

The MORROW

Where tomorrow meets today through ALEC



**THE PEOPLE OF
TOMORROW**
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**RURAL
AND
URBAN,
SIDE BY SIDE**
PAGE 12

RAISING THE GAME

Why these intercollegiate athletes and others join Team ALEC for leadership, education and communications courses ... see page 28.



College of Agricultural,
Consumer &
Environmental Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Agricultural Leadership,
Education & Communications

**By students,
for students**

We've Bean There



See Trade in Motion

Follow the export journey from farm to market, hearing from Illinois soybean farmers along the way.



Acknowledgment

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has a responsibility to acknowledge the historical context in which it exists. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign was established on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. We acknowledge these Native Nations and the importance of working with them as we move forward as an institution. Over the next 150 years, we will be a vibrant community inclusive of all our differences, with Native peoples at the core of our efforts.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Finding what drives you will help you succeed

By Erica Johnson

How's this for a heavy ask: you're about 18 years old, still in high school, and you're supposed to select a field of study on which you'll stay and base your career.

Um ... did I mention you're 18 years old?

Talk about standing at a crossroads. There are hundreds of schools, programs, and majors to choose from, so no wonder you're unsure about which one to take.

But what helped me decide a path to pursue was figuring out what drives me.

I liked it all — science-based innovation, the desire to reveal the truth, curiosity about the world around me and the courage and challenge it takes to lead.

Then I found the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program.

As University of Illinois students, we've come to know ALEC as a home for scientific communicators, innovative journalists, creative educators and future leaders of tomorrow.

The Morrow reflects that breadth. It's a publication created by students, for students—students looking to drive change in the agricultural leadership, education and communications fields of tomorrow. These three majors come together to unite and ignite a program for the future of agriculture, food and all its associated areas such as the environment, sustainability and rural development.

The values of ALEC continue to resonate with me as I wrap-up my junior year at the University of Illinois. I couldn't be more grateful that I chose a program with almost endless possibilities to fit the unique interests of students from all backgrounds.

Who knew 18-year-olds could be so smart?

Erica Johnson

Erica Johnson
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Published annually by students in the Publication Development and Production class (AGCM 327), Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications program, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

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ON THE COVER

Intercollegiate athletes (from left) Weston Adams, Lucas Althaus, Kora Malecek, Connor Serven and Solo Turner. Photo by Anna Longworth at Memorial Stadium, UIUC, April 2023.

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Communications students, student chefs unite



By students, for students

Students who produced this year's Morrow publication are Agricultural Communications majors enrolled in Publication Development and Production (AGCM 327)



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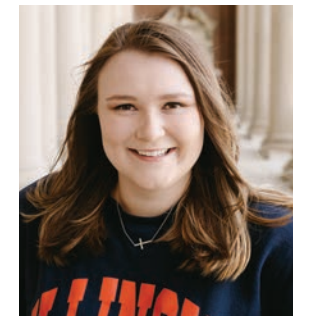
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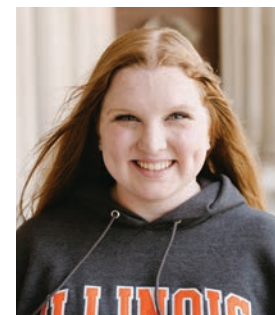
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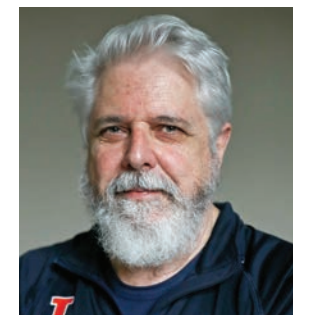
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Editor's note: The People of ToMorrow are outstanding students selected by Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) faculty members



Dean Germán Bollero with *The Morrow* development and production class members. Photo: Ed West

Welcome to the second issue of *The Morrow*

Dear friends of the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program,

It is my honor to welcome you to this issue of *The Morrow*. I am also honored to be named the next dean of the College of ACES, where every student, past and present; every staff and faculty member; and all of our donors and friends help make our mission a reality.

As dean, I am committed to advancing research and scholarship, nurturing ecosystems and communities, making education more accessible and inclusive, spurring economic development, and strengthening our global reputation.

Having been part of the College of ACES for over 30 years, I know effective communication, education, and leadership are vital to everything we do in the college. We need bold leaders to tackle major challenges facing society; leaders who invite diverse perspectives to work toward collaborative, multidisciplinary solutions.

But we're not in this alone — that's why I am so pleased to see ALEC's courses attracting students from across campus (see story on page 28). Just like the leaders it's training, ALEC has identified an area of need and ably addressed it.

Thank you to the students who make *The Morrow* possible. You make me proud, and I can't wait to see what you do next.

Sincerely,

Dr. Germán Bollero
Dean, College of ACES

Emma Eathington Leadership



I started my leadership career in the youth agriculture organizations 4-H, FFA, and many beef associations. Through these many leadership

experiences, I discovered that I wanted to give back to my community through developing our youth in agriculture.

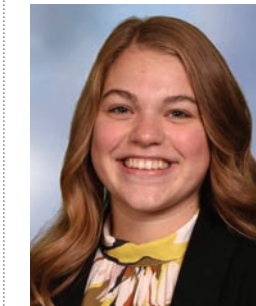
I began my journey with Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) in August of 2020 as an animal science student, minoring in leadership. After a year of taking leadership classes in ALEC, I discovered that the Organizational and Community Leadership major was where I was meant to be.

Shortly, I will graduate from the College of ACES with a degree in ALEC, with a concentration in Organizational and Community Leadership, and a double minor in Animal Sciences and Horticulture. After I walk across the stage, I will work full time at University of Illinois Extension in the Knox County office as the 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator.

I have achieved my goal to work with and develop youth in agriculture. I am currently working part time in this position as I finish my degree. I truly love my job and my 4-H members, volunteers and county.

I actively use the knowledge I learned in ALEC every day. I have applied to the online ALEC master's program that I hope to start in the fall of 2023. There is still more to discover within ALEC program, and I am excited to continue my journey.

Hannah Tappendorf Education



I began the transfer process after two memorable years at Lake Land College in Mattoon, IL. I knew that the right choice for me would be

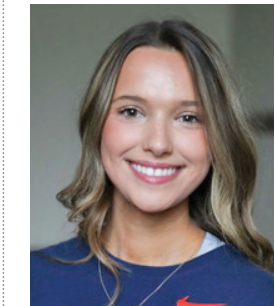
the ALEC program at the University of Illinois.

During my time in ALEC, I have participated in several student-led activities including being an ALEC ambassador, an officer of the Agricultural Education club and a member of the Hoof and Horn Cclub.

Within ALEC, I have found a group of individuals who have similar goals and a strong passion to share agriculture with the world. My fellow classmates and I have grown significantly in the past two years and have shared many, many laughs along the way. Though I have spent the last semester away from campus for student teaching, I still feel very connected to my classmates as we share stories and support each other at our monthly class with instructor Gary Ochs.

I am excited to have accepted a position as the agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond High School in Arthur, IL, and will be settling down in Mattoon. I am thrilled to have had the opportunity to join the long list of successful agricultural educators who have graduated from UIUC. It is truly an honor I will continue to cherish.

Kali Walker Communications



My time in the ALEC program has been nothing short of amazing. I have taken a variety of agricultural communications courses at the University of

Illinois Urbana-Champaign that have cultivated my ability to communicate with the agriculture sector. They've also given me a new set of beneficial skills that I will carry with me into my professional career.

The agricultural communications program has allowed me to become a well-rounded individual, gaining skills in a variety of areas including advertising, writing, web content management, photography and social media production. Over the past three years, I have been presented with the opportunity to serve as the Managing Editor in the production of the first edition of *The Morrow*, create three public information campaigns covering world-wide issues in the agri-food sector and expand my social network with other prominent communicators in the industry.

ALEC has provided me with beneficial communication skills, confidence and a better understanding of the various agriculture components globally. After graduation, I plan to attend graduate school here at UIUC and receive a Master of Science in Animal Sciences, specializing in Production and Environmental Management. I am grateful for the learning experiences and opportunities with which I have been presented during my undergraduate. I am excited to take everything I have learned and apply it to my graduate studies and my future career.



An ariel view of the historically significant Morrow Plots.
Photo courtesy of Andrew Margenot

No more beating around the bushes

Morrow Plots perimeter renovations

By Katie Cole, Brett Buhrow and members of AGCM 220

Over the years, one of the University of Illinois' most prized possessions – The Morrow Plots – has been hidden. But now it's on the verge of being “found” again.

The Morrow Plots, a half-acre area on the agricultural side of campus, have been home to sustainable cropping systems and fertilization practices since 1876. They're the oldest experimental plots in the U.S., and the second oldest in the world. In 1968, they were declared a national historic landmark.

But they are obscured by a six-foot yew hedge that surrounds their perimeter.

“The Morrow Plots are the Crown Jewel of the university,” says campus landscape architect Brent Lewis, “and nobody knows they're there, because of the hedge.”

Hedges weren't implemented until the mid 1920s, long after the plots were established. Admittedly, they're attractive, and some people associate them with the heritage of the plots. However, says Lewis, they're dysfunctional. They attract wildlife that feast on the plots' crops and they are labor-intensive to maintain. Overall, the university has been reducing its complement of hedges, which at the peak, numbered 33 miles. That number's been cut by one third.

Lewis says alternatives exist. His renovation plans include a wrought iron-style fence about four feet tall, brick columns that secure the fence portions, outside pollinator-friendly plants and perennial shrubs. He estimates the whole project will cost \$150,000-\$200,000 and serve the university well.

Says Lewis: “It'll be prettier, it'll be functional and it'll be environmentally friendly.”



ACES student Mallory Ames (left) and UIUC landscape architect Brent Lewis are pictured here by The Morrow Plots.
Photo: Owen Roberts

“The Morrow Plots are the Crown Jewel of the university.”

**UIUC Landscape Architect
Brent Lewis**

Time in a bottle

By Erin Wunderlich

As a UIUC soil scientist, Dr. Andrew Margenot sees samples of Illinois farmland all the time.

But on one hot, humid August day last summer, he found a soil scientist's nirvana: the discovery of hundreds of soil samples dating back to 1862, in a mostly abandoned, run-down South Farms storage facility due to be demolished.

And some of the samples belonged to The Morrow Plots, a rich part of the university's agricultural history and the inspiration for the name of this publication, *The Morrow*.

“I didn't sleep for two nights,” says Dr. Margenot, a crop sciences assistant professor and chair on The Morrow Plots committee. “I was so excited when we discovered the samples. I ended up spending the whole day in there.”

Besides containing samples from The Morrow Plots, the newly discovered collection included soil from 450 other locations in Illinois. Now, the Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council, along with UIUC researchers led by Dr. Margenot, have set out to identify and contact landowners whose property was part of the original research.

The group plans to resample soil from all the locations to understand how soil concentrations and microbes may have changed in the past century.

A separate study conducted with the USDA found the average age of a soil archive is about 39 years.

“That means most long-term archives are three or four decades, but ours is 100-plus years old, plus we have The Morrow Plots,” says Dr. Margenot.

While the soil samples have lost many elements of their composition such as microbes, carbon and nitrogen, Dr. Margenot says they still contain enough non-decomposition gases and microbial DNA to conduct a fossil genome approach, or a way to measure dead bacterial populations.

Dr. Margenot is also leading the charge to reinitiate yearly soil sampling from The Morrow Plots, which has not been done in nearly 25 years.

In the grand scheme of things, he says that this unmatched data will eventually be able to answer big questions such as how soil is important in understanding climate change in tandem with agriculture.

“We'll have answers to a lot of big changes to soil in Illinois over the years, including soil carbon sequestration, and how farming destroys soils in a way that impacts carbon stocks,” he says.



Prof. Andrew Margenot inspects the UIUC soil collection archive.
Photo courtesy of Andrew Margenot



Historic sample data from The Morrow plots is now available online to viewers around the world. Photo courtesy of the University of Illinois Archives

“I didn't sleep for two nights. I was so excited when we discovered the samples, I ended up spending the whole day in there.”

**UIUC soil scientist
Dr. Andrew Margenot**

When small talk turned into a big opportunity

By Erin Wunderlich

Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) graduate student Anthony (Tony) Dupuis never intended to be involved in research, let alone actively engaged as a research assistant. In fact, his thesis work started from casual dialogue with ALEC assistant professor Dr. Jasmine Collins, reminiscing about his days at Joliet Junior College.

Then an idea blossomed.

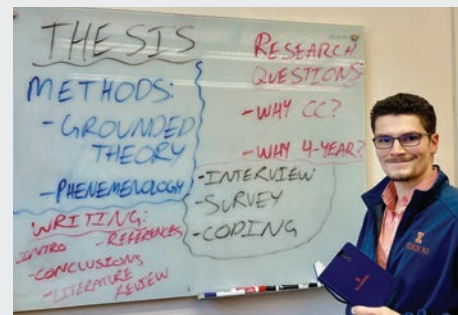
“I started taking time to read more about research on transfer students like me,” he says. “In doing so, I found that in relation to other aspects of education field, the amount of available information is underwhelming.”

And that was an opportunity. Tony went on to focus his research on the experiences of transfer students in the College of ACES (Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences). It’s highly relevant to the college, which accounts for one of the university’s largest percentages of incoming transfer students every semester.

Tony aims to highlight the key events that lead these students to attend UIUC, and identify the resources that students used to attain a higher education.

“My studies truly opened my eyes to the vast possibility of research that students can utilize here,” he says.

With his thesis, titled *Improving Higher Education Access and Completion in Illinois: Mechanisms of Support for Transfer Students*, Tony wants to create dialogue around the role of community college in modern education.



Graduate student Tony Dupuis. Photo: Claire Tester



Members of the Illini Emerging Leaders club. Photo courtesy of Lauren McMillan

Learning to be leaders and achieving greatness

By Lauren McMillan

What is leadership to you?

There are nearly countless definitions of leadership, as there are almost endless ways to lead. Even though the knowledge of how to be a successful leader is extremely important, many people learn these qualities late in their career.

In the Organizational and Community Leadership concentration of the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications program, students learn necessary skills from the very beginning, to achieve greatness when working with others. Illini Emerging Leaders (IEL) exists to share the wealth of this knowledge outside of the major.

IEL is an registered student organization created to educate people around campus and our community about leadership, through monthly meetings, leadership training and leadership conferences.

The IEL executive team works with faculty in the leadership concentration to assist in making the most effective lessons for their members. Effective leadership traits, working in groups and teams, coaching and dealing with change have been a few topics reached. With only one meeting a month, members attend meetings excited by what else they can learn to share with their other organizations.

Besides working with campus students, members are now visiting neighboring community schools to share their passion and knowledge about leadership with the next generation.

Every day this organization works to make a difference in our campus and community — through educating, instilling new passions, or forming a path of success for our members in their future careers.

Hopefully everyone is able to find their own definition of leadership firsthand through their experience in IEL.

Research lab helps develop student leaders

By Emily Bruch



Dr. David Rosch leads research lab discussion
Photo by Emily Bruch

Throughout any career, leadership is an important quality. At the University of Illinois, a variety of leadership classes are offered to students, regardless of their major.

Dr. David Rosch, associate professor of Agricultural Leadership, designs and teaches courses about group leadership and adult learning. He also leads a research lab where three undergraduate students and one graduate student study how the University of Illinois can help better help develop student leaders.

One of the lab’s current projects involves collecting data on how students’

leadership capacity is developing throughout their time taking classes. The two undergraduate students, Madeline Cooke and Rachel Nieder, have a variety of roles from entering and collecting data to developing original research to present at the annual Undergraduate Research Symposium. Graduate student Rob Klein is the lab manager. His roles include designing training manuals, co-authoring papers and running statistical analyses.

“I like how our research shapes the curriculum in our leadership courses,” he says. “It feels very practical.”

Curriculum with real-world applications

By Olivia Charles

School rivalries in the Midwest are a campus tradition. But instead of competing with their rivals, Dr. Amy Leman’s leadership students are collaborating, learning new skills and getting an inside view of the job market.

In Dr. Leman’s class, Training and Development (LEAD 321), students are matched with their counterparts at the University of Missouri to develop curriculum that will be used within a company. Most of the connectivity is virtual, but they also all come together for a working weekend once a semester.

“Working with students from another school can be a lot of fun,” says Dr. Leman. “At the same time, the students get to sharpen their teamwork skills.”

For the past several years, students have created food safety training procedures for Drury Inn and Suites and food insecurity training materials for high school students through Missouri 4-H Extension.

Students in the class say it helps them understand the types of jobs they would enjoy after graduation. Bethany Musick says this course has become important for her job search.

“Before taking LEAD 321, I was unsure what type of positions I wanted to apply to after graduation,” says Bethany. “This course has helped me narrow down my interests and inspired me to pursue program development going forward.”



Students to collaborate through real-world experiential learning in LEAD 321. From left, students Grant Norfleet, Emma Eathington, Tiberius Engel and Isabella Terronez gather around Jamie Boas on the screen to collaborate on a group project.

Employers: Take part in this learning experience

LEAD 321 is gaining popularity, and Dr. Leman is looking for new companies or organizations to work with her students. If you are interested in having University of Illinois and University of Missouri students collaborate to create curriculum for your company or organization, contact Dr. Leman at bunselme@illinois.edu.



Fox Illinois team prepares to deliver the evening news. From left: Dante Furco, sports director; Marlena Lang, reporter; Makenzie LaPorte, reporter; Eliza Petry, reporter; Darren Leeds, meteorologist. Photo courtesy of Eliza Petry

From part-time to prime time

A passion for agriculture leads to evening news anchor spot

By Eliza Petry

Growing up on an Illinois grain farm, I quickly found a passion for agriculture. It was reinforced when I got to high school and became active in my FFA chapter. Being involved in FFA helped me realize that, not only do I love agriculture, but I love advocating and educating others about it.

This realization paid off when I became the Illinois FFA State Vice President. As a state officer, I traveled around the state, gave speeches, and facilitated workshops related to agriculture and leadership. From these experiences, I decided I wanted to be an ag teacher and FFA advisor. So, when my term ended, I headed off to the University of Illinois.

My first two years, I worked as a waitress to help pay for my studies. In December of my junior year, I was curious about what other job opportunities there were in Champaign, and I found a news production assistant posting at Fox Illinois News. I did not know one thing about broadcasting. But it seemed interesting, and I was eager to learn.

On my first day of work, I realized I enjoyed it more than I could have imagined. I got to do many tasks behind the scenes that taught me the process of

news broadcasting — I edited video for the newscasts, controlled audio from the audio booth, floor directed in the studio, operated cameras and ran the teleprompter.

I began to question if teaching was still something I wanted to do, realizing that being a news anchor potentially was what I wanted for my career. I spoke with my managers-- they thought it was a great idea to train me for the fill-in anchor position. And before I knew it, I was on the air almost once a week.

I fell in love with the role. I learned that the fast-paced work environment that comes with breaking news and local stories is an area in which I thrive. I presume that my newfound keenness for broadcasting caught the attention of my manager, as he offered up the idea that I put together a weekly segment about hot topics within the ag industry. I was ecstatic about this opportunity and hit the ground running, putting together my segment “Ag in an Instant.”

So far, I’ve covered stories from how the war in Ukraine will switch up the trajectory of the grain markets, to the trade relationship between Mexico and the United States, to highlighting FFA

Week and National Pig Day. “Ag in an Instant” airs every Monday morning on multiple news stations that stretch across Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri.

While I may have deviated from my original career path, I’m still majoring in agriculture education, meaning I must student teach the spring semester of my senior year. I’ve appreciated my student teaching experience more than I imagined I would. I came to the discovery that learning how to create lessons for students to comprehend is very similar to constructing a news segment.

Now, as graduation approaches, I’m excited to report that I’ve recently accepted a position as the Fox Illinois evening news anchor and agriculture reporter, so I’ll be moving to the capital city after graduation.

So what started as a part-time job to help pay my way through college turned into a career where I feel my purpose is being utilized to its fullest potential. As I transition from “part-time to prime time,” I cannot wait to continue to share the stories of central Illinois, advocate for agriculture and relish every minute at the anchor desk.

A favorite photo from an ALEC assignment, “How I relate to agriculture”



Photographer: Eli Solinger | Cow at a pasture at a farm in Oxford, Mississippi. For a full spread of stand-out photos, see pages 16-17.

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Different paths, same destination

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Hometown: Chicago, IL
Population: 2.7 million

Tell us about your hometown.

I am from the south side of Chicago, specifically from the Ashburn neighborhood. My neighborhood was close enough to the city to still be considered a part of Chicago, but not close enough to the city where the skyline was always in sight. My hometown still gave me an urban upbringing and I grew up learning all about the bustling city of Chicago.

Did you ever see yourself at a Big 10 school?

I definitely did not! Getting a college education wasn't really thought of in my family. With being the youngest of eight siblings, as well as a triplet, our financial situation wasn't the best and with it came the idea that college was just too expensive. Out of all of my siblings, I am the second child to go after a college education.

What's the most eye-opening thing you've encountered at UIUC?

Even though I'm from near Chicago, I was surprised at the diverse population that makes up the university. I have been able to make so many connections with those affiliated with the university and they have opened my eyes to the various different backgrounds and groups of people that reside on the same campus that I attend. I found it very shocking that these people that are different from me share similar goals and interests that I have!

How did your hometown affect your interest in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC)?

Agriculture isn't mentioned too much where I'm from. But I was lucky enough to attend the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences and it had an agriculture program close enough to me that helped me see how much agriculture affects everyone. With my prior interests of wanting to become a teacher and the passions of agriculture I discovered in high school, I found ALEC.

What advice do you have for incoming students who may be nervous about living somewhere new?

You never know if you like something or not until you have actually tried it. I was terrified of coming to an area that was a lot larger and more diverse than where I actually grew up. But I learned to use that fear as a learning opportunity to meet some amazing people and thrive where I am now.

Dakoda Maguire

Hometown: Princeville, IL
Population: 1,738

Princeville is about 30 minutes northwest of Peoria and two hours northwest of Champaign. It's a small town with deep roots in production agriculture where you know almost everyone. I graduated with roughly 50 people in my class that I had known since Kindergarten.

During junior high, I had no plans of attending a school as large as UIUC. But the idea grew on me more as I went through high school and, ultimately, I ended up falling in love with the campus. In ACES especially, it's easy to make connections and makes a large campus feel like home.

The vast amount of things to do! I grew up having to drive nearly 30 minutes to Peoria to get food, go to the movies, or find something fun to do. Now that I'm here, I'm within walking distance to some of my favorite restaurants and there is always something fun going on throughout campus.

Agriculture and FFA were a very big deal at my high school with most of the high school being involved in our chapter. This helped get me involved with the organization and ultimately led me to choose a major in Agricultural Education.

It can be super scary to move far away but it's ultimately been the best decision I've made. I was blessed enough to find a home away from home at the 4-H House Cooperative Sorority with a house full of sisters to help me transition.



Funk facts for successful studies

By Elizabeth Dattner

The University of Illinois has the largest library of any public university in the United States. It's home to over 14 million volumes and 24 million other items...everything from Nintendo Switch video games, CDs and DVDs.

The main library at the College of ACES is the Funk Library. Located on the south quad of the University of Illinois, the library is immediately identifiable by its distinct octagonal shape and large windows. It's a comfortable place to study, with a quiet and relaxing environment for students. You can even borrow MacBook chargers, wired earbuds and Apple and Android phone chargers, using your ICARD.

The ACES Library is also home to the ACES Career Center, where students can schedule meetings to conduct preparation for job

interviews and access information on job updates. In addition, the first floor has meeting rooms where various registered student organizations, fraternities and sororities can host meetings.

The College of ACES also hosts **The ACES Student Success Workshop**. These workshops are held every other Wednesday and help to give students advice on study habits and ways to manage their way through college.

And while at the library, check out the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center, home to more than 47,000 agricultural communications documents from 212 countries.

Sparks fly in this student teacher's class

By Alex Johannes

Watching sparks fly in a welding booth, glancing at the commodity markets, performing surgery on bananas, and fostering conversations about quail eggs – those are some of the various experiences an agriculture student would have when walking into my agriculture classes during me student teaching internship this spring.

At DuQuoin High School, I am student teaching with Ann Piotrowski and Sarah McKinnies. Each day I work with over 80 students in my Basic Agricultural Mechanics, Animal Science, Agriculture Business, and Introduction to Agriculture courses. In the classroom, I integrate many practical experiences that students can apply into their professional lives, while also giving them the agriculture knowledge they can further expand on.

Beyond the school day, you can find me at FFA activities such as contest practices, contests, FFA meetings, professional development conferences and whatever else the day may have in store.

I'm a senior now in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program, and I find that student teaching has tied the three components of ALEC together: I use my leadership skills to serve as a mentor to my students, while my communication skills allow me to deliver content in a more effective manner.

In the education concentration, students also receive numerous opportunities to build lasting connections. These connections are with current agriculture teachers through a year of classroom observations and within the learning community of ALEC students who are in many of the same classes. All my ALEC experiences in agricultural education are treasured skills and knowledge to prepare me to teach agriculture.



Josh Grimes (center) is pictured here with FFA advisors Julie Reynolds (left) and Noelle Coronado. Photo courtesy of Josh Grimes

This new teacher takes a student's view

By Josh Grimes (Agricultural Education '22)

Walking back into a building I left five years ago – as a teacher instead of a student – is surreal. Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences is where I first learned and understood the meaning of agriculture and the ranges it has in our lives.

Viewing the school from a teaching perspective is something I was always curious about as a student. Comparing the curriculum from then and now is totally different. As a new educator in this position, I made it my goal to remember how I felt in these seats. Keeping students engaged with material and to connect agriculture to their everyday lives is a very important part for this class.

I have learned and absorbed an abundance of knowledge, tips, tricks and advice working with my colleague Julie Reynolds. Being in the classroom with someone who has much more experience was somewhat nerve wracking at first, but looking back I wouldn't have had it any other way. When the two of us are in the classroom together, we bounce ideas and comments off each other all the time to get our students engaged with the material being presented. She has allowed me to create my own environment in her space, while still letting me figure out my own teaching style and classroom management.



ALEC students helped at the National FFA Convention and Expo as the College of ACES ambassadors in Indianapolis, IN. Photo courtesy of Taylor Talbert

Professional development for future agriculture educators

By Brodee McCormick



ALEC students attended the Alpha Tau Alpha Conclave and competed in agricultural education contests. Photo courtesy of Brodee McCormick

The Agricultural Education Club/Alpha Tau Alpha (ATA) is a professional organization for all future agriculture educators and supporters of agriculture education in general. Since ATA was formed at the University of Illinois in 1921, there have been over 32 chapters at major universities across the nation. ATA allows agriculture education students to come together to learn about education spiritually, intellectually and physically.

At the monthly meetings, members can expect a variety of events to take place depending on what is planned for the month. A large focus of the chapter is to ensure future teachers are provided with professional development before heading into the classroom, through guest speakers, industry visits and tours, or events at the meetings to test members knowledge on FFA contests and common agriculture classroom facts.

ATA members are also actively involved in planned community service events, social events on campus and in the community, as well as helping write curriculum and facilitate for other various events both on and off campus.

And finally, members also have the opportunity to travel to the National Conclave in Indianapolis, IN, in October where they compete against other ATA chapters in various events and meet members from the other universities.

So many ways to see agriculture

Some of our favorite photos from the photo assignment “How I relate to agriculture” in Communicating Agriculture (AGCM 220).



Photographer: Zoey Dye | My favorite image is of the South Quad Bell Tower, or the McFarland Carillon.



Photographer: Taylor Talbert | Barn quilt designed by a family friend that has a meaning of faith and family.



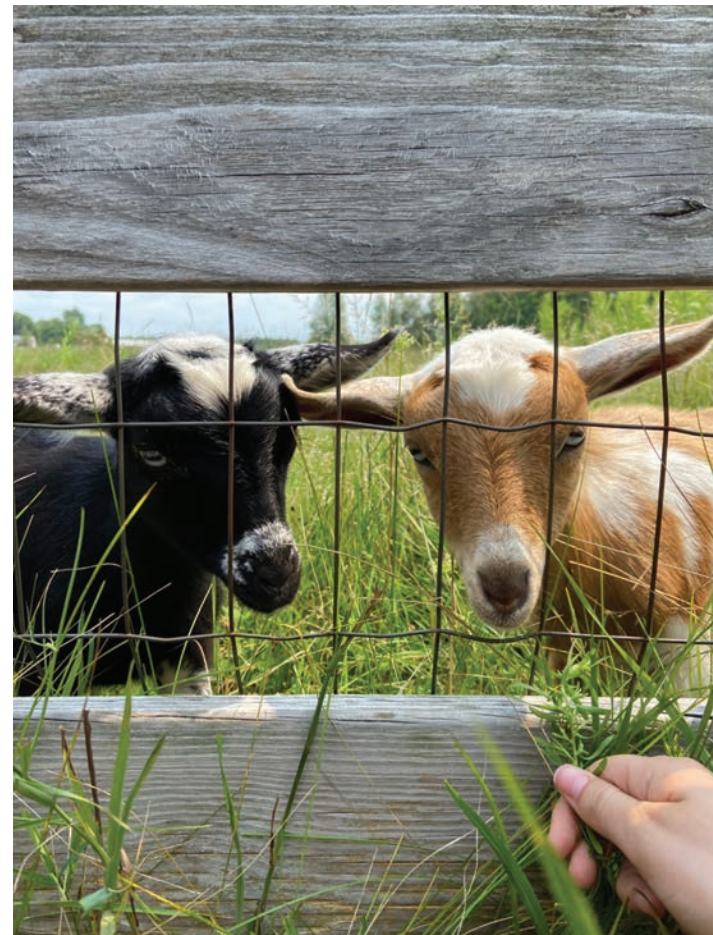
Photographer: Jacob Meyer | When people approach, these barn kittens anticipate dinner.



Photographer: Kayin Garner | Wild horses spotted at sunset in the desert brush near the Verde River in Rio Verde, Arizona. These wild horses roam the McDowell mountain range near the Yavapai Nation.



Photographer: Mallory Ames | The last pass of harvest had the father-daughter duo of Saint Joseph, Illinois, rushing to finish before sunset.



Photographer: Ruby Dalton | An amazing “art farm” located in Door County, Wisconsin, is home to many different farm animals, including these baby goats.



Photographer: Olivia Charles | A Holstein calf at a northern Illinois dairy farm.

Ask ALEC Alumni



LEADERSHIP
Reed Capps

1. What is your current job?

I work for the University of Illinois Extension as the Randolph County 4-H Program Coordinator. I work with youth and volunteers to teach, lead and support Randolph County 4-H.

2. How has your degree shaped your career path?

I like that the degree has many different focuses and courses to choose from. I enjoyed the education classes because they taught me how to properly create lessons and instruct in a classroom. However, I loved the courses offered that focused on life skills, like public speaking, how to construct a needs assessment, how to properly create resumes and many more.

3. What was your favorite UIUC or ALEC experience or memory?

My favorite experience was working on the Greenhand Conference. The experience of working behind the scenes and collaborating with different UIUC organizations and individuals to create programs and activities for these new FFA members was truly rewarding. Working on this project helped me prepare for my current position.



LEADERSHIP
Logan Honegger

1. What is your current job?

I am the College of ACES' Senior Coordinator for Advising and Student Success.

2. How has your degree shaped your career path?

The Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program prepared me with leadership and management skills that I use in my current position. It prepared for me how to be confident in my abilities and how to be a team player.

3. What was your favorite UIUC or ALEC experience or memory?

Still being connected to the program and having professors that turned into mentors and then became friends. The faculty and staff in ALEC are some of the greatest in the College of ACES. They were a constant support system throughout my college career and now as an alum. I am thankful to still be connected to the program and to have met professors that turned into mentors and now friends.



EDUCATION
Jerry Brockett

1. What is your current job?

I work as an agricultural educator and FFA advisor at Meridian High School in Macon, IL.

2. How has your degree shaped your career path?

My degree was in Agricultural Leadership and Science Education. It was directly in the field in which I pursued a career. The program helped provide me with experience for the classroom environment. I started the FFA program at my school, so I worked it from the ground up. My time at UIUC allowed me to gain the background knowledge necessary to do so.

3. What was your favorite UIUC or ALEC experience or memory?

I loved our AGED pictures at Memorial Stadium - that was always a highlight, as well as the AGED Club Christmas mug exchange. UIUC-wise, my favorite memory will always be cheering the Illini on in the Block I.



EDUCATION
Jacqueline Walters

1. What is your current job?

I am finishing my 5th year as an agricultural educator and FFA advisor at Sterling High School in Sterling, IL. This is where I landed after graduation from UIUC in 2018 and have stayed since.

2. How has your degree shaped your career path?

The agriculture education program at UIUC provided me with many opportunities to dive into the world of agriculture education and FFA that I was unfamiliar with. I grew up with a traditional agriculture background but did not have the FFA experiences that many of my classmates at UIUC had. The courses I took and the professors I had gave me the tools, knowledge, and guidance necessary to become a successful agriculture educator.

3. What was your favorite UIUC or ALEC experience or memory?

My favorite memories from UIUC are the relationships I made there. I have maintained a lot of those friendships and still see many classmates that were in my cohort at FFA events today.



COMMUNICATIONS
Katie Zelechowski

1. What is your current job?

I just moved into my current role as an Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) business intelligence analyst. In this role, I focus on driving business decisions and innovation.

2. How has your degree shaped your career path?

My degree significantly shaped my career path by empowering me with the resources and knowledge to tackle a variety of projects through the lens of effective communication. The connections I made while completing my degree served as starting points for much of the professional network I have today.

3. What was your favorite UIUC or ALEC experience or memory?

One experience I will always value is landing an internship as a marketing intern during my junior year, which happened after meeting the hiring manager as a guest speaker in one of my agricultural communications classes. This connection led to one of my favorite internships and helped me develop my passion for communication outside of the classroom.



COMMUNICATIONS
Matt Johnston

1. What is your current job?

I am currently an outreach coordinator for the Illinois Soybean Association. My job is to help support the Governmental Affairs team at ISA by coordinating outreach and education efforts to elected officials in Illinois.

2. How has your degree shaped your career path?

My degree in Agricultural Communications has given me an amazing opportunity to pursue a career in an industry that I feel passionate about. I will continue to utilize the skills and knowledge I have learned from the University of Illinois to improve myself, the Illinois Soybean Association and the agricultural community.

3. What was your favorite UIUC or ALEC experience or memory?

My favorite memory from UIUC was going to the Activities and Recreation Center (ARC) with my friends and spending hours playing basketball. I would say my favorite memory from ALEC was being able to learn from some of the best minds in the country, and then getting to enjoy a Caesar salad from the Bevier Café.

Leadership concepts in the Cradle of Western Civilization

By Dr. David Rosch
Rome study-abroad leader



Study abroad students in Rome.
Photo courtesy of Dr. David Rosch.

Twenty-five UIUC students will travel to Rome for a week studying leadership concepts in the context of Roman history, and how lessons from history are still relevant to today.

The trip needed to take a pandemic-related hiatus over the past few years. But now back it's back to a biannual event for Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) students and other students enrolled in the ALEC-led minor in Leadership Studies.

Participating students attend a series of planning sessions prior to traveling to Rome, where they learn about Roman history, religion and philosophy and how each can add to our understanding of successful teams, organizations and nations.

During the trip, students visit iconic sites like the Coliseum, the Vatican, St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel, and the Villa Medici gardens. Interspersed between some class time, students will also take a pasta-cooking class, visit a local winery, and sample more gelato than is likely good for them.

I'm glad that we can return to offering it, and with the continuing help of the ACES Study Abroad Office in providing scholarships to help bring down its cost to students.



International Agricultural Communications student and Jesús López Colmenarejo, an agricultural journalist from Spain. Photo: Dr. Owen Roberts

Study abroad ... from the classroom

By Rachel McGreal

Perhaps you want to dip your toes in global studies without leaving home. Or maybe you'd like to meet agricultural journalists and communications specialists from a dozen countries and learn about how farm and food stories are told around the world. Or how about seeing the way freedom of the press influences knowledge mobilization outside of the U.S.?

If so, International Agricultural Communications (AGCM 375) is for you.

This new course, which launched last fall, gives you an opportunity to explore agricultural journalism and communications in an international context, from the familiar surroundings of Bevier Hall.

Each week, the class "visits" a different country -- Mexico, Argentina, Ireland, and Burkina Faso, for example. On the first day of class that week, a class member is appointed to lead the discussion about the agriculture and the agricultural communications and journalism in that country. On the second day of class that week, an agricultural journalist or communications professional from that country (typically, a member of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists) joins the class in person or online to talk about their connection to agricultural communications in their country. The students then get the chance to ask them questions at the end of class.

The exchange of ideas and perspectives gives students the opportunity to compare agriculture and journalism from country to country, while simultaneously understanding how those industries are connected on a global scale.

Panama: All about culture and agriculture

By Taylor Talbert



Taylor Talbert on her way to the Guaymi Village to visit and learn more about their heritage
Photo courtesy of Taylor Talbert

Traveling abroad with some of your closest friends, learning more about global agriculture, and getting to see things that aren't in the U.S. ... sign me up!

Within the College of ACES, Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications instructor Gary Ochs supervises a group of 10 students to Panama each year to explore agricultural systems there.

In May 2022, I participated in this short-term study-abroad program. We saw amazing architecture and ate amazing food, learned about Panamanian agriculture, and so much more. In the 10 days we were there, we visited everything from a racehorse facility to an indigenous village and learned about colonial Panama.

Whenever someone asks me my favorite part of the experience, I'm unsure about what to say. I loved everything about it. But if pressed, I'd say these are my top three memories:

- **The pineapple plantation (Panama piña).** We saw how pineapples grow, how they're harvested and how they're exported. Did you know it takes more than 12 months for a single pineapple to grow?
- **The hike to the Guaymi indigenous village.** We hiked up a mountain to see the Guaymi indigenous village and learn how people there produce clothing. Did you know that you can make twine out of a shaved leaf?
- **Las Lajas.** Las Lajas is a town, but we saw so much agriculture there, including an organic farm and a cattle operation. Did you know that the number one breed of cattle in Panama is Brahman?

This Panama experience helped me develop my communication skills for sharing the knowledge I gained there. Study abroad programs help prepare us for our future careers. Read more about this program here.

Combining ancient culture and modern communications

By Sophia Wegeng

In January, I studied abroad in Mexico's Yucatán peninsula by way of a College of ACES faculty-led program. The focus of the trip was to study ecology, sustainability, culture and ancient Mayan civilization.

A personal focus of mine was to explore traditional Mayan agriculture along with international agricultural communications. On this trip, some of the highlights included the Mayan village of Dzont Carretero where Milpa farming is still practiced, the Mayan ruins of Dzibilchaltún, Uxmal and Calakmul, the Tizimín fair and livestock expo and the Rio Lagartos and Calakmul Biosphere Reserves. Also, we toured the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán Campus de Ciencias Biológicas y Agropecuarias

(biological and agricultural sciences).

Interest in this trip was greatly influenced by Dr. Owen Roberts' International Agricultural Communications class (AGCM 375). For me, the stories and discussions from this class incorporated everything that Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) students are being taught and providing evidence that what we are learning here in ALEC is leverageable across other cultures, occupations and viewpoints. The knowledge and insight from this course built my confidence to ask questions, seek out experiences and embrace the beauty of the stories around us.

These experiences have also provided direction for my future professional and educational trajectory. After graduation in



Sophia Wegeng climbing into a chamber on the Mayan ruins of Dzibilchaltún Photo: Erin Wunderlich

May, I will continue chasing my passion by pursuing a Masters of Agriculture in Agricultural Development from Texas A&M. I am thankful for the foundations I have received from the ALEC program here at UIUC, and I hope that others will find their passion as I did.

Emotional resonance: That's what makes an image hum

By Katie Knapp

The spark for where I am now in my career started in the darkroom in Bevier Hall.

I had come to the University of Illinois to major in ag communications because of my experiences in 4-H and FFA and on my family's grain farm. My second year on campus, I took the photography course that — back then — was film based. Learning the storytelling capability of images and how to make the prints match what my mind's eye had seen was more impactful than I knew at the time.

After graduation, I filed my new photography skills along with all the other tools of the trade and started my career in advertising agencies. After working at a handful through my twenties, I earned my master's degree in visual sociology from Goldsmiths, University of London, thinking I would shift into a more strategic, planning role after.

Instead, I launched a freelance career I had not expected.

For several years now, within my The Ag Photographer business, I have produced editorial and commercial photography for production ag and food sector clients. I've also published feature stories in The Furrow magazine.

Though I have taken many turns to get where I am today, a direct line could be drawn back to the day we covered Dorothea Lang's photography in class. Her ability to produce deeply meaningful images that show exactly how her subjects felt is still so inspiring to me. Technical correctness is important, but the emotional resonance is what I believe makes a good image effective and what I strive for each time I pick up my camera.



Agricultural photographer Katie Knapp. Photo courtesy of Katie Knapp



Dan Bristow checks the water levels during a busy harvest day on his in-laws' Wisconsin cranberry marsh. Photo: Katie Knapp



Illini ACT members and friends. Photo courtesy of ACT

Make friends and sharpen your communications skills with ACT

By Rachel McGreal

Having 1,000-plus student organizations on the UIUC campus means there's something for almost every interest you can think of.

For example, The Illini Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT) strives to provide a space outside of the classroom for members to share their passions for the agricultural communications and journalism sector and grow as leaders.

We offer club members opportunities to participate in professional development workshops, immersive industry tours, social and philanthropic activities, and more.

Illini ACT also creates opportunities throughout the year for its members to interact and network with industry professionals.

The club is open to all students of any major. As a member of Illini ACT, you're part of a tight-knit community that promotes friendship among members and brings like-minded peers together.

Illini ACT members also belong to the National ACT organization. That gives them access to exclusive scholarship, internship and professional development opportunities. Members can attend Ag Media Summit, the largest agricultural communications conference in the United States with

the agriculture industry's top writers, editors, photographers, publishers, and agricultural communications specialists.

National ACT also hosts a professional development conference and is invited to the National Association of Farm Broadcasting annual convention where members can connect with the nation's farm broadcasting elite.

To learn more about joining Illini ACT, check our [Facebook page](#) or contact Dr. Owen Roberts, Illini ACT advisor.

Rachel McGreal is the 2022-23 Illini ACT President and a former National ACT President.

How my internship connected me to the corporate world

By Sarah Meghrian

As a marketing and communications intern with Cargill, I've worked on several projects that focus on market research in the fast-food industry. It's given me a first-hand look at how marketing and communications work in the fast-paced corporate world...and the importance of thorough research and analysis.

I've come to understand the key players, trends and challenges in the fast-food communications industry. We use various research tools, including surveys

and interviews, to gather data and make informed decisions.

I've been involved in projects ranging from predicting culinary trends to creating content for social media platforms. In each project, I've learned the importance of effective communication with team members, stakeholders and clients.

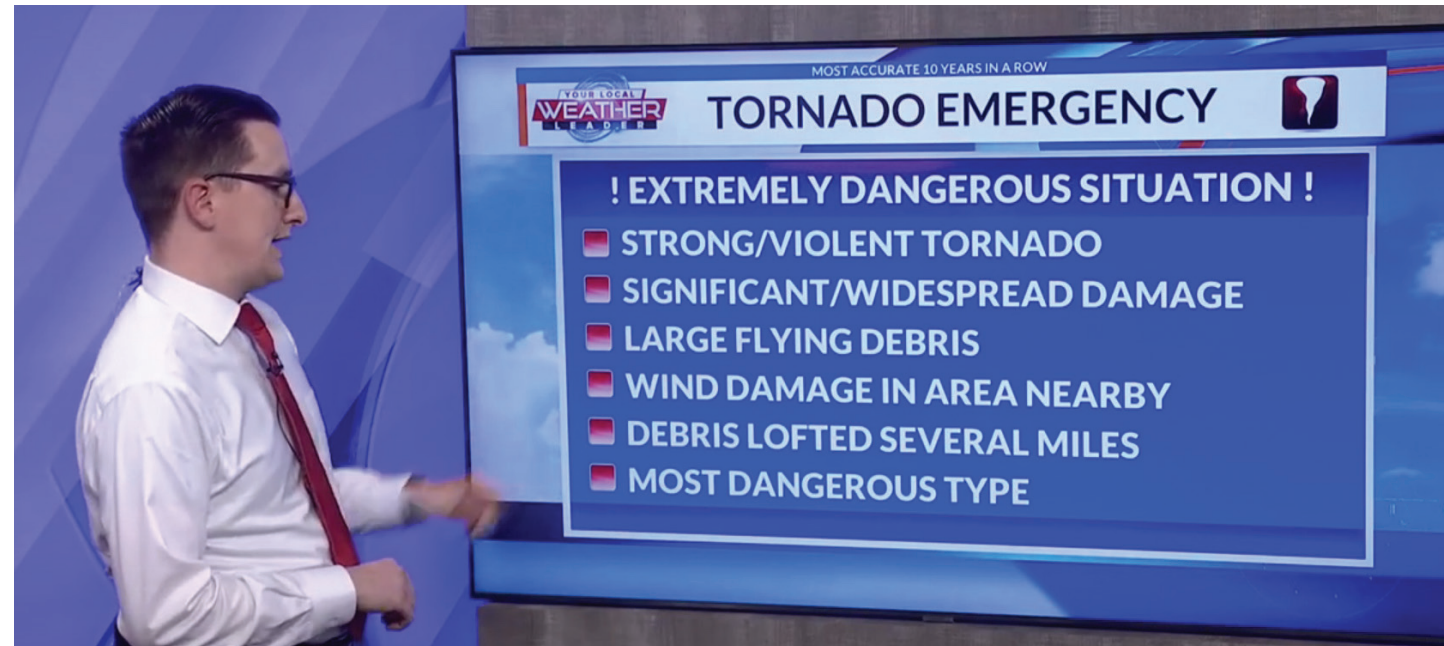
I've also learned to manage my time efficiently, prioritize tasks and meet deadlines.

Through my internship, I've gained an insight into Cargill's values and culture. The company is committed to sustainable and ethical practices. I've seen firsthand how these values are integrated into its marketing and communication strategies — and how they can create a positive impact on the environment and society.

I encourage everyone to apply for an experience such as mine during college!

Live from just outside the tornado: It's Jacob Dickey

By Sydney Friedman



Jacob Dickey describes the characteristics of a “tornado emergency” to viewers. Photo courtesy of Jacob Dickey

Jacob Dickey (Agricultural Education, '15) is cooking up a storm -- as a tornado-chasing meteorologist, as the host of his own TV cooking segment, and as an agricultural advocate. He's been passionate about weather since he was young, enticed by the awesomeness of a front moving in and turning tranquil skies into dark, moody vistas.

And now, after seven years in the weather business, his passion just keeps growing as a meteorologist for WCIA 3 News.

“I am really blessed with a job that is super exciting,” he says. “It makes a difference in people’s lives. It’s an important role and I don’t take it lightly.”

Jacob grew up in Gibson City, IL. He attended high school in his hometown where he was heavily involved in FFA, serving as the Section President in Illinois and later, working for National FFA facilitating leadership conferences. His passion for FFA prompted him to major in Agricultural Sciences and Leadership Education, after transferring to UIUC from the Parkland Pathways program.

But despite his commitment to education, Jacob never lost his childhood dream of chasing storms and tracking tornadoes.

As far back as the fifth grade, Jacob was part of WCIA 3’s Kidcaster program, a weather segment hosted by WCIA 3 News in which youngsters were on-air weather reporters on Friday mornings.

To compete in the big leagues though, Jacob believed he needed an advanced degree. So he enrolled in a master’s degree program in professional meteorology, with an emphasis in broadcast, from Mississippi State University. Later in his career, he

returned to WCIA 3 News, and back to his family’s rich history in agriculture in Central Illinois, dating back almost 200 years.

Today, Jacob’s work on WCIA 3 News is often directly connected to agriculture. He reports on soil moisture, ground temperature and the crop outlook for the season. His roots in agriculture allow him to help farmers make planting and harvesting decisions, and his colleagues don’t mind letting him step up.



Jacob’s dream of chasing storms led him to this tornado in Katie City, OK. Photo courtesy of Jacob Dickey



Jacob at his news desk. Photo courtesy of Jacob Dickey

“During farm season,” he says, “I’m kind of the one leading the charge with all things agriculture.”

Another agricultural connection Jacob fosters is through a weekly segment called Ag in the Classroom. There, WCIA 3 News partners with the Champaign County Farm Bureau Foundation to teach kids something about farming. It airs on the Morning Show every Monday.

“It’s another cool way to connect agriculture to my job,” says Jacob.

This winter, Jacob covered multiple very active and dangerous weather systems in Central Illinois. On January 3, nine tornadoes -- four of which Jacob saw -- ripped through the area, and two of them were broadcast live on air from Jacob in the field. This record-high tornado outbreak was followed by three rare February morning tornadoes, two of which Jacob saw from the studio using the station’s remote camera network.

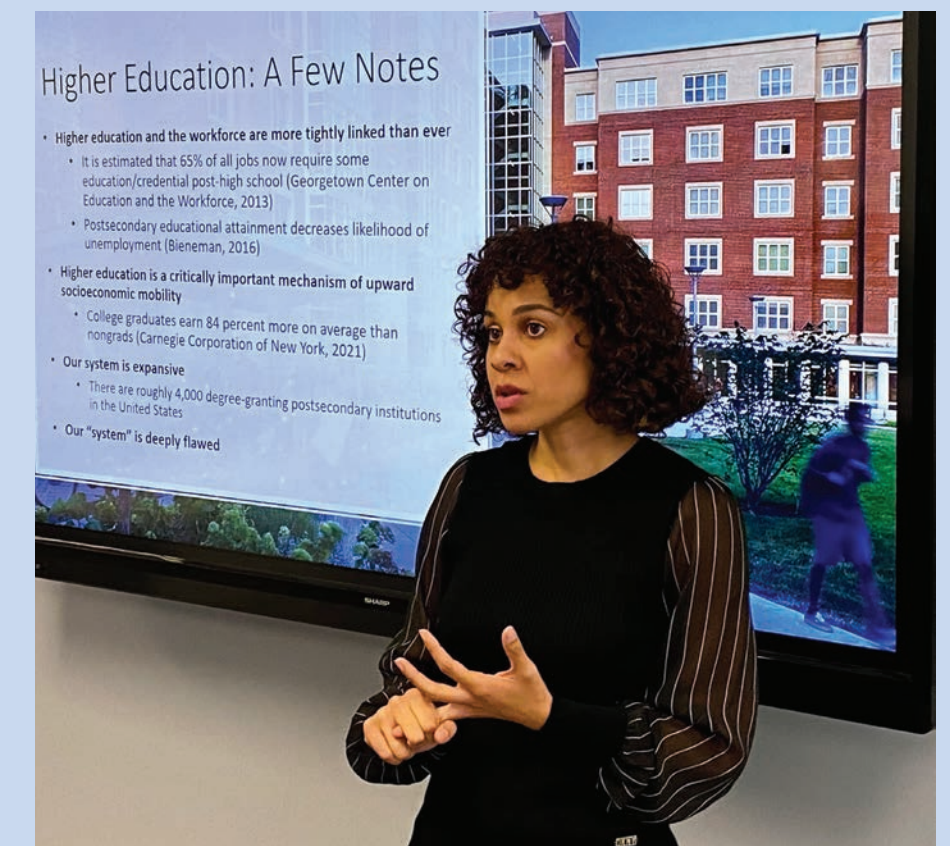
As destructive as severe storms can be, chasing them is something Jacob knows is important for his job.

“Ever since the first tornado I saw in the late 1990s north of Gibson City, I’ve been awestruck by Mother Nature,” says Jacob. “It is stunning to see the sheer and raw power of the atmosphere and recognize that we are at its mercy. And it’s important for me to see first-hand what my forecasts on paper look like in real life.”

Collaboration is the key



It’s all about teamwork for students in Dr. Jasmine Collins’ Leadership in Groups and Teams (LEAD 380) class ... collaborate, or your marshmallow tower construction project doesn’t stand up to the challenge! Pictured here clockwise, from bottom left are Canyn Borntrager, Natalie Cheung, Sean Majerczak, Vivian Guo and Raya Halabi. Photo courtesy of Dr. Jasmine Collins.



Dr. Collins outlines her research during an Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications faculty seminar. Photo: Owen Roberts

Campus Jobs Spotlight

Here at the University of Illinois, many students have campus jobs. In the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications program, our students take diverse roles in a variety of departments through the university. Highlighted below are a few of our current students working here at the university. This allows them to have flexible schedules and work with a variety of different faculty and staff.



Erica Johnson works for the College of ACES as an intern for the Coordinator of Undergraduate Recruitment. She assists with recruitment efforts from an organizational standpoint in addition to interacting with prospective students and giving tours of ACES campus. At events such as the Illinois Women Changing the Face of Agriculture conference, Erica visits with students about all that the College of ACES has to offer.



As a communications intern at The College of Veterinary Medicine, **Erin Wunderlich** learned valuable skills in interviewing students, faculty, and alumni for feature articles. She also worked on many projects that involve Adobe Creative Cloud, like using Photoshop to edit pictures and InDesign to create flyers and handouts. In between bigger projects, she learned to check data analytics for website and social engagement as well as create social media content to promote the college.



Olivia Charles works at the University of Illinois horse research farm where she aids in the daily care of a breeding herd of Standardbred racehorses, as well as a few privately owned riding horses. She is responsible for the feeding and cleaning of these horses. She has also started helping teach the class Working with Farm Animals.



Taylor Talbert works for the University of Illinois Undergraduate Admissions as an Illinois Student Admissions Representative (I-STAR). She gives general campus tours weekly to prospective, admitted and transfer students interested in UIUC. Ahead of tours, Taylor also helps address questions from students and others in the Office of Admissions and Records.

Sigma Alpha
Professional Agricultural Sorority
Cultivating Professional Women in Agriculture

@sigmaalpha_uiuc
sigmaalphaiuc.recruit@gmail.com



After more than 150 years, the sun is setting on the Lincoln Tree on Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications student Claire Smith's family farm. The tree dwarfs Claire, seen at the bottom left of the tree. Photo courtesy of Claire Smith

The Lincoln Tree is part of Champaign County history

By Claire Smith

History is found everywhere, oftentimes without us realizing it. For me, history was found in my backyard, with a grand old bur oak tree that's become known as the Lincoln Tree.

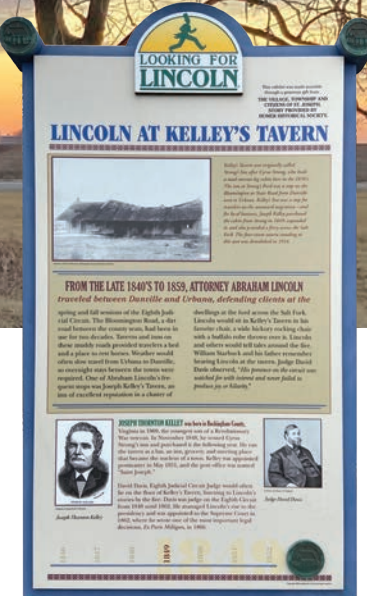
When my family purchased our Champaign County home in 2011, the previous owners — the Flessner family — told us that the tree in our yard was a significant piece of history. The story goes that Abraham Lincoln was known to have taken naps under the tree during his travels between the courthouses in Danville and Urbana, when he was a member of the Circuit of the Eighth Judicial District of Illinois from 1847-1857.

The story goes that Homer Lake Road was known as the “low road,” a less-traveled dirt road that was used when the weather was good and dry. The “high road” was in the vicinity of where Interstate 74 is now and that was used when it was raining or wet. The Salt Fork River sometimes caused flooding issues on the low road.

Lincoln would travel back and forth between the courthouses, defending his clients at spring and fall sessions. He would make a pitstop at Kelley's Tavern, which was run as a bar, an inn, grocery store and a meeting place for the townspeople. Lincoln would sit in his favorite chair — a wide hickory rocking chair that had a buffalo robe thrown over it — and tell stories around the fire with others. After, he would travel another mile and take a nap under the tree, where a bed and breakfast operated.

That means that tree has been there since sometime between 1840-1860. Today, there's a historical marker where Kelley's Tavern used to sit. My hometown, Saint Joseph, got its name from Joseph Kelley, owner of the tavern.

And as for the Lincoln Tree? Well, it's still there, but if you want to see it, drive by now. It's not getting any younger.



Raising the game

Leadership, education and communications skills appeal to a wide range of majors

By Erica Johnson and Elizabeth Dattner

Whether it's on the field or in the classroom, students enrolled in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) courses know how to make the play and finish strong. ALEC courses have a major focus on experiential learning to expand students' skillset ... and they're drawing students from all over campus, including several Fighting Illini intercollegiate athletes.

Two courses in the ALEC program with this kind of broad appeal include Foundations of Leadership (LEAD 260) and Communicating Agriculture (AGCM 220). Students in LEAD 260 study theories of leadership and learn about how to harness their strengths and potential. One of the main skills they students learn is how to work effectively in groups and promote positive working environments after graduation.

Fighting Illini basketball player Connor Serven — majoring in Agribusiness Markets and Management in the College of ACES — was a LEAD 260 student in fall 2021. He found the skills he learned to be valuable on and off the court.

“I took LEAD 260 to benefit both my sport and future job,” he says. “My ALEC classes have always given me a broader view of leadership and really helped me not only be a better leader, but a better follower as well.”

Student enrollment data shows 91 percent of students enrolled in LEAD 260 are outside of the ALEC program, and more than 40 percent are outside of the College of ACES. Instructor Dr. Jennifer Smist says courses like LEAD 260 promote diversity and inclusion by encouraging class members to discuss their experiences and backgrounds.

Another ALEC course with a diverse roster of students is Communicating Agriculture, with Dr. Owen Roberts. The curriculum focuses on understanding and communicating issues in agriculture to widely varying audiences, by means such as writing news, creating podcasts and taking photos.

Class enrollment is usually about a 50/50 split between urban and rural-based students. That creates exceptional synergy and dialogue in class. About 90 students, like Fighting Illini football players Solo Turner and Weston Adams, sign up each year.

“I took AGCM 220 because I was interested in the network of agriculture,” says Solo, who plays safety for the Illini. “Up until taking the course, I didn't understand the significant role that agriculture plays in our economy and my well-being.”

ALEC provides opportunities for students to learn by doing — a valuable approach that resonates throughout the program. Whether it's designing a national campaign, creating a business or building a magazine like this one, students in ALEC courses raise their game through unique learning experiences.

Photos by Anna Longworth



Need answers? Ask Izzy

Advice for being a successful Illini

By Elizabeth (Izzy) Dattner

Q. Staying organized at school seems tough. How do you do it?

I am a huge fan of the Outlook Calendar feature. At the start of every semester, I print out a syllabus for each of my courses and I program my Outlook Calendar and Notion page so I can use these tools to keep track of deadlines. I handwrite my notes, which helps me retain more information so I can feel more prepared for any exams.

I also prioritize my sleep schedule and eat healthy. Taking care of yourself can really make such a tremendous difference for your academic performance! More information about mental health services can be found [here](#).

Q. I've heard internships are a great way to supplement your in-class learning. Where do I get an internship?

Internships are readily available for students here at the University of Illinois. First-year Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) students enroll in ALEC 110, which helps you write a cover letter and create a LinkedIn profile. Students who are looking for internships can learn more about opportunities in the ALEC program. It's also a great idea to ask professors about opportunities!



Elizabeth (Izzy) Dattner
Photo: Claire Smith

Izzy says learn about professional development by taking part in campus groups like the Illini chapter of the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS). The photo on the right was taken during the group's national convention in Atlanta this year. Photo courtesy of MANRRS



Q. How will the ALEC program help me find a community?

When I first came to college, I was concerned about finding an accessible community at such a large university. The truth is though, ALEC offers the best of both worlds. Since ALEC has a smaller program, students can be on a first name basis with most of their professors. Smaller class sizes help students interact and form friendships with their peers. Through my classes in ALEC, I have been able to connect with new people and spend time with my former high school classmates who came here. Freshmen are all in this together — others are anxious to reach out, just like you.

Q. What are some other ways to get involved outside of your major?

The University of Illinois has 1,000 Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) on campus. Every fall, the University hosts Quad Day, which is an involvement fair where students can learn about specific clubs. The College of ACES also hosts its own involvement fair where students can learn more about various clubs on the in the college. I am involved in The Illini Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (see story on page 23) as well as the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS). Through these two organizations, I have learned about professional development while meeting like-minded peers. An additional way to meet people outside of your major is attending events at any of the various cultural centers on campus. Each cultural house is on Nevada Street by the Main Quad. Here is more information on [cultural houses](#).

ACES word search

W M J O P S I C L A N D G R A N T A W Q L W M L
H X I S S E N E R A W A L A B O L G Q P L X K W
B S T M N G M O I I N T Y P Q N E S W M A V O L
O B U L F E D M I T V Z Z H E K R O I L H A T A
J F G N I K N I H T L A C I T I R C S L R Q N N
I A V N U U P G P U A P B D Q O P S R A E U E O
P I U V D M K H Q U G C Z D Q P E B P H N E M I
G S O Q Q S W S X V E F I S H N N D J R R V P T
E Y B N O O G R W Z I R D N R A D B S E U N O A
S L L A H D R O F M U M M A U A X U O I T O L N
B T B E S O U E A W H N W T U M A C S V E I E R
Y Z O U B G I Y D B T A M Q A F M H C E H N V E
R X V L V O S L M U L E H W M H D O R B B U E T
Z I E K P L Q Q T A C T T K L M T T C D G I D N
D F Z U Q W P L B E U A P N A N Z X O D Z N L I
E I K V J T O O E O Q Y T I P P Q R I N X I L E
Q G Q J E P L R S W T N T I H O T H P S R L I V
F L Y E I G E K R P T G E N O S O C W C Z L K F
G S Q P L W R W M O H N U A J N R P U G R I S A
C P S N F H B T Q Q M S M Q U B W E Q L P L G Y
I I P J O E Y R A R B I L K N U F B D N B R H O
E A J S T O C K P A V I L I O N H Y R A S Q R G
K X W E L L A H Y E L N I K D I V A D H E Q J J
P T H A N T T J E R U T L U C I R G A M L L K V

- Global awareness
- Critical thinking
- Skill development
- Land grant
- Agriculture
- Leadership
- Education
- Communications
- International
- Morrow Plots
- South Quad
- Stock Pavilion
- Turner Hall
- Bevier Hall
- Mumford Hall
- David Kinley Hall
- Illini Union
- Funk Library

Down:
1. Illini Emerging Leaders
2. Funk Family
3. By Students for Students
4. Morrow Plots
5. Elyza Petry
6. Communications
7. Anna Ball
8. Campaign Urbana
9. Meteorologists
10. Dr. Owen Roberts
11. NI
12. Leadership
13. NI
14. Agricultural
15. Ten
16. Bevier Hall
17. Anna Ball
18. Two
19. Rome
20. Leadership

Across:
1. Ask Izzy
2. Education
3. By Students for Students
4. Morrow Plots
5. Elyza Petry
6. Communications
7. Anna Ball
8. Campaign Urbana
9. Meteorologists
10. Dr. Owen Roberts
11. NI
12. Leadership
13. NI
14. Agricultural
15. Ten
16. Bevier Hall
17. Anna Ball
18. Two
19. Rome
20. Leadership

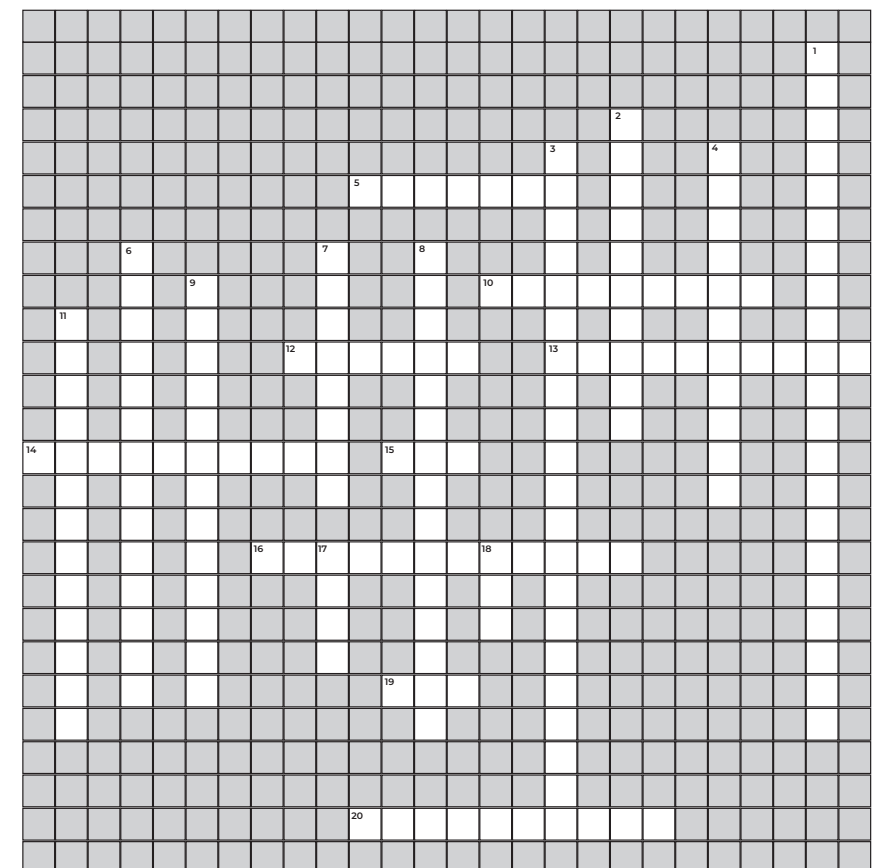
Down

1. What is the name of the leadership club?
2. Who is the Funk ACES Library named after?
3. What is *The Morrow's* motto?
4. What is the experimental agriculture field at the University of Illinois?
6. What does the "C" stand for in ALEC?
7. Who is the associate dean of the College of ACES?
8. Where is the main campus of The University of Illinois located?
9. What is Jacob Dickey's occupation?
11. Who is the professor in charge of *The Morrow*?
17. Where is the study abroad trip destination for the leadership program?
18. How many editions for *The Morrow* have been published?

Across

5. What is the name of the advice column in *The Morrow*?
10. What does the "E" stand for in ALEC?
12. Where was the Central American destination for the study abroad trip in 2022?
13. Who hosts Ag in an Instant on WCCU Fox News?
14. In what hall is *The Morrow* produced?
15. How many letters are in the title of this publication?
16. What does the "A" stand for in ALEC?
19. I-L-L...
20. What does the "L" stand for in ALEC?

ALEC crossword puzzle





Krissi Poesterl prepares her dish in the Bevier Café kitchen. Photo: Claire Tester

The sights and smells of this kitchen are irresistible

By Claire Tester

Across the College of ACES, experiential learning is a key element. In that spirit, Social Media Management in Agriculture is designed to teach students about the best practices for using social media in a professional setting.

For a capstone project in this course, class members create their own mock communications company, give it a name and help a culinary arts student in the Bevier Café introduce a new recipe via social media.

My company was called The Bridge, as a nod bridging the gap between producers and consumers. I was assigned a student chef Krissi Poesterl.

My marketing approach included step-by-step photos of Krissi preparing caramelized chicken stir fry, and menu designs I created on Canva. I posted them on social media platforms and on handbills on to attract interest in her recipe.

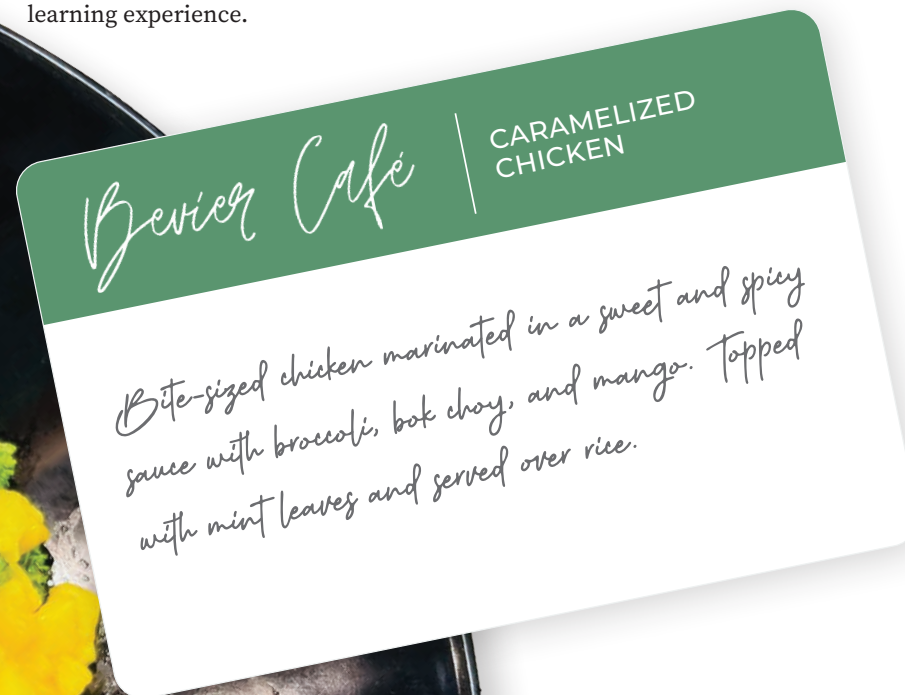
I believe visuals are key to attracting attention. I used photos that were about the sounds and smells of the kitchen: the chef's knife chopping fresh greens, steam swirling above her wok and student chef Krissi beaming over her mouthwatering dish.

My photos were designed to appeal to all five of our senses, and be engaging by featuring the skilled and hardworking chef. My campaign approach was rooted in the idea that a chef's exposure increases consumer interest.

Staggered posts on Facebook, Instagram Story, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Snapchat targeted faculty and students who might not usually eat at Bevier Café. Handbills targeted anyone, anywhere, any time without relying on the sometimes-unreliable Internet.

In the end, Krissi sold twice as many dishes than she originally anticipated.

We both agreed this was a superb interdisciplinary learning experience.



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Leading the way for women in agriculture



Agricultural Communications alumnae Heather Hampton+Knodle visited with women of the College of ACES following her keynote address at the Illinois Agri-Women's professional development event in March, held in conjunction with Women Changing the Face of Agriculture. Pictured at the event are (back row, from left) Kit Hopkins, Clara Asplund, Christina White, Jordyn Gerlach, Emily Brooks, Emily Krawcyk, Olivia Charles, Claire Tester and Kate Miller; (front row, from left) Ashlyn Murdock, Heather Hampton+Knodle and Ashlyn Quinn.

We are proud to recognize Heather Hampton+Knodle (Agricultural Communications '94) as a distinguished leader among women in American agriculture. As a farmer, rural development advocate, and now President of American Agri-Women, Heather has served as a role model for many Illinois women. Students have benefitted from the doors she's opened for future generations of agricultural communicators. Thank you for your leadership, Heather!



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