

UNIVERSITY OF SIOUX FALLS

MAGAZINE | SPRING 2025



Playing the College
Athletics Game

**LEARNING BEYOND
THE CLASSROOM**

People of Impact



Hello & Welcome

Dear USF Alumni and Friends,

Greetings from the University of Sioux Falls! The University's greatest measure of success is best reflected in the achievements of its students. Each year, the University conducts a comprehensive survey of its graduates and for the Class of 2024, 99% of our graduates were either employed, attending graduate or professional school, or continuing with additional undergraduate education within six months of their graduation. The survey once again received an impressive 86% response rate, far exceeding the target response rate goal of 65% as established by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Such a high response rate allows the University to make informed assumptions regarding the value of its degrees.

As we consider the University's contribution to workforce development in the community and region it serves, it is interesting to note that 76% of 2024 grads started their careers in South Dakota. And of those, 89% are employed in Sioux Falls or within a 30 mile radius. Overall, USF graduates reported working in 14 different states.

The USF Nursing Program has also achieved the highest NCLEX pass rates among all other Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs in South Dakota for 2024. This represents an accomplishment it has attained several times over the years and an undeniable commitment to excellence.

Additionally, the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC) announced their 16th annual NSIC Myles Brand All-Academic with Distinction Award recipients. In an incredible accomplishment, 27 USF student-athletes earned the honor, demonstrating the second highest representation in our conference, consisting of 15 member-schools across four states. This prestigious academic honor is bestowed upon NSIC senior student-athletes who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.75 or higher.

Clearly, we are proud of our students and are honored to assist them in pursuing their academic and career goals. When coupled with a Christian mindset, they present great potential for providing effective and grounded leadership to our communities, state, region and beyond.

As the University looks on the horizon to its 2025 commencement exercises on Sunday, May 4, and furthermore, looks beyond to the celebration of the institution's 142nd birthday on September 8, 2025, we are reminded of the great mission to which we have been entrusted. And, our alumni provide the lens through which to view this legacy of academic excellence and faith formation that has endured the test of time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brett Bradfield".

Dr. Brett Bradfield
President, University of Sioux Falls

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SCAN THE CODE TO TAKE OUR READER'S SURVEY



UPDATES

27 STUDENT-ATHLETES NAMED MYLES BRAND AWARD WINNERS

The NSIC announced their 16th annual NSIC Myles Brand All-Academic with Distinction Award with 27 USF student-athletes earning honors. Sioux Falls is the second highest institution behind Northern State with 28. The honor, named for the late NCAA President Dr. Myles Brand, is bestowed to NSIC academic senior student-athletes who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.75 or higher (student-athletes can only earn the award once).



SCAN HERE

to read more and view the
list of USF recipients.

NEW WEBSITES

Both the University of Sioux Falls and USF Athletics websites have new looks! Redesigned with users in mind, both websites have been restructured to provide an easy-to-navigate, engaging and intentional experience for our visitors. Check them both out!

UNIVERSITY WEBSITE / usioxford.edu

ATHLETICS WEBSITE / usfcougars.com

CAMPUS MINISTRIES PODCAST

USF Campus Ministries now has a podcast! Featuring conversations between Campus Pastor Matt Styles and USF employees, alumni, students and members of the community, season one focuses on the theme of "Living Missionally." New episodes monthly with new themes each semester.

Be sure to tune in by searching "USF Campus Ministries Podcast" on Spotify, YouTube or Apple.

EDUCATORS RISING LEARNING EXPO

USF hosted the Educators Rising Learning Expo on campus on January 13. Educators Rising is a national network that helps develop aspiring teachers by providing practical teaching experience and skill-building opportunities for middle and high school students.

Over 180 students from 23 different schools across the state of South Dakota attended the expo, where they engaged in hands-on activities, attended breakout sessions and met with USF education faculty and students.

FOUR USF ALUMNI RECOGNIZED IN SIOUXFALLS.BUSINESS 30 UNDER 30

In the third annual listing of the SiouxFalls.Business 30 Under 30, recipients were chosen who showed clear early career achievements, promise for future leadership and strong engagement in the community beyond their workplace. Four USF alumni were named to the list:

- + **Julia Andresen '23** – Business Development Executive, Avera Health Plans
- + **Ashley Hellwig '18** – Tax Manager, Eide Bailly LLP
- + **Laycee Kluin '20** – Digital Marketing Specialist, MarketBeat
- + **Luke Wanous '19** – Administration, Good Samaritan Society



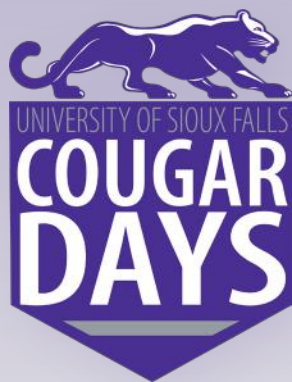
SCAN HERE

to view the full list and read more about the recognized USF alumni.

Congratulations on your accomplishments and thank you for inspiring a Culture for Service in all you do!

USF NURSING PROGRAM TOPS NCLEX PASS RATES

According to the South Dakota Board of Nursing, USF nursing students posted the highest NCLEX pass rate of all the four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs in the state, at an impressive 97.37%. Congratulations to our nursing students and all the dedicated faculty and staff that work tirelessly to make the USF Nursing program a success!



Cougar Days
SAVE THE DATE!

Mark your calendars for Cougar Days 2025!
See you on campus October 3-5!



TURNING A MISSION INTO MINISTRY

A L U M N I S P O T L I G H T F E A T U R I N G

C H A S E W A R D ' 1 3

Chase Ward surrendered his life to Jesus at USF.

"My USF running coach Mark Heider brought me a Bible during an incredibly challenging time in my life. He said, 'I don't have all the answers, but everything you need is in this book,'" Ward explains.

That year, Ward gave his life to Christ and people like former women's basketball assistant coach Tom Goehle and former campus pastor Dennis Thum poured into and invested in Chase's spiritual journey.

The journey eventually led Ward to Africa, where he founded a nonprofit organization called Simba Educational Ministries. The organization has transformed thousands of lives, including his.

"I graduated from USF in 2013 with a biology degree and the desire to serve. I was considering applying for medical school," he says. "While working at a hospital, I volunteered at Mission Haiti. After I returned, a coworker asked me if I would be interested in building a dining hall for a school in Kenya. I didn't have the skills or the finances, but I felt God prompting me to go."

On his initial trip, Ward was deeply impacted by how many children were not attending school and he felt called to act. He

returned home with the mission of securing educational sponsorships for 20 students and raising \$90,000 to complete the dining hall.

A generous family from the Brandon community wrote Ward a check for the entire project, and he reached out to USF professor Beth O'Toole for advice. She helped him establish Simba Educational Ministries, named for Proverbs 28:1 "the righteous shall be as bold as lions."

That first dining hall was just the beginning. The ministry developed a holistic care model focusing on five pillars: child sponsorship, kingdom building, widows and orphans, health and wellness and stewardship.

Through God and the generosity of its donors, Simba Ministries has helped 500 children graduate and has 350 current sponsored students in school. Over 12,000 people received care through the organization's medical clinics and approximately 1,200 families have broken the cycle of poverty.

"Every day at USF, I would walk past the statue of Jesus washing the feet and feel its significance," he says. "God brought me to USF for a purpose, and that purpose is to share the love of Jesus Christ through service." ■



ON A PATH OF SERVICE

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT FEATURING

MAGGIE PORTILLO

"You need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable."

This is the advice Maggie Portillo gives USF students who want to make the most of their college experience. The junior social work and psychology major says the mantra serves her well.

"I've been unsure about stepping into some of my leadership roles, but I have found great support at USF," she explains. "I am encouraged to live up to my potential. Getting involved has made all the difference."

Portillo is a resident assistant in Grand Island Hall, the president of the Latinos Unidos Club, and she leads bilingual worship on campus in a unique collaboration between Latinos Unidos and Campus Ministries. She also enjoys attending a wide variety of campus events and participates in multiple service projects.

Her interest in social work has opened doors to a job at an autism center and took her to Ecuador as a psychology clinic volunteer last summer.

"I discovered USF during a high school Christian college fair. When I found out they offered a social work degree, I decided to tour campus," she says. "USF feels like my home away from home."

Portillo grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her father is from Honduras and her mother is from Mexico. She speaks fluent Spanish and English and enjoys sharing her Latin culture with people who want to know more about it.

As president of Latinos Unidos, she tries to honor the organization's mission by building connections in the local Spanish community and speaking openly about her faith.

"I've been leading worship since I was 10," she says. "Being able to continue this service at USF is an unexpected gift."

In her spare time, Portillo enjoys soccer, music, hiking, snow skiing and spending time with friends and family. While she is still considering her options after graduation, she knows she will use her degree for good.

"There are so many amazing avenues in the field of social work," she says. "USF is preparing me well and I am excited to see where my education takes me." ■



HOME AWAY FROM HOME

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT FEATURING

ANDREW PORTEOUS

Andrew Porteous moved to Sioux Falls six years ago for a job that checks all the boxes.

The New Zealand native explains his journey to USF with humor and a delightful accent.

"After I graduated from the University of Otago in New Zealand, I decided to earn a master's degree in screenwriting from California State University Northridge. I was going to move back home and become famous!" he laughs. "But I wanted to see the 'real America' first, so I took a job in the student housing department at Western Colorado University. I met my wife Liz and that changed everything."

Porteous gained experience in the student life and student housing departments at several large universities. He was working at California State University Monterey Bay when the couple decided it was time for something new.

"Liz is an accountant and we both wanted to work at a small college in a smaller city near a good airport, surrounded by friendly people," he says. "That's how we found USF."

As the director of student life and housing at USF, Porteous has never felt more at home.

His department works collaboratively with student organizations and other departments to enhance the student experience beyond athletics and academics. They work hard to ensure safe and comfortable housing, quality dining, unique student programming and a welcoming atmosphere. The department also fulfills USF's Culture for Service motto through projects like the Cougar Cupboard, the community garden, emergency student housing and a recycling program.

"We help students connect with each other and the community," he says. "Nothing is more rewarding than seeing a shy freshman blossom into a confident graduate, and we're here to help foster that growth."

Since Porteous began his position, the department has improved shared student spaces with exterior projects like the hammock park, frisbee golf, a giant outdoor chess set and the installation of picnic tables across the park-like campus.

"We are now turning our attention to interior spaces, and we have some great surprises," he says. "USF is a special place and we're working hard to make it even better." ■





Learning Beyond The Classroom

USF INITIATES PRESIDENT'S SOPHOMORE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Last fall, USF's Thomas Kilian Academic Success Center introduced a new program designed to help younger students learn leadership skills, foster community connections and practice networking with peers and professionals. The President's Sophomore Leadership Institute is spearheaded by Jessica Carlson, associate director of the Academic Success Center. Carlson oversees the program in response to a recognized need for early leadership development opportunities on campus.

"Our department was in discussions with USF President Dr. Bradfield and Vice President for Enrollment Management Dr. Vander Feen," says Carlson. "Through some strategic conversations, we created a leadership program that's accessible to a diverse group of sophomore students, including those stepping into a leadership role for the first time."

The competitive application process began in the spring of 2024 with interested first-year USF students. Students were required to respond to questions such as their perspectives on leadership, their interest in the program, personal goals and any world issues they aspire to address. Accepted applicants were notified over the summer.

"We currently have 31 students in this year's cohort," says Carlson. "The cohort includes students from nearly every major on campus, several student-athletes and honors program participants, as well as nine first-generation college students."

In its inaugural year, the President's Sophomore Leadership Institute has already achieved several key successes. Through strong community partnerships, organizations like Northwestern Mutual, St. Francis House and Lost & Found have stepped forward to invest in the next generation. Professionals from those organizations shared their time, experiences and insights with the students, bringing diverse viewpoints and real-world expertise. USF alumni and administrators also played a crucial role in the experience, providing personal stories, career advice, mentoring and professional career networking.



"Through interactive sessions on topics ranging from servant leadership, ethics, emotional intelligence and resilience, students have strengthened their leadership skills and gained confidence that will not only help guide their path through college, but in life," says Carlson.

“THE PRESIDENT’S SOPHOMORE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE HAS BEEN AN EXCELLENT WAY FOR ME TO MAKE CONNECTIONS WITH PEERS AND FACULTY AND LEARN FROM DIFFERENT LEADERS IN THE SIOUX FALLS AREA.”

In addition to required monthly sessions, the sophomore cohort is provided with service opportunities and optional supplemental activities such as networking events, professional development conferences, career fairs, campus leadership roles and the ability to practice and apply their skills in professional and academic settings.

"The President's Sophomore Leadership Institute has been an excellent way for me to make connections with peers and faculty and learn from different leaders in the Sioux Falls area," says participant Zoë Adam, a sophomore pre-professional biology and psychology major. "I have gained skills and knowledge in various aspects of my life such as communications, business relationships, ethics and values and mental health. It also provided me with volunteer and outreach opportunities where I was able to strengthen new friendships and create new memories."

Carlson helped shape the program's vision with the help of USF colleagues and administrators and is motivated by its success. Next year's participants can look forward to a similar program structure, with plans to provide students with even more opportunities to engage with local organizations and learn from a variety of industry professionals and valued alumni.



"Our goal is to continuously enhance the program by incorporating new speakers, interactive experiences and service opportunities that align with the evolving needs of our students and the Sioux Falls community," she says. "It's been rewarding to see the impact this has had on our students."

The new program is just one of many avenues USF students can explore to further their experiences at USF. The Academic Success Center at the University is available to all students with academic coaching, tutoring, counseling and other services designed to help them overcome challenges and achieve their goals.



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SIOUX FALLS COMMUNITY.”

"There are so many ways to get involved at USF and so many people who want to help our students succeed," she says. "The Academic Success Center is here to empower all students with the resources they need."

As the USF staff thoughtfully selects the next group of sophomores to embark on the 2025-26 leadership program, they are grateful for the valuable partnerships helping shape the leaders of tomorrow.

"One of our greatest assets at USF is our strong network of community partners and alumni," says Dr. Bradfield. "When we were developing the President's Sophomore Leadership Institute, I knew that collaborating with local organizations and alumni leaders within the community would be one of the most valuable components of the student experience. That has certainly proven to be the case." ■



D O N O R

Spotlight

Bill and Carolyn Hinks

Bill and Carolyn Hinks find joy in helping the homeless, caring for children, investing in medicine and supporting education. Their incredible philanthropy touches dozens of organizations and thousands of lives.

"God has blessed us so we try to use our blessings to help others," explains Carolyn. "Sioux Falls is a wonderful community and we enjoy giving back. We're grateful for the opportunity to support so many good things."

One of those good things is USF. The Hinks have donated approximately \$1 million to USF, including funding for press box renovations at Bob Young Field. In over 20 years of faithful giving, they have supported many areas on campus including the USF Fund. The couple also partners with USF on furniture and flooring through their business, Furniture Mart USA.

While neither of the Hinks attended USF, their values and faith align with the University's Culture for Service motto. Over the years, the couple has formed strong relationships with some of USF's administration, staff, coaches and students.

"There are some very special people at USF with a strong vision for the future," says Bill. "We know people find Jesus at USF, and you can't help but

support a school with that kind of impact."

Making an impact is important to the Hinks. Their family-owned company is ranked in the Top 100 Furniture Retailers in America. There are 70 locations under the Furniture Mart USA brand, thanks to hard work, a commitment to quality and a heavy dose of faith.

"We started with a single furniture store back in 1977," says Bill. "I never thought we'd be where we are today. We try to honor the people who work for us and the people we serve."

Bill and Carolyn have five children who have all been part of the family business. Today there are nieces, nephews and grandchildren employed by the company. Despite an extensive list of awards and accomplishments, the couple agrees their greatest reward is the ability to serve others.

"I always notice and appreciate that they pray before games at USF," says Bill. "To us, serving the Lord is the most important thing." ■

GIVE2COO

2025 RESULTS

From March 18-20, the USF community came together to support our campus and the lives of our students. Thanks to hundreds of generous donors from across the country, a record-breaking \$321,830 was raised in just 48 hours during our 9th annual giving days.

48 HOURS

36 CHALLENGES

504 DONORS

\$321,830



Our community
has given over

\$1.8 Million

during our
annual giving
days!

102

NEW
donors!

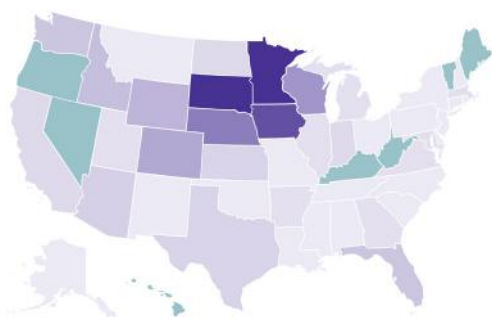
WHAT AN IMPACT!

- + ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS \$29,960
- + FINE ARTS \$23,805
- + ATHLETICS \$116,802
- + BASIC NEEDS \$6,235
- + CAMPUS MINISTRIES \$2,100
- + USF FUND \$142,928

SMALL GIFTS = BIG IMPACT

Nearly 70% of gifts were \$100 or less. Together, gifts of every size, from every person add up to make a big impact!

Gifts were received from **43 states!**



\$155,020

in challenge funds unlocked

Donors chose from any of the 20+ areas to support, and special challenge funds amplified their donations to have more impact than at any other time of the year!

Watch videos and
see the impact of
GIVE2COO!





FAITHFUL AND FEARLESS

A L U M N I S P O T L I G H T F E A T U R I N G

D R . J A C K I E D O O Y E M A ' 1 2

Recovering from two ankle surgeries in high school inspired Dr. Jackie Dooyema to pursue a career in physical therapy.

That decision started her down a path she never imagined. As owner of Fearless Physiotherapy in Sioux Falls, Dr. Dooyema specializes in women's pelvic floor health as it relates to the prenatal and postpartum stages of life.

"I chose USF for my undergraduate degree because I preferred smaller, more personal class sizes and the Christian faith component," she explains. "As I was earning my exercise science degree, I interned with some fantastic physical therapists and made valuable life connections."

One of those connections was especially significant.

"I met my husband Sam at USF," she says. "We share a deep faith and he is my biggest supporter."

After receiving her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree at USD and gaining experience at an outpatient orthopedic clinic, Dooyema and her husband moved to Nashville where she worked in a pelvic floor outpatient clinic. There, her desire to provide specialized women's care was ignited. When the Dooyemas moved back to South Dakota, she felt led to establish Fearless Physiotherapy.

"I provide cash-based, in-home physical therapy," she explains. "The concierge service allows me to focus on each person and provide customized care."

Fearless Physiotherapy was inspired by Psalm 34:4 "I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears."

"I want women to be strong, confident and fearless when it comes to their health. There is a stigma surrounding pelvic floor dysfunctions," she says. "Just because it's common doesn't mean it's normal."

After Dooyema became a mother and lost her oldest daughter at just 20 weeks, her advocacy for specialized prenatal and postpartum care deepened. So did her expertise.

"I became a certified birth doula," she explains. "I also spent two years receiving obstetrics physical therapy training from the American Physical Therapy Association."

In 2024, Dooyema received USF's Alumni Pacesetter Award, honoring graduates under age 35 who make a noticeable impact in their field.

"This wasn't possible on my own," she says. "All the glory goes to God." ■



EMBRACING THE USF DIFFERENCE

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT FEATURING

LOGAN ANDERSON

Last November, Logan Anderson was one of only 250 student-athletes from around the world selected to attend the NCAA Student-Athlete Leadership Forum. The attendees represented just .03% of all student-athletes in the NCAA.

"It was one of the most impactful things I have ever done," he says. "The experience changed my perspective on my career path and gave me a whole new vision for my life."

Anderson was nominated for the transformational leadership opportunity because of his role as vice president of USF's Student Athlete Advisory Committee, among other criteria. While attending the forum, he realized a desire for a career in athletics where he could utilize his interest in upholding policies, regulations and the law.

"I would like to pursue a career in athletics as a director of compliance or maybe something in game day operations," he explains. "Becoming an athletic director would be my ultimate goal."

Anderson is a junior criminal justice and psychology major who was recruited to play baseball for USF. He grew up in Omaha but wanted to attend college on a small campus

where he would be part of a tight-knit community.

"I love connecting with all types of people," he says. "USF has allowed me to meet friends who will be part of my life forever, whether it's teammates, classmates, professors or staff in the athletic department. The people here are amazing."

As a starting pitcher for USF, Anderson is proud to be part of the Cougar baseball team. He's also a student ambassador and enjoys recruiting prospective students to USF.

"I tell them how USF changed my life," he says simply.

Anderson's faith journey is a testament to that statement. He came to USF without a religious background but became interested in Christianity after classes with former campus pastor Dennis Thum. Friends on campus introduced him to Ransom Church where he was baptized in October 2023.

"USF is the prime driver behind my faith. I love going to church and attending services as much as I can," he explains. "I am fortunate to be at a place where I can grow my faith and learn about following Jesus. I know He led me to USF for a reason." ■



CALLED TO TEACH

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT FEATURING

DR. BRENDA PAULSEN '79

Some people quietly live big lives.

Dr. Brenda Paulsen is one of those people.

Paulsen retired from USF in December after 21 years of adjunct teaching. She was heavily involved in the theatre department, helped launch USF's doctorate program and brought inspiration to Christmas at USF.

Even more impressive, she began her career at age 44.

After graduating from Sioux Falls College in 1979 with an English degree, Paulsen married her husband, Thane, and had two daughters, Kate and Amanda. She directed her energy towards raising a family.

"In 1997, I was thinking about our looming empty nest and wondering what I was going to do with myself," she says. "God told me to get my master's degree and teach at USF."

Faithful discernment led her to earn a Master of Arts in English in 2003 and a Doctor of Education in Education Administration and Adult and Higher Education in 2016. She served USF as an adjunct professor, but her heart was on the job full-time.

"I loved being on campus," she says.

Paulsen initially taught undergraduate English and literature classes but ended her career leading doctoral courses. She also proposed and taught puppetry, playwriting and an interim travel study.

"In 2010 and 2011, Thane and I took students on a 10-day sailing trip. We studied literature of the high seas and Thane taught them how to sail," she explains. "It was an incredible experience."

The couple's love of sailing began on Lewis and Clark Lake and led them to the ocean. They spend months each year exploring the Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas and even embarked on a 3,300 mile voyage across the Atlantic, just the two of them, in a 39-foot sailboat.

This adventurous spirit is reflected in Paulsen's passion for the arts. Her theatrical influences inspired her to create the Paulsen Family Legacy Award for a theatre student who exhibits excellence in the theatre arts. She was also instrumental in bringing the "tableaux vivant" nativity scenes to Christmas at USF.

Paulsen summarizes her career with a quote from author Henri Nouwen.

"My whole life, I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work." ■

PLAYING THE COLLEGE ATHLETICS GAME

USF Upholds Christian Mission On and Off the Field



Navigating the ever-changing world of college athletics is a job that requires a dedicated staff and constant communication.

Fortunately, USF has the right people in place and a variety of resources to help the athletic department remain focused on what matters most: the student-athletes.

"The USF Athletic Department is motivated and engaged with all aspects of the student-athlete experience. When it comes to managing over 500 student-athletes and 18 different programs, we divide and conquer. I trust our staff and the process," says Jon Hart, director of intercollegiate athletics at USF.

Because of USF's small size, the athletic department is more nimble than larger institutions and does not have to fully deal with many of the controversial challenges associated with Division I programs.

"USF is in a strong position because we remain true to ourselves," says Hart. "We are transparent with incoming student-athletes about who we are and what to expect. We try not to become too involved with all the distractions happening in college athletics, but that doesn't mean we aren't paying attention and evolving."

Name, Image and Likeness (NIL)

The ability for student-athletes to profit from their name, image and likeness was made possible by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in 2021. This ruling unleashed a whole new revenue stream for college athletes, revolutionizing the industry in just four years. Currently, NIL mostly impacts Division I programs and competitors in higher revenue generating sports such as football and basketball, with some notable exceptions. But this may not always be the case.

"Discussions continue to happen about further enhancements for NIL at USF, but most Division II programs are in line with us right now," says Hart. "NIL is evolving every day and we're committed to staying on top of it."

USF promotes NIL opportunities on campus through websites like Influxer and Athlete's Thread, where student-athletes can set up their own online merchandising and receive a percentage of the revenue from various products associated with their name, image and

likeness. The self-directed NIL program is used by student-athletes from multiple sports at USF.

While the NIL frenzy has been a game-changer for national programs, smaller DII universities like USF continue to rely on benefits like team culture, community, environment and access to a quality education to attract athletes.

"At the DII level, a lot of the NIL opportunities are self-initiated," he says. "It's been great to see some of our USF student-athletes earning NIL revenue—nothing super significant but enough to cover some essential expenses throughout their college career," he says.



The Transfer Portal

The transfer portal was created by the NCAA in 2018 as a way of providing more freedom to athletes and schools in the recruitment process. Athletes can enter their names into the transfer portal during designated windows of time but are required to inform their university of their decision. The NCAA cautions student-athletes to be aware of all the rules and regulations regarding the transfer portal.

"The transfer portal has certainly changed the recruiting and roster management landscape of college athletics. Transferring has become the expected norm in the college experience," explains Hart. "Recent retention data shows we do a great job of retaining student-athletes at USF. In some cases, it makes sense for students to explore the portal but there is a lot of public data that reflects poor outcomes upon entering.

Unfortunately, there are many athletes entering the portal for the wrong reasons.”

Hart believes the key to retention is strategic recruiting and the student experience upon arrival. When student-athletes are being recruited to USF, coaches and staff emphasize academics, character, community and service. Honest, open communication helps avoid “wrong fits” and underscores USF’s desire for student-athletes who want to be at USF for the right reasons.

“Our interactions with the transfer portal mirror the NCAA rules,” he explains. “We take a very ethical, compliant and Christian approach when it comes to recruiting and working with transfers.”

Conference Affiliation

Being part of a strong conference is a key factor many athletes take into consideration when choosing schools. USF is a member of the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC), which currently includes 15 NCAA Division II universities across four states. The University of Jamestown will join the league as the 16th member in 2025-26.

“The NSIC is arguably one of the best conferences in NCAA DII,” he explains. “It’s a stable and competitive league with respected upper Midwest teams. Some conferences have significant travel demands, but USF is able to compete within a favorable geographical footprint. That is a win for our athletes, budgets and time in class.”

While there has been a recent surge in universities switching conferences in search of more stable competition, less financial burdens or higher revenues, schools in the NSIC remain loyal.

“USF is fortunate to be in the NSIC and our hope is to continue down a path of athletic and academic success within the league,” says Hart.

Even though USF is among the smallest universities in the NSIC, the Cougars are consistently ranked near the top both athletically and academically. For example, 27 student athletes from USF were awarded the NSIC Myles Brand All-Academic with Distinction Award in

January, the second-highest in the conference. USF also finished fifth in the NSIC All-Trophy standings in 2024.

A Final Word

“While the University takes pride in competing and winning at the NCAA Division II level, the mission of the USF Athletic Department is to build and model Christian values and character through athletics,” notes Hart. “This mission guides our decisions and will continue to help us be a leader in the NSIC and NCAA DII.” ■



SADIE VOSS

MAKING THE MOST OF NIL

I took the opportunity to create an Influxer account in September 2024, selling personalized gear with my name and number on it. I posted a link on my social media pages so friends and family could purchase my gear. I generated over \$1,000 in just a few months.

NIL is an amazing concept because it allows collegiate athletes to earn money from their personal brand, which we work hard to build. I am grateful to USF for seeking NIL opportunities for us!

SADIE VOSS, USF VOLLEYBALL

CLASS NOTES

All notes are based on information received between October 1, 2024 and February 28, 2025. Send us your update today at usioxfalls.edu/keepintouch.

// CELEBRATIONS

Alumni

Traci (Mertens) '05 married Adam Gustafson on Nov. 2, 2024

Troy Roskens '05 and Amanda welcomed Neil Finn on Oct. 7, 2024

Julie (Elder) '09 married Abraham Duut on Dec. 2, 2023

Ali (Clevenger) '11 and Josh Slawski welcomed Isaac on July 5, 2024

Rachel (Gould) '14 married Andrew Miller on Nov. 16, 2024

Alix (Kooistra Jansma Fear) '15 and **Tanner Grotewold '15** welcomed Cooper Lee on March 21, 2024

Lauren (Nelson) '16 married Andrew Kennedy on Oct. 28, 2023

Tanner Wangsness '16 married Leanne Leader on Sept. 7, 2024

Haley (Boyer) '18 and Patrick Gillespie welcomed Layla Elizabeth on Oct. 30, 2024

Faith (Voehl) '18 married Evan Hagen '18 on June 23, 2018 and welcomed Ava

Ellie (Herman) '19 married Joshua Sherod on Sept. 28, 2024

Laycee (Cain) '20 and Jared Kluin welcomed Mara Jo on Sept. 15, 2024

Haley (Robinson) '20 married **Kyle Gulbrandson '22** on June 8, 2024

Alyssa (Micke) '21 and Jon Bausch welcomed Casen on Jan. 21, 2025

Bria (Braniff) '22 married **Jackson Andersen '23** on May 25, 2024

Grace (Bundesen) '22 married Preston Wilhelmi on June 22, 2024

Kelsey (Sutton) '23 married **Riley Robinson '23** on Oct. 14, 2023

Laura (Gerber) '24, married **Benjamin Wollmuth '23** on July 20, 2024

// IN MEMORIAM

Alumni

Shirley (Norberg) Hoehl '48, Dec. 4, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD

Dorothy (Benson) Williamson '49, Oct. 31, 2024, Brookings, SD

Clarke (Hutchison) Hoover '58, Feb. 21, 2025, Sioux Falls, SD

Bev (DeLong) Whitaker '61, Oct. 6, 2024, Fort Myers, FL

Don Carlson '61, Dec. 26, 2024, Sun City, AZ

Warren Camp '63, Jan. 30, 2025, Minneapolis, MN

Steve Wilkening '67, Nov. 17, 2024, Noblesville, IN

Terry Parks '67, Dec. 26, 2024, Sheboygan, WI

Ben Johnson '67, Jan. 3, 2025, Watertown, SD

Rich Larson '68, Nov. 18, 2024, Sergeant Bluff, IA

Elizabeth McDowell '69, Jan. 21, 2025, Beloit, WI

Michael Carlson '70, Oct. 11, 2024, Lennox, SD

Douglas Modica '70, Jan. 12, 2025, Watertown, SD

Jim Palmer '70, Feb. 6, 2025, Sioux Falls, SD

Harry Conklin '71, Jan. 24, 2025, Elk Point, SD

Steve Burke '72, Aug. 16, 2024, Larimore, ND

Loren Anderson '73, Feb. 23, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD

Ronald Ballard '73, Nov. 4, 2024, Washington, DC

Larry VanderPoel '73, Nov. 21, 2024, Oakdale, MN

Gary Burley '73, Jan. 3, 2025, Sioux Falls, SD

Ted Boal '74, Oct. 4, 2024, Maple Grove, MN

Deb (Bendt) Wellesley-Ratcliffe '75, Nov. 27, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD

Eric Oines '76, Sep. 6, 2024, Williston, ND

Donnis (Hoogestraat) Reese '77, Jan. 2, 2025, East Lansing, MI

Timothy Sinkey '78, Oct. 29, 2024, Aurora, CO

Steve Winter '85, Nov. 4, 2024, Lake Andes, SD

Carol Stewart '85, Nov. 29, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD

Ann Weg '86, July 19, 2024, Worthington, MN

Troy Nieuwsma '93, Oct. 19, 2024, Kittredge, CO

Eric Case '94, Jan. 9, 2025, Holmdel, NJ

Patricia (Fried) Dysthe '99, Aug. 28, 2024, Beaver Creek, MN

Friends

Dale Hart, Aug. 12, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD

Peggy Nyhaug, Dec. 24, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD

Julie Pepper, Oct. 1, 2024, Sioux Falls, SD

Jean Sonneman, Aug. 3, 2024, New Prague, MN

UNIVERSITY OF SIOUX FALLS

Alumni Achievement **AWARDS**

Alumni Pacesetter Award

Dr. A. O. Larsen Distinguished Alumni Award

Dr. Firman A. Early Distinguished Ministry Award

Lois Harchanko Distinguished Music Award

Submit your award nominations before June 1
usiouxfalls.edu/awards

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