

Dear friend,

In describing the expansion of access to higher education that built public universities in postwar America, William Deresiewicz observes that “If those middle- and working-class kids were going to college just to get a better job, why did so many of them major in English? Because they also wanted to learn, think, reflect, and grow. They wanted what the ... aristocrats had, and the country was wise enough, or generous enough, or egalitarian enough, to let them have it.” I’ve underlined “also” to emphasize that liberal arts disciplines give people the opportunity to have it all: a professional career and personal intellectual fulfillment. While the dispiriting either/or narrative is still in circulation, it is readily debunked by employment and salary data (for statistical detail and news coverage, please visit Humanities Works, <https://humanitiesworks.org>).

In the IU Columbus Division of Liberal Arts, our degrees in Communication Studies, Criminal Justice, English, and Sociology are designed to help students meet these twin goals of higher education. As students explore their passions, our award-winning faculty guide them on the path to professional success. Along the way, our small classes offer the personalized learning experience associated with private liberal arts colleges. Beyond the classroom, our students complete internships with local agencies and firms, conduct research with their professors, and make friends in student clubs. After graduation, our alumni go on to careers in teaching, writing, broadcasting, marketing, social media management, event planning, social work, counseling, law enforcement, health care, higher education administration and other fields.

As Head of the Division of Liberal Arts, it is my honor to share with you the wonderful work of our outstanding students, faculty, and staff.

Sincerely,

George
George Towers



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Upcoming Events:

The Division of Liberal Arts organizes events for the campus and community including Constitution Day, Media Literacy Week and the Talking Leaves Launch in the fall and the Office of Student Research Exhibition and Great Decisions every spring. Please see the IU Columbus events calendar for additional events and details: <https://events.iu.edu/www-columbus/all>

Student recognition:

- IU Columbus Bachelor of General Studies Degree Outstanding Graduate Award – **Morgan Stieneker**
- IU Columbus Best English Essay – **Carly Archer**
- IU Columbus Outstanding Student in Communication Studies – **Mary-Kate Nolley**
- IU Columbus Outstanding Student in Criminal Justice – **Sierra Huffman**
- IU Columbus Outstanding Student in English – **Zoe Lawless**
- IU Columbus Outstanding Student in Liberal Arts Award – **Sierra Huffman**
- IU Columbus Outstanding Student in Sociology – **Bryor Brown**

Student spotlight: Sierra Huffman



Sierra Huffman shows us what a difference a student can make at IU Columbus. A May 2024 graduate who majored in criminal justice with a minor in psychology, Sierra wove her abiding commitment to combating human trafficking into her studies and co-curricular activities with remarkable results. For her criminal justice internship, she worked with Josephine’s Clinic in Cincinnati serving trafficking survivors. Struck by the clinic’s need to provide additional outreach, Sierra organized an event on campus last fall that raised over \$1,400 towards purchasing a van and brought in donations of medical supplies. She built upon her internship to conduct a research project that received the Office of Student Research’s (OSR) inaugural Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Belonging Award. Last

January, in recognition of National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, Sierra enlisted a panel of experts from law enforcement, health care, and the Indiana Trafficking Victims Assistance Program to share their perspectives at the Columbus Learning Center. The public forum, sponsored by the Criminal Justice Club and the Feminism Club, drew a large audience from our campus and community. Befitting her extraordinary contributions, Sierra received the Undergraduate Service Leadership Award, the Outstanding Student in Liberal Arts Award, and the Outstanding Student in Criminal Justice Award in 2024.

Sierra has her sights set on a career in federal law enforcement dedicated to combating human trafficking and advocating for victims. Her next step is enrolling in the University of Cincinnati’s Neuroscience Graduate Program to earn a master’s degree focused on the neurobiology of trauma. To save money for starting grad school next year, Sierra is working as a Store Associate at ALDI.

Sierra is quick to credit others with her success. She is deeply grateful to her mother, **Rebecca Jabarauckas**, for her devoted support. At IU Columbus, Sierra has long appreciated criminal justice program director **Scott Desmond’s** mentorship. Scott supervised Sierra’s internship, sponsored her OSR

project, and connected her with professionals in human trafficking prevention. She highly values Judge **Jim Worton** and city official **Jackson Sargent** for bringing their expertise with the issues currently facing the criminal justice field into their IU Columbus classes. She also hails Honors Program Director **Stephanie Serriere** for encouraging honors students to coordinate their projects around a subject they are passionate about.

Alumni spotlight: Sarah Akemon



Sarah Akemon, IU Columbus' Assistant Program Director for Student Transition and Support, majored in English with a concentration in Literature and minored in Sociology. Sarah's career story shows how the courses we take in college connect our interests with professional success. By studying poetry, for example, Sarah learned to weigh her words carefully to maximize their meaning. In her role at IU Columbus, she puts this skill to work. She oversees the crucial messaging that helps establish new students' expectations. She writes promotional literature, crafts website content and trains "Redd," IU Columbus' admissions chatbot, to respond effectively to inquiries. By taking literature classes, Sarah realized we understand ourselves and others through our stories. At work, she finds fulfillment in helping students

write the first chapters of their career stories.

Sarah's own journey took her from Columbus to Bloomington and back again. While she would eventually travel to IU Bloomington for her senior year, she knew that Columbus was the perfect campus for her to start her studies. Coming from a home school background, the acceptance and attention that Sarah received from faculty in our small classes was comfortably familiar. Accordingly, she felt the confidence she needed to be herself. For example, her self-expression through fashion led to a career upon graduation as the Wardrobe Supervisor for the IU Bloomington Opera and Ballet Theater.

A lifelong learner, Sarah is pursuing IU's Master of Science in Recreation degree with a major in Outdoor Recreation. She will build on her English degree to study how adventure stories are told and how they shape our experiences with nature. Since these stories are typically about conquering challenging landscapes and told from a masculine point of view, Sarah is particularly interested in promoting outdoor adventure narratives that better represent women's experiences and are framed by our coexistence with the environment. Sarah appreciates her IU Columbus faculty for encouraging her identification with themes that have resonated through her studies, her work, and her life. Her self-awareness as a feminist grew from studying literature with **Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick**, **Aimee Zoeller's** teaching inspired her commitment to activism, and her choice of graduate programs was influenced by **Nathan Rousseau's** Sports and Society class.

Sarah lives in Columbus with her husband Chris Sims and their pet dogs, cats, rabbits, and rats. Outside of work, her love of hiking feeds into her graduate study plans. Growing up in Columbus, she got hooked on day hiking in Brown County State Park. She has since become an expert backpacker: last year she spent 31 nights in the backcountry and backpacked 468 miles!

Full-time faculty and staff

The Division of Liberal Arts is home to a highly accomplished team of higher education professionals dedicated to serving our students and the community. Here are selected highlights among our recent contributions.

Lisa Siefker Bailey is teaching professor of English and the faculty sponsor of IU Columbus' literary magazine, *Talking Leaves*. She is working with the new student editor, **Kylie Brooks**, to publish a volume this fall that will celebrate the thirtieth year that our campus has had a magazine of the arts. Lisa's own poetry includes three poems, "#bestmomever," "Rett Girl Elegy," and "Mommy-Daughter Date," forthcoming in the Indiana College English Association (ICEA) journal *Indiana English*. A scholar of teaching and learning, Lisa made a presentation on teaching literature at this year's ICEA conference.

Anna Carmon, associate professor and Communication Studies Program Director, is a leader in IU Columbus athletics initiatives. She chairs the Athletic Affairs Committee and serves as statistician for our soccer teams. The Athletics Department recognized her contributions with an Honorary IU Columbus Varsity Letter. Anna is also committed to community service. She is the Board Vice President for Advocates for Children and the Coach of the Columbus East High School Speech Team.

Scott Desmond is an associate professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice Program Director. In spring, 2024, he completed a sabbatical at the Institute for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Society at Chapman University. A well-published scholar in juvenile delinquency and the sociology of religion, Scott spent his sabbatical analyzing the National Study of Youth and Religion data set to understand why religious adolescents are less likely to engage in substance use.

Lewis "Terry" Dibble is a senior lecturer of English and coordinates classes in humanities and social science disciplines unaffiliated with one of our degree programs. This fall, Terry is looking forward to his interactive presentation on AI during Media Literacy Week. Another initiative of Terry's involves joint meetings of his Introduction to Philosophy class with professor **Liz daSilva's** Cognitive Psychology class. Terry, Liz and their students discuss interdisciplinary approaches to eternal questions about the nature of consciousness, free will, and memory.

Academic Advisor **Maggie Evans** advises all students majoring in our division's degree programs as well as psychology majors. Maggie does double duty by teaching DLA-L 110 First Year Student Success Seminar every fall. In this required class, Maggie not only imparts essential skills but also develops supportive relationships with her advisees that see them through to graduation. The numbers also speak to her success: this fall's enrollment in DLA-L 100 is the highest since we created the class in 2015.

Julie Goodspeed-Chadwick, Chancellor's Professor of English, IU Bicentennial Professor (2019-2021), Affiliate Faculty in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Director of the Office of Student Research, was recognized with three teaching awards in 2023-24. She received Liberal Education and America's Promise Indiana Paragon Award, the IU Indianapolis Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Multicultural Teaching, and her fourth IU Trustees Teaching Award. Renowned for her scholarship of teaching and learning, Julie is co-editing a volume titled *Creativity in the Classroom* to be published by the IU Press this coming year.

Vicki Kruse, Senior Administrative Assistant for the Division of Liberal Arts and the Division of Science, became the first two-time winner of IU Columbus' C.W. Coons Distinguished Service Award in 2024, having previously received the award in 2015. Possessing an unsurpassed depth and breadth of

institutional knowledge, Vicki exemplifies the award criterion of going “above-and-beyond the call of duty to provide outstanding service to the university” by informally mentoring staff and faculty across campus.

Lori Montalbano is Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Dean of Students, Chief Diversity Officer and a professor of Communication Studies. In keeping with her many responsibilities, Lori keeps up with the issues facing higher education. For example, she recently completed a certificate program in AI Strategy from eCornell and spoke on teaching strategies involving AI at the International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education. She also shared her expertise with diversity issues as a member of the award-winning panel, “The Rhetoric, Politics, and Failures of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Confronting Whiteness, Finding Community,” at the 2024 Central States Communication Association Convention.

Pamela Morris, associate professor of Communication Studies, is a leader in media literacy education in the Indiana University system and beyond. For example, she holds Affiliate Faculty status at the University of Rhode Island’s Media Education Lab. In 2024, six students in Pamela’s Human Communication and the Internet class, **Jimena Leal, Mary-Kate Nolley, Sydney Owens, Ally Parker, Alexander Ridge** and **Shelby Vannetta**, competed in the Media Education Lab’s Youth Media Contest. Their presentation, “Navigating Media Disinformation: The Pursuit of Critical Thinking and Responsible Communication,” won the \$500 first place prize and Pamela received a Courageous RI (Rhode Island) Teacher Leadership Award.

Nathan Rousseau, professor of Sociology, completed a sabbatical in 2023-24 during which he pursued his research agenda in the neo-liberalization of higher education. He is writing a book titled “Normalizing Precarity in Higher Education: Universities and the Neoliberal Society” which is under contract with Routledge Press. In 2024, Nathan presented his work in this research area at the British Sociological Association Conference and at the University of Manchester Conference on Utopia and the Return of History. As an IU Indianapolis Virtual Global Learning Fellow, Nathan provided a virtual international exchange experience for IU Columbus students with their peers at England’s Newcastle University for the second consecutive spring.

Liberal Arts Division Head **George Towers** organizes the annual Great Decisions series of international affairs forums for the Columbus community in partnership with the Mill Race Center. The highlight of the spring 2024 program was a panel discussion on pandemic preparedness with Columbus Mayor **Mary Ferdon**, former mayor **Jim Leinhoop**, and Columbus Regional Hospital Executive Vice President & Chief Community Impact Officer **Julie Abedian**. They emphasized that collaboration across jurisdictions and between public sector agencies increased enormously during the pandemic and that these strengthened relationships will be very valuable in any future crisis.

Kate Wills, English Program Director and professor, is an accomplished poet whose work is regularly featured in peer-reviewed journals. Most recently, “The Mouse Colony,” which draws upon Kate’s background in biological research, appeared in *Animal Studies Journal* and “The Saffron Gatherers” and “Clear Cut: Forester” were published in the Indianapolis-based *Flying Island Magazine*. Kate is currently at work on chapbook of ecopoetry to be titled “Complicit in Green.”

Aimee Zoeller was promoted to teaching professor of sociology and won her fourth IU Trustees Teaching Award in 2024. Aimee, IU Columbus’ Sociology Program Director and Women’s Gender, and Sexuality Studies Coordinator, is a leader in teaching initiatives on both the Columbus and Indianapolis

campuses. Beginning this fall, she will serve as the IU Columbus Faculty Fellow Liaison for the Institute for Engaged Learning at IU Indianapolis. In 2023-24, she was in the first cohort of faculty to receive the Champion for Teaching Excellence Award from IU Indianapolis' Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The award recognizes those faculty who provided the highest levels of service to the CTL over the previous three years.

Contact us: If you would like to connect with our full-time faculty and staff, please feel free to reach out to them. Their contact information is listed here: <https://www.IU Columbus.edu/liberal-arts/contact-libarts/index.html>

Part-time faculty spotlight: Keith Romaine



IU Columbus art instructor **Keith Romaine** is as versatile as he is creative. After completing coursework at Antioch University, Keith launched his painting career as a street artist in San Francisco. Keith returned to the Midwest to continue his education, completing his bachelor's degree at IU South Bend and studying fiber art while earning the Master of Fine Arts degree at Michigan's Cranbrook Academy of Art. His fiber work focuses on banners and masks displayed at parades and festivals. For example, Keith's creations were featured at Bloomington's 2024 Pridefest. Relocating to Bloomington two decades ago to take doctoral courses in art history, Keith has become a fixture in his community and serves as Pridefest's art director. His generosity of spirit also led Keith to build a brick oven in his backyard to provide a pop-up bakery for his

Bloomington neighborhood on Friday evenings (read more about Keith's bakery in this [Indiana Public Media article](#)).

At IU Columbus, Keith teaches a general education humanities class titled "Art in Culture" and our two-semester sequence of drawing classes. Dedicated to the principle that students learn best by doing, Keith maximizes students' opportunities to engage the course material in class. He finds that student athletes and veterans often set an excellent example with their willingness to participate. Keith says that the support he receives from **Terry Dibble**, **Vicki Kruse** and **George Towers** also sets IU Columbus apart from other campuses at which he has taught.

Contribute

Thank you for your support. Please let us know how we can work together and help each other. We would love to hear from you. Please click on the name of each fund to contribute.

- [IU Columbus Outstanding Student in Liberal Arts Award](#). Gifts will be used to continue to provide prizes for the division-wide Outstanding Student Award and our other student awards.
- [Charles Bantz Scholarship in Communication Studies](#). Funds support juniors and seniors majoring in Communication Studies who have demonstrated involvement in the IU Columbus community. Dr. Bantz, a prominent scholar in communication studies, was IUPUI's Chancellor from 2003 to 2015.
- [Dr. Jay Howard Scholarship](#). This fund supports students studying sociology. An IU Columbus sociology professor for two decades, Dr. Howard served as IU Columbus's Vice Chancellor and Dean

from 2007 to 2009. He is now the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Butler University.

- [IU Columbus Criminal Justice Scholarship](#). Criminal justice majors who have achieved an A or B average are eligible to receive scholarships from this fund.
- [IU Columbus Division of Liberal Arts](#). This fund supports IU Columbus' student literary magazine, *Talking Leaves*, and co-curricular and community programming. The fund may also be used to augment promotional efforts and other activities.
- [Student Research Scholarship](#). Gifts support student research through the [Office of Student Research](#).