

UIS History Facts and Factoids

Excerpts from the 40th Anniversary collection of publications and the UIS Archives, Special Collections and Illinois Regional Archives Depository of Brookens Library

- 1970 UIS was founded as Sangamon State. Sangamon State's founding is September 28, 1970 (the first classes were held that day).
- SSU was known as an upper-division college – a three-year institution, a capstone to the state's community college system. SSU offered classes for juniors, seniors and graduate students. There were no freshmen or sophomores.
- Karen Hasara was the second person in line to register for classes. She was later a state senator, served as the first female Mayor of Springfield, and became the first UIS alumna on the University of Illinois Board of Trustees. In 2019, she was presented with an honorary doctorate of humane letters during the UIS Commencement in recognition of her inspirational leadership, public service, and contributions to her community.
- SSU's curriculum was built around four University Programs:
- Communication in a Technological Society (CTS)
 - Work, Leisure, Poverty, and Power
 - Justice and the Social Order (JSO)
 - Environments and People (ENP)
- The first president of SSU, was Dr. Robert C. Spencer. The Spencer's lived in what is now the Cox Children's Center.
- 1971 In December, the first students graduated from SSU, although the first ceremony wasn't until 1972.
- 1971 During the spring semester, Professor Gus Stevens was criticized by a state senator for wearing a hat "in the presence of ladies." Stevens responded by organizing the first "Floppy Hat Day" inviting students, faculty, and staff to join him in wearing floppy hats.
- 1971 Baseball was established as the first SSU sports team.
- 1972 SSU had classes downtown in the Leland Building.
- 1973 Author Alex Haley appeared on campus as part of Black Awareness Week sponsored by SSU Black Student Union.
- 1975 Singer Bobby McFerrin was a Peer Group Counselor.
- 1976 Brookens Library was the first permanent building on campus – dedicated in May. This moved the library from building F, which is now the Student Affairs Building.
- 1978 Dr. Alex B. Lacy Jr. became SSU's second president in September. His vision for SSU included seeing the campus be at center stage for the study of government, politics, and public policy.
- 1978 The University Observatory was dedicated on the roof of Brookens Library. The first "Star Party" was held.
- 1980 The first on-campus student housing opened in August. The Public Affairs Center, the second permanent campus building opened in September.
- 1981 Sangamon Auditorium held it's first performance – Hal Holbrook in "Mark Twain Tonight!"
- 1984 Dr. Duward Long, became SSU's third president in July.
- 1986 The Soccer Team won the first of three NAIA National Championship.
- 1991 Dr. Naomi B. Lynn became the fourth president of SSU and then subsequently the first UIS Chancellor in 1995.
- 1992 The Health & Sciences Building opened.
- 1995 Sangamon State University became part of the University of Illinois system. The last SSU commencement was held in May of 1995.
- 1996 UIS held its first homecoming (SSU held sponsored homecoming events in 1977, 1990, and 1994).
- 1999 The Capital Scholars Honors program was created.
- 2001 Richard D. Ringeisen became the second UIS Chancellor in April.
- 2001 UIS welcomed its first freshmen class in August, with the advent of the Capital Scholars Honors Program. 116 students moved into the first residence hall – Lincoln Residence Hall.
- 2004 University Hall Building opens. Construction of UHB resulted in a planned quadrangle of

landscaping boarded on the east of the new building.

2005 The UIS Colonnade was completed and designated as the symbolic center of campus and the head of the new Quad.

2006 UIS became a four-year university with the arrival of freshmen admitted to the general education curriculum.

2007 The Recreation and Athletics Center (TRAC) is dedicated!

2007 UIS alumna Dana Perino became White House Press Secretary to President Georgy W. Bush. She was a 1995 graduate with a master's in Public Affairs Reporting.

2008 Founders Residence Hall opens to house 132 freshmen. The partially completed building was named in honor of all those men and women who are recognized as SSU founders.

Fun Fact: Founders Residence Hall has a green roof – covered in 26,000 feet of soil and sedums that act as insulation for the building, reducing heating and cooling costs.

2010 UIS Athletics becomes a member of NCAA Division II.

Fun Fact: UIS participates in the Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC).

2010 63 foreign flags were placed in the Public Affairs Center representing the countries from which international students had to travel to attend UIS over the past 40 years.

2010 UIS/SSU celebrates its 40th Anniversary.

2011 Dr. Susan J. Koch becomes third Chancellor of UIS.

2018 The Student Union opened in January.

About UIS

UIS's official colors are UIS Blue and White. UIS Gold is a secondary color and used in Athletics.

Mascot: Orion

Fun Fact: In Greek mythology, Orion the Hunter, was placed in the heavens by Zeus, in what is now the Orion Constellation.

Nickname: Prairie Stars

UIS's Identity Brand is Leadership Lived, an inherent promise the university makes and keeps to its constituents and is centered around 4 Core Attributes:

- Teaching-Focused Academic Experience
- An Abundance of Opportunities to Collaborate

- A Right-sized, Supportive Community
- A Tradition of Educating Public Servants and Leaders

As of fall 2020 UIS had:

- 4,146 students (2,654 or 64% are undergraduates)
- 63.9% of undergraduate students attend classes full time;
- 78% of students are from Illinois;
- 207 full-time and 133 part-time faculty;
- 85+ student clubs and organizations
- 833 students living in campus housing;
- More than 44,000 living alumni located throughout the world;
- 30 bachelor's degrees, 20 master's degrees, 1 doctoral program. Online students: 1,540

Who Are The Campus Streets Named For?

Most of the streets within UIS are named after writers who were born, or lived in Illinois during their lifetime.

Nelson Algren (1909-1981) Lane – Best known for his novel turned movie *Man with the Golden Arm*. Algren grew up in the North and South side of Chicago and attended U of I (Urbana-Champaign) where he wrote for the campus newspaper.

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) Lane – Named after the Pulitzer-Prize winning poet, teacher and Poet Laureate of Illinois. Gwendolyn Brooks lived in Chicago attending 4 different racially diverse schools which gave her insights into the racial dynamics of the city that influenced her writing. She was 13 when her first poem was published.

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) Lane – Known mostly as a novelist and journalist, Dreiser wrote poetry and short stories. He worked as a reporter for the Chicago Globe in the late 1800s. His work was often controversial because he challenged moral codes with his writings on sex, prostitution, promiscuity, lynching, murder, and characters that triumphed even though they were involved in such morally compromising situations.

Eliza Farnham (1815-1864) Drive – Novelist, feminist, and abolitionist, Farnham lived in Illinois for six years. She wrote about her experiences in Pekin in *Life in the Prairie Land*. She was an advocate for women in prison and in her later life helped destitute women to emigrate to the American west, helping them find new homes.

Edna Ferber (1885-1968) Lane – Fans of movies from the 30s, 40s, and 50s will know Ferber's work that became blockbuster movies: Show Boat, Cimarron, and Giant. The Pulitzer-Prize winning Ferber was a novelist, short story writer, and playwright who lived for a short period of time in Chicago, Illinois.

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) Drive – The Nobel Prize winner and author of some of America's great classics was born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois and later lived and worked in Chicago.

Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) Drive – A native son of Springfield, Illinois, Lindsay became famous as "the Prairie Troubadour." A poet and performance artist, he published his poetry in pamphlets, which he read in a singing chant, and sold to people as he walked from town to town, through much of the eastern and midwestern United States. His childhood home at 603 South Fifth Street is maintained by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and is open to the public.

Edgar Lee Masters (1868-1950) Drive – Lee was a poet, biographer and attorney (who shared a practice with Clarence Darrow). Lee grew up in Lewistown, IL and was influenced by the Spoon River and Oak Hill Cemetery. Wrote *Lincoln: the Man*, a biography of Abraham Lincoln in 1931.

William Maxwell (1908-2000) Lane – American editor and author who wrote short stories and novels about small-town life in the American Midwest in the early 20th century. Maxwell taught English at the University of Illinois before joining the staff of *The New Yorker* magazine.

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967) Lane – Sandburg was a three time Pulitzer Prize winning writer and poet. He was born and raised in Galesburg, IL and later lived in Chicago, Evanston, and Elmhurst, IL. His second volume of *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* was recognized with his first Pulitzer Prize for History in 1940.

Richard Wright (1908-1960) Drive – Wright and his family moved to Chicago as a young man to escape the Jim Crow south. His childhood in Mississippi and life in Chicago heavily influenced his award-winning writing about the lives of African Americans and racism in America.