

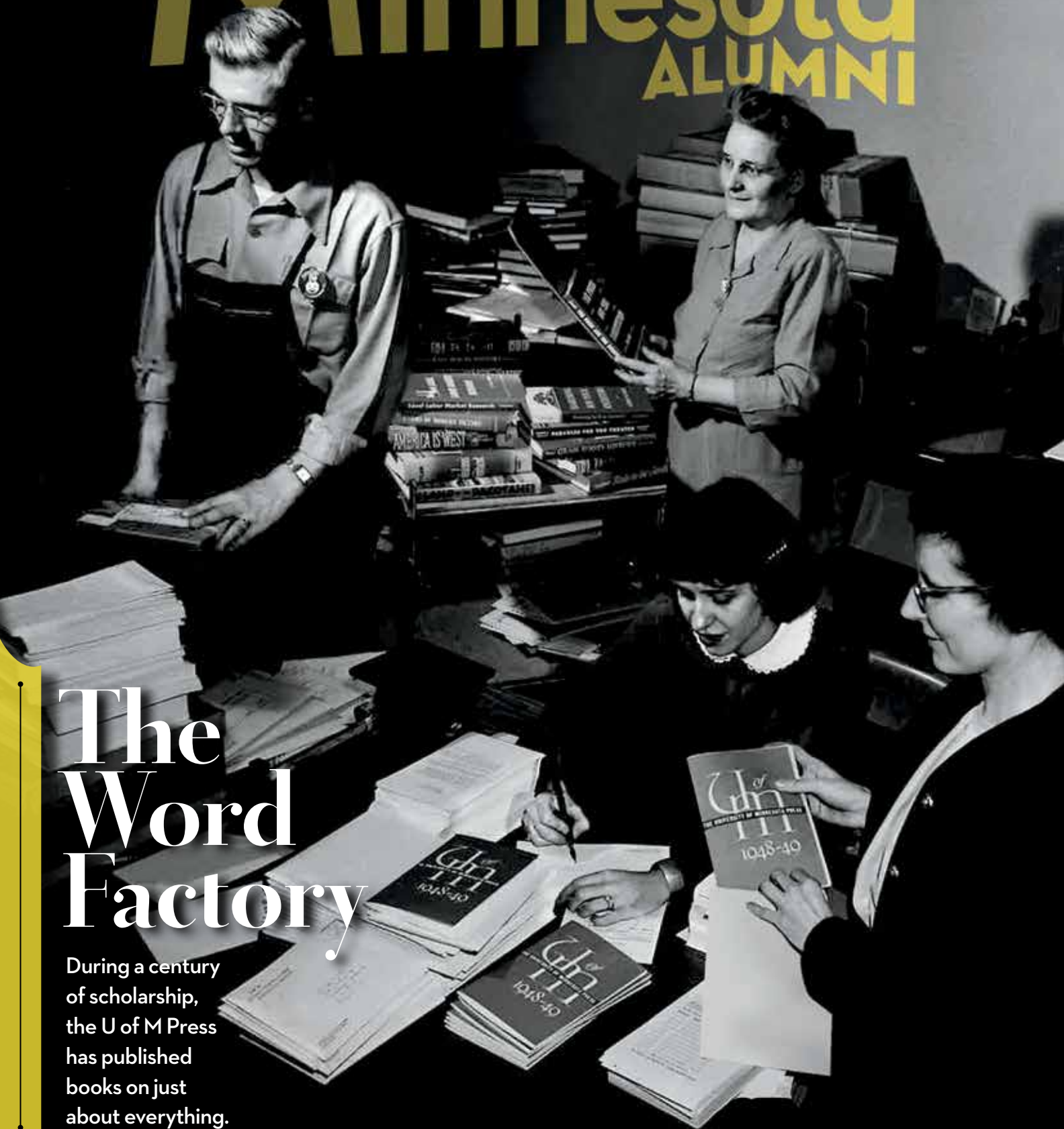
Minnesota ALUMNI

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SUMMER 2025

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Changing the Narrative



TO CELEBRATE A CENTURY of anything is a remarkable achievement; to celebrate 100 years of sharing information, scholarship, and even well-crafted entertainment is an even higher accomplishment.

The University of Minnesota Press (UMP) achieved its century mark this year. Because of its efforts, nearly 5,000 books have come into being—making their way into the marketplace to advance scholarship and jostle and compete in the universe of ideas. As a nonprofit publishing

entity designed to help writers share wise thinking, insights, and reflections on an almost unparalleled variety of subjects, the UMP contributes to a better, more informed society in myriad ways.

I've been musing on the deep and sometimes unsung importance of entities like the UMP recently. We may read simply to relax, but we also read to inform or challenge what we believe, why we believe it, or even to change our mind about something we thought in the past.

Books are key to all that. They let us further our understanding on important issues or feel surprising emotions or contemplate novel ideas. They help us as a society knit ourselves into a cohesive whole by proffering vetted information that advances knowledge for the group at large. They are the paper-and-ink version of a beckoning nod from a friend, paired with a promise to “show you something cool.”

Books, and their logical extension, education, always matter.

It's not a newsflash: Today, universities and colleges are facing a situation that is unprecedented, to use a white-hot word so doggedly overworked that it's fast losing its shine.

The landscape underneath higher education is moving. We're seeing attempts to change the very fabric of the research funding that underlies important discoveries. Misinformation and disinformation swirl through social media channels. Long-accepted, science-backed tenets, like those on vaccines, are teetering.

At times like these, it's critical to remember that knowledge matters. Education matters. Cutting-edge research matters. And reasoned, reflective discourse that twines in and around all those three lodestars matters more than ever.

P.S. On another note, this is my last issue as the editor of *Minnesota Alumni*. After an exceptional six years here and countless stories, I've decided it's time to pass the baton and pursue some personal projects that I've put on the back burner for too long. It's been an honor to share some time with each of you every issue and to celebrate the vibrant alumni community and all things U of M. ■

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Scott Struble

LETTERS

Another intractable problem

I submit the intractable problem [Find a Problem. Solve It. Spring 2025 issue] of our geological age is climate change and world governments' seeming inability to grasp its seriousness. How can we enlighten governments to the daily increasing probability earth will enter a hot house condition similar to the paleocene-eocene thermal maximum 60 million years ago? Once various tipping points are crossed there will be no going back. While governments are playing brinkmanship in what they perceive as the zero-sum game of geopolitics, using wars and threats of wars for game pieces and after having spent over \$4 trillion on renewable energy since 2000, global GHG emissions are still rising every year. The 10 countries responsible for 60 percent of those emissions are the ones playing the zero-sum game that is endangering every life form on earth.

As a practical matter, the problem boils down to how the scientific community communicates its findings. Around 90 percent of

R&D in this country is funded by government, business, and higher education. All this money comes ultimately from the public, making all R&D accountable to the public. Scientific discoveries and progress are reported in timely fashion in scores of scientific journals as they should be but scientific journals do nothing to educate and enlighten the public and its governments. The media and education are also part of this failing.

New knowledge has always had to face formidable opposition from capital, as far back as Socrates. Can the scientific community afford to pay a battalion of lobbyists six-figure salaries to compete for the government's ear with the capitalists? I hope we can find ways to get this knowledge into the hands of every citizen in engaging and understandable formats.

It's especially urgent now since our government is doing what it can to Make America Dumber Again.

Steven Boyer
St. Paul, MN
(B.S. '77)



ANNUAL CELEBRATION

On May 3, the Alumni Association welcomed more than 450 attendees to the McNamara Alumni Center for the 121st Annual Celebration, an opportunity to gather the U of M community and reflect on our shared pride. Journalist and author Roxane Battle hosted the event. From heartfelt speeches to spirited school pride, the night was a memorable tribute to our vibrant alumni network and the future we're building together.

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CLASS ACTS

New grads celebrate their achievement! The UMAA formally welcomed more than 1,000 new alumni on May 7 at McNamara Alumni Center with the Send Off, an annual pre-graduation ritual. The event featured samples from alumni-owned businesses, a graduation gift, therapy animals, and more.

Photo by Eric Miller / University Relations





A Shifting Landscape in Uncertain Times

RECENT MONTHS HAVE SEEN wide-ranging turbulence in the world of higher education due to proposed federal policy changes. This is a fast-moving environment, often with daily changes that have a potential impact on the U of M, as well as other institutions.

Potential funding cuts to research, as well as issues such as revoked visas for some international students; efforts to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and more areas that touch the University community are affected.

For instance, as of late April, the University was aware of 11 students who had had their Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) records terminated. (The federal administration then announced it will reevaluate at least some student

visa revocations on a national basis, but the situation remained fluid as of press time.)

The University is also monitoring proposed cuts or cancellations of federal research funds by both the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation. As of April 30, the University had received more than 70 stop work orders impacting a project by stopping certain work, temporarily halting payments, eliminating outyear funding, or otherwise modifying the terms under which work can be conducted. (In many cases, legal challenges to related actions are occurring across the country.)

The University has created a Rapid Response website to share information as it becomes available. Topics covered include sections on diversity, equity, and inclusion; the Department of Education; federal immigration policies, and National Institute of Health (NIH) funding. Each area also contains answers to a set of frequently asked questions. brief.umn.edu/rapid-response

All photos by Eric Miller / University Relations

By the Numbers

The U of M released a new economic report in early May.

Key findings show that the U of M drives \$11.5 billion in annual economic impact to the state, up from \$8.6 billion in 2017.

And for every \$1 of state investment, the University returns \$16.75 to Minnesota.

Other findings:

- Over 70,000 students are part of the U of M systemwide
- 366,000 alumni live and work in Minnesota (more than 60 percent of graduates).
- Nearly 70 percent of the state's physicians and other health professionals train at the U of M.
- The U of M's health enterprise, which includes the Medical School, the health sciences schools, and University of Minnesota Physicians, generated



\$2.6 billion in annual economic impact, supporting more than 17,000 jobs and \$155.1 million in annual state tax revenue.

- 1 in every 35 Minnesota jobs are supported by the University's presence or directly provided as one of the state's largest employers.

- The U of M has launched more than 270 startups since 2006—73 percent of which are based in Minnesota.
- No. 3 among all U.S. universities for startup creation, according to a 2023 AUTM Survey.
- U of M research generated \$3.9 billion in annual economic impact, supporting more than 25,000 jobs and \$212.2 million in annual state tax revenue.

For more information, go to z.umn.edu/alumni-econ-impact

UMAA Hosts National Institutes of Health Forum

In April, the Alumni Association presented the webinar *Impacts of Reducing Federal Research Funding* with Peter Crawford, M.D., Vice Dean for Research at the Medical School. It was designed to help inform attendees about issues surrounding National Institute of Health funding. Key takeaways included:

Medical breakthroughs at risk

NIH funding enables the U of M to conduct life-saving research, leading to new treatments and cures. Reduced funding could slow progress and limit the University's ability to address critical health challenges.

Economic impact

Federal research funding drives innovation and supports the economy in Minnesota and beyond.

A stronger workforce

Federal funding supports training of future scientists, engineers and healthcare professionals. Cuts would reduce opportunities for students and researchers, impacting our nation's leadership in innovation.

How You Can Help

Contact your members of Congress to urge their support for federal research and full funding of that work. Watch a recording of the webinar on YouTube by searching UMN Alumni Association and Impacts of Reducing Federal Research Funding.

We Asked, You Answered

Last issue, President Cunningham invited alumni to weigh in on the U of M's proposed strategic plan. Here's a sample of what we heard.

IN EARLY APRIL, the Alumni Association sent a survey to all alumni of the Twin Cities and Rochester campuses, inviting input on the upcoming Maroon, Gold, and Bold five-year University strategic plan, to be crafted over the summer. Roughly 860 people responded.

The survey contained four questions, which were also posed at several regional, in-person alumni events held over the winter:

1. From your vantage point, what will distinguish the U of M system as a leader in higher education in 2035?
2. How should we aspire to serve our state, nation, and world differently across the next decade?
3. What changes in the nation and world should the U of M System meaningfully influence?
4. In what ways might the U of M leverage its physical campus environments to advance itself nationally as a premier, comprehensive public university?

The topics that showed up most frequently in response to these questions were:

1. Commitment to research excellence
2. Affordability and access to higher education

3. Institutional integrity, academic freedom, and free speech
4. Focus on community engagement and public service
5. Campus safety and inclusivity

Many respondents emphasized the University's need to remain a top-tier institution known for innovation, and to lean into interdisciplinary and applied research that benefits communities. Sample answers included:

"By 2035, the U of M system can distinguish itself as a global leader by expanding its impact across key domains where it already excels: public health, animal health, agriculture, and food security. These areas are not only



“The University must continue to be a safe haven for scientific and medical innovation. The liberal arts must foster free speech and freedom from government censorship.”

vital to Minnesota’s economy and well-being but are also central to addressing global challenges like zoonotic diseases, climate-resilient agriculture, and sustainable food systems. Its land-grant mission and leadership in interdisciplinary research and innovation will cement UMN’s reputation as a university that delivers solutions. Equally, its unyielding defense of academic freedom and independent thought must remain a cornerstone. In a time when political actors seek to undermine higher education, the University must lead by protecting the rights of its students, faculty, and staff to speak freely and think critically. This commitment to truth, safety, and free inquiry will set the University apart.”

Affordability and student value were recurring concerns, and institutional integrity

and academic freedom were frequently mentioned, with strong opinions about the University’s political identity, campus climate, and public positioning. Some respondents advocated for the University to be a beacon of free expression, academic freedom, and inclusion, defending DEI, resisting political coercion, and protecting students’ rights. Others urged the U of M to minimize political entanglements and focus solely on academic merit, neutrality, and educational quality. Sample answers included:

“The University must continue to be a safe haven for scientific and medical innovation. The liberal arts must foster free speech and freedom from government censorship.”

“Drop the political bias. The University System in general is losing its relevance

due to heavily leaning liberal on the political spectrum. Aim for the middle for the health of the University and our country in general.”

Many respondents also emphasized the University’s public service mission, focusing on meeting Minnesota’s needs first. Many registered support for inclusive excellence and for preparing students to tackle real-world challenges.

Other topics included urging the U of M to take a leadership role in addressing climate change, sustainability, and environmental issues.

Regarding ways the U of M can leverage its physical campus to advance itself nationally as a premier, comprehensive public university, respondents wanted a creative, innovative, and safe campus. Sample answers included:

“Create next-generation research facilities that foster interdisciplinary work between engineering, design, computer science, and the social sciences.”

“The University should focus on the safety of students on campus, especially the areas around Dinkytown, and continue investing in facilities to remain competitive.”

Small World: From Morocco to Minnesota

IN EARLY APRIL, Mohammed Sadiki (Ph.D. ’90) received the U of M’s Outstanding Leadership Award for his contributions to agriculture and dedication to public service. The award is the highest non-degree accolade conferred by the University.

Sadiki earned his doctorate in plant genetics and breeding at the U of M in 1990, and spent his career advancing agricultural science and improving food security. Sadiki’s involvement in the USAID Morocco project, known as the “Minnesota Project,” was instrumental in developing agricultural and veterinary sciences in Morocco.

Sadiki had a long career at the Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine (IAV) in Rabat, Morocco, with significant achievements in legume genetics and agricul-

tural biodiversity. He also served as secretary general of the Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime, Rural Development, Waters and Forests. In October 2021, Sadiki was appointed Morocco’s Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, and Waters and Forests, a post he held until this year.

In November 2024, Sadiki met with U of M alumni as part of the MN Alumni Travel Morocco Tour. Former UMAA Chair Pat Duncanson was on the tour and invited Sadiki to visit his farm if Sadiki ever found himself back in Minnesota. That visit took place on April 11 at Duncanson’s farm south of Mankato, Minnesota.

Read more about Sadiki at cfans.umn.edu/news/mohammed-sadiki-award

Mary Buschette

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Male birth control

While 25 percent of women who use contraception use an oral birth control pill, no equivalent methods are currently available for men.

However, research from the College of Pharmacy laid the groundwork for the first hormone-free male birth control pill to enter clinical trials. The new drug, called YCT-529, is a first-in-class, hormone free, orally administered male contraceptive. Developed with Columbia University and YourChoice Therapeutics, YCT-529 works as a contraceptive by stopping the production of sperm. The research found:

- In male mice, the drug was 99 percent effective in preventing pregnancies within four weeks of use.
- In male nonhuman primates, the drug lowered sperm counts within two weeks of starting the drug.
- Both mice and nonhuman primates fully regained fertility after stopping the drug. No side effects from the drug were detected in either group.

“A safe and effective male pill will provide more options to couples...,” said Gunda Georg, Regents Professor in the Department of Medicinal Chemistry and corresponding author of the study. “It will allow a more equitable sharing of responsibility for family planning and provide reproductive autonomy for men.”

A Phase 1 clinical trial for the drug was completed successfully in 2024 and the drug is currently undergoing safety and efficacy testing in a second clinical trial.

Published March 13 in *Nature Communications*



Prey size affects carnivores

Research from the U of M illuminates how wolves, bears, and cougars—all found in Yellowstone National Park—compete for prey.

Scientists previously thought that when prey becomes scarce, predators become more aggressive toward each other, and that fewer resources meant dominant predators like wolves and bears will steal food from subordinate predators like cougars. A new study based on over two decades of data collected by a team of ecologists studying cougar predation in the park reveals the size of prey animals plays a surprisingly pivotal role in competition among predators. They found:

- As larger prey like elk declined over the past few decades, cougars in Yellowstone began targeting smaller animals like deer. The smaller animals are easier to hunt, and cougars can kill and consume them more quickly while attracting less attention from more dominant predators.
- When cougars hunt smaller prey, wolves and bears are less likely to steal their kills.
- As cougars shifted to hunting smaller animals, the frequency with which wolves and bears displaced them from their kills decreased.

“This work really showcases the complex ways large carnivores make a living,” said lead author Jack Rabe, a graduate student in the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. “We found that shifting cougar behavior is likely a key factor in the ecosystem’s stability. By opting for smaller prey, cougars reduce the amount of time they spend hunting to make up for kills lost to other carnivores. This allows them to maintain a relatively stable kill rate, which contributes to the overall balance of the predator-prey dynamics in the park.”

Published March 28 in *Communications Biology*

Early adult mortality

Death rates for adults aged 25-44 rose sharply during the Covid-19 pandemic and remain higher than expected post pandemic.

New U of M research shows heightened death rates during the pandemic intensified an already negative trend for early adults, which began around 2010. Early adult death rates in 2023 were about 70 percent higher than they might have been had death rates not begun rising about a decade before the pandemic.

Researchers from the U of M and Boston University analyzed death rates between 1999-2023. They found:

- For early adults, the death rate jumped substantially between 2019 and 2021, the core pandemic years. In 2023, the death rate remained nearly 20 percent higher than in 2019.
- Drug-related deaths are the single largest cause of 2023 excess mortality, compared with the mortality that would have been expected had earlier trends continued.

“The rise in opiate deaths has been devastating for Americans in early and middle adulthood,” said Elizabeth Wrigley-Field, lead author and an associate professor in the College of Liberal Arts and Institute for Social Research and Data Innovation. “What we didn’t expect is how many different causes of death have really grown for these early adults. It’s drug and alcohol deaths, but it’s also car collisions, it’s circulatory and metabolic diseases—causes that are very different from each other. That tells us this isn’t one simple problem to fix, but something broader.”

Published January 25 in *JAMA Network Open*

James Yuskavitch / iStock

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

An Economic Engine

"WE ARE UNIFIED in our drive to serve Minnesota." The final nine words of our mission statement are a rallying cry.

As President, I am proud of the fact that our University has such a strong national reputation, with global impact that extends across continents. But I also have deep admiration for the way our students, faculty, staff, and alumni prioritize the North Star State.

Our work is reflected across all 87 counties, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to building a stronger, healthier, and more prosperous Minnesota for generations to come.

That commitment spans more than 170 years, and over time, the University has cemented its role as one of Minnesota's most powerful economic engines. This is certainly reflected in our latest economic impact study.

According to nationally recognized consulting firm Tripp Umbach, the U of M generates \$11.5 billion in annual economic impact for the state—up from \$8.6 billion in 2017.

For every \$1 of state investment, the University returns \$16.75 to Minnesota. And as Minnesota's fifth-largest employer, the University supports more than 89,000 jobs and generates \$676 million in state taxes.

These numbers are impressive, but it's worth noting the University's return on investment extends well beyond just dollars and cents. The University plays an invaluable role in educating Minnesota's future workforce, ensuring students have the knowledge and skills to take on leadership roles in clinics, fields, classrooms, communities, and C-suites.

Success shows in our career placement rates, like in Crookston, where 93 percent of students find a job in their field within a year of graduation. And systemwide, nearly half of our students graduate with no debt at all.

While many of our peers across the country struggle to keep students in state after

graduation, about 66 percent of ours stay and work here in Minnesota. This equates to about 366,000 alumni—and in 2024, this group generated \$78.5 billion in economic impact across Minnesota.

Beyond our educational mission, our world-renowned research enterprise continues to spark new innovations and discoveries that spur economic impact... to the tune of \$3.9 billion per year.

Since 2006, we have helped launch more than 270 startup companies based on University research. Those companies have gone on to create more than 1,500 new jobs—1,000 of which are based in Minnesota.

One of those startups is Niron Magnetics, which specializes producing components for green technologies like electric vehicle motors, wind turbines, and energy efficient consumer electronics. Niron selected Sartell, Minnesota, as the site for its 150,000-square-foot manufacturing plant, which is projected to bring 175 new jobs to the region.

As the state of higher education in our country reaches an inflection point, it is important to remember that institutions like the University of Minnesota are not simply centers of learning. We are a powerful engine of economic growth that drives progress and prosperity, all for the betterment of people and communities across Minnesota and beyond. ■

Rebecca Cunningham
President

“The U of M generates \$11.5 billion in annual economic impact for the state—up from \$8.6 billion in 2017.”

THE WORD FACTORY

As the University of Minnesota Press celebrates its 100-year anniversary in 2025, here's a behind-the-scenes look at how this renowned publisher helps authors around the world turn their ideas and passion into published works.

By Meleah Maynard

THE UNIVERSITY of Minnesota Press (UMP) celebrates its 100-year anniversary this year—but it's still common for people to contact the office looking for the college newspaper, the *Minnesota Daily*.

It's an understandable mistake. While there are more than 100 University presses across the U.S., many people have never heard of them, or assume they exist solely to produce yearbooks or dry academic tomes.

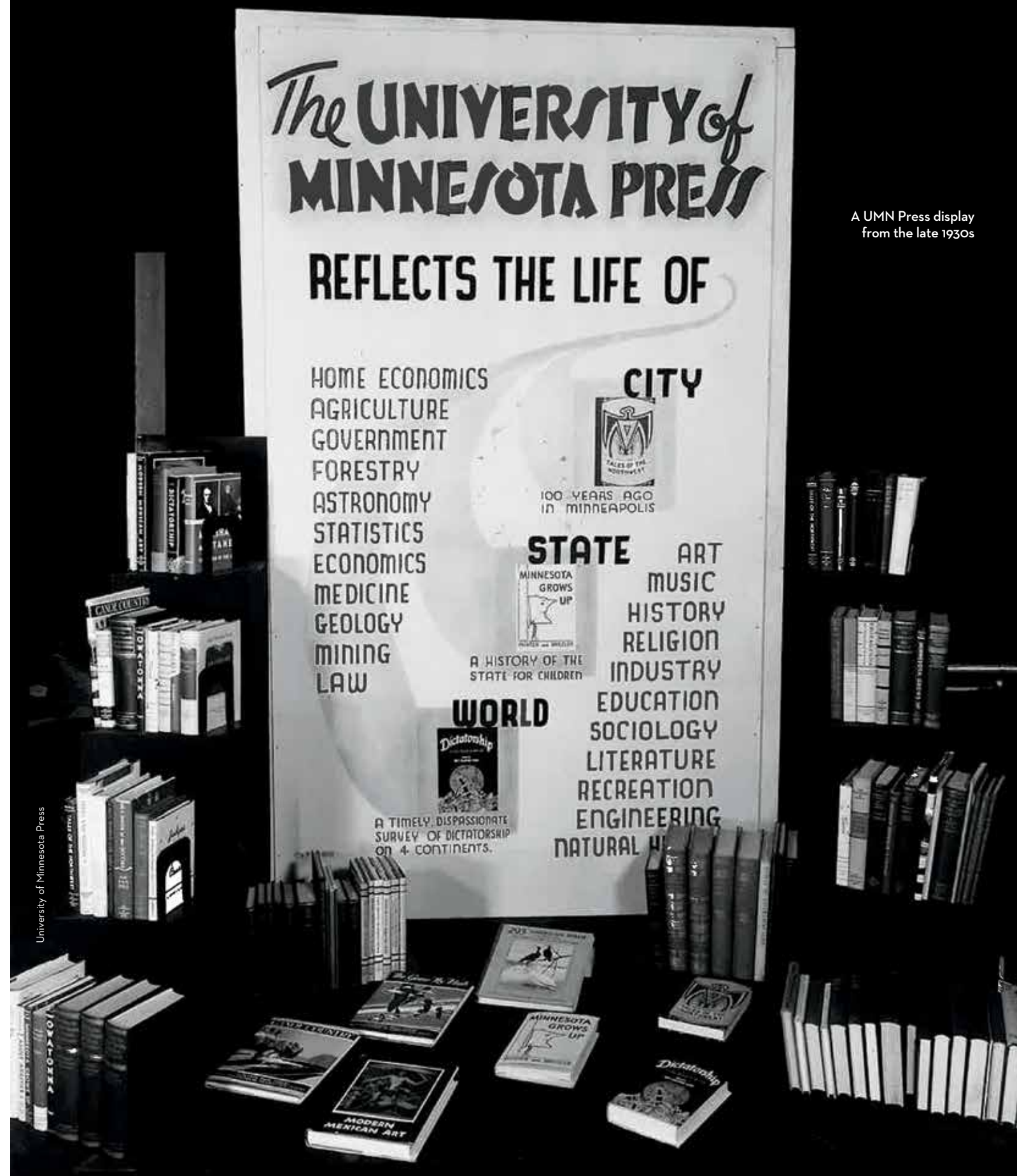
The truth is more interesting. University presses are nonprofit publishers, and not just of scholarly works but nonfiction, fiction, journals, and other materials for wide-ranging audiences of all ages. (Yes, literary theorist and critic Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* has been a bestseller for the press since its 1983 publication. But guess what 2024's bestselling book was? *Godzilla and Godzilla Raids Again*, the first English translation of sci-fi writer Shigeru Kayama's novels on which the 1954 film *Godzilla* was based.)

"Those novels have never been translated or published outside Japan, so when a scholar we've worked with [Jeffrey Angles] asked if we'd be interested in a translation, we said yes right away," recalls Doug Armato, UMP director for the past 27 years. "We've done some Japanese fan

books in the past, and we're grateful to have been able to develop the manuscript and get the rights to get this out there. It's been really fun."

That fun, risk-taking spirit, and the mix of things they do, are why UMP has not just survived for a century, but thrived, publishing more than 4,800 books since its founding in 1925. "I always said when I was working at other presses that U of M was where I wanted to be, and not just because it's great," Armato recalls. "This press has always been ambitious and maneuverable. We're like a speedboat among freighters because we zip around in new directions and people are amazed by the kinds of things we take on."

Books about plants and animals for kids and adults; a recent autobiography of Minneapolis musician James "Cornbread" Harris Jr.; children's picture books on everything from nature to being a refugee in Minnesota; and its current bestseller, *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen* by Chef Sean Sherman. They are all UMP's way of saying, "Hey, let's get in there and do things differently," Armato says. There's also Manifold, the digital publishing platform they launched in 2017 and use along with other publishers around the world.



A UMN Press display from the late 1930s

Margaret Harding



Five directors, one mission

Preparing for their centennial celebration has given UMP staff an opportunity to look back through history through stories, clippings, and photos. Over its 100 years, UMP has been helmed by just five directors, three of them women. Each faced many of the same challenges: strategizing over financials, finding readers and broadening audiences, and helping scholars spread knowledge inside and outside academia.

Margaret Harding was the publisher's first director. Known for saying it was her "deepest belief that education would be the salvation of mankind," she was also one of the first female directors of a major university press. It was Harding who acquired the publishing rights to the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), another key reason UMP is internationally renowned. Developed by U of M researchers in the late 1930s, the MMPI has become the most widely used personality test in the world.

"A lot of university presses publish journals and other things like we do, but our Test Division is unique," Armato explains, "and we're always actively developing the MMPI and the other tools that accompany it."

Harding led the Press for 25 years and was succeeded



Members of the UMP staff in the early 1980s: William A. Wood, Minnie Matsuura, Director John Ervin Jr., and Beverly Kaemmer.



Helen Clapesattle

by Helen Clapesattle, author of *The Doctors Mayo*, a *New York Times* bestselling history of the Mayo Clinic, published in 1941. John ("Jack") Ervin Jr. became the third director in 1957, and during his 30-year tenure, UMP published the notable University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers series, edited by Richard Foster, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren.

Believing scholarly publishing was a bit dry in the '70s and '80s, Ervin made several pivotal decisions, expanding the types of books on which UMP focuses, as well as their reach. An alliance with the Guthrie Theater resulted in the publication of a series of plays called the *Minnesota Drama Editions*. Ervin also opted to publish all scholarly works in paperback rather than just hardcover.

"I was just a kid working in publishing when I met Jack, and we'd have these long conversations that meant a lot to me," Armato recalls. "He made us the first press to do every scholarly book in paperback, because expensive hardcovers mostly went into libraries, and he

wanted everyone to be able to buy and read them. That decision helped make us who we are today, and we still do everything in paperback as well as eBooks."

By the time Lisa Freeman became the fourth director in 1989, UMP was internationally known for being a leading publisher of European philosophy and for helping introduce critical and social theory to North American



Doug Armato, director of University of Minnesota Press

“Minnesota is an incredible place to be a book publisher. People here love writing, reading, and they also love the U.”

audiences. Among the Press's notable scholarly achievements during Freeman's tenure was the publication of the *Theory and History of Literature* series, which grad students dubbed "the lipstick series" for its colorful covers. Edited by U of M faculty members, the series is credited with changing the course of humanities scholarship in American higher education.

Freeman went on to broaden the Press's theoretical scholarship to include the social sciences, and she embraced socially engaged publishing, including feminist and cultural studies. She also oversaw the publisher's move in 1994 from a rundown space near the University's laundry facilities to a new office in downtown Minneapolis near the Mississippi River, where they remain today.

Four years later, Armato took the helm.

A very human job

Since 2000, UMP has won 24 Minnesota Book Awards, with more than 50 finalists in several categories. Winners are Minnesota-based authors, and books often focus on the state in some way, such as *Minnesota's Geologist* by Sue Leaf, *Seven Aunts* by Staci Drouillard, or David Huggill's *Settler Colonial City*.

Armato doesn't take credit for UMP's award-winning regional books program; it was already robust in 1998 when he became director. But he committed to strengthening it even more. "This press has never stood still, and we were already leading in many ways," he says. "I wanted to use our strength and creativity to tell stories differently to broader audiences, and I knew we'd have no problem finding enough regional authors. Minnesota is an incredible place to be a book publisher. People here love writing, reading, and they also love the U."



Homegrown Voices

From the Twin Cities to Tokyo, the UMN Press publishes authors from all over the world. And a number of their books were penned by U of M alumni.

Racing Uphill: Confronting a Life with Epilepsy, 2025, by Stacia Kalinoski

Indigenous Archival Activism: Mohican Interventions in Public History and Memory, 2024, by Rose Miron

A Song Over Miskwaa Rapids: A Novel, 2023; *Gigchigami Hearts: Stories and Histories from Misaabekong*, 2021; and others by Linda LeGarde Grover

Fix What You Can: Schizophrenia and a Lawmaker's Fight for Her Son, 2020, by Mindy Greiling

The Children of Lincoln: White Paternalism and the Limits of Black Opportunity in Minnesota, 1860-1876, 2021; *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865-1912*, 2020; and others by William D. Green

American Gospel: A Novel, 2021, and *Undiscovered Country: A Novel*, 2020, by Lin Enger

Minnesota Marvels: Roadside Attractions in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, 2001; *For the Love of Cod: A Father and Son's Search for Norwegian Happiness*, 2023; and others by Eric Dregni

The Memory of Trees: A Daughter's Story of a Family Farm, 2013, by Gayla Marty

Ready for Air: A Journey Through Premature Motherhood, 2013, by Kate Hopper

Bohemian Flats: A Novel, 2014, by Mary Relindes Ellis

The War Came Home with Him: A Daughter's Memoir, 2016, by Catherine Madison

Fishing Minnesota: Angling with Experts in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, 2003, and *Wild Shore: Exploring Lake Superior by Kayak*, 2002, by Greg Breining

Looking for Asian America: An Ethnocentric Tour, 2007, by Wing Young Huie

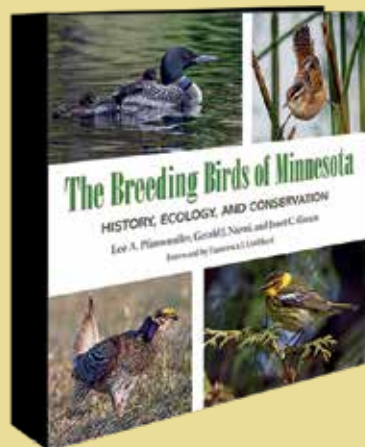
Memoirs to Monsters

First book published: *Cyrus Northrup: A Memoir* by Oscar W. Firkins (1925)

Average number of books published per year: 110

Number of journals published (upress.umn.edu/journals): 16

Current total number of books in print: Over 3,600



Heaviest book published: *Breeding Birds of Minnesota: History, Ecology, and Conservation* by Lee A. Pfannmuller, Gerald J. Niemi, and Janet C. Green (2023), 8 pounds, 10 ounces

Most Surprising Title: *Godzilla and Godzilla Raids Again* (2023) by Shigeru Kayama

Number of Minnesota Book Awards won since 2000: 24 (and over 50 finalists)

Number of translation agreements for the MMPI-3: 20 languages, including Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Danish, Dutch/Flemish, French, German, Greek/Cyprus, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish for Spain and South America, Spanish for Mexico, and Swedish.

Most famous series: *Theory and History of Literature* (THL), which introduced many major European thinkers to English language readers; 88 volumes appeared between 1981 and 1998. Known as the “lipstick series” for its brightly colored covers.

All-time bestseller: *Literary Theory* by Terry Eagleton—over 225,000 print copies sold.

Bestseller of the last decade: *The Sioux Chef’s Indigenous Kitchen* by Sean Sherman with Beth Dooley—over 125,000 print copies sold.

Erik Anderson, senior trade and acquisitions editor, joined UMP in 2008 and has run the regional books program for the past 12 years. With an undergrad degree in English, a master’s in Scottish poetry, and a resume that includes working as a puppeteer for a kids’ TV show and a stint as a marine biology educator, he’s got an eclectic mix of skills for a job that’s turned out to be quite different than what he expected.

“Coming out of grad school, I thought being a book editor meant leaning up against a tree smoking a pipe and thinking about things,” Anderson says with a laugh. “But it’s really about listening, having conversations, and collaborating in a very human way. Yes, the physical book is important, but being curious and helping authors shape their ideas and write the books they want to write is really at the heart of what I do.”

Anderson treasures the time he spent time with noted author and cook Beatrice Ojakangas working on her memoir/cookbook, *Homemade*, published in 2018. “I remember being in the kitchen at her place in the woods,” he recalls. “The book includes a lot of recipes, and she started baking French bread while we were talking about how she grew up on a small farm. I scribbled down the recipe because I wanted it, and she told me how she created steam by putting wet rocks from Lake Superior in a pan at the bottom of the oven. There are so many small, precious moments like that when you’re working with authors and that’s what makes this job so special.”

And then there was the time he worked with well-known entrepreneur and humorist Dudley Riggs on his 2017 memoir *Flying Funny*. Riggs was telling stories about growing up working in the circus. “He did a highwire act when he was young and, as he told me about that, he got up and walked out onto the balcony. He used a cane, but he said he could easily get up on the railing if he wanted to, even though we were 10 stories up. He was pulling my leg a bit, but he was also saying something very true about how he saw himself and I really enjoyed spending time with him.”

Bruce Kramer, longtime host of Minnesota Public Radio’s *Morning Edition*, had already been suffering from ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) for years when Anderson worked with him and *Almanac*’s Cathy Wurzer on his 2017 memoir *We Know How This Ends*. “Bruce was in the last months of his life, and he wanted to share things he’d learned from having ALS and he was still trying to get as much from life as he could,” Anderson recalls. “I remember feeling changed every time I walked out of the room after those talks. Moments like that make you recognize how lucky you are, how lucky I am to have the job I have. This job has changed me as a person.”

100 years of collaboration

Books need support to succeed, and UMP books are fortunate to have Production Assistant Eliza Edwards looking after them. Edwards, who majored in creative writing and East Asian studies, made her way to UMP

Godzilla: Public domain via WikiCommons

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BY HILTON
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Civil rights icon Josie Johnson

in fall 2021 after working as an archive assistant for the University's Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection, the largest repository of LGBTQIA material in the Midwest.

Working with editors and other colleagues, Edwards helps transform books from raw manuscripts to published works. She's also part of the team that keeps books in print when stock gets low. "Before I got here, I didn't realize books need tending their whole lives," she explains. "I'm happy to be one of the people who makes sure they have what they need when they're out in the world, and I'm grateful to be in a workplace where everyone works so closely in an interwoven web."

Edwards grew up in a family of readers and recalls one bookcase always having a lower shelf filled with books from UMP. "Some were scholarly, and others were more general on things like Minnesota history and Earth sciences. I remember always thinking about how opening a book is like sitting around a campfire listening to a good story. They're so much comfort, especially in difficult times."

Looking at photos staff shared while planning the centennial events, Edwards was struck by how she saw the same caring, collective passion she enjoys with colleagues now reflected in faces from the past. "They all built such an incredible foundation for us to do what we do," she says. "People are always seeking knowledge and guidance and there is so much wisdom packed into the books we've had the honor of publishing for 100 years." ■

Meleah Maynard is a freelance writer and editor in Minneapolis.



Winter's Children author Ryan Rodgers (right) with Olympic skier Kikkan Randall



Comedian Dudley Riggs

Choosing What Gets Published

THE U OF M PRESS doesn't track how many submissions they get each year, but Editorial Director Jason Weidemann estimates it's about 2,000. Around 5 percent of those submissions are accepted, for a total of roughly 110 books per year, including scholarly and general interest books, as well as a handful of what they call "distributions," mostly catalogs for museum exhibitions that they help store, ship, and market.

Weidemann and UMP's other editors handle the first round of selections, looking for projects that contribute strongly to various fields, as well as conversations they think readers will find interesting. They're also looking for books that will help move UMP forward. "We don't like to publish the same book twice, so we're trying to follow culture and publish ahead of where things are going," Weidemann explains. "That means paying

attention to early career scholars who are thinking about the future of their disciplines and adding to the diversity of voices we publish."

Scholarly and nonfiction manuscripts go through a formal peer review process and all books are brought before the Committee on the Press, a review board made up of tenured faculty who meet once a month to evaluate and vote on projects. Books that don't

fit that peer review model, like children's picture books and cookbooks, are reviewed by UMP publishing professionals for approval.

"Our strong processes of editorial evaluation ensures that when readers purchase a book published by a university press like Minnesota, they can trust the writing has been properly evaluated and vetted to the highest standards," Weidemann says.

University of Minnesota Press



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A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Music journalist and U of M alum Will Hermes literally wrote the book on iconic musician Lou Reed.

By Jon Spayde

Lou Reed, frontman of the gritty-cool 1960s band The Velvet Underground, was a key influence on punk, grunge, and other musical movements that gave voice to the harder-edged realities of city life. A poet at heart, Reed illuminated the lives of junkies, trans sex workers, and other “undesirables” with passion and precision, and collaborated with Andy Warhol, David Bowie, and avant-garde artist and musician Laurie Anderson. But before that, Reed began his career writing and performing rip-offs of then-current pop trends—surf music, girl-groups, British Invasion—for a budget record label called Pickwick whose platters sold for 99 cents in supermarkets.

Samantha June / Arius Photography

In September last year, Light in the Attic records brought out a compilation of those early ditties as a service to Lou Reed completists, and Will Hermes (M.A. '95) noted it in his Substack, a subscription-based service where writers share their work.

“Finally,” Hermes wrote, “Reed’s wild, pre-Velvet Underground bargain bin rock’n’roll records get a proper historical reissue.”

Hermes knows whereof he speaks. A longtime writer

Hermes at his home in upstate New York. According to the *Washington Post*, his book, *Lou Reed: The King of New York*, is “the only Lou Reed bio you need to read.”



“I could see the effects of my writing on the cultural life of my town.”

on music and the culture that surrounds it for *Spin*, *Rolling Stone*, *the New York Times*, and other publications, and a contributor to National Public Radio, he’s also the author of *Lou Reed: The King of New York* (2023), which the *Washington Post* called “the only Lou Reed bio you need to read.”

The book tells Reed’s story from his Jewish ancestry to Pickwick pop to international stardom, and grew out of *Love Goes to Buildings on Fire* (2011), Hermes’ richly detailed history of popular music in New York in the early ‘70s. That era was a period when the hippie ethos of 1960s rock encountered the edgy experimental music of downtown Manhattan, and disco, hip-hop, and the Brooklyn jazz scene emerged.

Reed, of course was a key player in that mix—and when Hermes decided to write his biography, he took another look at the entire NYC arts world of the day.

“Reed studied with the great postwar poet Delmore Schwartz at Syracuse University,” Hermes says. “He connected with Andy Warhol, and so was part of that world of visual arts and experimental filmmakers. He had a very long career and worked with Laurie Anderson in the ‘90s [who would later marry Reed in 2008]. The more I considered it, the more I thought, ‘Wow, this is a New York story, but through the lens of one incredibly talented musician who was everywhere.’”

Just as important to Hermes, though, was his feeling for the man’s music.

“I love the empathy in his songwriting, the way he can draw characters without judgment,” he says, “and the way he puts it together with straightforward music. He’s a great songwriter, but he’s also a great storyteller. As a writer myself, I love that he identified himself as a writer who wanted to make rock’n’roll an adult art form.”

Pursuing creative writing

Hermes, a native New Yorker who grew up listening to WNEW-FM and other progressive rock stations in the New York City area, attended the State University of New

York at Binghamton and became a disk jockey and music director at the college's radio station. He later earned a master's degree in education at Queens College and taught in the New York City public schools.

"But I really wanted to write," he says, so he began looking at graduate writing programs. The U of M's master's-granting precursor to today's M.F.A. track offered him financial support, and he decided to come to Minnesota.

While he studied and worked on short stories, he also picked up writing assignments at *City Pages*, the late Minneapolis alternative weekly. He calls that stint his favorite job ever.

"I could see the effects of my writing on the cultural life of my town," he says. "I would write about some obscure artist from Hungary who was coming, then go to the show, see a lot of people there, and hear from the bookers that, 'yeah, after your piece ran in *City Pages*, ticket sales really took off.'"

As for his master's, "the thrust was creative nonfiction in those days," he recalls. "A lot of people working in memoir. Eventually I started merging my interest in fiction-writing technique with my desire to write about the arts, music in particular. I was approaching my assignments at *City Pages* with more excitement than I was my fictional work."

He began freelancing for publications on both coasts, building a distinguished career that also includes teaching. These days Hermes lives in upstate New York, where his wife, Anne Galperin, teaches graphic design. Hermes still comes into Manhattan to introduce students at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts to the glory days of New York art and music. Hermes has recently been on the book promotion circuit, too, supporting the recent release of his Reed bio in paperback.

Hermes has watched the magazine world decline as the internet has risen, but he still freelances in major outlets, including the *New York Times* and *Rolling Stone*, and, like many journalists in today's less-than-encouraging climate, writes a Substack—"New Music + Old Music"—as one income stream and a way to keep at his craft on a daily basis.

"Substack has been a great experience," he says. "I can choose what I want to cover week to week, and even write more than once a week. It's been a kind of rediscovery of the way I wrote when I was working at *City Pages*." ■

Jon Spayde is a freelance writer in the Twin Cities.



'WE ARE REAL.'

Photographer and member of the Menominee Nation Dale Kakkak has spent his life documenting his culture and traditions. *By Joe Hart*

A good photograph is "an exchange of information," according to Dale Kakkak (B.A. '89). "It makes you sit down and think. Or it makes you feel something."

Kakkak is a professional photographer and a member of the northeast Wisconsin Menominee Nation. The things he wants his audience to think and feel through his photos concern the experiences of Indigenous people.

"That's why I got into photography, because there weren't many Native photographers in the 1980s," he explains. "And thus, there weren't that many images produced by Indigenous artists that would help people understand our views and our culture."

The misrepresentation of American Indian culture is no mere abstraction for Kakkak. Like many of his generation, he was born at the tail end

of an era when American Indian children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in residential boarding schools designed to "kill the Indian and save the man."

Kakkak attended a reservation Catholic school, the same one his mother was forced to attend as a boarding student. When he attended the school no longer boarded students, but not much else had changed, he recalls.

"The nuns would say, 'You gotta forget about being Indian or you're gonna burn in hell.' I remember that clearly," he says.

Like his mother, Kakkak was forbidden to speak Menominee at school. "That was taken away from us, language especially," he says.

In the late 1960s, during Kakkak's teenage years, a pan-Indigenous movement was gaining ground to reclaim sovereignty and cultural traditions. In the U.S., this groundswell centered on the American Indian Movement (AIM), which was founded in Minneapolis in 1968.

In 1974, Kakkak and some friends attended an AIM gathering in northwest Wisconsin, where he participated in his first ceremonial sweat lodge.

"That's where I started finding my way back to myself," he says. "I said, 'Oh, these ways are alive. This is real. We are real.'"

A start at the U of M

Fueled by a desire to help represent Indigenous viewpoints, Kakkak enrolled at the U of M, where he credits photography teacher Joe Benson with setting him on the path to being a photojournalist. After graduating with a journalism degree, he found a place for his work at *The Circle*, a monthly newspaper covering news in the American Indian community. Founded in 1980 in Minneapolis, it gained national prominence as a voice for American Indians and is still published today.

As a staff photographer, Kakkak traveled widely. He embedded with Ojibwe fishermen during the explosive battles over spearfishing on Wisconsin's Lac du Flambeau reservation. A federal court had backed the tribe's treaty rights, but white protesters brought slurs and signs, rocks, and even bullets to the boat landings. As an American Indian journalist, Kakkak was targeted, along with the local Ojibwe.

"I was traumatized up there," Kakkak recalls. "[There were] 1,500 people yelling at you, 'You dirty Red n—! Go back where you came from!' Getting spat on and having rocks thrown at you. Our lives being threatened, right to our faces. It was ugly."

Working for the Menominee Nation

In the mid-1990s, the tribal chair of the Menominee reservation invited Kakkak to help build a communications strategy for the Menominee Indian Tribe. Kakkak was an early advocate for using videography to help further document and share information.

In his work—and later for the College of Menominee Nation, a land grant institution founded on the reservation in 1993—Kakkak advocated for Native voices, but his work shifted toward sustainability, a primary focus of the college.

One of his first briefs was organizing an international conference on sustainability. That led to a series of regional summits exploring issues of food sovereignty, health and nutrition, and traditional American Indian foods.

Like language and culture, food and nutrition need to be viewed in their historical context, Kakkak says. In past years, American Indians were stripped of their traditional foodways and forced into dependence on the federal government. By the 1970s, this took the form of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)—notorious for its low-quality "commodities." The food sovereignty movement seeks to replace FDPIR with locally organized networks of Native producers.

"Today they're contracting with Indigenous food suppliers and incorporating Indigenous foods into our diet," Kakkak explains. Instead of sugary canned fruits and "government cheese," the program distributes walleye caught in Red Lake, wild harvested berries, organic grass-fed bison, and Native-farmed vegetables.

"Things are moving along in a good way with tribal food systems," Kakkak says. "Nourishment is important."

Along the way, in the early 1990s, Kakkak shot photography for two books, *The Sacred Harvest: Ojibway Wild Rice Gathering*, written by Gordon Regguinti, and *Ininatig's Gift of Sugar: Traditional Native Sugarmaking* by Laura Waterman Wittstock.

Although Kakkak has now officially retired, he's still deeply committed to documenting and preserving Menominee cultural heritage. This year, when the maple sap started to flow, he came out of retirement to help tend the fire at a local sugar bush, a practice with deep significance in Menominee history and oral history. ■

Joe Hart is a freelance writer in the Twin Cities.

"Things are moving along in a good way with tribal food systems. Nourishment is important."

Courtesy Dale Kakkak



PASSIONATE MENTOR

Retired St. Paul elementary school teacher Dorothy Jean Barnes-Griswold finds multiple ways to help students pursue higher education. *By Ellen Ryan*

Michelle Bennett/Wolfskull Creative

“It’s my ministry to help kids make [the] transition into higher learning,” says Dorothy Jean Barnes-Griswold (M.Ed. ’80), a godmother of sorts to decades of graduates: nearly 700 in all, located throughout Minnesota. Those students received years of intense boosting, coaxing, and emotional and financial support—sometimes in the form of book money—from the nonprofit Minnesota COPE, which Barnes-Griswold oversees.

The Minnesota COPE Program, or Creating Opportunities for Post-Secondary Enrollment for All Youth, is a nonprofit that helps students overcome economic, educational, and/or class barriers to step up to college. COPE has existed under various names since 1999, when Barnes-Griswold’s son cofounded an earlier iteration with a mentor. Dorothy Jean has been CEO and executive director throughout.

Griswold has devoted her career to education. She taught elementary school for a year in Mississippi before spending the next 33 years teaching in St. Paul before her retirement.

“I didn’t like the South,” she says. In May 1970, just as she was graduating from Jackson State University (then College), police shot 14 students amid antiwar and racial tensions. Two of the students died. The Jackson State shootings occurred just 11 days after a similar tragedy at Kent State University in Ohio, when four students were killed during a Vietnam war protest.

A year later, Barnes-Griswold moved to Minnesota; four years later, she enrolled for her master’s degree at the U of M.

For decades, she’s dedicated herself to helping students find success in higher education. “We provide resources and academic scholarships to college-bound students attending public or private high schools in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and to students attending college,” she says.

Barnes-Griswold says that COPE generally assists at least 30 students at any one time, and she is still finding, keeping after, and encouraging young people and their families—not to mention donors, board members, sponsors, foundations, and nonprofits.

COPE offers college-bound teens—primarily students of color—college prep classes for ACT and SAT through colleges (including the University) and local high schools; field trips, college fairs, and tours; financial aid workshops; one-on-one coaching and mentoring; volunteer service projects to learn and share skills; and more.

While teaching, Barnes-Griswold witnessed the needs of area children in poverty firsthand, including those diagnosed (or not) with learning disabilities. And bright kids who fell behind in school because their families moved frequently, or because they had to care for younger siblings in a parent’s absence, or they simply didn’t have clean clothes.

It also allowed her to make connections that have come in handy in helming COPE. Barnes-Griswold has worked

with fraternities, churches, nonprofits, foundations, and individual donors.

In general, COPE students must have at least a 2.0 GPA, volunteer 100 hours during high school; write thank-you letters to donors; and take part in orientation and annual wellness workshops. Those receiving a college scholarship must complete 50 hours of volunteer service annually.

“Miss Dorothy has dedicated her life to serving others,” says Cristina Harbaugh Mazier (B.S.B. ’24), who graduated from the U of M last December with honors. “I’ve never met anyone who has the passion that she has for the work that she does.” When the two paid calls on donor prospects, “It was always ‘Mr.’ and ‘Miss’—I learned that from her,” Mazier says. “Also, that persistence is everything.”

Retired Minneapolis airline pilot Captain Thomas Bailey started volunteering at COPE with his wife nearly 20 years ago, including raising funds through the program’s silent auctions. He’s mentored students and introduced them to aviation careers, served on the board, and endowed a scholarship. Learning about everything from flight crews to maintenance to air traffic control as career options has expanded the world for many young people, Bailey believes.

And Barnes-Griswold’s background and her master’s degree inform her work, Bailey says, whether she’s tutoring, talking with students about their future, or demonstrating

**Dorothy Jean Barnes-Griswold
taught elementary school for a year
in Mississippi before spending the
next 33 years teaching in St. Paul.**

that nothing useful in life comes free. “I see it as teaching life skills, like communication and resilience, as much as academic skills,” he adds.

College visits are a good example, he continues. “A lot of these kids might not have been outside of their own neighborhood,” Bailey observes. “Just the travel can be eye-opening.”

Another volunteer, Patricia Jones Whyte (Ph.D. ’13), has worked with COPE for nearly 25 years, including chairing the board and guiding teens through writing essays and letters of thanks. Barnes-Griswold knew that Whyte, herself a first-generation college student, would connect with students unsure of their qualifications.

“COPE exists due to Miss Dorothy’s determination,” says Whyte, who retired from the U of M as director of the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education in 2016. ■

Ellen Ryan is a freelance writer in Rockville, Maryland.

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR CLEAN ENERGY

To support entrepreneurs and projects focused on clean energy, U of M alum Nina Axelson draws on lessons from her college days. *By Elizabeth Millard*

Although Nina Axelson (B.S. '04) hasn't been in a U of M classroom for a couple decades, she's still doing her homework, using what she learned as an environmental science major to support clean energy efforts that will have a ripple effect across the state and beyond.

"Because of the science background I gained in my degree program, I had the type of systems-based thinking needed for these major projects," says Axelson. "It's not just the basics of the scientific method, it's having the language and understanding about how that science can be applied that's crucial. And that's what I build on for supporting startups as they move through different stages of development."

Axelson launched clean energy accelerator Grid Catalyst in 2021. The company works with startups and innovators to clear a path to commercialization for their ideas. The organization also developed Cleantech Innovation Pathways, a program for entrepreneurs that includes workshops, training, networking, and coaching.

In March, Grid Catalyst announced its fifth cohort, a group of nine energy startups that pitched pilot projects to key partners like the U of M, CenterPoint Energy, 3M, Xcel Energy, Great River Energy, Mortenson, and others. Three of the startups are based in Minnesota, and include technology that optimizes energy usage, provides environmentally responsible heating and cooling technologies, and develops liquid-immersion cooling systems for high-performance IT equipment. In the 2024 cohort, two of the startups were spinouts from the University of Minnesota.

"Our measure of success is how much innovation we can draw to Minnesota and how much we can support a homegrown innovation ecosystem," she says. "That means making sure Minnesota-based startups have strong opportunities that draw on the strength of higher education and corporations in the state."

As she grows Grid Catalyst, Axelson relies on the U of M as a partner in the organization's Innovators Network, as well as a source of potential startups: for example, a new summer program will work with about 25 students to train the next generation of STEM innovators, supported by the Carlson School of Management and the Institute on the Environment.

For Axelson, interest in these efforts actually didn't begin in a classroom. It started with wolves.

After initially studying business and communications at St. Cloud State, she left school to help her father recover from a stroke, then moved to Colorado. While there, she became aware of a conflict over the use of public land, particularly in regard to wolf management issues and ecosystem stability.

"That was when I realized I could take my love for the wilderness and apply it in a more formal degree program," she says. As a transfer student to the U of M's College of Natural Resources (now called the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, or CFANS), she appreciated being able to blend her interest in environmental science with her interest in policy and advocacy.

"I wanted to know how the science worked before I started to figure out how that could apply to working with people and advancing environmental action," says Axelson. "The College of Natural Resources program was so interesting, and it was perfect for what I wanted. It covered a wide variety of science-based fields, and then added insight into politics and business, with a look at how all of that intersected."

Another unique aspect of the program was the way it provided both a small community of students and a larger campus experience. At the time Axelson attended, the program had about 500 students, which gave it a "small college feel," she says. But it was tucked inside a robust and obviously much bigger University environment. That's reminiscent of Grid Catalyst in some ways; the organization's focus on a handful of cohorts or groups at a time pairs well with its large-scale partners.

The main advantage in her degree program, though, was the foundational knowledge she still uses daily. "Even 20 years later, I'm referencing quotes from my advisor and utilizing lessons from classes like forest ecology and botany," Axelson says. "That science foundation has been so critical not just for Grid Catalyst, but for all the jobs I've held since my time at the University."

Those roles have included managing Best Buy's diversity giving program, leading conservation efforts for St. Anthony Park Community Council, and leading sustainability projects as a vice president at Ever-Green

Mike Madison/Courtesy Nina Axelson



Energy. In that last position, Axelson served as project manager for development and implementation for the largest solar thermal installation in the nation.

"We have a great history in this state of solving big problems, especially science-based challenges," she says. "That's going to continue through the type of work done by our partners, our cohorts, and research institutions like the University of Minnesota." ■

Elizabeth Millard is a freelance writer in Hinckley, Minnesota.

"Our measure of success is how much innovation we can draw to Minnesota."

SMART & FOCUSED > BIGGER & FASTER

Greg Tehven helps North Dakota entrepreneurs envision next-generation technologies, especially in agriculture. Other U of M alumni also play key roles.

By Steve Neumann

A 1790 census of our fledgling American nation showed that roughly 90 percent of the population of 4 million were farmers. Today, that number is less than 2 percent of a population of around 330 million.

How is that possible? How can so few farmers feed a much larger population?

For a long period, the agriculture manufacturing industry made bigger equipment that went faster and faster, so it could produce more food or textile fiber with fewer people. But eventually, it got to the point where the equipment couldn't realistically be made any bigger or go any faster.

That means that innovation needs to come from other quarters.

Enter folks like Fargo, North Dakota native Greg Tehven (B.S.B. '06) and his company Emerging Prairie, an entrepreneur support organization that celebrates, and serves as a connection hub for the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the region.

Emerging Prairie focuses its efforts in three main areas: entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology. The group hosts weekly coffee gatherings and conferences to bring together like-minded people who want to build enterprise in the area.

"We do a wide variety of things that really celebrate entrepreneurs," Tehven says. "We coordinate events, have a coworking space, facilitate entrepreneur day at the Capitol to inform policymakers about entrepreneurial challenges, and we have the largest TEDx in the region, TEDx Fargo." (TEDx are locally organized events that mimic larger TED talks, in which an expert presents ideas designed to promote discussion on a topic.)

TEHVEN HAS EMBRACED entrepreneurship since his school days. When he was a freshman at the U of M in 2003, he and three of his classmates from the Carlson School of Management created Students



Greg Tehven and Dave Batcheller at the Grand Farm Innovation Campus site near Fargo.

Today Leaders Forever, a nonprofit that encouraged servant leadership. In 2008, the organization won the Social Entrepreneur's Cup, a division of the Minnesota Cup, an annual startup competition held at the Holmes Center for Entrepreneurship at the U of M's Carlson School of Management.

"We began with an idea to take our friends on a spring break trip called the Pay It Forward Tour, traveling to different cities across the U.S. to do service trips with the idea of revealing leadership through service relationships and action," Tehven says. (The group would eventually host chapters at more than 30 universities across 10 states.)

But that experience, as successful as it was, was also challenging for someone maintaining a full course load

Courtesy emergingprairie



for four years. After graduation, Tehven took a year off to travel and decompress.

"When I got back, I had gotten a full ride to go to the University of Manchester on a Rotary Foundation ambassadorial scholarship," Tehven says. "But I had to wait a year before I could go to grad school, so I began working for Doug Burgum, who had built Great Plains Software in Fargo, which he eventually sold to Microsoft."

While working for Burgum, Tehven—who comes from five generations of farmers—became enamored of downtown Fargo and started thinking entrepreneurially again.

"When I was in school in Minneapolis, I'd heard the stories of entrepreneurs. I got my undergrad in entrepreneurship," Tehven says, "but in Fargo, there wasn't an entrepreneur support organization. I actually turned down my scholarship and started to build Emerging Prairie."

A key part of Emerging Prairie's success is a fellow West Fargo High School classmate of Tehven's, and another U of M alum, Dave Batcheller (B.A. '05).

When Tehven was starting Students Today Leaders Forever in 2003, Batcheller's father, Barry, had retired

Every week, Emerging Prairie hosts StartupBREW, a morning networking event for entrepreneurs, creatives, and community members at the Prairie Den, their co-working space in Fargo.

When Tehven was a freshman at the U of M in 2003, he and three classmates from the Carlson School of Management created Students Today Leaders Forever, a nonprofit that encouraged servant leadership.



Grand Farm offers unique learning events like its annual Space Ag Conference and learning opportunities for students where attendees can talk about cutting-edge agriculture technology.



from his position as director of technology at John Deere. The elder Batcheller then started a business called Appareo, a technology company focused on electronics, mechanical, and software design for the aviation and agriculture industries.

The younger Batcheller joined Appareo in 2005 as a project manager, before eventually taking over for his father as president and CEO in 2013. In 2022, Appareo was sold to global agriculture machinery giant AGCO.

“What was really special about Appareo is that we were a company that was starting and growing and building in the electronics space,” Batcheller says. That was uncommon because the level of investment that is necessary is higher than in the software space, for instance, because there’s a broader spectrum of expertise that’s required to do it.

After acquiring Appareo, AGCO became the anchor

tenant in Emerging Prairie’s largest project, Grand Farm: a collaborative network of growers, corporations, startups, educators, researchers, government and investors working together to solve problems in agriculture through technology.

Grand Farm’s main 25,000-square-foot facility, located near Casselton, North Dakota, includes a conference center, classrooms, a 250-person auditorium, and a production shop for fixing tractors and other equipment.

“Grand Farm is going to be an incredibly important endeavor for our country and for the world from the perspective of food security, and maintaining a position of permanency in technology,” Batcheller says.

AGCO has also built a 300-acre state-of-the-art test farm there named the Precision Technology Institute (formerly the Dakota Smart Farm), designed to develop innovative farming practices to create a truly sustainable farm, specifically focusing on precision agriculture technologies and high-value retrofit solutions for existing equipment.

In February 2022, thanks in part to the advocacy of Mike Nathe (B.S. ’86), a fellow U of M alumnus and North Dakota state representative, Grand Farm was awarded a \$10 million grant by the North Dakota Legislature and Department of Commerce. A former Gopher baseball player, Nathe has become a strong advocate for innovation in agriculture and technology, Tehven says. Nathe has also led efforts to allocate 10 percent of North Dakota’s \$10 billion Legacy Fund toward in-state investments, supporting entrepreneurs and tech companies.

“Mike has been a huge champion of ours,” Tehven says. “He is working on \$15 million more [in funding] for Grand Farm, [and has] passed significant legislation to advocate for North Dakota entrepreneurs.”

Steve Neumann is a freelance writer in Mendham, New Jersey.

Courtesy emerging Prairie

SPONSORED CONTENT

Innovation fueled by philanthropy

We Minnesotans hate to brag, but there are some pretty exciting things happening at the University of Minnesota these days. And because philanthropy fuels discovery, it’s thanks in part to support from alumni and friends like you.



Photo by Scott Streble

Every second counts

When a person’s heart stops beating, every minute that passes before getting to a hospital can mean the difference between life and death. John Sauer counts his blessings to be called a cardiac arrest survivor because of his family’s quick action and a first-of-its-kind ER-on-wheels developed at the U with the support of philanthropy.

“So many people had to do their jobs perfectly for me to be here,” Sauer says. “I’m so lucky. So, so lucky.”

The U of M team is now sharing its lifesaving cardiac arrest protocols with hospitals across the country.

Empowered eating

In the free-to-download *Forever Green Cookbook*, local food celebrity and author Beth Dooley offers up tasty and nutritious recipes and tips for more sustainable eating.

The cookbook, produced with donor support, shows us uncomplicated ways to incorporate drought-hardy, farmer-friendly grains and locally grown foods into our meals.

“Understanding that [sustainably grown food] is the best source of nutrition ... [and] that this is going to have an impact on the quality of our water, soil, wildlife, and life in rural communities is so important,” Dooley says.



Photo by Caitlin Abrams

A toast to cleaner water

Tough news for beer fans: Producing a single pint of beer generates about seven pints of wastewater. Today a University of Minnesota team, backed in part by philanthropy, is working on a way to break down wastewater from breweries into methane and hydrogen that could be used for clean fuel—keeping our precious rivers and lakes cleaner for future generations.

“We’ve been working on this for 10 years,” says U researcher Paige Novak. “To string together 10 years of funding, you rely on philanthropic gifts. They provide support for getting a project going.” Cheers to you!



This work started here, but it stands to make a difference everywhere. Download the *Forever Green Cookbook* or make a gift to support an area of research that’s close to your heart at z.umn.edu/proudalum.



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COOL BUILDINGS

Postdoctoral researcher Emily McGuinness won a prestigious prize for her work creating hybrid building materials to combat global warming. *By Chris Quirk*



“I’m motivated to work on problems that are facing us as society, and I love using science within that context to accomplish new goals.”

assembly,” says McGuinness. “Being at the crossover of those two fields is kind of unique, and it’s channeling my work from the past into one project.”

The one-two punch McGuinness imbues into her new materials—based in passive daytime radiative cooling (PDRC), a way of cooling buildings without using energy—depends on two unique qualities of the hybrid stuff. First, the surface of the hybrid is irregular, minimizing the heat absorption of the sun by the skin of the building. “It scatters the light away from the surface of the building, much in the way clouds scatter light,” McGuinness explains.

Next, the materials absorb heat from within the building and convey it outside. “Whatever is creating heat in the building, a person or other heat source, it takes that heat and sends it out,” she says. The hybrid fiber-metal also has the useful quality of radiating infrared heat at very long wavelengths—so long that the rays pass through the Earth’s atmosphere unobstructed into deep space, so there is no increased heating in the atmosphere.

In addition, McGuinness is developing a production technique that will curb the cost and complexity of manufacturing the materials, making the process scalable. “I’m fundamentally curious, and I see opportunities to make the world around us better,” McGuinness says. “I’m motivated to work on problems that are facing us as society, and I love using science within that context to accomplish new goals.” ■

Chris Quirk is a freelance writer in Brooklyn, New York.

her Ph.D. in materials science at Georgia Tech before coming to the U of M in 2022.

“I’m curious about a lot of different areas, and I think I’m at my most creative and engaged when I can combine those in new and interesting ways,” says McGuinness. Vivian Ferry, an associate professor and director of graduate studies in CSE’s Department of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science, and Christopher Ellison, a professor and specialist in polymer research and faculty director of the U of M Industrial Partnership for Research in Interfacial and Materials Engineering (IPRIME), jointly advise McGuinness.

“Vivian is an expert in optics and Chris is an expert in polymer physics and self-

are infused with organic compounds into a single material, which can then be used to make building exteriors that both reflect energy from the sun and deliver heat within a building into deep space. That reduces the need for cooling powered by carbon-burning sources. “We infuse the metal oxides right into the structure of the polymers,” explains McGuinness. “The metal oxide and polymer chains are pretty well intertwined.”

McGuinness has the background to achieve this unlikely amalgam of metal and fiber. As an undergraduate at North Carolina State University, she earned degrees in textile engineering and in chemical and biological engineering, and later obtained

Sara Rubinstein



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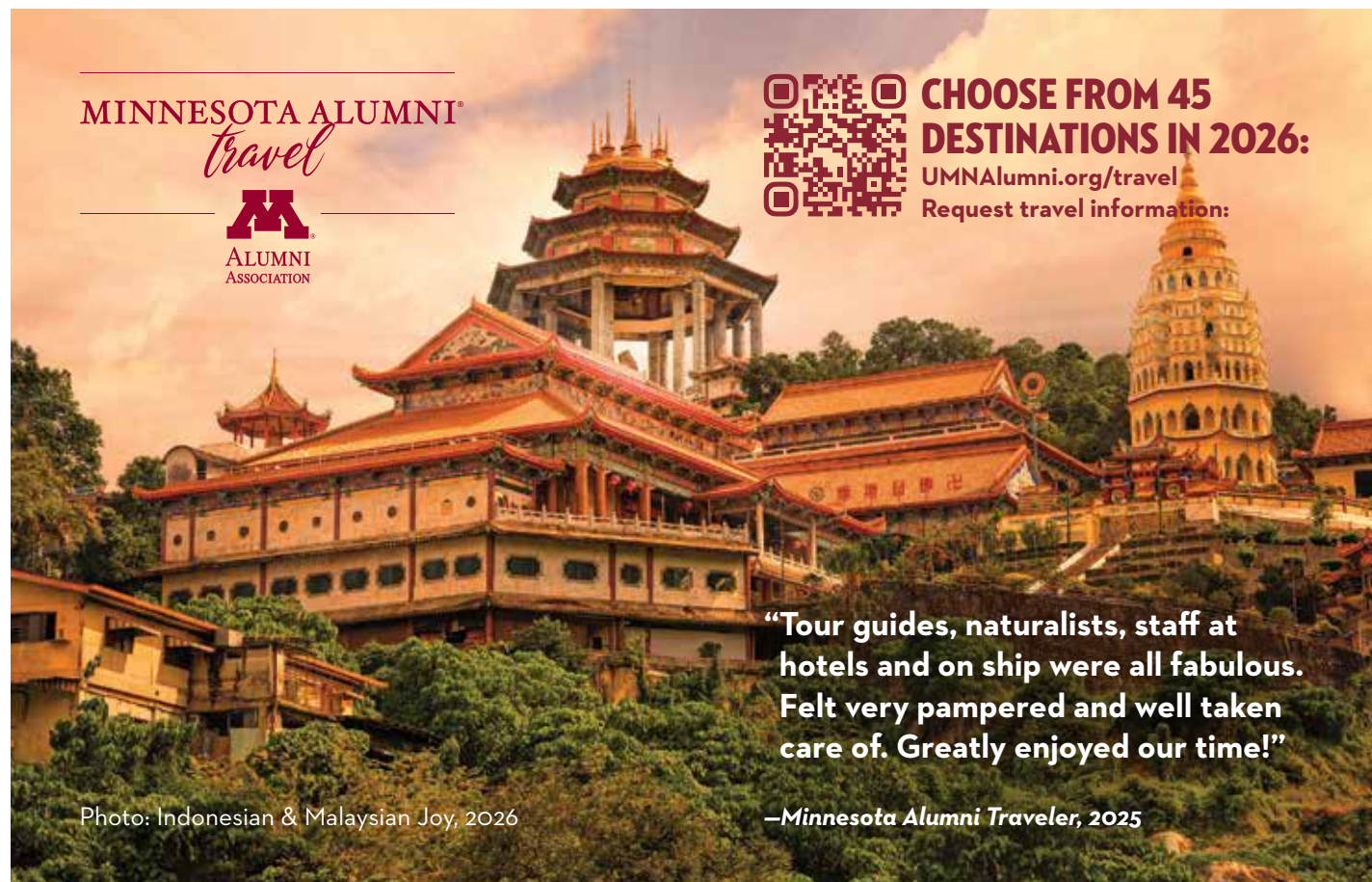
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Photo: Indonesian & Malaysian Joy, 2026

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ALUMNI NEWS & EVENTS

A TIME TO COME TOGETHER

In early May, over 450 friends and supporters of the Alumni Association gathered at the McNamara Alumni Center for our 121st Annual Celebration. I've been privileged to be part of this event 11 times during my career with the UMAA—and once again, I was reminded what an honor it is to stand among so many accomplished, talented U of M alumni.

Signature events like Annual Celebration give us opportunities to connect and reaffirm our commitment to and appreciation for the U of M. It's also a chance to recognize what the U of M means to us both personally and to the state of Minnesota.

That's particularly important now as the University navigates a rapidly shifting environment in higher education amid political, financial, and societal change. Today more than ever, U of M leaders, students, faculty and staff need the alumni community to champion the values that have shaped the University for 174 years. As the "Minnesota Rouser" lyrics say, "Firm and strong, united are we."

To support our connection to each other and the University, it's vital to stay informed. I encourage you to visit the U of M's official website to stay abreast of ongoing federal policy changes, subscribe to the UMAA's Alumni E-News, and learn about webinars the UMAA hosts where experts discuss policy changes that can impact students and the economy in Minnesota and beyond.

The strength of our alumni community lies in its diversity of experience, thought, and talent. Your experiences and perspectives matter: When alumni speak, people listen. You can make an impact by sharing your alumni story in your circle of influence and, if you live in the U.S., advocating for the University with legislators. Systemwide, we are over 633,000 alumni strong. Alumni can and do make a difference in public discourse and policymaking.

Most importantly, I encourage you to stay engaged with the UMAA. From career mentoring to volunteering, we offer alumni many ways to ensure the U of M remains a place of robust opportunity for future generations. The UMAA is celebrating 121 years of community impact. Together, we can ensure 121 more.



Lisa Lewis
President and CEO
Life Member and Alumni Leadership Circle Donor
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2025 DISTINGUISHED EDUCATORS

On April 7, the UMAA, with the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, recognized 21 outstanding faculty for their contributions to undergraduate and graduate education. These recipients are inducted into the Academy of Distinguished Teachers.

The UMAA awards \$50,000 annually to the recipients of the Horace T. Morse award to further their college research initiatives. See a full list of this year's recipients at [UMNalumni.org](https://umnalumni.org) under Events.

ALUMNI: SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE

The future of academic and clinical medicine in Minnesota is at a crossroads. The U of M is continuing negotiations with Essentia Health as a way to address rising costs, workforce shortages, and health care access, while bringing comprehensive care closer to home.

Patients will experience major disruptions after December 2026 if the University does not move forward with a new health care partner.

The Minnesota Attorney General's office is facilitating these discussions. To provide feedback on these efforts, here is a public forum for doing so: ag.state.mn.us/Health-Care/Academic-Medicine/Input.asp

Summer 2025 MINNESOTA ALUMNI 39



BE LIKE GOLDY. TAKE A TRIP WITH THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION!

SINCE 1958, the UMAA has hosted trips around the world for alumni and friends. And along the way, the U of M-Twin Cities mascot Goldy Gopher has hitched a ride to some pretty spectacular places, as you can see!

On May 19, more than 200 individuals gathered at the Graduate Hotel on campus for the 4th Annual Minnesota Alumni Travel Reception. Past travel program participants and those interested in our 2026 lineup of 45 diverse destinations had the opportunity to hear from seven tour provider partners, reunite with travel friends, win raffle prizes, and enjoy food and drinks. Learn more here: UMNalumni.org/travel or opt in to travel communications by scanning this code with your phone.



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Nora Hall (Ph.D. '98) is managing partner at GrayHall LLP, which specializes in research, evaluation, planning, and communications. She founded a leadership program that was housed at the Humphrey Institute for 11 years, and earned her doctorate in mass communication from the U of M.

About eight years ago, I was asked by the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation to help a community group develop the Philando Castile Peace Garden. (My firm works with a range of organizations to inform and shape projects that contribute to the betterment of society.)

It was roughly a year after Philando Castile, a 32-year-old Saint Paul Public Schools employee, was killed in a police-involved shooting on July 6, 2016. He took his last breath on Larpenteur Avenue, just west of the north entrance to the Minnesota State Fairgrounds, within view of the U of M's St. Paul campus and the Bell Museum.

All I knew about Philando was what dominated news reports. But I was eager to assist a project that wanted to turn tragedy into introspection and enlightenment with "a contemplative gathering space for peace, justice, and healing."

Too often when tragedy strikes, anger, helplessness, hopelessness, stress, and anxiety prevail, but this group wanted to create a space for navigating the aftermath of tragedies, and to foster a more thoughtful future around issues related to policing and Black men.

Initially, I was paid for my help, but I became so involved that I've offered pro bono services for this venture over the past seven years.

A pivotal moment for me came in meeting Valerie Castile, Philando's mother. She has a contagious passion for preserving Philando's history and life legacy, and shaping policies and education related to police actions. A Philando Castile Memorial Training Fund for police officers began in 2018 through her efforts.

Her wisdom and advocacy inspires personal growth around heartbreak and teaches resilience, openness, and self-determination. It reminds me of the University's service commitment that I took to heart while I was at the U of M as both a student and worker.

This garden helps Minnesota residents and the world learn more about police shootings, and serves as a platform for public policies such as the training fund; an annual candlelight vigil and community barbeque each July 6-7 in memory of Philando; and advocacy for social change.

I believe the peace garden strengthens communities and advances social justice through its very existence. The community and the University are fortunate to have it in the neighborhood to preserve history, allow collective acknowledgement of a life that ended too soon, and provide a quiet space to consider historical struggles, engage, interact, and learn.

You can learn more at philandocastile-peacegarden.org. ■

Garden: Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation

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*Offer valid to persons with no prior checking relationship in the last 12 months with Blaze Credit Union. \$100 minimum deposit required to open Blaze Free Checking or Pathfinder Checking account. To qualify for \$200 offer, account holder must set up an Automatic Payment or Direct Deposit and make a total of 6 Blaze debit card transactions (not including ATM transactions) within 60 calendar days from the date the account was opened. Account must remain open for six months. \$200 will be deposited to the checking account upon account opening. If all requirements of offer are not met, Blaze reserves the right to reclaim the \$200. Account holder responsible for any applicable taxes. Subject to termination at any time. Other conditions and restrictions may apply. Insured by NCUA