DEAR FRIENDS,

I selected this year’s Impact cover photo because it shows the greatest day of the year at Illinois Institute of Technology. Commencement is a celebration of proud families honoring their scholar’s accomplishments, grateful parents happy to see the end of a tuition bill, and excited graduates joining the Alumni Association.

My view is a little different. I see Commencement as a reflection of the philanthropy that made this day possible. While higher education is my profession, it is also my passion. Supporting students is what drives my commitment and personally motivates me. In my time here, I have met many students and heard their stories—students whose parents sacrificed so their families could afford college, students who would have dropped out if not for a scholarship, and students who dream of one day giving back to their alma mater. I know many of you have heard similar stories from our students, and you have been inspired to help.

On the heels of the successful close of Fueling Innovation: The Campaign for IIT, our ongoing philanthropic priority is to focus on these great students. President Alan Cramb and the Board of Trustees have asked us to center our fundraising efforts on students, and I hope you will join me in making scholarships our top priority.

Everyone whose name appears in this year’s Impact magazine is helping to shape the next generation of innovators, leaders, and change-makers. On behalf of President Cramb and the Illinois Tech administration, I thank you for prioritizing Illinois Institute of Technology in your philanthropic decisions. We look forward to being with you for another year of success.

Sincerely,

BETSY HUGHES | Vice President, Institutional Advancement
hughes@iit.edu

On the cover: School of Applied Technology master’s degree graduates at Commencement 2017

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On the cover: School of Applied Technology master’s degree graduates at Commencement 2017
When Jong Soung Kimm (ARCH ’61, M.S. ’64) was an architecture student in Korea in the 1950s, he became captivated by the design philosophy of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and decided to come to Illinois Institute of Technology to learn from “the master.” Arriving on campus as one of few international students in the College of Architecture—and struggling to learn English—made for a tough academic experience, but Kimm worked hard to get through lengthy textbooks in a new language, especially in history and the humanities. Mies’ masterpiece, S. R. Crown Hall, was newly completed at the time, and Kimm was among the first students to study architecture in the renowned building, even helping to arrange the first work tables in the wide open space. He found inspiration in the environment to persevere with his studies. He says that “working and studying in that space day after day, and many times through the night, confirmed all our beliefs”—referring to Mies’ new architectural style, which expressed the spirit of the modern era.

Kimm went on to work for Mies for several years before embarking on his own highly successful career in architecture. Now five decades after his student experience, he hopes to motivate today’s students in the same way he was once inspired. His recent gift to the Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship, currently under construction on Mies Campus, will help fund space for creative collaboration. AIA-award-winning architect and Illinois Tech professor John Ronan’s design for the building was a factor in inspiring Kimm’s gift. Kimm hopes to enable students to study and work in a cutting-edge environment just as he did in the majestic Crown Hall.

Kimm has been a loyal donor to his alma mater for many years. He was instrumental in organizing the Alumni Association in South Korea in the 1990s. He says that the members of the chapter discussed “paying back their debt” to the university for the great education they received in their respective fields and began to make contributions to Illinois Tech. Today Kimm’s legacy as a great architect is secured, as is his legacy as a generous Illinois Tech alumnus, extending a helping hand to future alumni.
Illinois Tech faculty and staff have built careers that are dedicated to helping students—but it may come as a surprise that these same people have dedicated their personal finances to students as well. In fact, faculty and staff are some of Illinois Tech's most loyal donors.

Over their lifetimes, more than 50 members of the faculty and staff have given at least $25,000 to the university. One-sixth of all donations from the first two Illinois Tech Giving Days in 2015 and 2016 came from faculty and staff.

Why are Illinois Tech faculty and staff so committed? According to Professor Carlo Segre, the reason is simple. Since Segre joined the faculty in 1983, Illinois Tech has gone through dramatic changes—and he can’t remember a time when he felt as optimistic about the university’s future as he does now. “I believe in Illinois Tech, and I want to make it a better place,” states Segre.

Observing the challenges of individual students has turned process improvement manager Jackie Anderson (PSYC ‘05, M.B.A. ’14) into a passionate donor. “First-time, first-generation students… students whose family circumstances have changed… international students from war-torn countries… When I donate to Illinois Tech, I know it’s helping students become successful alumni,” she says.

Tracy Allen (MIS ’93, M.S. CMGT ’17) of the office of the vice president of international affairs, alumni set an example. She points to alumni who founded sustainability-focused companies, brought produce trucks to Chicago food deserts, and started schools for at-risk girls. “I kept telling myself, ‘man, I should be doing a little more.’”

Associate Professor Georgia Papavasiliou (CHE ’96, M.D. ’03) couldn’t agree more. Papavasiliou has been at Illinois Tech on and off since she was an 18-year-old undergraduate. “This is my home,” she says.

Illinois Tech’s faculty and staff comprise many different kinds of individuals, but they share one thing in common: an unparalleled commitment to Illinois Tech’s students.
Like many who grew up during the Great Depression, the late Ed Squifflet (CE ’57) became an expert saver, socking away money in IRAs and savings accounts. Later in life, he created a stunning eight charitable gift annuities with Illinois Tech. Born in 1928, Squifflet and his family were driven by the Great Depression from Miami to Los Angeles to Chicago, where Illinois Tech awarded him a scholarship to attend college. He was thrilled by the university’s reputation and thought Illinois Tech should become a world-renowned institution. “This gentleman offered a first-class engineering education to us ‘poor kids,’” he wrote in an email upon the death of former Illinois Tech president John T. Rettaliata.

Squifflet was passionate about helping students who, like himself, were low-income and interested in civil engineering. His beloved wife of 58 years, Marjorie, had passed away in 2010, and he had significant retirement savings. He transferred a portion of his savings to gift annuities that paid him a monthly distribution. There were enough annuities that when he passed away, the remaining funds could be combined with one of his IRAs along with the sale of his house to create the $1.3 million Edmond and Marjorie Squifflet Endowed Scholarship Fund at Illinois Tech. Because the fund was endowed, it will support generations of future students.

Squifflet passed away in 2016, but his legacy lives on. Julian Bautista is a fourth-year civil engineering student at Illinois Tech today, and like Squifflet, comes from a low-income family. Bautista’s parents don’t speak English, and if he hadn’t discovered an engineering club in high school, he might never have made it to college. Bautista is also dependent on his scholarship and has this message for alumni like Ed Squifflet: “Your donations don’t only help monetarily—they pave the way for dreams… A lot of us are very ambitious dreamers.”
Emphasizing Education...

When Jamie Cowie agreed to join the Illinois Tech Board of Trustees in 1996, he had no idea the impact that the university would have on him over the next two decades.

Higher education has always been a driving force in his life—he even married his college sweetheart, Kathleen. Her upbringing also emphasized the importance of education, so it came as no surprise that the pair would incorporate these ideas into the life they built together and the children they would raise.

“Our beliefs came from our parents,” Cowie says. “Education shaped the lives of our parents and their attitude in our households as we grew up. It fostered an intellectual curiosity in us and set a high bar for us as kids, and we in turn have tried to emulate that for our kids.”

So, it’s natural that Cowie was drawn to Illinois Tech. An alumnus of Colby College and Stanford University, he spent the majority of his career in the investment business at Frontenac Company. “I’ve always had a key interest in and really enjoy being around tech businesses and tech solutions,” he says. “Illinois Tech really captured my interests—it’s right up my alley.”

It didn’t take long for Cowie to find that his passions for technology and education formed a natural crossroads at Illinois Tech, and he and Kathleen soon discovered it was a place where they could make a difference through their establishment of the James and Kathleen Cowie Scholarship.

“When you think about the university’s commitment to provide access to so many kids who were the first in their families to go to college, it’s stunning to realize how transformative education really is in society. It creates access for an individual and affects the entire family,” Cowie says.

“We have seen how Illinois Tech prepares graduates for the future, and we want to be a part of it,” he continues. “Supporting students not only helps give them an education they might not have otherwise had, but it also has an effect for our society. Our students graduate, find success, and in turn impact the lives of everyone around them.”

...From Generation to Generation
The pair met through Professor Emeritus Dale Fahnstrom—Ternovits as an undergraduate student, Conley as a graduate student, and both with an intense admiration for their inspirational professor. They both appreciated Fahnstrom's perfect combination of practical and demonstrative teaching. "For me, any class with Dale was 'thank goodness I'm not just going to be reading theory and writing computer programs—I'm going to be designing," Conley says. "There was sort of a cultural mystique surrounding Dale," Ternovits adds.

After ID, Conley and Ternovits took different paths that led to the same road. In addition to teaching at ID, Fahnstrom also worked at Fahnstrom/McCoy Design Consultants, where he hired Ternovits and incubated Conley's first business. This allowed the former students to continue to collaborate from two different directions—all because of Fahnstrom.

Eventually the pair co-founded Gravity Tank, an innovation consultancy firm acquired by Salesforce last year and now called Ignite. But they haven't forgotten their beginnings—they are instilling into their business the lessons Fahnstrom taught them. "The way Dale mentored us became a model for us building Gravity Tank," Conley says. "We looked for unique talent and gave them a lot of responsibilities and support. That's what grows great companies."

For Ternovits the lessons his mentor taught remain a regular part of his daily life. "We have these 'Dale-isms' that we still use today," he says. "You take that with you throughout your whole career—I always wonder 'What would Dale do?'—"

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DeeImpact

Anita Nagler (LAW ’80) has had a home run career. After graduating from both high school and college in less than four years, she entered Chicago-Kent College of Law at age 20, joined the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, and at the age of 23 was promoted to head the enforcement group at its Chicago office.

These days the avid art collector divides her time between Chicago and Los Angeles and sits on the boards of two investment firms. She was able to retire at 49 after growing a specialized hedge fund, Harris Alternatives, by tenfold, to roughly $10 billion, during her tenure as chief executive officer.

"Law school is a fabulous education," she says, when asked about her time at Chicago-Kent. "The education of law trains you how to think, but you then need to pursue a career that’s open to opportunity... Careers are opportunistic journeys."

After leaving the SEC to join Harris Associates, an investment firm, Nagler might have easily lost contact with Lew Collens, who had been dean of Chicago-Kent while she was a student—but Illinois Institute of Technology was her firm’s client.

Collens, then president of the university, asked for Nagler’s help. She soon became very involved—becoming an Illinois Tech trustee, a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, chair of the Finance Committee, and a member of the College of Science Advisory Board. She even helped the university to select Collens’s replacement.

In addition to her time, Nagler has also given a series of substantial donations to Illinois Tech including a gift to the Robert A. Pritzker Science Center.

"As a philanthropist, you can attempt to tackle large societal issues or you can attempt to impact a smaller group of people in a deep way," Nagler explains. She sees students and their families being deeply impacted by Illinois Tech, which produces graduates who are among the most highly paid in Illinois and the country. Skilled Illinois Tech graduates, in turn, can have a deep impact on Chicago by developing new businesses and technologies that create jobs.

"I really feel Illinois Tech is an important Chicago institution in terms of what it provides economically," says Nagler. "For me, it’s a way to help the city."
In today’s world, the value of a STEM education cannot be overstated. Knowledge in these important areas—Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math—is the next generation’s key to a successful future. The STEM disciplines form the core of an Illinois Tech education, and the university has several programs in place to introduce young people to the benefits of these growing fields.

One of the main ways Illinois Tech is promoting STEM education to young people is through a partnership between Exelon Corporation and Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center, a Chicago Public High School. This unique program, called Opt4STEM, allows qualified high school students to earn college credits at a four-year university at no cost to them, made possible in part through Exelon’s financial and in-kind contributions.

While college credit is a key opportunity, Opt4STEM offers much more. The program’s opportunities are broken into three main areas—STEM enrichment, college and career, and leadership and mentorship. The program has awarded $375,000 in scholarships—funded by Exelon and Illinois Tech—to 2,283 students in its two-year existence.

Steve Solomon, vice president of corporate relations at Exelon Corporation and president of Exelon Foundation, believes the program is critical to the future of STEM education. “Not many kids have the opportunity in high school to take classes like this,” he says, “and research shows that getting kids excited about STEM at an early age is crucial to their development and future success. What’s different about the Opt4STEM program is that we’re taking it one step further— we’re giving them a chance to learn what’s available to them after a college education.”

When it launched in 2015, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel praised the program’s part in supporting Chicago’s city-wide goal of increasing postsecondary success in STEM education and careers, and said Opt4STEM will “continue to support college access and experiences while proudly educating the next leaders in this growing field.”

Opt4STEM ensures that students have a strong foundation for academic success through the real-world experiences provided by the collaboration of Illinois Tech, Von Steuben, and Exelon. When students begin applying for colleges, Illinois Tech is hopefully at the top of their lists. When Opt4STEM alumni finish college, they will already have connections with Exelon and its subsidiary ComEd as a potential employer.

“This partnership is a great way to get high school students interested in the company and the energy industry in general,” Solomon says. “It also allows students to learn more about job opportunities that are out there for them and how many fields are connected through STEM initiatives. And that’s really where our futures lie. Once they graduate college, we hope to see some of these students as employees.”
A member of the Board of Trustees since 2015, Graff recently took his commitment to Illinois Tech to the next level with his leadership and sponsorship of the second Global Gathering, held in Paris in June 2017. This alumni event focused on global challenges—energy, security, water and health and wellness—chosen because they mirror Illinois Tech’s Engineering Themes and are considered areas in which alumni, faculty, and partner schools can impact the entire global population.

“The idea is that we can all learn from each other,” Graff says. “At the event, we had a variety of speakers with different expertise that lent itself to a broad discussion, beyond one particular market. That global aspect broadens the perspective of Illinois Tech.”

And that perspective is part of what makes the university so uniquely suited as a forerunner in addressing global challenges. “Illinois Tech provides the groundwork to solve global challenges—the basic fundamentals of science and engineering and how they’re at the root of all the issues we face,” Graff says. “All we need to do is tap into the expertise and experience of our alumni around the world.”

While Graff and other intercontinental alumni are busy expanding Illinois Tech’s global networks, they are also developing the university’s international brand. Wider recognition for the university throughout the world helps to improve the value of an Illinois Tech education, which in turn benefits the entire university community of alumni, faculty, and students—current, future, and past.

He may be a man with a global reach now, as his roles at Air Liquide have given him leadership opportunities across the Americas, Asia, and Europe, but it wasn’t always that way for Graff. “I came from a very humble background—I was the first one in my family to graduate college,” he says. “I’m a firm believer that every kid deserves a chance, and when I think about giving back, it’s about creating opportunities for others to further their education and develop themselves.”