details their friendship, from when they first met and fell in love as graduate students at the University of Houston, to navigating the performing and teaching worlds of opera, to eventually moving to New York City to follow their dreams. Kirsten is most known for her portrayal of the title role of *Salome*, which she has sung at the Metropolitan Opera, Opera Hong Kong and with Florida Grand Opera.

**Scott Moreau '01** performed in *Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash*, Aug. 3-29, 2021, at Portland Stage in Portland, Maine. Scott has traveled the world for more than a decade performing as the legendary singer and songwriter.

**Jacob Taitel '18** earned a silver medal in the tuba artist competition at the Leonard Falcone International Euphonium and Tuba Festival, held virtually Aug. 7-8, 2021. Jacob is a graduate student instructor in the musicology department at the University of Michigan, and an adjunct instructor of tuba and euphonium at Illinois Wesleyan.

**Lindsay Ring '21** earned a first-place finish in the finals of the Music International Grand Prix Solo Competition, held April 30, 2021. Lindsay, a euphonium player who performed pieces by the composer Philip Sparke in both the semifinal and final rounds, placed first in the Young Adult Winds and Brass category at the international competition for musicians of all ages. Lindsay qualified for the finals of the inaugural competition by winning her category at a semifinal competition in Chicago in March 2021. The finals of the competition, originally scheduled to take place at Carnegie Hall in New York City, were held at the Hylton Performing Arts Center in Manassas, Virginia, due to COVID-19 restrictions. Lindsay is currently pursuing a master's degree in music performance at the University of Michigan on a full scholarship.



Kirsten (Arnold) Chambers '97



Jacob Taitel '18

All submitted content received by **Oct. 4, 2021**. The submitted content deadline for the Spring 2022 issue of IWU Magazine is **Feb. 13, 2022**. Submissions may be edited, directed to other communications and/or preserved in IWU archives.



# MEMORIES FROM HOMECOMING 2021



**Wah Chook '22** (left) and **Daniel Maisch '22** were named Homecoming Court royalty.



IWU students showed off their moves at the Titan Dance Fest outside State Farm Hall.

Illinois Wesleyan Homecoming returned to an in-person format for its 2021 celebration. The prioritization of the health and well-being of the Titan community amid the ongoing pandemic limited the celebration to only outdoor and online events, but Titans returned to campus and engaged in virtual modes to make Homecoming 2021 a memorable one!



**President S. Georgia Nugent** greets Bloomington Mayor Mboka Mwilambwe at the President's Reception, where plans to build The Petrick Idea Center were announced (*see page 3*).



**SAVE THE DATE!**  
IWU Homecoming 2022  
Sept. 23-25, 2022



**Doug Martin** tends the grill during the Titan Tailgate prior to a 52-3 win over Elmhurst.



The 2020-21 Illinois Wesleyan men's golf team, led by head coach **Jim Ott '91** (far right), show off their national championship rings and trophy while recognized at halftime of the football game.





PHOTO/MAX VON ESSEN

# BRINGING BROADWAY BACK

Story by MATT WING

A lifetime of experiences prepared Bill Damaschke '85 to serve as producer of a Tony Award-winning musical that echoes real life as Broadway bounces back from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bill Damaschke '85 approached the microphone onstage at Broadway's Winter Garden Theatre and channeled his inner Harold Zidler.

*Moulin Rouge!* had just been announced winner of Best Musical at the 74th annual Tony Awards. A tuxedoed Damaschke, the show's producer, stood at the mic before a standing ovation and a national TV audience. He wondered how Zidler, one of the central characters in *Moulin Rouge!*, might handle such a situation.

"Hello, chickens," Damaschke said with Zidlerian bravado, using the character's familiar welcome.

The unique greeting drew laughter from Damaschke's peers in the audience. He quickly changed characters, however, and, as producer

of the musical that had just captured its 10th Tony Award of the evening, thanked the production's creative staff, company and backstage personnel.

"(They) bring their hearts, souls, passion and talents to the show each and every night," he said.

The Tonys marked a finish line of sorts. *Moulin Rouge!* opened on Broadway in June 2019 to glowing reviews, and the team was just hitting its stride when, in March 2020, an outbreak of COVID-19 amongst the cast and crew forced Broadway's first closure due to the pandemic; a week later, all of Broadway was shut down.

The Al Hirschfeld Theatre sat empty for more than 18 months before *Moulin Rouge!* reopened on Sept. 24, 2021. Two days later,



Damaschke and others from the show — *Moulin Rouge!* was nominated for 14 Tonys — were recognized for performances from what felt like eons before.

“It was a long night after a really long couple of years. We reopened the show, taped our Tony number and had the Tonys all within three days, so it was a pretty epic week,” Damaschke said three days after the awards show. “Every day that week, we felt like we’d never get through it, but we did.”

Though the Tonys felt like a capstone event in many ways, the triumphant night also marked a beginning. The reopening of *Moulin Rouge!* was done with new personnel both onstage and backstage. International openings of the production in London and Melbourne were just weeks away. A national tour begins in February.

The Tonys provided an opportunity to celebrate, even if only for just one night.

“I’m so happy for the show, and I’m personally really happy,” Damaschke said. “I’m not sure I’ve taken it in yet just because we’ve all had to get right back up and go back to work.”



Bill Damaschke first gained experience that would prove useful in a career as a Broadway producer while babysitting on Saturday mornings at his family home on Chicago’s South Side.

The eldest of seven children took on the responsibilities that naturally fell upon the oldest child, and that meant doling out the household chores every weekend.

“I would do these kinds of grids, and someone had to clean a bedroom or sweep the floor or do the bathroom,” Damaschke recalled,

smiling. “Everybody had a chore and everything had to be done by a certain time so we could go outside and play or stop and watch *Scooby-Doo* together, because those things were on the grid, too.”

It was all in a day’s work for the eldest child in a blue-collar family, Damaschke said.

“I guess I’m kind of an organized person, and with seven of us, I had to babysit all of the time,” he said. “That was my way of trying to produce my brothers and sisters ... to varying levels of success.”



PHOTO/THEO WARGO

(Above) Bill Damaschke '85 accepts the Tony Award for Best Musical at the 74th annual Tony Awards on Sept. 26, 2021.

(Opposite page) *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* returned from an 18-month hiatus, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, on Sept. 24, 2021.

Damaschke’s father was a truck driver, often on the road for long stretches. His mother was a waitress and, later, an executive assistant at a bank in Downtown Chicago. William and Carol Damaschke knew hard work and instilled a strong work ethic in their children.

Bill Damaschke embraced the

commitment to putting forth top effort. Before he became a top executive with DreamWorks Studios and a Tony-winning Broadway producer, he held less glamorous jobs as a waiter, telemarketer and office temp. The jobs paid the bills but weren’t anywhere near the career he had imagined.

No matter the job, he was going to do it well.

“I was never going to be a victim of not trying,” he said. “Sure, they weren’t fun jobs and they weren’t going to add up to the career I wanted, but I was just going to do a good job because at least when I walked away from it, people were going to say I did a good job.”



Bill Damaschke struggles to pinpoint the moment he decided he wanted to work in show business.

Maybe it happened while spending the Saturday evenings of his youth watching WGN’s “Movie of the Week” with his father. Maybe it happened when he joined his high school drama program and performed on stage for the first time. Or maybe it was when he enrolled at Illinois Wesleyan and found himself in a circle of creative classmates with similar ambition.

It had certainly happened by the time he walked across the stage on Illinois Wesleyan’s south quad to accept his diploma on a May afternoon in 1985.

“The great thing about Wesleyan was there was this group of people above me whose paths were super clear. A bunch of them went to New York, a bunch went to L.A., a bunch went to Chicago,” Damaschke said. “There was never a question if I could do it because people one or two classes ahead of me had done it and there were these little networks



PHOTO/JAMIE MCCARTHY

**(Above)** Damaschke and co-producer Carmen Pavlovic stop for photos while walking the red carpet at the 74th annual Tony Awards.

in all of those places.”

After graduation, Damaschke set off for New York. He found regular work on stage in between working odd jobs to pay the bills.

A fateful trip to Los Angeles a few years later changed everything.

“It was 1990 or 1991 and I was on a plane there to visit some friends, and I was just like, *I’m moving there*,” Damaschke recalled. “I literally just had this feeling, this stupid whim. When I landed, I told my friend who was there to pick me up, and she didn’t believe me.”

But two months later, the staunch New Yorker made the move to Hollywood. He continued acting — on stage, in commercials and soap operas — while continuing to support himself with random jobs. He manned a theatre box office. He catered and waited. He did market research, cold-calling people for feedback on products ranging from margarine spread to diapers.

Show business, however, remained his passion. He dreamed of success as an actor, but it didn’t stop there.

“I was already thinking about how to become a producer and get on that side of it,” Damaschke said. “I wanted to be an actor and become famous enough to have my own company so that I could produce and direct things — because all the actors that I admired, that’s what they did.”



Bill Damaschke was in the right place at the right time.

While continuing to take on acting roles, he served as a producer’s assistant during the making of Disney’s *Pocahontas*. Soon after, he joined what was then a small startup as a coordinator in its production office. He estimates he was among the first 30 or 40 employees hired by DreamWorks Studios, a company that quickly grew to become one of Hollywood’s leading studios.

Being in on the ground floor at a studio experiencing rapid growth meant Damaschke did work far beyond the scope of his title. He set up departments. He hired artists. He made frequent trips to IKEA to buy desks and lamps to accommodate the growing operation.

Damaschke found a home in DreamWorks’ animation division. He worked as a production manager on *Prince of Egypt*, the company’s first foray into animation. And as DreamWorks grew, Damaschke grew with it. He was promoted to head of creative production in 1999, and head of creative production and development in 2005. He made his producing debut in 2004 with *Shark Tale*, which earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Animated Feature (a trajectory told in *IWU Magazine* in 2005).

It was a rapid ascent for Damaschke, who became DreamWorks’ chief creative officer in 2011.

“We had incredible leaders who were so good at communicating the vision and purpose of what we were doing,” he recalled. “We were going to build a world class animation studio, and we were going to make animated movies for everyone, not just kids.”

Damaschke oversaw an unprecedented time of growth as DreamWorks challenged and often outperformed the major movie studios. But, like many good things, his time with the company came to an unceremonious end.

“I don’t know if I would have ever left DreamWorks had I not been fired. But in entertainment, working anywhere for 20 years is a really great run,” he said. “At that time, the company was prepping to be sold and we had a number of ‘almost-sales,’ and there was a lot of downward pressure.”

As part of his separation agreement, Damaschke had a noncompete clause prohibiting him from working in animation. Fortunately, another aspect of his work at DreamWorks served as an impetus for the next step in his career.

Damaschke had overseen DreamWorks’ live theatrical productions, which included *Shrek The Musical*, a critical success that enjoyed a yearlong Broadway run and earned eight Tony nominations. The work also included a live-action arena tour inspired by DreamWorks’ *How to Train Your Dragon*, in which Damaschke partnered with Global Creatures, the company behind another arena show, *Walking with Dinosaurs*. The pairing introduced Damaschke to fellow producer Carmen Pavlovic, with whom he developed a lasting



working relationship.

Not long after working together on the arena tour, Pavlovic's production company secured rights to a number of musicals, including *Moulin Rouge!* And when Pavlovic was ready to commence production of the jukebox musical, her first phone call was to Damaschke.

"She called and asked, 'Would you help me with this?'" Damaschke recalled. "And that, 'Would you help me with this?' has become a great portion of the past five years of my life."



Bill Damaschke often recalls a saying he's heard in Broadway circles. He's learned the truth of the adage from experience.

"They say it's really hard to open a show," Damaschke said. "But the real work starts the day after opening."

The first two musicals Damaschke produced were critical successes; *Shrek The Musical* and *The Prom* earned a combined 14 Tony Award nominations. They were not as commercially successful in their Broadway runs, however, with *Shrek* running for just over a year and *The Prom* less than 10 months.

But both musicals have lived on beyond their time on Broadway. Productions of *Shrek The Musical* have been staged in more than a dozen international locations, with tours both domestically and abroad. *The Prom* spawned a Golden Globe nominated Netflix adaptation and its domestic tour kicked off in November 2021.

*Moulin Rouge!* has already outpaced Damaschke's previous productions in terms of critical success, and he hopes its Broadway run does, too.

"Everybody working on *Moulin Rouge!* has really put one thousand percent of their art, passion and talent into it," Damaschke said. "So for it to get the kind of recognition that it has, I hope it sets us up to have a really long run in New York."

Interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, *Moulin Rouge!* is just now approaching the completion of its first full year of Broadway performances. Between a COVID outbreak amongst cast and crew at the outset of the pandemic, a year-and-a-half-long shutdown, and a reopening with a mix of new and returning cast and crew, it's been an emotional time for those connected to the production.

That was certainly the case on "reopening night" on Sept. 24, and perhaps even more so one night earlier at an invited dress rehearsal.

"We wanted to have our friends and our families there, and we had 250 first responders there, and we recognized them in the audience because our show was hit by COVID pretty hard," Damaschke said. "We

thought having the people that were there for our show, there for New York, there for Broadway, to all be part of that first show back would be a really great way to celebrate, and it ended up being fantastic."

The reopening of *Moulin Rouge!* has been met by the same high praise as its original opening over two years ago. International productions opened on Nov. 12 in London and Melbourne. A national tour begins in February in Chicago.

*Moulin Rouge!* continues to resonate with audiences because of its music, its pageantry and its message. Despite being set over a century ago, it's a tale for our time.

"Our show, at its core, is about a group of artists who are trying to put on a show against all odds and save their theatre," Damaschke said. "It's also a love story and it's about other things, too, but it's about a group of artists putting on a show and trying to do it under extreme circumstances, and that's kind of what's playing out in our real lives right now." ❖



(Above) Damaschke presents his address, "Unlocking Your Story," at Illinois Wesleyan's 2016 Commencement. Damaschke has remained engaged with his alma mater over the years, hosting the world premiere of *Puss in Boots* at IWU's 2011 Homecoming and hosting a Titan Talk in 2021. The latter is available for streaming at [www.iwu.edu/titan-talk-damaschke](http://www.iwu.edu/titan-talk-damaschke).

A series of rejections didn't stop Torri "T.J." Newman '06 from writing a story that has become a *New York Times* bestseller and landed a seven-figure movie deal.

Torri "T.J." Newman '06 stands in her parents' tidy kitchen in Mesa, Arizona, sipping coffee between glances at an iPhone emitting a cacophony of beeps and buzzes.

It's a rare day off for Newman in the midst of a book tour to promote her debut novel *Falling*. Crisscrossing the country at 35,000 feet and working out of airport lounges is nothing new for the former flight attendant; it was her time in the skies, after all, that prompted her introduction to the literary world.

But it's here in Mesa she is spending some downtime on a mid-July morning, fresh off a flight and only a matter of hours before she boards another. She's wearing a casual black dress accented by

a double-layered necklace and a denim shirt tied around her waist, though she'll hardly need the latter on a Mesa day calling for temps in the triple digits.

Newman's phone comes to life every few minutes, a steady stream of emails and text messages causing it to rattle against the kitchen counter. Suddenly she recognizes a number and knows she has to pick up. It's Shane Salerno, her agent.

He's calling with good news, something he's done frequently the past few weeks.

"*Falling* by T.J. Newman. A kidnapper demands that a pilot crash his plane with 144 passengers on board to save his family," Salerno says, reading the book's



PHOTO/JESSE RIESER

# TAKING OFF

Story by MATT WING



familiar tagline.

The hand Newman uses to hold her phone is trembling. Tears well up in her eyes. She knows what is coming next.

“Number two on the *New York Times* print bestsellers list,” Salerno continues. “And number three on the bestseller combined print and e-book list.”

Newman takes a long pause before letting out a sigh pregnant with emotion. She wipes her eyes. She thanks Salerno.

“I can’t believe we did it,” she says.



Newman sat alone in her Phoenix condo, the silence interrupted by clicks and whirrs from her printer as it began to spit out the first two chapters of her manuscript. For the 42nd time, she was sending a portion of her unpublished book to a literary agent. The results up to that point had not been great.

Forty-one submissions. Forty-one rejections.

“I was so deep in rejection and doubting whether or not I should even continue doing what I was doing,” Newman said in August 2021, a month after the book’s release. “These professionals were telling me that it wasn’t good, it wasn’t publishable. I kept asking myself, *should I listen to them?*”

She had felt the sting of rejection before, perhaps never so acutely as in the years after leaving Illinois Wesleyan and following her Broadway dreams to New York City. Newman never got the big break she so desperately sought through countless auditions. She found fulfillment in workshopping shows and exploring other creative avenues, but never experienced the success she envisioned by way of sold-out shows and curtain calls.

Newman retreated to her home state of Arizona and found work at a local bookstore, where she rediscovered a love of writing. She eventually followed in her mother and sister’s footsteps and joined the family vocation as a flight attendant, spending nearly a decade flying with Virgin America and Alaska Airlines. She enjoyed everything about the job: the travel, the opportunity to meet new people, the camaraderie among the flight crew. But she also relished the time alone the job afforded her,



(Above) Torri “T.J.” Newman ‘06 shows off her debut novel *Falling*, a *New York Times* bestseller, at a book signing event at Chicago’s Roscoe Books. (Opposite page) Newman poses in one of the many airport terminals she grew to know well during a decade as a flight attendant.

especially during red-eye flights when she wrote the first pages of *Falling*, often five or 10 minutes at a time, while passengers slept.

Confident her story was one readers would enjoy if she could only get it into their hands, Newman persisted in her agent search. As she collected pages hot with fresh ink from the printer tray, she decided

she would do something she hadn’t done before with the cover letter she would attach to the manuscript pages. She grabbed a yellow legal pad and pen and began a handwritten query letter.

“I just remember doing what they tell you to do — be confident and bold in explaining why an agent should represent you — and that was the spirit with which I wrote it,” Newman recalled. “It was a have-your-people-call-my-people type of note, and I was laughing when I wrote it because nothing could have been further from the truth at that time, in terms of my confidence and self-assurance.”

Newman’s pen rolled freely over the paper, inspired by a confidence that, if not felt initially, grew with each word she scrawled. Punctuating the letter with a signature discernible only by scribbled initials, she stuffed the letter and manuscript pages into an envelope and dropped it in the mailbox, forgetting about it almost instantly in a learned defense mechanism.

Weeks later, Newman’s phone buzzed and displayed an incoming call from an unfamiliar Los Angeles phone number. She rejected it without a second thought. Days later, a call from another unknown L.A. number appeared. She dismissed it again.

All of a sudden it dawned on her. Were the numbers the same? Were they from the agency she had sent the last copy of her manuscript? As the terror swirled, her phone buzzed again. She had a voicemail.

It was the agent. He liked her manuscript. He wanted to talk.

“I’m freaking out because the only agent that has contacted me, the only person showing any real interest in this book is calling me, and I’m declining their calls and ignoring



their messages,” Newman said.

A game of phone tag ensued and Newman feared she had missed her big break. Days later, with a backpacking trip planned that would take her into the Arizona wilderness and away from such comforts as cell phone service, she called and left a message for the agent, explaining she would be unreachable for the next week. Newman and her friend then set off on the trip, driving through the Arizona desert to the starting point of their excursion. With one last night in civilization, they stopped for dinner before setting a course for their hotel.

On the drive, Newman’s phone rang. It was the same L.A. number as before. She pulled the car onto the shoulder of a desolate highway. Before answering, Newman turned to her friend and warned, “this is going to be really weird, and I promise I’ll explain everything afterward, but I have to take this call.”

Newman pressed the green but-

ton on her iPhone screen to answer the call. She had finally connected with Shane Salerno, founder and president of The Story Factory. He loved the first two chapters of Newman’s manuscript. He wanted to read the full draft. Newman promised to send it as soon as she was able. They made plans to talk again.

Newman ended the call and turned to her friend.

“She was staring at me with this bewildered look,” Newman remembered. “And I said to her, ‘I don’t know for sure, but I think there’s a really good chance my entire life just changed.’

“And it has.”



There is a common misconception that flight attendants are servers of the sky, tasked primarily with delivering snacks and beverages to passengers once a commercial aircraft has reached its cruising altitude.

It couldn’t be less true.

Flight attendants are the eyes and ears of a flight crew. They have to be able to assess and respond to an infinite number of scenarios. *Has a passenger had too much to drink? Does a strange noise require investigating? Is there a security threat on board?*

Newman has that awareness. Some might call it intuition. The stories she tells range from humorous (she has an uncanny ability to guess a passenger’s beverage selection) to quite serious (responding to passengers’ medical emergencies).

And it was that sense of awareness that triggered a thought that became the main premise for *Falling*. Working a red-eye flight from Los Angeles to New York — that’s LAX to JFK, in air travel speak — Newman looked out over a crowded cabin and was struck by the vulnerability of the unsuspecting passengers.

“I had this thought that their lives, my life, and my crewmates’ lives — all of our lives — were in the hands of the pilot,” Newman said. “And I just couldn’t shake it.”

The thought ruminated within her mind for days. She thought of all the sinister ways in which that vulnerability could be exploited. Finally, she approached a pilot with a scenario.

“I asked him what he would do if his family was kidnapped and he had to crash the plane or his family would be killed,” Newman recounted. “And the look on his face terrified me because I realized it terrified him, because he didn’t have an answer.”

“And that was the moment I knew I had the idea for my first book.”

Newman began writing almost immediately, and she did so mostly at 35,000 feet. She jotted notes onto



(Above) Newman’s readers include many former co-workers, including this flight crew she snapped a photo with in July 2021.

scraps of paper and tucked them away safely in her apron. At the end of the day, she'd transfer the contents of her pockets — thoughts scribbled on cocktail napkins and the backs of flight manifests — into her iPad.

The unconventional writing process didn't lend itself to the speediest writing. *Falling* took years to write, but by 2017 Newman felt she had taken the story as far as she could and began the search for a literary agent. Little did she know the search would be just as daunting as writing the story.

The crushing rejection Newman experienced while shopping agents was washed away with one phone call from Salerno, whom she now calls a "creative partner." The two began work on a final edit of *Falling* in November 2019. The process took more than a year, but was expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought air travel to a screeching halt and offered Newman the time she needed to polish her work.

"(Writing) was frankly something that helped me stay afloat," Newman said. "I loved having something to focus on and disappear into and work on during that time."

By early 2021, Newman and Salerno were ready to begin shopping *Falling*. And while every step to that point had been a struggle, finding a publisher was not.

"The first publisher we showed it to was like, 'Yeah we want it. We absolutely want it,'" Newman reported. "And that was that."

Newman's two-book deal with Avid Reader Press, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, has been reported as a seven-figure deal. If that wasn't enough, a week later, Salerno secured a seven-figure movie rights deal with Universal Pictures.

Newman acknowledges such deals are "exceptionally rare and

pretty incredible," and that the financial security she has been granted allowed her to leave her job as a flight attendant earlier this year.

"I just wanted to write a story and get it published, so things like movie deals never entered my mind," Newman said. "This is just so beyond my wildest dreams."



Torri "T.J." Newman has seen her name in the bright lights of Times Square. She's been featured in the biggest newspapers in the country. *Falling* is on bestseller lists everywhere, and a top seller on Amazon and Apple.

Newman's success is the result of years of work and perseverance, but also a lifetime of experiences.

That includes her four years at Illinois Wesleyan. She serendipitously discovered IWU at a college fair in downtown Phoenix during her senior year of high school. Within 15 minutes of meeting then-Director of Admissions Bob Murray '82 and learning about the University some 1,600 miles from her hometown, "I knew I had found the university I would attend," Newman said.

Reminders of her time at IWU are ever-present. Her condo is filled with furniture she's reupholstered with skills learned from a senior honors project. Hanging above the desk where she wrote and edited much of *Falling* is artwork created in a scenic painting class at IWU.

"I can say with bedrock conviction that my time at Illinois Wesleyan has been vitally important to my life story," Newman said.

Other experiences proved similarly vital. Her struggle trying to make it on Broadway. Rediscovering a passion for writing while working at the bookstore. And, of course, the firsthand experience of working on a



(Above) Newman visits with **Bob Murray '82** at a book signing event in Chicago. Murray recruited Newman to Illinois Wesleyan at a college fair in Phoenix two decades ago.

flight crew.

"It's funny now, I look back and everything makes so much sense. Every step along the path and every piece of the puzzle just makes sense," Newman said. "As I was experiencing it all, it did not feel that way. It did not make sense. It did not feel like there was a grander plan. I just kept moving toward what I thought felt right."

Newman finished her book tour in September. Sales of *Falling* remain strong. She's started on her second book, but isn't sharing details. She doesn't want to jinx it.

It's been a whirlwind success for someone who fought hard to find it. There's been little time to stop and smell the roses, but moments like the one in her parents' kitchen back in July have prompted reflection.

"Those moments have popped up every so often during this process," Newman said. "And they've just made all the late nights, all the early mornings, all the rejection and doubt and insecurity, it's made it all worth it." ❖





# AT HOME AMONG THE SPIRES

Story by RACHEL MCCARTHY '21

As Illinois Wesleyan celebrates the 25th anniversary of its association with the Pembroke Program and the University of Oxford, Rachel McCarthy '21 shares a firsthand account of her experience studying in the “City of Dreaming Spires.”

*I thought they were kidding about the tailcoats.*

It was a dark and stormy night as I stepped off the coach bus from London Heathrow airport, the plastic of my suitcase wheels rattling against centuries-old cobblestone. As I blinked away the rain and scanned the fortress-like walls in front of me for anything resembling an address, I saw a group of people walking down the street, laughing and talking loudly like college students do, except the college students I knew didn't dress like they had just come from a 19th-century dinner party. I shrank into the wall, my purple hoodie sticking out like a sore thumb, and let them pass me by, coattails fluttering in the wind. The bus rolled away, and as anxiety gnawed at my stomach, I briefly

wondered if it was too late to have the bus take me home.

Of course, home for me lay across the Atlantic, back at Illinois Wesleyan University. It was there that Professor and Chair of English Joanne Diaz had first floated the idea of studying English for a year at Pembroke College, one of the 39 independent colleges which comprise the University of Oxford. The Pembroke Program was highly selective — only 13 institutions in the United States have this special partnership with Pembroke, including Ivy Leagues like Harvard, Columbia and Cornell — but Professor Diaz believed in me and encouraged me to apply. I met the 3.7 GPA requirement, and I had some solid writing samples from English classes I had taken with



her. So, I spent that winter break working on my application, and once I had submitted it, I didn't let my mind dwell.

"I'm not worried about it," I explained to my mom. "I know it's competitive, so I won't be disappointed if I don't get it. The only way I would be disappointed is if I didn't try at all."

My mother, who immigrated from the Philippines after graduating from college, never let me forget the importance of education. I kept a photo of her on the desk in my room at Oxford, situated at the top of a small white building overlooking the freshly manicured quad — a literal ivory tower. As I went through orientation week, settling in with each passing day, I wondered if this was how it felt for her to move across the world in pursuit of educational opportunities, an endeavor which culminated in sending her daughter to one of the most prestigious universities in the world. Four thousand miles between us, and yet I had never felt closer to her.

Oxford has maintained its prestigious reputation in part due to its unique tutorial system, in which students spend most of their time in independent study, guided by a handful of faculty members, or "tutors." Students meet with their tutors every week, either individually or in small groups, to present their papers, argue their points, and engage in deep discussion about the weekly topic. Sessions are intense, nerve-wracking, but also exhilarating, a rare privilege to marvel at some of the greatest minds in action. To prepare for these tutorial sessions requires hours of research, working through assigned reading lists, taking notes, synthesizing an argument, and of course, writing the actual paper. Aside from a handful of

lectures and class activities, the only schedules are the ones that students make for themselves.

"First paper due Tuesday," I wrote in the calendar of my planner, which used to hold hour-by-hour classes and meetings, before leaving it to collect dust at the bottom of my desk.

As a result, time at Oxford can feel completely separate from the rest of the world. In conversations



**(Above) Rachel McCarthy '21** studied at Pembroke College during the 2019-20 academic year. She is one of 61 Illinois Wesleyan students to study in Oxford through the program.

with classmates, the eight weeks of Oxford's three terms replaced months of the year. Thursday afternoons became my weekends, when I would treat myself to boba tea at my favorite cafe after finishing my last tutorial session of the week. My sleep schedule became much more flexible, shifting to accommodate my night owl work habits or my morning runs along mist-shrouded rivers.

If Illinois Wesleyan taught me how to balance 20 different tasks each day, Oxford taught me how to hyper focus on one, whether it was reading 11th century manuscripts or analyzing the language of 21st century advertisements. Large swaths of my days were spent at Bodleian Library, home to some 13 million books and print materials, with paintings of scholars and artisans watching over from the rafters.

"It's like being in the library from Harry Potter," I told my friends back home. "No, really, it's the actual set ... and the Great Hall is just across the street."

After a day of walking through a city of miniature Hogwarts Castles, calls with friends and family were what kept me grounded. Homesickness was tough, but I fought back by finding pieces of home among Oxford's ancient brick and mortar. I joined a K-pop dance club at a nearby college to temporarily replace the team I had left behind at Illinois Wesleyan, discovered a food truck that sold classic Filipino meals like the ones I ate at home, and recreated holidays like Thanksgiving and Super Bowl Sunday with the help of American and British friends alike.

Thanks to IWU's strong commitment to providing study abroad opportunities, I also had friends scattered across Europe during my time at Oxford. On Halloween weekend we congregated in Stockholm, where we did everything from visiting the Royal Palace to riding roller coasters at a Halloween-themed amusement park. Winter break brought us to Belgrade, Serbia, filled with beautiful museums and stunning Orthodox churches. For spring break, we agreed that it would be my turn to host, and I began making a list of the places in Oxford that had





**(Above)** Pembroke College is one of 39 independent colleges which comprise the University of Oxford. Sixty-one IWU students have had the opportunity to study at the prestigious institution over the past 25 years through IWU's participation in the Pembroke Program.

become my home. Along with plans for high tea at The Grande Cafe and a photo shoot at the famous Bridge of Sighs were notes to go thrift shopping at my favorite open-air market and visit the cows that roam the meadows behind Christ Church College — a piece of the Midwest hidden in the heart of Oxfordshire.

Soon, however, another piece of the Midwest came in the form of a one-way plane ticket to O'Hare International Airport.

I was about to go to sleep after drafting the final paper of my second term when my American group chat lit up with news of the Europe travel ban amid the early global outbreak of COVID-19. The ban didn't include the U.K. or Ireland, but other American students had been pulled from Oxford a few days before, and we couldn't help but speculate what would become of us. The following Thursday was spent anxiously awaiting updates from our home

**"In the 25 years since the Pembroke Program began, IWU has made its home within the walls of Pembroke College, and with any luck, it will continue to do so for many years to come."**

— RACHEL MCCARTHY '21

institutions, followed by a steady trickle of status updates: "I'm staying," "I haven't heard back," "I have to go home." IWU reached out to me on Friday morning, and 48 hours later I was boarding a coach bus to Heathrow.

As the bus rolled away, I thought back to that first night at Oxford, and that feeling of being way out of my depth. How self-conscious I was about my Midwestern y'all, my non-Ivy League university, and my obvious lack of tailcoat-money. But Oxford is so much more than fancy dinners and rowing matches; it's filled with people who are warm, down-to-earth and wildly passionate about the things they're studying. People who told me to never hide

my accent, who liked hearing where I came from, and who made me feel a sense of belonging at a school so unlike my own.

Now, I realize that I belonged there because Illinois Wesleyan belongs there — a small, hidden gem that's on par with the big names. In the 25 years since the Pembroke Program began, IWU has made its home within the walls of Pembroke College, and with any luck, it will continue to do so for many years to come. ❖

**About the Author:** Rachel McCarthy '21 earned a bachelor's degree from Illinois Wesleyan, as a double major in English-literature and psychology, in 2021.



**(Above)** Outside of her studies, McCarthy was able to visit Stockholm, Belgrade and many places in the United Kingdom, including Buckingham Palace.

## Power of the Program

Illinois Wesleyan's participation in the Pembroke Program has impacted 61 IWU students over the past 25 years. The transformative experience of studying at one of the world's most prestigious institutions has helped inspire IWU's Pembroke Program alumni to go on to do great things.



### **"Pembroke/Oxford was the most rigorous educational experience I have had:"**

*defending an essay to a bored professor staring at you honed my thinking skills like none other and likely helped me get into Stanford for my doctorate. Living in the beautiful buildings, drinking wine in Hogwarts-esque robes and 'Black Tie' attire, being a licensed cox on a dismal but fun rowing team (we crashed frequently), punting with friends, debates, choirs, balls — it was incredible. My favorite part oddly was participating in a plant disease class and loading up on books to dive into any range of topics."*



#### **Jeannie Stamberger '99**

CEO/Founder, The AmaZone ([www.theamazone.com](http://www.theamazone.com))

*"The Pembroke year was a transformational experience for me. Although I was reminded of my intellectual limitations on a daily basis while at Oxford, **that year convinced me I wanted to pursue an academic career.** The strong focus on essays also dramatically improved my writing and argumentation. Moreover, I enjoyed the Oxbridge collegiate life so much that I ended up back in England several years later — first as a visiting graduate student for a year at Sidney Sussex College in Cambridge, and then for eight years as a fellow of Clare College in Cambridge."*



#### **Josip Glaurdić '01**

Associate Professor of Political Science and Head of the Institute of Political Science at the University of Luxembourg

*"I cannot overstate the Pembroke Program's impact on my life. Rigorous academic coursework challenged me intellectually, while an immersive social experience welcomed me with open arms. In many ways, Pembroke treats its visiting students no different than its incoming "freshers"; we lived, studied and socialized among the regular students. A short dalliance with rugby led to deep and ongoing friendships with my rugby teammates. Connections with other visiting students from top-tier universities grew my network. **I can confidently say that I would not be the person I am today — personally or professionally — without the Pembroke Program.**"*



#### **D. William Lawrence '13**

Assistant United States Attorney at the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia

*"The Pembroke Program was a big part of why I chose to study at Illinois Wesleyan. I knew it would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study at one of the world's most renowned universities, but **I never could have anticipated the personal growth, friendships and experiences that came with it.** I'm a more intellectually curious, adventurous person today because of the year I spent at Pembroke."*



#### **Steph McAtee '16**

Software Development Engineer, Amazon Fashion





# Alumni Update

NEWS, WORKS AND CELEBRATIONS OF IWU ALUMNI & FRIENDS

## 1961

**Emil Ludy** earned the 2021 USA Hockey John Beadle Adult Member of the Year Award, presented by Labatt Blue, on June 7, 2021. A veteran of the USA Hockey Adult Nationals circuit, Emil has spent a lifetime in the sport as a player, coach and organizer of teams.

## 1963

**Dave Kindred** was recognized in *Sports Illustrated's* "Where Are They Now?" series in July 2021. Dave's career as an award-winning sports writer was thoroughly summarized, though the majority of the story focused on his chronicling of the Morton (Ill.) High School girls' basketball team. The stretch has included four state titles, the most recent of which earned him a place on the championship trophy, with the job description of "team blogger" engraved beside his name. Dave's "Where Are They Now?" story is available at SI.com. Dave was also featured prominently in Ken Burns' four-part docuseries, *Muhammad Ali*, which premiered on PBS in September 2021. Throughout his decorated career, Dave covered Ali for a half century, conducting more than 300 interviews with the heavyweight champion.



Steve O'Neal '75

## 1975

**Steve O'Neal** retired from Southwestern Oklahoma State University after a 31-year career as a professor in its department of biological sciences. Steve taught courses in general biology, botany, environmental biology and aquatic ecology. His research centered on the ecology of algae in both freshwater and marine ecosystems. He published 13 research papers in seven scholarly journals. He mentored numerous undergraduate students who presented their research at a wide range of scientific meetings. Steve plans to continue to pursue research interests and maintain his long association with the Blue Thumb volunteer program in Oklahoma, monitoring water quality in streams.

## 1976

**Michael Chivell** was named chairman emeritus of St. Louis law firm Armstrong Teasdale on June 1, 2021. Michael joined Armstrong Teasdale in 1983 as an associate and spent the following 23 years practicing corporate law. He led what was then called the business services practice group (today known as corporate services), was a member of various



Mike Palackdharry '85

firm management communities, including the executive committee, and has served in various capacities for the U.S. Law Firm Group, including as trustee, president, executive committee member and executive director. Michael served as managing partner from 2007 until he was elected chairman in 2016.

## 1978

**Carol Brandt**, a wealth management financial advisor with Merrill Lynch, was among *Forbes'* "America's Top Women Wealth Advisors" in 2021. Carol is a wealth management advisor and certified financial planner with nearly 40 years of experience providing personalized wealth management strategies to high-net-worth families. She has also been recognized as a *Barron's* "Top 100 Women Financial Advisors" and *Financial Times* "Top 400 Financial Advisors."

Retired Chief Judge of the 11th Judicial Circuit **Beth Robb** was one of three former chief judges who led panels to propose redistricted maps for the McLean County Board. The board must draw new maps every 10 years based on new census information. The panels also included **Karla Bailey-Smith '90** and Illinois Wesleyan Professor of Political Science **Greg Shaw**.

## 1979

**Dr. Kevin Schultz** is retiring from his Bloomington, Illinois, dental practice. After graduating from dental school, Dr. Schultz served as a dentist in the U.S. Army for 10 years before purchasing the local practice of the late **Dr. Bill Beadles '51** in 1993. Dr. Schultz has served the Bloomington-Normal community ever since, including this fall during a transitional period as a new dentist takes over the practice.

## 1981

**Demetria Kalodimos** was named communication professional-in-residence in Lipscomb University's School of Communication for the 2021-22 school year. A trusted voice in Nashville and beyond, Demetria has spent nearly 40 years in journalism as a news anchor and reporter, and documentary producer. As communication professional-in-residence at Lipscomb, she will share her experiences and expertise with undergraduate students and develop special workshops and programming, with a particular focus on digital media ethics, to enhance students' classroom experience.

## 1982

**Jody (Meents) Munsterman** retired after 39 years of teaching, including the past 35 at Crescent City (Ill.) Grade School, at the conclusion of the 2020-21 school year. Jody continued her education after leaving Illinois Wesleyan, earning three master's degrees while teaching full time. At various points in her career, she served as a speech, basketball and cheerleading coach. She recounted memories spanning the entirety of her career, from doing the Super Bowl Shuffle when the Bears won Super Bowl XX and helping students understand and cope after the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster early in her career, to managing the COVID-19 pandemic and navigating remote learning at the end of her time as a teacher, in a feature in *The (Iroquois County, Ill.) Times-Republic* in August 2021.

## 1984

**Sam Porritt** was featured in *In Kansas City* magazine in September 2021 as the founder of the nonprofit Falling Forward Foundation. After suffering a catastrophic injury 10 years ago that left him paralyzed from the navel down, Sam went through two years of rehabilitation to



Colleen Daugherty Halberg '86

regain the ability to walk with a cane, drive a car and return to work. His medical insurance allowed for unlimited rehabilitation and physical therapy, a plan he learned was quite uncommon in the industry. Sam founded Falling Forward Foundation to help others in need of rehabilitation beyond the therapy caps of their health insurance plans. Since its founding in 2013, Falling Forward has funded the recovery of more than 120 individuals. Sam and Falling Forward were previously featured in the Summer 2017 edition of *IWU Magazine*.

## 1985

**Cindy (Bollivar) Honegger** retired from Illinois Wesleyan in July 2021 after working at her alma mater for over 20 years as stockroom manager for IWU's biology and chemistry departments.

**Mike Palackdharry** was appointed executive vice president for growth and strategy by AssureCare, a leader in population health and care management solutions, in June 2021. Mike will lead AssureCare's business development teams, strategic initiatives, partnerships and marketing. He brings over 30 years of senior executive experience in

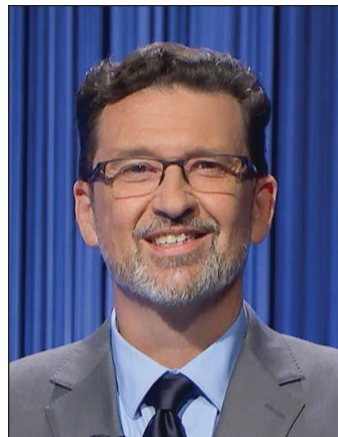


Neela (Agarwalla) Paykel '90

technology and software, having spent the majority of his career solutioning and managing large enterprise software implementations in a variety of executive roles. Inspired by his experience navigating the healthcare system seeking treatment for multiple family members battling a rare genetic disease, Mike is excited for the convergence of his professional expertise and his passion for healthcare access. "Although I have little healthcare experience, I am passionate about contributing to this business with the opportunity to improve overall care management and population health through software innovation," he said. "Those who know me, know that this is personal to me."

## 1986

**Colleen Daugherty Halberg** was named director of major gifts and planned giving for EPIC, a non-profit supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Peoria, Illinois, in May 2021. Colleen has worked in various fundraising positions throughout her career, including at Bradley University, where she earned a master's degree in institutional advancement and administration, and where she previously served as director of



Christopher Stucky '91 (p. 29)

annual giving. Her interest in development and fundraising was sparked by a campus job in Illinois Wesleyan's Office of Advancement during her time as an IWU student. Colleen was profiled in a story in *The Bradley Scout*, the university's student newspaper, in May 2021.

**Jacklynn (Wilson) Lesniak** was named system chief nursing officer for FirstHealth of the Carolinas, a health system based in Pinehurst, North Carolina, in May 2021. Jacklynn previously served as chief nursing officer and vice president of patient care services for Aurora Medical Center Grafton in Grafton, Wisconsin. She has held leadership roles with the Cancer Treatment Centers of America in suburban Chicago, and Watertown Regional Medical Center, a division of UW Health Partners, in Watertown, Wisconsin. Jacklynn recently earned a doctorate of nursing practice from Northern Kentucky University.

**Dr. Beth Mulberry**, the medical director at Mustard Seed Community Health in Greensboro, North Carolina, was highlighted in *Triad Business Journal's* "Outstanding Women in Business" series in June 2021. Mustard Seed provides primary medical and

mental health care to residents of the Cottage Grove neighborhood and to adults and children anywhere in Guilford County without insurance and living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Dr. Mulberry was previously featured in the Winter 2019-20 edition of *IWU Magazine*.

## 1988

**Peter Haas** was nominated by President Joe Biden in July 2021 to serve as U.S. ambassador to Bangladesh. A career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, Peter currently serves as acting assistant secretary of state and concurrently as principal deputy assistant secretary for economic and business affairs for the Department of State. He previously served as senior advisor/deputy assistant secretary for trade policy and negotiations for the State Department and prior to that was the deputy permanent representative to the U.S. mission to the organization for economic cooperation and development in Paris. Over his career, he has served in positions across five geographic bureaus of the State Department, including as consul general of the U.S. Consulate General Mumbai, India.

## 1989

Illinois Wesleyan Associate Professor of Nursing **Brenda Lessen Knoll** is the author and founder of the Premature Infant Oral Motor Intervention (PIOMI), which continues to expand its global footprint. Brenda provided a PIOMI training webinar for a group of neonatal physicians and speech pathologists at National Children's Hospital in Hanoi, Vietnam, and another for an interdisciplinary group covering seven countries, all to prepare for implementing her oral motor program.

## 1990

**Neela (Agarwalla) Paykel** was named general counsel at Hyper-



your news to *IWU Magazine*, P.O. Box 2900, Bloomington, IL 61702, [iwumag@iwu.edu](mailto:iwumag@iwu.edu), or via our website, at [www.iwu.edu/magazine](http://www.iwu.edu/magazine).



# ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWS

## *My Fellow Titans,*

On Aug. 1, 2021, I began my two-year term as president of our Alumni Association Board of Directors (AABD). I am humbled and honored to lead and serve our more than 20,000 alumni! I am joined on the AABD by an amazing group of Titans who serve our association and alumni community. I invite you to learn more about them and the positions they hold on the AABD in this Alumni Association News section.

I grew up in Delavan, Illinois, a small farming community 35 miles due west of campus. I was the first in my immediate family to attend college. Within days of graduating, I headed off to Chicago where I would spend nearly 20 years, followed by a few years in Los Angeles, as an association executive and trusted technology advisor to the world's largest and most influential professional societies and trade associations.

And then I got the call. My dad had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

So, after living in two of our nation's largest cities for more than two decades, I returned to rural Delavan to support my family during dad's courageous battle. After his passing in 2009, I was fortunate to return to work while still residing in Central Illinois. But, having been away from the area for so long, I sought ways to reconnect, and I couldn't have chosen a better way to do it than to get involved with Illinois Wesleyan!

My parents instilled in me the sense of civic and social responsibility to give back and to leave something just a little better than you found it. The farming community taught me that you had to rely on neighbors and friends, as many hands made for lighter work and better outcomes.

Our beloved alma mater is in need of your "hands" to make for lighter work and greater successes at IWU. Find something at IWU whereby you can give your time, your talent and/or your treasure, and you will leave it better than when you found it!

Go Titans!



**Dirk Behrends '87**  
*President, Alumni Association  
Board of Directors*



## Meet your AABD

### Officers

**Dirk Behrends '87**, President  
**Derrick Tillman-Kelly '09**, President-Elect,  
Nominating Committee Chair  
**Meg Howe '05**, Vice President of Alumni  
Engagement/Committees, Alumni Awards  
Committee Chair  
**Jim Richter '93**, Vice President of Affinity  
Groups, Pride Alumni Community Co-Chair  
**Desiree Quizon-Colquitt '89**, Secretary,  
Governance Committee Chair

### Leadership

**Kim (Norton) Bankston '96**,  
Council for IWU Women Chair  
**Al Black '79**,  
Regional Chapters Chair  
**Debbie Burt-Frazier '75**,  
Class Newsletter Editors Chair  
**Paige Buschman '17**,  
Pride Alumni Community Co-Chair  
**Erick Henderson '12**,  
Wesleyan Fund/Annual Giving Chair  
**Julia Hilt '22**,  
Senior Class President  
**Yolanda Juarez '17**,  
Young Alumni Council Chair  
**Ed Pacchetti '91**,  
Alumni Academic Resource Council Chair  
**Teddy Petrova '10**,  
International Alumni Network Chair  
**Amy Tenhouse '97**,  
Alumni Admissions Advisory Committee  
Chair

### At-Large

**Claudia Brogan '77**  
**Dave Darling '79**  
**Alan Leahigh '67**  
**Beth Messina '81**  
**Brittany Powell '10**  
**Taylor Robinson '21**  
**John Thiel '66**  
**Kira (Larson) West '86**

**(Right)** The Alumni Association Board of Directors' Executive Committee includes (clockwise from top left) **Derrick Tillman-Kelly '09**, **Jim Richter '93**, **Dirk Behrends '87** and **Desiree Quizon-Colquitt '89**. (Not pictured: **Meg Howe '05**.)

## AABD Executive Committee

### Derrick Tillman-Kelly '09

Derrick has over a decade of work experience in higher education and currently serves as the chief of staff in the College of Engineering at The Ohio State University. As president-elect and Nominating Committee chair, he is responsible for building a strong, representative leadership ladder for continued success and advancement of the association's mission. Derrick will be the next AABD president, beginning Aug. 1, 2023.

### Meg Howe '05

Meg is an accomplished sales leader, currently a managing director at Tier1 Financial Solutions. In her AABD role, she oversees committees responsible for recruiting students through the Alumni Admissions Ambassador program, bringing alumni back to the classroom through the Alumni Academic Resource Council, driving alumni growth and engagement at the grassroots level via regional networks, and increasing donor participation to the Wesleyan Fund. She also chairs an expanded Alumni Awards Committee.

### Jim Richter '93

A medical doctor who has practiced for over 20 years, Jim brings a lifelong passion of providing a voice for those who may not have yet found theirs — or mistakenly believe they don't have one — especially for people from under-represented and marginalized communities. Jim's primary role as a member of the AABD Executive Committee is serving as vice president of affinity groups.

### Desiree Quizon-Colquitt '89

A pharmaceutical professional currently serving as a senior manager for global external supply with Pfizer, Desiree serves the AABD Executive Committee as secretary and Governance Committee chair. She previously chaired the Wesleyan Fund Committee and its record-setting All In for Illinois Wesleyan day of giving earlier this year.



fine, Inc., creator of the world's first portable magnetic resonance imaging device. A licensed attorney with more than 25 years of experience in healthcare, life sciences law and team leadership, Neela most recently served as deputy general counsel at autonomous driving technology development company Waymo. At Hyperfine, Neela will serve as the company's primary legal representative, managing all legal and compliance matters. She will handle contracting, intellectual property, corporate governance and regulatory matters.



Bruce Bennett '93

## 1991

**Juan Salgado** was appointed by Illinois Governor JB Pritzker to the Future of Work Task Force in September 2021. The group is charged with identifying and assessing new and emerging technologies that have the potential to significantly affect employment, wages and skill requirements. Juan is chancellor for the City Colleges of Chicago.

**Christopher Stucky** was a contestant on *Jeopardy!* on Sept. 22, 2021, finishing as the episode's runner-up to record-setting contestant Matt Amodio, who won his 26th consecutive game. A communications specialist at State Farm and regular Heartland Theatre contributor, Christopher is a lifelong fan of the popular game show.

## 1993

**Bruce Bennett** joined Benson Hill's executive leadership team as president of its ingredients business segment. Benson Hill, based in St. Louis, is a food tech company unlocking the natural genetic diversity of plants with its cutting-edge food innovation engine. In the newly created role, Bruce will oversee global operations and adoption of Benson Hill's ingredients portfolio for the growing plant-based protein market to enable more nutrient-dense, better-tasting and sustainable food.

**Bob Bodach** was sworn in as president of the Will County (Ill.) Bar Association in July 2021. Bob is an attorney with Tomczak Law Group in Joliet, Illinois. His practice focuses on criminal defense, personal injury and real estate. He will serve as president of the organization serving Will County and its legal community, for which he has served as a director and officer for nearly a decade. Bob also joined Joliet's Troy Community School District 30-C school board in September 2021.

**Niki Handlin Burkey** graduated from Aurora University on May 1, 2021, with a doctorate of leadership in educational administration. Niki is the principal at Lincoln Prairie Elementary School, in Community Unit School District 300, in Algonquin, Illinois.

**Mark Denzler** was named the Not-For-Profit Business Director of the Year by the Greater Springfield (Ill.) Chamber of Commerce on Aug. 24, 2021, at its annual Small Business Awards Luncheon. Mark is president and CEO of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, one of the oldest and largest state manufacturing trade associations in the United States.

## 1994

**Michelle (Privia) Earle** married Roger Earle on July 31, 2021, at Lake of the Woods in Mahomet, Illinois.



**Patrick Moore** was promoted by the National Football League's Green Bay Packers to the position of assistant director of college scouting in May 2021. Patrick spent the prior three seasons as a college scout for the Packers. He's also previously served as a scout for the NFL's Cleveland Browns, and an assistant coach at Fordham University, Louisiana Tech University, Auburn University, Western Carolina University and Illinois Wesleyan.

**Brian White** was named the director of bands at the American School of Milan, in Milan, Italy, in August 2021. Brian brings nearly 25 years of experience in band direction to the role, including 18 years teaching overseas as a middle school band director in Saudi Arabia and Singapore.

## 1995

**Rod Adams**, a U.S. and Mexico talent acquisition and onboarding leader at PricewaterhouseCoopers, was named principal by PwC in June 2021. A previous recipient of Illinois Wesleyan's Robert M. Montgomery Young Alumni Award, Rod additionally offered insight to new graduates as they prepare for their first job searches in a *Wall Street Journal* story.

## 1996

**Esther Franco-Payne** joined the Public Welfare Foundation as vice president of programs in August 2021. Esther previously served as executive director of Cabrini Green Legal Aid. In the new role, she will engage in grant-making at the national level and continue to advance transformative justice in support of youth and adults impacted by the criminal legal system.

**Bob Hitchcock** was among the "Ultimate Tech Leaders" recognized by *Jacksonville (Fla.) Business Journal* in August 2021. Bob is the chief technology officer of Brightway Insurance Co., where he has worked since June

2019 after spending seven years as CTO for Fanatics, Inc., an American online retailer of licensed sports apparel, equipment and merchandise. The "Ultimate Tech Leaders" series recognized technology leaders who have helped organizations grow, negotiate challenges and shape the future.

## 1998

**Joe Herzog** was promoted to executive vice president for marketing strategy at architecture firm Shepley Bulfinch. Joe's promotion comes 12 years after joining the firm, where he has served as a principal and board member. Joe is a leader in mixed-use developments, student housing and higher education environments, drawing on his background in construction and project management experience, ranging from liberal arts colleges, universities, museums, city libraries and government centers.

## 1999

**Shana (Bushyhead) Condill** was appointed executive director of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, in Cherokee, North Carolina, in May 2021. The first female leader of the museum, Shana will work in conjunction with the museum's board and the Cherokee people to enhance and improve the scholarship and public presentation of the museum. A citizen of the Eastern

Band of Cherokee Indians, Shana has over 20 years of experience in the museum and cultural field. She most recently served as the budget and administrative coordinator for content strategy, publishing and branding at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Her first job as a museum professional was at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, as an intern, in 1998.

**Matt Schuldt** was appointed to the Tuck MBA Council for the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College by Dean Matthew J. Slaughter in September 2021. Members of the 32-member council are recognized for their professional experience and service to their communities, as well as for their knowledge and support of Tuck. The group meets twice annually to share advice and perspective with Tuck leadership.

## 2000

**Lindsay Caltagirone** is vice president of Dry Goods, a chain of boutiques offering jewelry, clothing and accessories. Dry Goods is a subsidiary of Von Maur Department Store and currently operates 69 stores across 18 states. Dry Goods is opening a location at The Shoppes at College Hills, in Normal, Illinois, this fall.

**Meg McKeen**, founder and chief confidence builder for Adjunct Advisors, LLC, was recognized

among *Insurance Business America's* "2021 Elite Women." With more than 20 years of experience in the insurance industry, Meg launched Adjunct Advisors in 2018 to help those in insurance sales leverage their unique voices and find success. Her roles with Adjunct Advisors include sales coach, professional speaker and podcast host.

## 2001

**Matthew Glavin** was appointed to the Law Alumni Board of Governors at Loyola University Chicago School of Law to serve a three-year term, beginning in August 2021. A member in international law firm Cozen O'Connor's Public Strategies Group, Matthew earned his law degree at Loyola in 2009.

**Nikki (Carnevale) Kanzia** was named president of IC Catholic Prep, a private high school in Elmhurst, Illinois. Nikki brings over 20 years of experience to the position, as a teacher, student advocate and school administrator. She previously served as assistant principal, and director for admissions and student life, at ICCP. She has also served in the Archdiocese of Chicago at Nazareth Academy in La Grange Park, in the Joliet Diocese as principal at St. Scholastica Parish School in Woodridge, and as assistant principal at the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus in Joliet.



Shana (Bushyhead) Condill '99



Meg McKeen '00



Nikki (Carnevale) Kanzia '01



Danielle (Blomarz) Kays '01

**Danielle (Blomarz) Kays** offered legal perspective on employers' ability to mandate the COVID-19 vaccine during an appearance on WGLT's *Sound Ideas* in May 2021. Danielle is an attorney at Seyfarth Shaw LLP. She is also a member of Illinois Wesleyan's Board of Trustees.

**Amber Munday** joined Kansas City-based law firm Polsinelli's national real estate practice as a shareholder in its Chicago office. In the new role, Amber will help clients manage their commercial real estate assets. A veteran attorney, Amber recently served as counsel for Nixon Peabody LLP.

## 2003

**Emily Miller** was named Sev1Tech's vice president of mission solutions for the Department of Homeland Security business unit in July 2021. Emily will now be responsible for driving Sev1Tech's mission to support growth across the Department of Homeland Security. Emily was previously a Department of Homeland Security federal employee at what is now the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and has expertise in critical infrastructure protection, cybersecurity and operational technology. Most recently, she served as vice president for national security and critical infrastructure programs at Mocana Corporation.



Rachael Liesman '06

**Jessica Shull** is the director of operations at JoshuaOneNine, the marketing agency she owns and operates with her husband **Joshua Shull '02**, in Bloomington, Illinois. JoshuaOneNine is a relational advertising and digital marketing agency that creates and distributes strong and courageous content for local businesses who want to be local brands. Jessica previously worked at State Farm for 18 years in a variety of roles, most recently a technology manager for digital assets and strategy, before dedicating herself full-time to JoshuaOneNine.

## 2004

**Jill (Schafer) Jackson**, a managing director in deals at PwC, was promoted to partner in July 2021. Jill co-leads the PwC U.S. contracts and closing mechanisms practice and focuses on advising clients regarding the accounting-related aspects of sale and purchase agreements.

**Marques Rice** was elected to North Suburban Legal Aid Clinic's Board of Directors in March 2021. Marques is an academic support professional and adjunct professor at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law, where he teaches appellate advocacy and bar preparation courses. He previously practiced law for nine years with the City of Chicago's Corporation Counsel. Marques



Brian Richardson '09 (p. 32)

also owns a retail business, Debbie's Floral Shoppe, and serves on the board of The Chance Center, a nonprofit in Chicago's Grand Crossing neighborhood focused on alleviating housing, economic and employment issues.

## 2006

**Rachael Liesman** is a clinical assistant professor and the director of the clinical microbiology laboratories at the University of Kansas Medical Center, where she has played a key role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. She has been a frequently quoted expert, in publications ranging from *Time* magazine to *The New York Times* and, in March 2021, was named one of *Ingram's* "Heroes in Healthcare."

**Mike McGraw**, president and owner of McGraw Enterprises, Inc., was among those recognized in *Springfield (Ill.) Business Journal's* "Forty Under 40" series, announced in July 2021. Mike is the owner/operator of McGraw Family McDonald's in the Springfield, Litchfield and Williamsville areas. He is involved in the McDonald's Corporation Operator's National Advertising group and serves as secretary of the board of directors of the Ronald McDonald House of Central Illinois.

**James Mulholland** was promoted in May 2021 to senior principal, product design archi-

tect, at Workday, an enterprise software platform that supports large companies in human resources, finance and planning processes. In the field of interaction and user experience design, James strives to better understand how people use software and how it fits into their professional lives. He previously focused on data and analytics capabilities, but new responsibilities will drive him to create impact more broadly.

## 2007

**Shannon O'Rourke Kasali** is the founder of Books for Congo, an organization that has established 16 libraries in two provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The organization has distributed over 68,000 books and trained 30 librarians since 2016. Shannon earned a master's degree in May 2021 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she was the School of Information Sciences student leadership and engagement graduate assistant, and served on the Progressive Librarians Guild and the ALA Student Chapter's International Committee. She also worked as an apprentice at The Urbana (Ill.) Free Library and as a graduate hourly at the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs.

## 2009

**Robert Porter** was appointed public administrator and public guardian of McLean County by Illinois Governor JB Pritzker in August 2021. Robert is a partner at Costigan & Wollrab, P.C., where he represents clients in civil litigation matters. He is a member of the Illinois State Bar Association and McLean County Bar Association, and is admitted to practice in the State of Illinois and the Central U.S. District Court of Illinois. He is also a board member of the Illinois Symphony Orchestra and the McLean County Museum of History.



## HART CAREER CENTER HAPPENINGS

**Illinois Wesleyan's Hart Career Center** continues to engage alumni and connect them with current students in virtual ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. In recent months, the alumni and friends below have played leading roles. Do you want to assist students to ensure their career success? Does your organization have internships or employment opportunities for Titans? Contact the Career Center staff at [ccenter@iwu.edu](mailto:ccenter@iwu.edu) or (309) 556-3095.

### Fall Career Fair

Joe Alberts '20, Joel Castillo '01, Heidi Boos '08, Jessica (Wiley) Dimitrijevic '08, Emily Dunlap '18, Will Jenkins '12, Vi Kakares '20, Justin Krzeczowski '18, Nick Kruchko '18, Isabel Michniak '21, Michael Misheck '18, Esther Niedert '20, Mike Plecki '18, Megan Presnak '05, Melissa (Buck) Scott '11, Aaron Simon '20, Mike Stephens '07, Halee Stirrat '20 and Monica Toporkiewicz '00

### IWU to Social Entrepreneur/Intrapreneur: A Journey Anything but Conventional

Teddy Zmrhal '94

### Careers in Social Justice

Nick Anderson '14, Bianca (Spratt) Cotton '11, Cecilia Mendoza '13 and Mark Timmerman '14

### Careers in Law

Andrew Herrington-Gilmore '09, Ryan Mellske '99, Don Mizerk '85 and Neela (Agarwalla) Paykel '90

### Pre-Health Programming

Dr. Brad Campbell '12, Dr. Becky (Carnes) Canter '88, Keelia (Rhoads) Clemens '05, Dr. Kristina Dakis '11, Dr. Casey Hamm '11, Dr. Michael Henry '12, Dr. Jeff Leman '91, Cassie (Twaddle) Phiri '04, Jeff Stein '96 and Megan Win '16

### Additional Virtual Programming

Brooke Chilton '16, Matt Hill '12, Kevin Kalus '00, Jon Robinson '05, Tera Peplow, Scott Searles '95 and Bret Swango '12

### Titans Helping Titans

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact Illinois Wesleyan students and recent graduates. The Hart Career Center is meeting the challenge by identifying internships and employment opportunities, but we need your help. If you can assist by providing internships, job opportunities, career/industry guidance, informational interviews, virtual programs, and/or virtual practice interviews, please let us know by contacting us at [ccenter@iwu.edu](mailto:ccenter@iwu.edu) or (309) 556-3095.

**Brian Richardson** joined the staff of Texas A&M University-San Antonio as associate director of career services in July 2021. In the new role, Brian will provide general oversight and leadership for career services at the university. Main areas of oversight will include: the career development program; career services technology; reporting and data related to career programming; creating and overseeing a peer career mentoring program; and on-campus recruiting efforts. Brian will also work closely with experiential learning and civic engagement, as career services is part of the Mays Center for Experiential Learning and Community Engagement. Brian previously served as assistant director for career engagement at Illinois Wesleyan's Hart Career Center since 2017.

**Kaelyn Riley** is a senior editor for *Experience Life*, an award-winning health and wellness magazine published by Life Time Fitness, with offices in Minneapolis-St. Paul. After double majoring in English and political science at Illinois Wesleyan, Kaelyn earned a master's degree in English at the University of California, Davis in 2011, and a master's degree in creative writing from Colorado State University in 2014. She has worked for *Experience Life* for seven years, previously serving as an executive assistant and associate editor before being named senior editor in 2018.

### 2010

**Michael Gorman** joined the University of Maryland's Center for Advanced Transportation Technology, where he will build tools to help transportation agencies across the country gain insight from their data. A staff member at Illinois Wesleyan from 2011-19 who most recently served as senior web developer, Michael earned a master's degree from the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago earlier this year.

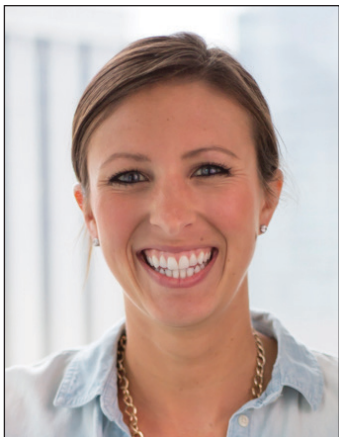
### 2011

**Jessica (Hinterlong) Schaeffer** was among 33 individuals recognized as "Chicago Business 2021 Notable Executives in Marketing" by *Crain's Chicago Business*. Jessica is vice president of marketing with LaSalle Network, a national staffing, recruiting and culture firm.

**Eli Williams** was sworn in as Des Plaines (Ill.) Park Board commissioner on Aug. 17, 2021. Eli is co-owner and general manager of Opal Enterprises, a Des Plaines residential remodeling company. He is a board member of the Des Plaines Chamber of Commerce & Industry and active in the Des Plaines Executive Network, the Certified Contractors Network and Bridge Community Church. He volunteers with Clean Up-Give Back and Feed My Starving Children, and has been involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters.

### 2012

**Dr. Erick Henderson** was named the 2021 Young Optometrist of the Year by the American Optometric Association. Dr. Henderson, who currently serves the greater Pittsburgh area, has been active in the association since he was a student, previously serving as the American Optometric Student Association president and the AOA's Nominating Committee chair. Dr. Henderson also serves on the Western Pennsylvania Optometric Society Board of Directors in multiple capacities, currently as its president, and recently joined the Pennsylvania Optometric Association Board of Directors after serving on several committees. Dr. Henderson also volunteers on the board of the Lamu Center of Preventative Health, where he and his wife, who is also an optometrist, coordinated an optometry-focused service trip to the rural Kenyan community of Lamu in conjunction with Illinois Wesleyan. Dr. Henderson is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago.



Jessica (Hinterlong) Schaeffer '11

**Hannah Johnson** was among the nominees at the 32nd annual Women of Distinction Awards, presented by YWCA McLean County in a virtual event Oct. 21, 2021. The director of youth and family education at the McLean County Museum of History, Hannah was one of 21 nominees for the awards recognizing women who are trailblazers in their professions, pathfinders for social justice, and women on the rise. Other nominees included Illinois Wesleyan Web Content Specialist **Kristen Buhrmann** and IWU Instructional Professor and General Biology Lab Coordinator **Libby Haywood**.

**Bret Swango** was named one of the Top 10 Data & Analytics Professionals at the 2021 OnCon Icon Awards, recognizing data and analytics professionals and vendors worldwide. Bret is the head of workforce and site selection analytics for Colliers International.

## 2014

**Edrienne Besagar** was the winner of an Alpha Lambda Delta graduate fellowship in July 2021. Edrienne earned the Gladys Bell Graduate Fellowship, in the amount of \$2,000, to help offset the cost of attending graduate school. A 2011 inductee into Alpha Lambda Delta, Edrienne is pursuing a master's degree in forensic nursing at Xavier University.



Eli Williams '11

**Marjorie Miller** joined international sorority Gamma Phi Beta as a chapter services manager in August 2021. In the role, she will oversee a portfolio of chapters across the country and work with collegians on more than 50 campuses. Marjorie will provide training, education and programmatic support for a variety of areas, including risk management, leadership development, and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Marjorie most recently served as Illinois Wesleyan's assistant director of student involvement.

## 2016

**Nicole Chlebek** enrolled at Florida International University as a doctoral candidate in the biology education research program this fall. She will study ways in which social systems — race, religion, sex, gender, etc. — play a role in biology and ecology education in higher education. Nicole previously served as the assistant director for regional admissions at Illinois Wesleyan.

**Tess (Johnson) Fegan** joined Taylor Print Impressions in Bloomington, Illinois, as an account manager. Tess had been a member of Illinois Wesleyan's Marketing staff since 2017, playing key design roles in All in For Wesleyan and new branding efforts. She had been graphics editor of *IWU Magazine*.



Tess (Johnson) Fegan '16

**Emily Shankar** is pursuing dual master's degrees in business administration and international relations at Boston University. Emily was formerly the assistant director for international admissions at Illinois Wesleyan, where she had worked since 2018.

## 2017

**Alex DeMont** joined the staff at Illinois Wesleyan as a stockroom manager, serving the departments of biology, biochemistry and chemistry, in August 2021. Alex previously served as a chemistry stockroom assistant at Illinois State University.

## 2018

**Michaela (Lamczyk) Burandt** was named president of her class at Midwestern University, where she is pursuing a master's degree in the school's physician assistant studies program.

## 2019

**Veronica Torres Luna** worked this summer with Chicago nonprofit Mikva Challenge as support staff for the Citywide Youth Council before enrolling in the public administration master's program at the University of Illinois at Chicago this fall. Veronica had previously served as outreach coordinator in Illinois Wesleyan's Office of Diversity and Inclusion since June 2019.

## 2020

**Kristian Avise-Rouse** was named music director at Columbia (Ill.) High School in June 2021. Kristian previously served as a junior high school band director and chorus teacher in the Pinckneyville (Ill.) school district.

**Hannah Horn** joined the staff at Illinois Wesleyan as a program coordinator in the Office of Student Involvement in September 2021.

## 2021

**Samira Kassem** was hired as program coordinator for the Multicultural Leadership Institute, a nonprofit organization located on Illinois Wesleyan's campus and recognized among IWU's affiliate programs, serving Central Illinois by providing transformative leadership experiences and advancing equity. The Institute's flagship program, the Multicultural Leadership Program, has developed nearly 300 local leaders and partnered with over 50 nonprofits over the past 12 years.

**Nia Lee** joined the staff at Illinois Wesleyan in September 2021 as an admissions counselor.

**Nico Lopez** joined Facebook in March 2021 as a full-time software engineer, working primarily on augmented reality projects within Facebook's Reality Labs. Nico previously served an internship with Facebook and a mentorship with Pinterest during his time as an Illinois Wesleyan student.

**Jake Moran** joined the faculty at Richards High School, in Oak Lawn, Illinois, as a math teacher ahead of the 2021-22 academic year. Jake will also coach football and baseball at Richards.

**Justin Park** was featured in a story on the NCAA website recognizing Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May 2021. A four-year member of





Kristian Avise-Rouse '20 (p. 33)

Illinois Wesleyan's back-to-back national champion men's golf team, whose parents are from Korea and Guam, Justin shared what AAPI heritage means to him in the story.

**Toni Tortorella** shared her cancer journey with *HealthCentral*, an online health and wellness website. Experiencing neck pain during her junior year at Illinois Wesleyan in 2019, Toni saw a doctor who found a lesion that, upon Toni's insistence, was biopsied and found to be extremely malignant. She was diagnosed with papillary thyroid cancer and underwent a surgery in February 2020 that was so effective that she didn't require radiation, chemotherapy or other common treatment protocols. Already a nursing major at Illinois Wesleyan, Toni completed her studies this spring and began her career as a registered nurse, working in operating rooms at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

## Faculty, Staff and Friends

Illinois Wesleyan Instructional Technologist **Kate Browne** and former Assistant Director of Communications **John Twork** were among those recognized by *The Pantagraph's* "20 Under 40" program. The program highlights young professionals who excel in their career, are passionate about



Justin Park '21 (p. 33)

their community and are making a mark in Central Illinois.

Illinois Wesleyan was well represented at the Women of Distinction Awards, presented by YWCA McLean County at a virtual event Oct. 21, 2021. Candidates for the awards recognizing women who are trailblazers in their professions, pathfinders for social justice, and women on the rise, included: **Hannah Johnson '12**, director of youth and family education at the McLean County Museum of History; **Kristen Buhmann**, web content specialist at Illinois Wesleyan; and **Libby Haywood**, instructional professor and general biology lab coordinator at IWU.

Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts **Michelle Gibbs** was among 25 scholars selected to participate in the National Endowment for Humanities Summer Institute focused on the works of Zora Neale Hurston, who portrayed racial struggles in the early-1900s American South. Hosted by The Project on the History of Black Writing at the University of Kansas, "Hurston on the Horizon: Past, Present and Future" took place virtually, July 11-30, 2021.

President of Carle BroMenn Medical Center and Carle Eureka Hospital, and Illinois Wesleyan University trustee, **Colleen Kannaday** received the Athena Leadership Award, announced

at an event sponsored by the McLean County Chamber of Commerce and Pantagraph Media on Sept. 30, 2021. The Athena Award recognizes professional excellence in an individual who gives their time and energy to community service and assists others in realizing their potential.

Illinois Wesleyan Adjunct Assistant Professor **Rob Lusk** spoke on the topic of child trauma in an online seminar hosted by Prevention Works! on Aug. 11, 2021. In addition to teaching at IWU, Rob is the clinical director at The Baby Fold, where he designs and implements new programs and provides clinical supervision, consultation and oversight to all the agency's treatment programs.

Ames Professor of Physics **Gabe Spalding** completed his second-to-last board meeting as Director-at-Large of the American Association of Physics Teachers. His term includes upcoming congressional visits and runs through the end of the winter meeting.

Chair and Associate Professor of Psychology **Amanda Vicary** appeared in an episode of *Snapped: Behind Bars*, which aired in September 2021 on the Oxygen network and is available now for streaming. The episode marked the first time the case of Barton McNeil has been covered on television, a case Amanda teaches in her Justice Scholars: Wrongful Convictions First-Year Experience.

## Tiny Titans

**David Priess '93** and Renée;

Antonia, born May 22, 2021

**Tyler Neal '05** and Sarah;

Caleb Ryan, born June 25, 2021

**Gena (Rawlins) Melick '05** and **Matthew '03**;

Landon Kai, born June 19, 2020

**Kyle Brigham '06** and Logan;

Charlie Beric, born July 14, 2021

**Lindsay (Brown) Dausch '08** and Matthew;

Audra Josephine, born June 8, 2021

**Carrie (Otto) Stahl '08** and Alan;

Henry "Hank" David, born Sept. 10, 2021

**Heidi (Adams) Murray '09** and **Timothy '07**;

Charles Jeremiah, born July 6, 2021

**Sarah (Micale) Buesing '10** and **Dave '10**;

Andrew Logan, born July 2, 2021

**Ellyn (Drathring) Jung '10** and **Thomas '10**;

Daniel Burton, born Nov. 6, 2020

**Monica (Piotrowski) Moore '10** and Kevin;

Milo Vincent, born June 19, 2021

**Kelli (Flahaven) Stephens '10** and **Pat '09**;

Calvin Patrick, born Feb. 4, 2021

**Eli Williams '11** and Betty;

Daisy Sue, born July 22, 2021

*All submitted content received by Oct. 4, 2021.*

*The submitted content deadline for the Spring 2022 issue of IWU Magazine is Feb. 13, 2022. All submitted content may be edited, directed to other communications and/or preserved in IWU archives.*



# Titan Celebrations



**Jill Olliges '13** and **Eric Esch '07** were married in Pullman, Michigan, on July 31, 2021, with many Illinois Wesleyan friends and family members in attendance.



**Marina (Johnson) Moore '17** and **Alexander Moore '16** were married Nov. 7, 2020, in Rock Island, Illinois.



**Jessica McGrew '19** and **Braden Tanner '20** became engaged to be married on May 7, 2021. The couple will be married in Magnolia, Texas, on May 1, 2022.



**Stephanie Cesaroni '12** married **Justyn Jost '13** in Chicago on June 19, 2021.

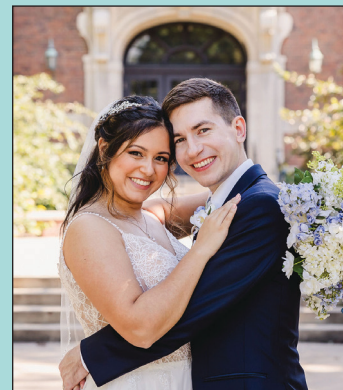


A group of Theta Chi alumni gathered for a weekend of golf and fellowship in Bloomington-Normal, Aug. 13-14, 2021. The weekend included a remembrance of Theta Chi brother **Mark Mandel '80**, who died March 30, 2021. The group created a video tribute to be shared with Mark's family.

*IWU Magazine* considers for publication photos of IWU people at celebrations and reunions of alumni. Please send your Titan Celebration photos to *IWU Magazine*, at [www.iwu.edu/magazine](http://www.iwu.edu/magazine), via email at [iwumag@iwu.edu](mailto:iwumag@iwu.edu), or by mail at P.O. Box 2900, Bloomington, IL 61702. All submitted content received by **Oct. 4, 2021**. The submitted content deadline for the Spring 2022 issue of *IWU Magazine* is **Feb. 13, 2022**.



Sigma Chi brothers (from left) **Mike Wall '84**, **John Dalton '84**, **Todd Vohland '84** and **Tim Brophy '84** gathered for their annual golf weekend over the summer in Freeport, Illinois.



**Shireen Hassan '20** married Sean Banigan on Aug. 14, 2021, at Illinois Wesleyan's Evelyn Chapel.



**Melissa Seeborg '13** and **Sean O'Connor '11** were married July 17, 2021, in Chicago, with many Illinois Wesleyan alumni and friends in attendance, including IWU emeritus professor and father of the bride **Mike Seeborg**.



**Arin Calamari '15** married John Busch on July 3, 2021, at Illinois Wesleyan's Evelyn Chapel.



**Melissa Mariotti '15** and **Filip Swist '14** were married July 17, 2021, in Lombard, Illinois.



## Faculty and Staff

**Roger Brucker** of Bloomington, Illinois, died Aug. 2, 2021. He was 80. Roger briefly attended Illinois Wesleyan but later returned as office manager of its physical plant in an IWU career that spanned 43 years. His efforts were recognized as the inaugural winner of IWU's Max L. Starkey Award in 2001; named in honor of the late IWU controller, the Starkey Award is presented annually to a staff member whose loyalty, enthusiasm and outstanding contributions have provided invaluable service to the IWU community. Roger enjoyed the outdoors and was an avid fan of the Chicago Cubs, but above all was a family man and loving husband, father, brother, grandfather and great-grandfather. He is survived by his wife, four children, 10 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and a brother.

**Cyril Ling** of Punta Gorda, Florida, died Feb. 11, 2021. He was 85. Cy was an emeritus professor of business administration at Illinois Wesleyan who actively served on IWU's faculty from 1990-2000. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Wayne State University, and a doctorate from Indiana University. He followed in his family tradition of Masonic membership. He is survived by his wife, three daughters, seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

### Nancy (Peairs) Ramos '42

died June 15, 2021, in Cupertino, California. She was 100. Nancy graduated from Illinois Wesleyan with a degree in sociology and went on to graduate school at the University of Southern California. But, at the height of World War II, many of her college advisors were drafted, and her classes were canceled. Nancy then went to work with American Airlines. She met her husband at a USO party in Southern California, and they corresponded regularly during his service. The couple later married and lived in New Orleans, Norfolk, Virginia, and Palo Alto, California, before finally settling in Cupertino. Having a son with dyslexia, Nancy was an advocate for children with learning disabilities. She regularly took calls from parents of children with learning disabilities, and she lobbied local, county, state and federal agencies for funding and legislative assistance for learning disabled children. Nancy served as a member and past president of the California Association for Children with Learning Disabilities and on the national board of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. She financed educational movies on dyslexia and served on the board of The Stanbridge Academy, in San Mateo, California, a nationally recognized school for learning disabled children. Nancy also volunteered on the stats desk at Stanford University athletic events and, along with local Kappa Kappa Gamma alumni, helped establish a new chapter of the sorority at Stanford. In 1983, she was the recipient of Illinois Wesleyan's Distinguished Alumni Award. Nancy and her late husband loved traveling and camping. She is survived by three sons, two granddaughters and one great-grandson.



## Alumni

**Beth (Kingdon) Folkers '43** died July 3, 2021, in Wayzata, Minnesota. She was 101. Beth trained as a nurse at Brokaw Hospital and married **Milan Folkers '40** in 1942, in Beloit, Wisconsin. She actively participated in the Minonk (Ill.) Methodist Church, P.E.O. International, Eastern Star, Tall Oaks Country Club, and was the original director of Lida Home Assisted Living in Minonk. She was a dedicated fan of University of Illinois athletics, Chicago Bears and Chicago Bulls, and an avid bridge player until her final days. She was preceded in death by her husband. She is survived by two children, a sister, five grandchildren, including **Dr. Milan "Trey" Folkers '98**, two great-grandchildren, and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

**Shirley (Ravnaas) Kersten '47** of Rochelle, Illinois, died Aug. 11, 2021. She was 96. Shirley majored in business administration, held multiple campus jobs, was active in intramural sports, and a member of the percussion section of the concert band, the marching band, and the Bloomington-Normal Symphony Orchestra during her time at Illinois Wesleyan. She went on to a career as a teacher, while she and her husband farmed near Ashton, Illinois. Shirley also worked at Walmart for 18 years in the hardware department and pharmacy. She was a member of Stewart United Methodist Church. She enjoyed teaching and following her former students as they grew older, and relished her roles as a wife and mother. She is survived by two children, two grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, a sister and many extended family members.

**Alma (Alexander) Somerville '49** of Peoria, Illinois, died Feb. 26, 2021. She was 94. Alma studied music at Illinois Wesleyan, where she was a drum majorette and active in Delta Omicron. She went on to a career as a singer, music teacher and choir director at Forrest Hill United Methodist Church of Peoria. She sang with the Peoria Philharmonic Chorale and was a soloist for the Christian Science Church. Alma and her late husband **Ross Somerville '51** lived in Bloomington, Illinois; St. Louis; Peoria; Las Vegas; Champaign, Illinois; and Belvidere, Illinois. In Las Vegas, she sang at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, with the Southern Nevada Musical Arts Society and University United Methodist Church Choir. Alma also worked in several retail stores, retiring from Carson Pirie Scott in Urbana, Illinois, in 1986. She was an avid reader and painter, and enjoyed time spent with her family. She is survived by two children, including **Susie (Somerville) Brown '79**, five grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

**Robert Randall '52** of Gilman, Illinois, died May 5, 2021. He was 91. Robert studied business administration at Illinois Wesleyan. After graduation, he served in the United States Marines during the Korean War. Upon his return, he married his wife, and they later moved to Gilman, where they owned and operated the Ben Franklin store until it closed in 2006. He is survived by many extended family members.

**Robert Quillman Sr. '57** of Palos Heights, Illinois, died Aug. 30, 2021. He was 86. Bob played basketball and was a member of Sigma Chi at Illinois Wesleyan. He worked at and later retired from the Bob Quillman Agency, Inc., in Chicago, as president of the award-winning life and health insurance agency. He was active in the baseball community in Oak Lawn, Illinois, for many years, as a sponsor, league official, manager, coach and umpire. He was an avid fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and enjoyed small-college basketball. He is survived by his wife, two children, **Bob Quillman '93** and **Erin (Quillman) Cluts '95**, and two grandsons.

**Shirley Bartlett Tibbitts '57** of Venice, Florida, died Dec. 20, 2020. She was 85. Shirley was active in Kappa Kappa Gamma at Illinois Wesleyan. She worked at the Discovery Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut. She was the honorary director of the Scranton Memorial Library of Madison, Connecticut, and a member of the First Congregational Church in Madison. She is survived by husband **Allan Tibbitts '58**, two children, seven grandchildren and a sister.

**Allan Horsman '58** of Bloomington, Illinois, died May 20, 2021. He was 85. Allan majored in business administration at Illinois Wesleyan and went on to a career as finance director for the City of Bloomington. He was a member of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Bloomington, as well as the Wade Barney Masonic Lodge and Scottish Rite Consistory. He was active in IWU's Pride Alumni Community. Allan enjoyed classical music and opera, and wintering in Florida. He will be remembered for his kindness and will be missed by all who knew him. He is survived by his partner.

**Marlene (Sebby) Thruston '58**, of Spartanburg, South Carolina, died June 13, 2021. She was 84. Marlene majored in nursing at Illinois Wesleyan and was employed at Copley Memorial Hospital in Aurora, Illinois, and Morristown General Hospital in Morristown, Tennessee. She also worked for several private physicians. Marlene and her husband, whom she met in line at Arnaud's restaurant in New Orleans in 1963, lived in Tennessee, South Carolina and Puerto Rico at various times. She was a member of First Presbyterian Church, where she volunteered in various capacities and served as a teacher for Mother's Day Out. She also volunteered at her daughters' schools and extracurricular activities. Later, she volunteered with Mobile Meals Ministry, and as a direct patient care volunteer for Spartanburg Regional Hospice. She enjoyed playing bridge, baking, sewing, reading, traveling and cheering on the Clemson Tigers. Above all, she was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother who treasured time spent with family. She is survived by her husband, two daughters, five grandchildren and a brother.

**John William "Bill" Locke '60** of Chicago died Sept. 7, 2021. He was 83. Bill majored in sociology at Illinois Wesleyan and later earned a master's degree in library science from the University of Chicago. He served as director of the Harold Washington College Library for 35 years, earning the college's Distinguished Professor Award. Bill was also a volunteer leader for many groups, including the Chicago Chapter of the international nonprofit Society of Architectural Historians, the Caxton Club, Chicago Art Deco Society and Cliff Dwellers Club. Bill loved Chicago's Newberry Library; he worked there briefly as a young man and returned in retirement as a volunteer. He is survived by his wife **Judith (Rehnquist) Locke '59**, three sons and a grandson.

**Ralph Sackett '60** died Aug. 18, 2021. He was 83. Ralph was a talented athlete who was drafted by the Baltimore Orioles out of high school, but instead chose to attend Illinois Wesleyan thanks to encouragement from a benefactor, the late **Dale McMackin '36**. He helped Ralph obtain a full scholarship, meal-work exchange and housing, allowing Ralph to become the first member of his family to attend and graduate from college. Ralph met his future wife **Alicia (Westwood) Sackett '60** during his time at IWU. After graduation, he coached the Bloomington Bobcats baseball team while earning a master's degree in mathematics at Illinois State University. He later coached at four Illinois high schools and Washington University in St. Louis, but started a new career in 1975 with Bloomington

**Richard Casper '59** of Dunedin, Florida, died Aug. 29, 2021. He was 84. Dick earned a bachelor's degree in music at Illinois Wesleyan and a master's degree in music education from Bradley University. He was an orchestra instructor in the Peoria (Ill.) school district for 32 years. He also taught private violin and viola lessons. He served as a counselor for IWU summer music camps and played in the Peoria Symphony Orchestra. A lifelong member of First



United Methodist Church of Peoria, Dick directed various choirs for many years and was a member of the church's Sanctuary Choir. He was a longtime member of Temple Lodge No. 46, Peoria Valley of Scottish Rite and Mohammed Shrine. He was a volunteer hospital van driver for the Shriners Hospitals for Children, a volunteer escort at Proctor Hospital, and a volunteer at Peoria public radio station WCBU. Dick was a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and the Blue Key Honor Society. He served in multiple capacities for the Illinois Music Educators' Association. He was an active member of the Pinellas and Pinellas Park community orchestras in Florida. He and his late wife enjoyed camping, and Dick was an avid golfer. He also enjoyed backpacking, fishing, gardening and traveling. He and his wife wintered for 13 years in Harlingen, Texas, before moving to Florida to be closer to family. He is survived by three stepsons, six step-grandchildren and five step-great-grandchildren.

Federal Savings & Loan. Ever versatile, he later added real estate development to his resume. Ralph enjoyed golfing, fishing and cheering on the St. Louis Cardinals. He and Alicia loved spending time in Naples, Florida, and at their cabin in Lake Napowan, Wisconsin. He is survived by his wife, four children, 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

**James Proctor Brown, III '62** died Jan. 4, 2021, in Norfolk, Virginia. He was 80. Jim earned academic degrees from both Illinois Wesleyan and Indiana University. He served in the Peace Corps in Nigeria from 1962-64. He was a history professor at Norfolk State University from 1968-2008, teaching African and world history. Jim spent his life sharing his experiences. He believed that we are all connected and should respect and support one another. He is survived by his wife, two daughters, two grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and a brother.

**Rev. William Brown '62** of Richmond, Virginia, died Nov. 29, 2020. He was 80. After graduating from Illinois Wesleyan, Bill earned a degree in sacred music from Union Theological Seminary in New York. He was a permanent deacon in the United Methodist Church. He served as minister of music at Trinity United Methodist Church in Henrico County, Virginia, for over 20 years. He also served congregations at Grace United Methodist Church in Kokomo, Indiana, and Ginter Park Baptist Church in Richmond. He was a former dean of the Richmond chapter of the American Guild of Organists and a former treasurer of



the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather. He is survived by two sons, six grandchildren, a brother, **Donald Brown '65**, and many nieces and nephews.

**Barbara (Wood) Salter '63** died June 15, 2021. She was 80. Barbara met her future husband **Ronald Salter '62** during her time at Illinois Wesleyan. They soon moved to Parkersburg, West Virginia, where Ron took a position with Fahlgren and Associates advertising agency. In 1980, Barbara and Ron established Salter and Associates, LLC, a marketing and advertising service. Barbara was active in her community, having served as a member of Kappa Kappa Society and two terms as president of the Junior League of Parkersburg. She was chair of the Parkersburg Area Municipal Planning Commission, a member of the Wood County Senior Citizens Board of Directors, and attended Wayside United Methodist Church. She is survived by her husband, two sons, a granddaughter, and many cousins and extended family members.

**Thomas Hageman '64** of Huntley, Illinois, died June 30, 2021. He was 78. Tom studied music education at Illinois Wesleyan and started his teaching career in the Wheeling-Buffalo Grove (Ill.) school district, where he established a grade school orchestra program. He obtained a master's degree from the University of Illinois while he continued to teach, and soon took a new position at Maine East High School, in Park Ridge, Illinois, where he served as music educator and orchestra director while developing new programs and directing multiple ensembles. He later taught at Buffalo Grove High School, where he continued to innovate new programs and elevate the school's music department. Tom also conducted the Illinois Summer Youth Music program at the University of Illinois, was a frequent guest conductor and, in 1992, was selected as the Outstanding School Orchestra Director by the Illinois Chapter of American String Teachers Association. Tom remained engaged in music even in retirement, as a European tour coordinator and youth orchestra conductor. In addition to his love of music, Tom enjoyed golf, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, and time spent with family and friends. He is survived by his wife, two children, including **Laura (Hageman) Buckley '90**, four grandchildren and a brother.

**Robert Moore '64** died June 29, 2021, in Modesto, California. He was 79. Bob became the first member of his family to earn a four-year college degree when he graduated from Illinois Wesleyan. He later served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War, serving in an artillery division. He returned to his hometown of Streator, Illinois, and soon married his wife. Bob embarked on a career as a claims administrator with the Social Security Administration, and the Moores soon began a family in Helena, Montana, where they lived the majority of their adult lives. Bob loved bowling, golf, chess and card games with family and friends. He loved spending time with his wife, children and grandchildren, rarely missing important events in their lives. He is survived by three children, five grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, a sister, and many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews.

**Franklin Lenberg '65** of Moline, Illinois, died April 5, 2021. He was 84. Frank studied art at Illinois Wesleyan. He served in the U.S. Navy and went on to work for the National Licorice Company before later retiring from J.C. Penney Company. He was a member of Gospel Temple in Moline and Open Bible Church in East Moline. He enjoyed flea markets, reminiscing and sharing stories. He is survived by his wife, son, and many extended family members and friends.

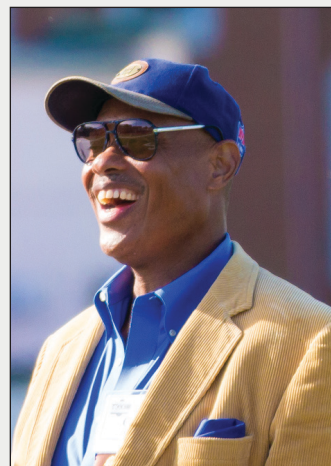
**Richard Mund '65** of Golden, Colorado, died June 24, 2021. He was 79. Dick majored in biology and was active in Student Senate at Illinois Wesleyan. He later earned master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Denver. He held roles as director of admissions, director of financial aid, and vice president of student affairs at Marshall University. He later moved on to Mobil Corporation, where he held multiple roles, including executive director of Mobil Foundation. He was elected chairman of the Conference Board of the Contribution Council, representing many of the country's top companies. Dick and his wife **Joan (Dennis) Mund '65** retired to Golden in 2000, where they made many friends, as they did in all of the places they had lived previously. Dick was known for his dedication to education and philanthropy, his skills as a craftsman, and for being a proud husband, father and grandfather. He is survived by his wife, three children, five grandchildren and a brother.

**Frances (Bennett) Smith '67** of Hillsboro, Oregon, died June 6, 2021. She was 88. Frances earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Illinois before coming to Illinois Wesleyan to earn a master's degree in biology. She taught science classes at Mascoutah (Ill.) High School before owning and operating the Sewing Nook on Mascoutah's Main Street for over 25 years. She is survived by two children, seven grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

**Marilyn Wankel '72** of Blandinsville, Illinois, died March 19, 2021. She was 70. Marilyn earned a bachelor's degree at Illinois Wesleyan, a master's degree at Olivet Nazarene University, and taught in the Schuyler County (Ill.) school district for over 30 years. Marilyn taught several grades before becoming a music teacher and musical director for students in fifth grade through high school. She accompanied and directed several church choirs, and was the lead singer for the band Cloud Nine in the early 1980s. She coached gymnastics and taught

**Cesar Douglas '75** died June 30, 2021. He was 67. Cesar majored in biology at Illinois Wesleyan, where he stood out in the classroom and on the football field. After his time at IWU, he spent time with the National Football League's San Francisco 49ers and Chicago Bears, and played a season in the Canadian Football League. Upon leaving football, he worked in the private sector. He eventually decided to

continue his education and earned a master's degree at Grand Valley State University and a doctorate at the University of Mississippi. Cesar returned to Grand Valley State and taught for four years. He later joined the faculty at Florida State University, where he was a dedicated professor and chair of the business department who encouraged and mentored countless students. Cesar served on Illinois Wesleyan's Board of Trustees for many years. He was also active as a member of IWU's Minority Alumni Network. He is survived by his wife, five children, 15 grandchildren, two siblings, and many nieces, nephews, extended family members and friends.



tap dance lessons. She led countless show choirs and music contests. She often starred in or directed Pandora Playhouse productions, as well as madrigal Christmas shows, in Rushville, Illinois. Music remained a major part of her life in retirement, as she volunteered to assist the Rushville High School marching band and formed a singing/storytelling duo of Celtic and Irish traditions called Cambria Garden with friend Cathy Teel. Among Marilyn's favorite things were: bragging about her children, watching her grandsons grow, cruising for photographs with her husband, Hallmark movies, historical fiction, Ireland, Carol Burnett, Julie Andrews, mountains, and everything music. She is survived by her husband, two children, four grandsons, stepdaughter, brother, and three nephews and their families.

**Scott McMurray '76** of Waukesha, Wisconsin, died Aug. 20, 2021. He was 67. After earning a bachelor's degree in religion at Illinois Wesleyan, he went on to earn a master's degree in divinity at Asbury Theological Seminary and a doctorate in ministry at McCormick Theological Seminary. Scott served as a United Methodist clergyman for 40 years, serving various congregations throughout Illinois and Wisconsin. He was an avid bicyclist and world traveler. He will be remembered for his devotion to his congregations and faithfulness to God. He is survived by two children, two grandchildren, his father and brother.

**Ann Musselman '79** of Bloomington, Illinois, died July 9, 2021. She was 64. Ann studied music education at Illinois Wesleyan, where she was active in choir and Sigma Alpha Iota. She later shared her voice with her church choir, the chorus of the Houston Opera, and as a music teacher in the Deer Park (Texas) school district. She is survived by a brother, and many nieces and nephews.

**Cynthia Reynolds '80** of New Rochelle, New York, died Aug. 10, 2021. She was 63. Cynthia majored in musical theatre at Illinois Wesleyan and moved to New York City after graduation. She performed there with Amato Opera, Vineyard Opera, New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players, and other companies. She worked the night shift word processing for international law firm Weil, Gotshal & Manges, taught herself computer programming, and later joined Softwise as a software designer. She married a tenor whom she often sang with and together they raised two children. Cynthia's talents and skills included botanical illustration, knitting and making incredibly complex Halloween costumes. She picked up her childhood instrument of choice — the violin — later in life and became an avid orchestra and chamber music player, while mentoring the teaching staff at Songcatchers in New Rochelle. She was a member of First Unitarian Society of Westchester (N.Y.). She made a bold career change, becoming a school teacher, and found her happiest place in Peekskill, New York, teaching elementary music and strings, and directing the middle school musicals. She is survived by her husband, two children, and many friends, colleagues and former students.

**Daniel Stoerzbach '80** of Galesburg, Illinois, died May 16, 2021. He was 63. Dan studied accounting at Illinois Wesleyan, where he was active in Phi Kappa Phi and as a member of the men's golf team. Dan was a competitive golfer who twice won both the Galesburg Junior All-City Championship and the Galesburg Men's All-City Championship. He earned All-America status and was a four-time MVP of the IWU men's golf team. He graduated from IWU *magna cum laude* and went on to graduate from law school at the University of Illinois. He joined Barash and Stoerzbach Law in 1983 and practiced with his father and other area attorneys until 2007, when he started



Stoerzbach Law Office. Dan and his wife enjoyed attending their daughters' sporting events, boating, water sports, golf, biking, hiking and traveling back roads. He was a member of Sunrise Rotary, a board member of Knox County IL CEO, and provided professional services for Habitat for Humanity. He is survived by his wife, four daughters, five grandchildren and two siblings.

**Timothy Ruegg '82** of Seward, Nebraska, died Sept. 12, 2021. He was 61. Tim earned a bachelor's degree in music education at Illinois Wesleyan and a master's degree in church music from Pacific Coast Baptist Bible College. He served in the U.S. Air Force as a trombonist and composer/arranger for Strategic Air Command Band and Heartland of America Band at Offutt Air Force Base, and was deployed to the Persian Gulf in support of operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield. After his military career, he dedicated himself full-time to ministry and served on the staff of colleges and churches in California, Oklahoma and Washington. He had served as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Seward since 2005. He also worked at Walmart in Seward for 15 years. Tim loved his community and enjoyed opportunities to play in and conduct the Seward Municipal Band and the University-Community Band. He is survived by his wife **Peggy (Miller) Ruegg '82**, 13 children, 19 grandchildren, mother and four siblings.

**Dr. Tracy Lower '84** of Springfield, Illinois, died April 30, 2021. She was 58. Tracy earned a bachelor's degree at Illinois Wesleyan and an M.D. at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. After completing her residency, she joined the faculty at SIU, and became the first woman to earn the rank of full professor in its pediatrics department. She received the Pediatrics Chairman Award in 2010 and was named Outstanding Teacher of the Year in 2011. She was voted to hood the graduating classes of both 2005 and 2014. She received the prestigious Humanism in Medicine Award in 2016. While appreciating various honors, her greatest satisfaction came from being a mentor and teacher for countless medical students, residents and attending physicians. In addition to her commitment to medical education, Tracy was especially interested in child welfare. She served many years on the board of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois. Her outside interests included music, travel and reading. She especially enjoyed activities involving her family. She is survived by her father, two brothers, and many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews.

**Kurt Saksa '84** died Dec. 22, 2020, in Schaumburg, Illinois. He was 58. Kurt majored in art and was active in Acacia at Illinois Wesleyan. He later pursued graduate studies at Southern Illinois University



Carbondale. He was a gifted artist, and was well known for his sense of humor, style and trivia prowess. He is survived by a sister, two nephews and many extended family members.

**Doug Thomas '84** of Phoenix died Aug. 10, 2021. He was 59. Doug was a member of the Illinois Wesleyan basketball team and Sigma Chi fraternity. After his time at IWU, he earned a Juris Doctor from Washington University in St. Louis, and he practiced law in Phoenix for 26 years. He also served on the Phoenix Union High School District Governing Board for 12 years. His passions included fly fishing, music, travel, theatre, family and his German shepherds. He is survived by two stepchildren and many extended family members and friends.

**Richard Whitlock '89** of rural Clinton, Illinois, died July 15, 2021. He was 54. Rich studied economics at Illinois Wesleyan and most recently worked as a claims adjuster for COUNTRY Financial. He also served as fire chief of Ellsworth (Ill.) Fire Department. Rich was a member of the Living Hope Christian Church in Downs, Illinois, where he helped in the construction of the permanent building. His hobbies included horsemanship, woodworking and pheasant hunting. He is survived by two daughters, his loving companion and her four children, his mother and a brother.

**Mark Gibson '93** of Madison, Wisconsin, died June 4, 2021. He was 49. Mark majored in chemistry at Illinois Wesleyan and later attended graduate school at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He worked as a software engineer for Forte Research Systems (now Advarra, Inc.) for more than 15 years. His hobbies included playing the piano and classical guitar, learning and speaking foreign languages, ballroom dancing, and participating in charity runs. A devoted husband and father, his family was his priority. He is survived by his wife, two children and a sister.

**Kathryn (Rosensteele) Flores '03** of Chicago died July 21, 2021. She was 40. Katie earned a bachelor's degree at Illinois Wesleyan and a master's degree from National Louis University. She dedicated her career to education. She first demonstrated her ability to touch the lives of students, faculty and administrators during eight years of teaching kindergarten in Chicago Public Schools. As part of her work experience, she traveled to Ghana for a cultural exchange program. Katie later moved on to the University of Chicago's STEM education team, where she served as school support manager and curriculum developer. Most recently, she helped develop mathematics textbooks and provided long-term coaching support for elementary math teachers. Katie played an instrumental role in the team's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, and served on its "Fabulous Fun" Committee. She was active in many community organizations, including the McKinley Park (Ill.) advisory and development councils, and McKinley Community Play Garden. But the roles she cherished most were loving wife and adoring mother. She is survived by her husband **James Flores '02**, two children, her parents and a brother.

**Tanner Springer '06** of Downs, Illinois, died July 14, 2021. He was 37. Tanner studied computer science and played baseball at Illinois Wesleyan. He worked as a software developer at State Farm for 13 years before transitioning to a job as a software engineer for Enterprise Holdings. He shared his love of sports with his family — especially his sons — cheering for the St. Louis Cardinals, Chicago Bears and Chicago Blackhawks. Tanner also shared his love of sports with the many athletes he mentored as a youth sports coach. He

was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed hunting, fishing and time with his loyal dogs. But most of all, he enjoyed being a father and spending time with his family. He is survived by his wife, three sons, two siblings, grandfather, and many extended family members and friends.

**Zeze Ready '11** of Chicago died in June 2021. He was 32. Zeze was a double major in business administration and theatre arts at Illinois Wesleyan. After graduating from IWU *cum laude*, he relocated to Chicago to provide technical support to ticketing systems across the country, while also organizing small productions as managing director of the Circle Theatre. Throughout his life, Zeze was involved in and enjoyed cup-stacking, *Harry Potter* books, Future Business Leaders of America, Knowledge Bowl, theatre, band and sailing. He loved animals, and his family and many friends. He is survived by his parents.

## Deaths Reported

**Elizabeth "Betty" White '37**; Nov. 11, 2020  
**Mary (Kantor) Cervantes '48**; Aug. 29, 2021  
**Betty (Hatten) Leigh '49**; June 2, 2021  
**Steven Zebos '51**; Aug. 27, 2021  
**Carl Bird '52**; June 21, 2021  
**Marilyn (Howe) Eichelberg '53**; June 29, 2021  
**William Sapp '53**; July 12, 2021  
**Howard Wirt '54**; May 5, 2021  
**Elizabeth-Belle "Lidabelle" MacFadon '55**; July 2, 2021  
**Romeyn A. Kerr '58**; Jan. 7, 2020  
**Monica (Stella) Neubert '58**; Sept. 11, 2021  
**Clarke Williams '58**; July 18, 2021  
**John David Zwanzig '59**; June 1, 2021  
**Judith (Brokaw) Smith '61**; Sept. 6, 2021  
**Florence (Bliss) Aldred '62**; June 21, 2021  
**Connie (Zoller) Schmidgall '64**; Sept. 4, 2021  
**Arthur Woolley '67**; May 29, 2021  
**David Mauch '71**; Aug. 20, 2021  
**Kent Peters '71**; July 25, 2021  
**Carol (McGinnis) Clouser '73**; Sept. 5, 2021  
**Edward Matushek '75**; May 28, 2021  
**James Rosinia '76**; April 21, 2021  
**Mark Mandel '80**; March 30, 2021  
**Dwaine Tefertiller '84**; June 5, 2021  
**Melissa (Kielion) Long '92**; July 30, 2021  
**Michael Antholine '96**; March 14, 2021  
**Collin Halihan '19**; June 16, 2021  
**Dean Bartges**; Sept. 21, 2021  
**Tom Mikulecky**; Sept. 26, 2021

**Editor's Note:** *IWU Magazine* runs obituaries of alumni based on information received from our readers. Please include full name of deceased; IWU class year; date and place of death; essential biographical information; and survivors, including the names of relatives of the deceased who are IWU alumni. Send to *IWU Magazine*, P.O. Box 2900, Bloomington, IL 61702, [iwumag@iwu.edu](mailto:iwumag@iwu.edu), or at [www.iwu.edu/magazine](http://www.iwu.edu/magazine).



# SCHEDULE YOUR SUPPORT

## Just set it and forget it.

Recurring gifts are the most reliable form of giving to the University AND easier for you! Whether it's monthly, quarterly, biannually or annually, follow three simple steps and you can schedule your support for Illinois Wesleyan.

### 1. Choose your gift designation



### 2. Specify your amount



### 3. Set the interval

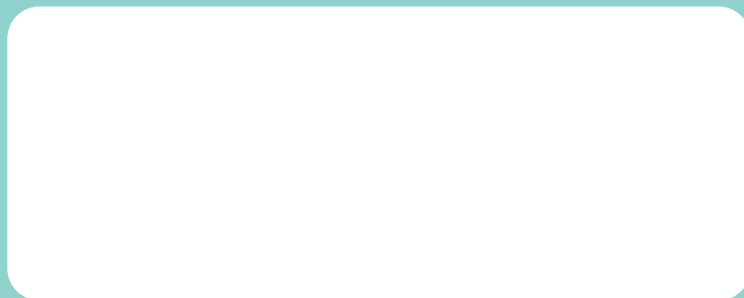
No further action is required! Learn more and schedule your support of IWU at  **[iwu.edu/ways-to-give](https://iwu.edu/ways-to-give)**

"I'm a 'set it and forget it' kind of person. I get so swept up in my daily life that the ability to schedule my gift and never worry about it again was immediately the path I wanted to take. We live in a subscription-based world, and it was convenient to be able to schedule my gifts to IWU once and never worry about them again. The process was extremely easy to set up and has been easy to maintain over the years."

— **Jordan Kuhns '13**

*Jordan Kuhns graduated with a degree in business administration in 2013 and just celebrated a decade of giving to IWU.*





*season of wonder*

Snow will soon return to Illinois Wesleyan's campus, as it did in January 2021.

PHOTO FINISH