BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

WE FLY

Sociology Alumni Newsletter 2024-2025

Letter from the Chair

Greetings from Ball State!

Do you know how much your engagement matters to the Department of Sociology?

Thanks to your continued support, the 2024–2025 academic year was another outstanding one for our department. Here are just a few of the ways your engagement has helped us advance our mission of preparing students for meaningful careers and lives:

- **Thirty-four students** were involved in **ten community engagement activities**, including immersive collaborations with Hancock County Drug Court, Second Harvest, the MLK Dream Team, and others. These hands-on learning experiences helped students apply their sociological training in ways that truly mattered to our partners and their communities.
- **Twenty-four students** presented their research at the **Immersive Learning Showcase**, and **15 students** attended the **North Central Sociological Association's** annual conference—13 of whom gave formal presentations. These achievements were supported in part by **your contributions** and by an **AKD student travel grant**, awarded to our chapter this year.
- We resumed **study abroad programming**, with nine students participating in a faculty-led trip to Costa Rica. This was just one of the many high-impact learning experiences **made possible with Foundation funds**.
- Our students completed **internships** with campus units like Human Resources and Financial Services, as well as external organizations such as the Muncie Non-Profit Support Network. In our graduate program, students contributed to high-level analysis in the **Office of Institutional Research and Decision Support** and in Dr. Cassidy's Research Design Studio.

The quality of our instruction, curriculum, and student outcomes continues to be recognized on campus and nationally. Our innovative work on **career readiness** was featured in a forthcoming article in Teaching Sociology, the discipline's flagship teaching journal. Our faculty also published six journal articles, a book, and four book chapters, and were honored repeatedly for their scholarship, service, and mentorship.

Thanks to a component of a **$10 million gift from the Lilly Endowment to the Gregory S. Fehribach Center**, our department is launching a multi-year collaboration to support students with disabilities in their transition to employment—an effort co-led by Greg Fehribach and Dr. Melinda Messineo.

We've also grown our digital presence: Instagram and Facebook engagement reached all-time highs, and we now connect with **over 90 alumni** through **Cardinals Connect** and **hundreds more on LinkedIn**, helping us track outcomes, share opportunities, and build professional networks for our students.

We are poised for continued growth and impact—but we cannot do it without you.

If you would like to contribute to this momentum—**by mentoring a student, offering input on our curriculum, joining our Alumni Advisory Committee**, or **making a donation**, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Dr. Melinda Messineo (mmessine@bsu.edu), our Alumni Liaison, or me directly (clmenning@bsu.edu).

To make a gift that directly supports our students, please click here to donate. Every dollar helps us provide immersive learning experiences, conference travel, scholarships, and career-readiness programming.

Thank you for being part of our community. We hope you enjoy this year's newsletter and feel as proud as we do of what we've achieved—together.

With warmest regards,
Chadwick L. Menning, PhD
Professor and Chair
Department of Sociology

Read this letter on our **blog.**

Wishing Dr. Roger Wojtkiewicz a Happy Retirement!

We're sending lots of good wishes as Dr. Roger Wojtkiewicz heads into retirement! Grateful for everything he's brought to our department over the years. (April 2025) Read More Here.

Celebrating Years of Service

We're proud to recognize three amazing members of our department for their years of service at Ball State University. Dr. Roger Wojtkiewicz was honored for 25 years, Dr. Rachel Kraus for 20 years, and Lisa Etchison for 10 years of dedicated service. From teaching and mentorship to keeping everything running behind the scenes, each of you has made a lasting impact. Thank you for all that you do; our department is better because of you! (May 2025) Read More Here.

Good News

Congratulations to Dr. Sara Collas for presenting two papers at this year's NCSA conference: *Can Artificial Intelligence Shed a Tear?* (with Dr. Melinda Messineo) and *Why is Tito's Vodka in Love with Dinah? A photo ethnography of a lesbian party scene.* (April 2025) See More.

Also, congratulations to Dr. Collas for her captivating workshop titled, "*Last Night a Spiritual Saved My Life*". (February 2025) Discover More Here.

Congratulations to Dr. Fang Gong on serving as both a presenter and the Student Paper Awards Chair at this year's NCSA conference. She presented "*Perceived Everyday Discrimination Among Asian Americans: An Intersectional Analysis of Gender and Ethnicity*", co-authored with Dr. Jun Xu and Grant Mu. (April 2025) See More.

Congratulations to Dr. Mellisa Holtzman on the publication of "*Sociology: Think Outside the Book!*" This interactive e-text promotes student engagement through activities, videos, polls, and interactive tables and graphs. It's also fully customizable, allowing faculty to tailor the content to their needs. (May 2025) Read More.

Also, congratulations to her for co-presenting "*The Complexity of Blame: Investigating College Students' Perceptions of Sexual Violence*" at this year's North Central Sociological Association (NCSA) conference. (April 2025) Learn More.

This summer, Dr. Holtzman will be working with the HR and Talent Acquisition teams at First Merchants Corporation to learn more about career paths in the banking industry. She's hoping this experience will help students build stronger connections with the field; and also help banking professionals see the value our students bring. We're excited to hear what she learns along the way. (April 2025) See More.

Congratulations to Dr. Chad Menning for his upcoming publication in Teaching Sociology! He co-authored an article called "*Approaches to Focusing on Employability in the Sociology Major*" and it'll be published this fall. (April 2025) Learn More Here.

Congratulations to Dr. Melinda Messineo on her recent publications in the Oxford Handbook of Sociology for Social Justice! (February 2025) Find Out More.

Also, congrats to Her for co-presenting "*Can Artificial Intelligence Shed a Tear?*" with Dr. Sara Collas at this year's NCSA conference! (April 2025) See More.

Further congratulations to Dr. Messineo on her upcoming article in Teaching Sociology! She co-authored "*Approaches to Focusing on Employability in the Sociology Major*" which will be out this fall. We love seeing her continued work helping students connect what they're learning in the classroom to life after graduation. Can't wait to read it! (April 2025) Details Here.

Congratulations to Dr. Ellen Whitehead on her promotion to Associate Professor! Your dedication to teaching and research is truly inspiring! (April 2025) Learn More.

This summer, Dr. Whitehead will be working with Heart of Indiana United Way to explore how nonprofit organizations handle program evaluation and assessment. She'll be learning more about family needs in our community and bringing back insights that will help students interested in research and community work. So excited for her and this great opportunity! (May 2025) Find Out More.

Congratulations to Dr. Roger Wojtkiewicz for his Sage publication of the *"Little Green Book" Modeling Nonlinearity and Interaction in Regression Analysis Using Spline Variables*! (May 2025) Learn More.

This February, Sociology major Brooklyn Becher was recognized by the Dean of the College of Sciences and Humanities for her outstanding academic achievement! Huge congratulations, Brooklyn. We're so proud of you! (February 2025) Read More.

Congratulations to our 2025 Johnson-Tamney Scholarship recipient, Willow Emig! We are so proud of you!! (April 2025) Read More.

We're so proud of Sarah Orr, a Ball State Sociology alum (Class of 2020), who was featured in the ASA's "Majoring in Sociology: A Pathway to Opportunity." Sarah now works as a Senior Premier Support Consultant at Roche Diagnostics.
Congrats, Sarah, you're an amazing example of where a sociology degree can take you! (September 2024) Read More.

Our Donors

Thank you for giving on One Ball State Day 2025

Sociology

Your generosity helped us raise $1130.00 with a total of 20 gifts! Because of YOU our program and students thrive!

Find Out More.

Community Engagement

Capstone Students at the Immersive Learning Showcase

Our Capstone students wrapped up the year by presenting their projects at the Immersive Learning Showcase on Friday, April 18, in Cardinal Hall. Each project reflected weeks of hard work, and it was so exciting to see everything they've learned put into action. We're incredibly proud of all their effort and growth this semester! (April 2025) Read More.

Second Harvest and Hancock County Drug Court

In January 2025, Capstone students went to visit their community partner, Second Harvest! Read More.

Our 2025 Capstone Students

Big congratulations to our amazing students who took part in this year's Capstone Project! They partnered with three local organizations and did some truly impressive work:

- With Second Harvest, they surveyed Big Idea site participants to better understand community needs.
- With Hancock County Drug Court, they helped complete year 3 of a multi-year data project for reaccreditation.
- With the MLK Dream Team, they ran a community relations survey to support planning for 2025–26.

Huge thanks to these organizations for welcoming our students; we're so proud of the work they've done! (April 2025) Read More.

North Central Sociology Association Centennial Conference

Students and faculty had a great time attending and presenting at this year's North Central Sociological Association Annual Conference in Lexington, Kentucky. Special thanks to AKD for supporting our student researchers! (April 2024) Find Out More Here and Here.

Costa Rica trip

In *Globalization and the Social World (SOC 328)*, students explore how globalization impacts food production, sustainability, the environment, and the people of different parts of the world.

As part of the course, students travelled to Costa Rica in May 2025 to see these topics come to life. They visited food production farms, learned from sustainable eco-tourism projects, and experienced the country's incredible landscapes, including rainforests, volcanoes, beaches, and wildlife. It was an unforgettable way to connect global issues with real-world experiences. (May 2025) Learn More Here and Here.

Sociology Seniors Honored at the President's Residence

Some of our amazing Sociology seniors were invited to the Senior Honors Event at the President's residence! So proud to see them recognized for all their hard work and accomplishments. Way to represent the department! (April 2025) Learn More.

Alpha Kappa Delta Workshop

Huge thanks to Alpha Kappa Delta for sponsoring our **"***What Can You Do with a Sociology Degree?*" workshop! We're so grateful for the support in helping students explore career paths and connect their studies to life beyond the classroom. (October 2024) Learn More.

AI Brownbag Seminar

Thank you to our amazing faculty presenters for leading thoughtful discussions during our Issues in AI Brownbag Seminar! We appreciate your time, insights, and dedication to helping us explore the social side of emerging technologies. (October 2024) Learn More.

Ball State Sociology Student Successes

Earlier this semester, Sociology student Kelsey Mosley was featured in the Student Success Summit video, and Merrah Salyer served as a student intern supporting the Peace Plaza

dedication. We're proud to highlight their contributions and the meaningful work they're doing both on campus and in the community. (September 2024) Learn More Here.

White River Clean-Up Success

Back in September, Sociology students and faculty participated in the annual White River Clean-Up! We're so proud of everyone who took the time to help care for our local environment and represent the department in such a meaningful way. (September 2024) Read More.

Sociology Meets Community at the Two Dollar Tour

Back in August, the Two Dollar Tour of the Village brought students, alumni, and community members together to celebrate local connections between campus, businesses, and the neighborhood. Sociology alum Cole Heady took part by showcasing his 3-D printer creations; so fun to see our grads doing such creative work! (August 2024) Learn More.

On Stage: Lisa Etchison

We're so proud of our very own Administrative Coordinator, Lisa Etchison, for performing in the Muncie debut of the musical *Waitress*! The show ran throughout the month with packed audiences and great energy. Congrats, Lisa, on an amazing performance; we loved seeing you shine on stage! (February 2025) Read More Here.

Student Success

Ball State Top 100 Students

Congratulations to our Top 100 Students! We have Gabriel Del Greco and Dana Ibarra, who are Sociology Minors. And congratulations to all other awardees! We're so proud of everyone and all the hard work you've put in! (February 2025) Find Out More.

Giving

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