

# UNIVERSITAS

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

FALL 2024



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PHOTO BY SARAH CONROY

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**UNIVERSITAS**

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Dr. Sarah Adam, SLU assistant professor and Paralympic silver medalist  
Photo by Sarah Conroy

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**President’s message**

**Stories that reveal the heart of SLU**

A SLU faculty member in occupational therapy is the first woman in history to compete on the U.S. Paralympic wheelchair rugby team (page 6).

A history professor has made a major discovery of an ancient Roman temple (page 10).

Numerous faculty members have created new courses designed to ignite a lifelong process of curiosity and learning in the Ignatian tradition (page 18).

And our club sports program offers every student a path to continue — or to discover — an engagement with athletics that supports their well-being, sense of community and connection to the natural world (page 14).

When I talk to students about why they love Saint Louis University, they often tell me that it is because our commitment to mission is real — that “higher purpose, greater good” is more than a tagline.

This issue of *Universitas* highlights many of the ways that we are delivering on our commitment to pursue truth, to re-imagine what is possible and to foster communities where all people thrive.

SLU’s Catholic Studies Program is one distinctive example of our Catholic, Jesuit identity in action (page 28). It is a place where students are centered in their spiritual lives, integrating insights from across academic domains as they seek the presence of God in all things. Through numerous gatherings, discussions and events, students can experience what it means to be part of a community that is expressly committed to seeking wholeness.

As Billiken alumni, you know well: A SLU education expands our students’ worldviews, the opportunities they will find after graduation and the sense of purpose they will bring to all aspects of their lives.

Indeed, our University’s talented alumni continue to tell powerful stories that reflect the experiences and the expertise they acquired in their years at SLU. Graduate Sharee (Brown) Silerio (A&S ’09), who worked on the Academy Award-winning documentary short film *The Last Repair Shop*, is dedicated to creating films that expand representation of Black women and girls (page 33). And alum John O’Leary’s (CSB ’99) story will soon be released as a motion picture filmed in part on our St. Louis campus (page 24).

Not all of us will make movies, but we all have an essential role in the Billiken story. In the multiple ways that you contribute to your families, communities and professions — each one of your stories reflects the profound potential of our University’s noble mission.

Thank you for continuing to bring SLU’s story to life.

Fred P. Pestello, Ph.D.  
President

On campus



SARAH CONROY



SARAH CONROY

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A graduate prepares for commencement; graduates celebrate after the ceremony; a group selfie before the ceremony begins in Chaifetz Arena; and the 2024 honorary degree recipients (from left) William and Susan Klepper, Hamm and Christie.



SARAH CONROY



SARAH CONROY

**‘Resilient’ Class of 2024 Celebrated at Commencement**

For many of Saint Louis University’s newest alumni – who started college during the COVID 19 pandemic – the 2024 spring commencement was their first chance to experience a proper graduation.

St. Louis native and Emmy award-winning actor Jon Hamm congratulated the nearly 1,600 students on their ability to thrive.

“Your resilience in the face of continued discomfort and distraction is impressive,” Hamm said.

He reminded the graduates that they are now part of a shared community.

“Be proud sons and daughters of St. Louis,” he said. “Be proud of where you’re from, knowing that it made you. Be at peace with where you are, knowing it’s transitory and is leading to something else on the path. But most importantly, be excited for where you’re going – the future is endless, it is ripe with possibility, and it is all yours to make of what you wish.”

In addition to delivering the main address, Hamm joined three SLU alumni in receiving honorary degrees: P. Maria Joseph Christie, S.J. (CSB ’99), secretary of higher education for the Society of Jesus; Dr. Susan E. Klepper (DCHS ’66), emeritus professor at Columbia University; and Dr. William M. Klepper (A&S ’66), academic director at Columbia University.



KABANCE PHOTO



SARAH CONROY

FROM TOP: Hamm (center) receives his honorary degree from Board of Trustees Chair Joseph Conran (left) and SLU President Dr. Fred P. Pestello; Hamm poses for a selfie with student speaker Sky Carroll.

## On campus

### University Names New Leadership



**William Johnson**  
RECTOR AND VICE PRESIDENT, SLU-MADRID

Johnson was dean of the SLU School of Law for more than seven years. He served over four years as the director of both the law school's Center for International and Comparative Law and its Summer Law Program in Madrid.



**Dr. Twinette Johnson**  
(A&S '96, GRAD '19)  
DEAN, SCHOOL OF LAW

Johnson began her academic career as an associate professor at the SLU School of Law over 20 years ago. Most recently, she was dean and professor of law at the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law.



**Dr. Jackson Nickerson**  
EDWARD JONES DEAN, RICHARD A. CHAIFETZ SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Nickerson was a professor of organization and strategy at the Olin School of Business at Washington University in St. Louis, where he'd been since 2007.

### Hot Diggity! SLU Welcomes Campus Facility Dog

The SLU community welcomed a new member to campus this spring: Duo Facility Dog Woody.

Unlike a service dog, a facility dog is trained to work with multiple handlers in homes, clinics or organizations and carry out specific, skilled tasks with multiple clients. Facility dogs do not have public access rights and are authorized to work within the assigned facility only.

The first Duo Facility Dog to ever go to college, Woody is a two-year-old English Labrador retriever who has been training



SARAH CONROY

his entire life for his role: decreasing stress, improving moods and promoting well-being through interactions with students, faculty and staff.

### KINCAID RECEIVES LITERARY AWARD; WHITEHEAD TAPPED FOR 2025 HONOR



WYLIE AGENCY

Renowned Antigua-born author Jamaica Kincaid received the 2024 St. Louis Literary Award on April 25.

Kincaid's work explores themes of colonialism, gender and sexuality, racism, class and family. She wrote the novels *Annie John*, *Lucy* and *See Now Then*, and several other books.



CHRIS CLOSE

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Colson Whitehead will come to St. Louis next April to accept the 2025 St. Louis Literary Award.

Whitehead is the author of many novels, including *The Underground Railroad*, *The Nickel Boys* and *Harlem Shuffle*. In addition to the Pulitzer, he won the National Book Award and the Carnegie Medal for Fiction, among other awards. He has received a MacArthur Fellowship and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

JOE BARKER



The new Target store is located along Grand Boulevard between Gratiot and Papin streets.

### Time for a Target Run

TARGET'S NEWEST ST. LOUIS STORE, located near the Saint Louis University campus, opened on July 21.

The approximately 72,000-square-foot store includes a CVS Pharmacy, Starbucks Café, and Ulta Beauty at Target. The store fills a void of anchor retail tenants along the Grand corridor and is part of the retailer's efforts to open more stores that meet

community needs for urban centers, dense suburban cities and college campuses.

The project is located within the 400-acre redevelopment area that's guided by the St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corp., a joint effort of SLU and SSM Health.

### SLU EARNS NATIONAL DISTINCTION FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching announced that Saint Louis University earned the 2024 Community Engagement Classification. The elective designation is awarded by Carnegie and the American Council on Education. SLU is one of 368 campuses nationwide holding the classification.

The report highlighted SLU's work on issues like food insecurity through Campus Kitchen and Billiken Bounty and community improvement through initiatives like Habitat for Neighborhood Business, SLU Legal Clinics, and the engagement efforts of the St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corp.

The classification has been the leading framework for institutional assessment and recognition of community engagement in U.S. higher education for the past 19 years.

## ATHLETICS

### Billiken Hall of Fame Class of 2024

The Department of Athletics inducted new members into the Billiken Hall of Fame in February.

#### BILLIKEN GREAT: CONTEMPORARY

Honoring student-athletes who competed in the past 30 years

**Aspen Cervin** (CSB '17), tennis

**Miller Hogan**, baseball

**Jackie Kempf** (CSB '17, GRAD CSB '18), basketball

**Rick Majerus**, men's basketball head coach

**Ryan McCoy** (CSB '18), swimming

**Alex Nickel** (PH '17), softball

**Tim Ream** (CSB '10), soccer

**Jenny (Kehl) Wallace** (A&S '03), soccer

#### DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Honoring former student-athletes for their contributions to SLU athletics and distinguished careers

**Tom Strunk** (CSB '89), soccer, is chief financial officer of World Wide Technology Inc. He was instrumental in bringing Major League Soccer to St. Louis and has an ownership stake in St. Louis CITY SC.

#### BAUMAN SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

Honoring individuals who made outstanding contributions to Billiken athletics

**Joe Conran** (A&S '67, LAW '70) is a retired partner and former chair at Husch Blackwell LLP, where he is of counsel. He chaired the SLU board of trustees for the past 10 years.

#### BOB BURNES AWARD

Honoring teams that brought recognition to SLU

**2006 women's soccer team**, led by head coach Tim Champion

**2011 12 men's basketball team**, led by head coach Rick Majerus

CAMERON NEISER



### Schertz Heads Up Men's Basketball

Josh Schertz has started his first season as the head coach for Billiken men's basketball.

Schertz came from Indiana State, where he finished his third season with the Sycamores last spring and led them to a

32-7 record and a run to the NIT championship game. Prior to ISU, he spent 13 seasons at Lincoln Memorial, where he led the Railsplitters to 10 NCAA Division II national tournaments, including an appearance in the 2016 NCAA Division II national championship game.

Schertz is 403-109 in 16 seasons as a collegiate head coach. His .787 winning percentage ranks in the top 10 among all active coaches in the NCAA. Schertz was named the 2024 MVC Coach of the Year and the Hugh Durham National Coach of the Year, which is presented annually to the top mid-major head coach in college basketball.

### Soccer's Schulte Makes Olympic Team

Former Saint Louis University men's soccer standout Patrick Schulte (CSB '24) made it to the 2024 Paris Olympic Games as a member of the U.S. Olympic men's soccer team. The team advanced to the quarterfinals, and Schulte made five appearances during the Olympic tournament.

As a Billiken from 2019 to 2021, he was the Atlantic 10 Conference's Defensive Player of the Year in 2020 and was a first-team All-Conference pick in 2021. In 2021, he helped the Billikens to a 16-1-4 record and an NCAA quarterfinal appearance.

Noted as one of the best young goalkeepers in the country, Schulte was drafted by the Columbus Crew of Major League Soccer in 2022 and helped the team win the MLS Cup in 2023. He was the 2022 MLS NEXT Pro Goalkeeper of the Year in 2022 with Columbus Crew 2.

Schulte is one of several Billikens who have been members of the U.S. Olympic men's soccer team through the qualifying stages, and he joins a select few former Billikens who have represented their country in the finals. Brian McBride (Ed '96) was on the most recent U.S. team to make the finals at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Matt McKeon (A&S '97) was on the U.S. squad at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Joe Hamm (A&S '73), Mike Seerey (CSB '73) and Al Trost (A&S '71) played on the United States' 1972 squad at the Munich Olympics.



Adam's students and colleagues surprise her with a sign at the Disabled Athlete Sports Association (DASA) Ability Awareness Demonstration in April at the Simon Recreation Center.



SARAH CONROY



SARAH CONROY

Adam (right) teaches students about wheelchair rugby during the DASA event in April.

SLU community members cheer for Adam during a watch party for her Paralympic debut on Aug. 29 in the Allied Health Building.



SARAH CONROY

Adam (center) makes history as the first woman to compete on the U.S. Paralympic wheelchair rugby team versus Canada in Paris on Aug. 29.



SARAH CONROY

Adam (right) shows her Paralympic silver medal to colleague Emma Edwards on her first day back to campus on Sept. 9.



AP PHOTO / MICHEL LEULER

SARAH CONROY

Adam's medal

Although wheelchair rugby has been a mixed-gender sport (with men and women competing together) since it debuted at the 2000 Paralympics in Sydney, the sport has been dominated by men. At the Paralympics in 2021, only four of the 96 athletes were female. That number doubled to eight in Paris.

"To be able to compete amongst the best of the best in our sport, particularly as a female playing against mostly men, I have focused a lot on being in peak physical shape," Adam said. "I spent many hours at the Simon Rec Center getting ready."

Adam had a unique introduction to the sport as an "able-bodied volunteer" for the Disabled Athlete Sports Association (DASA) in 2013, when she was a graduate student. DASA offers the biggest selection of disabled competitive team sports and Paraspport opportunities in the Midwest. Adam connected with the community and attended development events — as both a coach-in-training and a referee.

A year later, after noticing difficulty walking, gripping items, numbness in her hands and bouts of fatigue, Adam was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She began playing wheelchair rugby recreationally in 2017 and competitively in 2019.

Adam describes her style of play as "cerebral," viewing wheelchair rugby as a large chess match, aiming to always be three moves ahead of her opponents. She hopes a documentary about her team's journey to Paris in 2024 will inspire others and shed light on the adaptive sports movement.

"I was initially drawn to the combination of physicality and strategy involved in wheelchair rugby," Adam said. "I've found that there is also a great community of athletes in Paraspport who support each other not just on the court but off the court. I've seen Paraspport truly help transform people's lives by connecting them back to some sense of normalcy and a community of like-minded individuals. It's a great community to be a part of."

Adam made her international debut at the Americas Championship in 2022, where the team won gold, and later that year won a silver medal at the world championships. In 2023, she was part of the gold medal-winning Parapan American Games team that secured USA Wheelchair Rugby a spot for Paris 2024. She also became the first American woman to win Parapan American Games gold in wheelchair rugby.

USAWR is the most decorated Paralympic wheelchair rugby program in history and the only one to be awarded at all Paralympic Games since the sport was added to the event roster in Sydney. The United States has won silver medals at the past three Paralympic Games: Rio 2016, Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024. 🏆

# LOST AND FOUND

A SLU history professor's discovery sheds light on the Roman Empire's transition from pagan worship to Christianity.

— by Marie Dilg

The medieval hilltop town of Spello, Italy



Spello is a picturesque village in Italy where the meandering cobblestone streets are lined with baskets of flowers. Enclosed in a circuit of medieval stone walls and nestled in the verdant rolling hills of the central region of Umbria, Spello is considered one of the country's most beautiful villages.

The scenery, however, is not what attracted Dr. Douglas Boin to Spello. An expert in the religious transformation of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the Saint Louis University history professor was drawn to the village by a piece of stone sitting in a room under a frescoed ceiling and dramatic lighting. The stone contains a rescript, a message from Emperor Constantine giving villagers permission to build a temple in Spello to celebrate a religious festival in their own town rather than making the long journey to another. The only condition was that the temple be dedicated to worshipping Constantine's imperial ancestors. This rescript was produced at a time when the Roman Empire was straddling the lines between pagan and Christian religions.

Over his many years of research into fourth-century antiquities, Boin came across articles and footnotes that mentioned the rescript, which was discovered in the 1700s near Villa Fidelia, a resplendent Renaissance home built outside Spello's walls.

"It's a trophy piece and by far the most famous piece of antiquity to come from Spello," he said. "It sparked my interest because anytime you can see something written, whether on paper or stone, it can bridge a gap in time and help us make sense of history. So, my colleagues and I decided to take a road trip to see it."

The Latin inscription on the rescript references a temple of *opere magnifico*, roughly translated as "splendid endeavor." After seeing the rescript, Boin and colleagues stopped for a glass of wine and began to muse. Where was this splendid temple erected? What did it look like? How did it impress itself on the village at that time?

The dig site in Spello, Italy

The grounds of the Renaissance-era Villa Fidelia feature a statue of the goddess Diana



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BOIN

### PARKING LOT FULL

Boin returned home, and in 2020, he received seed money from SLU to search the archives in the region's capital, Perugia, a university city perched on a hill in Umbria down the road from Assisi. While nothing above ground gave Boin clues regarding the temple's location, he found enough information in letters and diaries to justify a deeper dive.

In 2021, Boin received another grant from SLU to put together a team from the British School at Rome to conduct a geophysical survey on the grounds of Villa Fidelia. The Italian government gave Boin and his team one day to use magnetometry and ground-penetrating radar to find anything worth excavating.

By the end of the day, the team found nothing — no actionable data that would support further exploration or excavation. The team leader called Boin to deliver the disappointing news, but he also mentioned that as they were wrapping up, the government said the team could search the earthen parking lot outside the villa if Boin wished.

"An unobstructed field to surveyors is like an open road to a Formula 1 driver," Boin said. "They were itching to use their equipment to take a look, so I said, 'Do it.'"

It was good that they did. When the geophysical survey was processed several weeks later, it showed what appeared to be three distinct walls approximately four feet below the surface of the parking lot.

"The images showed substantial remains of a gigantic structure with a defined shape," he said. "We didn't know what it was, but whatever it was could tell us a lot about the suburbs of the village and how it developed over time."

### THE BIG DIG

Boin assembled a team of professional archaeologists to begin excavating the parking lot. The team included the director of field operations, Dr. Letizia Ceccarelli of Milan; excavation experts Francesco Giorgi and Danilo Nati; and team photographer/drone operation leader, Luca Primavesi of Milan. The team had two weeks to determine whether what they saw on the radar was real.

The first dig was in mid-July 2023. It started at 6 a.m., and the day was already hot. A backhoe operator who, according to Boin, manipulated the claw with the grace and precision of a ballet dancer, gently scraped the compact earth. By 10 a.m., the operator carved out a 16-by-16-foot trench that seemed void of discovery.

"It was the most terrifying professional experience of my life," Boin said. "I kept a poker face and stuffed down my anxiety about wasting everyone's time, energy and resources."

Then Giorgi, one of Boin's colleagues, noticed a layer of pink sediment that usually signals to archeologists in parts of Italy

that they are getting close to something ancient. Soon after, the claw caught on to something so substantial it could not continue pulling back. Boin and his colleagues jumped into the trench with precision tools and revealed three adjoining walls, each nearly 4 feet wide.

"The walls of a Roman house are about half that width, so we knew we found something more monumental than a house," Boin said. "We thought this might be an ancient imperial cult temple. We were ecstatic."

Over the next two weeks, Boin and his colleagues unearthed several layers of sediment, exposing artifacts, animal bones, coins, ceramics and bronze artifacts, all of which are useful in dating ruins.

"I can't describe how rewarding it is as a historian to come in contact with artifacts that historical actors have left behind," Boin said. "It's like finding new, never-before-seen presidential letters."

Boin said the artifacts led his team to believe the temple was used by at least three groups for three different purposes over three different periods of time.

"When we stood in the trench, our feet were in fourth century B.C., and at the top of the trench, we were in fourth century C.E.," Boin said. "We time traveled through 800 years of history."

Boin (left, holding SLU sign) and colleagues at the site



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SPELLO PROJECT



PHOTO BY LUCA PRIMAVESI

An aerial view of the dig site in 2023 as excavated by the SLU-led international team

### PAGANISM AND PLURALISM

Boin said the temple is significant because it can offer insights into the social change from pagan gods to Christianity within the Roman Empire.

Although Emperor Constantine was the first emperor to profess Christianity, it appears he entertained different religious values simultaneously and supported "imperial cult" traditions, which were based on the Roman belief that emperors were divine figures. It would take almost 70 years for Christianity to become the official religion of the Roman Empire under Emperor Theodosius.

"The idea that Constantine was just as involved in promoting a pagan cult of the emperors as he is in embracing his newfound Christianity is one of those weird chapters in history that fascinates me," Boin said. "It shows us history is not as linear as you might think. The past zigzags and gets a little messy. This temple gives us a conversation piece — a place to stop and wonder how confusing and uncertain the trajectory of these people might have been."

Boin said there is evidence from other locations throughout the Roman world that Christian rulers supported imperial cult practices, but those findings have been small and inconsequential compared to the Spello discovery.



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS BOIN

The backhoe at the first dig

### SCALING UP

In January 2024, Boin and his team announced their findings in Chicago at the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America. He said jaws dropped when he told peers how much they accomplished with well-managed funding and a small team.

"The Spello Project shows what you can do with a hunch and an entrepreneurial spirit," he said.

"We found people who trusted us to see if we could make a contribution to history. It's a testament to the research support that SLU provides and an amazing vote of confidence in me and my colleagues."

Media coverage following the discovery has been overwhelming for Boin, who finds himself "wordless" when trying to capture the scope of the endeavor. He likens it to designing a rover and launching it into space. News outlets throughout the world, including *The Jerusalem Post*, the *Times of India* and the *Miami Herald*, picked up on the story. His team's work has been featured in *Smithsonian Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Archaeology News* and on CBS News.

Boin said the next step is to scale up the Spello Project. Boin said much remains unknown about the temple and whether it is the one Constantine sanctioned in the rescript. When Boin returns to the villa

to explore further, he will bring SLU students into the field with him.

"That is an absolute priority," he said. "I started my career 20 years ago as a graduate student in Italy excavating one of the oldest synagogues in Europe. That lit a fire under me and set me on my path to becoming a history professor. I would love to use this project to pay it forward and give a student a similar opportunity and hopefully create the next generation of historians."

Details about the temple's discovery are being prepared for publication in the *American Journal of Archaeology*. ☒





# Join the Club

Club teams give Saint Louis University students a chance to be good sports.

by Amy Garland / photos by Sarah Conroy



**TODD ROBBEN (CSB '06, GRAD CSB '14) DIDN'T PLAY SPORTS** as a student at Saint Louis University. Now, as director of Campus Recreation and Wellness, he tells students not to follow his example.

"I ask incoming students, 'How many of you played sports in elementary or high school?' Pretty much every person raises their hand. 'How many of you plan to continue to compete in athletics at the collegiate level?' All the hands go down," he said.

Robben knows that they're missing a great chance to enhance their college experience — but acknowledges that not everyone is a Division I athlete. What about those who don't compete in the arena but want to participate, nonetheless?

That's what sport clubs offer: a way for anyone on campus to be a player.

At SLU, more than 900 students of all skill levels belong to nearly 30 sport clubs. The possibilities include individual and team sports and range from traditional (like baseball or volleyball) to not-so-traditional (ultimate Frisbee, wilderness and adventure, equestrian). Some only play with or against other SLU students; others travel to national competitions.

Robben highlights the benefits.

"There's obviously the health component," he said. "But from a student development standpoint, we understand that finding community on campus and having a sense of belonging, coupled with the learning that takes place outside of the classroom, are major contributors to student success."

Sport clubs at SLU are considered student organizations and as such, operate under the same guidelines. They must register with the Student Government Association and the Department of Campus Recreation and Wellness. Once the club becomes chartered, they are eligible to receive funding from SGA but also can raise money independently through dues, ticket sales or fundraisers.

Like other kinds of student groups, sport clubs become what the students make of them. All aspects — tryouts, fundraising, competition, travel — can change from club to club, year to year.

Robben said the best sport club leaders rise to the occasion and, in the process, develop more than muscles from their activity.

"You're developing life skills leading a club: organizational skills, communication skills, conflict management or conflict resolution, problem-solving," he said.

On the next few pages, see just a small fraction of SLU's sport clubs in action.



## CREW

Members of SLU crew row in a sweep boat on Creve Coeur Lake, which is about a half-hour northwest of campus. From right to left (or stern to bow) are Estephania Diaz (DCHS '24) as the coxswain, Dylan Barrett, Peter Blix, Jesse Sandhu, Welkin Huelsman, Kathryn Egelhoff, Claire Skelly, Shae Connolly and Hailey Gonzalez.

The rowing club meets in the evenings during the week and weekend mornings at both the lake and the Simon Recreation Center. Crew goes from August to November and from March to May. The team competes in regattas across the country.

Founded in 2001, SLU crew is open to all students, with no experience necessary. In fact, a majority of the team learned to row and then competed competitively within their first semester.



## LACROSSE WOMEN'S

Lauren Pollack (DCHS '24) (left) maintains control of the ball while in attack and being marked by defender Ana Gegetchkori, a community college student.

The women's lacrosse club is looking to grow this year. The team competes in fall and spring semesters and is part of the West Conference of Division II of the Women's Collegiate Lacrosse League. The club faces other teams in the area including Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis College of Pharmacy and the University of Missouri-Columbia.

The team practices on the Laclede/Vandeventer Field, just west of the Village Apartments on campus.

SLU also has a men's lacrosse club.





### KAYAK

Louie Puder attempts a stern stall during kayak practice at the Simon Recreation Center pool.

While this photo obviously was taken inside the Rec Center, the kayak club prides itself on getting outdoors. The club's "home river" is the St. Francis River, a tributary of the Mississippi in Iron County, Missouri, and the team travels

on weekends to paddle some of the best whitewater rivers in America.

Formed in 1995, the club team has paddled in Missouri, Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. The club is non-competitive and open to any SLU student. Past members have gone on to tackle some of the most challenging rivers around the world.



### CRICKET

Like many activities on a college campus — where the population turns over every four years at least — sport clubs at SLU come and go, depending on student interest, initiative and energy.

A few years ago, for example, a group of international graduate students started coalescing around the idea of a cricket club.

Rama Kanth Reddy Gosula (S&E '24), then a computer science graduate student, said he wanted a way to connect diverse students across nations, cultures and interests.

Gosula brought cricket to campus by organizing an exhibition match during international student orientation in August 2023. It was such a success that he then coordinated a tournament for eight teams the following month.

However, that wasn't the first time cricket had been played at SLU. Todd Robben, director of Campus Recreation and Wellness, checked his archives and discovered that the University had an active cricket club in the early 2000s.

For now, cricket is played at the intramural level. Four five-week sessions are offered throughout the academic year, alternating between indoor and outdoor, based on the season.

Gosula said there are more than 20 students and recent alumni who continue to play regularly on campus. ☒



### ULTIMATE FRISBEE WOMEN'S

Neuroscience major Riya Sheth (A&S '24) is ready to catch a disc during a drill called "Power Up" that helps the club work on its endzone.

When the women's ultimate club say that no experience is required to join, they mean it; most of the players did not even know how to properly throw a Frisbee at first.

The club has about 30 members, practices twice a week on campus and attends several weekend tournaments throughout each semester.

The University also has another ultimate club that is open to anyone, male or female.



### PICKLEBALL

Neuroscience major Nathan Sewell prepares to drive a ball down the center of the court while playing pickleball.

Pickleball has been the fastest-growing sport in America for several years, according to the Sports and Fitness Industry Association. It was just a matter of time before pickleball came to campus.

Well, technically, to Tower Grove Park, a couple miles south of campus — where SLU's pickleball club plays.

The club is open to players of all skill levels. More than 100 students were on the roster last year, with around 40 highly active members. The club competes at least once per semester against other schools' clubs. The last competition was hosted by Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and included participants from seven universities.



### More Ways to Play

There are close to 30 club teams at SLU. In addition to those pictured, here are the University's other chartered clubs:

- Badminton
- Fencing
- Lacrosse MEN'S
- Softball
- Tennis
- Wilderness Adventure Club hiking, rock climbing, canoeing, cliff jumping, snowboarding, caving and backpacking
- Baseball
- Flag Football
- Rugby
- Spikeball
- Ultimate Frisbee OPEN
- Volleyball MEN'S
- Volleyball WOMEN'S
- Water Polo
- Basketball WOMEN'S
- Golf
- Running
- Soccer MEN'S
- Soccer WOMEN'S
- Taekwondo
- Cycling
- Ice Hockey
- Table Tennis

## LIGHTING THE SPARK

The Ignite First-Year Seminar shows students how to kindle curiosity into academic pursuits and a dynamite educational experience.

— by Amy Garland, photos by Sarah Conroy

On the first day of his Ignite First-Year Seminar, Dr. Harold Braswell (Grad SW '22) introduces his students to St. Ignatius.

“That’s a guy who originally had dreams of knighthood that he eventually came to see as stupid, in vain. His dreams shattered when his legs were shattered by a cannonball. And how did he create a better life? He read books, and he started writing about them,” Braswell said.

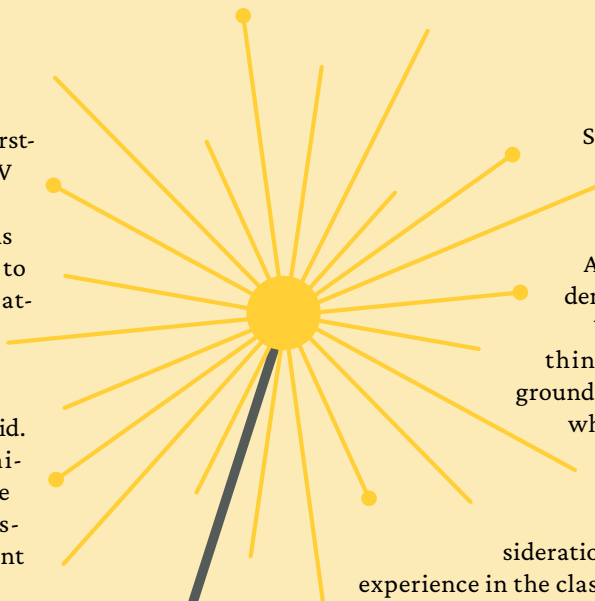
“For me, that’s the basis of the university. It’s simple but profound,” he continued. “I want my course to register on that level with students and orient them to college.”

Braswell’s seminar is called “Life: A User’s Manual.” Like the scores of Ignite Seminars offered each year, the course is meant to show new students what makes teaching and learning at Saint Louis University uniquely transformative.

The Ignite Seminar is relatively new to SLU. Piloted in the fall of 2021, it’s part of the first University-wide common core curriculum. All freshmen and transfer students started taking it during the 2022-23 academic year.

Dr. Ellen Crowell, director of the University core and associate professor of English, said the concept of the seminar combines the Jesuit educational model with a “passion seminar” model common at other universities, where faculty teach a first-year course on something they’re passionate about.

“This means faculty develop a course around the thing that keeps them engaged in their intellectual life while taking into account the process of teaching and learning inspired by Ignatian pedagogy,” Crowell said.



Such wide parameters allow for an endless variety of Ignite Seminar topics: storytelling and city planning; hacking and healing arts; forensics, film, food.

About 80 seminars are offered each academic year.

While the subject can be almost anything, each small-group seminar must be grounded in the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm, which involves a five-step cycle: context, experience, reflection, action and evaluation. Professors and students meet each other where they are, with consideration for their lived experiences and shared

experience in the classroom. The course curriculum includes continual reflection, plans for action, and evaluating both content and process.

“The Ignite Seminar asks us to step down from the lectern, into the classroom with our students, and to understand that what’s at the center is what we create together, not just what I’m offering them,” Crowell said.

Take her “Reasons for Poetry” Ignite Seminar, for example.

“When I began the class, I taught poems I knew well, and I realized that my students were looking to me for the right answer. So I ditched that. And now I only teach poems that I find the night before and spend no time analyzing before I step into the classroom to discuss with them, so that they understand we are all in this together,” Crowell explained.

“The decentering of expertise is really important to the seminar. I’m not teaching them content — I’m teaching them a mode of engagement.”

Engagement is vital in the Ignite Seminar: among students, between student and professor, with the texts and with one’s own experience and how it’s shaping the future.

“These students often come out of a highly structured secondary school environment where their curiosity was not necessarily at the forefront. This course invites students to follow an idea down a rabbit hole in ways that satisfy that curiosity,” Crowell said.

“As long as students leave their seminar feeling invited to bring their whole selves to the table as they engage in intellectual inquiry, we’re doing it right,” she said.

Braswell definitely is doing something right; he was one of two professors to win the inaugural Ignite Instructor of the Year Award.

On the next few pages, read more about his course and five other engaging Ignite Seminars.

## ALGORITHMS TO LIVE BY

**Faculty:** Dr. Justin Goodson

FATHER JOSEPH DAVIS  
PROFESSOR

OPERATIONS AND  
INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT,  
RICHARD A. CHAIFETZ  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



“Even if you make the best possible decision, failure is the most likely outcome.” — GOODSON

**Course Description:** What should you do (or not do) in a day or a lifetime? This course isn’t for math majors — it’s for everyone who wants to learn about the fundamental structures of the problems we face and to discover something about ourselves.

**Objectives:** “Mathematics has as much to say about living as philosophy or literature,” Goodson said. “I want to help students take a quantitative view on everyday problems and lifelong challenges.”

Goodson instructs students to apply algorithms to everyday situations. For example, they use a method of operations research to schedule homework throughout the week. They apply sorting principles to their Spotify playlist. They rethink college romance.

“We talk about the optimal stopping principle: Given a set of options, how do you pick one? If you stop early, you might leave the best on the table. If you pass one up, you may never see something as good again. Some of them think trying to squeeze dating into a formula is a bad idea, but others are curious.”

**Text:** *Algorithms to Live By: The Computer Science of Human Decisions* by Brian Christian and Tom Griffiths

**Requirements:** “Students might not find a passion for applied mathematics,” Goodson said. “I just want them to look at the world through a different lens. I want to spark curiosity and passion for scholarship.”

For the semester project, students identify a challenging decision in their lives, apply an algorithm from the course and share how to decide.

**Student Evaluation:** “Freshman year, I changed my major from business to public health. What I learned in my Ignite Seminar helped me make this decision. I used the optimal stopping algorithm to determine the right time to stop looking for a new major. I used the explore/exploit method; I took different kinds of classes to explore and exploit what I was interested in. I also looked to the overfitting algorithm, which influenced me to think less and use fewer constraints when researching majors.” — *Libby Williams, public health and health management major*

## BEHIND THE MONA LISA'S SMILE

**Faculty:** Dr. Fabiola Martínez

Rodríguez

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

VISUAL AND PERFORMING  
ARTS, ART HISTORY,  
SLU-MADRID



“I like the freedom the Ignite Seminar gives for teaching your passion. My approach has always been interdisciplinary, so I was excited to design a less traditional art history course.” — MARTÍNEZ

**Course Description:** Take a journey through the cultural history of the Transatlantic world, a complex geopolitical space across which people, food and goods moved, shaping the world today. Start at the iconic image of the “Mona Lisa”—specifically, the one with Beyoncé and Jay-Z in front of it in their 2018 video. From there, explore artworks and museum collections that connect the past with the present while reflecting on the legacies of colonialism and the ongoing struggles for social and racial equality.

**Objectives:** Martínez aims “to bring art out of the museum and into the lives of students,” exploring how art connects people and cultures. Specifically, she wants to situate her students in Madrid, connecting art to Spanish history and showing how that history is entwined with the Americas.

Martínez, who’s from Mexico, said, “Many of my students come from the U.S.; we come from that encounter of Europe going into the Americas. I want to highlight the issues of diversity and tolerance and race because we’re looking at the enduring legacies of colonialism.”

**Texts:** Smarthistory: The Centre for Public Art History; Khan Academy Art History (online resources)

**Requirements:** The signature project is a written “journey” of the student’s own, informed by their background and academic interests. The journey must include five to seven “stops” — at least two artworks and possibly a song, personal object or photograph. Martínez wants her students to reflect on their past, the journey they started as SLU-Madrid freshmen and where this path may take them.

**Student Evaluation:** “I learned not to just memorize what was said during the course, but to truly reflect and analyze its context. In this case, the context pertains to my life in regard to the journey that I have and will take. I have also reflected extensively on history, especially if it is related to art and cultural identity.” — *Lara Hop, psychology major*

## DISSECTING A TIMELINE: ANATOMY THROUGH THE AGES

**Faculty:** Dr. Meadow Campbell  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
CENTER FOR ANATOMICAL  
SCIENCE AND EDUCATION,  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



*“When we studied the cardiovascular system, we met Columbo, a Spanish anatomist. Turned out he had performed the postmortem on St. Ignatius. When I uncovered that, I couldn’t wait to tell my students.”* – CAMPBELL

**Course Description:** Studying anatomy can be tedious, a list to be memorized. This seminar turns curiosity about the body into a journey of how the field developed. From social taboos that restricted dissection of the human body to modern practices of anatomical gift donation, the field of anatomy spans history. The study of anatomy combines the growth of biological thought and philosophy of science, issues of life and death, race and ethnicity, gender and sex, socioeconomic status, and cultural mores regarding health and well-being. It is intimate yet touches many.

**Objectives:** “No one has taught anatomy like this before,” Campbell said. She takes a systems-based approach — studying dissection itself first, then skin, the cardiovascular system and so on — but integrates history throughout. She wants students to realize that “we can’t take our current knowledge for granted,” that discoveries change understanding all the time.

**Texts:** There’s no official textbook, but Campbell uses *A History of Human Anatomy* by T.V.N. Persaud, Marios Loukas and R. Shane Tubbs as a guide for articles to assign to the class.

**Requirements:** For the semester project, students choose an anatomical system and collaborate to create slides that are combined into a comprehensive timeline of anatomical history.

**Student Evaluations:** Campbell appreciates that students approach her class differently. “One of my students is an artist. She sits up front and shares her notebook with me. She’s got skulls in there and gastrointestinal systems. That’s how she processes as I teach.”

“We visited the rare books section of the library, and we were able to look at books that were literally hundreds of years old! We also had the incredible opportunity to visit the SLU cadaver lab on south campus, which was a very meaningful educational experience.”

– Ariela Grad, forensic science and French major

## LIFE: A USER’S MANUAL

**Faculty:** Dr. Harold Braswell  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
ALBERT GNAEGI CENTER  
FOR HEALTH CARE ETHICS,  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND  
SCIENCES



*“In school, you read for the teacher and for professional development. But hopefully, you also read for your soul. That’s something that should be the foundation of a Jesuit university.”* – BRASWELL

**Course Description:** How do you lead a good life? In this course, read about psychotherapy from some of the most insightful writers of the 20th century, and then relate their ideas to your experience; examine your life in the hope of better understanding yourself and your college journey ahead.

**Objectives:** For this seminar, Braswell goes beyond his background in health care ethics and disability studies to his interest in psychoanalysis as a therapist. He wants to build trust in his students, to create a space where his students are provoked to think and feel, and where they can freely share what they read and write about.

**Texts:** Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Alison Bechdel’s *Are You My Mother?* plus primary sources by Sigmund Freud, Frantz Fanon and others (“Dense texts — it’s asking a lot of 18-year-olds,” Braswell said.) The course title comes from a novel by Georges Perec, which isn’t on the reading list.

**Requirements:** The final assignment asks students to reflect on and write about a difficult moment in their lives.

“I had to make sure that they trusted me enough to do that,” Braswell said. “That was a semester-long process. I shared things I’ve written about my life; it didn’t seem fair to ask them to write about their lives if I’m not going to share about mine.”

He continued, “The papers that I got — I won’t go into detail because it’s between me and them. But I had very high expectations, and I got a lot more.”

**Student Evaluation:** “Before the class, I agreed with the SLU goal of delivering a liberal arts education and the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis*, caring for the whole self. This seminar showed me how those ideas play out firsthand. The entire course was centered around how we find meaning and how we can apply texts we read to our lives.”

– Josie Germain, sociology major

## THE MOST HUMAN COMPUTER

**Faculty:** Dr. David Ferry  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
COMPUTER SCIENCE,  
SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND  
ENGINEERING



*“The Luddites destroyed machines for threatening their livelihood. And it’s true: Technology changes our lives. But if that’s how we reacted to every innovation, we’d still be driving horses and buggies.”* – FERRY

**Course Description:** What does it mean to be human — and how close can a computer get? Think about what is computable and what it means to have conscious human thought — and how those two concepts relate. This course includes an introduction to computer programming and asks students to experience and reflect on how people interact with computers to solve complex, modern problems, as well as how computing is shaping the human experience.

**Objectives:** Ferry, who specializes in computer systems and artificial intelligence (AI), divides this course into thirds: teaching basic computer programming, introducing his expertise about technology systems and philosophizing about the role of tech in modern lives.

“The way a lot of people make decisions about technology is kind of ad hoc, a gut feeling: Is this good or bad? But it’s 2024; we’re 100-plus years into industrialization and modernization. We have a lot of experience for how technology changes our lives,” Ferry said.

He attempts to give students a framework to evaluate whether a piece of technology is the right solution for the given moment. In so doing, he encourages students to be thoughtful about how they spend their time and to consider what fruitful human activity looks like.

**Text:** *The Most Human Human: What Talking with Computers Teaches Us About What It Means to Be Alive* by Brian Christian

**Requirements:** In addition to several short reflections and programming assignments, students complete a semester-long programming project and research project. For the programming project, students build a “chat bot,” a program that attempts to converse with a user as though it is human. The final research project invites students to explore how technology influences their field, major, hobby, etc.

**Student Evaluation:** “Professor Ferry was fantastic. Outside of being a great teacher regarding the material, he’s also just an enjoyable person to talk to, which makes a class that much better.” – Brendan Stoll, flight science major

## OWNING THE AWKWARD

**Faculty:** Dr. Carolyn O’Laughlin  
(GRAD ED ’23),  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
ADMINISTRATION, SCHOOL  
OF EDUCATION



*“This isn’t seventh-grade health class – it’s not THAT awkward.”* – O’LAUGHLIN

**Course Description:** Explore the concept of awkwardness and its impact on social interaction. Through discussion, experiential activities and self-reflection, learn to understand the shared human experience of awkwardness and identify strategies for mitigating it. See how “owning the awkward” can lead to personal development, better communication skills and stronger communities.

**Objectives:** “Awkward things are the things that make us human together,” O’Laughlin said. She encourages students to connect through vulnerability.

Following the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm in this seminar is perfect, she said, because it encourages learning from mistakes.

O’Laughlin said she’s no stranger to awkwardness. She worked for 20 years in college student affairs, lived in student housing until she was 35, and researches neurodivergence in college students. After being a teaching assistant for SLU President Dr. Fred P. Pestello and Provost Dr. Michael Lewis when they taught their Ignite Seminars, O’Laughlin realized her academic experiences could be enlightening to first-year SLU students.

**Text:** *Cringeworthy* by Melissa Dahl, who led a class discussion virtually after O’Laughlin cold-contacted her

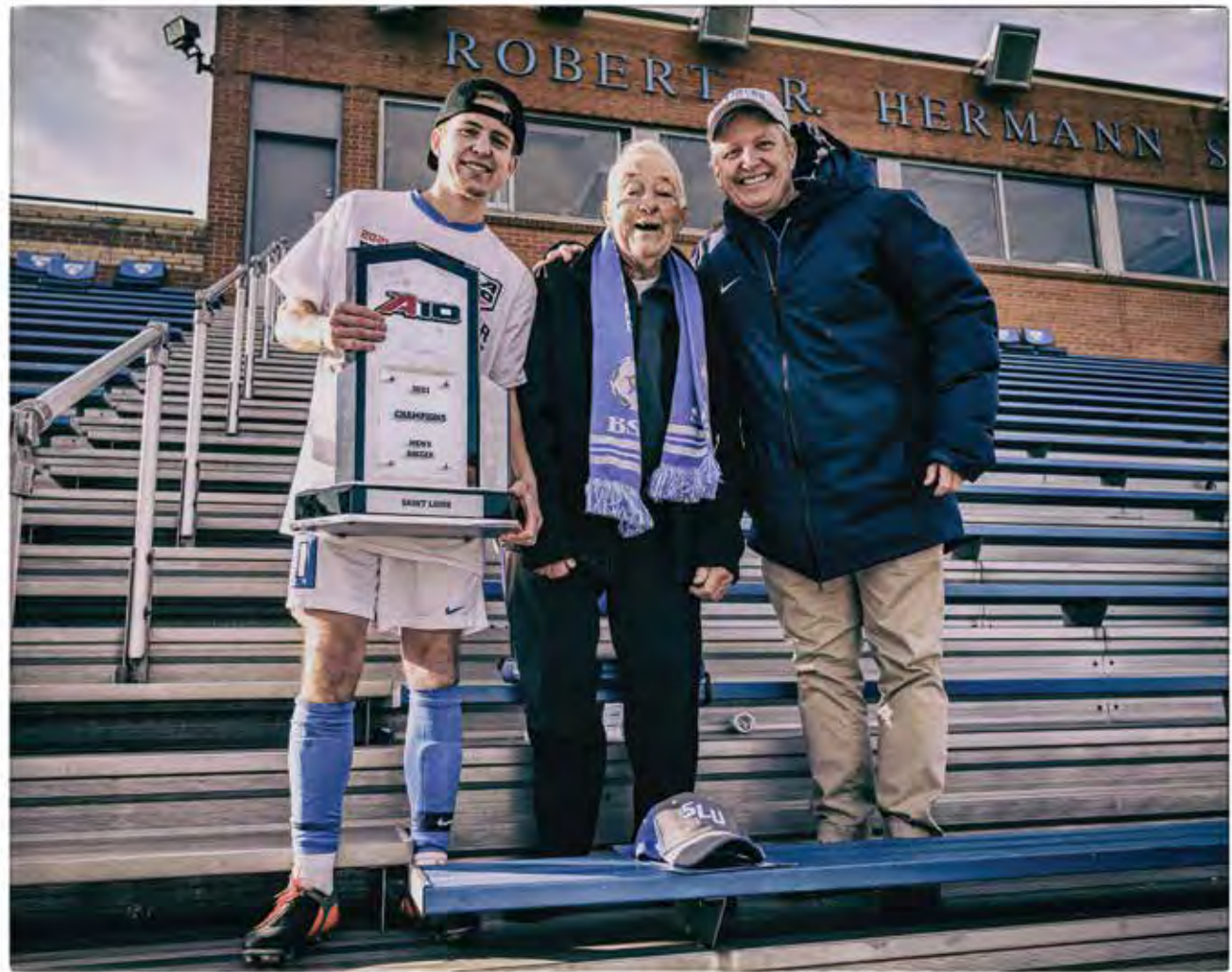
**Requirements:** “I want them to become learners motivated by curiosity,” O’Laughlin said. “So I encourage them to bring their whole selves to the topic, their own awkward experiences.”

She calls her classroom a nest, a safe space to explore the uncomfortable. On the first day, the class divides into groups to build actual nests, led by an instructor over Zoom; it’s meant to break the ice while echoing awkward virtual interactions. The class also participates in an improv workshop led by a St. Louis troupe, a forced-choice activity led by SLU’s Division of Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement, and more.

The semester project is an annotated bibliography about something the student finds awkward. Topics have been as broad as menstruation and as specific as forgetting the name of a person you just met.

**Student Evaluation:** “This class gave me tools that increase my social awareness and make me a more empathic and understanding member of the SLU community.”

– Collin West, economics major



Three generations of Kleins at Hermann Stadium in 2021

JORDAN NEISLER

# Three of a Klein

**THE KLEIN FAMILY IS PROUD OF THEIR BILLIKEN SOCCER LEGACY.**

By Joe Barker

It would be impossible to tell the story of Saint Louis University men's soccer without including John Klein. **All three of them.**

Three generations of Kleins have donned the blue and white of the Billikens. Along the way, the Kleins have established a legacy at SLU.

"This is a family who all happened to have the same passion," John Klein III said. "My grandpa started playing soccer for no other reason than that he loved the game. That love for the game was passed down to a son and grandson who have been incredibly fortunate to have some success in the soccer world. My dad and I have realized how good this game has been to us, and it makes us want to continue building on that legacy that my grandpa started."

The first John Klein to suit up for SLU was the late John Klein I (IT '61). He was part of the Billikens' 1959 and 1960 national championship squads. (See page 41.) In 1991 he was inducted into the St. Louis Soccer Hall of Fame and in 1995 was named to the Billiken Hall of Fame. He died on May 11, 2023.

"I always heard of the type of player he was — people described him as hard-working and blue-collar," Klein III said. "They said he was a shorter defender but would go up against a tall forward and win a head ball over them."

More than two decades later, another Klein took the pitch at SLU, but it almost didn't happen.

"I set my eyes on some schools outside of St. Louis and went to Duke for a couple of years," John Klein II said. "Things were good there, but I all of a sudden got this itch to make my way back to St. Louis, and I wound up at SLU. In the end, I think I wanted to honor my dad. He played there, so I wanted to play there."

Klein II (CSB '87) was on the SLU team in 1985 and 1986. After that, he played professionally for a number of teams, including the St. Louis Ambush and Storm. Klein II moved into coaching and has been the coach of the Columbia College (Missouri) men's soccer team since 2000 and the first and only coach of Columbia's women's program.

John Klein III continued the family tradition in 2018. It wasn't a hard choice to come to SLU.

"Playing for the same school as my dad and grandpa filled me with tremendous pride," he said. "Each time I put on the Billiken jersey, I would think about them. They had put on that jersey before me and had success, so I felt it was my responsibility to hold that up. I really just wanted to make them proud."

John Klein III (CSB '21, Grad PS '23) wrapped up his highly decorated career after the 2022 season. During his time at SLU, the Billikens returned to the NCAA tournament, and Klein was a key fixture. In his final year, he was named the Atlantic 10 co-offensive player of the year, first-team all-conference and first-team all-region.

When Klein III took the pitch at Hermann Stadium, the stands were filled with family.

"Johnny got us reconnected with SLU," Klein II said. "That was an amazing experience. It was great coming to those games and interacting with the program again. It renewed our respect and love for Saint Louis University."

Seeing the family reunion in the bleachers was a highlight of Klein III's time at SLU.

"Looking up in the stands, I'd see my family — grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins — about 15 people waving and smiling at me," Klein III said. "This game has given my family so many memorable moments that we will be able to talk about forever."

Following his successful SLU career, Klein III was able to stay in town. St. Louis CITY SC took him 30th overall in the 2022 MLS SuperDraft. He made his MLS debut on May 20, 2023, at CITYPARK in a 4-0 win over Sporting Kansas City.

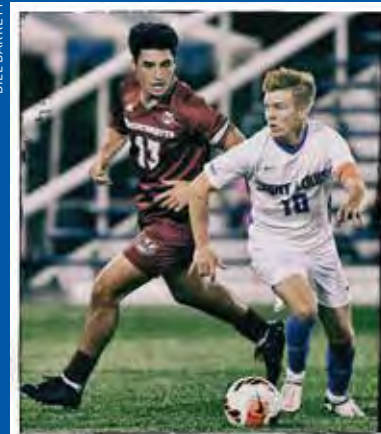
"Continuing playing in St. Louis has been one of the best things to happen in my soccer career," he said. "Not only do I still get to play in front of my family and friends, but the St. Louis CITY fans have been really good to me. They are really proud of their local players, and I can tell they want me to succeed." ❧



John Klein I 1959-1960



John Klein II 1985-1986



John Klein III 2018-2022

BOLES LAUS LUKASZEWSKI, S.J.

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

BILL BARRETT

# SLU Goes Hollywood

In the fall of 2023, a movie production about alum John O'Leary made itself at home on campus.

— by Joe Barker  
— photos by Sarah Conroy

For a few weeks in the fall of 2023, Hollywood came to Saint Louis University.

Filming for the movie *On Fire*, which tells the story of SLU alum John O'Leary (CSB '99), took place at several campus locations in November and early December. The film is slated for a 2025 release.

O'Leary was 9 years old in 1987 when he was so badly burned in an accident that doctors gave him less than a 1% chance of survival. He shared his journey to recovery in the 2016 bestseller *On Fire: The 7 Choices to Ignite a Radically Inspired Life*, which is the basis for the film.

"I'm a Midwest kid, a SLU grad, so this whole thing is shocking," O'Leary said. "The fact that there's a movie about it is remarkable."

Members of the SLU community got an up close look at the making of a movie both in front of the camera as extras and behind the scenes by shadowing the director and crew.

Production crews spent seven days filming on campus using outdoor locations near the Chaifetz School of Business and Lipic Clock Tower Plaza, as well as indoors at Chaifetz Arena, the former YWCA building on the West Pine Mall (now owned by SLU) and Salus Center.

The film stars Joel Courtney as O'Leary; Masey McLain as his wife, Beth (Hittler) O'Leary (DCHS '01); John Corbett as his father, Denny (Law '68); Stephanie Szostak as his mother, Susan; William H. Macy as broadcaster Jack Buck; and James McCracken as young John O'Leary.

"I've always loved our campus," O'Leary said. "I brought our director here to just meet with my family — that was it. We weren't going to film in St. Louis, but we met with St. Louisans and then he toured SLU and asked, 'What is this place?' I told him it was where I went to college, and he said, 'This place is stunning. It should be in the movie.'"



▶ In a Salus Center hallway, O'Leary (left) talks with McCracken, whose bandages match O'Leary's following the 1987 fire.

◀ A clapperboard marks the start of a precommencement scene filmed outdoors on campus.

▶ In a scene depicting a luau-themed party filmed in the former YWCA building now owned by SLU, Courtney (far right) moves toward the camera as SLU student extras Danavan Wright and Mariah Slaughter (center) pose as party guests. More extras stand to the left.



◀ Art director Clark Woodman puts the finishing touches on a room at the YWCA building, which substitutes as a SLU residence hall room circa 1999. "It's all so cool," O'Leary said. "The story is told in three different time periods — when I'm 9, when I'm 21 and then around 28. These scenes bring me back to being on the quad, being in the dorm room and the fraternity house, and back with my friends."





« Macy as Jack Buck (left) and Corbett as O'Leary's father stand near McCracken (in wheelchair) as his character pays a visit to the St. Louis Cardinals locker room. The scene was filmed in an empty space in Salus Center, decorated to depict the 1987 era Busch Stadium room.

» Szostak and Corbett enjoy a laugh while waiting for a scene to start at Salus Center.



» At center, O Leary (at podium), with Courtney and film director Sean McNamara (center, right) in front of the Center for Global Citizenship, formerly the West Pine Gym, for a 1999 business school precommencement scene. O Leary makes a cameo in the film playing the ceremony speaker. Hollywood does such a wonderful job of showing superheroes, and this movie does a phenomenal job of showing what it looks like in real life," he said. It's a family, it's a university, it's doctors and nurses — it's ordinary folks who see an opportunity to make a difference, and they take it and do it, so they change the world. ☒



For the latest *On Fire* updates, including the release date, scan the QR code.



Beth O Leary (right) teaches McLain (second from left), who portrays her in the film, occupational therapy exercises on Courtney as John O Leary (left) looks on. "My wife and I met on campus, we became friends on campus and eventually fell in love on campus," O Leary said.

» Macy strums a ukelele between takes at Salus Center.



SLU's Catholic Studies Program offers students a home for studies and spirituality.

# Under One Roof

— by Catherine Kraemer



Clergy concelebrate an outdoor Mass near the Catholic Studies Center during the spring semester.

If it weren't for its location on campus, it would be easy to mistake Saint Louis University's Catholic Studies Center for any family home. The front entrance is a revolving door of activity. The kitchen is warm and busy. The stairs creak from years of use, and the sofas in the living room have seen their fair share of lively discussions and quiet reflection.

While the center is no longer a residence, it is a home base for a growing number of SLU students, as well as a hub of Catholic activity on campus, from weekly Masses and meals to speakers, retreats and alumni events. It's also the official home of the Catholic Studies Program — a major or minor available through the College of Arts and Sciences that allows SLU students to approach their primary major through the lens of Catholic thought.

This intertwining of Catholic studies, spirituality and community makes the Catholic Studies Center unique in its offerings and a destination for students seeking a new way to connect their faith with their SLU education.

## CATHOLIC STUDIES GETS ITS START

In the early 1990s, a handful of Catholic universities across the country were considering adding a Catholic Studies Program, with the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, being the first to introduce one in 1993. Inspired by St. Thomas' success, SLU developed its program in 1997.

Catholic Studies is different from a typical theology program because it complements a student's primary area of study. It brings together theology, philosophy and nearly every other area of study available at SLU, depending on a student's academic focus.

"The idea is to have a place within the University in which you can have engagement with all the different disciplines, together with Catholic thought and culture," said Matthew Baugh, S.J., academic program director for Catholic Studies at SLU. "Catholic Studies involves deep interdisciplinary engagement."

The program initially drew a steady stream of students but stayed relatively small. It offered a contract major, allowing students the opportunity to approach program leaders and create a personalized plan. But as Catholic cultural study began to take root on campus, so did the program — gaining momentum and an eventual place of its own in the Catholic Studies Center.

## A HOME FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT AND CULTURE

The story of SLU's Catholic Studies Center also begins at the University of St. Thomas, where Christopher Collins, S.J., SLU's former assistant to the president for mission and identity, attended school in the early 1990s. St. Thomas' Catholic Studies Program was also housed in a former private residence on campus.

When Collins came to SLU to direct the Catholic Studies Program in 2012, he brought with him a vision for a building — a literal and metaphorical home for the program.

"In talking with leadership at St. Thomas, they said that the house was very important to their program," Dr. Greg Beabout said.

Beabout, a SLU philosophy professor, teaches in the Catholic Studies Program and was part of a group of faculty who were instrumental in securing SLU's Catholic Studies Center.

"To have a place for an academic program that previously didn't have a home base — that was a big part of the story of moving here," he said.

"Here" is Cartier Hall, a 19th-century Victorian home located on the western edge of SLU's campus. In 2016, SLU President Dr. Fred P. Pestello transferred the building to the Catholic Studies Program, resulting in the creation of the Catholic Studies Center.

In addition to housing the Catholic Studies Program, the center also became the long-awaited permanent home for the Edmund Campion Society, a student-led group founded in 1999.

"The first time the Campion Society met in Cartier Hall was the beginning of the fall 2016 semester. There was Mass in this room right here," Beabout said, gesturing around Cartier Hall's sunny living room. "The priest set up an altar on the landing of the staircase. There were 11 students here, so still a really small group, but it grew pretty quickly. By September, we couldn't fit in the living room anymore."

Seeking more space, the group moved its Monday-night "Campion Night" gatherings to the third floor of the building. At one point, members invited Pestello to join them for Mass as a show of gratitude for the new center. Students were encouraged to bring a friend, putting the total at more than 50 attendees.

"There were candles and incense in a crowded room," Beabout said. "Dr. Pestello said afterward that all he could envision was a fire. From that point forward, we moved over to Boileau Hall."

Much to Pestello's relief and with his blessing, the Catholic Studies Center added the adjacent Boileau Hall to its footprint. Over the next year, a chapel was built to accommodate the large number of Monday-night attendees. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the group moved to St. Francis Xavier College Church to spread out, but attendance never dipped.



Baugh

Over time, Campion Nights grew to include not only Mass but also recitation of the rosary, the opportunity for confessions and a home-cooked meal prepared and served by a group of loyal volunteers. What started as a Thanksgiving meal for students became a Monday night tradition, made by volunteers of all ages.

"We have about 75 volunteers in the St. Louis community who work in teams. I'd say about 80% of them are SLU alums," Baugh said. "One of the things we talk about in our Jesuit province is trying to find ways to do inter-generational ministry, and this has been an amazing way to do that — to create bonds across the generations."

## A NEW ERA OF GROWTH

As interest in programming put on by the Catholic Studies Center grew, so did SLU's Catholic Studies Program, most recently under the leadership of Baugh.

Baugh was ordained in 2019, and his first pastoral placement was at the College Church. Soon after, he started teaching at SLU in the Catholic Studies Program. By the end of 2020, Baugh was offered permanent appointments in political science and Catholic studies, and in the summer of 2021, he took over as director of the Catholic Studies Center.

Baugh sees his dual role as a political scientist and Catholic studies leader as an example of what makes the program unique.

"It helps people understand our mission because the fact that a political scientist can run a center like this tells you that we're not a theology department," Baugh said.

During the 2020-21 academic year, Baugh was part of a subcommittee that designed an updated version of the Catholic Studies Program. Working together with Dr. Eleonore Stump, SLU's Robert J. Henle, S.J., Professor of Philosophy, Baugh looked at program models at other universities.

"We worked all that year, and in the fall of 2021, we became the first — and still only — Jesuit university with a full-fledged major in Catholic studies," Baugh said.

The program includes students from the School of Education, the School of Nursing and STEM fields, as well as Jesuits and members of local religious communities. Many pursue a Catholic studies major, while others choose a minor or simply take a few classes, depending on what their schedule allows.

Classes are taught by Baugh, Dr. Jennifer Sanders — the program's other full-time faculty member — and faculty from other departments. After taking core courses and electives, seniors complete a culminating project that takes a question or a problem in their main field and brings Catholic thought and culture into dialog with that topic.

For one final project, a political science major with an interest in Catholic teaching on the death penalty drafted a pastoral letter that the archbishop could send to his diocese





Cartier Hall, home of the Catholic Studies Center (left), and Boileau Hall

explaining Catholic teaching on capital punishment. Another student examined Catholic social teaching as it pertains to economic policy, specifically looking at socioeconomic problems in St. Louis.

Recent Catholic studies graduates are now in graduate programs for philosophy and economics. Others teach in low-income communities, work in health care and hold leadership roles in a wide range of fields.

Kelley Cochran (VSN '24) recalls moving into her freshman residence hall in the middle of the pandemic, when life felt uncertain, and community was scarce. A friend saw that she was struggling and invited her to join her in prayer at the Catholic Studies Center. The community Cochran experienced was enough for her to know she wanted to keep coming back.

“Despite all that was happening in the world, I found meaning and had such a good time,” she said. “Ever since then, I’ve continued to hang out here with my best friends. They hold me accountable in my faith.”

Cochran came to SLU as a nursing major, and after her introduction to the Catholic Studies Center, she decided to add a minor in Catholic studies. By taking classes like “Ignatian Spirituality in Health Care,” it was easy for her to see the ways in which Catholicism complements and influences the work she does as a nurse.

“Catholic studies has helped me remember why I do what I do: taking care of patients in light of the Jesuit mission, body and soul,” she said.

#### AN INNOVATION LAB FOR THE UNIVERSITY

Together, SLU’s Catholic Studies Center and Catholic Studies Program offer a place for prayer, fellowship, conversation and reflection on the ways Catholicism shows up in the world — and how the tenets and values of the faith integrate with the work of SLU alumni, inspiring their future contributions.

“One way I’ve learned to explain what we do here to alumni and friends is that we’re kind of an innovation lab for the University. We’re trying things that can be of use to the broader University,” Baugh said. “The core of that can be seen here in one facility where students can go to class, they can use the chapel, and there are communal spaces where they can gather.”

As students invite friends to experience the Catholic Studies Center and awareness grows, the space is evolving to meet the need. In 2022, the center was renovated to include a seminar room, library, podcast studio and two faculty offices. The next renovation will expand the chapel to accommodate an even larger group.

From Baugh’s perspective, the Catholic Studies Program itself is also evolving.

“We’ve got to figure out how to be able to scale up to grow our program and respond to the hunger that we’re finding among students for a program like this,” he said.

As he works to accommodate this demand, Baugh is proud of the Catholic home SLU has created on campus and the way it seamlessly integrates a SLU education with Catholic thought and culture.

“The burning question in Catholic education right now is, ‘How do you do integration?’” he said. “This is a place where we’re testing out things, and we’ve got everything under one roof. There’s no separation between classroom and chapel. That’s what the whole University is, but here, in a very tangible way, you can sense that.” ☒

#### 1959

**DR. MARGARET (LOPICCOLO) SULLIVAN** (A&S '59, Grad A&S '68) began writing novels at age 80 during the pandemic. Her latest mystery is set in St. Louis and Calhoun County, Illinois, *Who Killed Larry Summerfield?*

#### 1964

**SANDRA OLIVETTI MARTIN** (A&S '64, Grad A&S '67) published a memoir, *Fire at the Stymie Club: Stories from the Mississippi River to Chesapeake Bay*, covering her St. Louis girlhood and including her stories as a newspaper editor and columnist.

#### 1965

**THERESE (DELICH) STAWOWY** (Grad A&S) is a retired teacher and administrator. A former Sister of Loretto, she is a longtime Loretto community co-member involved in social justice activities. She volunteers for a thrift store and her parish in Berkeley, California.

#### 1966

**DR. THOMAS J. FARRELL** (A&S '66, Grad A&S '68, '74) recalled his years at SLU in the article “Doris Kearns Goodwin and Thomas J. Farrell on the History of the 1960s” in the online journal *New Explorations: Studies in Culture and Communication*.

**DR. GERALD NIETERS** (Med) wrote *Cryless*, a 2022 memoir about his time as a physician during the Vietnam War.

#### 1967

**DR. JOHN DOLIS** (A&S), professor emeritus of English and American studies at Penn State University in Scranton, wrote *American Modernist Fiction: Psychoanalytic Recitations of Identity*.

#### 1968

**DR. JAMES PURDOM** (Grad IT) received the Friendship Award, the Chinese government’s highest award for foreign experts, in September 2023.

#### 1970

**WILLIAM P. LEVINS** (A&S '70, Law '74) was inducted into the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Gallery of Distinguished Civilian Employees. He was the district counsel of the St. Louis District for the last 21 years of his career, retiring in 2021.

**DR. MICHAEL MURRAY** (A&S '70, Grad '71), a Curators’ Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus at the University of Missouri—St. Louis, received the Lifetime Achievement in Scholarship Award from the Broadcast Education Association.

#### 1971

**ROBERT SPOHRER** (A&S '71, Law '74) was recognized during the annual Florida Bar convention for 50 years as a member of the bar.

#### 1972

**CECILIA NADAL** (A&S) contributed to the book *Fighting for a Free Missouri: German Immigrants, African Americans and the Issue of Slavery*.

#### 1973

**THOMAS HISCHAK** (A&S) wrote a book, *Song of the Season: Outstanding Broadway Songs Since 1891*. Hischak has written over 30 books on theater, film and popular music, and more than 40 plays. After a career spent at the State University of New York College at Cortland and Flagler College, he retired in 2023. He lives in St. Augustine, Florida.

#### 1974

**PATRICK B. MATHIS** (A&S), a founding shareholder at Mathis, Marifian and Richter Ltd., received the 2024 Outstanding Achievement in Estate Planning Award from the Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education.

#### 1976

**LAWRENCE ALTMAN** (Law) received the 2024 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Ambassador Award from Avila University in Kansas City, Missouri, where he is an adjunct professor. Until he retired in 2016, Altman was the special education lead attorney and

## Class notes

compliance officer for Kansas City Public Schools and the Title IX coordinator for the Kansas City School District. Previously, he was an attorney in St. Louis for 34 years.

**NICHOLAS CRESANTA** (A&S) retired after 46 years of federal civil service. He lives with his wife, **AVA (VAN DYKE) CRESANTA** (A&S '77), in Parker, Colorado.

**DR. LEONARD FLECK** (Grad A&S) was named University Distinguished Professor in both the Center for Bioethics and Social Justice and the Department of Philosophy at Michigan State University, where he’s been on the faculty for nearly 40 years. He published two books in 2022: *Precision Medicine and Distributive Justice: Wicked Problems for Democratic Deliberation and Bioethics, Public Reason, and Religion*.

**CARY SANDMAN** (Law) received the Jack Williams Appellate Award from Arizona Attorneys for Criminal Justice for his achievements in capital appeals, successfully overturning several death sentences and securing freedom for Barry Jones and Haim Sharif after they served nearly 30 years on death row. Sandman lives in Tucson, Arizona.

#### 1978

**FRED KNAPP** (Law) was recognized for lifetime achievement by *The New Jersey Law Journal* in its New Jersey Legal Awards 2023. Knapp was in private practice for decades and served as the Morris County Prosecutor. He now leads the alternate dispute resolution practice at Laddey, Clark and Ryan.

#### 1979

**TOM MARANTZ** (Grad CSB) was recognized by the Community Bankers Association of Illinois as the 2023 Outstanding Member of the Year. He is CEO and chairman of the board at Bank of Springfield, where he served for more than 44 years.

#### 1983

**RICHARD “RICK” ENGEL JR.** (CSB) became managing partner at Armstrong Teasdale in January. He has been at the firm for 36 years. He has advised high-profile organizations through Chapter 11 proceedings and restructuring. He lives in St. Louis.

## Class notes

### IT'S SOCK SEASON AT SLU!

This fall, your gift to any Saint Louis University fund can come along with a present for you or someone on your holiday shopping list. This limited edition Billiken footwear is the perfect winter accessory and is available only through SLU and for a short time.

**GIFTS OF \$60** Eligible for one pair of socks  
**GIFTS OF \$100+** Eligible for two pairs of socks

Place your order by Oct. 31 for delivery in time for Christmas. Questions? Contact [giving@slu.edu](mailto:giving@slu.edu).

SCAN TO LEARN MORE OR MAKE A GIFT.



**THOMAS T. MOGA** (Law) presented a series of intellectual property lectures at Can Tho University School of Law in Vietnam. He was appointed to the board of directors of the International Association for the Protection of Intellectual Property and reappointed to the intellectual property group of the industry trade advisory committee of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

**1986**

**TIMOTHY WYNES** (Law) retired from Black Hawk College in Illinois in July 2023 following his 21st year as a community college president. Previously, he was an assistant prosecutor in Boone County and founded the first clinical law program at the University of Missouri School of Law.

**1987**

**TRACY BRIGGS CALABRESE** (Law) retired from her position as chief of the general counsel section of Houston's City Attorney's Office. She worked there for over 25 years.

**1988**

**DR. KATHLEEN J. FITZGERALD** (A&S), an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, published two books: the fourth edition of *Recognizing Race and Ethnicity: Power, Privilege, and Inequality* and the third edition of *Sociology of Sexualities*.

**1989**

**CHENG-ERH CHANG** (Grad PH) is a senior advisor at Taipei Wellness Management Hospital in Taipei, Taiwan.

**PATRICK G. MCCARTHY** (A&S) is general counsel and a founding member of the Wallace Co. of St. Louis, the North American distributor for Mackworth brand patient-mobility products.

**1990**

**DR. PHILLIP THOMAS TUCKER** (Grad A&S) has written dozens of books about history, including about Cathy Williams, a Buffalo Soldier from Missouri, and Anne Bonny, a pirate from South Carolina.

**1992**

**MICHAEL ALBRECHT** (CSB '92, Law '96) was appointed to the Pasadena (California) City Council Planning Commission in July. He also supervises his real estate development company. He loves spending time with his wife, Lauren, and their two children.

**DOUG ROTHERMICH** (Law) is a partner and wealth strategist at Fidelis Capital. He previously oversaw all high-net-worth planning for TIAA and directly advised clients holding over \$1 billion in assets.

**1993**

**FR. TOM KIRCHHOEFER** (A&S) is the chief of the chaplain service at the Kansas City, Missouri, VA Medical Center.

**TIM LABARGE** (A&S '93, Grad A&S '96) and **DR. SARA (CRESTSINGER) LABARGE** (VSN '96) have two teenage boys and live in Lake Oswego, Oregon. Tim runs a summer camp in Oregon for youth with heart conditions. He spent 25 years working for newspapers, magazines and other

clients. Sara worked for 27 years as a pediatric nurse before completing a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland. She is now a nurse practitioner in pediatric cardiology at OHSU.

**DR. LAIRD VERMONT** (Med) joined Washington University Clinical Associates and opened Monarch Pediatrics in Creve Coeur, Missouri.

**1996**

**REX CARTER** (Grad CSB) is senior director of risk management for the St. Louis Cardinals.

**MELANIE (STOVAL) MURRY** (A&S) was selected among the "Women Who Lead in Higher Education" for 2024 by the *Memphis Business Journal*. Murry is a university counsel at the University of Memphis.

**DR. JOHN S. TIEMAN** (Grad Ed) was elected to the city council of University City, Missouri. A published essayist, poet and translator, Tieman retired after more than 40 years in the classroom.

**1997**

**ANDREW CORKERY** (A&S '97, Law '00), of counsel at Pitzer Snodgrass, P.C., in St. Louis, received the 2024 Illinois Defense Counsel Volunteer of the Year Award.

**MANDI (JENKINS) GABRIELE** (VSN) was promoted to the rank of colonel during a Pentagon ceremony in September 2023. Gabriele is an Air Force reservist assigned to the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of the Air Force at the Pentagon. She has spent the last four years activated full-time, serving in various assignments.



Gabriele holds a photo of her father, Jimmy Dale Jenkins, a veteran.

**ANDY HAHN** (A&S) wrote *Mapping St. Louis*, a book that interweaves 40 city maps with essays, detailed views and illustrations that chart the growth of St. Louis. Hahn is director of the Campbell House Museum, an 1851 townhouse in downtown St. Louis.

**DAWN LEWALLEN** (Law) is a senior underwriter at Stewart Title Guaranty Co., where she has worked since 2000.

**1998**

**ERIN ANDERSON** (DCHS) has a pediatric occupational therapy practice, Erin Anderson and Associates. She is celebrating 20 years in private practice, during which time she has employed four SLU alumni. She lives in Chicago with her husband and two children.

**DR. GINGER (CHAPMAN) COFFEY** (VSN) is a nurse in the Admit and Transfer Center at Cincinnati Children's Medical Center. She received a Doctor of Nursing Practice in 2020 from Mount St. Joseph University in Cincinnati.

**SEAN MCKENZIE** (CSB) became a partner at Anders CPAs + Advisors in January 2024. He has more than 20 years of experience in public accounting and has been at Anders since 2021.

**1999**

**MATTHEW E. PORTER** (PC) is founder and vice chairman of Contegix, a cloud computing firm based in St. Louis. Porter, who lives with multiple sclerosis, is a member of the advisory board for the National MS Society and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

**2000**

**KRISTEN (SVOBODA) BARACY** (Law) is a partner at Tucker Ellis LLP. She lives in Santa Monica, California.

**DR. ELLEN NICASTRO** (A&S '00, Med '04) joined Washington University Clinical Associates and opened Monarch Pediatrics in Creve Coeur, Missouri.

**2001**

**DR. CHRISTINE CHEN** (A&S '01, Med '05) joined Washington University Clinical Associates and opened Monarch Pediatrics in Creve Coeur, Missouri.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT Sharee Silerio



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Sharee (Brown) Silerio** (A&S '09) watched the 96th Academy Awards last March not to see who would win the big contests, not for host Jimmy Kimmel's jokes, not even for Ryan Gosling's "Kenergy" — but rather to root for a 40-minute documentary called *The Last Repair Shop*.

When it won Best Documentary Short Film, Silerio leaped to her feet in celebration. Her husband, Mario, captured her reaction for Instagram, and family back in St. Louis cheered with her over FaceTime.

Silerio was the production coordinator on *The Last Repair Shop*, so the win felt personal.

"Of course, I felt joy and pride, but not just that," Silerio said. "This film was about people who had difficult moments that music helped them get through. That's what writing and film do for me."

Silerio is a filmmaker and field producer for Breakwater Studios, which focuses on short-form documentaries, including *The Last Repair Shop*. She lives in Los Angeles, where she moved in 2022.

Before that, she was a production assistant on shows for Netflix and Oxygen, as well as *Hart of the City: St. Louis* for Comedy Central and *The Busch Family Brewed* for MTV. She also worked in public relations and as a freelance writer.

Her career in film might be traced to her time at Saint Louis University, where she took film classes and wrote her first screenplay. She also was a reporter and anchor for SLU TV.

"I found stories on campus about campus, went out and shot them, and edited them," Silerio said. "It was great practice with skills I'd need later on."

She felt the power of stories even earlier, though, around the time her family moved to a predominantly white neighborhood right before Silerio started kindergarten.

"That's when I discovered that I was Black," she said. "I had classmates calling me 'burnt' and 'ugly.' Kids I thought were friends just kind of treated me like an alien."

She turned to all sorts of outlets to escape her feelings: watching television and movies, writing poetry and painting. She even wrote and filmed a horror movie starring her sister.

"And I absolutely loved reading — being able to step into another world," she said.

Now, she wants to use her creativity to explore the worlds of Black women and girls, highlighting stories that value their whole humanity and experience. To pursue these kinds of projects, she recently launched Starlight Pictures, a film, television, digital and streaming production company.

"My dream is to continue crafting narratives that cultivate empathy, encourage vulnerability and spark healing," she said.

And possibly, win her an Oscar of her very own someday.

— by Amy Garland

# Alumni Merit Awards

These annual awards recognize the achievements of alumni from across the University. The 2024 honorees were celebrated during May commencement.



SARAH CARMODY

**Joseph P. Conran** (A&S '67, Law '70) is a retired partner and former chair at Husch Blackwell LLP, where he is currently of counsel. Before private practice, Conran was a captain and judge advocate in the U.S. Air Force. He chaired the SLU board of trustees for the past 10 years, serves on the law school's Dean's Advisory Council and volunteers on the boards of several other schools and organizations.

**Timothy Drone** (A&S '72, Grad A&S '75, Grad CSB '77) and his wife, Jeanne, hold one of the largest collections of private antiquities in St. Louis and have given myriad pieces to SLU. One collection — 850 newspapers dating from 1683 — is used for research by SLU faculty and students across disciplines. An executive banker for nearly 50 years, Drone also financed two SLU art exhibitions.

**Dr. Michael Ernest** (Dent '69) spent decades as an endodontist in private practice. He also served in the U.S. Air Force; was an assistant professor of endodontics; worked with a volunteer fire department; and was CFO for a nonprofit that raised funds for the Southeastern Firefighter Burn Foundation. Ernest's contributions to SLU's Center for Advanced Dental Education helped support the dental specialties clinic.

**Father Michael Esswein** (P&L '93) always wanted to become a priest, but during his senior year in the seminary, an accident left Esswein paralyzed from the shoulders down — and concerned that he wouldn't be able to pursue his vocation. Ordained in 1998, he now serves hundreds of Catholics as pastor of two parishes in the St. Louis area.

**Dr. Flint Fowler** (Grad Ed '97) is president and CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis, where he has expanded access to new sites and diversified programs during his 28-year tenure. He has received numerous service and advocacy awards during his career, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's highest recognition, the Thomas G. Garth Character and Courage Award.

**Marilyn Horst** (Grad SW '77) spent a decade in banking before turning to social work. For 45 years, Horst was a social worker at SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital. She helped establish the Asthma and Allergy Foundation, St. Louis Chapter, which provides assistance to the underserved. In 2021, she and her husband established the Marilyn L. and Alvin H. Horst Scholarship Fund at SLU's School of Social Work.

**Barbara Jacobsmeyer** (DCHS '88), CEO of Enhabit Home Health and Hospice, oversees nearly 11,000 people in over 250 home health and 100 hospice locations in 34 states. She developed her dedication to patient well-being as a physical therapy undergraduate at SLU, and she now supports SLU PT students with the Physical Therapy Student Association For and With Others Scholarship.

**Laura S. Kaiser** (Grad PH '82, Grad CSB '85) is president and CEO of SSM Health, a \$10.5 billion Catholic, not-for-profit, integrated health system. She leads 40,000 team members and 12,800 providers toward a common vision to make health care affordable and accessible. Kaiser has been named one of the "100 Most Influential People in Healthcare" by *Modern Healthcare* magazine for six years.

**James P. Kavanaugh** (CSB '86) champions diversity, equity and inclusion as co-founder and CEO of World Wide Technology and an investor and owner of St. Louis CITY SC and the St. Louis Blues. He entered SLU's Smurfit Stone Entrepreneurial Alumni Hall of Fame in 2010 and was SLU's President's Choice Award recipient at the St. Louis Sports Hall of Fame in 2014. He has served on SLU's board of trustees since 2010.

**Dr. Frank Magiera** (PC '62) studied aerospace engineering at SLU but ended up a successful, independent financial services professional. He concentrated on providing training to investment professionals seeking certification in security analysis and portfolio construction. In 2012, he established the Frank and Bernice Magiera Scholarship for SLU's School of Science and Engineering.

**Nathan Merrick** (Grad PS '20) is a member of the board of directors of Fish Window Cleaning, where he uses his passion for branding and marketing to boost the company as a leader in the franchise service industry. Merrick also established two scholarships in the School for Professional Studies, including one for students in their last year of study who experience financial hardship.

**Dr. Toniya Singh** (Residency '00, Fellowship '03), a cardiologist, is managing partner at St. Louis Heart and Vascular. She is also a mentor to SLU medical students, residents and fellows. Singh chairs the National Women in Cardiology section and National Cardiovascular Management section of the American College of Cardiology.

**Trudy Busch Valentine** (VSN '80) witnessed suffering as a nurse and experienced it with the sudden loss of her husband in 2002 and her son's challenges with substance use. She has worked in health care, education, advocacy and pastoral care. She also has served on numerous boards, including SLU's board of trustees since 2017. In 2019, the School of Nursing was named in her honor.

## PIONEER AWARD

**Gregory Frey** (Ed '07) and **Steven Frey** (Ed '09) are brothers and colleagues. At Benet Academy, a Catholic high school near Chicago, Gregory teaches Spanish, and Steven teaches English. The two have led students on 12 service-immersion trips to Guatemala since 2014. They also assist with service trips to Appalachia and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity.

← **FROM LEFT, TOP ROW:** Conran, Drone, Fowler, Gregory Frey, Steven Frey, Merrick and Magiera.  
**FRONT ROW:** Esswein, Valentine, Kaiser, Horst, Singh and Jacobsmeyer.

## 2002

**JOSH JONES** (Law) became an associate judge in the Eighth Judicial Circuit in Adams County, Illinois, in July.

**DR. JIM SCHROEDER** (Grad A&S '02, '05) co-wrote a book, *Turning Free Will Into Willpower: The Opportunity of a Lifetime*. He is a pediatric psychologist and vice president in the Department of Psychology and Wellness at Easterseals Rehabilitation Center.

## 2004

**DR. MICHELLE KOVARIK** (A&S) is the Gregory G. Mario '87 Associate Professor of Chemistry at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. She is also the faculty co-director of Trinity's Center for Teaching and Learning. In May, she received the college's teaching award.

**KEVIN LEE** (Grad A&S), president and CEO of Mid-America Transplant, received a Foundation Award for Leadership Excellence from the Foundation for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

## 2005

**RITU KAUR COOPER** (Law) is a co-managing partner of the Washington, D.C., office of Hall Render Killian Heath and Lyman. The first woman of color in this role at any Hall Render office, Cooper is a member of the firm's health section and co-leader of its compliance service line.

**BOBBY METZINGER** (A&S) is a senior sales support consultant at Caterpillar in Texas. For the last two years, he participated in the Wreaths Across America program at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Metzinger placed a wreath on the tombstone of SLU alumnus Dr. Bradbury Robinson, who threw the first legal forward pass in college football history.

**JOEL SAMUELS** (A&S), an intellectual property attorney with Harness IP, was featured in a cover story in the 2023 edition of *Super Lawyers Missouri and Kansas* about his experience as an immigrant to the United States. He lives in St. Louis with his wife, **SARAH (YOUNG) SAMUELS** (CSB), and their four children.

## 2007



Dr. Michelle Odai presents the award to Breitbach at the National Athletic Trainers' Association meeting.

**DR. ANTHONY BREITBACH** (Grad Ed) received the 2023 Sayers "Bud" Miller Distinguished Educator Award for excellence in athletic training education. Breitbach was director of SLU's Athletic Training Program from 2007 to 2022. He is now

interprofessional education and a professor of physical therapy and athletic training.

**DELANEY (DAMBERG) CLEMENT** (PC) is chief operating officer for the Archdiocese of St. Louis. She has experience in engineering, operations management and strategic planning, most recently as senior manager of enterprise technology strategy at Boeing. She and her husband, Ben, have three children.

## 2008

**LINDSAY (STUBER) HENRY** (Law) is a member of the Dykema law firm. She works in corporate finance in Chicago. As a former examiner at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Henry has experience with regulatory compliance issues.

**PETER LEBLANC JR.** (Law) is an attorney in the trusts, estates and legacy planning practice group at Lathrop GPM in St. Louis.

**SARA SALGER** (Law), managing partner and president of the Gori Law Firm, is the 71st president of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association — the third and youngest woman to hold that position.

## 2009

**SHANAE CHAPMAN** (A&S) received the 2024 Excellence in Innovation Award from the Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Harris-Stowe State University. She is the founder, CEO and managing director of Nerdy Diva, specializing in tech training, instructional design and user-experience research and design.

## Class notes

**THOMAS CHIBNALL** (Grad A&S '09, Law '15) is a shareholder in the St. Louis office of Ogletree Deakins. He is a member of Ogletree's workplace safety and health practice group.

## 2010

**BLAKE DUREN** (Law) was elected a circuit judge in Sauk County, Wisconsin, Branch III.

**JOSHUA MCCURDY** (PC '10, Grad PC '12) is an international program manager in Boeing's air dominance (fixed-wing aircraft) portfolio. He spent more than 10 years as a flight test and project engineer for various Boeing weapons international programs. McCurdy lives in Missouri, spending most of his time in the St. Louis area and at Lake of the Ozarks.

**ALEX WEBB** (CSB), an attorney with the Army Corps of Engineers' St. Paul District, received the national Army Corps of Engineers' E. Manning Seltzer Award. Webb was honored for helping solve a dredged material management issue on the upper Mississippi River.

## 2011

**DR. DUSTIN SIEGEL** (A&S), a biology professor, received the 2023 Provost Faculty Excellence Award at Southeast Missouri State University. He also received the 2024 Governor's Award for teaching excellence from the Missouri Council on Public Higher Education.

## 2012

**DR. KIRSTEN F. (BRANDT) DUNN** (Med), an internal medicine physician with Mercy Virtual Primary Care, is the 2024 president of the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Society. Dunn lives in Chesterfield, Missouri, with her husband, Dr. Tim Dunn, and their three children.

**DR. CORRINE HINTON** (A&S) is dean of English and humanities at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, Illinois.





## In memoriam

### 1992

Marilyn Diebold (VSN)

Maureen Miller (LAW)

Mary (Robinson) Noel (VSN)

### 1993

Eugene Howard Jr. (LAW)

Richard Schilli (A&S)

### 1994

Andrea Braun (A&S)

### 1996

Donald Emerick (LAW)

Daniel Hurley (MED)

Mary Morris (PH)

Amy Prudhomme (SW)

Katherine Wildt, C.P.P.S. (A&S)

### 1998

Edmund Yopez (GRAD)

### 1999

Eric Barnhart (LAW)

Kathryn (Marcinkowski) Howes (DCHS)

### 2000

Keith Campbell (CSB)

### 2001

Kristine Ashley (VSN)

### 2006

Steve Skidmore (DCHS)

### 2004

Brandon Boots (DCHS)

### 2006

James Kelly (LAW)

Jeremy Loddeke (A&S)

### 2007

Laura Stonikas (CSB)

### 2008

Kiley Ziegler (MED)

### 2012

Leah Czerniewski (PC)

Ann Filla (A&S)

### 2018

Lana Watson (PH)

### 2021

Katelyn Bolls (DCHS)

Jordan Losier (PS)

### 2022

Karen Johnson (VSN)

The "In Memoriam" section includes the names of alumni who died between Jan. 1, 2023, and July 8, 2024.

This list of deceased alumni was compiled by SLU's Office of Research and Development Services. If you have a question or would like more information about an "In Memoriam" listing, please send an email message to [devupdates@slu.edu](mailto:devupdates@slu.edu).

## FACULTY AND STAFF

**Joyce (Evers) Huelsmann**, a longtime staff member in the Trudy Busch Valentine School of Nursing, died May 17, 2024, at age 78. Huelsmann worked at SLU for 47 years and was a founding member of the Women's Commission and the Staff Advisory Committee (SAC). An annual award for the outstanding SAC member is named in her honor.

**Dr. Leo Jackson "Jack" Malone Jr.**, a former professor of chemistry, died April 22, 2024, at age 85. Malone joined SLU in 1965 as an assistant professor and served as assistant dean of the Graduate School from 1968-71. The author of *Basic Concepts of Chemistry*, he retired in 2005.

**Dr. Jack Marler**, an associate professor of philosophy, died Nov. 28, 2023. He was 75 years old. Marler came to SLU in 1990. In 1995, he helped forge ties between philosophy departments at SLU and the University of Frankfurt, which eventually developed into an exchange program.

**Dr. Brian Nedwek**, a former administrator at SLU, died Oct. 29, 2023. He was 82 years old. He came to SLU in 1976 and stayed for more than two decades, serving in the Graduate School, academic affairs and public policy studies before becoming an associate provost.

**Dr. Larry David Samuels**, former director of nuclear medicine at SLU's Medical Center, died April 25, 2024, at age 90. A pioneer in pediatric nuclear medicine, Samuels was at SLU from 1982-90. Previously, he was associate professor of nuclear medicine at Hadassah University Hospital in Jerusalem.

**Dr. John George Severson Jr.**, professor emeritus of biology, died March 23, 2024, at age 83. Severson was at SLU from 1971 until he retired in 2011. In addition to teaching, he served as an associate dean for the College of Arts and Sciences and as coordinator of undergraduate programs for biology.

**Dr. Kenneth R. Smith Jr.**, a longtime SLU neurosurgeon, died May 16, 2024, at age 91. Smith established SLU's Department of Neurosurgery in 1966 and headed it until 2002, continuing surgical practice until he retired in 2004. Smith volunteered at regional clinics, made service trips to Nairobi and helped start neurosurgery residency programs in five African countries. In 2002, he created SLU's K.R. Smith Endowed Chair in Neurosurgery.

**Dr. Robert Wilmott**, dean emeritus of the School of Medicine, died May 19, 2024, at age 75. In 2001, he was named chair of pediatrics at the medical school and pediatrician-in-chief at SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Hospital. In 2019, he became dean and vice president of medical affairs. A pediatric pulmonologist, he published the "Healthy Kids" column in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* for years. In his honor, the pediatrics department presents the Wilmott Teaching Award.

Coach Guelker (right) shows the trophy for the team's fourth national championship to Jerome Marchetti, S.J., in 1963.



FROM LEFT, BACK ROW: Players Gerry Balassi, Don Range and John Klein stand behind Coach Guelker.



## The last look



Students welcome the team back to campus after their second championship in 1960.



SLU players celebrate a 4-2 victory at Michigan State University in October 1959.

### FIRST-YEAR CHAMPS

In 1959, 65 years ago, men's soccer debuted as a full-fledged varsity sport and went 11-1 for the season. In November of that year, the team captured the NCAA Championship, defeating Bridgeport University in the final game, held in Storrs, Connecticut. Sportswriters called the Billikens a "Cinderella team."

### CLUB BEGINNINGS

Men's soccer first came to Saint Louis University in 1958 as a club sport with a roster of St. Louis-area players who competed in just five games, winning four of them. During that short season, only \$200 was available for uniforms, and the players wore their own shoes.

### LEGENDARY COACH

In 1958, Bob Guelker, then the director of physical education at St. Louis Preparatory Seminary, served as the SLU club team's volunteer coach. When the team moved to varsity in 1959, Guelker was hired full-time. He coached at SLU through the 1966 season, amassing a 95-10-5 record and winning five national championships.

### A DYNASTY BEGINS

The Billikens' 1959 NCAA championship was the start of 16 years of dominance in men's collegiate soccer. Through 1974, the team won 10 NCAA Men's Soccer Championships, still the most of any men's Division 1 soccer program. During that time, SLU also was the runner-up in three NCAA Championship games.

### THE TEAM TODAY

The men's soccer team's storied history continues to the present day. In all, the team has made 50 appearances in the NCAA Men's Soccer Championship tournament, advancing to the quarterfinals nearly half of the time. Numerous alumni play professionally, and seven have played for the U.S. National Team.

### WOMEN MAKE HISTORY

The SLU women's soccer team played their first game in 1996. Building a dynasty of their own, the women's team has won eight Atlantic 10 Conference Championships. And in 2023, they played in the NCAA Championship for a sixth consecutive season, reaching the "Sweet 16" for the first time.



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# Be the Reason...

SLU senior Mariangela Acosta can continue on a path of advocacy, service and a career in occupational justice.

“Even though contributions might not seem like much to the donors, they mean so much to me,” she said.

SCAN TO READ  
MARIANGELA'S  
STORY



Mariangela Acosta  
Doisy College of Health Sciences, Class of 2025

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