

IOWA WESTERN

A Magazine for Alumni & Friends

2026
OUTSTANDING
ALUM
Kori Nelson

in this issue

Fall 2026

2026 Outstanding Alum :: Iowa Western: 60 Years of Impact

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This year, Iowa Western Community College celebrates 60 years of serving students, communities, and employers across southwest Iowa and beyond. Since 1966, the college has grown and adapted alongside the region, expanding programs, facilities, and opportunities while remaining focused on what matters most: helping people build better futures.

While much has changed over the last 60 years, our purpose remains the same. Iowa Western continues to empower learners, advance communities, and improve lives by providing accessible, high-quality education and training that creates opportunity and strengthens the region. Every day, we see that impact through our students, alumni, employees, and community partners.

As you read through this issue, I hope you'll take a moment to reflect on the role Iowa Western has played in your own story. Whether you attended classes here, supported the college, or watched a family member earn a degree, you have helped shape the institution we are today.

Anniversaries provide an opportunity to look back, but they also remind us to keep moving forward. Iowa Western's greatest impact isn't found only in the accomplishments of the past 60 years, it's in the and opportunities that lie ahead.

Thank you for being part of the Iowa Western story.

Dr. Dan Kinney
President, Iowa Western



Contents

- 2 Letter from Iowa Western President: Dr. Dan Kinney
- 4 Iowa Western: 60 Years of Impact
- 6 Business & Community Education
- 8 Business Administration: Then and Now
- 10 Iowa Western Outstanding Alum: Kori Nelson
- 13 High School: College Early-Start
- 15 Snapshot: Reiver Athletics
- 18 Alumni & Community Relations
- 20 Homecoming 2026

Iowa Western Alumni Magazine

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Fall 2026



60 YEARS OF IMPACT

Empowering Learners. Advancing Communities. Improving Lives.

For 60 years, Iowa Western Community College has been changing lives through education, innovation, and a commitment to serving southwest Iowa and beyond. The college's story began amid a statewide effort to expand access to higher education. Following the passage of area school legislation on June 7, 1965, seven county boards of education, representing Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby counties, joined together to propose the creation of Iowa Western Community College. After campus locations were selected, the State Board of Public Instruction approved the proposal in February 1966, officially establishing the institution and marking the beginning of Iowa Western's mission to serve Southwest Iowa. Since opening its doors in 1966, the college has grown from a small, emerging community college serving a handful of vocational students into a comprehensive institution that reaches thousands of learners each year. Along the way, Iowa Western has remained focused on creating opportunities for students of every age and stage of life.

Iowa Western's early years laid the foundation for decades of growth. Clarinda Junior College, founded in 1923, became one of the institution's first campuses, while Council Bluffs was selected as the site of a new campus that would become the college's central hub. The college launched its first vocational-technical programs in Council Bluffs in January 1967 and expanded its offerings with a full liberal arts curriculum in 1968, reinforcing its commitment to providing broad educational opportunities throughout the region.

From the college's first commencement in 1968 to the expansion of regional centers, student housing, academic programs, and workforce partnerships, Iowa Western's history is a story of growth driven by community needs. Each new facility,

program, and initiative has reflected a commitment to helping students succeed while strengthening the communities we serve.

Over the decades, generations of students, alumni, faculty, staff, donors, and community partners have helped shape Iowa Western's legacy. Landmark additions such as residence halls, the iconic clock tower, the Arts Center, the Clarinda Center's Center of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing (CEAM), and state-of-the-art academic and athletic facilities have enhanced the student experience while establishing Iowa Western as a regional leader. Investments in academic programs and workforce training have opened doors to rewarding careers and helped drive economic growth throughout western Iowa.

As we celebrate this milestone anniversary, we reflect not only on the college's achievements, but also on the people behind them. Their dedication, support, and belief in the power of education have built the foundation for six decades of success. Today, Iowa Western continues to empower learners, advance communities, and improve lives, carrying forward the mission that has guided the institution for generations. As new opportunities emerge and future students begin their own journeys, Iowa Western remains committed to helping them succeed while strengthening the communities we call home. The story of Iowa Western is still being written, and our brightest chapters are yet to come. 

1966



State Legislature approves a community college system in Iowa

1970



General Education Graduation at the Page-Fremont County Center.

1986



Iowa Western celebrates 20 years

1996



Iowa Western's clocktower was designed and constructed by students

2003



Aviation Technology Center completed at the Council Bluffs Airport

2010



Student Center with cafeteria, college store, culinary arts and library opens

2017



Ribbon cutting at Clarinda's Center of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing

2021



The Dr. John and Jean Marshall Wellness Center was completed

2026



New Transportation & Logistics Building advances CTE expansion

Locations

MAIN CAMPUS

Iowa Western
Council Bluffs, IA

CENTERS

Clarinda Center
Clarinda, IA

Cass County Center
Atlantic, IA

Shelby County Center
Harlan, IA

Page/Fremont County Center
Shenandoah, IA

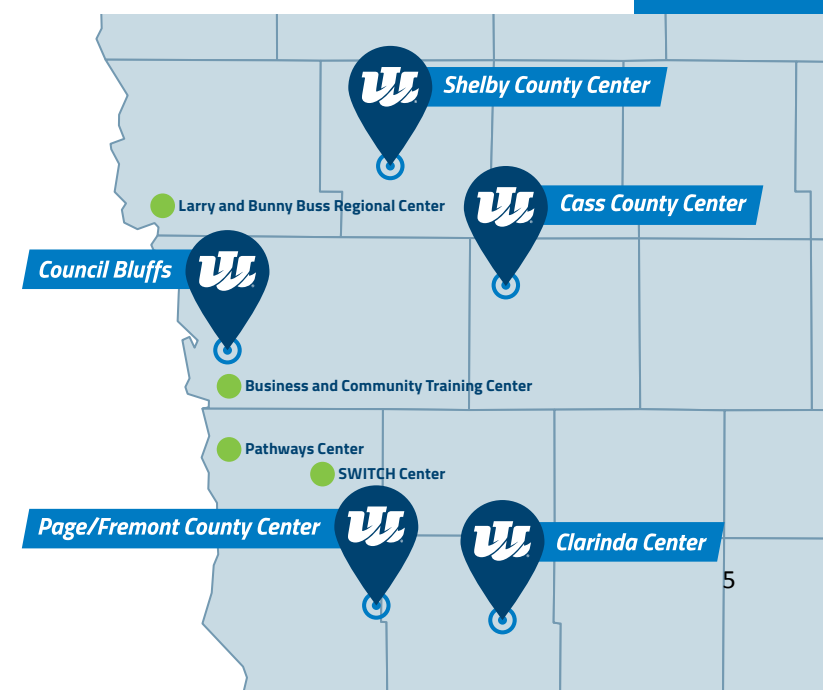
REGIONAL CENTERS

Business and Community Training Center
Council Bluffs, IA

Larry and Bunny Buss Regional Center
Missouri Valley, IA

Pathways Center
Glenwood, IA

SWITCH Center
Hastings, IA



Business and Community EDUCATION

By Kara Schweiss

Iowa Western Community College’s Business & Community Education (BCE) division emerged soon after the college’s 1966 formation to serve as a bridge between education, employers and the community with programming outside of traditional degree programs. It’s played an important role ever since.

“The Business & Community Education division connects people, businesses and communities with practical learning opportunities that support workforce development, career advancement and lifelong learning,” Director of Community Education Libby Woods said. “The development was driven by the growing need for accessible, flexible education and workforce training that could quickly respond to the needs of local businesses, industries and community members. As workforce demands evolved, the college recognized the importance of offering short-term training, professional development, adult education and customized programs that helped individuals gain skills, advance careers and support regional economic growth.”

Serving nearly 7,700 students annually, BCE now encompasses a broad spectrum of programming for adult learners with coursework in sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, skilled trades and technology. BCE curriculum also includes safety training and customized contract education for employers. The division responds deftly to evolving needs in southwest Iowa from



industry-specific training and certifications to general leadership development and personal enrichment courses.

Many programs lead to industry-recognized credentials or professional licensure, creating pathways for students to enter or advance in the workforce. Employers collaborate with Iowa Western to identify skill gaps and instructors tailor curriculum to address specific workforce needs from specialized welding techniques to transportation certifications.

“To meet today’s workforce; that’s what we’re here to do. We might be taking someone who’s underemployed or unemployed and preparing them for the workforce, or we might be taking a worker who is already working and then making sure that we upscale them, that they stay relevant with their skills in this market today, because it’s changing so much,” said Matt Mancuso, vice president of Business & Community Education. “(If) we see a need and we don’t have that program, we can create that program, get students in and get them to that company that needs them more quickly.”

The program’s business and community partnerships are numerous and diverse with Iowa-based organizations like Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital in Council Bluffs, Lisle Corporation in Clarinda, Pella Windows & Doors, the Council Bluffs Fire Department and Pacific Junction-based AgriVision along with national companies like Google. That’s just naming a few, Mancuso said. “We have so many partnerships.”

Mancuso believes that responsiveness and agility have fostered BCE division’s success.



Workforce training initiative at ConAgra’s Council Bluffs Foods facility.



AgriVision Graduation Ceremony

“Business and Community Education is *about* more than classes and training programs; it is about *transforming* lives and *strengthening* communities.”
-Libby Woods

“Our division, I would say, prides itself on being a little more adaptive... not doing a cookie-cutter program for everybody but keeping that customized training that we want to do,” he said.

Beyond its public offerings, BCE partners with businesses and organizations throughout the region to deliver on-site training and professional development. The division also serves adult learners through HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) preparation, English language instruction and educational programming at the Clarinda Correctional Facility, helping individuals learn lifechanging skills that can lead to new opportunities.

The division’s impact extends well beyond instructional time for both individual students and the larger community, Woods said.

“BCE is about more than classes and training programs; it is about transforming lives and strengthening communities... Every program, partnership and student success story reflects the division’s commitment to meeting people where they are and helping them move forward,” she said. “BCE serves students by providing flexible, accessible and career-focused learning opportunities designed to meet students where they are in life and in their educational journey. The division focuses on practical, real-world education that helps students quickly apply what they learn to improve their personal, educational and professional goals.” [iw](#)



AgriVision Graduate



HiSet Graduation



Workforce Generator Training Program; partnership with PowerTech and Kohler Generators

When classes at Iowa Western Community College first began in 1966, the vision for business education was straightforward – prepare students for the careers and opportunities that were driving Southwest Iowa’s economy.

When Ward Bean joined the Iowa Western faculty a year later, his quest was to develop business and clerical programs as well as vocational training programs that offered certificates upon program completion. “In 1967 and 1968, my efforts were directed toward developing an executive secretary, training program and a clerical training program,” said Bean, who graduated from Northwest Missouri State College in 1961 and taught at Thomas Jefferson High School before coming to Iowa Western. “We started with a handful of programs, dedicated faculty and a commitment to practical, hands-on learning. What I could not have imagined then was how dramatically the world of business – and our department – would evolve over the next six decades.” This summer, Iowa Western’s business department celebrates its 60th anniversary – having grown from a couple of students in classrooms to thousands of students online, in traditional classrooms, dual-enrollment partnerships and industry-driven programs. Each prepares graduates for careers that were largely inconceivable six decades ago. Yet, despite its remarkable growth, the department remains rooted in

the same mission that guided Iowa Western from the beginning: providing accessible, affordable education that helps students build successful futures and strengthens the communities served. “It’s our mission each year to assess current programs, and as we are this year, add new ones that make sense to our curriculum and the business environment,” said Department Chair, Assistant Professor Jean Nzumgang Fonkoua. “Each assessment let’s us know what’s working and what needs to be changed or updated. Adding new options – like Supply Chain Management this coming fall – keeps things fresh and current.” In the fall of 1969, Bean said he worked closely with Dr. Ernie Zuber of the College of Business at the University of Iowa to develop the two-year associate degree college credit business administration program. “It was offered on a part-time basis in the evening, and classes were held at Abraham Lincoln High School because we had very limited instructional spaces,” he said. Eventually, permanent buildings were erected on the Council Bluffs campus and the business program offered courses on campus for full-time day students as well as part-time evening students.

As the college grew, so did the business program, expanding its curriculum to include emerging fields and technological advancements. During the 1970s and 1980s, as Iowa and the nation experienced economic shifts, the business program at Iowa Western adapted accordingly. The introduction of computer technology in the 1990s transformed how business was conducted, and Iowa Western responded by incorporating computer courses into its offerings. Faculty members, many of whom were industry professionals, brought real-world experiences into the classroom, enhancing the learning environment. With the new millennium, the addition of online courses reflected the changing landscape of education and the needs of non-traditional students. Today, Iowa Western Community College’s business program stands as a testament to the institution’s commitment to education and community development. With a diverse range of courses, dedicated faculty, and strong industry connections, the program prepares students for a variety of career paths in an ever-changing economy. “As we move forward, we will always have the students’ best interest in mind for faculty, curriculum and opportunities to grow in a business world that is always changing,” Nzumgang Fonkoua said. *uw*

BUSINESS Administration

Through the Years: Growing to Meet Student Needs

By Mike Watkins



Supply Chain Management PROGRAM

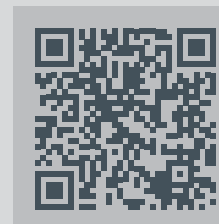
In Fall 2026, Iowa Western introduced a new Supply Chain Management Associate of Applied Science degree. The two-year program is designed to provide students with a foundation in supply chain operations, including purchasing, logistics, inventory, transportation, and operations.

Students will develop practical skills that support the movement of products and materials through the supply chain.

Supply chain professionals help ensure products get where they need to go, supporting operations across industries such as manufacturing, retail, distribution, and transportation. The program will eventually be housed in Iowa Western’s new Transportation and Logistics Building once construction is complete.

FOLLOW THE PROGRESS

To follow the progress of Iowa Western’s Career and Technical Education expansion, including the new Transportation and Logistics Building, visit the Career & Technical Education Construction Updates page.



Rendering of the future Transportation and Logistics building.



OUTSTANDING ALUM

Kori Nelson

By Kara Schweiss

Outstanding Alum Kori Nelson speaks very fondly of her time at Iowa Western Community College 30 years ago. “I was offered academic and athletic scholarships for volleyball and softball. Iowa Western gave me the opportunity to stay close to home while going to college and I was excited to get to experience playing college sports and traveling with the team,” the Council Bluffs native said. “I was fortunate to be able to experience sports in college, spend time with teammates and travel, and learn from passionate teachers. I also actually became great friends with a former high school opponent, Elizabeth Opal (now Escritt), who played for Abraham Lincoln but became an Iowa Western teammate... She and I were both selected as Academic All-Americans for our work in the classroom and on the ball field.”

Nelson said she appreciated not only Iowa Western’s

athletic opportunities, but also the “small-town feel” of the campus.

“It kept me in my comfort zone, while also allowing me to grow and meet students from many different cities and states. The teachers/professors were very caring and genuinely interested in our successes. The class sizes were perfect and the campus was peaceful,” she said. “As of late, the improvements to Iowa Western have been amazing to witness. I almost wish I was about 30 years younger to be able to experience it all now as a student-athlete.”

After earning an associate degree in biology from Iowa Western, Nelson went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Nebraska Omaha. At just 22 years old, she assumed the position of executive director of the Historic General Dodge House, a national historic landmark in Council Bluffs. During her 18-year tenure, she brought new life and vision to the organization, helping restore the historic

home and grounds to more closely resemble the physical state of the property when it was occupied by the Dodge family after its 1869 construction.

The work opened doors to numerous interesting experiences as well as recognition from the community, Nelson said. She was a Leadership Council Bluffs Class XII (1999-2000) graduate. She has served as Heritage Day bus tour narrator for the Adult and Youth Leadership Classes hosted by the Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce since the early 2000s. In 2002, she received the Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce Tour Guide of the Year Award and also was a National Park Service Conference speaker in Little Rock, Arkansas that year. She was twice invited to be a speaker on historic homes and architects for former Iowa First Lady Christie Vilsack at Terrace Hill, the governor’s mansion in Des Moines. By mayoral appointment, Nelson served on the Council Bluffs Convention and Visitors Bureau board from 2014 to 2017. She has also been honored by the Daily Nonpareil and Midlands Business Journal’s “40 Under 40.” She even found time to serve on the boards of the Wabash Trace Nature Trail and Friends of Union Pacific Railroad.

Nelson took a different direction in her nonprofit career

“I appreciate every person I have had the opportunity to work alongside.”
-Kori Nelson

when she joined Midlands Humane Society, expanding the organization’s footprint for the numbers of animals rescued and adopted and also seeing an increase in support from corporate and private donors, improved special events and a larger social media presence.

Her community accomplishments continued with graduations from the Nonprofit Association of the Midlands Non-Profit Executive Institute (NEI) in 2017 and the Make it Happen class sponsored by the Iowa Council of Foundations and facilitated by the Community Foundation for Western Iowa 2020. In 2021, she and fellow Midlands Humane Society co-workers completed the Service Enterprise Initiative through the Points of Light Foundation.

In 2022, Nelson made another career shift. She now serves as the executive director of Horses Help SWI, Inc., an equine service center founded by Linda Heithoff Borman and located about five miles east of Council Bluffs along Hwy 92. Its mission

is “To provide equine-assisted services in a safe and inclusive environment for individuals with physical, cognitive, emotional or social challenges.”

“In just the last couple of years, we have grown our programs to include adaptive riding and basic horsemanship, mental health therapies for area veterans, group activities and growth opportunities for youth in need, senior programming to help those living with dementia, and a new educational program that focuses on helping struggling readers learn alongside horses, all while surrounded by nature,” Nelson said, adding that she became a Certified Adaptive Riding Instructor in 2023 and a Certified Horse Powered Reading Instructor in 2025 as part of the role.

“Horses and weather teach you a lot about life regarding trust, patience, adaptability, acceptance



Continued Page 12

and good humor,” she said.

It’s been a great career path so far, she said. “I have been incredibly blessed to have served in leadership roles with three very unique nonprofits in Council Bluffs. From taking the helm of a very well-established museum, the Historic General Dodge House in 1999, to working on development and marketing with the Midlands Humane Society in 2017—which was only a couple years old at the time—to starting a nonprofit, Horses Help SWI, Inc., from scratch and working through so many exciting and challenging elements,” she said. “Working with great team members—staff and volunteers—has been key every time, and I appreciate every person I have had the opportunity to work alongside.”

Nelson noted with amusement that she was actually Kori Nielsen in her Iowa Western days (“I did not change my name much when I got married.”) High school sweetheart Eric Nelson started his private law practice shortly after the couple married, served as a public defender for a time, and is now a District Court Judge for the 4th District State of Iowa.

“Funny story about us is that we were both in a modeling show at the Midlands Mall during the mid-to-late 1980s, and we ended up being partners on the runway during the dance skit we all had to perform for the crowd. He was the lone boy in the show, and I was the lucky girl who got to be partnered with him,” Nelson said. “We met again as teenagers while at a youth dance at Westfair, but it wasn’t until we had been dating for a while in high school that we discovered our initial connection so many years ago at Midlands Mall.”

The Nelsons have a daughter, Brooke, entering her senior year at Lewis Central High School and a son, Bryce, entering his sophomore year at Saint Albert Catholic. Not surprisingly, the family also has four-



legged members, one dog and two cats adopted from Midlands Humane Society. Brooke and Bryce are active in multiple sports, and their parents, both former athletes, have coached several teams throughout the years.

“My husband went to Lewis Central, I went to St. Albert, and then our children both go to each one of the respective schools now as well,” Nelson said, adding that family and community have always been important in her life and career. “My parents, Mike and Barb Nielsen, are the best parents and grandparents anyone could ask for and have always been willing to help volunteer with every career I’ve had. They also provide amazing care for our children.”

Nelson fostered ongoing connections to Iowa Western soon after graduating.

“I was honored to have been asked to be an Iowa Western Commencement Speaker in the early 2000s. What is interesting about this is that I wasn’t even able to attend my own Iowa Western graduation in 1997 because we were traveling for softball, so my first Iowa Western graduation ceremony was up at the podium helping to give the accolades to others,” she said. “During my time at the Dodge House, I was regularly on campus for televised interviews with Iowa Western Television and I worked with The River 89.7 radio station for their adoptable pet promotion when I was with Midlands Humane Society.”

She continues to maintain ties with her alma mater today.

“I live 10 minutes away from Iowa Western and my son’s school plays their football games on the Iowa Western field, which is an amazing partnership and opportunity for our high school athletes to play on fields of this caliber,” she said. “I stay in touch with the school through the Black Tie festivities and by attending shows at the Arts Center.” 



HIGH SCHOOL

COLLEGE EARLY START

By Mike Watkins

The program allows Iowa students in grades 9-12 to enroll in college-level courses while still attending high school. Through partnerships with local school districts, students can earn transferable college credits, complete career certifications and experience the rigor and expectations of higher education in a supportive environment.

Since its founding, the program has grown into a major component of Iowa Western’s overall enrollment and outreach efforts, connecting students from dozens of school districts with real college coursework before they ever receive a high school diploma.

And while thousands of high school students throughout southwest Iowa earn this advantage each year, Iowa Western Community College’s College Early Start Program provides something far more valuable than college credit.

It creates confidence.

“Students begin seeing themselves as college students earlier, and they gain valuable skills in time management, communication and independence before they graduate high school,” said Kim Wollenhaupt, Dean of High School Partnerships & Student Advancement at Iowa Western.

“Seeing them succeed in the college experience while still high school students, trying out new classes and learning, is really fun to see. For many of them, it’s lifechanging.”

A rising junior at Abraham Lincoln High School, Ana Watkins took her first class as part of Iowa Western’s College Early Start Program last winter.

For her, the experience – and opportunity – to earn college credit while still a high school student was a privilege she admitted she knew she couldn’t pass up.

Watkins took an online developmental psychology class and plans to take 3-plus classes this upcoming year toward an associate’s degree.

“I found plenty of value in the experience as I want to become a therapist, and this class taught me so much which makes me feel more confident to take it on.”

The College Early Start (CES) program has become one of



CERTIFICATE PATHWAYS

Automotive

Nurse Aide Certificate

Culinary Arts: Food Technician

Diesel

Industrial Tech

Industrial Tech Certificate

Welding



Iowa Western's most influential educational pipelines, helping thousands of students transition from high school to college while giving them a meaningful head start on careers, certifications and degrees.

College Early Start offers pathways ranging from transferable general education courses to career-focused certificate programs, including welding, automotive, industrial and diesel technology, culinary arts, and nurse aide training.

In some cases, students graduate from high school already holding an industry-recognized credential that allows them to immediately enter the workforce or continue advanced study.

What makes the program especially impactful is its accessibility. High schools typically cover tuition costs for participating students, allowing families to save thousands of dollars on future college expenses.

At the same time, students gain valuable experience learning how to navigate college expectations, time management and academic responsibility.

For many, the experience removes much of the anxiety associated with beginning college after high school graduation.

"We describe the program as a way to create 'academic momentum' while easing the transition into higher education," Wollenhaupt said. "Students are introduced to college syllabi, deadlines, independent learning and classroom expectations long before arriving on campus as full-time freshmen. That early exposure often translates into improved college readiness and stronger long-term outcomes."

An important upcoming change is the scope and growth of College Early Start – both geographically and in the variety of opportunities available to students.

This partnership model is no longer limited to just traditional academic coursework. For example, the recent additions of the College Academy Centers in Missouri Valley (BUSS Ctr), SWITCH (Southwest Iowa Technical Career Hub-Hastings, IA), and the Glenwood Pathways Center (in Glenwood) initiatives have significantly expanded opportunities for students.

These programs allow students to access career and technical education pathways, dual credit trades programming, and hands-on learning experiences closer to home.

"One thing Dr. Kinney often highlights, and I think it's incredibly important, is that once the CTE expansion project is completed, every high school student in our region will be within 30 miles of dual credit trades offerings," Wollenhaupt said.

"This is a huge step forward for educational equity and workforce development because it removes barriers related to travel and accessibility while opening doors for students who may not have otherwise considered postsecondary education or skilled trades careers. We're expanding access in meaningful ways that connect directly to workforce needs and student interests across our region." 

REIVER ATHLETICS

By Travis Jacobson

The Standard is the Standard. Iowa Western Reiver Athletics continues to define that standard, and since 2020, 145 national championships have been brought back to "The Bluffs".

The 2025–26 season saw continued success both on the field and in the classroom, as the Reivers added six team national championships and 25 individual national titles to an already impressive trophy case. The Reivers also earned national runner-up finishes in women's cross country, women's half marathon, men's bowling, and women's outdoor track & field.

Men's and women's swimming continued their rapid rise, with two third-place finishes at the national championships in just the program's second season. Overall, 21 Reiver teams competed at their respective national championship events during the year. The Reivers used top-five finishes in football, women's indoor and outdoor track & field, men's bowling, women's cross country, and

men's and women's swimming to win their fifth straight NATYCCA Ron Case Cup.

Equally impressive was the success achieved in the classroom. A total of 405 student-athletes earned ICCAC Academic All-Region honors by maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

SM

Continued Page 16



Head Football Coach, Scott Strohmeier celebrates after winning the 2025 National Championship.

HALF MARATHON

For the second year in a row, Iowa Western Men's Cross Country claimed the NJCAA Half Marathon title. The Reivers saw their top three runners inside the top 10, with Sophomore Barnabas Ndiwa defending his 2024 title with a photo finish over teammate Geoffrey Ronoh. Iowa Western topped ICCAC opponent Iowa Central CC and New Mexico JC by over 20 points.

FOOTBALL

A season dedicated to Emily Strohmeier, Iowa Western capped off its fifth straight NJCAA D1 Football national title game appearance by defeating Hutchinson CC 28-10 for Head Coach Scott Strohmeier's fourth national championship. In the title game, down 10-0 after the first quarter, the Reivers scored 28 unanswered points and held the Blue Dragons to just 57 total yards of offense over the final three quarters of play. Mike Blackburn's defense sacked the quarterback nine times, adding to a NJCAA single-season record of 74 QB sacks. Iowa Western Quarterback Malachi Marshall was named the NJCAA Offensive Player of the Year and was one of 12 Reivers to be named All-Americans. Additionally, at the 2026 NFL Draft in Pittsburgh, six former Reivers heard their name called, a NJCAA record for a single draft.

WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD

For the fifth time in six years, Iowa Western Women's Track & Field brought home the NJCAA D1 Women's Indoor Track & Field National Championship. The Reivers were once again led by Sophomore sensation Juliana Sakat, whose 42.5 points were good for 8th place by herself in the team standings. Sakat defended her 2025 Mile, 1000m, 3000m, and 5000m titles while anchoring the winning distance medley relay team. Freshman high jumper Yman Ossie Tchiengue won her first title as a Reiver with a mark of 1.81m.

The Reivers also had a strong showing at outdoor nationals in Hobbs, NM. Iowa Western saw five more individual national titles. Sophomore Elizabeth Ewusie captured the 3000m steeplechase, while Freshman Natasha Lynch easily won women's hammer throw with a school record toss of 58.75m. The team fell a half point shy of their second outdoor title in a row, finishing behind the hosts, New Mexico JC.

For Sakat, she finishes her two-year track & field career as the most decorated athlete in NJCAA Track & Field history with 16 national titles, 12 school records, and two national records. The Ghanaian will return in the Fall for her final season of cross country.

The women's track & field program has won seven team titles (5 indoor, 2 outdoor) and an incredible 63 individual titles since 2021.

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S WRESTLING

First-year head coaches Myranda Velazquez and Brayden Curry crowned their first national champions at the 2026 NJCAA Wrestling Championships in Council Bluffs. Sophomore Ayana Fletcher, who took the 160 lbs title in 2025, wrestled for just 13 minutes en route to the 145 lbs crown while Tony Palmer handled his finals opponent easily, winning by pinfall in just 1:26. A total of 12 Reivers finished the national tournament with All-American honors and the men's team earned a top-10 finish.

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SWIMMING

In just their second season as a program, Iowa Western Men's and Women's Swimming finished on the team podium with a pair of third-place finishes. Two Reivers earned three individual national titles: Sam Brunel won the

men's 1000-yard and 200-yard freestyle and Marsol Bernat took home the men's 200-yard butterfly. Brunel would also finish second in the 500-yard and 1650-yard Freestyle, while Marsol earned a top five finish in the 50-yard fly, 100-yard fly, and 100-yard IM.

On the women's side, Sophomore Sammy Diaz finished top five in the 200-yard freestyle, 500-yard freestyle, 1000-yard freestyle, and the 1650-yard freestyle. Kaylee Johnson finished in 4th place in the 200 IM, and Sophomore Emily Walters finished third in the 100 IM and fifth in the 200 IM.

SHOTGUN SPORTS

All they do is win. Iowa Western Shotgun Sports claimed the program's fifth consecutive national championship and 4th ACUI title since 2022 at the National Shooting Complex.

The Reivers broke 2,811 targets out of a possible 3,000 across six different disciplines to win the 2026 ACUI/SCTP Division

IV High Overall Championship, finishing 82 points ahead of second-place Iowa Central.

Iowa Western finished at the top in five of six categories; their only blemish was second place in Super Sporting by just two targets. American Trap was the team's best event, going 499 of 500 in the discipline. Leo Brand, Michael Day, Gavin Kuck, and Makin Germis all shot perfect scores.

Abby Johnson claimed the 4th individual title of her Iowa Western career, winning Women's Double Skeet. Payton Kruse secured her second title, winning Women's Super Sporting, and Michael Day also won his second, coming away with the Men's American Trap title.

For Head Coach Derek Pollock, in his 8th season at the helm, the program has seen 17 individual champions, four ACUI Division IV team titles, and one NCSSAA Division V national title. **uw**

IOWA WESTERN Team National Championships

Men's Half Marathon 2025 NJCAA



Football 2025 NJCAA



Cheerleading 2026 UCA Worlds



Women's Indoor Track & Field 2026 NJCAA



Shotgun Sports 2026 ACUI Division 4



Dance 2026 Hip-Hop





2026 Celebrate CB Parade



Left: Mike Hoy
Right: Arnaldo Ovalles

ALUMNI & COMMUNITY



MAKING WAVES IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP

As the youngest female mayor elected in U.S. history, Iowa Western graduate Eva Fipps is bringing fresh energy, vision, and dedication to public service.

We shine a spotlight on Iowa Western alum and Henderson, Iowa Mayor Eva Fipps. Eva's journey is anything but ordinary. After

Eva's story is about much more than making history. It's about service, determination, and believing that one person can make a difference.



Want to learn more? Scan the QR code to watch Eva's full story and discover how a passion for service, a dedication to community, and a willingness to take a chance led to a historic path in leadership.

graduating from Iowa Western while dual-enrolled at Treynor High School, a spur-of-the-moment decision to run for office led to a historic achievement: becoming the youngest female mayor elected in United States history.

Driven by a passion for serving others and a vision for her community's future, Eva earned the trust of Henderson residents and secured a decisive election victory. Today, at just 20 years old, she continues to champion growth and opportunity as a representative voice for Mills County, working to revitalize rural communities and inspire the next generation of leaders.

Despite her groundbreaking accomplishment, Eva remains humble, approachable, and deeply committed to the people she serves. She credits Iowa Western with providing the opportunities, experiences, and support that helped shape her leadership journey and gave her the confidence to pursue her goals.

Throughout the year, Iowa Western brings alumni, friends, and community members together through events that celebrate Reiver pride and strengthen connections. From Homecoming festivities and alumni recognition events to community celebrations like the Celebrate CB Parade, these gatherings create opportunities to reconnect, network, and make lasting memories.

Follow the Iowa Western Alumni Association on Facebook and Instagram to stay connected and learn about upcoming events.



ALUMNI BOARD left to right: Pam Beall-Hill, Rhea Eitmann, Jeannie Aldredge, Diane Osbahr, Mike Watkins, Beth Smith, Bailey McQueen Jones, Melissa Head, Brandon Green.



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STAY CONNECTED

WE LOVE HEARING WHAT OUR ALUMNI ARE UP TO!

Share your latest milestones, including a new job, promotion, degree, award, family addition, or other life updates.

You can also update your contact information to ensure you receive alumni news, event invitations, and future issues of this magazine.

Scan the QR code, visit our website under the Friends & Alumni tab, or email us.

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