

You Belong

CLASS NOTES

ONE OF US

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

1970s

Fedora Amis (Mary Ross), MEd 1970, published her fifth Jemmy McBustle historical mystery, "Vanderbilt in Peoria."

1980s

Sandra Van Trease, BSBA 1982, was honored as a "Director to Watch" by Directors & Boards Magazine.

Andrew Tucker, BA 1987, MEd 1995, began a new position as sales member specialist with the Better Business Bureau.

1990s

Kathleen WELTER, MBA 1992, began a new position as chief human resources officer at Caleres. It's a full-circle moment in her nearly three-decade career in HR. "The opportunity to come back to Caleres as the chief human resources officer to work with the talented people here and contribute at a level with a larger impact is exciting," she says. "It makes for a dynamic chance to sincerely impact the growth and success of our company and the experience of our associates." Her career has spanned every facet of human resources, from recruitment and succession planning to performance management, compensation and training. She has also guided organizations through integrations and acquisitions. Most recently, she led the HR function of a consulting and operations firm, supporting its growth through the development of the organization and its people. "I've learned at every step of my career and know I'll continue to learn in this role," she says. She credits UMSL's MBA program with giving her the fundamentals to ground HR in broader strategy. "That includes creating an experience and culture that attracts and keeps incredible talent," she says. For her, the most meaningful part of her role ties directly back to Caleres' values: "Being in a position that can directly impact how our associates experience that value of caring is humbling and exciting."

Suzanne Yardley, BA 1992, was promoted to vice president of self-determination and individualized living with Easterseals Midwest.

LaTonya Bowens, BSW 1999, began a new position as a social worker with Hazelwood School District.

Greg Goette, BSCiE 1999, was promoted to project executive for Holland Construction Services.

Claire Vlachos-Martin, BS 1999, began a new position as director of New Center Growth & Parish Engagement with FOCUS North America.



2000s

Aaron Burns, BS 2000, began a new position as a senior director in medicinal chemistry with Rapport Therapeutics.

Ruth E. Thaler-Clark, BGS 2000, received six awards for her writing in the Communication Contest of Missouri Professional Communicators, the regional affiliate of the National Federation of Press Women.

Jennifer Ray, BA 2001, began a new position as a sales enablement specialist with Shelter Works.

Justin Kessler, BSBA 2002, began a new position as senior vice president with Cresa.

Lathon Ferguson, BA 2003, began a new position as vice president of development with The Little Bit Foundation.

Kat Alford, BA 2004, began a new position as a mortgage processor with ASE Credit Union.

Allison Cundiff, MEd 2004, MA 2008, published her latest book, "Hey Pickpocket," with JackLeg Press.

Jon Hubach, MPPA 2006, began a new position as a community development specialist with the City of St. Louis.

Kimberly Edwards, BA 2007, MEd 2010, began a new position as assistant dean of students with California State Polytechnic University-Pomona.

Howard Fields, BSEd 2007, MEd 2009, PhD 2017, began a new position as superintendent with Ferguson-Florissant School District.

Kristen Price, BSEd 2007, was named a Missouri Regional Teacher of the Year by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Patricia Zahn, MPPA 2007, EdD 2022, was inducted into the Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship.

Jennifer Sorenson, MEd 2008, was appointed to the role of chief donor engagement officer at Rise Against Hunger.

Abi Kleinsmith, BA 2009, began a new position as a content implementation manager with Pearson.

Arionna Ralleigh, BSEd 2009, MEd 2013, began a new position as director of school partnerships with Nine PBS.

2010s

Jessica Lake, BSW 2010, MSW, MPPA 2014, began a new position as a civic collaboration fellows program coordinator with the University of Missouri Extension.

Joel Miller, BSBA 2010, MBA 2016, began a new position as a program manager with MSMF Wealth Management.

David Poger, MPPA 2010, began a new position as a channel account manager - insight (U.S. West Business Segment) with Dell Technologies.

Aya Finley, BSAcc 2011, MAcc 2012, began a new position as GRC audit and compliance team lead with World Wide Technology.

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Send class notes and life updates to:

alumni@umsl.edu alumni.umsl.edu 314-516-5833

“

QUOTABLE

ANDREW BERHORST, BSBA 2014, BACC 2024

WATCHING OUR TEAM CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY MAKES ME EXCITED TO COME TO WORK. ”

Emalee Welsh, MA 2011, was recently named partner and deputy head of private wealth practice with Sterlington PLLC.

Mary Grace Buckley, BA 2012, MFA 2016, began a new position as a copywriter with Maritz.

Patience Kanyi, MPPA 2012, began a new position as group director of operations with Four Points by Sheraton Accra Kotoka Airport.

Christopher Kepley, BM 2012, began a new position as a music teacher with Loveland Classical Schools.

Aleshia Moyamba, BA 2012, began a new position as director of marketing with Clairborne Senior Living.

Bridgett Siegman, BA 2012, began a new position as an outpatient therapist with Burrell Behavioral Health.

Jeremy Butler, BSBA 2013, began a new position as a pricing specialist with Sensient Technologies Corporation.

Elizabeth Eikmann, BA 2013, contributed to the anthology “The Wonder and Complexity of the 1904 World’s Fair,” which was awarded the silver medal in Regional Nonfiction at the 2024 INDIES Book Awards.

Dr. Brianne Hobbs, OD 2010, was named dean of the Chicago College of Optometry.

Stacy Flanagan, BSBA 2013, began a new position as a wealth management advisor with Visionary Wealth Advisors.

Natascha Harried, BLS 2013, began a new position as social services coordinator for Madison County with the Salvation Army.

Yuima Mizutani, MEd 2013, PhD 2020, began a new position as an assistant professor with the University of Cincinnati.

Daman Singh, BA 2013, began a new position as a technical lead with ENGIE.

Sarah Ackermann, PhD 2014, began a new position as chair of art education with Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design.

Kyle Hinrichs, BLS 2014, began a new position as a freight and logistics analyst with Bunzl Distribution.

Carmen Stayton, MEd 2014, was elected president of the Special School District of St. Louis County Board of Education.

Joe Wieczkowski, BSBA 2014, began a new position as vice president of account management with Drive Social Media.

Tyler Bunge, BLS 2015, began a new position as a senior regional account manager with CSL.

➤ **Andrew BERHORST, BSBA 2014, BACC 2024**, has been promoted to chief financial officer with the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition. Berhorst began his career in restaurants, working his way up from dishwasher to general manager before learning bookkeeping while living in Los Angeles. That pivot sparked a new direction that led him back to St. Louis, where he earned his CPA eligibility after completing a second undergraduate degree at UMSL. He has since passed two of the four CPA exams and is studying for his third. Today, as chief financial officer at the Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, his role carries a personal sense of meaning. “The role has meant everything to me,” he says. “Being able to give my gifts back to a community that needs help has been a new lens on accounting and my career for me.” His work spans financial reporting and monitoring funding streams that sustain vital services, and he has even overseen a multiyear building project from planning to financing. “The staff refers to me as an operational CFO, and that is the best description I can think of for what I do,” he says. He credits UMSL for preparing him to thrive while balancing work and study. “UMSL does the best job at accommodating working students,” he says. “My professors had real-world experience and understood my same struggles – that camaraderie is what will bring me back for graduate studies one day.”

UMSL faculty member who inspires me



THERE ARE SO MANY UMSL ALUMNI AND FACULTY WHO INSPIRE ME, BUT IF I HAVE TO NAME ONE PERSON, IT WOULD BE JOANNA MENDOZA. PROFESSOR MENDOZA REGULARLY INSPIRES ME, AND SHE IS SUCH A FIERCE LEADER AS CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC. SHE IS OPEN TO NEW IDEAS AND IS CONSTANTLY CELEBRATING AND UPLIFTING OTHERS. SHE IS DETERMINED TO MAKE SURE THE UMSL DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC IS SEEN IN THE ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY AND THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF MISSOURI. I AM SO PROUD OF THE WORK SHE IS DOING, AND IT MAKES ME EVEN PROUDER TO SAY I'M AN UMSL ALUM.

Maria A. Ellis, BM 2017

ALUMNI NEWS

Marc Champlain, BSME 2015, began a new position as a market manager with Motors & Armatures, Inc.

Emily Hannon, MS 2015, began a new position as manager of health care analytics with Centene Corporation.

Greg Helton, BSCiE 2015, began a new position as infrastructure market manager at CDG Engineers.

Samad Javed, BSBA 2015, was promoted to director of sales with 360 Broadband.

Gabriella Kirkpatrick, MBA 2015, began a new position as head of global compliance with ZOLTEK.

Justin Lois, BLS 2015, began a new position as manager of strategic sourcing in rapid design with The Resource Group.

Kelleigh Martin, BSBA 2015, began a new position as a mortgage underwriter with Flat Branch Home Loans.

William Morris, BA 2015, MFA 2017, was promoted to content strategist with WashU Medicine.

Matt Weiss, BLS 2015, began a new position as an executive area manager with Engineered Tissue Solutions.

Marisa Yoder, BS 2015, MS 2017, began a new position as manager of scientific administrative services with the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center.

Tyler Collico, BSACC 2016, began a new position as a senior manager of health care valuation with LBMC.

Rachel Dougherty, BA 2016, began a new position as a paralegal with Wallace Miller.

Theresa Finder, BSME 2016, began a position as a senior performance improvement consultant with Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

Eric'el Johnson, BSEE 2016, began a new position as senior engineering manager with Boeing.

Christina Salmo, MEd 2016, began a new position as dean of literacy with Atlas Public Schools.

Patricia Sissac, BS 2016, MEd 2025, began a new position as a mental health counselor with Haven of Light Christian Counseling.

Zakaria Tajjioui, BLS 2016, began a new position as an operations analyst with GPSwaste.

Ellen Prinster, BSCiE 2017, MBA 2021, began a new position as a senior manager of transmission electrical design with Ameren.

Lauren Suellentrop, BSBA 2017, MBA 2021, began a new position as a category manager with Schnuck Markets.

Geddy Trebus, BS 2017, began a new position as a foot and ankle territory manager for North Central with Johnson & Johnson MedTech.

Christopher Chandler, BSIS 2018, began a new position as a software engineering supervisor with Avalon Healthcare Solutions.

Jeff Dyson-Perskins, BSEE 2018, began a new position as a chief impact officer with Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition.

Jordan Fletcher, BSBA 2018, began a new position as marketing manager with D&S Car Wash Supply.

Christopher Mathes, BS 2018, began a new position as a business development facilitator with Tri Tech Automation.

Alberto Maza Martin, BSBA 2018, began a new position as manager of anti-financial crime technology with PwC Luxembourg.

Nicholas Badolato, BA 2019, began a new position as a logistics analyst with Bayer.

Ehsan Davarzany, MA 2019, began a new position as a project manager with VarcoMac LLC.

Luke Grass, BSBA 2019, began a new position as an account executive with Equifax Workforce Solutions.

Alex Hawkenbery, BSBA 2019, began a new position as an account sales representative with Progressive Insurance.

Jackie Huskey, BSBA 2019, began a new position as a senior solution developer in compensation support with Edward Jones.

Mohammed Kokan, BSIS 2019, began a new position as undergraduate service librarian with Tarleton State University.



Jonice LANGFORD, BA 2019, has found deep purpose in her new role as lead case manager and family resource specialist with the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis Division of Public Safety. After starting as a case manager just a few months ago, she quickly stepped into leadership, where her work directly touches lives. "This role has impacted me in many positive ways," she says. "It allows me to help those in need and gives me the opportunity to make a huge difference in someone's life."

Her path to this position has been shaped by both courage and passion. After earning her degree at UMSL, she spent several years in case management before shifting into sales and project management in the tech sector. Though she thrived, her heart remained with service. "Life did its thing, and eventually I came across a job opportunity at Urban League, an organization I always recognized and respected," she says.

She credits UMSL with instilling leadership skills through coursework, student organizations and supportive faculty. Now, she says, directly making an impact on one's life in a positive manner is what excites her most about her career and future growth.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

ORLANDO

with LaVell D. Monger, BA 2016

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When he began his training as an anthropology student at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, LaVell Monger thought photography was merely a fun hobby. But through hard work and commitment, he has turned that passion into a highly successful career that has taken him far from his native St. Louis. As the owner of RTW Photography in Orlando, Florida, Monger has built a creative company that focuses on elevating small businesses and local communities. Along the way, he has gained a reputation as a changemaker for his new home, serving as a planning commissioner for Osceola County and board chairman of the St. Cloud Chamber of Commerce, as well as participating in Leadership Osceola County, Leadership Orlando and Leadership Florida Connect. He offers these insights and recommendations about the Orlando area he has grown to love. – Kala Dunn

WHERE TO STAY

If you want energy and convenience, Grand Bohemian Downtown is a great luxury hotel with plenty to do nearby. For something quieter and modern, Lake Nona Wave Hotel is a hidden gem.

MUST-SEE ATTRACTIONS

Beyond the theme parks, Lake Eola is a must for its farmers' market and skyline views. I also recommend catching a performance at the Dr. Phillips Center to experience Orlando's cultural heartbeat.

HIDDEN GEMS

The Yard at Ivanhoe is a favorite for locals every Monday

evening, as it is occupied by Grit Run Orlando – Run Club. I'd also include RTW Creative + Studio in Parramore, my photography studio.

FOOD TO TRY

Orlando has a surprisingly rich food scene. Nikki's Place is my go-to for soul food, The Monroe is unmatched, and many Michelin-starred restaurants are perfect for sampling a variety of local flavors.

BIGGEST SURPRISE ABOUT LIVING AND WORKING IN ORLANDO

Realizing how much opportunity exists outside of tourism. Orlando is an innovation hub with entrepreneurs, creatives and leaders shaping industries

far beyond hospitality. The collaborative spirit here has been inspiring.

FAVORITE THING ABOUT ORLANDO

The people. Orlando is a true melting pot, and the diversity here brings so much depth to the city's culture and community. I love being part of a city that is still writing its story. Orlando is constantly evolving, and there's room for leaders, businesses and creatives to make their mark. Being able to contribute to that growth while serving the community is what excites me most.

ONE OF US

Paul Luong, OD 2016

HOMETOWN: St. Louis**CURRENT LOCATION:** St. Louis**OCCUPATION:** Co-owner, Complete Eye Care Inc.;
Adjunct Professor, UMSL College of Optometry

Dr. Paul Luong's connection to UMSL runs deep – and forward. During his fourth year in the College of Optometry, he learned about a private practice that was looking to hire an optometrist. Graduation was still eight months away, but he reached out, interviewed and began working part-time to ensure it was the right fit. After graduation, he joined the practice full-time, and less than a decade later, he became a co-owner of Complete Eye Care Inc. and an adjunct faculty member, guiding the next generation of optometrists through hands-on mentorship.

In 2025, he was honored with the college's Early Career Achievement Award, a recognition he describes as "being acknowledged by the very institution that shaped me into the optometrist and person I am today." He also remains closely involved in alumni engagement and serves on the UMSL Alumni Association Governing Board.

–Erica Falgout

WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST REWARDING ABOUT YOUR CLINICAL WORK? I love the variety of patients we see at CEC. We're a comprehensive ophthalmology

practice, and I enjoy the medical side of eye care. I have a particular interest in specialty contact lenses and the unique challenges of fitting patients with diseased corneas or irregular ocular surfaces. Helping them regain quality of life through improved vision is one of the most rewarding aspects of my career.

HOW DID YOUR TIME AT UMSL SHAPE YOUR JOURNEY AS AN OPTOMETRIST AND BUSINESS OWNER? UMSL's optometry program is truly top-notch. The rigorous curriculum, combined with the dedication of the faculty and staff, prepared me well for the realities of clinical practice. That foundation gave me the confidence not only to provide excellent patient care but also to take on the challenges of running a business. The support and mentorship I received at UMSL still shape the way I approach both clinical and management decisions today.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO COME BACK AND TEACH FUTURE OPTOMETRISTS? I began clinical teaching in 2018, working with third-year optometry students at the UMSL Patient Care Center. It's their first experience with real patients, and it's a privilege to guide them through the eye examination process. Since 2024, my practice has also served as a clinical rotation site for fourth-year students – an especially formative stage as they refine their skills and explore what kind of doctor they want to become. Being part of that journey is something I don't take for granted.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF UMSL OPTOMETRY STUDENTS? The field is evolving quickly – with new technologies, medical therapies and expanding scopes of practice – but what will always matter most is a genuine commitment to patient care. I want students to embrace innovation but never lose sight of the privilege we have of being trusted with someone's vision and quality of life. I also hope they lean on each other and on the strong alumni network that UMSL has built; the relationships I made here have shaped my career as much as the education itself.

best piece of advice I ever received



IF YOUR ROLE IS CONSIDERED MANAGEMENT, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS SEEK INPUT FROM OTHERS TO AID YOU IN REACHING THE BEST POSSIBLE DECISION FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION. THIS IS DUE TO LEADERSHIP FOR THE MOST PART BEING ABOUT TAKING CALCULATED RISKS, AND YOU WILL ALWAYS CREATE BETTER STRATEGIES IF MORE FACTS AND INFORMATION GO INTO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

Luigi Wewege,
BSBA 2009

Daccota Lenny, BSBA 2019, began a new position as assistant controller with Tarlton Corporation.

Gladwell Ndungu, BSBA 2019, MS 2022, began a new position as a procurement associate manager on the Tiger Team with Energizer Holdings.

Austin Stelling, BS 2019, began a new position as a scientist with Pace Analytical Services.

Christopher Wilke, BS 2019, began a new position as a business development representative with Orbital Energy.

Rachael Wylie, BSBA 2019, began a new position as an assistant supply chain manager with McWane Ductile.

2020s

Tony Deluvia, BSN 2020, began a new position as senior performance improvement consultant with Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

Mitchell Miller, BSBA 2020, began a new position as an assistant client accounting manager with Cushman & Wakefield.

Madeline Morrison, MSW 2020, began a new position as a therapist with Preferred Family Healthcare.

Courtney Taylor, BA 2020, began a new position as a senior manager of inspection and compliance management with ATIS.

Shelby Andre, MEd 2021, began a new position as a teacher with Palm Beach Public School.

Gina Jenkins, EdD 2021, began a new position as a reading specialist with Hazelwood School District.

Madison Kukic, BSEd 2021, began a new position as an operations manager with Faith Group, LLC.

Cameron McLaughlin, BA 2021, began a new position as an operations assistant and behavioral therapist with Atlas Autism Health.

Kerry Moriarty, BS 2021, began a new position as a director of brand and business operations with Terrace House STL.

Jennifer Meyers, MBA 2021, began a new position as director of external affairs at the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative.

Kelly Sextro, BSCiE 2021, began a new position as a project engineer with Great River Engineering.

Samantha Scott, BS 2021, began a new position as a school counselor with Francis Howell School District.

Thao Tran, BS 2021, began a new position as a warehouse customer service associate with Service Spring Corp.

Almir Alagic, BSIS 2022, MS 2024, began a new position as a field technician with Digacore Technology Consulting.

Sidra Chaudhry, BSBA 2022, began a new position as an accounting specialist with Citi.

Terrell Davis, BSBA 2022, began a new position as a creative consultant with National Great Rivers Research and Education Center.

Kathleen Gamble, MSW 2022, began a new position as a provisional licensed counselor with Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri.

Amanda Lopez-Cachan, BA 2022, began a new position as director of accountability with MICA Project.

Leticia Zoratto Lunge, BSME 2022, began a new position as a GCS senior systems engineer at bioMérieux.

Paul Niemann, DBA 2022, began a new position as an assistant professor with Indiana State University.

Peter Rees, MEd 2022, began a new position as a primary therapist with Birch Tree Recovery.

Ryan Russell, BS 2022, began a new position as research associate 1 with Bayer.

Cassandra Suggs, EdD 2022, began a new position as assistant superintendent for Affton School District.

Carson Von Alst, MBA 2022, began a new position as director of strategic initiatives with Missouri Pharmacy Association.

Matthew Argent, BA 2023, began a new position as a sales associate with KEG 1 Missouri, LLC.

Brendan Lally, BSW 2023, began a new position as a licensed master social worker with Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

Katie Loomis, BSBA 2023, began a new position as a buyer with ControlTech Automation.

Joshua Walker, BSBA 2023, began a new position as accounting manager with The Charity CFO.

Noelle Wisdom, BS 2023, began a new position as an early childhood instructional assistant with Wentzville School District.

Cassandra Ewune Beryl, BSACC 2024, began a new position as staff accountant with Evernorth Health Services.

Leticia Caruthers, BSBA 2024, began a new position as a staff accountant with Senior Services Plus, Inc.

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Gifts yield transformative campus improvements

Through their collective generosity, UMSL alumni and friends have made possible the completion of three significant campus projects that will benefit students for decades to come. In conjunction with state and university investments, gifts of private support continue to pave the way for the future of the University of Missouri–St. Louis.

The renovation of **University Libraries**, including the Thomas Jefferson Library and St. Louis Mercantile Library, provides students and patrons with modern educational resources while maintaining the traditional beauty of these beloved campus spaces. Students and visitors may now enjoy additional flexible spaces for lectures, individual research and group work. The renovation also includes an art gallery and exhibition spaces for the Mercantile collection, as well as an expanded computer lab.

The newly renovated **UMSL Innovation Center** facilitates programmed experiences and organic connections among bright and motivated students, rising entrepreneurs,

outstanding faculty and others that allow today's great ideas to become tomorrow's realities. The \$3 million facility renovation is an investment in the vibrant future of the St. Louis region.

"Our building is a center of centers, with the Supply Chain and Analytics Center of Excellence, the Center for Excellence in Financial Counseling and the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center all located in the same space," says EIC Director Scott Morris. "There's already just so much synergy between the different groups. We're organically finding ways to work together and opportunities for cross-pollination, cooperation and sharing of resources. We hope that as we each serve the community, we can find ways to pull even more people in."

The revitalized **Creative Arts Building** (formerly known as the Arts Administration Building) now offers renovated space for the Department of Music and the Department of Art and Design, thanks to individual gifts as well as a generous matching challenge for the naming of the Arianna String Quartet Recital



Hall. With a graphic design lab, expanded practice facilities and a performance space acoustically designed for solo and chamber recitals, UMSL's creative arts students have the tools to unbridle their creativity and reach their full potential.

These are only three of many ongoing and upcoming projects at UMSL through which donor support is making a world of difference for our UMSL students, providing the springboard for their individual successes and for the subsequent elevation of our region. Thank you for transforming lives through your generosity.

Courtney Hendricks, MEd 2024, began a new position as a middle school science teacher with Hickman Mills C-1 School District.

Eric E.B. Jones II, MA 2024, began a new position as an imaging specialist with Iron Mountain.

Sara Lewis, DBA 2024, began a new position as director of business services with Missouri University of Science and Technology.

Ce'driyon Lomnick, BSW 2024, began a new position as a community support specialist II with Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

Brett Paubel, BSACC, MAcc 2024, passed the CPA exam and began a new position as an assurance associate with PwC as he awaits experience requirements for licensure.

Kiel Pedersen, BSBA 2024, began a new position as a contract management specialist with Boeing.

Andrea Rojo, BSACC 2024, MAcc 2025, began a new position as a staff accountant with Wipfli.

Ryan Sanders, BSBA 2024, began a new position as a WIM operations analyst with Wells Fargo.

Cooper Strayhorn, BSBA 2024, began a position as a mathematics teacher with Francis Howell School District.

Addison Eaker, BSBA 2025, began a new position as an operations analyst with Wells Fargo.

Andrew Price, BS 2025, began a new position as program manager with Destination St. Louis.

Khadija Tall, BA 2025, began a new position as an assistant operations manager with SBM Management Services.

UMSL Alumni Association honors Distinguished Alumni

The 2025 UMSL Distinguished Alumni Award winners continue to make an indelible mark on our world through their groundbreaking work in the fields of literature, engineering, politics, education and technology. They embody the core values of our institution. And, in sharing their time and talents with UMSL, they pave the way for the success of our next generation of alumni.

This year's honorees, recognized at the Founders Celebration on Sept. 25, included Luke Coffey, BA 2002; Sam Ganga, MBA 1989;

Paula Knight, MEd 1996, EdS 2008, EdD 2014; and Mary Troy, BA 1970. Eric'el Johnson, BSEE 2016, was the recipient of the Outstanding Young Alumni Award.

The professional success and community service of our 2025 Distinguished Alumni serve as a source of inspiration for all alumni to rise together, not only to transform UMSL but to transform our world.

Outstanding Young Alumni Award: Eric'el Johnson, BSEE 2016

– Johnson is a rising star at Boeing, where she leads a team of 15 as a senior engineering manager in F/A-18 mission systems. She is also the founder of a mentoring program for UMSL engineering students.

Sam Ganga, MBA 1989

– As a partner at the Big Four accounting firm KPMG, Ganga serves as a technology and digital executive shaping the digital frontier of the business world through cutting-edge technology.

Mary Troy, BA 1970

– Troy is the prizewinning author of four short story collections and two novels, as well as the recipient of the Missouri Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching after 24 years with UMSL's MFA program.

Paula Knight, MEd 1996, EdS 2008, EdD 2014

– Knight serves as superintendent of the Jennings School District and has devoted her career to improving the quality of public school education through innovative programs.

Luke Coffey, BA 2002

– Coffey serves as a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and was the first non-U.K. citizen ever to be appointed senior special adviser to then-British Defence Secretary Liam Fox at the UK Ministry of Defence.

