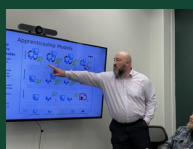




HIGHLIGHTS



LTC hears about apprenticeships during National Apprenticeship Week.



LTC Theatre gears up for 50th Anniversary Celebration.



Two Statesmen baseball players commit to D1 universities.

FROM SEOUL TO LTC TO ILLINOIS ATHLETICS: CY YUN'S ('22) JOURNEY

Cy Yun didn't take the typical path to sports marketing. His journey began on the baseball fields of Seoul, South Korea, where he spent ten hours a day perfecting his game. In South Korea, being a baseball player was not just a passion—it was a profession, even at a young age. But the system was unforgiving. When Cy wasn't drafted into the professional league, his path seemed to hit a dead end.

"I didn't take any academic classes growing up because I was so focused on baseball," Cy explains. "If you don't get drafted, there aren't many options." It was a daunting reality, but Cy wasn't ready to give up. Encouraged by his cousins, who had found success in the U.S., and inspired by a showcase event that brought Lincoln Trail College's baseball coach Kevin Bowers to South Korea, Cy took a leap of faith. He packed his bags and headed to Robinson, Illinois, to begin a new chapter of his life at Lincoln Trail College.

For Cy, arriving in Robinson was nothing short of a culture



UPCOMING JANUARY EVENTS

- 1 COLLEGE CLOSED - New Year's Day
- 6 First Day of Spring Semester Classes
- 10 U of I Extension Eat, Save, Move Booth
- 20 COLLEGE CLOSED - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 22 Eagleton Book Club
6 p.m., Learning Commons
- 23 LTC Foundation Meeting
12 p.m., Lincoln Room
- 30 Footloose Auditions
6 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 31 Footloose Auditions
6 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater

shock. The sprawling metropolis of Seoul, a city teeming with life and energy, had been his home. Now, he found himself in a rural American town, surrounded by open fields and quiet streets. "It was a huge adjustment," he admits. "The language barrier was tough, and the cultural differences were even harder."

The challenges of adapting were compounded by the fact that, as one of the few international students at Lincoln Trail College, Cy stood out. But what could have been isolating became an opportunity. "There wasn't an option to just hang out with other Korean students because there weren't any," he says. "It forced me to build relationships with my teammates and classmates."

Those relationships became the cornerstone of his experience. Teammates welcomed him into their circle, professors guided him through academic hurdles, and

local families, like the Boyces, opened their homes to him. "They treated me like family," he says with gratitude. "That was something I'd never experienced growing up in a big city."



Baseball remained a constant as Cy adjusted to life in Robinson. His favorite memories from his time at LTC aren't just about the games but the bonds forged along the way. He recalls a road trip to Louisiana, where the team spent hours on a bus, sharing stories and laughter. "It was my first away game in the U.S.," he says, smiling. "Walking around New Orleans with my teammates was unforgettable."

Beyond the field, Cy was learning life lessons that extended far beyond sports. He credits Mrs. Boyce, a faculty member at LTC, for teaching him the value of helping others without expecting anything in return. "In Seoul, life is so fast-paced and individualistic," he explains. "But in Robinson, I learned what it means to be part of a community."

Though baseball brought Cy to the U.S., his time at LTC helped him discover a new dream. With the support of the college's tight-knit community, he began to explore opportunities in sports management. "I've always loved sports, not just as a player but for the joy they bring to people," he says. "I realized I wanted to be part of creating that experience for others."

After graduating from LTC, Cy transferred to the University of Illinois, a decision he calls his "primary goal" when starting his study abroad journey. The transition to a larger campus came with its own set of challenges, but his time at LTC had prepared him to adapt. It was at Illinois where Cy's passion for sports marketing truly took off.

Sometimes, life-changing opportunities come in the most unexpected ways. For Cy, it began with a class assignment. As part of his coursework, he was tasked with interviewing someone in his chosen field. A quick online search led him to Julia Greuel, Assistant Director, Marketing and Fan Development for Illinois Athletics. Nervous but determined, Cy reached out.

The day of the interview was unforgettable—for more reasons than one. "It was raining, and I was soaked, even with an umbrella," Cy recalls with a laugh. "I didn't know what kind of coffee Julia

liked, so I brought two—one latte and one Americano.” The meeting went better than he could have imagined. Julia not only shared her insights but also gave Cy his first opportunity to step into the world of sports marketing.

“She told me to take the first step, so I asked if I could do that with her team,” Cy says. “And she said yes.”

That summer, Cy began working as a marketing assistant with Illinois Athletics, a role that allowed him to combine his love of sports with his newfound skills in event planning and promotion. His responsibilities include marketing for cross country, men's gymnastics, and tailgates for Illinois football. He also assists with secondary roles for women's soccer, gymnastics, and baseball. On game days, Cy is part of the team ensuring fans have an unforgettable experience.

“When people tell me they had a great time at an event I helped plan, it's the best feeling,” he says. “I love seeing people happy.”

Cy takes pride in bringing a unique perspective to his work. Drawing on his background, he often incorporates ideas from the Korean Baseball Organization into his projects. “It's exciting to share something new,” he says. “Being international is a huge benefit—I can offer fresh ideas that others might not have thought of.”

As he reflects on his journey, Cy offers words of encouragement for other international students considering studying abroad. “Don't be afraid to fail,” he says. “It's okay if your English isn't perfect. People understand, and they appreciate the effort.”

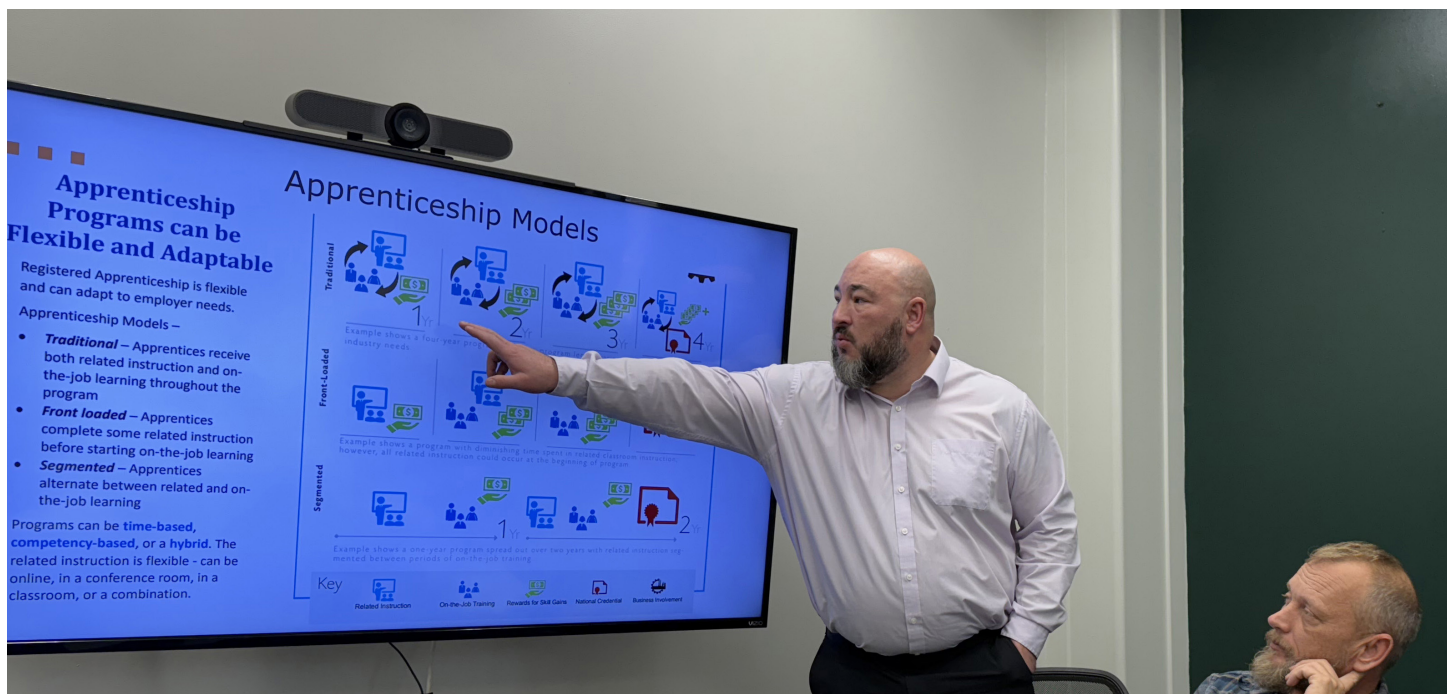


He also emphasizes the importance of embracing what makes you unique. “Your background is your strength,” he says. “Use it to bring something different to the table.”

Cy's future is as bright as his determination. Whether working with major sports brands like Nike or Adidas or continuing to create unforgettable fan experiences, he's committed to bringing joy to others through sports. “I want to give people something fun, something that makes their day better,” he says.

And it all started with a leap of faith—from Seoul to Robinson, and beyond.

IECC CELEBRATES NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK



Illinois Eastern Community Colleges celebrated National Apprenticeship Week with a series of events aimed at educating students about the opportunities apprenticeships can offer. Led by Rob Jackman, Libby McVicker, and KaRissa Miller, the initiative brought presentations and discussions to all four IECC campuses: Frontier Community College, Lincoln Trail College, Olney Central College, and Wabash Valley College.

The trio shared insights into how apprenticeships combine on-the-job learning with classroom instruction to create pathways to careers in more than 1,000 occupations, ranging from healthcare and information technology to energy and manufacturing.

In Illinois, more than 22,000 active apprentices earn an average of \$22.33 per hour while developing skills and gaining credentials. These programs have expanded far beyond traditional construction trades to include high-demand fields such as advanced manufacturing and logistics.

"An apprenticeship is more than a job—it's a way to jumpstart your career while earning nationally recognized credentials," said Jackman, IECC's Project Coordinator of the Transition Center and Perkins programs. "It's a direct pathway to a brighter future."

Jackman highlighted the benefits of apprenticeships during presentations, emphasizing how students can gain both financial stability and practical experience. He also addressed how apprenticeships can be tailored to meet the needs of both students and employers.

McVicker, IECC's Program Director of Grants & Compliance, spoke about the importance of making apprenticeships accessible to all students, regardless of their backgrounds. She described how apprenticeships help level the playing field by providing structured training, mentorship, and the potential for wage increases as skills improve.

"Apprenticeships are for everyone," said McVicker. "They provide real opportunities for students to succeed while addressing the needs of employers and industries."

The presentations included testimonials like that of Whitney Gill, an IECC apprentice, who shared how her apprenticeship has transformed her education and career.

"Financially, it has given me the stability to focus on my studies without the pressure of working full time," Gill said. "Knowing I have an established role after school has

eased the stress of job hunting and provided a clear, exciting path forward.”

IECC's apprenticeship programs are part of a broader strategy to support local economic development. By building relationships with businesses and industries, the colleges are helping to address workforce shortages and create homegrown talent pipelines.

Employers benefit from increased retention, lower recruiting costs, and a workforce trained to meet industry standards. Meanwhile, communities gain from enhanced economic stability and job growth.

While the benefits of apprenticeships are clear, challenges remain. Lack of awareness, limited funding, and the logistical complexities of apprenticeships are barriers the IECC team is working to address. Their presentations highlighted solutions such as grants, partnerships, and increased outreach.

“This week is about raising awareness,” McVicker said. “We want students to know these opportunities exist and how they can take advantage of them.”

National Apprenticeship Week at IECC underscored the critical role apprenticeships play in preparing students for in-demand careers while addressing the needs of local industries.

Jackman reflected on the impact of their efforts. “We've planted seeds that will grow into future careers,” he said. “For many of these students, an apprenticeship could be the start of something life-changing.”

LTC, IECC PREPARING FOR NURSING INFORMATION SESSIONS

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges will host information sessions for students interested in applying for Fall 2025 entry into the Associate Degree Nursing Program at Frontier Community, Lincoln Trail, Olney Central and Wabash Valley colleges.

Virtual sessions will be offered at 9 a.m. on December 16; at 3 p.m. on January 10 and at 5:30 p.m. on January 29. Login information can be accessed at www.iecc.edu/nursinginfosessions.

Lincoln Trail College will host an in-person session on January 22 at 1 p.m. and on February 19 at 1 p.m. Both meetings will take place in Williams Hall Room 110.

To make application for the nursing program at LTC, please contact Michelle Woods at 618-546-2335, ext. 1130. All applicants must attend a nursing information session prior to application submission.

For further information about nursing at any of the IECC colleges, please visit www.iecc.edu/nursing.



LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE THEATRE CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Lincoln Trail College Theatre will celebrate five decades of performances, memories, and community with a special 50th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, February 22, at 6 p.m. The event will take place at The Woods Event Center, 10584 N. 600th St., Robinson, Ill.

The celebration promises to be a fun-filled, family-friendly evening that honors the legacy of both the college's mainstage productions and its beloved Children's Summer Theatre program. Guests can expect an exciting lineup of activities, including music from a DJ, catered food, a dessert bar, and opportunities to take photos with fun props and costumes.

In addition to the festivities, commemorative t-shirts and coins will be available for purchase, giving attendees a way to remember this milestone event. Tickets are \$15 for general admission, or guests can reserve a table seating eight for \$250.

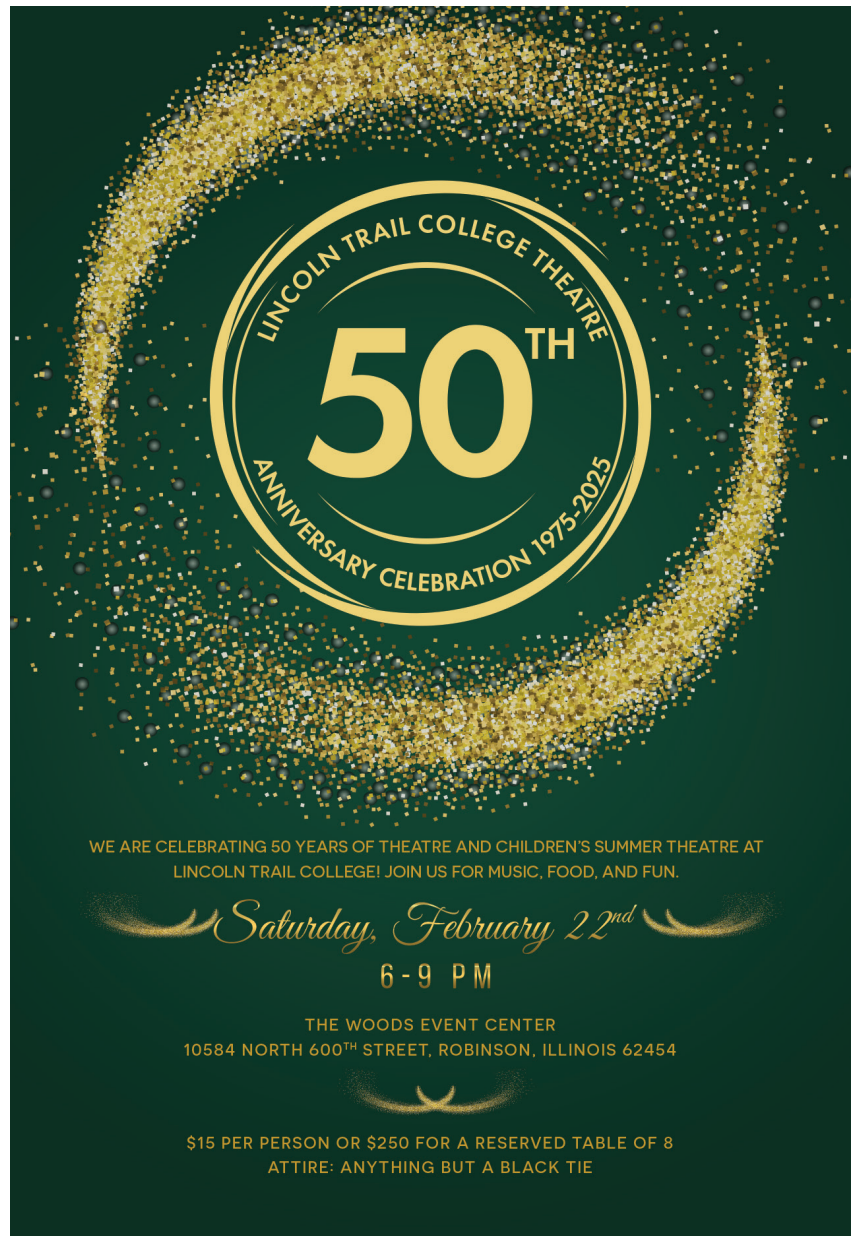
Organizers Kristi Rawlings, Barb Shimer, Rachel Dollahan, Mindy Evans, and Dan Boatman have worked diligently to create an evening that blends nostalgia with celebration. "We want this to be an opportunity for people to reminisce about their favorite shows, reconnect with old friends, and just have a great time," said Dahlberg.

The dress code, humorously dubbed "Anything But A Black Tie," encourages guests to come as they are—whether dressed casually or in creative attire inspired by past LTC productions. Children are welcome, but they must be accompanied by an adult.

For 50 years, Lincoln Trail College Theatre has brought performances to life on stage, fostering creativity and building a sense of community among its participants and audiences. This event is a chance to celebrate that legacy while looking forward to the future of the program.

Over the last 50 years, Lincoln Trail College has produced more than 100 mainstage shows and 40 Children's Summer Theatre shows.

Don't miss this opportunity to honor 50 years of theatrical excellence at LTC. Tickets can be purchased online through Cur8.



LTC ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO JOIN ENSEMBLES

Do you love music? Lincoln Trail College invites you to be part of its vibrant musical community by joining the Jazz Band, Concert Band/Pep Band, or Community Choir this spring. These ensembles offer opportunities for musicians and singers of all experience levels to share their talents, make new friends, and perform for the community.

The Community Choir, under the direction of Yvonne Newlin, meets on Monday nights at 6 p.m. This spring, the choir will feature a special focus on show tunes, making it an ideal choice for anyone who enjoys the magic of Broadway and musical theater.

The Jazz Band, directed by Jena Combs, meets on Tuesday nights at 6 p.m. Whether you're a seasoned player or dusting off your instrument, this group is perfect for those who enjoy jazz classics and contemporary hits.

The Concert Band/
Pep Band, also directed by Jena Combs, meets on Thursday nights at 6 p.m. Members of the Concert Band bring excitement and energy to select Lincoln Trail College basketball games as the Pep Band. If you love performing for an enthusiastic crowd, this is the ensemble for you.



All ensembles are open to both Lincoln Trail College students and members of the surrounding community. Whether you're a longtime musician, a casual performer, or someone looking for a new creative outlet, there's a place for you at LTC.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with others who share your passion for music," says Jena Combs. "We encourage everyone, regardless of skill level, to join us and experience the joy of making music together."

Rehearsals are held at Lincoln Trail College in DeMent Auditorium.

EBEL COMMITS TO UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS



Lincoln Trail College is proud to announce that Dane Ebel has officially committed to play baseball at the University of Kansas following his graduation. Ebel's decision to join the Jayhawks marks a significant milestone in his athletic journey and is a testament to his dedication and ambition both on and off the field.

"My family and I ultimately decided that Kansas would be the best fit for me," said Ebel. "I loved the environment of the school and how much everyone there cares about sports. The main thing that drew me to Kansas was the recent upward trend the program has been on, and they consistently have the number one juco recruiting class for the past four years or so."

Reflecting on his time at Lincoln Trail College, Ebel shared how his experiences with the college's coaches and team played a crucial role in his development. "Lincoln Trail has helped me so much," he said. "Our coaches have intelligent baseball minds and have been instrumental in pushing me to achieve my goals. The conference we play in, the GRAC, is the best conference in the Midwest, so pitching against our competition has helped a ton."

Ebel attributes his growth to the supportive environment created by his teammates and coaches. "My teammates are like-minded, with the same goals to one day be professional baseball players, so we're always pushing each other on the field and in the weight room," he noted. "Our coaches go above and beyond, whether it's helping with recruiting or listening to what you want to work on or fix in your game."

At Kansas, Ebel looks forward to the academic support provided to athletes, emphasizing the importance of balancing studies with athletics. "Kansas does a great job making sure their athletes get the time and help they need academically by having tutor hours each week," he explained. "I plan to put my full effort into those sessions and getting my work done so I can be on the field and do what I love."

Ebel also offered some advice for aspiring athletes: "Keep your head on straight, keep your goals in sight, and work towards them every day."



DECEMBER ATHLETIC EVENTS

Men's Basketball

8	Shawnee Community College	7:00
11	at Wabash Valley College	3:00
15	Kaskaskia College	7:00
18	Rend Lake College	3:00
22	at Lake Land College	7:00
25	at John A. Logan College	3:00
29	Southwestern Illinois College	7:00

Women's Basketball

8	Shawnee Community College	5:00
11	at Wabash Valley College	1:00
18	Rend Lake College	1:00
20	Brescia University	5:00
25	at John A. Logan College	1:00
29	Southwestern Illinois College	5:00

NUGENT COMMITS TO LOUISVILLE



Lincoln Trail College's baseball player, Jimmy Nugent, has announced his commitment to the University of Louisville, where he will join the Cardinals following his graduation in

May. A transfer from Penn State, Nugent's journey to this commitment reflects a passion for the game.

"There were a couple of reasons I chose Louisville," said Nugent. "One of the biggest factors is that it's only two hours from home, which is huge for my family. In the past, I've been too far away for them to see me play, so being closer is really important to me. Plus, Louisville has an extremely high-level Division I program, and that's something I've wanted to be part of ever since getting into college baseball."

Nugent credits his time at Lincoln Trail and Coach Collin Maynard with helping him mature both as a player and a person. "LTC has helped me grow in the game of baseball and learn who I am as a player, which is going to help me a ton when moving on to another college," he shared. "Transferring into Lincoln Trail was the best decision I've made in my college process so far. The coaches and teammates here care about you as a person and your career, which is extremely rewarding. LTC has given me a lot of opportunities to figure out who I am, which has helped me feel ready for the next year."

Coach Collin Maynard noted Nugent's growth and his impact on the team. "Jimmy has developed well during his time here," Maynard said. "He's worked on hitting for a higher average while maintaining power, and he's refined his defensive mechanics to become the best catcher he can be." Maynard also sees a bright future for Nugent at Louisville. "I expect Jimmy will have an opportunity to be in an impact role right away. He has a relentless work ethic, and I know he won't allow himself to be outworked by anyone."

For Nugent, the commitment to Louisville aligns with his ultimate dream of playing professional baseball. "My long-term goals have been the same since I was eight. I want to play baseball at a professional level, and committing to Louisville has only helped with that. They're known for developing catchers for the next level, and they do an unbelievable job at preparing players for the pros," he said.

As he prepares to move to Louisville, Nugent also offers advice for his teammates and future LTC players: "Trust the process, and be obsessed with baseball every day. LTC is what you make of it. If you want to get better and go to the next level, every opportunity is here for you."

LTC IN PICTURES



International alumnus Matthieu Fortin (2015-16), right, visited LTC with three friends from France. He reconnected with familiar faces here and made new friends.



Some LTC International students toured the Old Joliet Penitentiary and saw where season one of the TV show Prison Break was filmed.



Members of the Singing Seniors perform at LTC's Fall Choral Concert.



LTC's Community Choir performs during the Fall Choral Concert.



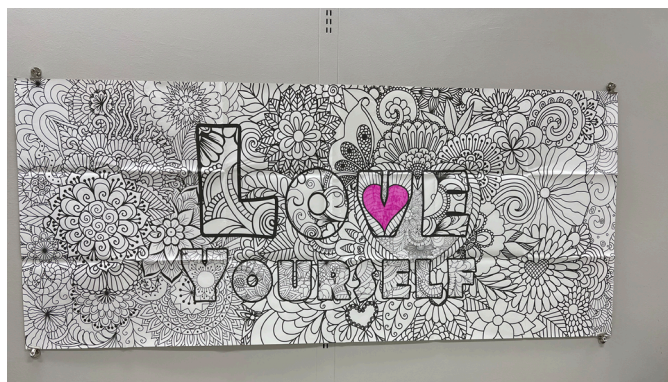
Members of LTC's Community Band perform at LTC's Fall Instrumental Concert.



Rebecca Trivett performs a solo while Grayson Pinkston plays the piano at LTC's Fall Instrumental Concert.



Leigh Carnes (18) earned Second Team All-Region 24 honors. She led the Lady Statesmen in kills, total attacks, assists, and points.



Student Senate kicked off a "Color Our Campus" campaign with positive affirmations to help students finish the semester strong.