University of Illinois Springfield

50th Annual Commencement

Saturday, May 15, 2021
Greetings

Donald J. Edwards
Chairman, University of Illinois Board of Trustees

On behalf of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, and as a proud alumnus of the U of I System, I am honored to bring greetings and congratulations to the Class of 2021!

You have been through so much to reach today’s milestone, juggling your studies with the historic challenges of a global pandemic. In the process, you have done even more than achieve your dreams. You have also helped make our universities among the safest in our nation – a model for our peers – and I am deeply grateful for your understanding, your cooperation and your sacrifice.

Although it has been a few years since I was in the seat you are in today, I still remember the mix of excitement and anxiety I felt, not knowing exactly what the future might hold. That feeling is understandable. But rest assured that the world-class education you received here, in and out of the classroom, has given you the foundation to succeed and flourish.

As you head off to make your mark on the world, know you carry a bond that forever connects you to your years on this remarkable campus. You are joining one of the world’s largest alumni networks – nearly 800,000 strong from across the U of I System’s three, best-in-class universities. As our alumni have since our founding over 150 years ago, I hope you will carry our flag with pride. Your successes will carry us forward, adding to our global reputation for excellence and attracting the new generations of students who want to follow in your footsteps.

I hope you will come back to campus often – to share your achievements, your experiences and your insights. And as you are out there changing and improving society, the entire world over, know that all of us you have left behind will be working for you, ensuring that the value and prestige of the degree you worked so hard to earn continues to grow.

Congratulations again, Class of 2021!

Dr. Timothy L. Killeen
President, University of Illinois

Congratulations, Class of 2021!

College years are always a lifetime memory. But yours are literally historic, a time that your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will learn about during their own educational journeys. You earned your degrees amid the worst pandemic in a century, and
Greetings, Class of 2021!

Commencement is an important and exciting rite of passage that I look forward to celebrating each year. You have devoted years of your time becoming a stronger, smarter version of yourself, fully equipped to tackle your goals. And now you have your University of Illinois degree to help pave the exciting path ahead.

As Interim Chancellor of the University of Illinois Springfield, I could not be prouder of our Class of 2021. You have endured a year that was challenging in every way possible. Your grit persevered, and you will carry that determination with you into the future.

I am equally as proud of the faculty and staff of UIS who helped see you through to this day, and I’m grateful to the family and friends who supported you in your educational journey. They surely are cheering you on today!
The vision of UIS is to provide a pathway to opportunity, a catalyst for change and a space of possibility where learners can become leaders capable of transforming their local and global communities. Wherever you go and whatever you do, I hope the lessons of leadership you encountered at UIS will serve you well. I am confident your future will be bright with opportunities. Congratulations!

Rikeesha V. Phelon, ’99 PAA, MA ’05 LAS
Chair, University of Illinois Springfield Alumni Board

Welcome to the UIS Alumni Association. We are a global, supportive alumni community of more than 44,000 graduates, united by rich traditions of loyalty, excellence and service to society.

Graduation is not an ending; it’s a new start or a new beginning. It’s a time to celebrate, and to reflect. It’s a time to be thankful for those who helped you and have supported you. It’s a time to embrace opportunities before you. Your degree will open doors for you, and allow you to pursue your life’s dreams, passions and ambitions.

Know that you share a common bond with nearly 800,000 living graduates of the University of Illinois System, found in all 50 states and more than 160 countries. Wherever life takes you, you’ll likely be among those who have a shared experience and bond of the University of Illinois degree. Display your diploma with pride and use your experience to help recruit a new student to UIS. The value of our degree will continue to grow with intelligent, hardworking students from diverse backgrounds coming through the doors of our alma mater.

Congratulations, Class of 2021! You are well prepared to lead in the world. Be bold. Reach for Stellar. Stay true. Be UIS.
Graduate Academic Honor Awards

Timilehin Isaac Adewuyi ................................................. Honors in Accountancy
Taiwo Dorcas Akinsoji ................................................. Outstanding Public Health Student
Herman Eli Ame ........................................................ Outstanding Student in Political Science
Kampana Bittalli ........................................................ Honors in Business Administration
Zena Budiri ............................................................... Outstanding Student in Human Development Counseling
William John Craig .................................................. Outstanding Student in Environmental Sciences
Jennifer Dick Thomas ................................................. Outstanding Graduate Student in English
Jordyn Michelle Eads .................................................. Honors in Accountancy
Whitney Taylor Elders ................................................ Outstanding Graduate Student in Public Administration
Christine Rachel Hatfield ............................................ Outstanding Student in Public Affairs Reporting
Rebekah Hecht ........................................................... Outstanding Student in History
Gregory Scott Heurter ................................................ Excellence in Academic Achievement
Jennifer Ashley Janas ................................................ Outstanding Human Service Student
Kathleen M. Keeney ..................................................... Outstanding Student in Legal Studies
Jayme Aileen Kirchner ................................................ Outstanding Student in Computer Science
Yulia Kuznetsova ......................................................... Outstanding Student in Computer Science
Taylor Ann Larson ..................................................... Outstanding Capstone in the Master of Arts in Education
John Michael Malone ................................................ Outstanding Doctoral Student in Public Administration
Matthew Marvin ........................................................ Outstanding Student in Management Information Systems
Sally A. McDaniel-Smith ............................................. Outstanding Graduate Student in Public Administration
Tamrika Reddy Pothapu .............................................. Outstanding Student in Data Analytics
Sarah Logan Richmiller .............................................. Outstanding Student in Human Development Counseling
Joseph William Ritter ................................................ Outstanding Student in History
Ruksana Padmanabh Sathe ........................................ Outstanding Student in Management Information Systems
Margaret Cathleen Shadid .......................................... Outstanding Student in Political Science
Tami S. Silverman ....................................................... Outstanding Doctoral Student in Public Administration
Heather Staats ......................................................... Outstanding Leadership, Initiative, and Academic Work in Educational Leadership
Christle June Stezskal ................................................ Outstanding Student in Data Analytics
Barbara F. Stricker .................................................... Outstanding Public Health Student
Benjamin F. Szalinski ................................................ Outstanding Student in Public Affairs Reporting
Kayla M. Thompson .................................................. Outstanding Human Service Student
Angela Try ............................................................... Outstanding Graduate Student in Communication
Abbie Lynn Varble .................................................... Honors in Business Administration
Alexandra Marie Ward .............................................. Outstanding Graduate Student in Communication
Melissa Hope Watkins ................................................ Outstanding Student in Legal Studies
Rachel Marie Wilham ................................................ Outstanding Student in Environmental Sciences
2021 Graduates

David Keith Aarseth
Ali Ahmat Abdoulaye
Alexandria Carver Adelman
Moyosore O. Adeolu
Adeyemi Kehinde Adesina
Timilehin Isaac Adewuyi
Iyanu Benson Adeyemi
Helen Adetutu Adeyeni
Janet Abiola Afolabi
Zain Syed Ahmad
Varun Ahuja
Christian Stephen Aillon
Gomathi Ayathuray
Gbemileke Rufus Ajayi
Ayomide Temitope
Akinniranye
Taiwo Dorcas Akinsoji
Emily Albrecht
Abigail Jean Alewelt
Lauren R. Alewelt
Courtney J. Alexander
Manal Saud M. Alharbi
John Russell Alino
Connor Wester Alisson
Yousef Jamal Alkabsh
Razan M. Alkhashaleh
Brooke A. Allen
Ebony Melan Allen
Maddison B. Allen
Kimberly Aline Alley
Hani A. Al-Shafei
Ozge Erol Altas
Sara Anne Alves
Herman Eli Ames
Brendan Stone Anderson
Erika L. Anderson
Gary W. Anderson
Lisa D. Anderson
Sammy Anderson
Jesse Elwood Andrews
Madison H. Angell
Eric Josef Angerer
Kenia Liliana Aranda
Robert Michael Arentzen
Rehab Ullah Arfan
Cibele Arruda
Louise R. Arzu
Saadia Ali Aschemann
Shelby Nicole Atchison
Anirudh Atla
Naveen Raman Atmakur
Chance D. Austin
Alexander M. Aviles
Joshua Avina
Guna Shekar Reddy Avula
Samson A. Awoyemi
Yonatan Abi Ayele
Adeola Celest Babington
Babitha Babu
Dominika Backman
Doris Jean Bailey
Drew Evan Bails
Steven R. Bainbridge
Pranoy Baisya
Aisha Omobolade Bakare
Aisha Olaitan Bakare
Brooks Baker
Chance Baker
Grant David Bale
Heather Elaine Balke
Corey Robert Ball
Sherry Baluch
Vaishnavi Balyapelli
Sunday Bamgbose
Folasayo Abidemi Shulamite
Bamidele
Marisa Jai Barber
Yakashia Barber
Margaret Grace Barbic
Alan Robert Barnes
Brenda Lee Barnes
Caitlyn Elizabeth Barnes
Lauren Brooke Barnes
Nicholas D. Barnhill
Mina Anastasia Barrera
Monica Lynn Barry
Hozefa Bata
Christopher Jay Neal Bauer
Austin James Bauman
Neeha Bayisetty
Teddy C. Beauchem
Yashraj Behera
Laquitsha Neorsha Bejoile-Hayes
Cambry A. Bennett
Kirstin Kae Bergerud
Kyle Bergmann
Scott Stanley Bernacki
Jon Paul Bernardy
Mark Berns
Blake Evan Bertolo
Darren J. Bettinger
Ashwini Vijay Bhole
Kendra Bierman
Rithwik Biju Joseph
Ahmed Bin Khalid
Kampana Bittalli
Juliette M. Black
Michelle Candace Black
Jessamine Jane Blackburn
Sean Michael Blackford
Kaylee Blakley
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Matthew Marvin
Fahim Masoud
Alan Ray Massey
Juan Manuel Mata
Sai Raj Swamy Matam
Tucker Scott Mathieson
Kallie Nicole Matthews
Mackenzie Beth Matthews
Adeshkumar Matumadugu
Christopher Maxwell
Julia Elizabeth Mayes
Christopher Jerome Mayhall
Ryan Nicholas
McAllister-Grum
Janae L. McBride
Ashley Nicole McClinton
Lacey Nicole McCormick
Sally A. McDaniel-Smith
Luke E. McFarland
Richard A. McGill
Christine Therese McGraw
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Daniel Melendez
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Mario Mollo
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Bruno Morais
Avinash Moram
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Seth Hamilton Morgan
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Kyle Taylor Mosley
Brian Moulton
Kassandra Mruk
Patricia Mubirigi
Lohith Punteeth Varma
Mudunuri
Malavika Jaideep Mujumdar
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Venkata Saiganesh Pelluri
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Joshua Pierce
Lauren Jade Pierson
Izabel Pina
Alicia Nicole Pingleton
Daniel Andrew Pittman
Richard P. Podeschi
Ryan Anthony Podlashes
Abhishek Polepally
Gayathri Niharika Polneni
John Victor Ponte
Jacob Popky
Graciela Popoca
Tamrika Reddy Pothapu
Taylor Nikhol Potrawski
Emily M. Potterf
Prasanth Potu
Matthew Vandervoort Powell
John Christopher Lee Powers
Susan Marie Powers
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Zoey A. Pritchett
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Puranapanda
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Shannon M. Richards
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Sophia Leigh Richmiller
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Reinaldo Rivera
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Nicholas Michael Romolo
Claire Gabriella Roscetti
Benjamin David Roth
Zachary D. Roth
Mariah L. Rowden
Richard William Rowe
William Martin Rucker
Adam Tyler Rude
Sravya Rudrayagari
Olivia Eleanor Ruff
Michelle Ruiz
Justin Conley Rumer
Brayden Christopher Russell
Scott Russell
Aaren Dawn Rutan
Jeremie Biringanine
Ruvunangiza
Adam Sahli
Danielle Lynn Sakach
Surayyah Jihadah Salahuddin
Emmanuel A. Salazar
Kylie Marie Salmon
Austin Payton Troemper
Duane Ellsworth Truax
Lori-Ann Ashleigh Trusty
Angela Try
Sheree N. Turner
Srushi Uppuluri
Joyce Diana Uriostegui
Niha Ursani
Alexandru Vacar
Pedro Valencia
Keelin C. Valenti
Steven Robert Van Landuyt
Abilash Vanam
Laura Danielle Vandeventer
Abbie Lynn Varble
Diana Vazquez
Benjamin Vesterby
Bhavana Vidavalapati
Miguel Angel Villarreal
Jennifer Gonzalez Viramontes
Quentin Voglund
Benjamin J. Von Behren
Andrew Christopher Vonderheide
Pooja Voruganti
Spencer E. Voyles
Kaylyn Sue Vroman
Nguyen Cao Nguyen Vu
Krishna Prabhu Mohan
Vutukuri
Julia Elizabeth Wade
Paula Ann Waite
Jeffrey Austin Walker
Quinderius A. Walker
Adam Keith Walston
Alexandra Marie Ward
McKinzi Lyn Warnisher
Utkarsha Kishor Washimkar
Melissa Hope Watkins
Randa Pearl Watkins
Farris Aldelphia Watson
Danielle Watts
Priscah Watts
Grace Marion Weber
Michael Anthony Weinberg
Drew Welbourn
Nathan R. Welch
Brian James Weldy
Matthew William Wendling
Brock Charles West
Megan M. West
James K. Wheeler
Mark A. Wheeler
Rebecca Anne Wheeler
Sandra Caitlynn Whitaker
Gabriella Odonnell White
Jacob Allen Whited
Calla Marie Wickenhauser
Hunter Braden Wieber
Alexa Wiese
Justus Robert Wiese
Rachel Marie Wilham
Brandy Marie Wilkinson
Briana Williams
Erin Nicole Williams
Katherine Baker Williams
Keena S. Williams
Greg Weaver Williamson
Timothy Allen Williamson
Milda Willoughby
Dana Rachelle Wilson
Tresa Nicole Wilson
Christopher Michael Wimmer
Keisha Mechell Windham
Madison Ann Wiseman
Baylie Marisa Wisley
Ashley Nicole Wood
Meghan Elizabeth Woods
Danielle DAniece Nickole
Woodson
Kory William Wright
Sean Shuang-Jian Wu
Sai Raghavendran
Wubhayavedantapuram
Thomas Michael Wuchte
Kyler Wulff
Hanhui Xu
Brad Andrew Yakle
Srirsha Yanamadala
Sai Santhosh Nag Yarlagadda
Alexis June Yoggerst
Jonathan Allen Yoswig
Charles Alden Young
Jane C. Zeblon
Teddy Zhang
Jennifer Gayle Zimmerman
Deborah Rose Ziogas
Alexandra Grace Zoll
Gina Carol Zunke
Faculty Emeritus

The status of Faculty Emeritus is an honor awarded at retirement from the University to those faculty who have served the University well. The bestowal of Professor Emeritus status is a recognition of the value the University places on the experience, knowledge, and ability of its retiring faculty. This status is awarded in accordance with the University of Illinois statutes and University of Illinois Springfield policy. The following individuals have been selected to receive Faculty Emeritus status this year.

Michael Cheney
Michael Cheney joined the University of Illinois Springfield in 2001, following a 20-year career at Drake University. He received his Ph.D. in Communication from Ohio State University in 1977. During his time at UIS, he served as Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, spent a short stint as a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at UIUC, became a full professor in the Communication Department and held joint appointments as an Associate Professor of Economics (UIS) and as an affiliated faculty of Liberal & Integrative Studies (UIS). While in the Communication Department, Dr. Cheney was known for his classes on The Beatles, baseball, and all things political and presidential. He was also instrumental in pushing the department forward in offering an online B.A. In addition, the students and the department have definitely reaped the benefits of his research interests centered around media, politics and popular culture. Dr. Cheney continues to serve a key role as mentor to junior faculty.

James Grubbs (posthumous)
James (Jim) Grubbs joined the University of Illinois Springfield in 1999. Prior to his faculty role, he worked in the Credit for Prior Learning and the Office of Technology-Enhanced Learning areas. Dr. Grubbs was passionate about online learning and looking at the intersectionality of communication, relationships, and media. He developed several popular online classes that quickly became staples of our online program. As a result of his efforts and effectiveness in the classroom, Dr. Grubbs was the recipient of the Burks Oakley II Distinguished Online Teaching Award in 2009. Dr. Grubbs was best known for his work with UIS student radio. He provided students with a hands-on radio experience through an audio teaching laboratory that worked in conjunction with communication courses and the overall operation of a campus radio station.

Carolyn Peck
Carolyn Peck received her formal education from Oklahoma State University at Stillwater, where she received a B.S. in Sociology, an M.S. in Family Relations, and a Ph.D. in Human Environmental Science in 1981. Dr. Peck also has over twenty years of direct field experience working with the elderly and their caregivers and in end-of-life care. She joined the UIS College of Education & Human Services, Human Services Department in 2002. Her teaching has focused on gerontology and end-of-life issues. Dr. Peck has conducted research on compassion fatigue in geriatric case managers with the Illinois Department on Aging, which has been published in a peer reviewed publication. She writes several book reviews annually for the international journal Educational Gerontology. In 2010, Dr. Peck received the UIS Faculty Excellence Award for sustained, career-long accomplishments in teaching and scholarship. She was the recipient of the 2014 Dorothy S. Kimball Award through the Area Agency on Aging for Lincolnland, established to honor individuals for outstanding accomplishment in the field of aging and on behalf of older adults and their caregivers.
Karen Reinke

Karen Reinke earned her Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology with a minor in Neuropsychology from the University of Arizona in 1998. She was an assistant professor at Southern Illinois University Carbondale before joining the Department of Psychology at UIS in 2007. Dr. Reinke was awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor in 2012. Throughout her career at UIS, Dr. Reinke has taught courses in cognitive neuroscience and related fields in the Department of Psychology, the general education curriculum, and the Capital Scholars Honors Program. Her research interests include the areas of cognitive neuroscience, electroencephalography (EEG), functional MRI, learning, attention, and emotion. Research collaborations with colleagues at several institutions have resulted in 18 publications. Dr. Reinke has presented scholarly work at national and international conferences and supervised numerous undergraduate and graduate student research presentations. Notable service that Dr. Reinke has provided for the university includes membership on the Campus Planning and Budget Committee, CAP Personnel Committee, and Academic Integrity Council.
The academic costume worn at American university exercises has its origin in medieval times. The general garment worn by all, at the time, was a gown or robe, a cape with attached hood (cowl) worn over the gown for warmth, and a cap. Color and other adornments added to the garments indicated social status or wealth. The attire worn by students and teachers was strongly influenced by the cathedrals near the center of study. As schools grew in size and diversity of subjects, teacher guilds began designating their field of study by color, and the color of the garments took on an additional designation. By the 14th century, a cap, pileus quadratus (four-cornered cap), became the standard head dress. Through time, these vestments changed in style but the three items, the cap, gown, and hood, remain in academic costumes.

THE CAP: The pileus quadratus went through its own changes. Originally introduced in Paris, the four corners were long and hung down over the head. Later, the corners were pointed upright and then were stiffened outward by a board (the mortar board). The mortar board, or Oxford style, is the traditional cap worn in American universities.

The cap is black in American universities and is constructed of cloth, with velvet reserved for the doctorate. Various items have been attached to the cap, but the tassel is now standard. The color of the tassel is black for any degree, with gold metallic thread restricted to doctors and governing officials. Occasionally, the color of the tassel will indicate honors.

THE GOWN: The cut of the gown designates the degree. The gown color in American universities – except Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, and a few others – is black. The bachelor’s degree gown is relatively simple, falling in straight lines and distinguished by long pointed sleeves. The master’s gown is also relatively straight, but the arm opening is at the elbow, allowing the rest of the sleeve to hang down. Until 1960, the arm emerged through a slit at the elbow, a sleeve was added which closes at the wrist. The original sleeve still hangs down to about the knee. The doctor’s gown is rather elaborate, marked by bell sleeves with three velvet bars and velvet panels around the neck and down the front. The cut is also fuller than other gowns. The sleeve bars and trim may be black or of subject color.

THE HOOD: Of the three components of academic costume, the hood conveys the most information. The level of the degree is indicated by the length of the hood and the width of the trim. The bachelor’s hood is three feet long with two-inch velvet trim, the master’s is three and one-half feet long with three-inch trim, and the doctor’s is four feet long with five-inch trim. At UIS, bachelor’s degree candidates do not wear hoods.

The color of the trim indicates the subject area of the degree: white signifies Arts; peacock blue signifies Public Administration, tan for Business Administration, salmon pink for Public Health, light blue for Education, pink for Music, scarlet for Theology, lemon for Library Science, and so on. There are 35 such designations.

The final information conveyed by the hood is the institution that awarded the degree to the wearer. The color designation for UIS is a royal blue field with a white chevron. Each school has its own color designator. For example, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a navy blue field with two orange chevrons. Although there is an attempt not to overlap color designators, a number of schools may have the same colors. For example, 39 universities in addition to UIS have royal blue field with white chevron.

The colored cords worn by participants identify students as scholars of distinction who have demonstrated a commitment to learning at a high level of achievement. It is believed by some historians that the wearing of honors cords is older and more traditional than the stoles that are also used by Greek honor societies since the cord recalls the teaching and contemplative orders of the Middle Ages when members of these honor societies wore knotted cords to remind them of their duties. The students who wear these honors cords in our commencement ceremonies today symbolize the University of Illinois Springfield’s historical success in attracting capable students who are exemplary scholars committed to a life of learning.
Development of the Campus

The University of Illinois Springfield is located on 746 acres on the southeast side of the capital city, near Lake Springfield. The campus comprises:

The Legacy Campus, built in the early 1970s, is home to the university’s first buildings. Originally intended as “temporary,” these buildings have been renovated for many purposes over the years. Among their current occupants are Health Services, International Student Services, NPR Illinois radio, Illinois Issues magazine, a child care center, art studios and music rehearsal rooms, Human Resources, and the Exercise Science, Athletic Training, and Nursing academic programs.

Norris L Brookens Library was completed in 1975. A major learning/resource center designed to support the university’s academic programs, the library also houses Brookens Auditorium; the College of Education and Human Services; the Center for Online Learning, Research and Service; and the Center for Academic Success.

Public Affairs Center opened in 1980. The building houses the College of Public Affairs and Administration, the university’s administrative offices, the Center for State Policy and Leadership, the Studio Theatre – home to UIS Theatre productions – and the UIS Performing Arts Center, which hosts more than 100 music, theater, and dance performances annually and is home to the Illinois Symphony Orchestra and Springfield Ballet Company.

Health and Sciences Building, opened in 1992, houses UIS biological and physical sciences and the computer science program in high tech labs. The building is also home to the UIS Visual Arts Gallery.

Lincoln Residence Hall, completed in 2001, is a state-of-the-art residential facility for freshmen and sophomores.

University Hall, opened in 2004, is home to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, College of Business and Management, and the offices within Enrollment Management, including Admission, Financial Assistance, Orientation, and Office of the Registrar.

The Recreation and Athletic Center, opened in 2007, houses a sports arena, fitness facilities, and an indoor running track. The arena is home to the UIS Prairie Stars men’s and women’s basketball teams and the volleyball team.

Founders Residence Hall, opened in 2008, is UIS’ second residence hall for freshmen and sophomores. The 200-bed facility also features classrooms and the offices of several student services. The hall has a green roof in order to conserve energy.

The UIS quad, located in the center of campus, features a colonnade, fountain, and the newest addition, a life-size sculpture of Abraham Lincoln, titled “The Young Lawyer.”

The UIS Student Union opened in January of 2018 on the south end of the quad. The two-story, 50,000-square-foot facility is a hub for student life and fosters a greater sense of community on the growing campus. It includes dining services, a coffee shop, a ballroom, a Student Leadership Center, volunteer offices and workspaces for student organizations.
About the University of Illinois Springfield

The University of Illinois Springfield was established in 1970 as Sangamon State University and became the third university in the University of Illinois System in 1995.

For its first thirty years, the university was an “upper division” university, enrolling only juniors, seniors and graduate students. It quickly became renowned for its focus on serving the needs of adults who wanted to finish their undergraduate degrees or earn a master’s degree.

UIS enrolled its first class of Capital Scholars honors freshmen in 2001 and then expanded the freshman class significantly in the fall of 2006. With today’s graduating class, UIS now has over 44,000 alumni worldwide.

UIS enrolls more than 4,000 students and has 51 degree programs.

UIS is a place where leadership is lived every day by faculty and students. They have an abundance of opportunities to collaborate in a very supportive community environment. The result is a graduating class composed of today’s and tomorrow’s leaders.

Congratulations to all of our graduates.
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