

# ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS 2024-25 **ANNUAL REPORT**



## ***Greetings from the Illinois State University College of Business!***

The 2024–2025 academic year marked another period of extraordinary growth, innovation, and engagement for our College. At a time when many institutions across Illinois and the country are navigating enrollment challenges and financial pressures, we are proud to report that the College of Business has reached a five-year enrollment high, with over 4,000 students pursuing degrees across our four departments.

Our student-centered mission remains unwavering. More than two-thirds of our students engaged in transformational learning experiences, including internships, study abroad, consulting projects, and case competitions. Programs like Business Bird Ready continue to thrive, with nearly 10,000 badge activities completed and a 30% student engagement rate. Our graduates continue to find success after college, with a median starting salary across majors of approximately \$50,900 and over 84% reporting at least one job offer, self-employment, or graduate studies after graduation.

This year's Business Week was a campus-wide celebration of professionalism and community, hosted in the newly renovated Caterpillar Auditorium. We were honored to welcome Jon Farney '93, President and CEO of State Farm Mutual Auto Insurance, as our keynote speaker and Hall of Fame inductee, along with fellow honorees Tiffany Hemann '00 of Symbotic and Michelle Hermann '88 of CIBC Private Wealth. During Homecoming, we celebrated fourteen outstanding young alumni through our 2024 Early Career Achievement Awards, who returned to share career insights with our students.

Our faculty continue to distinguish themselves nationally and internationally. In FY25 alone, faculty in the College published over 50 refereed journal articles, served on numerous editorial boards, and received prestigious awards, including the Academy of Finance "Best Paper" recognition. New courses like ACC 303/403: Sustainability and ESG Reporting and MGT 340: Negotiation demonstrate our commitment to preparing students for today's dynamic and ever-changing business landscape.

Beyond the classroom, our students gave back in meaningful ways. Through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, our student volunteers prepared over 1,000 tax returns for community members, saving families thousands in fees. Our Feed the Funnel event packed 50,000 meals for local food pantries. And our COB Wellness Shelf, launched this year, provided hundreds of students with essential items to support their health and academic success.

Philanthropy continues to be a pillar of progress in the College. This year, we awarded over \$600,000 in scholarships to more than 340 students. We remain grateful to our generous alumni and friends who make this level of support possible. Your contributions help us enhance facilities, expand experiential learning, and provide critical support for our students and faculty.

Thank you for all that you do for the College of Business. With your partnership, we continue to prepare thoughtful, ethical, and globally aware leaders. We are proud of all Redbirds: past, present, and future.

*Ajay Samant*

Ajay Samant, Ph.D.

Dean and Professor

Illinois State University College of Business



## Everything we do at Illinois State University's College of Business is mission-driven.

Throughout this annual report, you will see how our programs, achievements, and initiatives align with the three strategic goals that guide the College of Business at Illinois State University. These goals are more than statements—they are a shared vision that drives every decision, every innovation, and every milestone.

### Improve the well-being of our stakeholders

We aim to foster a supportive, connected environment that helps our students, faculty, staff, community, and alumni partners thrive both personally and professionally.

This includes investing in elements of wellness, community engagement, business sustainability, and professional development.

### Offer a quality education to stakeholders

We are committed to delivering a rigorous, relevant, and forward-looking business education that is certified by our accrediting body, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). From experiential learning opportunities and faculty-led research to real-world learning experiences, our programs prepare students for meaningful careers in an ever-evolving global economy.

### Provide equity and empowerment to all stakeholders

We believe success and education should be accessible, and that all stakeholders should feel empowered to thrive at the College of Business. That's why we're creating more inclusive spaces, expanding access to opportunities, and ensuring every stakeholder has the tools and support to succeed and lead.

# CREATE

# YOUR

# LEGACY

## GOAL 1

Improve the well-being of our stakeholders

## GOAL 2

Offer a quality education to stakeholders

## GOAL 3

Promote equity and empowerment of all stakeholders



## Redbirds FLI

The COB's Financial Literacy Institute took flight this year with a number of amazing events and initiatives.

### Reality Fair (Budgeting Simulation) – Fall 2024

Hosted a Reality Fair with the Illinois State Credit Union based on information published by the FDIC. This event allowed students to work through a budget based on different after graduation situations – starting salaries, own vs. rent, kids, pets, insurance, etc.

### IARFC National Financial Plan Competition – Fall 2024

Supported 4 teams (8 students) who competed in the competition, which required them to build a written financial plan. Competed against financial planning students across the country.

### Financial Literacy Presentations – Spring 2025

After hiring financial planning student workers during the fall semester to review information, complete the Certified Peer Financial Mentor program, and develop presentations, a trial/practice was run of presentations on the following financial topics:

- Building Blocks of Financial Literacy
- Your First Job & Your Future – Retirement and Benefit Decisions
- Net Income and Next Steps: Student Loans, Retirement, and Emergency Fund
- Housing and Transportation
- Simple Steps to Investing

### First 10 Years After Graduation

A trial run was done to get students more comfortable presenting as well as determining how much/which content should be included in presentations. The plan is to partner with Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) in the COB and across campus starting in the fall to present on specific topics they are interested in from the list above.

### Student Wellness Ambassador Team (SWAT) Presentation – Spring 2025

Presented to RSOs about financial literacy.

### FPA Financial Plan Challenge – Spring 2025

Supported a team of 3 students who are currently involved in the competition, which requires them to build a written financial plan. Competing against financial planning students across the country.

### FPA of Illinois Mentorship Program and FinServ Foundation Fellowship Program

Encouraged students to get involved with industry mentorship programs to learn more about financial planning careers and network with industry professionals. Several students took advantage of each program.



## COB Wellness Shelf

### What is the COB Wellness Shelf?

The COB Wellness Shelf was introduced in fall 2024 and serves current College of Business students, staff and faculty. The goal is to provide basic wellness items and food to people with financial and food insecurities. Beyond that, the shelf also serves as a place to ensure students have access to healthy snacks to get them through the day when needed.

### How does it work?

The shelf and mobile cart get restocked daily. Typically, we shop for the shelf every 2-3 weeks, as able. At its launch, the shelf was stocked with donations. Thanks to the generosity of an alumni donor, we've spent roughly \$2,000 on the shelf in spring of 2025.

### What types of items are included on the shelf?

We have grab n go food items (granola bars, ramen, fruit, mac n cheese cups, etc. along with larger canned goods and non-perishables. We also have a number of hygiene products (deodorant, toothpaste/brushes, soap, pads and tampons, etc.) And then we have some basic school supplies (notebooks, pencils, pens, etc.)

### Future plans for the shelf?

Will be adding a form for students to request specific items.

## Feed the Funnel

### Feed the Funnel (9/11 Day College Meal Pack Day)

October 5, 2024

- Raised \$10,000, matched with \$10,000 from 9/11 Day & Americorp
- 125+ volunteers from across the university and local community
- 50,000 meals packed in 2 hours
- Locally, meals went to Tinervin Family Foundation (176 cases), Society of St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry (44 cases), Home Sweet Home Ministries (6 cases), School Street Food Pantry (6 cases), The WITT Corporation (6 cases), and Song & Sword Church food pantry (6 cases)
- [www.mightycause.com/story/Tbt9hf](http://www.mightycause.com/story/Tbt9hf)

*GOAL 2*

Offer a quality education to stakeholders

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*GOAL 3*

Promote equity and empowerment of all stakeholders



**GOAL 2**

Offer a quality education to stakeholders

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**Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)**

Redbirds helped our local community with their federal and state tax filing this year. This event provides a service and cost savings to our community as well as a valuable real-world learning experience for our COB students.

- Total 2024 returns prepared 1055 for clients + >100 for family and friends
- Prior year returns > 60
- Average cost of a basic return at commercial preparers is approx. \$300
- Total volunteers certified = 73
- 14-16 ISU COB student volunteers
- I would say more than ten of them were there most weeks.
- We provide 18 hours of appointments per week for 10 weeks
- Approximately 70 of our returns were ISU 1040NR returns

• **Joseph Padula**, Junior, Financial Accounting

Basic Tax Preparer

*"Participating in the VITA program made me feel very fortunate to help out those in the Bloomington-Normal community with their tax returns. What inspired me to participate in this program was to get hands on tax experience, as well as learn more about tax law."*

**Illinois State University and Heartland Community College Announce New Articulation Agreement for Business Administration Degree**

Illinois State University and Heartland Community College have teamed up to streamline the path to a bachelor's degree in business administration through a flexible, fully online program. This new agreement supports working learners by offering a clear and efficient route from Heartland to @ BusinessISU helping students stay on track and on time. **Learn more: [bit.ly/42QH5NC](http://bit.ly/42QH5NC)**



# BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

## Green Workplace Certification

- Awarded to the Marketing department in October 2024
- Certifies campus workplaces that prioritize eco-friendly practices in their everyday work.
- One of eight units at ISU with this designation.

GOAL 1

Improve the  
well-being of  
our stakeholders



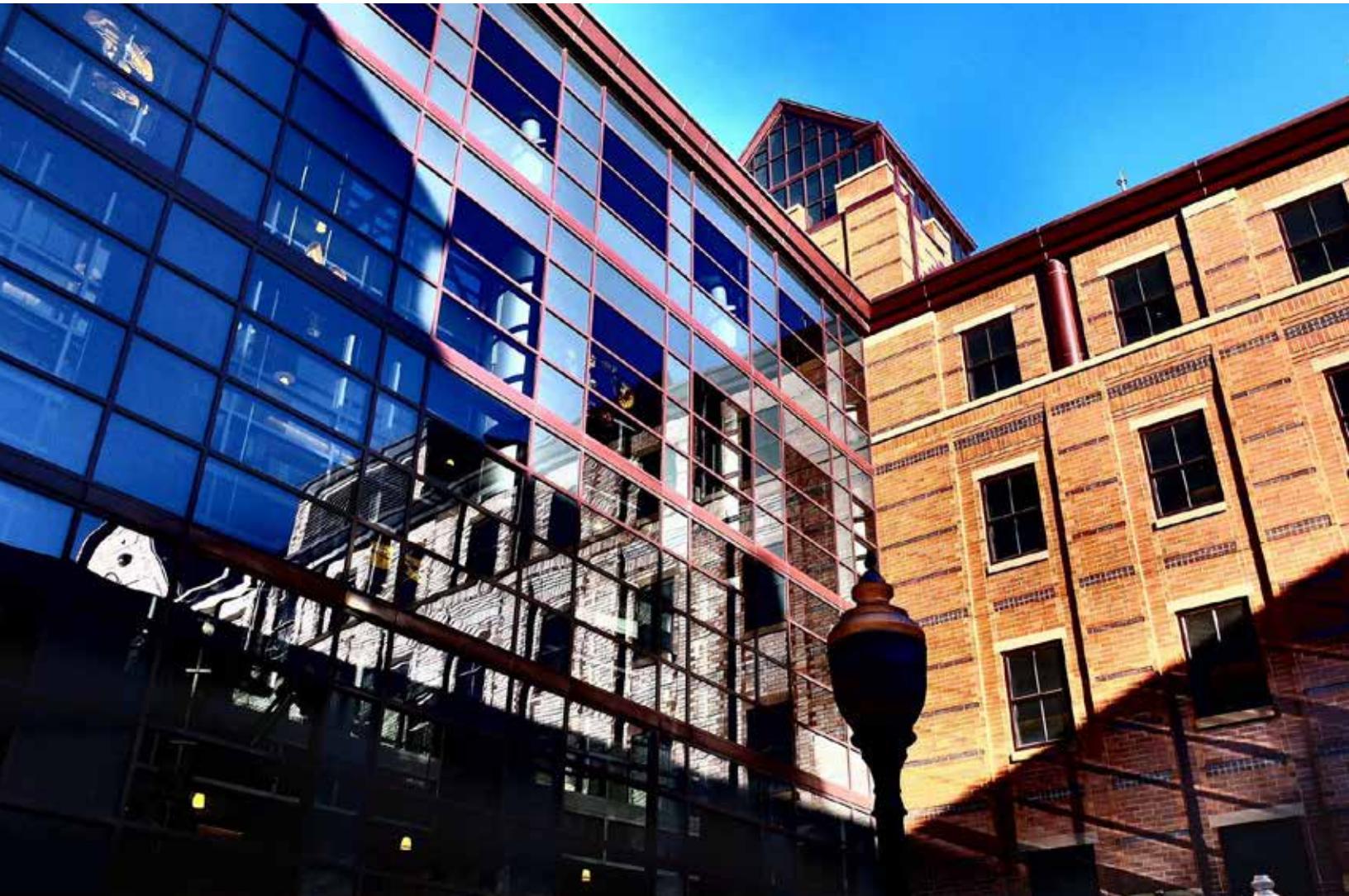
## Sustainability-related Journal Articles

- Sixteen publications and two conference proceedings on sustainability since 2024
- Publications from the Accounting & BIS, Finance and Management departments
- Publications in top journals such as Business Strategy and the Environment, Journal of Accounting Literature, Journal of Business Finance & Accounting and British Accounting Review
- **Sandeep Jagani** had four publications and one conference proceeding on Sustainability since 2024 including a publication in Business Strategy and the Environment
- **Yaman Erzurumulu** had four sustainability related publications in 2025 and one in 2024



Jagani

Erzurumulu



# BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

## GOAL 1

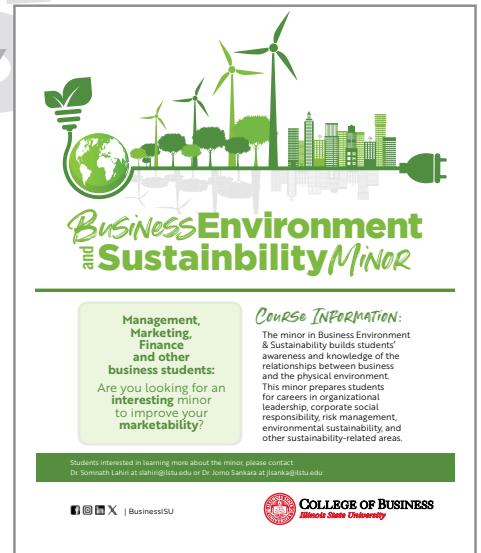
Improve the well-being of our stakeholders

## GOAL 2

Offer a quality education to stakeholders

### Business Environment and Sustainability minor

- Increased promotion of the Sustainability minor
- Increased enrollment of sophomore and underrepresented groups in Fall 2024
- More classes added to the minor and plans to add internships



**Business Environment and Sustainability Minor**

**COURSE INFORMATION:**  
The minor in Business Environment & Sustainability builds students' awareness and knowledge of the relationship between business and the physical environment. This minor prepares students for careers in organizational environmental management, corporate social responsibility, risk management, environmental sustainability, and other sustainability-related areas.

Students interested in learning more about the minor, please contact Dr. Somnath Lahiri at [solahiri@ilstu.edu](mailto:solahiri@ilstu.edu) or Dr. Jomo Sankara at [jsankara@ilstu.edu](mailto:jsankara@ilstu.edu)

**COLLEGE OF BUSINESS**  
Illinois State University

### Sustainability content in academic classes

- New Sustainability and Environmental Social Governance Reporting course offered in the COB starting Fall 2025
- Open to graduate and undergraduate students
- Include guest presentations from experts in the field.
- Also part of the Business Environment and Sustainability minor

### New Sustainable Finance course also planned (scheduled for Spring 2026)

- Increased sustainability content in COB courses with increased guest presentations on Sustainability.

### Earth Day breakfast

- On April 22, 2025, ISU held its Earth Day breakfast
- The COB co-sponsored the event this year.
- Eight COB representatives attended the event

### 2024 Sustainability Research Conference

- Organized by the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN) and hosted by ISU on October 17-18
- Conference supported by the COB
- The conference focused on sustainability and innovation and provided opportunities for researchers to share their work and connect with others.



## STUDY ABROAD in 2024-2025



**6.95% of all COB students**  
completed study abroad travel



**74 Total Experiences**

- 16 summer experiences
- 24 short experiences
- 25 semester-long experiences

- 2 all-year experiences
- 7 international internships



**In FY25, students will have traveled to 19 different countries** plus 2 short-term programs that visit multiple countries.

They will have **participated in 28 different programs** ranging from 8 days to a full academic year.

**GOAL 2**

Offer a quality education to stakeholders



## GWEN BOJAN

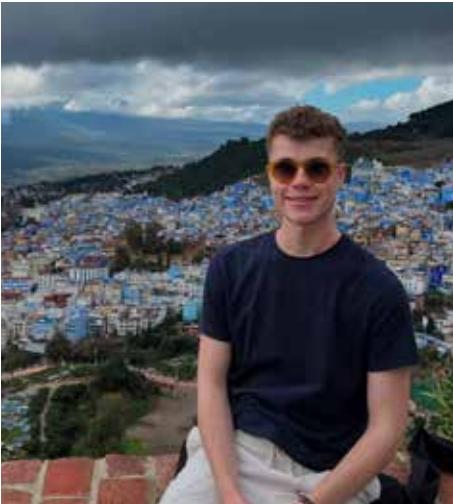
Major: International Business - Honors Program , Junior in Fall 2025

***University of Nicosia • Nicosia, Cyprus***

February 3 - June 7, 2025

Classes: Foreign Policy, Cyprus Art History, Marketing and Management

*My most memorable experiences were traveling to 2 continents, 10 countries and immersing myself into different cultures in four months!*



## LEO KRUGER

Major: International Business, Senior in Fall 2025

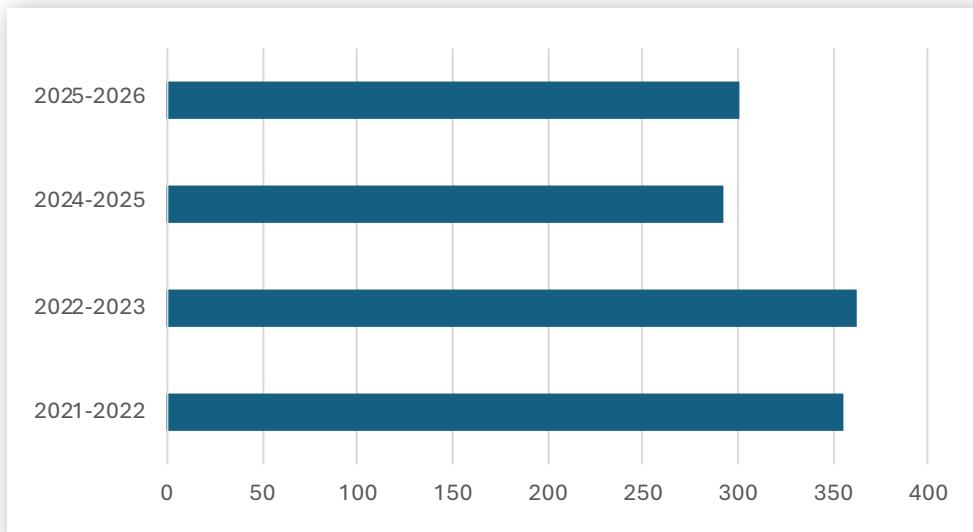
***Universidad Antonio de Nebrija • Madrid, Spain***

4 months abroad

Classes: International Trade, European Studies, Business Spanish, Global Skills

*Studying in Madrid pushed me to adapt to new cultural and academic environments while strengthening my Spanish fluency. My biggest takeaway was gaining confidence in myself and gaining international connections.*

## INTERNSHIP ENROLLMENTS



## INNOVATION LAB

Throughout the year, 1871 offers innovation labs. These events are described as "disruptive, industry-focused experiences, designed to connect innovators and maximize chances of high-impact collisions."

These labs help individuals accelerate the growth of their ideas and become more competitive by identifying solutions and partnerships. In 2025, 1871 is offering several Innovation Labs: climate tech, health tech, food tech, fintech, insurtech, sports and entertainment, construction, supply chain, Web 3, and artificial intelligence.

Dr. Eli Sherrill, associate professor in the Department of Finance, Insurance, and Law, recently participated in the lab focused on financial technology, referred to as fintech. Sherrill participated virtually in the Partner Fireside Chat.

Sherrill said fintech is a topic most students do not know much about, but that there are many fintech opportunities in Illinois. "Summits like 1871 are a great opportunity to expand their understanding in this growing area."

**GOAL 2**  
Offer a quality education to stakeholders

*"I am impressed with the strong lineup of speakers 1871 was able to organize," Sherrill said. "Being able to hear from such large companies as United, Discover, and BMO is an exciting opportunity, especially when the speakers are experts in the field of fintech."*

- Dr. Sherrill



## STUDENT RESEARCH

At the Illinois State University College of Business, students are actively engaging in impactful research that extends beyond the classroom. Seniors Wyatt Frere and Ruby Morr built on their experience from the FDIC Academic Challenge to launch a summer research project analyzing how the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) affected banks' financial performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. With guidance from Dr. Vladimir Kotomin and support from a competitive summer FIREbird research grant awarded to Ruby Morr, the first awarded to a College of Business project, the pair explored how PPP participation influenced banks' deposits, interest income, and asset growth.

The project gave Frere and Morr hands-on experience working with complex datasets involving millions of records and deepened their understanding of data analysis and financial modeling. While navigating challenges with software and regressions, they gained valuable insights into the research process and the rigor required for publishable work. Their project reflects the College's commitment to supporting student-driven inquiry, developing real-world analytical skills, and contributing meaningful research to the field of business.



*The published paper can be found here:*



*Student experiences are described here:*



## BUSINESS BIRD READY (BBR) BADGES

*What is the goal of the BBR badge program?*

The goal of the program is to help students connect the importance of professional development and professional competencies. We work to ensure students see the connection between their in-class and out-of-class experiences.

*Who has supported this program?*

This program is run through an endowment created by the Hallinan family.

*How many students are earning BBR badges?*

Typically there are 10-15 badges available at any given time (they change throughout the year.) Some popular badges include: LinkedIn Ready, Interview Ready, Intro to Networking, Intro to Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Business Week Pro, Business Week Mentor/Mentee, Design Thinking Workshop Collaborator, etc.

All COB students have access to the badges, and currently the COB has had 10,000 activity completions in the last year which is a 30% engagement rate across the college. The COB was awarded for the highest activity completion rate for a non-required program through Suitable.



## NATIONAL CASE COMPETITIONS

When Illinois State University returns a team to the International Food and Agribusiness Management Association (IFAMA) 2025 Student Case Competition in June, it will be as defending champions.

*GOAL 2*

Offer a quality education to stakeholders. The student case competition, which the Redbirds won during their debut in the event last year, is just one part of the 35th annual IFAMA World Agribusiness Conference, hosted in Ribeirão Preto, Brazil June 22 to 26. The four-day event includes an Academic Symposium, Business Industry Forum, and networking. It moves from one country to another every year and is hosted by an ag school in that country.

### Closing on a championship:

#### Illinois State Duo wins National Collegiate Sales Competition.

Seniors Hailey King and Hailey Struthers entered the 2025 National Collegiate Sales Competition (NCSC) in Kennesaw, Georgia, as self-proclaimed “underdogs.”

Competing with a “sense of hunger” less than three weeks after disappointing results at a smaller competition, King and Struthers topped more than 70 colleges from across the country to claim the coveted NCSC championship for Illinois State University.



Read more at:



# STUDENT SUCCESS MEASURES

## COB FALL 2024 AND SPRING 2025 UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT NUMBERS

Department	FALL 2021	FALL 2022	FALL 2023	FALL 2024
Accounting	586	633	674	723
FIL*	580	634	699	794
Management	1346	1444	1425	1420
Marketing	792	883	985	977
<b>COB TOTAL</b>	<b>3304</b>	<b>3594</b>	<b>3783</b>	<b>3914</b>

Department	Honors Students	Undergrad Majors	Honors Percentage
Accounting	61	713	8.56%
FIL*	52	836	6.22%
Management	44	1282	3.43%
Marketing	61	988	6.17%

\* Finance, Insurance, and Law

*Goal 1*

Improve the well-being of our stakeholders

*Goal 2*

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*Goal 3*

Promote equity and empowerment of all stakeholders



# AMAZING BUSINESS BIRDS

GOAL I

Improve the well-being of our stakeholders

**Ryan Russell** Anticipated graduation - May 2026

Marketing (Professional Sales) Minor in Organizational Leadership

**Leadership roles while at Illinois State University**

- Business Week President
- Student Trustee on Board of Trustees - Illinois State University
- President of Interfraternity Council
- Student Life Senator in Student Government Association
- Director of Event Planning on Student Leadership Advisory Board
- Vice President of Sigma Pi Fraternity

**Major awards this year**

**Living the Ritual Award**

The recipient is a chapter member who exemplifies the sorority or fraternity ritual for their organization and embodies the very best elements of the values of their organization. The recipient also should demonstrate a commitment to philanthropy, Greek unity, and student advocacy.

**Harold Jacobsen Award**

All undergraduate members of Sigma Pi Fraternity are eligible to be nominated for consideration. This individual award is presented in recognition of the outstanding leadership an undergraduate brother provides on campus at his college or university during the last biennium. Members can be nominated by the chapter, alumni volunteers or an alumni club.

**How did the COB help you to be successful?**

*"The College of Business empowered me with transformational learning opportunities by continuously investing in and supporting students like myself. Their unwavering support has been instrumental to my success, both during my time at the university and in launching my professional career."*



**Nick Harfst** Graduate - May 2025

Finance

**Leadership roles while at Illinois State University**

- President & Secretary of Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society
- Senior Vice President, Vice President of Alumni Relations, and Vice President of Professional Affairs for Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity
- Business Week Mentor
- Accounting Teaching Assistant
- Campus Tour Guide

**Awards**

- Presidential Scholarship
- Connie Krug Student Service Award
- LaVerne A. Cox Scholarship
- Lehman Beta Gamma Sigma HOPE Scholarship



**How did the COB help you to be successful?**

*"The College of Business gave me opportunity—the opportunity to learn business, grow as a leader, and graduate debt-free. This foundation gives me the freedom to pursue my future goals."*

# AMAZING BUSINESS BIRDS

GOAL I

Improve the well-being of our stakeholders

**Wendell Miller** Graduate - May 2025

**Advanced Marketing Analytics / Integrated Marketing Communications  
(projected MBA 2026)**

**Start-up Showcase winner: \$4000**

I've actively engaged with the Illinois Innovation Network through startup pitch competitions at Distillery Labs and the University of Illinois Springfield, where I showcased Ozyn's potential. In collaboration with the Illinois Foundation, I'm leading efforts to launch Phase 1 of Ozyn through a pilot program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. I'm also hopeful to explore a similar pilot opportunity with Illinois State University in the future. Additionally, I'm a member of 1871 and participated in the Campus 1871 event, further deepening my involvement in Illinois' entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**Bigest accomplishment?**

Definitely being invited to attend Forbes under 30 summit as one of the few academic scholars and networking with professionals from US Bank, Spotify, Google, and so many more.

**How has the COB helped you be successful?**

*"The College of Business equipped me with the critical thinking, strategic insight, and leadership skills necessary to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship. Through hands-on learning, mentorship, and a strong emphasis on innovation, I gained the confidence and capability to turn a vision into a scalable venture that solves real-world problems."*



## What is OZYN?

OZ in Hebrew means strength, Y/N is yes or no, "Do you have the strength to innovate the networking world, Yes or No". Ozyn is a smart networking platform that uses NFC-enabled bands and a mobile app to instantly share digital profiles with a simple tap. It streamlines in-person connections by replacing business cards and manual follow-ups with real-time engagement and smart contact management.

Ozyn is pursuing grants and investor funding while collaborating closely with developers to keep advancing the platform.

**Gabriela Ledesma** Graduate - May 2025

**International Business with a minor in Business Analytics**

**Leadership roles while at Illinois State University**

- President of the International Business Association
- Co-Founder and Vice President of UNA-USA
- Business Week mentor - twice

**Major Awards this Year**

- Bone Scholar Award
- Student Laureate
- Aver and Tarhule Kuluku Academic Excellence and Leadership Scholarship
- Outstanding Senior in the International Business program
- Mike Schermer Outstanding Student Leader Award



**Favorite College of Business Memory**

*"My favorite and most impactful initiative at the COB was leading the first team-building certification in international environments at ISU. Over the course of seven hours, participants learned how to collaborate with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, promoting cultural intelligence and enhancing global teamwork."*

# AMAZING BUSINESS BIRDS

GOAL 1

Improve the well-being of our stakeholders

**Kristen Bernas** Starting date: May 2017

Office Administrator

**COB Outstanding Service Award for Civil Service recipient, 2025**

**Illinois State University Distinguished Service Award, 2025**

- Major accomplishments that factored into the awards above:
- Creating an onboarding process for new tenure-track faculty, building strong relationships with my coworkers, designing swag for High School Accounting Challenge, and Registered Student Organizations

**How did the COB help you to be successful?**

*"Accomplishing so much in such a short period of time has completely reshaped my perspective on what I am capable of. Being recognized for my hard work has fueled my desire to see others receive the same recognition. We've built a strong foundation here in the College of Business, and I firmly believe that when we support each other and embrace new ideas, we can achieve even greater things together."*



## The Marsha Perry Spark Award

The College of Business, through the work of the Human Resources Development team (HRD), is proud to announce the creation of the Marsha Perry Spark Award, a new recognition honoring individuals within the college who exemplify the dedication and service that Marsha Perry embodied. This award celebrates those who ignite a spark in others and go above and beyond in their roles.

By recognizing those who make a significant impact on others through their dedication, innovation, and service, the Marsha Perry Spark Award reinforces our ongoing commitment to excellence here at the college. We invite members of the college to join us in celebrating the remarkable contributions of our colleagues while also honoring the legacy of Marsha Perry through this award.



### Spark Award Winners

Liesel Mitchel - 2024

Connie Gentes - 2024

Ashley Jobson - 2024

Trudy Jones - 2025

Megan Lapping - 2025

**Nominate a COB employee today**



## Marsha Perry

Marsha Perry was a cherished member of our college and the Illinois State University community for years. She was known for her commitment to the college, its students, and the University's culture. Her willingness to contribute, even beyond her job description, left a lasting impact on countless students, staff, and faculty. She was a fierce advocate for Illinois State employees, and her legacy continues to inspire all who had the privilege of knowing her.



# AMAZING BUSINESS BIRDS

GOAL

Improve the well-being of our stakeholders

## Ron Whitton '80

Business Administration

**"The goal was to teach students about helping others in their time of need. Sometimes you are helping others and sometimes others are helping you. Many people think that small donations don't matter but put together small donations make a large difference."**

- Ron Whitton

Ron helped establish the COB's Pay it Forward Student Fund, which is a fund centered around "students helping students." The Pay It Forward Student Fund is sponsored and funded by Ron and, in part, by the students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the College of Business. It provides a unique opportunity to help students develop personally and professionally while fostering a service mindset.

Ron has also created two endowed funds in the College of Business:

- MPW - Pay it Forward Business Scholarship
- The Ron Jr. and Cathy Whitton Family Endowed Scholarship



*Learn more about the Pay It Forward Fund, how to donate, and the student team that makes it happen here*



## Bill and Sue Hallinan Bill '66 / Sue '68

Bill and Sue Hallinan have long been champions of student success in the College of Business. In 2018, they established the William and Sue Hallinan Endowed Fund for Professional Development to ensure all COB students have access to meaningful professional development opportunities.

One key initiative supported by this fund is the Business Bird Ready program, including the Business Bird Ready app. This platform encourages student engagement in co-curricular activities that build personal and professional skills. Students select opportunities aligned with their academic and career goals, track their progress, and earn badges based on competencies identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Activities can include attending lectures, participating in COB events, studying abroad, obtaining new skills, or taking leadership roles.

In 2020, the Hallinans furthered their commitment by creating the Hallinan Fund for the College of Business, which supports the college's top priorities each year. This flexible fund has helped advance technology, enhance facilities, support scholarships, and expand professional development opportunities.



"I believe my success can be attributed to two factors: 1, The support of my wife, Sue, and her incredible insight and people skills, and 2, My education from and personal experiences at ISU.

Further, I believe it's fair to assume a degree is evidence of subject matter competence and that building relationships is essential to success personally and as a professional. Those assumptions beg the question as to whether the institution is providing the tools to students to meet the challenges in the professional marketplace.

My years of experience as a practitioner and employer in law and business bear witness to the quality of my education at ISU. However, I came to believe that many educational institutions and faculty were lacking in preparing graduates to meet employers' expectations for personal professional attributes. So, when asked, Sue and I proposed a program to fix that and, as they say, "the rest is history".

- Bill Hallinan



*Learn more about Business Bird Ready here*



# AMAZING HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

## **Jon Farney '93**

Jon Farney is President and Chief Executive Officer of State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company. He has more than 30 years of experience with State Farm and within the insurance and financial services industry.

Farney joined State Farm in 1993 and has served in a variety of executive leadership positions including assistant vice president – securities products, assistant vice president – planning & analysis, vice president – financial operations and operations vice president – underwriting. He served as senior vice president, treasurer and chief financial officer for eight years before being elected President of State Farm Mutual in January 2024. He assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer in June 2024.

He received a bachelor's degree in accounting from Illinois State University, Normal and earned his MBA from the University of Michigan. He is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and has earned the Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter® (CPCU), Chartered Life Underwriter® (CLU), Chartered Financial Consultant® (ChFC) and Fellow, Life Management Institute® (FLMI) designations.

He is a member of the Business Roundtable.



## **Tiffany Hermann '00**

Tiffany Hemann is currently Vice President - Financial Planning & Analysis at Symbotic located in Wilmington, Massachusetts. In this role, Tiffany supports the efforts of the Symbotic mission, changing the way consumer goods move through the supply chain by reinventing warehouse automation for increased efficiency, speed and flexibility.

Prior to joining Symbotic, Tiffany spent 20+ years at The Boeing Company in various roles supporting defense platforms, services and functions. In these roles, she partnered with business leaders to oversee program execution as well as the development of long-term strategies to support the production of the Apache Attack Helicopter, as well as in service support programs for the F-22 Raptor, C-17 Globemaster and large derivative platforms. She also oversaw the financial process controls to ensure compliance and adherence to capital investments and new business opportunities. In these roles, Tiffany also had the opportunity to live in various locations to include Ridley Park, PA; Arlington, VA; St. Louis MO; San Antonio, TX; and Mesa, AZ.

A native of Staunton, Illinois, Tiffany holds a bachelor's degree in finance from Illinois State University and a master's degree in business from Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville. She also participated on the Illinois State University Finance and Law advisory board.

Tiffany is a proud alum of ISU, she is honored and humbled to be inducted into the ISU College of Business Hall of Fame alongside the many respected alumni with remarkable backgrounds.



# AMAZING HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

## Michelle Hermann '88

Michelle Hermann is a senior relationship manager for CIBC Private Wealth with more than 30 years of experience, focusing primarily on providing investment management services and advising high net worth individuals and business organizations. She is skilled in providing financial and estate planning services to clients, focusing on their intentions for future generations and philanthropy. She has led seminars and webinars nationwide on a variety of topics, the most recent of which addressed wealth management issues for women.

Prior to Team Geneva Advisors, which became part of CIBC in 2017, she was a senior vice president and trust officer at Park National Bank (now US Bank). Previously, she was the president of Great Lakes Trust Company, focused on building the fiduciary and brokerage platform. Her career began at Boulevard Bank (now US Bank).

Michelle holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Illinois State University ('88) and a Master of Business Administration degree from Quinlan School of Business at Loyola University Chicago ('94). She is a past president of the Chicago Estate Planning Council and secretary of the South Suburban Estate Planning Council. She was also included in Barron's Top 100 Women Financial Advisor Ranking in 2024.

Since graduating from Illinois State University Michelle has remained involved with ISU. She served as a board member of The Educational Investment Fund. She also began mentoring finance students in 2020 and now has an annual networking referral program of student mentees from the College of Business. She and her husband, Mike (ISU '87) have three children and live in Texas and northern Michigan.



*Celebrating the successes of our outstanding College of Business graduates and supporters is one of the most rewarding things we do at Illinois State University. Their commitment to excellence not only reflects their professional dedication and service to others, but their achievements also add value to our programs and the Illinois State brand for all of our graduates.*

**It is with great pleasure  
that we honor these individuals.**

# AMAZING EARLY CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

## Connor Achim '16

Connor is an Account Director for Crexi, a Commercial Real Estate Tech Company based in Los Angeles. There he oversees the state of Nevada and works to grow the company's presence through market penetration and acquisition.

Previously, Connor worked for some of the most well-known tech companies in Los Angeles including Clutter Inc. where he managed a team of 80+ sales agents as well as Compass Real Estate. There he was the strategic growth manager for Hollywood and Calabasas, California.

Since graduating in 2016, Connor moved to Los Angeles, CA where he lives with his dog, Zeus. Outside of his career, Connor takes a lot of pride in his health/wellness and continues to push his physical limits. In the past few years, Connor has completed 6 half marathons, 3 full marathons, 2 triathlons, and is currently training for his first ironman race in California.



## Ashley Carboni '14

Ashley Carboni is a distinguished Manager in KPMG's Accounting Advisory Services practice. Ashley plays a crucial role in leading teams that guide clients through complex accounting challenges, including the adoption of new accounting standards, and supporting clients through acquisitions and divestitures.

Beyond her client responsibilities, Ashley is involved in several initiatives at KPMG. She instructs new staff training and leads the Chicago office's purposeful interactions event series. Ashley's commitment to the accounting profession extends into her active participation in the Illinois CPA Society. She is a valued member of the Accounting Principles Committee, Women's Committee, and Awards Committee.



Ashley graduated from Illinois State University with a BS in Accounting in May 2014 and then went on to earn a Master of Accounting Science from Northern Illinois University in May 2016. After passing the CPA exam, Ashley started her accounting career as a Technical Associate at the IFRS Foundation in London. During her two-year tenure, Ashley gained valuable insights into international standard-setting processes and had the opportunity to travel to 20 different countries.

Outside of work, Ashley celebrated her marriage to her longtime partner Zach Joiner in September 2022. They enjoy traveling and have become homeowners in Downers Grove.



## Renee Haning '12

Renee Haning is Director of Total Rewards at COUNTRY Financial, serving in this role since 2020. Renee joined COUNTRY in 2007 as College Relations Recruiting Coordinator. She later served as Employee Relations Coordinator, Manager of Organizational Development, HR Business Partner and Manager of Compensation. Prior to COUNTRY, she worked as the Program and Event Director at McLean County Chamber of Commerce.



Renee earned a BS in Psychology from the University of Illinois, Urbana and an MBA from Illinois State University, Normal. She holds the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and SHRM Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) designations. She has previously served as President of the local BNHRC SHRM chapter and ILSHRM Conference Director.

Renee and husband Tyler live in Minier, with their three children Teagan, Ainsley, and Tagg. In her free time, she's usually cheering on her kids at a softball/baseball field or on basketball court.



## Ellen Janssen '16

Ellen (Schumacher) Janssen has been at TEKsystems since 2016 on the recruiting team in several roles as Recruiter, Senior Recruiter, Onboarding Coach, and Specialized Recruiter Lead. Ellen manages her own network of professionals to help with their career opportunities while also leading a pod of other recruiters to do the same for their networks for their career success.

Ellen enjoys coaching new recruiter training sessions and being a co-pillar lead in my company's Health and Well Being program and is a member of the local Alumnae Chapter of Alpha Omicron Pi.



## Nicole Jones '18

Nicole Jones is currently in her third season as a Senior Accountant with the Chicago Cubs (yes, they talk in seasons vs. years). She is responsible for the Rooftop and Hotel businesses along with managing the accounting for their charitable organization, Cubs Charities. Nicole plays a key role in all monthly and annual reporting requirements and takes part in all investing and capital decisions. Nicole lives in Chicago with her dog, Lottie. She enjoys attending baseball games, running, reading, and cooking.



# AMAZING EARLY CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

## Ellen Marr '17

Ellen Marr graduated from Illinois State University in 2017 with majors in Interactive Marketing Communications & Human Resource Management. She joined Spark Foundry, a leading media agency in Chicago, right after college, starting as a Media Strategy Associate. Over the past seven years, Ellen has worked with clients like Mattel, State Farm, Starbucks, and Dreyer's Ice Cream, and now serves as a Director of Digital Investment. In her current role, Ellen manages the planning and execution of digital ad campaigns, overseeing more than \$50 million in ad spend. She loves coming up with creative strategies and bringing them to life to drive results for her clients. One of Ellen's favorite parts of her job is managing a team and facilitating their growth.

Outside of work, Ellen enjoys traveling and spending time with her friends and family. She has taken advantage of opportunities to travel while working, including spending two months working from Paris.



## Filip Miljevic '12

Filip Miljevic is a experienced private equity professional with a diverse career. Her is currently a Senior Associate at G Square Healthcare Private Equity in London, Filip has played a crucial role in several high-profile transactions and holds board positions in several European companies. He co-led the exit of a €50m+ EBITDA European MedTech distributor, managed a UK mental health software investment, facilitated a £50m+ EBITDA merger, and creating a leading UK social care business Prior to G Square. Filip worked three years at August Equity, investing in healthcare, business services, and technology business.

Filip began his career in New York as an Associate in Credit Suisse by joining the largest North American Private Banking team with \$4bn AUM. He helped manage portfolios of UHNW individuals, investing across all asset classes. He later joined Morgan Stanley after which he moved to the UK to pursue his MBA at University of Oxford as a professional tennis player.



## Dakota Neisen '15

Dakota Neisen is a dedicated educator and coach currently residing in East Peoria, Illinois, with his wife Ashlyn and their daughter Wynter. He graduated from Illinois State University in 2015 with a degree in Business Teacher Education. Dakota began his teaching career at Mendon Unity High School, where he taught and coached boys basketball and girls track for three years. He then transitioned to Tri-Valley High School in Downs, teaching Computer Science while coaching girls basketball and track.

In his current role at Morton High School, Dakota teaches Business and continues to coach girls basketball and track. His accomplishments include coaching a state champion sprinter in 2021, serving as an assistant coach for the girls basketball team that finished 3rd in the 3A state championship in 2022, and earning the title of Distinguished Modern Classroom Educator through the Modern Classrooms Project. In 2023, he completed his MBA from Eastern Illinois University and became a business owner with his wife Ashlyn in May 2024. Dakota's commitment to education and athletics reflects his passion for fostering growth and excellence in his students and athletes.



## Nicole Poggensee '14

Nicole Poggensee is a experienced Content Director at Publicis Collective (formally known as Performics) in Chicago, where she leads the SEO content strategy and oversees implementation for prominent brands including Microsoft, Haleon, and OLAPLEX. With nearly a decade of experience in SEO and content marketing, Nicole excels in driving successful organic search traffic and revenue through comprehensive content programs.

In her current role, Nicole serves as a trusted partner to her clients, overseeing a team of three Content Managers across eight accounts and fosters seamless collaboration across multiple teams to drive strategic execution.

Outside of work, Nicole pursued her passion for fitness as a Pure Barre Instructor for three years, integrating her commitment to wellness with her professional endeavors. She remains actively engaged with Illinois State University, participating as a panelist for Business Week Transition Seminars in both 2020 and 2024.



## Matt Riley '16

Matt Riley began his career at State Farm working in risk and compliance. He then made the jump from corporate risk management to personal risk management becoming a Fiduciary Officer for First National Bank and Trust. Since then, he has become the VP of Wealth Planning, helping clients to meet their prosperity goals through investments and retirement planning. With his B.S. in Finance and minor in Financial Planning, he has continued his education journey, earning eight other designations



*Continued on next page*

# AMAZING EARLY CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

including the Chartered Financial Consultant(R) and is currently obtaining his MBA.

On the side, Matt is co-owner of a dog daycare/boarding facility where he handles all financials. In addition, Matt became a member of Rotary in April of 2019, has been president of the Warner Hospital and Health Services Foundation since June 2020, and is treasurer for his church. He wouldn't be where he is today without his loving wife Alexis and their son Jameson who is destined to be a Redbird one day.

## **Penney Rodd '14**

Penney Rodd started her career as an Industrial Engineer at Nissan Engine facility. After few years, she led a major supply chain project for increasing capacity. Through the project, she recognized her skills and passion in Finance and business which led her to get her MBA at Illinois State University.

After graduation, Penney started working for Sony Disk and Digital corporation as a financial analyst in early 2015 involved in many cost saving projects and process improvements. Sony decided to close that facility as the products got outdated and new technologies were taking over. She later received an offer from Navistar as a Senior Financial analyst at Corporate FP&A in 2020. In 2022, Penney was promoted to the Finance Manager role to manage overhead cost, and she is still serving Navistar in this role.



## **Megan Smalter '20**

Megan Smalter graduated from Illinois State University in 2020 with a Bachelor's of Science in Risk Management & Insurance and Finance with a minor in Spanish. During her time at Illinois State University, she was involved in Gamma Iota Sigma, Alpha Kappa Psi, and was a Business Week mentee/mentor. Megan also was a Katie School of Insurance International Intern in Zurich, Switzerland, and studied abroad in Granada, Spain.

Megan is currently a Private Company Management Liability Underwriter at CNA Insurance. She manages a \$3M book of business and maintains many broker relationships in the Chicago and Cincinnati territories. Megan is also involved in the insurance industry as the President of Rising Risk Professionals, President of Insurance Associates, a committee member of the Future PLUS Mentorship Taskforce, and an active member of the Association of Professional Insurance Women.



## **Brendan Surmeier '17**

Brendan Surmeier received his BS/MPA from Illinois State University in the spring of 2017. After graduation, he joined Brown CPA Firm as a staff accountant in Northbrook, Illinois. While at Brown, Brendan was involved with Federal and SALT tax compliances for families and small business. In December 2018, Brendan joined Ernst and Young as Staff Accountant in their Financial Services Office where he was promoted to Senior Tax Accountant shortly after. Around the same date as his start date, Brendan passed his final CPA exam and officially became a Certified Public Accountant.

Today, Brendan is a Tax Manager focusing on Federal Tax Compliance services for Private Equity Funds, Hedge Funds, and Mutual Funds. Brendan is married to his wife Megan. They have two children, Mason, Olivia, and their dog Willow.



## **Nathan Willard '14**

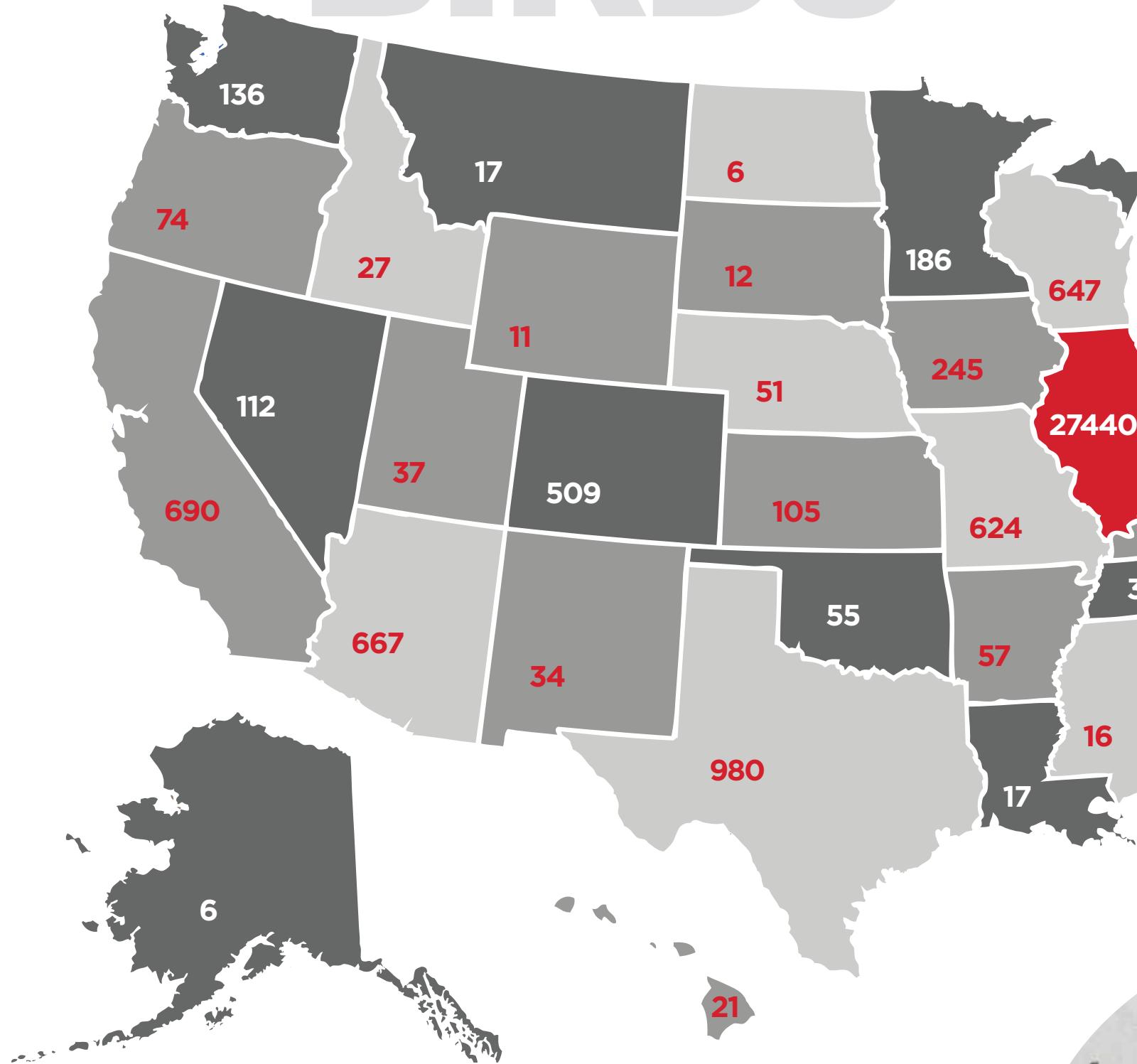
Nathan Willard is the Chief Executive Officer at JSM Living, a real estate and development firm located on the University of Illinois campus. He leads the strategic planning process in an effort to provide the best possible living and leasing opportunities. Entering his 15th year at JSM, Nathan was originally hired as a Leasing Agent and worked in various part-time roles as a student. After earning his Bachelor's in Human Resources Management, he returned to Champaign as an HR Generalist and soon after, was promoted as the HR Manager. Nathan took on oversight of all HR, IT, and Marketing operations in 2021 and most recently, began as CEO. Nathan credits his career to the examples put forth by his parents and countless role models.

Outside of work, he enjoys coaching youth sports and spending time in the outdoors. Additionally, he appreciates the opportunity to return to campus and speak with HRM students. Today, Nathan lives in White Heath with his wife Emily and their son Landon.

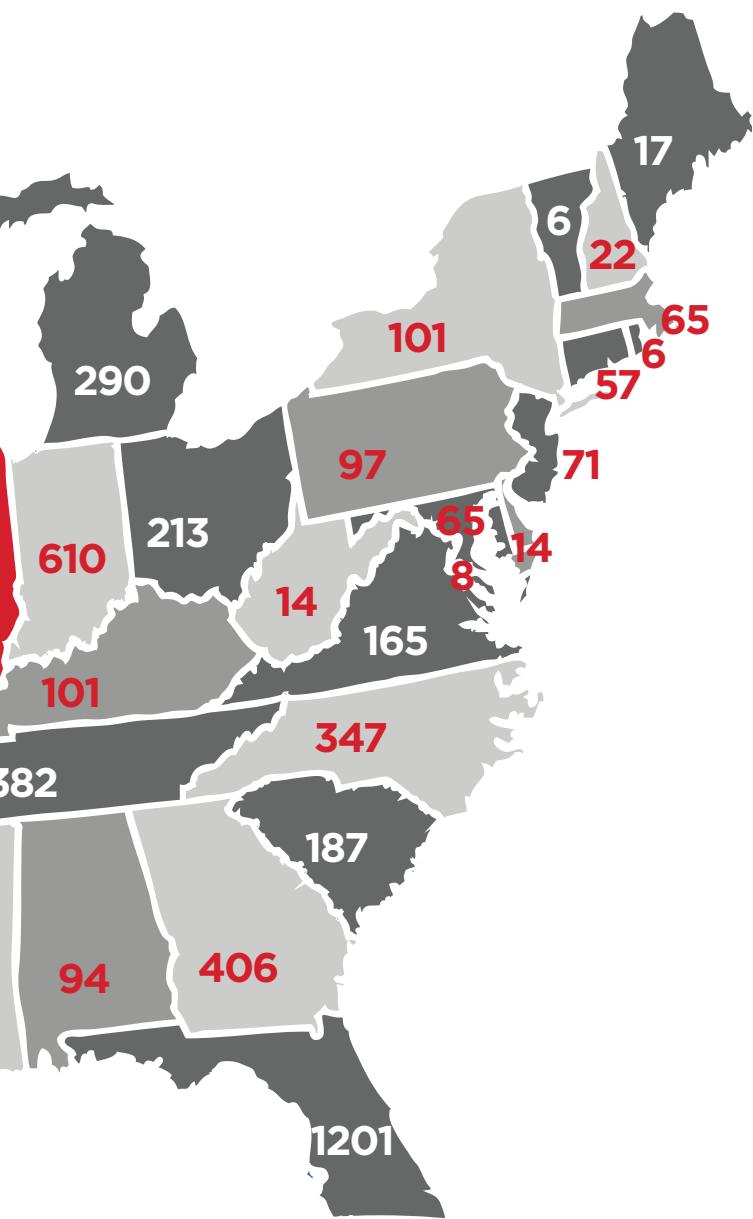




# BUSINESS BIRD IN THESE U



# UNITED STATES



# COB ALUMS LIVING AROUND THE WORLD

Australia	6	Italy	1
Austria	1	Japan	5
Bahamas	1	Jordan	1
Barbados	2	Korea	4
Belgium	1	Latvia	1
Cameroon	1	Luxembourg	1
Canada	22	Malaysia	13
Chile	1	Mexico	3
China	2	Netherlands	3
Congo	1	Nigeria	3
Costa Rica	1	Norway	2
Croatia	1	Orland Park	1
Czech Republic	1	Panama	119
Denmark	1	Portugal	1
England	5	Saudi Arabia	1
Finland	1	Serbia	1
France	3	Singapore	3
Germany	6	South Africa	2
Grand Cayman	1	South Korea	3
Honduras	1	Spain	5
Hong Kong	9	Spain 46021	1
Hungary	1	Sweden	3
India	4	Taiwan	3
Indonesia	4	Thailand	3
Ireland	1	Venezuela	2
Israel	1	Vietnam	2



# DEPARTMENTS

## COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

### Accounting

#### *Launch of ACC 303/403: Sustainability and ESG Reporting*

The department introduced a cutting-edge course on Sustainability and ESG Reporting, positioning itself among forward-thinking programs nationally. This new course prepares students to navigate the growing global demand for ethical and sustainable financial practices — an area of increasing relevance in both corporate and public sectors.

#### *Third year of the ACC High School Challenge*

The third annual High School Accounting Challenge was held on April 4, 2025, in the State Farm Hall of Business and was free for over 200 central Illinois participants.

More than a dozen Central Illinois schools sent multiple four-person teams to compete individually and as teams for trophies and tuition scholarships. Individual prize tiers included a \$3,000 scholarship for first-place finishers, \$2,000 for second, and \$1,000 for third.

#### *Scholarship Support and Student Recognition*

The department awarded 51 scholarships totaling \$227,000 at its annual Awards Dinner and celebrated student honorees such as Hannah O'Brien and Aava Farokhian, recipients of the AFWA Outstanding Women Who Count awards.

As a future business teacher, the high school accounting challenge holds a special place in my heart. Events like this are so important to inspire future business leaders and accountants. This competition builds students' confidence, critical thinking abilities. Watching students discover their passion for accounting through real-world challenges is incredibly rewarding, and it reminds me why I am committed to fostering these kinds of opportunities in my future classroom.

*Katelin D. Orstrom*  
Business Education Student  
Studio Teach Student Staff  
Unit 5 Substitute Teacher



### Finance, Insurance, and Law

#### *The Katie School sent six students on international internships to global centers of insurance including:*

- London – centering on the historic Lloyd's of London insurance markets,
- Zurich, Switzerland – related to the global reinsurance market
- Bermuda – learning about alternative markets, such as captive insurers

#### *FIL faculty received recognition for their scholarly activity further enhancing institutional reputation.*

- Vladimir Kotomin won "Best Paper" award at the Academy of Finance
- Stella Liao won the Journal of Financial Research "Editors' Choice Award"

During FY25, **43 students enrolled in one of the student-managed portfolio courses** including a \$1,300,000 portfolio of equity securities (*FIL 370: Educational Investment Fund*) and a \$1,400,000 portfolio of fixed-income funds (*FIL 346: Fixed-Income Security Analysis & Portfolio Management*).



### Management

#### *Successful Launch of New Negotiation Course*

The department launched MGT 340: Negotiation, a newly developed course by Dr. Hakan Ener, which equips students with essential business negotiation skills. The course was exceptionally well-received, reaching full enrollment in its first semester, showing ISU is meeting both student demand and instructional excellence.

#### *Strategic Faculty Recruitment in Key Areas*

The department successfully recruited two new tenure-track faculty members: Dr. Xian Cao (*Entrepreneurship*) and Dr. Faezeh Mehr Amirkamali (*Human Resource Management*), ensuring continued program strength and instructional capacity in high-demand sequences.



**Hakan Ener**

"Our undergraduate negotiation course was born out of a simple realization: Students need more practice solving business challenges face-to-face with their peers and colleagues. In this course, they placed themselves in the roles of recruiters and job candidates, business owners and lenders, and a variety of other roles to negotiate deals for up to an hour at a time. Students found value in learning how to speak to their counterparts effectively, and many stated that they immediately practiced their new skills in actual job negotiations."

**- Hakan Ener**

### Marketing

Case Competition Participation: Marketing analytics students represented the department in the preliminary round of the Dick's Sporting Goods/University of Pittsburgh Business Strategy Case Competition (Feb 10–21, 2025).

- National Sales Competition Success: Coached and sponsored students in national sales competitions, achieving 1st place among 60 universities in the premier sales competition in the nation.
- Student Organization Excellence: Collaborated with several registered student organizations, including the Delta Omega Chapter of Pi Sigma Epsilon, recognized as one of the top 5 chapters nationally.
- Graduate Program Promotion: Actively promoted the Master of Science in Business Education program, emphasizing its quality and accessibility as a fully online pedagogy degree

# BUSINESS WEEK



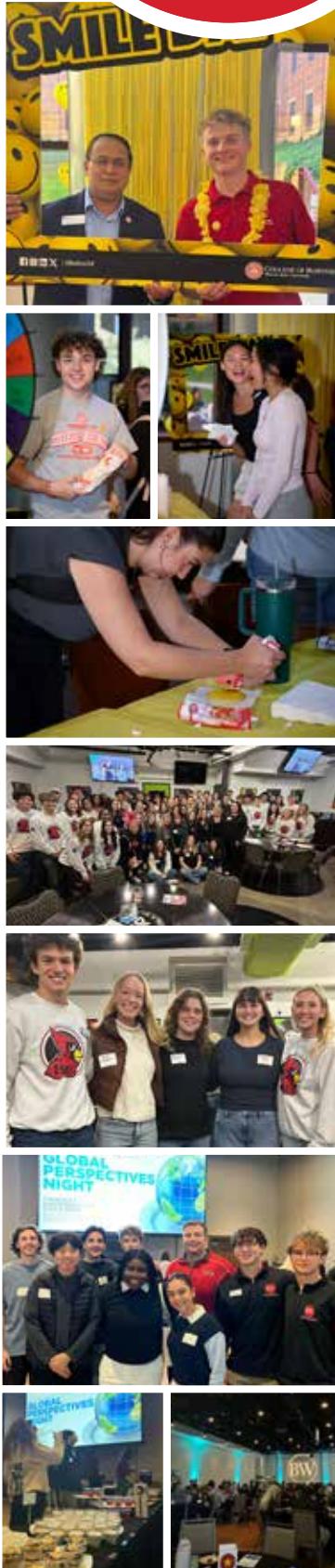
Since its founding in 1979, Business Week has been the heart of professional development in the College of Business at Illinois State. Business Week is a year-long program made up of development opportunities for all Illinois State University students that culminates with a week-long series of engaging professional events. It encourages personal interaction between students, alumni, potential employers, and industry leaders. Through this, students foster soft skills essential for success in the professional world.

Entering its 47th year, this series of interactive events include discussions of leadership, business etiquette, effective networking, goal setting, communication, and career management by Illinois State University alumni.

## INSPIRE - COB Smile Day

A lot of good days were made during the College of Business's inaugural COB Smile Day on October 3rd, inspired by World Smile Day, which is celebrated annually on October 4th. The goal of the event was to give students a chance to relax, and smile, during the challenging midpoint of the school year, with an emphasis on fostering a sense of community. Attendees were treated to complimentary goodies such as stress balls, stickers, and smiley pins, all distributed by COB faculty and staff. They also had the chance to decorate their own sugar cookies. Student Counseling Services set up a booth to distribute helpful mental health resources, and the beloved Illinois State Police resource dog, Pawficer Sage, made a special guest appearance. Activities included a wall for random acts of kindness, where participants shared their ideas, and a photo booth with fun, yellow props, and a card-making station, where attendees crafted cards for residents of a local nursing home.

Of the 250 supplies available for attendees, everything was gone by the end of the event, marking a successful first COB Smile Day. The atmosphere was upbeat and friendly, as students chatted, enjoyed the activities, and, most importantly, built community and spread smiles.



## After 5 Behavior: Elevating your professionalism

The After 5 Behavior event kicked off with a presentation led by four representatives from Enterprise Mobility, including Talent Acquisition Manager Monica Hood.

The four professionals discussed the importance of professionalism beyond the traditional 9-to-5 workday, covering topics like how to conduct yourself at happy hours and holiday work events, as well as how to maintain a personable yet professional relationship with coworkers. They also discussed the importance of building a personal brand, how to protect it, and strategies for expanding and maintaining your network. Their insights helped students feel more equipped to navigate after-hours social situations, a key component of effective networking in today's business environment. Following the presentation, attendees enjoyed a night of unlimited driving range golf, pizza, salad, and soda, while socializing with peers, networking with the professionals, and asking additional questions.

## INSPIRE - Global Perspectives: Multicultural Manners

On November 14th, the Business Week team hosted their second Global Perspectives Night, an event designed to explore the business customs and cultures of countries such as Vietnam, South Africa, and the Philippines.

Attendees had the opportunity to hear from speakers representing each country, who shared insights into their cultures and business practices. The experience was further enriched by traditional desserts from each nation, with recipes provided by the speakers to ensure the treats were as authentic as possible. This immersive event aimed to expand participants' understanding of global business practices while offering a delicious taste of diverse desserts from the speakers' respective countries.





## TRIVIA NIGHT: A Night of Friendly Competition

The Business Week team presented its 8th annual Trivia Night as a warm-up to the 2025 Business Week. Trivia Night is an evening where staff and students are invited to test their knowledge and let loose a bit before the more professional events of Business Week begin. Over 130 students took part in the event and as part of "giving back" to the COB community, the Business Week team is utilized all net proceeds from the event to help fund the COB's Pay It Forward (PIF) student fund. The PIF fund distributes financial support to COB students in need for professional development purposes.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DINNER

The Professional Development Dinner is Business Week's kickoff event, providing aspiring student professionals with the opportunity to learn valuable etiquette expertise. As the dinner is served, it becomes an opportunity to practice professional dinner etiquette, an important skill for those planning to enter the workforce. Even more, the dinner is open to professionals, allowing for networking opportunities with COB business partners. The 2025 dinner featured an etiquette skills presentation by Dr. Madeline Trimble, and a motivational talk from keynote speaker, Wendell Dallas, President and CEO of Nicor Gas.



## TRANSITION SEMINARS

The transition from college to corporate life can be daunting. Topics for each seminar were chosen by the BW Team to help educate students on what to expect and how to prepare as they enter their perspective industries. COB alumni, ISU staff, and industry professionals conducted the seminars and shared personal experiences. The topics for 2025 were *Invest in Yourself: Investment and Budgeting Strategies for Financial Success, Don't Overthink It! - Your First 5 Years Post-Graduation*, and *The Digital Workplace: Enhancing Productivity Using AI, Excel, and Beyond*.



## INSPIRE - Fundamentals of Business With Comedy Sportz

Malarkey Comedy, home of ComedySportz Chicago, brought their interactive Applied Improv group workshop to Business Week in 2025. Their engaging, hands-on event was designed to help students enhance their leadership, communication, and listening skills through fun, non-performance-based improv exercises. The workshop fostered an inclusive and supportive environment where participants could build meaningful relationships and strengthen connections. Through improv-based activities and practical discussions, attendees gained valuable insights and tools to become more effective communicators and leaders.



## BUSINESS WEEK KEYNOTE SPEAKER

This year, Business Week welcomed Jon Farney, President and Chief Executive Officer of State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company as their Keynote Speaker. With more than 30 years of experience with State Farm and within the insurance and financial services industry, Farney shared about his journey from ISU to leading one of the nation's top insurance companies, offering his knowledge, life experiences, and expertise. (see inset on next page)



## MENTOR/MENTEE CEREMONY

At the end of Business Week, over 200 students gather to celebrate the completion of the Mentor Program. After months of preparation, meetings between mentors and mentees, and attendance at Business Week events, the participants gather to receive their certificates of completion. Many mentees go on to become mentors themselves, work on the Business Week team, and/or continue to make lasting impressions on their peers and the College of Business.





## BW KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND HALL OF FAME RECIPIENT

Illinois State University College of Business had the honor of hosting Jon Farney, CEO of State Farm and proud ISU alum, as the keynote speaker for Business Week 2025. He was also inducted into 2025 COB Hall of Fame. Farney shared about his journey from ISU to leading one of the nation's top insurance companies, offering his knowledge, life experiences, and expertise.

We congratulate Farney on his well-deserved Hall of Fame induction and thank him for coming in to visit with the next generation of business leaders

# JON FARNEY



**WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BUSINESS WEEK?**



# CAMPUS AWARD

## College of Business Campus-Wide Recognition

### Illinois State University Small Registered Student Organization of the Year

Recognizes outstanding contributions by a small registered student organization (25 members or less). The organization must have significantly impacted the Illinois State campus community through activities that reflect its mission and have exceeded its goals for the past academic year.

**2025 Award Winner: COLLEGE OF BUSINESS - BUSINESS WEEK**



### Illinois State University Large Registered Student Organization of the Year

Recognizes the contributions of a larger student organization (26 or more members). The organization must have significantly impacted the Illinois State campus community through activities that reflect its mission and have exceeded its goals for the past academic year.

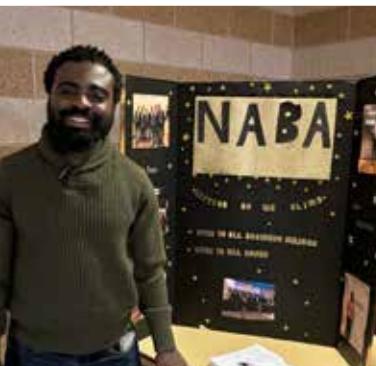
**2025 Award Winner: COLLEGE OF BUSINESS - WOMEN IN BUSINESS**



### Illinois State University Registered Student Organization Advisor of the Year

This award was developed to honor those advisors who contribute their time, energy, and dedication to registered student organizations at Illinois State University. It recognizes that without the support and knowledge of advisors, the accomplishments and advancements of our student organizations would not be possible. The recipient of this award receives a recognition plaque.

**2025 Award Winner: COLLEGE OF BUSINESS - DR. PUI YING TONG, Business Analytics Society**



# SLAB

## STUDENT LEADERSHIP ADVISORY BOARD

The Student Leaders Advisory Board (SLAB) is an organization comprised of the presidents of all Registered Student Organizations (RSO's) in the College of Business (COB). SLAB's purpose is to share the student perspective with the Dean of the COB. They attend monthly meetings with the dean or other college leaders about issues within the COB that concern current and prospective students.

The list of RSO's available for student participation in the Fall of 2025 are:

Accounting & Financial Womens Alliance

ALPFA

Alpha Kappa Psi

American Marketing Association

Beta Alpha Psi

Beta Gamma Sigma

Business Information Systems (BIS) Club

Business ACUMEN

Business Analytics Society

Business Week

Delta Sigma Pi

Future Business Leaders of America - Collegiate

Gamma Iota Sigma

Illinois State Students in Finance

International Business Association

National Association of Black Accountants

Phi Gamma Nu

Pi Sigma Epsilon

Sales Excellence Academy

Sigma Iota Epsilon

Society of Human Resource Management

Sports Marketing Student Association

Student Accounting Society

Women in Business



STUDENT LEADERSHIP  
ADVISORY BOARD

*College of Business*



*Learn more about  
COB RSO's and SLAB here*

### THE SLAB GALA

The College of Business Student Leadership Advisory Board's 3rd Annual SLAB Gala was an incredible event celebrating the dedication and achievements of our 24 Registered Student Organizations (RSO's). The spring event consistently draws well over 300 attendees, including students, staff, and esteemed guests. All 24 RSO's compete to win one of the nine categories created by the SLAB student team. Nominations are judged by a group of faculty and staff and announced at the evening event. Congratulations to all the students and RSOs nominated for awards and scholarships!

The 2025 winners were:

- Outstanding Collaborative Program Award – *Delta Sigma Pi*
- Innovation Award – *Business Analytics Society*
- Outstanding Service/Volunteer Organization - *Alpha Kappa Psi*
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Award – *Women in Business*
- Most Outstanding Marketing – *Phi Gamma Nu*
- Advisor of the Year – *Tommy Haddock*
- Small RSO of the Year – *Beta Gamma Sigma*
- Medium RSO of the Year – *Sales Excellence Academy*
- Large RSO of the Year – *American Marketing Association*

SLAB  
gala





# ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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