

# O'Neill *Onward*

O'NEILL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS ALUMNI MAGAZINE **FALL 2024**

## ON THE WORLD STAGE

Ukrainian Ambassador to the United States Oksana Markarova, MPA'01, gained leadership skills and lifelong mentors during her time at O'Neill



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—**Aidan Hamilton**, BSPA'26

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# O'Neill *Onward*

FALL 2024

The *O'Neill Onward* alumni magazine is produced annually by the Office of Marketing and Communications at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University.

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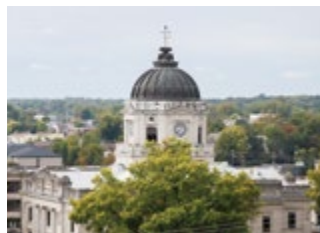
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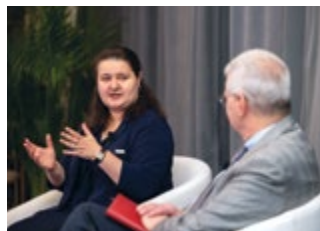
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# WELCOME

Greetings from the Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs! It is a privilege to share some exciting updates and reflections on our journey together.

First, I would like to welcome Alyssa Osborne, our new executive director of development, who joined us in July. Alyssa has enjoyed a long career in similar roles, working with the IU Foundation from 2011–15 before becoming the director of development for major gifts with the College of Arts and Sciences. She also served as the interim director of development for the Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies over the past year. We look forward to Alyssa expanding relationships and building new ones as we all work to support our students.

I extend my deepest thanks to Susan Johnson, whose passion as senior director for development during her 20-plus years at IU was an inspiration to all. We wish her all the best in retirement.

We're also thrilled with the recent transition at our Indianapolis location that saw IUPUI become Indiana University Indianapolis. This transition marks a significant milestone in our history, and we have already gained distinction by establishing the first new degree at IUI, that of Community and Organizational Leadership Studies. Thank you so much to the generous individuals who have already endowed scholarships and provided support for students starting this program.

The school has seen tremendous growth, and I'm excited to welcome seven new faculty members this year. Enrollment at our Bloomington location is up 10%, with strong increases in our undergraduate student body, particularly in our majors in public financial management, management, law and public policy, and healthcare management and policy. At our Indianapolis campus, our undergraduate enrollment is up 5% while our graduate enrollment is up 8%, with our programs in environmental sustainability and emergency management being notably strong this year.

I want to honor and reflect on the memory of Dean Emeritus Charles "Chuck" Bonser, the O'Neill School's founding dean, who passed away on August 14, 2024. Chuck's vision and leadership were instrumental in the creation and success of the O'Neill School, which he led for 17 years after its founding in 1972. Bonser's legacy continues to shape our community.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to our alumni. Your support, dedication, and achievements inspire us every day. Our reputation as the top public school for public affairs in the nation, our world-renowned research, and our incredible success in student employment have been built on the support of our alumni. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the O'Neill School. Together, we will continue to make a difference and create a brighter future for all.

*Siân Mooney*

Siân Mooney, Ph.D.  
Dean



Dean **Siân Mooney** (second from right) leads a cohort of O'Neill students to COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

# Leading in environment and sustainability efforts

The O'Neill School is leading the way in the battle against climate change, improving air quality, reducing CO<sub>2</sub>, studying “forever chemicals,” and more.

## **COP28 reinforces O'Neill School's role in battling climate change**

Global climate change is one of the largest threats facing our world, and working together to combat this critical issue will be paramount to overcoming the challenge.

That very notion is what brought together nearly 100,000 attendees at the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties, known as COP28, held in Dubai Nov. 30–Dec. 12, 2023. Among the attendees were high-profile world leaders and a host of experts in the public, private, and

academic sectors, including representatives from the O'Neill School.

Led by Dean Siân Mooney, the O'Neill contingent also featured undergraduate and graduate students, making IU one of the few universities in the world to send students as observers to the event.

O'Neill student participation was generously supported by Dean's Council member Kelly Johnson, MPA'90.

“During my time working in the federal government, I was fortunate to represent the United States at United Nations global conferences on sustainability and world heritage,” Johnson said. “These were some of my most memorable experiences as the opportunity to interact with world leaders on pressing international issues was unsurpassed. For the O'Neill students who attended COP28, I wanted

them to share the excitement of being part of the global community as they embark on their careers. I hope they, too, found it to be unforgettable.”

Mooney stayed busy throughout the conference, including attending Bloomberg Green at COP28, an immersive experience designed to go beyond the negotiating rooms and delve into pragmatic strategies for cross-sector climate action.

Mooney also was invited to a marquee dinner held by the United States Chamber of Commerce that brought together business leaders and government officials from around the globe to highlight the critical role of the business community in addressing the global climate challenge. Additionally, she attended an IU alumni gathering in Dubai, hosted by the IU Alumni Association UAE Chapter.

Mooney was energized by COP28.

“It was invigorating intellectually,” Mooney said. “It reminded me of why I chose to study climate change many years ago in the late 1980s and how much work there is to do. I was inspired by the huge diversity of voices all working for the same end but using different approaches.”

Tom Agger, who just completed O’Neill’s MPA-MSES program, appreciated the chance to network at the event.

“What I enjoyed most about my experience at COP28 was the knowledge-sharing aspect of the conference,” Agger said. “It was an amazing opportunity to meet people from around the world and understand the innovative work they are doing to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. People were so willing and excited to converse and interact with strangers and learn from them.”

COP28 has ended, but the O’Neill School will lean on what was learned to play its part in battling climate change.

“Our school is perfectly poised to study and analyze many of the challenges raised at COP28, such as financing the energy transition, the relationship between climate and health, and the role of nature-based solutions in moving us to a world with lower concentrations of greenhouse gases,” Mooney said.

### Mooney serves on EPA’s Clean Air Act Advisory Committee

Dean Siân Mooney, is serving a two-year term as a member of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Air Act Advisory Committee.

The committee provides the EPA with independent advice, information, and recommendations on policy and technical issues associated with the development, implementation, and enforcement of the Clean Air Act. Mooney is renowned for her expertise in natural resources and the environment.

“I am deeply honored to be appointed to the Clean Air Act Advisory Committee,” Mooney said. “Air quality is a critical issue that affects the health and well-being of communities across our nation. I am eager to collaborate with fellow committee members to address the challenges we face and to develop strategies that promote cleaner air and a more sustainable future.”



Professor and Director of Research **Jerome Dumortier** contributed to the Roads to Removal report identifying ways to remove and reduce CO2 levels in the United States.

are part of a large-scale nationwide report and upcoming conference at IU Indianapolis that highlight opportunities to remove large amounts of carbon dioxide in the United States.

Researchers from every state contributed to the Roads to Removal report from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. In it, they collectively outline ways in which each region and state can support the United States’ goal of

### O’Neill contributes to nationwide report on removing and reducing CO2

Professor Jerome Dumortier has been studying carbon management, agricultural emissions, and bioenergy for more than 15 years. Now, he and his research



### Rewild IU student organization works to restore natural areas of Bloomington campus

Rewild IU grew out of Lecturer Jon Eldon’s Terrestrial Habitat Analysis class. The student group focuses on restoring natural areas on Indiana University’s Bloomington campus. Ethan Iversen, BSPA’24, who studied environmental management, was the teaching assistant for the class that inspired the group and served as its first president. Rewild IU collaborates with IU’s Landscape Services on managing and restoring the natural areas of campus that have been negatively impacted by invasive species, overbrowsing, and a lack of management.

Iversen said his favorite project was the restoration of IU’s Bottomlands, 5 acres located just south of the IU Auditorium, where Rewild IU members removed invasive shrubs and promoted native plants.

removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as part of a broader plan to become a net-zero greenhouse gas nation by 2050.

The report examines land-based methods to remove what authors predict to be at least 1 gigaton—that’s 1 billion tons—of carbon dioxide equivalents per year, from forestry management in the Southeast and wind energy in the West to agricultural management in the Midwest.

Some of those options are the focus of the Roads to Removal symposium at IU Indianapolis October 28–29. During that event, speakers from around Indiana and the country will discuss issues including soil science, the future of fuel, carbon pricing, the Farm Bill, and a path forward for policy, jobs, and economics, among other topics.

Dumortier’s area of expertise focuses on agriculture, bioenergy production, and electric vehicles.

“We now have more electric vehicles in the United States, which reduces the demand for ethanol, thus reducing the demand for corn,” Dumortier said. “A lower demand for corn means there’s some land planting reallocation that could happen because corn isn’t as profitable anymore.”

That means farmers could shift to a new type of crop: switchgrass—a more efficient crop than corn in terms of energy content per acre and could be used to generate the electricity needed to power the growing electric vehicle fleet. Switchgrass absorbs more carbon in the soil, and it also lasts longer so farmers wouldn’t have to replant every year—it’s there for the next 10 years.

Many farmers already alternate their crops, but Dumortier says there are barriers to making the switch to switchgrass.

“Right now, switchgrass comes with very high production costs, lower yields for the first couple of years, and there is really no market for it. That’s why we need to create a market and financial incentives to make it a viable option for farmers,” he said.

That is where policymakers come in. Current mandates to produce cellulosic ethanol from sources like switchgrass are not being enforced and the necessary infrastructure—such as bioenergy plants—to turn the crop into energy hasn’t been supported. At least not yet.

Another way Indiana can help reduce and remove CO<sub>2</sub> is by reviewing and adjusting crop management practices—and getting additional farmers on board.

“For example, using cover crops that increase the soil carbon levels and managing field tillage to reduce the carbon that tilling releases from the soil,” Dumortier suggested.

There also could be a push to get more Hoosier farmers to collect more of the agricultural residue left behind after a harvest—the stalks, leaves, and cobs. But much like converting to switchgrass, there also is controversy surrounding that practice.

“Agriculture residues return important and necessary nutrients into the soil,” he said. “There’s the concern that harvesting it may reduce the nutrient value of the soil, which can have big implications on future crops. That’s why there’s a lot of discussion about exactly how much of those leftovers you can actually harvest to convert into biofuels without hurting the soil.”

Authors hope the Roads to Removal report sets the stage for leaders in every corner of the nation to have those discussions about the options presented. To read the entire report and register for the upcoming symposium, visit [go.iu.edu/roadstoremoval](http://go.iu.edu/roadstoremoval).

### **From sky to shore: O’Neill study shows journey of PFAS into the Great Lakes**

The Great Lakes hold more than just breathtaking beauty. They cradle a staggering 20% of the world’s freshwater and 95% of America’s freshwater. With 10% of the U.S. population and as much as 35% of Canadians calling their basin



Assistant Professor **Marta Venier** studies the impact of PFAS, or “forever chemicals,” in the Great Lakes.

home, these lakes are the beating heart of North America.

The Great Lakes also host a vibrant ecosystem full of life, from fish to bald eagles. Chemical contaminants pose a significant risk to this ecosystem, with per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS), also known as “forever chemicals,” emerging as the latest threat. Understanding where PFAS enter the ecosystem is critical to combating the threat posed by the substances.

A new study from researchers at the O’Neill School and collaborators from Canada published in *Environmental Science & Technology* shows that PFAS are introduced to the Great Lakes through precipitation and the air. The study was funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Great Lakes National Program Office.

“When it comes to precipitation, the levels of PFAS are the same across the lakes,” said Chunjie Xia, a postdoctoral associate who worked on the study. “The levels in precipitation don’t depend on the population; they are similar in Chicago, which is heavily populated, and at Eagle Harbor, Michigan, where there’s maybe 500 people living in a 25-kilometer radius.



Lynton K. Caldwell Professor **David Konisky**, is a leading expert in U.S. environmental policy and politics, specializing in environmental and energy justice, regulation, federalism, and public opinion.

That tells us the levels are ubiquitous. This is the first time we've seen that. We've never seen that for other pollutants before.

"On the other hand, the levels in air are really different. The highest were in urban sites, such as Chicago and Cleveland, where there are more people, and the lowest levels were at remote sites where there are few people. That's similar to what we have observed for other chemicals such as PCBs [polychlorinated biphenyls] and pesticides, where the levels are directly related to local population."

Lake water samples also told a story. Lake Superior, for instance, is the biggest and deepest among the Great Lakes and showed the lowest level of PFAS. Lake Ontario, which is the last in the Great Lakes chain, the most populated, and the one with the most industrial and urban centers, had the highest levels.

"The biggest result was that atmosphere disposition is a really important pathway for delivering PFAS to the lakes, particularly for Lake Superior," said Marta Venier, an assistant professor in environmental chemistry at the O'Neill School, who led the study.

When the researchers looked at how PFAS get into the lakes and how they are later eliminated from the lakes, they found that PFAS are building up in the northernmost lakes such as Superior, Michigan, and Huron. However, Lake Ontario is getting rid of PFAS faster than it's accumulating them since its water discharges to the St. Lawrence River and the Atlantic Ocean.

"The results of the study suggest that we need to take a broad approach to control sources that release PFAS into the atmosphere and into bodies of water, such as wastewater treatment plants, stormwater, and any sources, since they eventually all end in the lakes," Venier said. "We also need to gather more data to determine which of these sources is the major player."

The study does ease concerns about the level of PFAS in precipitation.

"Although precipitation is one of the pathways for PFAS into the environment," Venier said, "the levels that we measured are not a concern for people."

### **O'Neill researchers lead \$2.5M Department of Energy effort to explore solar energy transition**

The decision-making processes that determine the location of clean-energy facilities can play a critical role in the success of such projects. A team of researchers, including a group from the O'Neill School, has been awarded a \$2.5 million grant from the Department of Energy to evaluate how these processes, called siting practices, shape community support for large-scale solar projects and how those dynamics differ across communities.

David Konisky, the Lynton K. Caldwell Professor in the O'Neill School, will serve as principal investigator for the Indiana University arm of the effort. He leads IU's Energy Justice Lab and the Environmental Justice Fellows program. He will be joined by Professor Shahzeen

Attari, an expert on the psychology of resource use and climate action, and Associate Professor Jennifer Silva, whose research focuses on political culture, social class, inequality, and family and intimate life.

"We are thrilled to receive this award from the Department of Energy to continue our research on the clean-energy transition," Konisky said. "Siting solar power is not just a technical challenge but a social challenge, and our project will study how the siting process affects community support for large solar installations."

The United States has set a goal of reaching 100% carbon pollution-free electricity by 2035, and solar power will play a critical role in achieving this objective. However, the location of energy infrastructure can have a significant impact on the effectiveness and acceptance of the technology. A lack of support from a local community can delay projects or lead to their cancellation altogether.

The goal of the research is to better understand the inherent challenges of siting solar technologies so more effective policies can be developed for future projects. The team will conduct surveys and interviews, as well as monitor media coverage of 24 proposed solar projects across the country over time, with a specific focus on disadvantaged communities and historic fossil fuel communities.

"Community buy-in is important for all local economic development," Konisky said. "Large-scale solar developers engage in a variety of approaches when siting new facilities, and we want to study which approaches are most effective, and for whom."

The IU research team will collaborate with researchers from Loyola University Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania, including principal investigator Sanya Carley, a former IU professor of energy policy and city planning who codirects IU's Energy Justice Lab with Konisky.





Summer interns Aiden Baker (left) and Ella Jasnieski (right) collect samples from Yellowwood Lake during a training session in June while lab manager Megan Gokey (center) observes. | Jessica Corry

## Limnology Lab monitors Indiana's lakes and prepares students

The important job of monitoring the health of Indiana's public lakes has been entrusted by a state agency to the O'Neill School for 35 years. In the process, many student interns have participated in this task, collected vital data, and subsequently applied the knowledge and skills they gained to professional roles across the country.

The Indiana Clean Lakes Program, a water monitoring and education program, started in 1989 in partnership with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's Office of Water Quality. The program is administered through a grant to the O'Neill School, and the school's Limnology Lab, which studies bodies of fresh water, leads the monitoring efforts.

"Our resources are invaluable. We all need water; it's essential. If we don't monitor the lakes then we don't know the impact we're having," said Sarah Powers, the Limnology Lab director since 2022. "Not only is there a public health benefit, but also it's an opportunity to educate about water ecosystems."

IU is one of just a handful of universities to perform lake water testing for a statewide monitoring program. Each summer the lab typically has six interns who collect and

analyze samples from 80 lakes statewide. The lab also trains citizen volunteers to collect multiple samples from an additional 50 or more lakes to provide a broader data profile of lake status across the state.

"It's amazing and fantastic that the state has entrusted such an important goal to us, and that we can utilize this program as a way to train the next generation to understand how the monitoring process works," said Powers, a former intern herself.

Matt Bubenzer, a graduate student from Indianapolis, is a summer intern for the second year in a row. In the fall semester, he'll finish master's degrees in environmental science and public affairs with concentrations in ecology and conservation. His goal is to get a job with a state or federal conservation or fish and wildlife department.

"I definitely feel more prepared for a career than without this internship," Bubenzer said. "With water sampling we're following EPA standards to a T. We go through a rigorous process to collect samples correctly and not mess up the results. I think this is preparing me for any environmental career."

—Kirk Johannesen



Downtown Bloomington, Indiana | James Brosher

# Creating the leaders of tomorrow

BY KEN BIKOFF

For more than 50 years, the heart of the mission of the O'Neill School has been to serve the public good not only through education and research but also through direct engagement with communities and organizations across the state of Indiana and beyond.

The O'Neill Leadership Program does just that, providing opportunities for student fellows to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world settings while contributing to the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the state. Last year, students contributed nearly 30,000 hours of service to local communities in Indiana with 100 fellows working with more than 60 partners, including 23 nonprofit organizations and 38 public entities.

"I am delighted that so many public, nonprofit, and private sector employers in

our state choose to partner with us," said Dean Siân Mooney. "This is a positive for our students who gain the critical experience to be leaders in their field. These partnerships also support communities by helping to keep the best and brightest minds in Indiana and chart a bright future for us all."

The O'Neill Leadership Program matches graduate and undergraduate students with nonprofit, arts, environmental, and government organizations in Indiana.

At the graduate level, master's students work as part-time employees and receive a stipend and benefits. The program aims to enhance the capacity and impact of these organizations while offering students valuable professional development and networking opportunities.

Alauna Keeley, MPA'24, was a fellow with the city of Bloomington's Planning and Transportation Department where

she researched local air and water quality issues and helped redesign the Bloomington Habitat Connectivity Plan.

"I'm most proud of my personal growth in understanding how local government operates under the larger frameworks of state and federal government," Keeley said. "I'm passionate about public service and the role of government because much of what we do is to ensure there is equity, responsible growth and development, and environmentally sound behaviors."

Rachel Dobias, MPA'23, has remained in Bloomington after cultivating relationships as an O'Neill Leadership Fellow. She is currently the camp and marketing director at the Boys & Girls Club of Bloomington.

"I'm proud to have been working with The Club for almost eight years and to be a consistent adult in the lives of lots of local kids," Dobias said.

Undergraduate fellows in the O’Neill Leadership Program receive a stipend to complete an internship with a partner in the state of Indiana for an average of 10 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters while continuing a regular academic course load. Students who participate over the summer have a more intensive experience, interning 20–30 hours per week with partner organizations throughout Indiana. Students gain career-building work experience while giving back to the community, and it helps build their network.

Jishen Wu, an environmental management major, served as a development intern with Monroe County United Ministries.

“I got to work with all these excellent local community leaders and define my future career,” Wu said. “As an international student, it’s much harder to find an internship. But OLP provided various resources and mentorship, which made me feel supported and more confident.”

Drew Yeager is majoring in environmental management and served as a communications and marketing intern for the Bloomington Economic Development Corporation.

“Effective communication strategies allow us to bring together all of the necessary pieces to generate business retention and economic growth in the community,” Yeager said. “OLP has connected me with the resources to become a successful leader and change maker.”

Partners include dozens of public and nonprofit organizations around the state.

“Practical experiences are at the core of an O’Neill School education,” said R.J. Woodring, associate dean for student success and administration at O’Neill. “Through the O’Neill Leadership Program, our students gain professional experience while building capacity within Indiana public and nonprofit organizations. It’s a win-win partnership for students, the organizations, and our communities.”



Director of Student Inclusion and Engagement **Rebecca Valeriano-Flores** (top left) with Activate O’Neill students in Bloomington | Jessica Corry

## Activate O’Neill expands leadership opportunities for historically excluded groups

Activate O’Neill is a program tailored to students from historically excluded groups to provide them with academic and career support and help them build their personal and professional networks for today and into the future.

This past year, Activate O’Neill assisted with placements and scholarships for the program’s participants, coordinated a donation drive that resulted in more than 160 items—such as toiletries, clothing, kitchen supplies, and more—being donated to the Exodus Refugee Center branch in Bloomington, and established a student board.

“I was really impressed by our students’ leadership and initiative,” said Rebecca Valeriano-Flores, director of student inclusion and engagement at the O’Neill School.

“The Activate O’Neill program allowed me to greatly expand my leadership skills,” said Christian Sanders, BSPA’24, president of Activate O’Neill during the spring semester. “I was really able to hone my organizational skills and gained great experience in policy development.”

Being part of a program that is in its early stages of development gave students the flexibility to shape the future of Activate O’Neill. Micah Camble, MPA’24, served as a graduate assistant under Valeriano-Flores.

“Ultimately, we realized that a student-run board would create the most opportunity for growth, service, and sustainability,” said Camble. “I am happy that I got to play a role in developing the student executive board because there are so many O’Neill students who are currently giving back to others.”



O'Neill Professor and Fischer Faculty Fellow **Claudia Avellaneda** designed an executive training program for Brazilian leaders at the O'Neill School. | Jessica Corry

## From Brazil to Bloomington

Each year, dozens of high-level government officials travel from Brazil to Indiana for a specialized leadership training program hosted by the O'Neill School and IU Executive Education.

The courses help Brazilian leaders learn how to take a big-picture approach to their role and impact with their organization, communities, and the world.

The group spends one week in Indiana learning about topics ranging from assessing performance measures to conflict resolution, data visualization, managing a diverse workforce, and more. In turn, they return to Brazil with a certificate from Indiana University.

O'Neill Professor and Fischer Faculty Fellow Claudia Avellaneda designed the program.

"When I came to O'Neill 11 years ago, there were no ties between our school and Latin American countries," she says.

Originally from Colombia, Avellaneda was passionate about changing that. She developed a relationship with ENAP—the National School of Public Administration in Brazil—that laid the foundation for the leadership program and others.

"When I created this program, I thought it would serve bureaucrats from the Latin

American region," she said. "However, ENAP Brazil also sends top- and middle-level managers as well as cabinet-level officials. It's been remarkable."

For the first two years of the program, Avellaneda worked with the O'Neill School International Office to create and manage the entire program. In 2018, it shifted to IU Executive Education for additional support.

Lyvan Bispo dos Santos attended the program that year. Now, he serves as an attorney for Brazil and is the legal coordinator for Brazil's Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

"Until this program, I thought a leader was someone isolated and the 'master' of all actions and people in the workplace—I was completely wrong," he said. "Modern leadership is concentrated in being hands-on and empathetic, achieving long-term results, working in a group, and inspiring other professionals."

Avellaneda hopes to expand the program to include more Latin American countries in the future and create a leadership training center at Indiana University in Bloomington to host classes in Spanish.

—Leslie Wells



## New Community and Organizational Leadership Studies degree

A new degree at IU Indianapolis fosters leaders across the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.

"Our new Community and Organizational Leadership Studies (COLS) program provides students with training that transcends job titles," said Associate Dean of Student Services and Enrollment Management Suzann Lupton. "Being able to lead effectively is a critical skill that is applicable in every sector of our society."

O'Neill Lecturer and Director of Undergraduate Leadership Programs Liz Wager spearheaded the launch of the COLS path, describing it as a diverse degree that carries students through their careers, regardless of where they are within an organization.

"Leadership does not require a title or position of power," Wager said. "It requires an understanding of how to influence others to become the positive change agents needed to navigate today's complex public, political, and organizational challenges."

Students can also enhance their existing knowledge and work experience through the minor or certificate options.

# Comings and Goings

## Welcoming new faculty



We are delighted to welcome seven outstanding scholars and teachers to our O'Neill community (top to bottom):

**Tara Ali** joins our Bloomington campus as a full-time lecturer. Prior to joining O'Neill, she worked in private practice and also as a judicial law clerk.



Assistant Professor **Rafael M. Almeida** joins O'Neill Bloomington. His research focuses on sustainability dimensions of energy, water, and food systems, including greenhouse gas footprints, land-use change, water quality and quantity, hydrological alteration, and biodiversity.



**Andrea Astill** joins our Bloomington campus as an assistant clinical professor. She boasts a long career teaching courses at IU's Kelley School of Business.



Assistant Professor **Shuyi Deng** joins O'Neill Bloomington. Her research focuses on the racial dynamics in the nonprofit sector and the distributional consequences of nonprofits and philanthropy along the lines of race.



Assistant Professor **Adriana Molina-Garzón** joins O'Neill Indianapolis. Her research focuses on understanding conditions that hinder or promote sustainable development in rural areas, specifically as it relates to nongovernmental agents.



Associate Professor **Sanghee Park** joins O'Neill Indianapolis. She studies social diversity and representation within policymaking entities; collaborations; and how governments allocate and manage personnel, financial, and organizational resources in diverse contexts.



**Elizabeth Wager** joins our Indianapolis campus as a lecturer. She previously served as the undergraduate program director and faculty advisor for organizational leadership at the Purdue School of Engineering and Technology.



(Left to right) Michael Rushton, Kirsten Grønbjerg, and David Good at the Indiana Memorial Union | Jessica Corry

## Faculty retirements

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our retiring faculty and wish them all the best in retirement!

Associate Professor **David Good** is an expert in quantitative policy modeling, productivity measurement in public and regulated industries, and urban policy analysis. He previously served as the director of O'Neill's Transportation Research Center. He first joined the O'Neill School as a lecturer in 1984 and became a full-time faculty member in 1985.

Distinguished Professor Emerita **Kirsten Grønbjerg** joined the O'Neill School in 1997 and is a nationally recognized scholar on nonprofit and public sector relationships. Her research and publications focus on nonprofit funding relations, nonprofit capacity, nonprofit data sources, and the American welfare system.

Professor Emeritus **Michael Rushton** came to the O'Neill School in 2006 and served in a variety of roles, including director of the arts administration programs and the director of strategic planning. He also was associate vice president for university academic affairs. Rushton's expertise is in economics, management, and public policy of the arts.

Clinical Associate Professor **Sara Johnson** served as the director of executive education. She joined the O'Neill School in 2015 after serving on the faculty and as the director of undergraduate programs at the Fairbanks School of Public Health at IU Indianapolis. Under her leadership, the O'Neill School's Executive Education program served thousands of professionals spanning from Indianapolis to Vietnam and Memphis to Brazil.



Ambassador **Oksana Markarova** (left) and Professor Emeritus **Robert S. Kravchuk**, an expert in Russian and Ukrainian public administration and political economy, spoke at the IUAA Weekend U event in Washington, D.C., in February 2024. | IU Alumni Association

# O’Neill opened doors for Ukrainian ambassador

BY NIKKI LIVINGSTON

Before Oksana Markarova became the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States, she was selected by Indiana University to pursue a Master of Public Affairs focusing on public finance from the O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

In 1999, she applied to the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship program, a U.S. State Department initiative that provided opportunities for graduate students and professionals from the former member countries of the Soviet Union. Upon acceptance, American universities select which students they want to bring to campus.

“It’s IU that picked me,” Markarova said. “I applied from Ukraine for the Muskie fellowship, and then the university picks you. So, in a way, it was destiny.”

IU already had a rich relationship with Ukraine and Eastern Europe. In 1947, the Department of Slavic and Eastern European Languages and Cultures was established in the College of Arts and Sciences. As a result, summer training in Russian and

other Eastern European languages has been offered on the Bloomington campus since the 1950s.

In the 1970s, as trade with Eastern Europe became more of a possibility, IU was selected to host a national conference of economists. After the dissolution of the USSR, IU hosted a U.S. Department of Energy-funded conference on migration from Eastern Europe in 1993.

IU’s extensive connection to the region made it the ideal place for Markarova to expand her knowledge and skills and tackle challenges like being immersed in a predominately English-speaking environment.

“There was so much that I learned, but also so much that I discovered,” she said. “In Indiana, I came across beautiful landscapes, delicious food, and nice people. I loved the library; I spent so much time there. When volunteering, I met Colin Powell before he became secretary of state. Bloomington is a small town, but so many amazing things happen there.”

Many O’Neill faculty members made a lasting impression on Markarova and her career. Professor Emeritus Robert S.

Kravchuk, an expert in Russian and Ukrainian public administration and political economy, has become a lifelong mentor and friend. She said she learned from her peers, many of whom were working professionals, and relied on other top-notch faculty, too.

Markarova said the core curriculum courses prepared her to be a leader in her field, strengthening her analytical and project management skills. She also explored the public policy process in both U.S. and international contexts, the management of public institutions, and the social equity implications of public policy decisions.

“In our public finance class, we went beyond the theoretical and examined specific issues; having real projects was very useful,” she said. “Something else that stayed with me in the first public administration class was our first two cases. We examined the Challenger disaster as well as Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those were very difficult assignments.”

When Markarova graduated in 2001, Ukraine’s public sector was still under the influence of pro-Russian forces despite its independence, so she went back to work in the private sector.

In 2003, the O’Neill School had a role in shaping the newly sovereign country’s constitution. This was one aspect of legislative reform that took place through the \$4.9 million USAID-funded Parliamentary Development Project led by Professor Emeritus Charles Wise.

In late 2013, 1,500 people protested President Viktor Yanukovich’s sudden decision to reject an EU association agreement in favor of closer ties with Russia. Daily events across Ukrainian cities supported European integration. Armed police forcibly removed 400 activists from Kyiv’s streets, sparking massive protests against human rights abuses and pro-Russian policies. Known as Euromaidan, these events evolved into the Revolution of Dignity, a movement for democracy and systemic renewal.

After Yanukovich fled the country, Ukraine began to establish a new technocratic government. It was during this period in 2014 that Markarova received a phone call from Natalie Jaresko, a Ukrainian-American former U.S. State Department official, who had just accepted the position of Ukraine’s minister of finance.

“She asked me what I was doing next week. I told her working and helping,” Markarova said. “She said, ‘No, no! You must serve your country. Many people are volunteering to join the front lines because that is where they can help. Now, you have to volunteer where you can help most.’”

“So, I thought I would join the ministry for one year, help my country, and go back to the private sector. But I spent five years being the deputy minister, first deputy minister and ultimately the minister of finance.”

As the decade came to a close, the country’s financial situation stabilized with the help of the International Monetary Fund



Markarova (right) was invited by Governor Eric Holcomb to speak at the 2024 Indiana Global Economic Summit in May. | Jessica Corry

and through changes to fiscal policy. Around that time, IU was awarded a U.S. Department of State grant of nearly \$1 million, in partnership with the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, to design and implement an academic government communications program in Ukraine. IU committed to contribute an additional \$360,000 to the project.

When Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was elected in 2019, he requested Markarova stay on as minister of finance. She returned to the private sector after his first term, but Zelenskyy asked her to serve as an ambassador to the United States less than a year later.

Given her background, the goal was to focus on American business investment in Ukraine. However, due to Russia’s invasion, she is now a wartime ambassador. Still, she said her finance experience has been useful.

“Congress has adopted supplementary funds for Ukraine,” Markarova said. “We had to explain to our friends on the Hill why we needed what we requested, how we will use it transparently and effectively, and how the funds are not only helping us but helping the U.S.”

“Without U.S. support, we could not stay that course. We could not fight as successfully as we do. My finance experience and the knowledge I learned at IU enabled me to explain more effectively.”

Much of Markarova’s time on Capitol Hill is spent advocating for the Ukrainian cause before leaders, policymakers, federal agents, and more. In the process, she often runs into IU graduates and recently spoke at an IU alumni event in Washington, D.C.

“If you work in Washington like I do, you see IU graduates everywhere,” she said. “Whether I’m in the State Department, USAID, Department of Commerce—everywhere I go, actually—I meet alums from Indiana University. I think this is what IU is known for: to be a great school that has a devotion to public service.”



Tomer Frankel in the pool | Grace Hollars-USA TODAY Sports

# O’Neill Olympians

BY KEN BIKOFF

The 2024 Paris Olympics brought together more than 10,000 athletes in the spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play with the goal of contributing to building a peaceful and better world through athletic competition.

And the O’Neill School was there.

Three students from the O’Neill School—Tomer Frankel, BSPA’24, Rafael Miroslaw, and Kai van Westering—competed in the Paris Games, all of them leading for the greater good through their efforts in the swimming pool.

Frankel, who recently graduated with a major in environmental management and a minor in urban planning, competed for Israel in the 100-meter freestyle, the 100-meter butterfly, the 4 X 100-meter freestyle relay, and the 4 X 200-meter freestyle relay. The Paris Games were his second Olympic appearance after swimming in the 2021 Tokyo Olympics.

Frankel appreciates that the O’Neill School allowed him the freedom to

pursue his passions and is continuing his education with O’Neill’s Master of Science in Environmental Science program.

“I’ve never had an issue when a professor didn’t accept the fact that I’m an athlete, and I can succeed in school and in the pool,” Frankel said. “One of the things I like about the O’Neill School is that it’s not just about myself. It’s about the environment and society, so anything I’m doing in life, in the pool, or here, it’s all about how I can make this place better than it was yesterday.”

Frankel finished 21st in the 100-meter freestyle event, and he helped Israel to a ninth-place finish in the finals of the 4 X 200-meter freestyle race. He also placed 21st in the 100-meter butterfly.

Miroslaw, who currently is pursuing an undergraduate degree in public affairs, competed in the 200-meter freestyle event for Germany, and he was part of the German 4 X 100-meter and 4 X 200-meter freestyle teams. He reached the semifinal of the 200-meter freestyle,

finishing 15th with a time of 1:47.34, and he helped the 4 X 100-meter relay team set two national records on the way to a seventh-place finish in the finals with a time of 3:12.29. In the 4 X 200-meter relay, he helped Germany finish eighth in the finals.

Westering, a junior pursuing a bachelor’s degree in public affairs with a focus on environmental management, was part of the swim team for the Netherlands. He tied for 21st in the 100-meter backstroke and was 23rd in the 200-meter backstroke. Westering also helped the Netherlands to a fourth-seed in the finals of the 4 X 100-meter medley.

“We’re so incredibly proud of the O’Neill students who took part in the Paris Games,” said Sián Mooney, dean of the O’Neill School. “The ability of O’Neill School students who are also athletes to excel in the classroom and in their athletic pursuits is a testament to their world-class drive, and it was so exciting to see them perform on such a huge stage.”





**Tomer Frankel** | IU Athletics



**Rafael Miroslaw** | IU Athletics



**Kai van Westering** | IU Athletics



O'Neill student **Wendy Catalán Ruano** stands outside the replica Eiffel Tower that was on display during the Olympic Swim Trials in Indianapolis in June 2024.

## O'Neill student helps recreate Olympic trials centerpiece

In her role with the Latinas Welding Guild, sustainability major Wendy Catalán Ruano helps welding students with admissions, scholarships, and skill development. In 2024, that included creating a 66-foot-tall Eiffel Tower replica that served as the centerpiece for the Paris Olympic swimming trials in Indianapolis.

“We wanted our students and graduates to be able to dream of the sorts of projects they could work on in the future,” she said.

The guild offers welding and manufacturing training to support students from marginalized communities. It was that mission that first drew Catalán Ruano to the guild.

“My dream was to get a bachelor’s degree,” she said. “But I had some very hard life circumstances, and I had to take a major pause on school.”

In 2021, she restarted that dream at the O’Neill School, where she combines her education with equity-centered work and sustainability efforts.

“I was very drawn to issues involving people and community and equity and justice,” she said. “Plus, coming from an immigrant household, we are very conservative about our resources. That’s one reason I wanted to learn more about the strategies that exist around sustainability.”

The guild used to purchase costly raw material for its lessons, but now—thanks to a community partnership—they’ve shifted to recycled materials.

“Most recycled material can be turned into something new,” she said. “We can grind it down as if no one ever welded on it. It’s really important for our students to know they don’t need have to have new material to make something beautiful.”

Catalán Ruano wants to expand those efforts. She hopes to apply insights from a new O’Neill course on greenhouse gas emissions to manage the guild’s emissions and improve working conditions.

“One of the most frightening things in welding is the amount of harm we’re exposed to, especially with the gas and chemicals we use,” she said. “I want to learn how we can create a safer environment for our students.”

Whether working on sustainability-related issues or sparking initiatives that unite the community, Catalán Ruano is excited about the possibilities for herself and her students. They may not receive the global recognition of Olympic athletes, but they serve as inspiring examples, empowering women and others to pursue fields where they have been underrepresented.

—Leslie Wells



# Donor Spotlight

## Kelly Johnson

Championing social justice and equity in the areas of environment, sustainability, and climate change

Driven by a lifelong commitment to the meaningful involvement of all people in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies, **Kelly Johnson** is making a significant impact.

As a partner at Holland & Hart's Washington, D.C., office, Johnson combines her environmental and natural resources compliance expertise with her passion for policy advocacy. Her journey began with an undergraduate degree in environmental management from Rutgers, followed by an MPA from the O'Neill School in 1990 and a J.D. from the Maurer School of Law at IU.

Johnson's dedication extends beyond her professional achievements; she is a key figure in shaping future environmental leaders through her involvement with the O'Neill School. Serving on the O'Neill School's Dean's Council, she actively supports various initiatives to expand opportunities for current students.

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*“Seeing the next generation succeed and lead in this field is the most rewarding outcome of my support.”*

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She has made a significant contribution to support the Environmental Justice Fellows program. This initiative, led by Lynton K. Caldwell Professor David Konisky, helps graduate students integrate the study and consideration of environmental justice into their personal development, academic experience, and career planning. Johnson's involvement has been

instrumental in fostering a new generation of leaders dedicated to advancing environmental justice.

“Investing in the education and development of O'Neill students is my way of contributing to a future where environmental justice is at the forefront of policy and action. I want to help students not only understand the complexities of environmental issues but also feel empowered to develop and implement solutions that prioritize equity and sustainability,” Johnson said. “Seeing the next generation succeed and lead in this field is the most rewarding outcome of my support.”

Johnson's support has enabled like-minded students to explore the root causes of environmental justice issues.

“The Environmental Justice Fellows program exposed me to diverse perspectives and opportunities for engagement and action,” said Steph Jovan, an MPA-MSES student with a concentration on environmental management. “Through the program, I learned more about the policy and advocacy efforts that are underway to address these issues, and that there are people who care greatly about the issues that the marginalized communities experience and will be experiencing in the face of climate change.”

Additionally, Johnson's generosity sponsored O'Neill students to attend COP28, the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties, held in Dubai in the fall of 2023. Johnson was fortunate to represent the United States at UN conferences during her career and recognized the unique opportunity it would be for O'Neill students.

“For the O'Neill students who attended COP28, I wanted them to share the excitement of being part of the global community as they embark on their careers,” she said. “I hope they, too, found it to be unforgettable.”



**Nichole Reatherford**, BSCJ'24, was a digital forensics intern with the IU and Indianapolis Metropolitan police departments. | Alex Kumar

## Internship keeps students on forefront of digital forensics

When Nichole Reatherford, BSCJ'24, walked into the crime lab at the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, she started checking bags filled with electronics. The devices are evidence—and she was looking for someone's digital fingerprints.

"Everyone's physical fingerprints are important, but our digital fingerprints are just as important," she said.

She was one of two interns with the Digital Forensics Unit, a partnership between the IU Police Department and IMPD, an internship led by IUPD Detective Sarah McKalips who wanted a program that would let students build their knowledge and experience over several semesters.

To develop the internship curriculum and find the right students, McKalips extended the partnership to multiple schools at IU Indianapolis—each representing a different aspect of the digital forensics field.

O'Neill School Professor Tom Stucky said the internship provides a unique opportunity that allows O'Neill students to be on the forefront of an emerging career field.

"O'Neill is a very interdisciplinary school, and this is a great model for how interdisciplinary work can proceed," Stucky said. "Digital forensics is somewhat of a new space but one that is rapidly developing and there are myriad applications for these skills."

Reatherford said the experience deepened her understanding of lessons at O'Neill and provided clarity for her future.

"As interns, we got hands-on experience with real crime. I was working with detectives, alongside police officers, and they actually used our work to exonerate or convict people in the court of law. That real-world experience is incredible," she said. "Because of this internship, I could see myself staying in the digital forensics world as a career. It's a really cool field to work in."

### Support student internships

The O'Neill School understands the importance of student internships, and—with your help—we're committed to helping undergraduate and graduate students gain the skills only hands-on experience can bring. Because some internships are either unpaid or low-paying, we have created internship funds designed to support students while they are applying their classroom knowledge in the professional workplace.

Please consider supporting student internships by donating to the Making a Difference Internship Scholarship (Indianapolis) or the Greater Good Internship Fund (Bloomington) at [magazine.oneill.indiana.edu/give-now](https://magazine.oneill.indiana.edu/give-now). Your gift allows students to gain valuable real-world experiences that will prepare them for a successful future.



# Class NOTES

If you have an update you would like to appear in Class Notes, email us at [oneillar@iu.edu](mailto:oneillar@iu.edu).

## 1970s

**Howard Locke**, MPA'78, retired as director of the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Human Resources, Shared Service Center after 47 years of public service. His career included six years with the state of Indiana and 41 years with the Department of Defense.

## 1980s

**Amy Kennedy-Reynolds**, MPA'85, recently retired from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. In addition to her distinguished career, her horse, Louie, was named the National Champion at the 2024 National Appaloosa Show in the Novice Non-Professional Western Pleasure class.

**Deborah Anselm**, BSPA'87, was featured in the *Quad Cities Regional Business Journal* for her dedication to community service and commitment to civic engagement. She currently serves as the executive director of the Iowa Newspaper Association, advocating for Iowa newspapers.

## 1990s

**Kristen Doyle**, BSPA'94, was named the new chief executive officer of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas, beginning July 1.

The Kosciusko Chamber of Commerce announced **Terrence Sweeney**, MPA'97, as the new downtown development director for Main Street Warsaw.

**Michael Roubitchek**, BSPA'98, has been appointed to serve as deputy general counsel at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. He oversees the enforcement of the agency's wastewater and drinking water statutes and regulations. Additionally, he serves as the president of the Chatham Area Public Library District in his spare time.

## 2000s

**Sharon King**, MPA'02, was named the new executive director for Louisville Parks and Recreation. She will oversee a department consisting of 123 parks, 14 community centers, and more than 13,000 acres of land across the city of Louisville. She has worked for the Louisville Metro Air Pollution Control District since 2005, most recently serving as assistant director.

**Matthew Leach**, BSPA'04, was hired by Iowa State University as the new head swimming and diving coach, after previously serving as the head coach at Washington State.

**Michael Milligan**, BSPA'08, is approaching the two-year anniversary of publishing his memoir *Win or Go Home*. Recently, his publisher offered a collaboration with a movie producer. They developed a pitch in hopes of securing an investment for a screenplay adaptation of his memoir.

## 2010s

**Ruth Gabler-Schachermayr**, MPA'11, is now head of alumni relations at the University of Vienna, one of the largest universities

## Remembering Charles “Chuck” Bonser, founding dean



February 15, 1933–August 14, 2024

Dean Emeritus Charles “Chuck” Bonser, the founding dean of the Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, passed away August 14, 2024.

During Bonser's 17-year tenure as dean, the O'Neill School developed into one of the largest and most highly rated public affairs schools in the United States while also building a strong global reputation for its environmental science research. Bonser retired from full-time academic service in 1998, although he continued an active agenda with Indiana University on a part-time basis. In 2002, he was called back to serve as director of the IU Graduate Program in Arts Administration, which became part of the O'Neill School.

Outside of the O'Neill School, Bonser held a variety of governmental and public service posts during his career.

“Chuck leaves an unforgettable mark on the O'Neill School and IU as well as the many individuals who had the pleasure of calling him a professor, colleague, mentor, role model, and friend,” said Siân Mooney, dean of the O'Neill School. “We will ensure that his legacy endures for generations to come.”

in Europe with 90,000 students and 10,000 graduates every year. Since her Fulbright years at IU, she has aimed to make a difference, first by leading fundraising efforts with Kiwanis International for Europe, and now back in the education sector. She feels privileged to use the knowledge and expertise acquired during her time at IU to create alumni relations, form bonds and connections, and build communities with a great team.

**Simon Jeffrey**, BSPA'11, is currently the program director at the Posse Foundation's Chicago location, where he has held various roles during the past 11 years.

The Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce awarded **Leslie Abshier**, BSPA'10, Grad Cert'12, MPA'12, vice president of resource development at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Bloomington, with one of the Women Excel Bloomington 2024 awards.

**Alexander Luboff**, MPA'13, was named the deputy lead for product and training at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency School Safety Task Force.

**Heather Farmer**, MAAA'14, was featured in *Bloom* magazine for the opening of Bloomington Fine Art Supply, which offers a diverse selection of art supplies, tools, and classes designed to cultivate community and creativity among artists of all skill levels in Bloomington, Indiana.

**Cory Martin**, BSPA'13, Grad Cert'15, MPA'17, was honored at Association Forum's 40 Under Forty.

**Jacob Ihrie**, BSPA'19, was honored by the Albion Town Council in May for his service as town manager. On May 7, the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership announced his appointment as director of regional initiatives.

## 2020s

**Colleen Rosales**, Ph.D.'21, received a Rising Star Award from the Science Gateways Community Institute (NSF-Funded) in October 2023 for her work on increasing open data access for real-time and historical air quality data nationally and worldwide.

## Distinguished Alumni Awards



We proudly recognize these O'Neill alumni who have distinguished themselves in their careers, serving as role models and leading for the greater good.

**Mark Elwood**, BSPA'87, is the board chair at Elwood Staffing, a leading provider of talent-based solutions and actionable workforce intelligence. He has served in various roles at the company since 1987, helping it to become one of the most successful businesses in Indiana. Elwood is also an engaged community member who has served on numerous nonprofit boards. He and his wife established the Mark and Wendy Elwood Substance Abuse Prevention Fund and often lead the way in supporting major initiatives around youth, animal care, mental health, substance abuse prevention, and the arts.



**Kevin Jowitt**, MSCJ'12, was selected as the inaugural recipient of O'Neill Indianapolis' Distinguished Alumni Award. Jowitt began his law enforcement career at Indiana University in 1977 and later served as the chief of police in both Westfield and Noblesville, Indiana. He also served as a division commander for the Hamilton County (Indiana) Sheriff's Office. Jowitt is a past president of the Indiana Association of Chiefs of Police and serves on its foundation board. He received the Distinguished Hoosier award in 2018 from Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb. In addition to his involvement with the O'Neill Distinguished Alumni Council, Jowitt also teaches as an associate faculty member for the Criminal Justice and Public Safety programs at the O'Neill School.



**Melina Kennedy**, MSES'95, is the chief executive officer of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, where she facilitates strategic collaboration between the executive leaders of corporations, philanthropic foundations, and universities to advance inclusive prosperity. Previously, Kennedy worked in law, government, and business, including serving as deputy mayor for the city of Indianapolis. Active in the Indianapolis community, Kennedy was president of the Capital Improvement Board of Managers for seven years. Currently, she serves as a board member for the National Bank of Indianapolis, the Indiana University Academic Medical Center, and the 16 Tech Innovation District. At the O'Neill School, she is a member of the Dean's Council.

# Alumni STORIES

Michael R. Abel, Abel Media & Arts



## O'Neill alum rises in ranks of law enforcement

As a top leader in one of Indiana's largest police departments, Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Assistant Chief of Police **Catherine Cummings**, Grad Cert'13, knows her position comes with pressure that extends beyond her professional responsibilities.

"One of the reasons I take this job very seriously is so that other women will have a better and more professional road than I had," she said.

Cummings is only the second woman to serve as an assistant chief of police within in the department. She worked her way up from a patrol officer but admits the climb wasn't easy, especially as a woman. That's why she says it's critical to openly acknowledge and address the additional pressure women in law enforcement face.

"I think it's important for women to understand that you're going to feel like there are more eyes on you in this profession—and, quite honestly, that's because there are," she said.

She doesn't view the issue as men versus women but rather about making sure women know they're welcome and wanted in law enforcement.

Since the late 1980s, women have made up 12–13% of law enforcement nationally. At IMPD, women still make up only about 12% of the force.

Cummings' team is working to move the needle on that. IMPD is part of the 30x30 initiative—a national group of police leaders, researchers, and professional organizations working to increase female representation to 30% by 2030.

To support those efforts, the department hosts recruiting events geared toward women so they can ask their questions and better understand the many careers available.

"We want women to draw upon their courage to pursue a career in law enforcement because they are uniquely situated and suited for this line of work," she says. "I want women to know they are absolutely capable of doing this job."

—Leslie Wells



## Advocating for a greener tomorrow for all

The world is quickly racing for solutions to new environmental challenges. However, vulnerable communities are often left behind, experiencing the most negative impacts. **Cody Smith**, MPA'23, is empowering the voices of those who have been disenfranchised.

Smith grew up on a sheep farm in Crawfordsville, Indiana, that had been in his family for generations. Behind it was a large pond that had an odor, discoloration, and an overgrowth of moss and algae. The main culprit: phosphorous.

"Animal manure contains a lot of phosphorous, and our livestock pasture was at the inlet of our pond," Smith said. "That informed my interest in how our decisions impact the environment."

After completing his bachelor's degree at Iowa State University, Smith worked at the Nebraska-based Center for Rural Affairs, whose mission focused on the Midwest. While there, he recognized the need to increase his foundational knowledge.

"I wanted to study environmental policy without having to pick between energy and water," Smith said. "With O'Neill, I could create a specialized concentration that included both."

Smith flourished in the MPA program. That included being a member of the first cohort of Environmental Justice Fellows with Lynton K. Caldwell Professor David Konisky, where Smith worked with community leaders who organize people against environmental injustice.

After graduating, Smith became a senior policy advocate for the Iowa Environmental Council. He develops programs to make sure members of vulnerable communities receive the benefits they are owed.

"I am so fortunate to have this education," Smith said. "Throughout my career, I aim to work with the communities that are most impacted. We can include them in the decision-making process and think about how each choice will change their everyday lives. For me, that is the core of environmental justice."

—Nikki Livingston



Terre Haute Mayor **Brandon Sakbun**, MPA'23, in his office in City Hall | James Brosher

# From graduation to mayor's office in 30 days

One month before taking office as mayor of Terre Haute, Brandon Sakbun graduated from the O'Neill School's online Master of Public Affairs program. His desire to serve his community motivated his run for mayor.

This conviction was instilled by his parents and the people of Terre Haute. Even in high school, Sakbun knew he wanted to run for office one day. As a result, he decided it was important to get an education in finance, business, and public policy.

As an undergraduate, he studied business administration at IU's Kelley School of Business and was also a member of the IU Army ROTC program.

Upon graduating with his bachelor's degree, Sakbun joined the Army's Special Operations Ranger Regiment as a platoon leader and executive officer. In July 2022, while still serving in the military, he enrolled in O'Neill's Online MPA program.

"To prepare for returning to Terre Haute, I started O'Neill's Online MPA while on active duty because it's highly ranked and very flexible," Sakbun said. "What the MPA program allowed me to do is work with professors and use academic research to look into cities like Terre Haute and see where we could go. Conversations about how to proactively look at infrastructure, utilities, business development, race, and gender equality all started in the MPA program."

In January 2023, six months into the MPA program, Sakbun announced his mayoral candidacy. His confidence stemmed from his experience in the military and his educational journey.

"The professors at IU were excellent, and I'd be hard-pressed to find a professor in a course that did not help me to be a better mayor," he said. "At O'Neill, many are former public servants on both sides of the aisle. The research faculty provide the data you need, avoid twisting narratives, and show you the methodology. Not everyone is exposed to that, but IU and the O'Neill School did that for me, so I'll forever be indebted."

Sakbun completed his MPA in December 2023 and was inducted as mayor of Terre Haute in January 2024. Over the course of his career, he hopes to have a powerful impact on the community of Terre Haute and the Hoosier state while encouraging the next generation of leaders.

Sakbun talks about the call to public service and offers this advice to IU students:

"Identify where your passion and call to serve intersect, then channel that and follow through. Don't just chase a job or career. Through your unique field, knowledge, skills, and experiences, think about how you can make a difference in the lives of others. Chase impact."

—Nikki Livingston



O'Neill Online Week MPA students with Hoosier Ticket COO Jason Gerdom | Tracey Theriault

## Teaming up to bring fans to Hoosier gameday

The Hoosier Ticket Project started with a simple goal: Removing financial barriers that prevent fans from attending Indiana University athletic events by leveraging the generosity of alumni and fans.

During the past three years, the Hoosier Ticket Project has allowed hundreds of fans to experience Hoosier gameday for the first time, but the finer points of running a nonprofit organization took a backseat to the main focus of the effort.

Leveraging the expertise of the O'Neill School's faculty and students, the Hoosier Ticket Project partnered with O'Neill Online Week to provide support and a blueprint to help the burgeoning organization grow.

"A big vision that we've always had is to really get involved with the student body at IU, and there was no better way to do that than with the O'Neill School," said Josh Bruick, CEO of the Hoosier Ticket Project.

Like Bruick, Hoosier Ticket Project COO Jason Gerdom is an IU graduate, and he has heard fellow alumni talk about how programs at IU have helped their businesses and organizations. That planted a seed in his mind.

"I thought to myself, 'We're a nonprofit, and we have one of the best nonprofit

programs in the country at the O'Neill School,'" Gerdom said. "After exploring some of the opportunities that IU provides, we were invited to be part of this course for O'Neill Online Week, and it has worked out great."

Clinical Professor Laura Littlepage is the instructor of the class, which provides students the opportunity to gain experience that directly translates to what they'll face in their careers after graduation.

"The week is really intense," Littlepage said. "They have to work long hours, and they have to react to a client's needs very quickly. Sometimes in life, you have a very short turnaround on a project, and it's important to be able to adapt. They're actually sometimes amazed at how much they're able to get done."

The Hoosier Ticket Project hopes to grow to the point it can give back to O'Neill by establishing an internship program in the future, the roots of which will depend on implementing the advice provided by this year's class.

"We have found an awesome partner in the O'Neill School," Gerdom said. "We're helping the students, and they're helping us. It's a fantastic relationship."

—Ken Bikoff



## Composting capstone brews greener future

At Tinker Coffee in Indianapolis, Skylar Hazlett, BSPA'24, served more than drinks. She also taught customers about composting.

In between making orders, she packed used coffee grounds into 5-pound bags.

"We don't want to just throw away this valuable resource that could go on to provide nutritional value within the soil," she said.

It was an idea first brewed up by her manager, who started providing the grounds to customers for free.

Hazlett built on that idea as part of her capstone class at O'Neill. That meant educating customers about composting and also working to expand Tinker's community partnerships with gardening clubs, schools, and other groups.

"I think this project proves how accessible sustainability can be," Hazlett said. "There are very easy things we can all do to help create more sustainable communities."

That's where she sees herself in the future.

"It's exciting to think about all the possibilities that could exist within sustainability to make our communities better places for everyone," she said.



# Guided by legacy: Faith Odiete's dedication to service



**Faith Odiete**, BSCJ'24, was the undergraduate student speaker at IU Indianapolis' 2024 Commencement | Indiana University

Faith Odiete, BSCJ'24, would tell you her life's path has been shaped by the intersection of three things: her African heritage, the loss of her father, and her determination to break stereotypes through service.

Her father was on the Nigerian Police Force when he lost his life in the line of duty. His devotion to protecting others lives on through his daughter, and her parents' examples of sacrifice, service, and strength set her on a path to greatness.

"My father's legacy became my compass, guiding me toward a career in public service," Odiete said.

It's a career that's already filled with accomplishments. She joined the Cadet Officer Program at Indiana University Indianapolis and was part of the ROTC program.

Odiete is the first in her family to serve in the military. In fact, she was commissioned into the U.S. Army as an intelligence officer and second lieutenant on the same day she walked across the stage to complete her first O'Neill degree.

"I wanted to make a positive difference and leave the world a better place than I found it," she said. "What better way to do that than at a school that specializes in setting up their students to do so?"

In August 2024, she finished an internship with FEMA's Office of Mission Support within the Department of Homeland Security Headquarters in Washington, D.C., setting the stage for her next goal: an O'Neill MPA in Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

"O'Neill's emphasis on experiential learning has provided me with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, enhancing my capacity to make meaningful

contributions to the community," she said. "The supportive environment and resources available at O'Neill empowered me to leverage my skills and passion for service to create positive change in the world."

Her track record of academic excellence, community engagement, and campus leadership set her up to add more honors to her ever-growing list of accolades. In the final weeks of her undergraduate career, she was named O'Neill's Outstanding Student in Criminal Justice, IU Indianapolis' 2024 Commencement undergraduate student speaker, a member of IU Indianapolis' Top 100 undergraduate students, and one of the university's Premiere 10 undergrads.

The university also named her a 2024 William M. Plater Civic Engagement Medallion recipient. Odiete volunteers in the Dream Alive program, where she is a tutor and mentor for middle school students in an after-school program. The students live in marginalized, high-risk communities.

Odiete says community service cultivates a sense of social responsibility and empathy, fostering a deeper understanding of the needs and challenges faced by different segments of society—and it adds to a legacy that would make her father proud.

"While academic achievements are certainly valuable, being recognized for community service feels more personally fulfilling," she said. "It's a validation of the impact I've been able to make beyond the classroom, directly touching the lives of others and contributing positively to my community. It celebrates empathy, compassion, and my dedication to making a tangible difference in the world."

—Leslie Wells

# Arbutus SOCIETY



*As we considered how to make a lasting impact on future generations, we made a deliberate choice to include the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs in our estate planning. This commitment ensures that future students will benefit from the same high-quality education and professional opportunities that I received—by lowering financial barriers.*

*We are passionate about aiding students who pursue degrees at O'Neill and share our passion for shaping effective public policy, governance, and impactful organizations. The O'Neill School is renowned for its contributions to these areas, and we are confident that our planned gift will help sustain its mission. We are hopeful that our gift will open doors for future students to take advantage of the many experiential learning opportunities available to O'Neill students, regardless of their financial means.*

*We encourage fellow alumni to think about how their legacy can support the ongoing success of O'Neill students, ensuring that our alma mater continues to empower talented individuals to make a positive impact on our communities.*

**John Fernandez**, BSPA'85, MPA'89, JD'92  
Senior Vice President, Innovation and Strategic Partnerships, The Mill; Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (2009–12); City of Bloomington Mayor (1995–2004)

**Karen Howe Fernandez**, JD'93

The Arbutus Society, named after the official flower of Indiana University, recognizes our alumni and friends who let us know they are investing in the future of Indiana University and the O'Neill School through a planned or deferred gift. To join the Arbutus Society, please contact Alyssa Chagnon Osborne at (812) 856-8445 or [achagnon@iu.edu](mailto:achagnon@iu.edu).

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