“Together the Redbird community will make certain that the future of Illinois State University soars to even greater heights.”

Larry H. Dietz, Ph.D.
President, Illinois State University

“We Redbirds fly together. We can be the difference and empower all Redbirds so that they continue to rise.”

Ashley Shannon
Journalism major, Illinois State University
As president, I am often asked what sets Illinois State apart. The answer is our focus on the student. What we do in the classroom, in the laboratory, in the art studio, and in civic outreach efforts. In all aspects of campus life, including our scholarly pursuits, the University always places the interests and needs of students first. We make that promise to future Redbirds invited to study here, and we keep it once they are part of the campus community.

The results of this student-focused educational experience are impressive. They are appreciated by students and documented repeatedly, as ISU is consistently in the national spotlight. The following highlights just a few consistent points of pride:

- Top 100 public university according to U.S. News & World Report
- Top 10% graduation rate among all of the nation’s universities
- Top 10% freshman retention rate
- Ranked by College Factual as 22nd “Best College for the Money” out of 1,200 schools across the country
- Very low student loan default rate of 2.8 percent compared to the national average of 11.8 percent, which reflects ISU’s graduates ease in joining the workforce.

While we have much to celebrate, there is more that we can do—and should. We have high standards and aspirations for what we can yet achieve at Illinois State. But to accomplish our vision, we need the philanthropic partnership of our Redbird alumni and friends. It is consequently with enthusiasm that we launch Redbirds Rising: The Campaign for Illinois State.

This $150 million campaign will be the most ambitious in the University’s history. It will provide the resources to ensure that today’s Redbirds and those who will enroll in the future will benefit from a unique and exceptional educational experience. With additional private support, our teacher-scholars will have the resources to explore and seek leading-edge knowledge and pursue creative activity, often in collaboration with students. Our academic and student programs will advance to new and higher levels of achievement and impact.

Your support of this campaign will bolster the ISU experience for future Redbirds in significant ways. They will embark to have an even more positive impact in their field and community. There is no doubt that philanthropic support of Illinois State will have a transformational, reverberating effect in reaching people, places, and organizations in ways that we cannot begin to imagine.

I invite you to join with others to reflect on your own Redbird experience, and consider ways in which you can help future Redbirds pursue their dreams and aspirations. Together the Redbird community of benefactors will make certain that the future of Illinois State University soars to even greater heights.

Larry H. Dietz, Ph.D.
President, Illinois State University
Redbirds carry a commitment to build upon accomplishments of the past with the goal of obtaining a higher achievement level for the benefit of future generations. This dedication has defined Illinois State since its founding in 1857. As a result, the University has touched the lives of countless people by pursuing scholarly endeavors, fostering the next generation of leaders, and seeking innovation. Every endeavor is marked by a “can-do” Redbird spirit.

We began as a small place of learning on the prairie. Our early leaders had a vision that may have seemed unrealistic at the time. Their aspirations—and those of all who followed over the next 160 years—were pursued with a passion and dedication needed to make what was envisioned become a reality.

Success has been achieved despite challenges. Facing them is part of what makes Illinois State special. The campus community has always had the drive to overcome obstacles, seek out new ways of addressing problems, and dream about what could be. Redbirds throughout time have never been simply satisfied with the status quo.

WE NOW STAND AT THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW OPPORTUNITY AND VENTURE.

Today’s Redbird community enjoys the fruits of those who labored in the past. Because they rose to the challenges of their time, Illinois State is a thriving university marked by dedicated staff and faculty. Students partner with professors who masterfully blend teaching excellence with academic pursuits outside the classroom, resulting in myriad opportunities for students to develop new skills as they gain knowledge. With such a foundation for learning and teaching, it is not surprising that Illinois State attracts talented students eager to make their mark on the world.

Past generations dared to dream of that which did not yet exist, building upon a vision to develop a public university focused on training teachers. Illinois State has evolved and expanded in scope to now be ranked among the finest of universities in the country. Similar to the challenge facing our founders more than a century ago, we now stand at the threshold of a new opportunity and venture. Now we are the ones asked to imagine what could be. We must consider the question of how this university can more deeply impact the lives of current and future Redbirds in ways that would astonish and please prior campus visionaries and leaders.

This is our moment in the history of the University to pursue a new vision. We can once again make appreciable Redbird dreams become a reality. We can expand even further the boundaries of learning, knowledge, creativity, and competition through Redbirds Rising: The Campaign for Illinois State. With your help, current and future generations of Redbirds will soar to advance themselves and the University in ways unprecedented.
VISION
Student learning is the focal point of every higher education institution. What differs is the model of teaching. Illinois State’s approach reflects the University’s commitment to individualized attention, which results in unique student-faculty partnerships and mentoring opportunities.

Full-time faculty are at the front of ISU’s classrooms, giving students the advantage of learning from a scholar who is as strong in teaching as research. Professors draw from their personal scholarly endeavors to share practical applications that tie concepts to current events and global dilemmas.

The commitment to scholarship runs deep across the University. Undergraduates in each college regularly engage with faculty in research that is presented nationally or in a journal publication. Students marvel at the opportunity to gain such experience that builds confidence, along with an impressive resume.

THE COMMITMENT TO SCHOLARSHIP RUNS DEEP ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY.

Equally significant is the effort to advance scholarship by providing students financial support. Through scholarships, the University awards millions to students annually. These private dollars make a significant difference, easing a student financial burden so heavy many recipients would otherwise not be able to attend. They have more time to focus on their collegiate goals. They also benefit from the confidence and encouragement gained in knowing someone has invested in their future.

That fact made a huge impact on Daniel Jackson, an education major driven to teach in Chicago’s inner-city schools. He received support from Illinois State’s Black Colleagues Association (BCA). “Without the BCA, there would not be a Daniel Jackson at ISU,” he said. “Not only have they helped me out, they created a spark in me.” He is more determined than ever to excel at ISU and teach to motivate struggling students.

Emma Byall ’17 also benefited from financial support through a scholarship. An international business major, she had the experience of completing a summer internship in Australia because of generous donors. “I couldn’t have done it without them,” she said. “I’m really grateful. It gave me the confidence and experience I needed to know that I can make a difference.” It also helped open the door to her current job with an international logistics and supply chain business.

Private support also strengthens individual departments in their effort to recruit faculty at the top of their field, which again directly impacts students. An endowed professorship or chair is a prestigious designation that helps create distinction around a discipline. Endowed faculty positions draw top students and attract faculty in their discipline from throughout the nation. They create a unique, challenging, and rewarding academic environment in which students thrive.

With scholarship as a priority in the Redbirds Rising campaign, Illinois State will have the means to attract the brightest students who are eager to learn from the best professors. There will be no question that the University supports student scholars and their faculty mentors, who together are working to change the future.
VISION
Illinois State is committed to providing a collegiate experience that facilitates civic engagement and develops leadership. The need for both has never been more urgent, as graduates are thrust into a rapidly changing world regardless of their chosen field.

The University is responding by intensifying efforts to prepare students in creative problem-solving; the ability to adapt; and perhaps most importantly, the confidence to lead. This personal growth is achieved at Illinois State through active involvement, which results in students gaining practical knowledge, applying academic concepts, and gaining the characteristics of effective leaders.

CREATING SUCH ENRICHING AND EMPOWERING MOMENTS THAT GO BEYOND TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM LEARNING REQUIRES PRIVATE SUPPORT.

Students like College of Business graduate Brett Gilbert ’17 learn to work in a team structure, improve communication, prioritize, organize, and influence. “Some of my peak experiences at Illinois State were running Business Week,” Gilbert said. “It was very challenging to organize and lead our student teams. But we made it happen! I feel like this and other Registered Student Organizations positions have helped expand my ability to lead.”

Creating such enriching and empowering moments that go beyond traditional classroom learning requires private support. Redbirds Rising will generate finances needed to continue providing the best experiences for students regardless of their background or income.

The University will be positioned to further nurture and prepare students as they mature into capable leaders and citizens who are adept innovators, ready and able to positively influence their community and field. With your support, our students can and will seize transformative learning opportunities that change their minds, hearts, and lives.
Students must be empowered to navigate a future workforce marked by massive opportunities and disruptions as new technologies steadily emerge. This reality creates the challenge of keeping pace across campus with changing teaching tools that are often specific to a discipline.

The University’s efforts to develop innovative learning environments that support modern pedagogy are intense and unending. Illinois State stands firm in the commitment to provide a curriculum that prepares students to function in the 21st century.

From the arts and sciences to business and education, learning spaces are the frontline for interdisciplinary research and creative endeavors. Classrooms need to be designed as flexible teaching-learning spaces that allow for hands-on experiences. They must foster teamwork and collective problem-solving that cuts across fields of study. Laboratory equipment likewise must be updated regularly to keep pace with the changing workplace.

The story of Spencer Simpson ’16 exemplifies why this is crucial. “The high-tech simulation lab attracted me to Mennonite College of Nursing,” she said. Training in the lab allowed her to learn fundamental clinical skills in a realistic environment, which led to her selection as one of just 56 students across the country chosen for an externship at Mayo Clinic. That opportunity led to a job offer in Mayo’s surgical unit immediately after graduation.

As Simpson’s experience reveals, much has been accomplished on campus to date across disciplines. Other examples include upgrades and renovations completed from Milner Library to the culinary lab. Looking ahead, each college has developed a blueprint of how innovation can be better integrated into areas of study to encourage a more entrepreneurial mindset in students.

With this approach to teaching and learning, our graduates will have gained a competitive advantage. They will be adept and practiced in embracing technology as a valuable tool because of the financial investment made by other Redbirds to bolster Illinois State’s educational experience.
All that Illinois State University has become is to the credit of those who have gone before us. They had the vision to see potential growth. Perhaps more importantly, they had the conviction and courage to unify as change agents who turned aspirations into blueprints and accomplishments.

Now we must build on the past as we unite to write the future of the University. We too must come together through involvement and partnership to shape what Illinois State can and will become.

**WE ARE BEING ASKED TO RISE TO THE CHALLENGE OF ADVANCING THE UNIVERSITY.**

Will we be lauded for bold expectations and decisive actions that others will appreciate when looking back to our era? Future students, faculty, and staff will undoubtedly evaluate our level of investment in the University. How will they grade our commitment to continue the legacy of aspiring to create greater opportunity and impact?

These are the questions that will be answered through Redbirds Rising. This campaign presents a special occasion to think about our place in the history of Illinois State. We are being asked to rise to the challenge of advancing the University by investing in individuals who will become discoverers and competitors, artists and performers, leaders and innovators. By supporting people and programs from every academic discipline, we demonstrate today—and to future generations as well—our understanding of the powerful Illinois State experience. As a united community of Redbirds, we will be known as leaders not only with a dream to advance the University, but the drive to make a lasting impact on the place that has so impacted us.

Help us write this next chapter in Illinois State’s prestigious history. We ask for your generous support of Redbirds Rising: The Campaign for Illinois State. Together we will empower our Redbird community to take flight. We will elevate the level of scholarly excellence. We will provide students with the teaching and collegiate experience needed to attain levels of achievement and impact once deemed unreachable.

“**The future of Illinois State—all that we stand for and will yet accomplish—depends on what we do today.**”

Ken ’73 and Deborah (Hypke) Glover ’73

“**Now is the time to leverage our strong foundation and rise to new heights of excellence.**”

Jim ’74 and Carole (Czerniak) Mounier ’75

“**Redbirds Rising presents an exciting opportunity for those of us who love Illinois State to invest in its future.**”

Dan ’70 and Pam Kelley
Your investment in Illinois State University through this $150 million fundraising campaign will touch the lives of countless Redbirds. Your philanthropic commitment will elevate the level of scholarly achievement and enable aspiring Redbirds to pursue their dreams of an Illinois State experience.

Your investment will educate future leaders who will shape the organizations and communities they will join. You will empower graduates to facilitate innovation and problem-solving in an increasingly complex world.

Achieving these results requires a successful campaign, which depends on an active response from Redbirds across the nation and around the world. Here are two ways that you can make an impact.

RISE TO THE CHALLENGE.

Philanthropy is a powerful form of leadership. Individuals who invest their financial resources in Redbirds Rising are making a statement of faith in future generations, while casting a vote of confidence in Illinois State’s mission and core values. For many, the act of contributing to the campaign is an expression of gratitude. Is there a mentor or motivator who lifted you up as a student or young professional? Become a person of such influence in another’s life by making a gift.

SHARE YOUR STORY. There are more than 210,000 living alumni, each with their own unique memories of how Illinois State University shaped their future. How did the Redbird experience enrich your life? Reflect on the faculty and staff who invested in your education, as well as the opportunities that lifted you up in preparation to pursue your passion. Share your story, news of the campaign, and Illinois State’s ongoing accomplishments with alumni and friends of the University.

The future of Illinois State—all that we stand for and will yet accomplish—depends on what we, the alumni and friends of Illinois State, do today. Your financial gift, pledge, gift of real estate, or planned gift can make a difference for our current and future Redbirds, giving them the resources needed to maximize their talents and continue rising.

For more information visit RedbirdsRising.IllinoisState.edu or call University Advancement at (309) 438-8184

/ISUGiving
“Illinois State is a place where innovation and collaboration spark artistic expression and offer solutions to tomorrow’s problems.”

John Baur, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies, Illinois State University

“Your contribution promises to lift our students toward higher achievement, give them new fields at Illinois State to explore, and propel them as they strive lifelong to better our society.”

Susan Kalter-White, Ph.D.
Professor, American Literature and Native American Studies, Illinois State University