



University of SOUTH DAKOTA



30 UNDER 30

The University of South Dakota's 30 Under 30 class reflects what the Coyote community has known for generations: a USD education creates leaders who make an impact. Our academic programs continue to shape graduates who excel personally, professionally and within their communities.

This class shows how USD adapts, innovates and rises to meet the needs of a changing world and the students who will define it. Across industries and communities, USD alumni use their talents, integrity and drive to create positive change. A USD education prepares students not only for professional success, but for lives of leadership, service and lasting contribution.

From civic trailblazers and health and science innovators to industry standouts, change ignitors and commerce catalysts, these alumni live the Coyote way every day.



HUNTER BURNS '18, '19

Director of Special
Programs - Affordable
Housing

Sioux Falls Housing and
Redevelopment
Commission

**Tell us about your
current professional
role:**

I serve as the director of special programs at the Sioux Falls Housing and Redevelopment Commission, as well as chair for the Policy and Advisory Committee for South Dakota's Housing for the Homeless Consortium and Continuum of Care. I oversee low-income housing programs and help connect people to resources that support sustainable and affordable housing.

I lead a small team of that goes above and beyond to meet people where they are, providing housing-focused case management and support to offer a hand up. During my time at Sioux Falls Housing, I've launched four new programs serving people who are often underserved in our community, including people experiencing homelessness, people exiting the criminal justice system, foster youth and individuals fleeing violence. I hope to bring more programs to the community so that we can serve as many people as possible and help families achieve affordable, sustainable housing.

“
Find your niche and dive in. You can always do more than you think you can, and taking the leap will lead you to places and accomplishments you never thought possible!

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? I have served as an advocate for underserved communities in South Dakota, helping connect individuals to housing resources that would otherwise be unavailable. I serve on several committees that have great impact on the state's homeless services response system, including as chair of the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Consortium governing board.

I strive to bring new housing resources to Sioux Falls and across the state, and I work to ensure families always have access to safe, affordable housing.



**MEREDITH JARCHOW-
OLSON '24**

Assistant Commission
Administrative Officer
Minnehaha County

Tell us about your current professional role: As the assistant commission administrative officer, every day is different. The three full-time staff members in our office complete work to support five part-time, elected commissioners.

My responsibilities are wide-ranging and include attending commission meetings and presenting items for approval; serving as project manager for the campus master plan process currently underway;

coordinating contract renewals; tracking and researching county-related legislation during the state legislative session; coordinating recurring internal and external stakeholder meetings; assisting in FF&E procurement for the new juvenile justice system; and many other tasks. Every day brings new challenges, and my USD education helped prepare me for this career. I gained valuable skills through my coursework, internship experience and the insights shared by professors and classmates.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? In my position, I work closely with Minnehaha County departments, the city of Sioux Falls, Lincoln County staff and state

legislators on county-related issues. These collaborative relationships have helped me realize become an active member of the professional community, even as a transplant to the Sioux Falls area.

As a county employee, my colleagues and I strive to serve Minnehaha County residents to the best of our ability. The professional relationships I have fostered across multiple levels of government are essential to serving constituents effectively, particularly when cities, counties and legislators work together on solutions that benefit all South Dakotans.

Additionally, I completed the National Association of Counties High Performance Leadership Academy, a rigorous 12-week program focused

on leadership development for county employees.

“

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Reach out to alums or people in your network if you are interested in their career and offer to meet for coffee to learn more about what they do, or request to job shadow for a day.

If you're looking for a job, let others know so they can be on the lookout for you if there are any openings at their organization.

Q&A

with Civic
Trailblazer,
Brett Ries '20



What's one skill every civic leader should have?

The ability to empathize.

Q

What's one change you've helped make that you're proud of?

Defeating anti-drag show legislation in the South Dakota Legislature.

A

In one word, what motivates your civic work?

Q

Tell us about your current professional role.

A

I am an associate at Williams & Connolly LLP, a Washington, D.C.-based law firm. While I work on a variety of cases, my primary interests are criminal and constitutional law. I have worked on cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as a death penalty case. My job requires strong research and writing skills to persuade readers and advocate effectively for my clients. Ultimately, my guiding light and career goal is to help improve the law in ways that promote justice and ensure constitutional rights are adequately protected.

Outside of my legal work, I am also a political activist and drag performer. I have testified before state legislatures, hosted Pride events in my hometown of Watertown, South Dakota, and presented to law schools and law firms on the history of LGBTQ+ discrimination. As with my legal career, I want to be a positive source of representation and help fight for change and equality in the social and political realms as well.

Attorney

Williams & Connolly LLP

2025

Q

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

A

At age 21, I ran for the South Dakota House of Representatives to inspire youth to seek a voice in the political process. The campaign was featured on CNN. I have delivered a TEDx talk as a drag performer advocating for individuals not to sacrifice their identities for their careers, and I have given lectures at law firms and universities, including USD, on the history of LGBTQ+ discrimination in law and politics. I am a three-time published legal author on constitutional issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community, including anti-LGBTQ+ juror bias, gun violence and drag bans. My article examining how drag bans can violate the First Amendment won the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association's Michael Greenberg Writing Competition. My other two articles were a finalist and runner-up, respectively, in the American Constitution Society's Constance Baker Motley National Student Writing Competition.



Equality.

A

I also organized the first Pride march in Watertown, South Dakota, advocated for expanded legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in my community, and hosted the city's Pride drag show. These efforts aim to ensure that LGBTQ+ individuals in my hometown know they do not have to hide who they are to be happy and successful.



Q

What sparked your interest in serving your community?

A

Wanting to give back to the community that raised me and wanting to contribute to a better future for the community.



JOSHUA CHASE '23, '25

Economic Development
Specialist

Sioux Metro Growth
Alliance

**Tell us about your
current professional
role:**

At Sioux Metro Growth Alliance (SMGA), we empower communities to grow by providing professional economic development management services to local development corporations. Our team leverages a strong network of utility, finance and government partners, working closely with local leaders, to retain existing jobs and bring new projects a fruition for our member communities.

“Identify your support network and learn from them as you navigate challenges in your professional life. As you grow into your role within your organization, remain open to constructive criticism and feedback.

My primary focus is supporting the Lennox Area Development Corporation (LADC), where I provide staff support and strategic guidance. In this role, we've made significant progress in addressing Lennox's housing needs and attracting new projects to the community. I also prioritize regular engagement with existing businesses in Lennox and across the region to better understand their challenges and identify solutions that support their continued success.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? Economic development requires patience, and I'm proud of the progress that has helped move both the LADC and the Lennox community forward. Four new businesses have opened on Main Street, and interest continues in both single-family and multifamily housing development. At a regional level, SMGA has expanded its public- and private-sector engagement. SMGA's Corporate Partnership Program encourages collaboration among private businesses and local, county and state governments. By fostering these relationships, we help create the connections necessary for measured, intentional growth that benefits the entire region.



CALEB WEILAND '24

Political Director

Dusty for Governor

**Tell us about your
current professional
role:**

Serving as political director for a statewide gubernatorial campaign in South Dakota has been the most formative professional experience of my career. I manage a multimillion-dollar budget, lead a team of 20 employees and coordinate with over 500 volunteers across both urban and rural communities. My role ranges from organizing phone banks and door-to-door outreach to ensuring grassroots efforts align with communications, digital operations, policy discussions, coalition building and fundraising. Every decision is grounded in listening to the

concerns of South Dakotans, regardless of political affiliation, demographic background or socioeconomic status. Public speaking, coalition building, persuasion, and problem-solving are tools I rely on constantly. Beyond these operational duties is the most rewarding part of my job, mentorship. I focus on mentorship—guiding young volunteers and aspiring leaders to engage in civic life and pursue public service. I hope to continue to serve South Dakota more effectively, whether in campaigns, government, or public service.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

In 2024, I led a campaign that achieved the largest margin of victory in any U.S. House race nationwide. That success reflects more than numbers—it reflects our ability to connect with

South Dakotans on the issues that matter: rural job growth, accessible healthcare and quality education. This year alone, I traveled over 30,000 miles across nearly every county in South Dakota to meet voters. Building genuine relationships is central to my approach. I mentor elected officials at every level to pursue principled solutions over politically convenient ones, guiding them to make decisions with lasting impact and integrity.

I also invest in the next generation, showing young people the value of public service and the tangible impact they can have. Over the past two years, I have encouraged many high school students to attend the University of South Dakota, fostering the next generation of Coyotes committed to leadership, service, and civic engagement.

In an environment where cutting corners or chasing political points can seem expedient, I prioritize integrity, partnerships, and long-term problem-solving. I teach my team to rise above divisive rhetoric, focus on potential, and collaborate to achieve meaningful outcomes. Success is not just electoral—it is influence that uplifts others, principled leadership, and tangible progress for South Dakotans.

If there's one thing I want to be remembered for, it's this: our success comes from connecting with South Dakotans and rolling up our sleeves to make a difference—not chasing headlines or playing politics. Politics is messy, but I refuse to let that define us.

I want this team to be known as the next generation of leaders who lead with integrity, focus on service, and show what politics can be when it's done right.

Stay curious and open to learning. Seek mentors, ask questions and take on challenges that stretch your skills. Build meaningful connections, networking isn't just about advancing your career, it's about learning from others and contributing to shared success.





University of
SOUTH DAKOTA

CIVIC TRAILBLAZERS



AUSTIN FELTS '17, '22

Judge Advocate General
(JAG)

United States Airforce

Tell us about your current professional role: I serve as the chief of litigation at McConnell Air Force Base, where I represent the U. S. government in courts-martial and advise commanders on a wide range of legal and operational matters. My work requires balancing sharp analysis with practical judgment, whether I am litigating in the courtroom or counseling leaders on military justice, ethics or administrative law. Litigation is central to my work, and I thrive in high-stakes environments that demand strategic

strategic thinking, clear advocacy and anticipation of complex challenges. Beyond the courtroom, I provide preventive legal guidance that helps commanders make sound decisions affecting both individual service members and mission readiness.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? Through resilience and discipline, I influence peers and contribute to a stronger Air Force and legal community. The JAG Corps offers a breadth of practice unmatched in the civilian sector. In less than a year, I have worked across military justice, labor and employment matters, and legal assistance for Airmen, which keeps me challenged and motivated. I pursued this career to combine legal training with public service, and the Air Force enables me to do so every day.

“
Get comfortable being uncomfortable. Growth rarely happens when we play it safe. We learn the most when we take risks and occasionally make mistakes. Don't judge your journey by comparing it to peers and friends your age; everyone's path looks different, and there's no "right" timeline for success.



2025

**30
UNDER
30**



KATIE HAVERLY '18, '20

Physician Assistant

Avera Health

Tell us about your current professional role: My time at USD was foundational in building the academic knowledge and clinical skills necessary for my role, while also shaping the values of compassion, community engagement and lifelong learning that guide my daily work.

Through ongoing faculty mentorship and the support of the network of friends and colleagues from my time on campus, I was able to discover and grow a passion for empowering patients

to take an active role in their health and for working to reduce disparities in my community. Opportunities for community involvement at USD strengthened my confidence to lead, advocate for my patients' needs and pursue

opportunities beyond my comfort zone. Because of these experiences, I am able to pursue a career where I can confidently make a meaningful impact on patients' lives.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? My greatest successes are not measured in titles or awards, but in walking alongside patients as they work toward their goals and seeing the impact personalized care can make on their health and quality of life.

Some advice I would give to other young professionals is to lean on your network and support system. Seek out connections that not only support you but also challenge you to grow, and don't be afraid to ask for help along the way. Remember that you do need to have everything figured out right away.

Beyond my clinical work, I am actively engaged in advancing the physician assistant profession locally and nationally. I serve on the South Dakota Board of Medical and Osteopathic Examiners PA Advisory Council and committees for the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants. I have also been part of a team that received national recognition for rural wound care initiatives. Outside of medicine, I serve on the USD Kappa Alpha Theta scholarship committee and participate in the Sioux Falls Young Professionals Network.



SPENCER DUNDAS '21, '24

Physical Therapist

Albuquerque VA Medical Center

Tell us about your current professional role: I recently accepted a position as a staff physical therapist at the Raymond G Murphy VA Medical Center. Prior to this role, I completed a neurologic physical therapy residency at the Cincinnati VA, where I specialized treating veterans with neurological disorders.

During my residency, I worked directly with neurologists to manage patient care from a neuro-musculoskeletal rehabilitation perspective and completed extensive

continuing education aligned with my values of lifelong learning, clinical excellence and advancement of the profession—values instilled during my graduate education at the University of South Dakota.

In my current role in Albuquerque, I use evidence-based examination techniques, patient-centered communication skills developed at USD and advanced clinical skills gained through residency training.

Short-term, I plan to serve as a clinical instructor for physical therapy students to share what I have learned thus far in my practice.

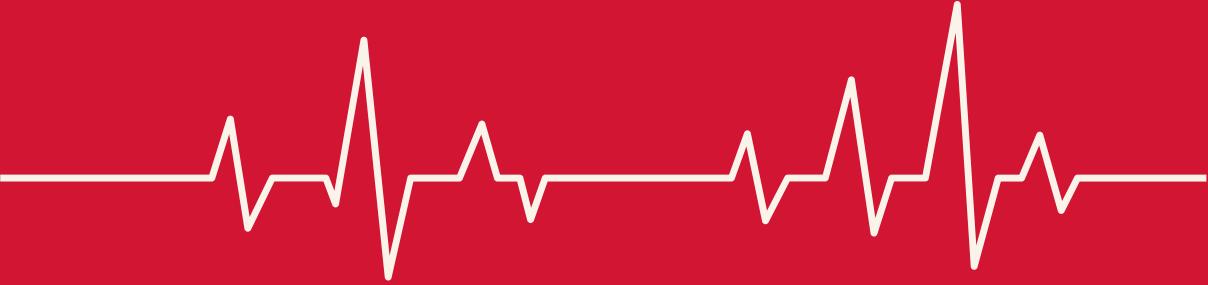
Long-term, I aim to establish a neurological physical therapy residency to help expand the number of specialists within the profession.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? Within my first year of practice,

I demonstrated professional leadership by completing a post-graduate residency following graduation from USD and by serving as a clinical instructor at the University of Cincinnati Pro Bono Physical Therapy Clinic.

In that role, I mentored first- and second-year students, passing on clinical knowledge gained through residency and early professional practice while supporting care for underserved populations.

Stay curious and never stop learning. Your academic career is not over simply because you completed all of your required coursework. The field is constantly changing, and you must adapt to these changes and continue to learn or you will be left behind.



Q&A

with Health & Science
Innovator, **Venkatesh
Kolluru '24**



Research Scientist

**University of Alabama in
Huntsville**

2025

What helps
you reset
when you hit
a scientific
roadblock?

**A short walk
and music.**

Q What science issue will you
always advocate for?

Sustainable land and
water management.

A

**In one word,
what drives your
curiosity?**

Patterns.

Q Tell us about your current
professional role.

A

I am a research scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, where I work on NASA's IMPACT project. My work focuses on utilizing artificial intelligence and machine learning models for large-scale Earth observation, including monitoring floods, wildfires, land degradation and agricultural systems. I integrate data from discrete satellite sensors to develop operational geospatial tools that support decision-making for U.S. federal agencies. My work draws on remote sensing, data science and environmental modeling, as well as scientific communication through peer-reviewed publications and presentations. My goal is to make Earth observation data more actionable and scalable to support climate resilience, sustainable agriculture and disaster response in the United States and beyond.

Q How have you demonstrated success and
influence in your profession and community?

A

I have authored and co-authored multiple peer-reviewed publications on vegetation dynamics, climate impacts and machine learning applications in Earth observation, with research cited by international scholars. Through NASA IMPACT, my research contributes directly to federal initiatives focused on climate adaptation and disaster resilience. I have received recognition including the ESA Rangeland Ecology Travel Award and USD's Distinguished Dissertation Award. Beyond research, I mentor students and early-career scientists, lead collaborative projects and develop tools that empower communities to better manage environmental challenges. Through this work, I aim to bridge scientific innovation with real-world impact for both people and ecosystems.

Q What's a value that
guides how you
approach research?

A
Integrity.

Q What USD experience
fueled your passion for
health or science?

A
Fieldwork that connected satellite data with real landscaped shaped how I think about environmental science.



MIKAELA FISCHER '18

Endoluminal Territory
Associate
Smith and Nephew

Tell us about your current professional role: I work for one of the nation's leading medical device companies specializing in joint replacement technology. As a robotic clinical specialist, I train orthopedic surgeons on robotic-assisted systems, support surgeons and hospital staff during knee replacement procedures, and educate clinical teams on best practices for using the technology. I use my exercise science background and strong understanding of anatomy daily in a hospital setting. Working at the intersection of clinical

care and business, I rely on relationship-building, communication and teaching skills to advance shared objectives and support improved patient outcomes.

I plan to continue my career in the medical device industry, where I am motivated by the rapid pace of innovation and the opportunity to improve health care through technology.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? Medical device is a challenging field to get into, and I have demonstrated success by building strong professional relationships and establishing a network that supports growth and collaboration. I lead team calls, coordinate local labs and training sessions, and support surgeons and clinical teams nationwide.

I have also helped launch robotic surgery programs across the state of Minnesota.

As a community member, I participate in recreational basketball leagues and am actively engaged in my neighborhood, where I recently purchased a home.

“
Say yes to opportunities! Best case, it ends up being something you love. Worst case, you find out something you never want to do again. When people say "your dream job might not exist yet," they are actually right. I didn't know about my dream job until after graduating college and the robots that I work with are barely five years old.

30 UNDER 30

ROMAN GREWAL '21, '24

Program Manager
National Science
Foundation

Tell us about your current professional role: Since graduating from the University of South Dakota in May 2024 with my Master of Science degree, I have built a career at the intersection of technology, research and public service.

I currently serve as a program manager for the National Science Foundation, where I oversee federal research programs with a focus on STEM education and tribal initiatives. In this role, I lead cross-functional teams to plan and execute multiyear research projects,

manage a multi-million-dollar funding portfolio, and use data-driven analysis to assess the scientific merit and broader impacts of funding proposals. A significant part of my work involves cultivating collaboration among academic institutions, tribal colleges and government agencies to support community-based research.

One accomplishment I am particularly proud of is implementing outreach strategies that increased proposal submissions from Minority Serving Institutions by over 25 percent.

My education from USD was instrumental in preparing me for these roles. The coursework in artificial intelligence and machine learning directly informs the predictive algorithms

I build at QRL, while my experience as an associate researcher at USD—contributing to federally funded initiatives and supporting grant development—provided a strong foundation for my current responsibilities at the NSF.

My goal is to continue using this interdisciplinary skill set to drive innovation and create measurable impacts in rural and tribal communities.

“
Initiative and adaptability are invaluable—don't wait for instruction when your own judgement can move you forward. Embrace continuous learning and view career shifts not with apprehension but as opportunities to reassess your goals, stay curious and seek guidance from mentors. Ultimately, your career is something you build, not something you inherit.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? My efforts have expanded research opportunities for rural and tribal communities, including increasing proposal submissions from Minority Serving Institutions and early career investigators by more than 25 percent.

In addition to my public-sector work, I contribute to the data science field through my role at QRL, where I develop predictive algorithms and financial models that inform strategic investment decisions. Together, these experiences reflect my commitment to advancing equitable access to STEM opportunities and shaping research programs with lasting impact.



ALLY SCHUBERT '18, '25
7th Grade Social Studies
Teacher
Milbank School District

Tell us about your current professional role: I teach seventh-grade American history, covering the period from 1492 through the end of Reconstruction following the Civil War. My curriculum begins with the age of exploration and examines complex and often difficult topics, including government policy, slavery and the treatment of Native Americans.

I believe students must learn all aspects of history, including its most challenging chapters, to better understand the world and their role in it. While my primary responsibility is teaching, my role extends beyond the classroom. I serve as an educator, mentor, counselor and advocate for my students. Each day, I rely on creativity to engage learners, organization to manage coursework and assessment, and a strong command of content to guide meaningful discussion.

My goal is to create a classroom environment where students feel supported, challenged and valued.

If I can inspire even one student each year to develop a love for history, I consider my work a success. More importantly, I strive to help students leave my classroom as more thoughtful and compassionate individuals.

Looking ahead, I plan to continue my education by pursuing a doctorate with the goal of preparing future educators and helping them enter the profession with the same enthusiasm and commitment I bring to the classroom.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? I believe effective teaching extends beyond

delivering content. Building trust and showing up for students are essential to their success. I actively support my students outside the classroom by attending athletic events, concerts and community activities. In my experience, when students see that their teacher is invested in their lives beyond school, they are more engaged and perform better academically.

By consistently demonstrating care and commitment, I have built stronger relationships with my students and positively influenced both their classroom performance and their connection to the school community.

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My biggest advice for fellow young professionals is to not be afraid to ask for help. We cannot do everything by ourselves and there are so many people willing to help out so definitely use them.



CARLY STERNHAGEN '19
High School Teacher +
Coach
Menno School District

Tell us about your current professional role: I serve as a high school math teacher and also hold multiple leadership roles, including head cheer coach, journalism teacher, yearbook advisor, prom advisor and National Honor Society advisor. My professional focus is on creating a student-centered learning environment grounded in strong relationships. I believe meaningful learning begins with knowing students as individuals and demonstrating genuine care for their success.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? Teaching at the high school level allows me to influence more than 60 students each day over the course of four years, guiding them as they grow from freshmen into graduates. Building lasting relationships with students has been central to their engagement, development and success.

“
One of the few things we can count on in life is that things are going to change. Our ability to adapt within change factors into success in your career. Do not be afraid of change or make changes for yourself if you are not in the right place for you. You will never regret following a good leader.

into graduates. Building lasting relationships with students has been central to their engagement, development and success.

Outside the classroom, I remain deeply involved in my hometown of Tabor, South Dakota. I have served for more than 15 years on the committee that organizes the Rich Schild Memorial Fireworks during Czech Days, an

annual celebration honoring a fallen service member from the Yankton Charlie Battery Unite who was killed in action in 2005.

My role includes fundraising, promotion and coordinating music for the event. Through this work, I am proud to help honor the sacrifice of service members and their families and to contribute to a meaningful community tradition.





KIRSTEN BIERSBACH
'19, '21, '25

Assistant Professor of
Special Education and
Literacy Education

University of South Dakota

**Tell us about your
current professional
role:**

I serve as an assistant professor of special education and literacy education at the University of South Dakota, where I prepare future educators to meet the diverse needs of K-12 learners. I teach undergraduate and graduate courses that integrate evidence-based practices in literacy instruction and inclusive education, with an emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy, differentiated instruction and the use of children's literature to support

“

Build relationships that challenge and support you, and be that person for others, too. Growth happens in a community. Stay open to feedback, share your wins and struggles and invest in connections that help you reflect, stretch and lead with purpose.

language and literacy development across content areas.

I mentor pre-service teachers through field experiences and practicum placements, helping them bridge theory to practice in real-world classroom settings. I also contribute to program development and assessment within the School of Education to ensure curriculum alignment with state and national standards. Through research and scholarship, I work to advance accessible literacy practices and advocate for students with exceptionalities. My goal is to empower educators to create learning environments

where all children can thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? I lead my work with a commitment to equity, compassion and purpose. I have demonstrated professional success through teaching, research and mentorship, as well as through curriculum development, conference presentations and service on committees that influence educational practice

and policy. Beyond the university, I serve as a mentor with LSS Youth Mentoring and collaborate with the Boys and Girls Club to provide staff training on inclusive practices and positive behavior supports.

Through these efforts, I apply my expertise in community settings and advocate for high-quality, accessible education. Across teaching, service and partnership, I remain committed to creating spaces where individuals feel supported, valued and empowered to succeed.



JESSILYNN BEAN '19
Intermediate Teacher
American Horse School

Tell us about your current professional role: My work focuses on helping students see themselves reflected in the classroom, develop a strong sense of identity, and take pride in their history, culture and language. In my role, I draw on skills in teaching, mentorship, curriculum development and cultural advocacy. Beyond classroom instruction, I've served as a team leader, mentor for new teachers, and a member of the school improvement, curriculum and safety committees.

Looking ahead, I hope to pursue a Ph.D. in education to expand opportunities, resources and culturally grounded leadership to my school and community. Ultimately, my purpose is to serve as an educator and leader who uplifts others by honoring Indigenous knowledge, preserving language and building systems where Native students can thrive.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? I have demonstrated success and influence by combining culturally responsive education, leadership and advocacy to uplift Indigenous students and families.

Lead with purpose, integrity and heart. I have learned that the most meaningful work happens when passion aligns with community values and cultural identity. I believe we must always remember who we are and where we come from. Our roots provide the strength and clarity to make lasting, positive contributions to our communities and professions.

Throughout my career, I have worked to create learning environments where students see themselves reflected in the curriculum and develop pride in their identity, history, culture and language. By integrating culturally grounded lessons and celebrating Lakota traditions, I help students connect academically and personally to their heritage, fostering confidence and achievement. The most powerful signs of impact come from the trust I've earned within the community—being welcomed by families and given the responsibility of educating their children. In my professional capacity, I also take on

leadership responsibilities that support colleagues and students, including mentoring incoming teachers and serving on committees focused on school improvement, curriculum development and safety. Through these efforts, I help educators design instruction that reflects and respects cultural diversity. The strongest measure of my impact is the trust I have earned within the community; being welcomed by families and entrusted with educating their children, while seeing students grow in confidence and families express gratitude for the care and respect shown to them.

Q&A

with Change
Igniter, **Hannah
Helseth '22**



What's one strategy you use to help students?

Listening. The power of active listening is key.

Q

What's your "student success" superpower?

Seeing potential in students before they see it in themselves.

A

One word your students would use to describe you.

Understanding.

Q

Tell us about your current professional role.

A

I serve as a high school counselor on the Winnebago Reservation, where I have the privilege of working with Native youth on their academic journeys. Being Indigenous myself, I understand the importance of representation and culturally responsive support in schools. I bring both professional training and lived experience to my work, allowing me to connect with students in ways that honor their identities and communities. My role extends well beyond scheduling; it centers on helping students envision futures that embrace both who they are and what they hope to achieve.

Alongside my professional responsibilities, I am pursuing my master's degree in school counseling. The program equips me with new knowledge and practical strategies that I apply daily to strengthen the support I provide to my students. Together, my work and education are guided by a larger purpose: to empower Native youth to heal, grow and thrive while honoring the strength of our people and traditions.

7-12 School Counselor

Winnebago Public Schools

2025

Q

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

A

I measure success not only by personal achievements but by the influence I have on the students and community I serve. Simply being present and showing Native youth that success is possible is a meaningful accomplishment. Representation matters, and I know that when my students see me, they see what is possible for themselves. Beyond my students, I feel welcomed and supported within the community I serve. That trust motivates me to continue creating safe spaces, building relationships and advocating for my students.

While long-term outcomes will take time to fully emerge, I find success in every milestone—students choosing college, gaining confidence or simply feeling supported. These moments affirm that my work as a counselor is shaping the next generation in meaningful ways, and I am excited to see all that they will accomplish.

Q

In one word: what does being a Coyote mean to you?

A

Growth.

Q

What fuels your passion for working with students?

A

Resiliency. It's what I see in them every day and what keeps me committed to this work.



DANIELLE STARTZ
'18, '26

Elementary Special
Education Teacher

Bon Homme School
District

**Tell us about your
current professional
role:**

I am pursuing a double major in elementary education and special education through the South Dakota Teacher Apprenticeship Program. Selected as one of 70 participants from over 250 applicants, I balance full-time coursework—44 credits completed with a 4.0 GPA in my first year—

while working in the classroom. This year, I advanced from a paraprofessional role to my first year as an elementary special education teacher at Tyndall Elementary, my hometown school. With an advanced student teaching permit, I am able to teach while completing my degree, applying academic learning directly to practice. My role entails creating individualized education plans, collaborating with colleagues and families, and supporting students with diverse learning needs.

My background in business and psychology strengthens my ability to manage responsibilities while addressing students' social and

emotional needs. Through this pathway, I continue to grow as both an educator and an advocate, building inclusive classrooms where all children can thrive. This pathway has shown me that teaching is not simply a profession, but a calling—one that allows me to make a lasting difference in the lives of children and families in my community.

**How have you
demonstrated success
and influence in your
profession and
community?**

I have demonstrated success and influence by combining academic achievement with a commitment to giving back. Acceptance into the competitive South Dakota Teacher Apprenticeship Program

enabled me to pursue my dual degrees while helping address the teacher shortage in my hometown. By accepting a position as an elementary special education teacher at Tyndall Elementary, I am investing directly in the community that raised me and working daily with students, families and colleagues to create inclusive, supportive learning environments.

Through this apprenticeship program, I've shown that career change and professional growth are possible at any stage of life. With the support of grants and scholarships, I also highlight how financial assistance can open doors for aspiring educators, strengthening schools and communities across the state.

Advocate for yourself and be proud of your accomplishments—no one will champion your growth better than you. Track your impact, speak confidently about what you've achieved and make clear asks for the opportunities you want. At the same time, don't be afraid to take chances most wouldn't dare.



VICTORIA CALLEGARI '22

EL School Home Liaison
Sioux Falls School District

**Tell us about your
current professional
role:**

I serve as the primary point of contact for families who are new to the country, helping them navigate the education system and the broader community. I coordinate parent-teacher conferences and ensure proper language support so families can engage meaningfully with educators. I also provide cultural awareness training for staff and work to bridge cultural gaps, strengthening relationships between schools and families.

This work requires adaptability, active listening and cultural competence as I help families understand their rights and build the skills needed to advocate for themselves. I also organize community events tailored to families' needs and connect them with resources for housing, employment and basic services. These responsibilities leverage my strengths in communication, leadership and problem-solving while requiring close collaboration with diverse stakeholders.

In addition to my professional role, I am pursuing a master's degree in global affairs at the University of Oklahoma. Building on

I believe one of the most important things is to lead with empathy and curiosity. Working with people from different backgrounds challenges you to grow, communicate more effectively and see the form from new perspectives. I've learned that humility and openness go a long way; being teachable helps you earn trust and learn from everyone around you.



**How have you
demonstrated
success and influence
in your profession
and community?** I have demonstrated success and influence by integrating advocacy, cultural competence and relationship-building to create meaningful impact. As an EL school home liaison with the Sioux Falls School District, I serve as the first point of contact for families new to the country, empowering them as they navigate education and community systems with confidence. By organizing parent-teacher conferences with language support, providing cultural awareness training to staff and connecting families to vital resources, I help bridge communication gaps and empower families to advocate for themselves and their children.



BRADIE DONELAN '17

High School English
Teacher

Tea Area High School

Tell us about your current professional role: I am a high school English teacher at Tea Area School District, where I primarily teach English IV (British literature) along with courses in technical communications, speech, and creative writing. Teaching requires determination, patience and confidence, and I strive to model those qualities for my students each day. My goal is not only to teach the curriculum, but also to help students recognize their potential and understand how confidence can open doors and shape their futures.

In addition to my teaching responsibilities, I am pursuing a master's degree in educational leadership (PreK-12 principal) at the University of South Dakota. I plan to use this degree to move into an educational leadership role and continue supporting both students and educators. While education is demanding, it is a career I would choose repeatedly because of the students I serve and the colleagues who inspire and empower me.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? In education, success is reflected not only in student data, but also in the mindset students

carry with them when they leave the classroom. As a teacher of seniors, I have the privilege of working with students during their final year before graduation. This past year, the senior class chose me as their commencement speaker, an honor I viewed as affirmation that they understood my message, that education is about achievement, but also about effort, resilience and attitude. During the 2024 school year, I was invited by my principal to serve on the team responsible for selecting a new English curriculum, further allowing me to contribute to instructional improvement.

I was also selected to attend the Future Leaders in Education Retreat in Rapid City, where I learned from current educational leaders and strengthened my commitment to pursuing leadership roles in education.

Additionally, I was asked to serve as the faculty advisor for a newly formed Women's Empowerment Organization. While the organization is driven by dedicated students, I value the trust they placed in me and the opportunity to support and mentor young women as they develop leadership skills and confidence.

“

Be confident in what you do. Confidence, attitude and effort can take you a long way professionally. Also, use the people within your profession as inspiration. I work with incredibly talented teachers and have the privilege of working under some of the best administrators (at the superintendent, principal and curriculum level) to do it. I'm constantly learning from all of them, and that is part of the reason I find success.

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30**





TRISTAN BECK '17

Director of University
Housing

University of South Dakota

**Tell us about your
current professional
role:**

My work focuses on ensuring no students slip through the cracks. Using my background in mathematics and assessment, I analyze a decade of qualitative data and turn it into quantitative, longitudinal reports that help track trends, identify patterns and inform long-term improvements. Alongside this data-driven work, I prioritize strong personal connections. For staff, we are cross-training team members on critical processes to prevent

disruptions when someone is unavailable. For students, I created an academic campaign through Coyote Connections that serves as an early-warning system for those who may be struggling. Although the initiative began last academic year and comparison data are limited, early assessment shows positive progress, and I plan to continue refining the program.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? In a field defined by frequent staff and student turnover, success is reflected in the people you reach. As a resident assistant, I was

Don't be afraid to seek out new professional development opportunities in your current role to expand your skillset. Even if where you work doesn't have much of budget for this, you can still find free webinars that can help you learn skills to help you move up or become better in your current role.

known for memorizing the names and room numbers of all 67 residents by the end of Move-In Weekend during my second year. I carry that practice forward today by learning all RA names on the first day of training and striving to learn as many student names as possible.

While learning names may seem simple, it helps build trust and lasting connections. My goal is for students to feel safe and comfortable coming to me and my staff, even after they move out of on-campus housing. I am proud to serve in this role and of the opportunity it provides to make a positive, lasting impact on both the institution and the students we serve.



MICHAELA GOLDAMMER '19

Project Manager
Children's Miracle Network

**Tell us about your
current professional
role:**

I work at Children's Miracle Network on our strategy team, where I lead high-impact, cross-functional projects from concept through completion. My focus is on ensuring initiatives are purpose-driven, strategically aligned and supportive of organizational goals. On a daily basis, that work allows me to improve the tools, resources and awareness used to raise funds in local communities so that children receive the care they need, regardless of their family's ability to pay. In addition to my professional

responsibilities, I have recently returned to school to pursue a graduate degree in nonprofit administration. This has allowed me to better understand how nonprofit organizations function operationally and strategically, while broadening my perspective as I continue to grow as a professional in the sector.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

I have focused on creating programs and partnerships that inspire people to give and remain engaged over time. I have led initiatives that connect corporate partners, student-led programs and community supporters with meaningful opportunities to participate, while also improving the tools and resources they rely on to be successful. By shaping strategies that make participation more

Follow what genuinely excites you. Passion is a powerful motivator, and it often leads you toward people and opportunities that will give you purpose. Seek out others who are already doing what interests you, whether they're mentors, leaders you admire or peers who share your enthusiasm.

accessible, impactful and rewarding, I have helped strengthen long-term relationships and increase the overall effectiveness of fundraising efforts that support children's hospitals.

I have also worked to influence my community by demonstrating how personal passion can fuel purpose. I have mentored students interested in fundraising and nonprofit work, organized campaigns that highlight the difference individual involvement can make, and committed to my own marathon fundraising effort as a way to model dedication and accountability.

Each of these efforts has been about more than raising money; they are designed to create space for others to see themselves as part of something larger than themselves.

My success comes from bridging strategy with empathy. I prioritize listening closely to the needs of partners, supporters and participants, translating insights into action, and ensuring results create a ripple effect that benefits both the mission and those who support it.

Q&A

with Industry
Standout, **Alyssa
Linneman '21**



Favorite USD
hangout or
spot you
miss the
most?

**The Kappa
Alpha Theta
house!**

Q

What's your go-to drink or
snack during busy days?

An iced coffee or 7energy
from 7 Brew always puts a
little extra pep in my step!

A

**Early bird
or night owl
for work?**

Q

**Tell us about your current
professional role.**

A

Night owl!

In my role as a retirement counselor at Touchmark at All Saints, I educate seniors and their families about the many benefits of senior living and help them navigate what the future may hold. Our community offers five levels of care—Independent living, Assisted living, Enhanced Assisted living, Pre-memory care and Memory care—and I guide families in understanding these options so they can feel confident in their decisions, both now and in the years ahead. My work centers on building trusted relationships and supporting people as they weigh the emotional and practical aspects of moving. This ensures that each individual feels heard, supported, and empowered in their decision. Beyond helping residents choose a home, I see my role as providing peace of mind. I work to create smoother transitions for residents, ease concerns for their loved ones, and strengthen the broader community by helping ensure seniors are safe, connected and well cared for.

Retirement Counselor Touchmark at All Saints

2025

Q

**How have you demonstrated success and
influence in your profession and community?**

A

I have built a career in a field that is both challenging to enter and deeply rewarding. In my previous role as director of sales and marketing, I navigated the complexities of opening a brand-new senior living community, an experience that required adaptability, persistence and leadership. In my current role at Touchmark, I have the privilege of witnessing success every day as residents live full lives of joy, community and peace of mind, knowing I played a part in helping them get there. Beyond my professional role, I serve as a member of Coalition on Aging, an organization that supports older adults by connecting professionals and providing education to strengthen our community.

Q

**In one word: the
most challenging
part of your job?**

A

Change.

Q

What value guides how you
show up in your workplace
or industry?

A

Compassion guides how I
listen, support and help
each person or family I
work with to make a
decision that honors their
values.



BROOKE JACKSON '22

Coordinator of Native
Student Services

University of South Dakota

Tell us about your current professional role:

In my position, I have the opportunity to advise student organizations, plan amazing programs, interact with college students on a daily basis and stay connected to the community. I oversee the highest number of work-study students within Student Services and plan and implement events and programs for both Native Student Services and the Wiyuskinyan Unpi Tipi Living Learning Community. I also develop initiatives that meet students socially, academically, professionally and culturally where they are,

supporting them as they grow into who they are meant to be. One of the most rewarding aspects of my role is the daily interaction with students. Building relationships, supporting their goals and witnessing their growth is the most meaningful part of my work. Outside of my current position, I plan to pursue a doctorate in educational leadership to continue advocating for Native student success across higher education.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

I have demonstrated sustained success and influence through leadership, student advocacy and a strong commitment to community. I serve as the primary adviser to seven student organizations, and being repeatedly invited to continue in these roles reflects the trust I have built and my ability to foster meaningful relationships with college students. I have helped

establish an Indigenous Career Readiness Program, expanded research opportunities for Native students in STEM fields, and developed partnerships between USD and the Vermillion School District. I have presented at two academic conferences on Native student experiences in Living Learning communities and research accessibility, and I participated in the NASPA First-Generation Student Success Conference, where I completed a professional program in assessment in higher education. My work has been recognized through acknowledgement from the assistant vice president of Career

Services and Student Success for high engagement among my work-study students. I have also created an innovative program focused on culturally appropriate professional attire for Native students and was accepted into the President's Executive Leadership Institute for the current academic year. Outside of my professional role, I am honored to be a member of the seventh cohort of the Billie Sutton Leadership Institute, which brings together leaders from across the state to advance equity and opportunity in rural communities throughout South Dakota.

“
My advice is to network and be unafraid, even if you are afraid. Networking is often underutilized, and by leveraging it, you can put yourself in positions and rooms that you would not have been in otherwise. It is okay to ask to be included in spaces and at meetings to gain more experience. Every person you meet is an opportunity to grow professionally and learn more about the field you want to go into.



ZBYNEK SUROVEC '20, '23

Multimedia Director

Sturgis Buffalo Chip
Entrepreneur / Freelancer -
Eclectix Productions, LLC

Tell us about your current professional role:

I currently serve as multimedia director for the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, recognized as the largest motorcycle rally in the world. In this role, I lead the production of large-scale video content, manage creative teams, and oversee multimedia strategy, marketing and branding initiatives. In addition to my work with the rally, I operate a freelance multimedia business specializing in videography, advertising and commercial production for a diverse client base. My educational background is integral to

my day-to-day work. I hold a bachelor's degree in media and journalism with a minor in business administration, as well as a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies with an emphasis in marketing, photography and business from USD. The skills developed during my time at USD inform nearly every aspect of my career, from creative storytelling and content production to strategic planning and team leadership.

I'm currently producing a documentary about the Sturgis Rally with the goal of a global premiere on platforms such as Netflix. As I continue to grow professionally, my goal is to become a leading multimedia director in the industry, pushing creative boundaries while

One of the most valuable things I've learned is to stay curious and take initiative. Don't wait for permission to grow - growth feels uncomfortable, and that's a good sign. Lean into new challenges even when you're nervous, ask for feedback and treat people well along the way. Even the tough or "not-so-great" experiences can shape you - they teach resilience, reveal what you value and help you grow faster than the easy wins.

producing meaningful and impactful content. I remain committed to lifelong learning and continued professional development.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

I have demonstrated success through the scope, reach and recognition of my work. I have received multiple professional accolades, including two American Advertising Awards from the American Advertising Federation for the 2024 Sturgis Rally Aftermovie: a Gold Award for cinematography and a Silver Award for branded content and entertainment. As multimedia director for

the Sturgis Rally, I lead productions that reach millions of viewers worldwide and play a key role in shaping the brand and legacy of a globally recognized event.

Beyond the rally, I contribute to the broader creative community through my freelance business by mentoring emerging creators and collaborating with a wide range of clients. I am currently leading the production of a documentary on the Sturgis Rally with aspirations for global distribution. The project reflects both professional ambition and a commitment to cultural preservation and storytelling at a national level.



University of
SOUTH DAKOTA

INDUSTRY STANDOUTS



CALEB SWANSON '24

Agricultural Land Equity
Program Analyst

California Strategic
Growth Council

Tell us about your current professional role: As an agricultural land equity program analyst for the California Strategic Growth Council, I assist the 13-member California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force in developing policy recommendations for the governor and legislature. The report focuses on expanding access to agricultural land and promoting secure land tenure for beginning, small, and historically underserved farmers and ranchers. To ensure the report reflects lived experience, I have facilitated approximately 35 public meetings in compliance with

California open meeting laws; researched key agricultural land equity issues, including environmental and economic impacts; conducted outreach with California's 109 federally recognized Tribal Nations and numerous non-federally recognized Tribal Nations; facilitated 20 community engagement sessions; organized 20 regional site visits; administered a statewide survey; and orchestrated engagement with legislative staff. I drafted the task force's initial report and continue to refine it based on feedback from task force members, community stakeholders and subject-matter experts.

I also co-founded and serve as co-director of operations for the Public Interest Law Association, a national organization that supports aspiring public interest law professionals through mentorship, community building and education. The organization continues to expand and hopes to offer professional development and scholarship

“
Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone and try something different or daring. Impactful service often begins by saying yes to new opportunities.

opportunities. In addition, I serve as a board member and secretary for Greening Vermillion, overseeing internal operations, external communications and social media.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? Managing public meetings while guiding a diverse stakeholders to come to a consensus has proved a significant challenge for my team. Relying on my student government experience, I introduced structured facilitation strategies to the task force, including consent agendas and clear text amendment guidelines. These tools have made meetings more productive and helped keep the task force on track to publish its report on time, an important accomplishment within



2025

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TANNER COMP '17

Senior Associate

Acclaro Valuation Advisors

Tell us about your current professional role:

I serve as a senior associate at Acclaro Business Valuation, providing professional valuation services for privately held companies ranging from \$1 million to over \$1 billion. I specialize in employee stock ownership plan transactions and also perform estate and gift tax valuations, intangible asset valuations and other advisory services across multiple industries. My role combines technical rigor with strategic

insight. I develop and refine valuation models using income, market and asset approaches; conduct in-depth industry and macroeconomic research; and apply advanced techniques to produce credible, defensible results. I also translate complex financial analyses into clear, actionable insights to support informed decision-making.

Beyond client work, I am passionate about mentoring and education. At Acclaro, I have onboarded and trained new valuation professionals, designed enrichment programs and presented at regional conferences

on specialized valuation topics. Previously at Deloitte, I led domestic and international audit teams, facilitated large-scale trainings, and supported the professional growth of dozens of young professionals.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? I have demonstrated success by advancing my profession and serving my community. In 2024, I presented at the Midwest Regional ESOP Conference, sharing technical valuation expertise with industry peers. I have also contributed

to the profession by authoring articles on ESOP accounting, warrant considerations and other complex valuation issues to help expand professional knowledge. In the community, I serve on the board of directors for Omaha Leaders, a nonprofit that unites business and community leaders to grow in leadership and service. As

treasurer, I help guide financial stewardship and organizational strategy in support of its mission to serve, connect and equip leaders in Omaha.



KANWAR SINGH '24

Branch Manager

First Alliance Credit Union

Tell us about your current professional role:

I serve as a branch manager at First Alliance Credit Union, where I oversee daily branch operations, manage staff and play an active role in consumer lending and deposit growth. My position requires a blend of leadership, analytical decision-making and member-focused service. I also serve on lending and deposit committees, where I analyze data and collaborate on policies that shape financial outcomes for our members.

I hold a bachelor's degree in economics and an MBA in business analytics from USD, which strengthened my quantitative approach to problem-solving while reinforcing broader strategic thinking. I aim to continue growing as a financial leader who blends technical expertise, operational efficiency and people-focused leadership.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community? I have demonstrated success in my profession by assuming leadership roles early and delivering measurable results. Before graduate school, I worked in retail banking at JPMorgan Chase, building a strong foundation in client service and relationship management. I later gained experience at Goldman Sachs in asset

and wealth management operations, where I developed skills in process efficiency and client onboarding. Today, as a branch manager at a member-owned credit union, I oversee staff, manage operations and help guide members through important financial decisions.

Stay relentlessly curious and take ownership early. Don't wait for the perfect role or title. Learn how the business works, understand the "why" behind every decision and look for ways to add value beyond your job description. Every time I stepped into something new, the biggest leaps came from embracing what I didn't yet know and figuring it out through discipline, humility and consistency.

help shape policy and contribute to long-term growth strategies. Working in a not-for-profit, member-owned institution allows me to directly support the financial well-being of individuals and families in my community. My influence comes from combining technical and analytical skills with a people-first mindset, benefiting both my team and the members we serve.

Find what aspects about the work you're doing that you love and build a personal brand around it.



Q&A

with Commerce
Catalyst, Isaac
Armstead '19



Early-morning launch energy or late night problem solver?

Give me the early morning launch energy!

Q Finish the sentence: "I hope to push the aerospace industry forward by _____. "

Challenging the status quo, thinking outside the box and building relationships along the way.

A

In one word: what does being a Coyote in mean to you?

Grit.

Q
Tell us about your current professional role.

A

I have advanced quickly at GE Aerospace since graduating from USD, moving through several technical and operational roles and now serving as a spares account manager on the commercial side. Each role has built the foundation for my goal of pursuing senior leadership supporting CFM56 and LEAP aircraft engines. As an account manager, I work with customers including Southwest Airlines, Lufthansa, Lockheed Martin and international partners to ensure engine hardware meets operational needs. I focus on understanding challenges, strengthening relationships and supporting accurate demand forecasting through regular customer engagement. The skills driving my success were developed at USD, particularly connecting people, ideas and processes. I prioritize listening, collaboration and problem-solving, while remaining grounded in the importance of delivering high-quality aircraft engines that help people travel safely.

Commercial Spares Account Manager
GE Aerospace

2025

Q

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

A

My success has had an immediate impact on my hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma. After experiencing the transformative power of education at USD, my older brother, Will Armstead '17, and I founded the Armstead Foundation, a scholarship that helps Tulsa high school seniors pursue a college education. What began as a way to give back academically has had a deeper personal impact, reinforcing the importance of opening doors for others with similar backgrounds. For the past three years, I have remained closely connected to my community by coaching third- and fourth-grade co-ed basketball. This role has allowed me to give back through service, channel my competitive spirit and stay grounded in the values shaped during my time at USD.



Q **In one word: the future you hope to help build.**
A **Balance.**

Q Favorite season for big thinking, planning or recharging?
A The weeks just before spring. I treat it like the end of hibernation; reset, reflect and lay out next season's big goals.



PHILLIP MILLAR '19
Audit Manager
Eide Bailly, LLC

in our communities and helping ensure stakeholders have dependable financial information.

I am also a lifelong learner with a strong interest in literature and history. I enjoy exploring the world's great writers create, particularly those influenced by real historical contexts.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

Professionally, I have demonstrated success by delivering high-quality audits through effective team leadership and the ability to navigate complex accounting issues.

and fellowship to anyone who may need it, while learning from the stories of those I meet. I have also participated in Eide Bailly's annual Community Day, supporting efforts to clean and improve local parks and the river greenway.

Tell us about your current professional role: I am an audit manager at Eide Bailly, working primarily with clients in the construction and employee benefit plan industries. I manage audit teams and review financial information to ensure organizations' historical records and provide a reliable foundation for current and future decision-making. As a lifelong South Dakota resident, I especially value working with local contractors, seeing the critical infrastructure they build

Be authentic in your interests and passions as you progress through your career. Your authentic self is going to lead you to more fulfillment than any role you try to force yourself to play. Be curious and ask questions for the sake of learning. Do not withhold questions for fear of appearing stupid and do not ask questions for the sake of looking smart. Asking a question that makes you look stupid is just the process of becoming smart.

I continually seek to broaden my knowledge through reading, visiting museums, engaging with people from diverse backgrounds and observing the natural world.

I take pride in training and developing staff and in building strong, lasting relationships with clients. In the community, I volunteer at The Banquet, where I help provide meals



PETER FREIDEL '20
Financial Advisor
Bank of Colorado
Investment Services

Tell us about your current professional role: I work as a financial advisor with Bank of Colorado Investment Services and Raymond James in the Roaring Fork Valley, near Aspen, Colorado. I partner directly with clients to help them define and achieve their long-term financial goals, providing comprehensive wealth management services that include portfolio management, estate planning and retirement income strategies. My focus is on building lasting relationships and helping clients create clear, confident plans for their financial future.

How have you demonstrated success and influence in your profession and community?

Professionally, I have demonstrated success by delivering high-quality audits through effective team leadership and the ability to navigate complex accounting issues. I have also participated in Eide Bailly's annual Community Day, supporting efforts to clean and improve local parks and the river greenway.

There's no growth in the comfort zone, and no comfort in the growth zone. Don't be afraid to take risks and step outside what feels familiar. Saying yes to new and sometimes uncertain opportunities can open unexpected doors and lead you to places you never imagined. Commit to outworking everyone around you—hard work will always set you apart.

community involvement a priority from the start. Today, I'm an active member of the local Kiwanis Club, volunteer with several community organizations and coach youth sports, including seventh-grade basketball at the local middle school and golf at the high school. This level of involvement, first cultivated at USD, has been deeply rewarding both personally and professionally. Within a year of joining Bank of Colorado, I was promoted to vice president. Shortly thereafter, I was invited

by the president of Bank of Colorado Investment Services to transition into a financial advisor role. Over the past four years, I have grown my practice to more than \$60 million in assets under management and was named one of the area's top financial advisors by the Locals' Choice Awards. I remain grateful for the lessons and values instilled in me during my time at USD.

