Scholarships transform lives

North County students flourish thanks to the Emerson Community Scholarship
Head Coach Ryan Young oversees practice in his 10th season with the Tritons volleyball program. The team got off to its best start in program history, winning its first 12 matches and running its record to 23-3 by the beginning of November. See page 8 for more campus views and news.
A singular education  The Pierre Laclede Honors College builds community to foster the growth of independent thinkers.

Transforming mental health  Work from teams at the Missouri Institute of Mental Health impacts all 114 Missouri counties and beyond.

Stronger together  An innovative partnership aims to raise awareness of disabled students’ needs on campus.

Making dreams possible  How Emerson’s $1.5 million commitment to UMSL scholarships for North County students is paying dividends.

Showcasing humanity  Alumnus Adrian O. Walker’s photography explores beauty traditions among black men.

Clarification: The spring 2019 issue of UMSL Magazine featured two grants awarded to the Center for Character and Citizenship totaling $5.4 million. CCC co-Director Melinda Bier was the principal investigator on both grants.
By David Morrison

Rebecca Rogers’ career in literacy education started well before she joined the University of Missouri–St. Louis College of Education faculty in 2006. It even predates her PhD in literacy in the Department of Reading at the University of Albany. When she was in high school in upstate New York, she served as a literacy volunteer. “I was 15, and I was tutoring adults who were much older than me in reading and seeing that power of language and literacy,” Rogers says. “I think I’ve always been intrigued by the entanglement of language, literacy and power.”

Now, Rogers is one of the leading experts in the field of critical discourse analysis and literacy studies. She has seven books and more than 75 articles and chapters in national and international journals to her name. You’ll find her latest article, a meta-ethnography of family literacy studies, authored with colleagues Catherine Compton-Lilly of the University of South Carolina and Tisha Lewis Ellison of the University of Georgia, in the latest issue of Reading Research Quarterly.

For her scholarly contributions, Rogers was named a Curators Distinguished Professor by the University of Missouri System, the highest honor bestowed on UM System faculty, in the spring. “Critical discourse analysis is a set of theories and methodologies to help people unravel and understand what’s happening with language and power,” Rogers says. “I’ve been one of the people who contributed to the rise of CDA in literacy studies – because it was mainly in linguistics – and I’ve also made it more accessible for public intellectuals: educators, counselors, community workers.”

Locally, she has been a longtime leader in Educators for Social Justice – a grassroots organization of teachers who collaborate to integrate social justice practices into their classrooms. On campus, she has helped grow UMSL’s Literacy Clinic from primarily an on-campus, face-to-face lab for preservice and in-service teachers into a clinic that has branches in local schools, now led by colleagues Katherine O’Daniels and Martille Elias.

The new frontier, Rogers says, is moving UMSL’s top-notch literacy teacher preparation programs online. “I think it puts UMSL on the map being a leader in the preparation of literacy specialists,” Rogers says. “I’m really excited about future research in this area and continuing to grow our program.”

Within the past year, the university has launched a series of in-demand degree programs that provide promising futures: a BS and MS in cybersecurity, a BSBA in entrepreneurship and BS degrees in actuarial science and computing technology. The creation of these new programs reflects the university’s dedication to provide students with the skills to help ensure career success.

“We are thrilled to launch these new degrees in St. Louis,” Interim Chancellor and Provost Kristin Sobolik says. “UMSL remains on the vanguard of innovative educational offerings with degrees that look forward to current and future students’ aspirations. Our graduates are uniquely prepared to be competitive in the job market, and they help address the region’s growing need for highly trained technology and actuarial professionals and entrepreneurs.” Each degree was developed to help fill talent gaps and workplace shortages in the St. Louis region and beyond. For example, the world cybersecurity talent shortage is nearing 3 million, according to (ISC)², a prominent industry certification body, and UMSL is one of two local universities to offer actuarial sciences and the only public St. Louis institution to offer entrepreneurship.

The university will continue expanding offerings to fit students’ needs: Two more degrees, a BS in sport management and a BA in organizational leadership, will start accepting students in the spring.
During Professor of English Frank Grady’s “English Literature to 1790” course, students (from left) Meredith Alton, Sophie Kluba, Rachael Wood and Dani Brown-Schnurr perform a staged reading of the melodramatic final scene of Nahum Tate’s 1681 revision of Shakespeare’s “King Lear” – a happy-ending, Restoration version of the play.

Barb Shaffer shows off work celebrating the St. Louis Blues’ 2019 Stanley Cup win done while auditing a biweekly printmaking course in the Department of Art and Design.

Legendary jazz composer Benny Golson visits campus in September to give the UMSL Jazz Combo a clinic that turns into an hour of advice and behind-the-scenes storytelling.

Line dancing livens up the grounds outside of the Thomas Jefferson Library during the annual Fall Involvement Expo.

From left, St. Louis Area Foodbank Vice President Lanora Gooden, Save A Lot Vice President Tony Botos, Interim Chancellor and Provost Kristin Sobolik, Chancellor Emeritus Tom George, Associate Vice Provost D’Andre Braddix and Director of Student Social Services Robin Kimberlin formally dedicate the Triton Pantry on May 23 on the first floor of the Millennium Student Center. Created to combat the problem of food insecurity on campus, the pantry serves 160-180 students and community members each month.

Students, faculty and staff win bragging rights during the inaugural College Transit Challenge by logging the most social media check-ins as they make use of the Metro system. Citizens for Modern Transit staged the daylong challenge to highlight the impact and importance of transit in the St. Louis region.

Brian Owens (at right) and Michael McDonald take to the stage at the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center in September for a unique community celebration and tribute concert to the original soul of Ferguson.

Two students greet the new semester – and campus photographer August Jennewein – during Weeks of Welcome, the trademark beginning-of-the-year program designed to build community at UMSL.

College of Nursing BSN students (from left) Madeline Klein, Jennifer Underwood and Justin Pursley get some hands-on experience in their “Clinical Simulation” class.

The shuttles get a redesign featuring the trident logo as UMSL Parking and Transportation extended its shuttle service contract.
There are many symptoms that might make older adults—and those closest to them—start to worry about the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease and other age-related brain disorders. They can include an increase in the frequency of fairly routine memory lapses, such as when persons forget why they walked into a room or where they last left their keys, wallet or sunglasses. In other cases, individuals might start repeating themselves during conversations.

No matter what trips the alarm for someone to go visit a doctor, newly diagnosed patients and their family members will end up facing some version of the same question: “What’s going to happen next?”

A precise answer remains elusive. “Historically, our answer is that individuals with neuro-degenerative disorders will experience worse symptoms as the disease progresses,” University of Missouri-St. Louis Professor Robert Paul says. “But the rate of progression differs from one person to the next. We know, on average, that individuals will develop cognitive symptoms of sufficient severity to impair their ability to manage daily living skills like cooking, driving, managing their medication and staying on top of their bills.

“However, we cannot predict the timing of these progressive changes for each individual using traditional clinical techniques.”

Paul is one of the researchers trying to unlock those answers in just one of the projects he’s leading in his role as director of the Missouri Institute of Mental Health.

His team is taking a new approach, using advanced neuroimaging and high-powered computational algorithms to find solutions. “Clinical scientists are trained to think mechanistically—variable Y is due to variable X,” Paul says. “But degenerative brain disorders are more likely to involve interactions among multiple variables that differ in small but meaningful ways for each individual, even though the final expression of symptoms looks similar.”

Technical advances and greater computing power make it possible to identify the combination of factors that work in tandem to increase individual risk.

The work Paul’s team is doing is well aligned with the goals of the University of Missouri System’s Precision Health Initiative, which aims to capitalize on advances in genetics, biology, big data, bioengineering and medical technologies to usher in a new era of personalized health care for Missourians and other clinical populations around the world. The initiative is manifested in the NextGen Precision Health Institute being built in Columbia, Missouri.
Paul’s work also fits well with the historical origins of MIMH. The institute was established in 1962 as the Missouri Institute of Psychiatry on the grounds of the St. Louis State Hospital as the research and training arm of the Missouri Department of Mental Health. The University of Missouri–Columbia School of Medicine took over its operations in 1965, though it remained in St. Louis, closely connected to the Department of Mental Health.

Much of the early work at the institute – beyond training mental health professionals for public clinical psychiatry – was in bioinformatics, the science of collecting and analyzing complex biological data, with a focus to include behavioral health as well as mental health disorders or crisis situations. Riedel also has assisted her in training all the instructors across the state – about 300 of them. Those instructors have, in turn, taken the lessons to more than 50,000 Missourians through the eight-hour training program since 2008.

The institute manages to touch people in all 114 counties of the state. Rachel Christiansen Taube is the director of Mental Health First Aid, a public education program that teaches participants to recognize risk factors and warning signs of mental health disorders or crisis situations.

Paul is part of an international consortium working with long-range data from HIV/AIDS patients in Bangkok, Thailand, exploring the dynamics between infection, the immune system’s response and the impact on the brain.

As focused as many MIMH researchers are on initiatives in Missouri, the institute’s work also stretches beyond its borders and around the globe to more than 10 countries.

Paul joined the staff at MIMH in 2008. “We’ve gotten really good at writing really good grants.”

“Th...
### MIMH GRANTS & FUNDS

**Fiscal Year 2019**

**Four Areas of Impact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$573,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Outreach</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$1,441,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and Evaluation</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$5,448,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>$4,338,513</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75 projects totaling $11,802,068

---

There are a lot of words that could describe the Pierre Laclede Honors College at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. "Invested" is the first that comes to Maddie Woodham’s mind but there’s also "quirky." Sarah Wilson offers up "inclusive" and "satire," and for Associate Dean Dan Gerth, it’s "humor" and "mentors." Monique Edwards chooses "empowering" and "connection."

For the college’s dean, Edward Munn Sanchez, the choice is obvious. "Fun," he says. “It’s something that’s hard to explain because the goal isn’t to have fun. People are here doing their work, doing what they want to do. But it is really a place where people are enjoying themselves.”

“There is not a single day where there isn’t something that you laugh at, and there’s not a single day where you don’t have an enjoyable conversation. It’s amazing, when that happens every day, how enjoyable that is. It makes the Honors College a truly humane place.”

---

Residents of the upperclassmen Honors College dorm, Villa North Hall, (clockwise from left) Jenna Haddock, Simon Langrehr, alumnus Tanner Emring, Maddie Woodham and Madison Koogler gather for a meal.

---

MISSOURI INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

The Honors College fosters student individually within tight-knit community

Family on campus

By Jessica Rogen
“Everyone knows everyone really quickly. We become a family fast.”

– Associate Dean Dan Gerth

That thread of joy and good humor runs through the college’s often-overlapping academic, extracurricular and social spheres – even in halls thanks to a gaggle of students who covered all resident paintings’ eyes with googly ones: “the result is a unique, tight-knit academic and social community within the larger university setting that enhances students’ experiences by supporting growth and individual thought. About 600 of UMSL’s approximate 7,000 undergraduates are working toward an Honors College certificate in addition to a major in a different college. By serving students from a wide array of disciplines, the college – which is celebrating its 30th anniversary – upends the definition of typical liberal arts education.

“It’s really more for students who are intellectually curious, that want to do something beyond what they would usually do in their majors,” Munn Sanchez says. “That can be in the classroom, but it can also be outside of the classroom.” Every freshman who enters the college takes the “Cultural Traditions” seminar, which surveys Western and non-Western cultures and introduces students to the higher education classroom. “Not all are service oriented, but each class is engaging,” Edwards says. “They usually make sure to let us know it’s a group environment. It prompts something inside of me to share what I think. You feel like you have something to contribute, and that’s very empowering.”

Many of the college’s interdisciplinary classes couldn’t be found elsewhere such as “History of Conspiracy Theories” or “Swipe Right: Mathematics of Modern Dating and Love.” But what they have in common is a focus on producing excellent writing. Throughout school, students work on a portfolio containing both school work and practical documents such as résumés that they review with a faculty mentor before graduation. The writing focus materializes in the college’s twin journals: Bellerive, an annual literary magazine, and Brain Stew, a biweekly zine that’s a home for uncensored student thought and encapsulates the college’s sense of satirical humor: “It’s really easy to miss that in all the tomfoolery there’s a lot of really good writing, and there’s a lot of good writing done by people in different disciplines,” Munn Sanchez says. “Irreverence is at the heart of the college. It’s a critical stance that you’re trying to teach students to have – to look at their own assumptions and ask questions about them in a significant and real way.”

That speaks to Edwards’ view of the college – an enhancement of her time at UMSL that opened up opportunities for uncensored student thought and for uncensored student thought and encapsulates the college’s sense of satirical humor: “It’s really easy to miss that in all the tomfoolery there’s a lot of really good writing, and there’s a lot of good writing done by people in different disciplines,” Munn Sanchez says. “Irreverence is at the heart of the college. It’s a critical stance that you’re trying to teach students to have – to look at their own assumptions and ask questions about them in a significant and real way.”

That’s a sentiment echoed by Woodham. “We want you to be here at the Honors College, and we’re going to make sure we do things along the way to show you that we care,” she says. “I think that’s the best part.”
AIMS TO MAKE UMSL MORE INCLUSIVE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

By Steve Walentik

Jacob Smith allowed himself a brief moment to marvel at the turnout when the Able-Disable Partnership gathered for its first meeting of the 2019-20 academic year.

Only one or two chairs remained unfilled as a group of 30-some people packed into the small meeting room on the third floor of the Millennium Student Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. There were men and women, students of different races and ethnic backgrounds—all inspired by the chance to raise awareness of people with physical as well as intellectual and developmental disabilities and advocate for ways to improve their experiences on campus.

“It’s been pretty amazing,” Smith says. “There was a time when this was just an idea in my head.”

About a year earlier, Smith, a triple major in psychology, history and secondary education, joined the Student Government Association as a means of getting involved. The Jefferson College transfer was meeting with Myrtus Orey, then the SGA’s student director of diversity and inclusion, and they were discussing ways UMSL could be more inclusive for racial and ethnic minorities as well as LGBTQ+ members of the campus community. Smith urged her to also give a voice to students with disabilities.

There currently are 420 students at UMSL registered to receive accommodations from Disability Access Services, though the number of students with disabilities is almost certainly higher because not all disabilities are reported. Smith remembers Orey asking him if there was a student organization devoted to disability issues. When he answered that there wasn’t, she told him he should start one.

“I never considered the possibility of starting a group on campus that was dedicated to disability issues,” Smith said. “I just immersed myself with this diverse group of people, I saw the problems that are in place.”

“Now that they’re hearing a lot of these issues, they’re very willing to work with us,” Smith said. “I know a lot of the people that we’ve worked with and met with, they’re really excited about this group. They love that this came together.”

“You’re right, I should,” he said.

That set the process in motion.

Smith had been challenged by his own disability—autism—throughout his life. At the time, he was volunteering with UMSL’s SUCCEED, the post-secondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. He felt motivated to try to make a difference.

He met Luke Barber through the SUCCEED program and asked if Barber, a dual major in public policy administration and social work, would like to help develop a disability-focused student organization. Barber had participated in the Missouri Developmental Disability Council’s Partners in Policymaking program in 2018 and was eager to join the effort. It was his idea to call it the Able-Disable Partnership.

Jacob Brandt, a computer science major who befriended Smith while at Jefferson College, also got involved as the partnership was getting off the ground. So, too, did Kevin Hill, a business major who’d led an earlier effort to create such an organization.

They only needed to gather six more signatures from interested students before they could petition to become an officially recognized student organization. They won approval in January with Associate Teaching Professor Leighanne Heisel from the Department of English serving as their faculty advisor.

Smith’s original vision for the partnership was to generate broad awareness for disability issues, and the organization has hosted a series of forums starting last spring on visual impairment and autism.

But he and his co-founders have also seen specific areas where UMSL can improve to meet the latest Americans with Disabilities Act standards and become a more welcoming place for students with disabilities.

“The group has definitely opened people’s eyes,” Brandt said. “A year ago, I wasn’t very big in the disability access stuff at all, and now I’ve become a huge advocate. The more I saw, the more I immersed myself with this diverse group of people, I saw the problems that are in place. When we talk to people, they just go, ‘You know what? You’ve got a point there. I never thought about that. I never considered that.’”

This semester, Brandt and fellow student Maxwell Agbakpem, who uses a wheelchair, worked with Dean of Libraries Christopher Dumes and other staff members to help create an accessible study room in the Thomas Jefferson Library. They are also adding an accessible desk to the computer lab.

People at UMSL have been open to listening and making changes.

“This group has definitely opened people’s eyes,” Brandt said. “When we talk to people, they just go, ‘You know what? You’ve got a point there. I never thought about that. I never considered that.’”

College, also got involved as the partnership was getting off the ground. So, too, did Kevin Hill, a business major who’d led an earlier effort to create such an organization.

They only needed to gather six more signatures from interested students before they could petition to become an officially recognized student organization. They won approval in January with Associate Teaching Professor Leighanne Heisel from the Department of Communication and Media and Assistant Professor Lauren Obermark from the Department of English serving as their faculty advisors.

Smith’s original vision for the partnership was to generate broad awareness for disability issues, and the organization has hosted a series of forums starting last spring on visual impairment and autism.

But he and his co-founders have also seen specific areas where UMSL can improve to meet the latest Americans with Disabilities Act standards and become a more welcoming place for students with disabilities.

Hill had started a list of places on campus that were difficult to navigate for people with physical impairments. The Able-Disable Partnership has been adding to it and next semester plans to hold a “Disability Walk and Roll” event—similar to the SGA’s annual safety event—to move around campus looking for areas of concern.

Beyond the infrastructure issues that might exist, the Able-Disable Partnership has also been working with other student groups and educating them on being more inclusive for people with disabilities.

“Now that they’re hearing a lot of these issues, they’re very willing to work with us,” Smith said. “I know a lot of the people that we’ve worked with and met with, they’re really excited about this group. They love that this came together.”

About a year earlier, Smith, a triple major in psychology, history and secondary education, joined the Student Government Association as a means of getting involved. The Jefferson College transfer was meeting with Myrtus Orey, then the SGA’s student director of diversity and inclusion, and they were discussing ways UMSL could be more inclusive for racial and ethnic minorities as well as LGBTQ+ members of the campus community. Smith urged her to also give a voice to students with disabilities.

There currently are 420 students at UMSL registered to receive accommodations from Disability Access Services, though the number of students with disabilities is almost certainly higher because not all disabilities are reported. Smith remembers Orey asking him if there was a student organization devoted to disability issues. When he answered that there wasn’t, she told him he should start one.

“I never considered the possibility of starting a group on campus that was dedicated to disability issues,” Smith said. “I just immersed myself with this diverse group of people, I saw the problems that are in place.”

“When we talk to people, they just go, ‘You know what? You’ve got a point there. I never thought about that. I never considered that.’”

College, also got involved as the partnership was getting off the ground. So, too, did Kevin Hill, a business major who’d led an earlier effort to create such an organization.

They only needed to gather six more signatures from interested students before they could petition to become an officially recognized student organization. They won approval in January with Associate Teaching Professor Leighanne Heisel from the Department of Communication and Media and Assistant Professor Lauren Obermark from the Department of English serving as their faculty advisors.

Smith’s original vision for the partnership was to generate broad awareness for disability issues, and the organization has hosted a series of forums starting last spring on visual impairment and autism.

But he and his co-founders have also seen specific areas where UMSL can improve to meet the latest Americans with Disabilities Act standards and become a more welcoming place for students with disabilities.
This fall marked five years since Emerson stepped forward in the wake of the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, with a commitment to help rebuild, heal, empower and change the community through the transformative power of education.

In September 2014, the global manufacturing and technology company, which is headquartered in Ferguson, announced it would donate $1.5 million for University of Missouri–St. Louis scholarships dedicated to students from north St. Louis County. The resulting Emerson Community Scholarship Program awards annual $5,000 grants to eligible UMSL students from 13 area high schools with preference given to those pursuing degrees in business or in STEM disciplines.

“Research shows a college education is influential in terms of a person’s lifetime earnings potential, career opportunities, job satisfaction and community involvement,” says Dave Rabe, Emerson vice president of corporate social responsibility. “We wanted to help make college more feasible for students with limited financial means from north St. Louis County high schools, and especially for those who are the first generation of their families to attend college. UMSL came to us with a sound proposal, and we’ve been pleased with their stewardship of our funding and to see the results.”

A big benefit of the scholarship, explains UMSL Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Alan Byrd, is that it allows students to focus on school—not just on making ends meet financially.

“St. Louis has gone through a lot over the last decade,” he says. “For students from north county, knowing they will have a scholarship waiting for them at UMSL when they complete high school does a lot for their confidence, morale and state of mind. It was a life-changing opportunity for many of these students and their families.”

Since 2015, the scholarship has benefited 64 individuals, with 39 studying business or STEM-related majors. Of the total recipients, almost half are first-generation college students.

“Research shows a college education is influential in terms of a person’s lifetime earnings potential, career opportunities, job satisfaction and community involvement,” says Dave Rabe, Emerson vice president of corporate social responsibility. “We wanted to help make college more feasible for students with limited financial means from north St. Louis County high schools, and especially for those who are the first generation of their families to attend college. UMSL came to us with a sound proposal, and we’ve been pleased with their stewardship of our funding and to see the results.”

A big benefit of the scholarship, explains UMSL Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Alan Byrd, is that it allows students to focus on school—not just on making ends meet financially.

“St. Louis has gone through a lot over the last decade,” he says. “For students from north county, knowing they will have a scholarship waiting for them at UMSL when they complete high school does a lot for their confidence, morale and state of mind. It was a life-changing opportunity for many of these students and their families.”

Since 2015, the scholarship has benefited 64 individuals, with 39 studying business or STEM-related majors. Of the total recipients, almost half are first-generation college students.
Fredrick Muikia
Computer Science

People have made the difference for Fredrick Muikia.

New friendships with other Kenyan immigrants helped smooth the transition to the U.S. and ninth grade at Hazelwood West High School in 2011. Then, Derrick Freeman, assistant director of Multicultural Student Services, made the difference from high school to UMSL.

“We have amazing mentors,” Muikia says. “He’s walked me through the whole journey—from picking classes and professors, getting tutors and connecting with events, with groups. More than just school advice.”

Muikia found UMSL thanks to his high school guidance counselor, who encouraged him to apply for scholarships. Receiving the Emerson Community Scholarship made him chose UMSL. As a first-generation student and the second of seven siblings, those scholarships were instrumental in allowing her to attend a four-year institution.

At UMSL, Muikia chose computer science, which aligns with his interest in solving problems.

“Technology is everything right now,” he says. “I didn’t want to just watch while everything is moving but to understand where all this is going, be a part of it.”

Emma Norman
Business Administration

Emma Norman believes in the universal power of coffee.

She’s hoping to use the beverage, and her UMSL education, to help forge bonds among neighborhoods.

“I have always had a dream of opening my own nonprofit coffee shop one day in the St. Louis area to help reunify our city,” she says. “There’s so much division, and coffee is one drink that people—no matter where you’re from or your age or race or anything—bond over. I see so much creativity in St. Louis, but there is not always space for people to cultivate it, especially those who come from lower-income areas.”

Though it was that aspiration that led Norman to business school, the Emerson Community Scholarship combined with the Opportunity Scholars Program made her choose UMSL. As a first-generation student and the second of seven siblings, those scholarships were instrumental in allowing her to attend a four-year institution.

Norman found marketing, which ties her incorporates creativity with her business acumen. She also discovered Campus Crusade for Christ, a student organization that has become the sophomore’s spiritual home on campus.

Norman has participated in mission trips to Guatemala and Israel and plans to do so again. She’d like to eventually use proceeds earned at her coffee shop to support full-time missionaries.

“My faith is a really big part of my life,” she says. “I want to better society and impact the world.”

“I want to better society and impact the world.”  
— Emma Norman

Maleah Lucas
Education

In high school, Maleah Lucas was worried about her future. The first-generation student applied to college in the wake of her father’s death with the knowledge that, as one of five siblings, she’d have to pay her way or not attend.

Receiving the Emerson Community Scholarship changed everything.

“I was driving, but I had to pull over,” Lucas says. “I screamed at the top of my lungs because I was so relieved. I kind of talked to my dad a little bit like, ‘OK, I don’t have to worry about this anymore.’”

Now in her sophomore year at UMSL, Lucas is excited to begin working toward a degree in education. She’s driven by her desire to do good.

“I always knew I liked helping people,” she says, explaining she’d witnessed disengaged peers not graduate. “I want to make an impact, help them enjoy school and say that it can be fun.”

She’s inspired by Multicultural Student Services coaches who helped her through some difficult moments her first year. That, along with watching her family struggle with her father’s death, has inspired Lucas to aim for a master’s degree in counseling.

“That’s just one of her big dreams. I’m going to do my best to work toward them,” she says. “I want to make my dad proud.”

“The scholarship gave me that chance to be independent and figure out life on my own, which was hard but possible,” Fantroy says. “It got me out of my comfort zone.”

The difference the nurses made for her family inspired Fantroy, and now one of her goals is to become a Spanish-English medical translator to better help others.

“I like to spend my time getting to know my patients, their backgrounds and their families,” she says. “Cancer patients are really positive even though a lot of them face a bad outcome. I think it’s important to have a good health care team that cares about you beyond your illness.”

“The scholarship gave me that chance to be independent and figure out life on my own.”
— Rachel Fantroy
Alumnus Adrian O. Walker sees the world through his own lens

By David Morrison

When Adrian O. Walker first enrolled in the University of Missouri–St. Louis, he was a photography major. That didn’t last long, though.

“When I got to the class, I saw that everybody had a camera. I was like, ‘What the heck?’” Walker says. “I didn’t know I had to buy a camera for the class. I thought it was something where they were going to let us borrow one. I had to drop the class because I couldn’t afford to get a camera. I was a freshman in college. I was already broke.”

Walker found sociology through MK Stallings, a friend working in the department at the time, and graduated with his UMSL degree in 2010. Walker gravitated back to photography when he and friends founded Made Monarchs – a blog that grew into an online media and events company. He also went on to earn undergraduate certificates in photography and gender studies.

He never thought he was “making work.” He was just doing what he loved.

“I take what I learned from the sociology side of things and create relationships between me and the subject,” Walker says. “I’m able to make a connection in the most rational way. I’m human. They’re human, so I can connect with them.”

By showcasing his subjects’ humanity, Walker’s work has earned tremendous acclaim. He was one of 47 artists chosen for this year’s Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. His photo “Black Virgin Mary” will be on display in The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., until next August, then travel with the exhibition to two other museums through 2022.

Walker is also one of only seven artists among those 47 whose work has been singled out for a special prize during the exhibition.

“It’s really an amazing experience,” Walker says.
The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery selected Walker’s photograph “Black Virgin Mary” (on this page) as part of this year’s Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. It is collected in his book “We Matter” along with his work “Breath” (bottom right).

Top right: Adrian O. Walker shows his works at The Greens in Columbia, Missouri.

“We Matter”
The Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery selected Walker’s photograph “Black Virgin Mary” (on this page) as part of this year’s Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. It is collected in his book “We Matter” along with his work “Breath” (bottom right).

“I’m able to make a connection in the most rational way. I’m human. They’re human, so I can connect with them.”

Walker’s photo in the exhibit comes from his latest collection, titled “We Matter,” which explores beauty traditions among African American men. Walker says he imbues each portrait with an intimacy that erases the possibility of threat often assigned to black men and instead pushes the viewer to see the power of kinship within the black community.

“He strives, for example, to recast the durag – often seen as a menacing feature on black men – as what it actually means to his community. “It’s something we wear to protect our hair. It’s not just a durag, it’s a crown,” Walker says. “This crown symbolizes a lot when it comes to protection. Being looked at as a threat is a threat in itself. We are merely creating art on top of our heads.”

In the aftermath of the Michael Brown shooting in 2014, Walker began working to portray a different side of African American communities. A native of north St. Louis, Walker knew the Ferguson area well, had friends from there and, through his work, wanted to show the side of the people that he felt was missing from the newscasts. In 2015, he self-published his book of photography from that time, “My Lens, Our Ferguson,” which was shortlisted for the Paris Photo-Aperture Foundation First PhotoBook award that year.

“It taught me how to slow down,” Walker says. “I wasn’t out there taking photos like wildfire, just trying to get the best image to put up on Instagram and get the most likes. I waited. I was just taking images on my camera – aka iPhone because no one wanted anything pointed at them during that time in Ferguson – and I made something happen out of it. It got me to where I am now.”

Walker lives in Oakland, California, and works for VSCO, a creative channel that builds tools, spaces and connections. Oakland’s Pt. 2 Gallery represents Walker, and he wants to keep revealing truths through his photography.

“We’re forever a student and always seeking out help or trying to build something or making more connections.” Walker says. “I don’t know where I want to be. I just know I want to keep going.”

Top right: Adrian O. Walker shows his works at The Greens in Columbia, Missouri.
Gloria Clark Reno has been away from the action of the courtroom over the past year since she began presiding over Missouri’s 21st Judicial Circuit, the state’s largest. But she’s had plenty of other responsibilities to keep her busy. “Everything comes through this office,” Reno says from her fourth-floor quarters in the St. Louis County Courthouse in Clayton, Missouri. “You get a different viewpoint of the court, and you really understand this is a multimillion-dollar operation. There are a lot of tax dollars that go to operating this court, and it belongs to the citizens of St. Louis County. We want to make sure that we take care of the physical plant and provide excellent service to the public.”

One of her first meetings in the new position last fall was with the safety and justice challenge.
Nathan Roth didn’t plan on getting into comets when he came to the University of Missouri–St. Louis as an undergraduate student. He knew he wanted to study physics, but it wasn’t until his junior year when he took an astrophysics course with Professor Elena Gibb that he discovered his interest in protoplanetary disks, dense clouds of dust and gas surrounding certain stars. He landed a summer research position in Gibb’s lab and, from there, transitioned to studying comets with her.

“It was sort of an accident,” he says. “I fell into it. But once I started, I really loved it.”

Eventually, when the much-anticipated James Webb Space Telescope launches, he’ll be working with that, too. For his work at UMSL, Roth analyzed comets’ compositions by looking at their comas, or tails of ice and dust, using single telescopes. At NASA, he’ll be using the 66-dishes of the Atacama Large Millimeter Array — the most sensitive radio array on the world. He’ll be repeating the radio and submillimeter observations, which will allow him to look for more complex molecules, including organics like sugars and simple alcohols.

“I was sort of an accident,” he says. “I fell into it. But once I started, I really loved it.”

As a graduate student, Roth picked up a NASA Earth and Science Fellowship. He worked at UMSL’s own Richard D. Schwartz physics program. For his work at UMSL, Roth analyzed comets’ compositions by looking at their comas, or tails of ice and dust, using single telescopes. At NASA, he’ll be utilizing the 66-dishes of the Atacama Large Millimeter Array — the most sensitive radio array on the world. He’ll be repeating the radio and submillimeter observations, which will allow him to look for more complex molecules, including organics like sugars and simple alcohols.

Graduating high school at the height of the financial collapse, Spoerry delayed college and, several years later, began taking classes at St. Louis Community College. Her path forward wasn’t clearly formed, but it had to include two things: hard skills and the ability to help people.

After graduating with her associate degree, another election had a profound effect on Spoerry. She watched the results of the 2008 presidential election and was spurred to work harder, starting her BSPPA coursework at UMSL to fight to protect those who felt vulnerable.

“I feel a lot of compassion because I know that if you run the simulation of my life 100 times, I don’t end up here many of those,” Spoerry says. “If any one of the cards on my house of cards had buckled, I wouldn’t be here. I want to make sure that other people don’t end up here.”

For her, public policy should make people’s lives better and cultivate opportunities for the citizenry.

“I am very grateful to my professors in the MPPA program,” she says. “They understand that the point is to put good leadership — for local government, for nonprofit, for research professionals — into St. Louis and our region.”

Now, Spoerry uses those skills to serve the residents of Florissant. Her office facilitates programs related to community development block grants, including home improvement loans; emergency heating and cooling grants; mortgage, rent and utility assistance; volunteer efforts; down payment assistance and other housing resources. These programs benefit residents, and for Spoerry, that’s the job. For her, public policy should make people’s lives better and cultivate opportunities for the citizenry.

“I feel a lot of compassion because I know that if you run the simulation of my life 100 times, I don’t end up here many of those,” Spoerry says. “If any one of the cards on my house of cards had buckled, I wouldn’t be here. I want to make sure that other people get the opportunities, the leg up, that I got.”
1960s

Stephen Novack, BA 1968, was recognized by Chambers and Partners USA for his firm's work in commercial litigation in St. Louis. Stephen is a partner and co-founder of Novack and Macey LLP.

Kirk Richter, BSBA 1968, received the 2019 Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award presented by the UMSL Alumni Association at the annual IGNITE! conference on Aug. 24.

1970s

Thomas Tuzinski, ME 1973, was inducted into the Greater St. Louis Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame on April 18. Thomas taught physical education at Bayless High School for 30 years.

Patrick Gadelt, BA 1973, received a Distinguished Alumni Award at the 2019 UMSL Founders Dinner on Oct. 10. Patrick is an attorney at Husch Blackwell.

Kenneth Slavens, BA 1974, MA 1976, joined the senior arbitrator panel of United States Arbitration & Mediation. Kenneth is a partner at Husch Blackwell.

L. Jack Vasquez, Jr., BA 1974, was appointed as district director of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's St. Louis District office.

Thomas Hilton, BSBA 1975, is a partner in the forensic and litigation services group at Anders CPAs + Advisors.

Missouri Society of CPAs as chair. Thomas Hilton, BSBA 1975, joined the UMSL Founders Dinner on Oct. 10 in St. Louis.

Kevin Mansell, BSBA 1975, was elected to the board of directors for Columbia Sportswear Company.

1980s

Lee Rauhut, BA 1975, retired from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Records Management Center in St. Louis.

Connie Bunkhardt, BA 1976, received the National Wildlife Federation Conservation Achievement Award in Conservation Leadership in recognition of her efforts to protect Missouri’s wetlands and habitat through co-founding the Katy Land Trust and Magnificent Missouri.

Linda Birley, BSBA 1977, MA 1982, joined Union Presbyterian Seminary as director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Scott Stream, BSBA 1976, was named to the board of the St. Louis Association of Health Underwriters as treasurer. Scott is the owner of Stream Benefits Group.

Lee Rauhut, BA 1975, retired from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Records Management Center in St. Louis.

Connie Bunkhardt, BA 1976, received the National Wildlife Federation Conservation Achievement Award in Conservation Leadership in recognition of her efforts to protect Missouri’s wetlands and habitat through co-founding the Katy Land Trust and Magnificent Missouri.

Linda Birley, BSBA 1977, MA 1982, joined Union Presbyterian Seminary as director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Scott Stream, BSBA 1976, was named to the board of the St. Louis Association of Health Underwriters as treasurer. Scott is the owner of Stream Benefits Group.

1990s

Joe Blanner has vision

After serving for a few years on the Alumni Association Governing Board as chair of the advocacy committee, chair of the leadership council committee and, most recently, as vice president, Joe Blanner’s now trying the role of president on for size.

With the full support of the board behind him, he sees the board committees, particularly the engagement committee, as a way to fully impact the alumni and community and grow support for existing and emerging alumni affinity groups. A partner with the law firm of McCarthy, Leonard & Kaemmerer, he graduated from UMSL in 1998 with a BSBA.

Honing alumni

The UMSL Alumni Association recognized the 2019 Distinguished Alumni awardees during the 28th annual Founders Dinner on Oct. 10 at the Ritz-Carlton in Clayton, Missouri.

This recognition is bestowed on alumni whose extraordinary careers and significant roles in community service set them apart from their peers. This year’s honorees are (from left) Orvin Kimbrough, MBA 2002; Patrick Gadelt, BA 1973; Sara Foster, BA 1983; Tom Migneron, BSBA 1982; and Gary Morse, MA 1983, PhD 1985. Luigi Wewege, BSBA 2009, received the Outstanding Young Alumni Award.

Lee Rauhut, BA 1975, retired from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Records Management Center in St. Louis.

Connie Bunkhardt, BA 1976, received the National Wildlife Federation Conservation Achievement Award in Conservation Leadership in recognition of her efforts to protect Missouri’s wetlands and habitat through co-founding the Katy Land Trust and Magnificent Missouri.

Linda Birley, BSBA 1977, MA 1982, joined Union Presbyterian Seminary as director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

Scott Stream, BSBA 1976, was named to the board of the St. Louis Association of Health Underwriters as treasurer. Scott is the owner of Stream Benefits Group.

1980s

Carol Felzien, BSBA 1982, joined the board of directors of Volunteers in Medicine-St. Charles. Carol is the director of administration at the Hammond Institute for Free Enterprise at Lindenwood University.

L. Jack Vasquez, Jr., BA 1974, was appointed as district director of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's St. Louis District office.

Henry Miller, BSBA 1980, joined Winning Technologies as controller in O'Fallon, Missouri.

Thomas Migneron, BSBA 1982, received a Distinguished Alumni Award at the 2019 UMSL Founders Dinner on Oct. 10. Thomas is a retired general partner at Edward Jones.

Sara Foster, BA 1983, received a Distinguished Alumni Award at the 2019 UMSL Founders Dinner on Oct. 10. Sarah is the executive vice president of talent and corporate administration at Commerce Bancshares, Inc.

Gary Morse, MA 1983, PhD 1985, received a Distinguished Alumni Award at the 2019 UMSL Founders Dinner on Oct. 10. Gary is the vice president of research and development at Places for People.

Stephen Mosher, BSBA 1985, was awarded the Distinguished Achievement in Accounting Education award by the American Institute of CPAs for exemplary teaching and research contributions.

1990s

Phyllis Moehrle, BSBA 1985, was recognized at the annual IGNITE! conference on Aug. 24.
A capital visit Washington, D.C.-area alumni welcomed Interim Chancellor and Provost Kristin Sobolik to her fall gathering at the Cosmos Club in October.

Chancellor’s Council member Dick Jung, BA 1971, and his wife, Jan Anderson, hosted and gave a brief history of the club, its programs and its members — many who have won Pulitzer or Nobel Prizes — and some who have even appeared on their country’s postage stamps. The Washington group meets once in the spring and in the fall and is a great opportunity to network with UMSL alumni from a variety of work and volunteer environments such as the United States Department of State, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the World Health Organization and many institutions of higher education.

University City. Lavonne is assistant principal at Brittan Woods Middle School. Tina Clark-Scott, BS 1998, was honored by the St. Louis American Foundation as a Salute to Excellence in Education award recipient. Tina is the assistant superintendent of academics and support services for the Normandy Schools Collaborative. Marcella Marquez-Haun, BS 1998, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Marcella is the senior vice president and chief communications officer for Centene.

Gwendolyn Diggs, BSBA 2000, received a 2019 UMSL Business Achievement Award on May 3. Nancy Hawes, BA 1995, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Nancy is a shareholder at Polsinelli. Richard Toden, BSBA 1995, was re-elected to the Rockwood School Board of Education. Loralee Mondl, MEd 1999, was appointed as circuit judge for the Third Judicial District Court of Missouri.

Nancy Hawes, BA 1995, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Nancy is a shareholder at Polsinelli. Richard Toden, BSBA 1995, was re-elected to the Rockwood School Board of Education. Loralee Mondl, MEd 1999, was appointed as circuit judge for the Third Judicial District Court of Missouri.

Lavonne Ford-Williams, BSBA 1997, EDP 2010, was re-elected to the board of directors for Midwest Start-up Corporation.

Tiffany Anderson, BSBA 2000, MBA 2005, operations manager at WidePoint Corporation. Jessica Porta, BSacc 2002, was re-elected to a 2017 commencement. The Washington group meets once in the spring and in the fall and is a great opportunity to network with UMSL alumni from a variety of work and volunteer environments such as the United States Department of State, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the World Health Organization and many institutions of higher education.

University City. Lavonne is assistant principal at Brittan Woods Middle School. Tina Clark-Scott, BS 1998, was honored by the St. Louis American Foundation as a Salute to Excellence in Education award recipient. Tina is the assistant superintendent of academics and support services for the Normandy Schools Collaborative. Marcella Marquez-Haun, BS 1998, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Marcella is the senior vice president and chief communications officer for Centene.

Gwendolyn Diggs, BSBA 2000, received a 2019 UMSL Business Achievement Award on May 3. Nancy Hawes, BA 1995, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Nancy is a shareholder at Polsinelli. Richard Toden, BSBA 1995, was re-elected to the Rockwood School Board of Education. Loralee Mondl, MEd 1999, was appointed as circuit judge for the Third Judicial District Court of Missouri.

Lavonne Ford-Williams, BSBA 1997, EDP 2010, was re-elected to the board of directors for Midwest Start-up Corporation.

Tiffany Anderson, BSBA 2000, MBA 2005, operations manager at WidePoint Corporation. Jessica Porta, BSacc 2002, was re-elected to a 2017 commencement. The Washington group meets once in the spring and in the fall and is a great opportunity to network with UMSL alumni from a variety of work and volunteer environments such as the United States Department of State, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the World Health Organization and many institutions of higher education.

University City. Lavonne is assistant principal at Brittan Woods Middle School. Tina Clark-Scott, BS 1998, was honored by the St. Louis American Foundation as a Salute to Excellence in Education award recipient. Tina is the assistant superintendent of academics and support services for the Normandy Schools Collaborative. Marcella Marquez-Haun, BS 1998, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Marcella is the senior vice president and chief communications officer for Centene.

Gwendolyn Diggs, BSBA 2000, received a 2019 UMSL Business Achievement Award on May 3. Nancy Hawes, BA 1995, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Nancy is a shareholder at Polsinelli. Richard Toden, BSBA 1995, was re-elected to the Rockwood School Board of Education. Loralee Mondl, MEd 1999, was appointed as circuit judge for the Third Judicial District Court of Missouri.

Lavonne Ford-Williams, BSBA 1997, EDP 2010, was re-elected to the board of directors for Midwest Start-up Corporation.

Tiffany Anderson, BSBA 2000, MBA 2005, operations manager at WidePoint Corporation. Jessica Porta, BSacc 2002, was re-elected to a 2017 commencement. The Washington group meets once in the spring and in the fall and is a great opportunity to network with UMSL alumni from a variety of work and volunteer environments such as the United States Department of State, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the World Health Organization and many institutions of higher education.

University City. Lavonne is assistant principal at Brittan Woods Middle School. Tina Clark-Scott, BS 1998, was honored by the St. Louis American Foundation as a Salute to Excellence in Education award recipient. Tina is the assistant superintendent of academics and support services for the Normandy Schools Collaborative. Marcella Marquez-Haun, BS 1998, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Marcella is the senior vice president and chief communications officer for Centene.

Gwendolyn Diggs, BSBA 2000, received a 2019 UMSL Business Achievement Award on May 3. Nancy Hawes, BA 1995, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Nancy is a shareholder at Polsinelli. Richard Toden, BSBA 1995, was re-elected to the Rockwood School Board of Education. Loralee Mondl, MEd 1999, was appointed as circuit judge for the Third Judicial District Court of Missouri.

Lavonne Ford-Williams, BSBA 1997, EDP 2010, was re-elected to the board of directors for Midwest Start-up Corporation.

Tiffany Anderson, BSBA 2000, MBA 2005, operations manager at WidePoint Corporation. Jessica Porta, BSacc 2002, was re-elected to a 2017 commencement. The Washington group meets once in the spring and in the fall and is a great opportunity to network with UMSL alumni from a variety of work and volunteer environments such as the United States Department of State, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the World Health Organization and many institutions of higher education.

University City. Lavonne is assistant principal at Brittan Woods Middle School. Tina Clark-Scott, BS 1998, was honored by the St. Louis American Foundation as a Salute to Excellence in Education award recipient. Tina is the assistant superintendent of academics and support services for the Normandy Schools Collaborative. Marcella Marquez-Haun, BS 1998, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Marcella is the senior vice president and chief communications officer for Centene.

Gwendolyn Diggs, BSBA 2000, received a 2019 UMSL Business Achievement Award on May 3. Nancy Hawes, BA 1995, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Nancy is a shareholder at Polsinelli. Richard Toden, BSBA 1995, was re-elected to the Rockwood School Board of Education. Loralee Mondl, MEd 1999, was appointed as circuit judge for the Third Judicial District Court of Missouri.

Lavonne Ford-Williams, BSBA 1997, EDP 2010, was re-elected to the board of directors for Midwest Start-up Corporation.

Tiffany Anderson, BSBA 2000, MBA 2005, operations manager at WidePoint Corporation. Jessica Porta, BSacc 2002, was re-elected to a 2017 commencement. The Washington group meets once in the spring and in the fall and is a great opportunity to network with UMSL alumni from a variety of work and volunteer environments such as the United States Department of State, the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, the World Health Organization and many institutions of higher education.

University City. Lavonne is assistant principal at Brittan Woods Middle School. Tina Clark-Scott, BS 1998, was honored by the St. Louis American Foundation as a Salute to Excellence in Education award recipient. Tina is the assistant superintendent of academics and support services for the Normandy Schools Collaborative. Marcella Marquez-Haun, BS 1998, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Marcella is the senior vice president and chief communications officer for Centene.

Gwendolyn Diggs, BSBA 2000, received a 2019 UMSL Business Achievement Award on May 3. Nancy Hawes, BA 1995, was recognized by the St. Louis Business Journal in its annual list of Most Influential Business Women. Nancy is a shareholder at Polsinelli. Richard Toden, BSBA 1995, was re-elected to the Rockwood School Board of Education. Loralee Mondl, MEd 1999, was appointed as circuit judge for the Third Judicial District Court of Missouri.

Lavonne Ford-Williams, BSBA 1997, EDP 2010, was re-elected to the board of directors for Midwest Start-up Corporation.
Kicking it on the west coast  The Alumni Association traveled to San Francisco on Sept. 6-8 with the UMSL men’s soccer team. Alumni, parents and staff cheered on the Tritons for games against Notre Dame de Namur University and the Academy of Art University.

The more-than-500 alumni living and working in the San Francisco region were invited to attend the weekend of soccer, receptions and a mini 50th class reunion at Fisherman’s Wharf.

Aaron Eaxel, BISA 2010, spoke at the UMSL commencement ceremony on May 17 as one of the alumni speakers. Aaron is a financial advisor at Edward Jones.

Lacey Shalenko, BISA 2010, MBA 2012, joined Wabash Valley College as head women’s basketball coach.

Travis Short, BA 2010, joined TD Ameritrade in investor services.

Brian Boll, BA 2010, was promoted to senior in the audit and advisory services group at Andersen CPAs + Advisors.

Janae Alfled, MEd 2011, MEd 2012, PhD 2018, was named principal of Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School in the School District of University City.

Ron Austin, MFA 2011, wrote “Avery Cott Is A Snake, A Thief, A Liar” published by Southeast Missouri State University Press. Ron is a lecturer at Washington University in St. Louis and a senior editor for December magazine.

Nora Black, MBA 2010, joined the board of the St. Louis Area Foodbank. Nora is the vice president of human resources at Lancer Delivery Systems.

John Davis, BISA 2010, joined Investa Management as director of finance and accounting.

A Night for Advocacy
Over a dozen current and former Missouri legislators gathered in the lobby of the Patient Care Center on South Campus at the University of Missouri—St. Louis on Oct. 17 for the third annual UMSL Alumni Association Legislative Advocacy Reception.

Interim Chancellor and Provost Kristin Sobolik opened the event along with Stas Rep. Kevin Windham and Missouri Sen. Brian Williams. The College of Nursing and the College of Optometry were the focus of this year’s reception, and representatives of both presented on their current research, student bodies and initiatives—focusing on how their work helps promote the health and well-being of Missourians.

Interim Chancellor and Provost Kristin Sobolik opened the event along with Stas Rep. Kevin Windham and Missouri Sen. Brian Williams. The College of Nursing and the College of Optometry were the focus of this year’s reception, and representatives of both presented on their current research, student bodies and initiatives—focusing on how their work helps promote the health and well-being of Missourians.
is superintendent of the School District of University City.

Joseph Gobe, BSBA 2014, joined Boozing as a supply chain management analyst.

Emma Miller, BSBA 2014, was promoted to senior employee relations manager. IT consultants at the Internet Group in Atlanta.

Kathleen Riddler, BS 2014, MA 2016, MBA 2018, spoke at the UMSL commencement ceremony on May 17 as one of the alumni speakers. Kathleen is a business communications specialist at Express Scripts.

Shelby Sharp, BSBA 2014, joined Arundel Lodge as marketing and communications manager.

Sami Vazzone, BSEE 2014, spoke at the UMSL commencement ceremony on May 17 as one of the alumni speakers. Sami is an engineer at Ameren.

Kathy Fischer, MBA 2015, joined Baron Hill Biosystems as its vice president of people.

Nicole Mercier Ho, BS 2015, was one of 10 honorees in the 2019 Heart of Heartland Care program hosted by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Nicole is an intensive care nurse at St. Luke’s Hospital.

Luise Negren-Perez, MME 2015, MA 2019, was named a 2019 UMSL Trailblazer, which celebrates the diverse and exceptional accomplishments of women. Luise is a doctoral student in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Jennifer Victorian, MED 2015, was appointed to engagement and communication specialist at IMPACT Group.

Shelia Walker, HSA 2015, was elected to the Ferguson-Florissant School District Board of Education.

Jason Haney, MBA 2016, was named vice president of operations for the American Health Plans division of American Health Partners.

Sara Hardin, BLS 2016, was named a 2019 UMSL Trailblazer, which celebrates the diverse and exceptional accomplishments of women. Nicole is an assistant civil engineer at Burns & McDonnell in Kansas City, Missouri.

Shea Sumpter, BLS 2016, joined Rich East High School in Park Forest, Illinois, as assistant coach.

Stacy Adams, MBA 2017, was honored with one of the St. Louis Business Journal’s 2019 HI Awards. The program recognizes the best human resources programs or practices that have had a positive impact on employees and their organizations. Stacy is an account manager at Express Scripts.

Ashley Johnson, BS 2017, was named a 2019 UMSL Trailblazer, which celebrates the diverse and exceptional accomplishments of women. Ashley is the case manager for UMSL Student Social Services.

Brent Martin, BS 2017, MEd 2018, was promoted to staff accountant at SPW Partners, LLC.

Ryan Morse, MCA 2017, was promoted to senior audit associate in the audit and advisory services group at Andersen O’Reilly + Advisors.

Gloria Patterson, MED 2017, received a 2018 Inspiring Teachers Award from the Challenge Learning Center-St. Louis. She teaches at Jennings Junior High School.

Tony Withouse, BS 2017, joined Sauce on the Side as director of sales and marketing.


Sarah Boyer, BA 2018, joined Northwestern Mutual as a client service representative.

Karl Gontier, MA 2018, was appointed director of UMSL’s Anchor Institution Initiative. UMSL was among 31 universities selected to take part in the Higher Education-Anchor Mission Initiative.

Cindy Ho, BS 2018, joined the tax department of Schonauer & Labori, PC.


Kaye Lee, MEd 2018, was appointed to the Engagement and Communication Specialist at IMPACT Group.

Katy Robertson, BSBA 2018, was named a 2019 UMSL Trailblazer, which celebrates the diverse and exceptional accomplishments of women. Katy is the case manager for UMSL Student Social Services.

Sarah Wilson, BSN 2018, was one of 10 honorees in the 2019 Heart of Heartland Care program hosted by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Sarah is the chief operating officer at St. Luke’s Hospital.

Nicole Menichino, BS 2018, joined BioSys as its vice president of people.

Kelly Fischer, MBA 2018, joined Benson Hill Biosystems as its vice president of people.

Josh Hart, BSBA 2018, joined American Health Partners, division of American Health Plans, as vice president of operations for the Missouri division. Josh is the graduate assistant at St. Luke’s Hospital.

Taylor Freiner, BS 2017, joined Arundel Lodge as marketing and communications specialist at Express Scripts.

Kathleen Riddler, BS 2018, MBA 2015, joined to senior employee relations manager, IT consulting at UMSL.

Allison Benda, BA 2014, to Joe Weczorek, BSBA 2014, joined to senior employee relations manager, IT consulting at UMSL.

Josh Hart, BSBA 2018, to Amber Peterson on Nov. 3, 2018

Allison Benda, BA 2014, to Joe Weczorek, BSBA 2014, on Nov. 10, 2018

Taylor Freiner, BS 2017, to Jessica Sauer on July 27, 2019

David Levalds, BSBA 2002, to Meggan Timmernman on Aug. 3, 2019

Miranda Hall, BSBA 2016, to Jack Braamaker on Aug. 9, 2019

Justin Frantik, BSBA 2019, to Sierra McClure on Aug. 9, 2019

Marisol Ramirez, MEd 2015, to Isaac Saddrvar on Sept. 27, 2019

Bremma Baur, BA 2016, to Brandon Stubber on Oct. 12, 2019

Victoria Gengler, BS 2011, to Thomas McCarty on Oct. 19, 2019

Melissa Roth, BS 2016, to Matthew Goodspeed on Oct. 25, 2019

Melissa Jo Schneefke, BS 2016, to Ryan Hickerson on Nov. 2, 2019
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI SYSTEM
Missouri Compact Scholarship Initiative

Double your support.
Double your impact.

For a limited time, unlock matching funds totaling $42 million. Maximize the impact of your generosity. Make a difference now!

Scholarships empowered

1,527 Tritons to graduate last year

Take advantage of this extraordinary matching opportunity, a joint initiative between the UM System and UMSL.

For more information, please contact the University Development office.

giving@umsl.edu  314-516-5666  giving.umsl.edu