

CORNERSTONES

Spring 2023

**WELCOMING THE
NEWEST ROCKET ALUMNI**

**GRAND FINALE TO
UTOLEDO'S 150TH**

**CHAMPIONS IN PLAY
AND IN THE CLASSROOM**



POINTS OF PRIDE



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awarded The University of Toledo a **three-year, \$1.5 million grant** to target Ohio's inland water sources and treatment plants with new monitoring and treatment methods to control harmful algal blooms and their toxins. "The Maumee River flows through many cities and farmlands in northern Ohio and is the major conduit of nutrients to the western basin of Lake Erie, causing the harmful algal blooms," said Dr. Youngwoo Seo, a professor of civil and environmental engineering and chemical engineering, and leader of the new project.



WILLIAM L. PIERCE '99, '09

**Associate Vice President of Alumni
Engagement and Annual Giving**
The University of Toledo Foundation

It's a Great Time To Be a Rocket!

The last ten months at The University of Toledo have been nothing short of amazing:

- Founded on October 12, 1872, The University of Toledo has been providing life-changing education to students for more than 150 years. As part of a yearlong sesquicentennial celebration, \$3.2M has been raised so far to support need-based scholarships for current UToledo students.
- UToledo Reimagined: Strategic Plan 2023-2028 was approved by the University Board of Trustees earlier this year. Countless stakeholders, including alumni, had a voice in the creation of the strategic plan that will help propel us into the next 150 years of educating leaders across UToledo's diverse academic disciplines.
- The Athletics Department earned a combined GPA of 3.472 during the spring 2023 semester, the highest semester GPA ever by the Rockets. This success in the classroom was accompanied by six Mid-American Conference regular season championships and four MAC Tournament titles! Read about these victories later in this edition.
- Our graduate programs were recognized among the best in the nation, according to the 2023 U.S. News & World Report Best Graduate Schools rankings.
- And last fall, The University of Toledo was recognized for the first time among the top universities in the country in the 2022-2023 U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings, influenced in part by student success measures including retention and graduation rates, class sizes and faculty-to-student ratios.

These are only a few of the significant accomplishments and milestones that have recently taken place, all within a dynamic environment of higher education. Even though obstacles are a part of every sector, it's crucial to take the time to celebrate our achievements and plan for a long-term future that will require the continued support of our alumni, donors and friends.

As a two-time graduate of UToledo, I have never been prouder of my alma mater. I hope you will share in this pride and help the University tell its story. 🚀

WILLIAM L. PIERCE '99, '09

CORNERSTONES

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In Brief

SPRING 2023



WELCOMING GRADUATES

2,540 candidates for degrees are poised to join the ranks of more than 168,000 Rocket alumni around the world after participating in **spring commencement ceremonies** that began May 5-7.

“The Class of 2023 is graduating from UToledo at an important time in our history as we complete the celebrations of our sesquicentennial,” said UToledo President Gregory Postel.

Ceremonies recognized 791 candidates for doctoral, education specialist and master’s degrees, and 1,749 undergraduate candidates.



Undergraduate ceremonies, May 6



Commencement speaker **Elyse Chengery '09**



Rocky greets members of University leadership

SAVE THE DATE



Homecoming is Sept. 30

Join us for **Homecoming 2023**, which will feature a full week of traditions and festivities including the Alumni Gala, Edward C. and Helen G. Schmakel parade, pregame party and more before the Rockets take on Northern Illinois in the Glass Bowl. Full details are at: toledoalumni.org



Congratulations to 2023 Alumni Award Honorees

The University of Toledo Alumni Association will recognize distinguished Rockets at the **Homecoming Alumni Gala** on Sept. 29. In addition to graduates of each college, alumni are selected for prestigious honors: The Gold T, Daniel Saevig Blue T and Edward H. Schmidt Outstanding Young Alum awards.

GOLD T AWARD

Dr. Martino Harmon '87, '98, '13

DANIEL J. SAEVIG BLUE T AWARD

Barbara Floyd '80, '82, '89

EDWARD H. SCHMIDT OUTSTANDING YOUNG ALUM

Joel Whitcomb '09, '11

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

Patricia Levey '72

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Dr. Carmine Vittoria '62, '64

COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Dr. Ilene Berson '90, '97

COLLEGE OF LAW

Beverly McBride '66

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND LIFE SCIENCES

Dr. Jennifer Christner '95

COLLEGE OF NATURAL SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS

Dr. Ciping Huang '88

COLLEGE OF NURSING

Patricia DePompei '85

COLLEGE OF PHARMACY AND PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES

Dr. Kelly Ragucci '97

JESUP SCOTT HONORS COLLEGE

Brad Windbigler '98

JUDITH HERB COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Dr. Lee Johnson '99

NEFF COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

Michael Chung '87, '91

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Casey Cornelius '01, '03

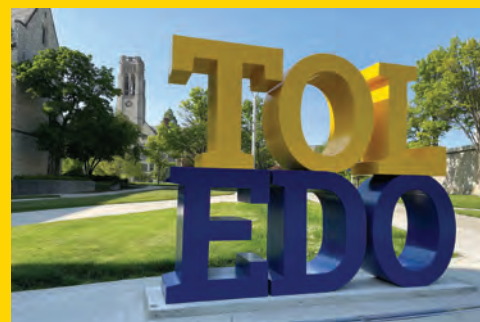
AROUND CAMPUS



Aileen Arias, left, a freshman studying business, shows a plant to **Holly Holtkamp**, a senior majoring in environmental science, at the recent Summer Vegetable Plant Sale in the Bowman-Oddy Laboratories greenhouse.



UToledo President Gregory Postel presented diplomas to senior class members of the Toledo men's tennis team who competed in the NCAA tournament at the same time as commencement ceremonies. From left are **Marko Galic**, **Krzysztof Wetoszka**, **Luka Jankovic**, **Max Skaer** and **Luis Kleinschnitz**.



A **TOL-EDO sign** now stands between the Thompson Student Union and Snyder Memorial Hall with the iconic University Hall tower in the background.



BOOMING **CONCLUSION**

Rocket Spring Festival, State of the University, 419 Day Celebrate the Best of UToledo's 150th Year

The University of Toledo continued its sesquicentennial celebration and recognized 419 Day with the outdoor Rocket Spring Festival on Centennial Mall April 19.

The free, public festival sponsored by Huntington Bank ended with a 13-minute fireworks show that illuminated the sky over Main Campus to the tunes of popular hits and UToledo favorites.

The festival followed President Gregory Postel's third annual State of the University Address from Doermann Theatre in University Hall – the first building on the Bancroft campus, completed in 1931.

Postel described the University as an institution on the move, highlighting notable accomplishments from the past year including numerous student achievements, research discoveries, healthcare advancements and community engagement initiatives.

His speech showcased the University's new strategic plan, which was approved by the Board of Trustees in February.

"Looking ahead to the next 150 years, we are reimagining the future of public higher education and our role as a leading public research university," Postel said. "Our new strategic plan sets the direction for the next five years as together we focus on building a stronger, sustainable institution with a redesigned brand that showcases the value of our education, research and patient care."

The University's new strategic plan, UToledo Reimagined (2023-2028), includes six priority areas that will provide the framework for the next five years. Postel highlighted each of the goals and his vision for moving them forward.

Ensuring student success is the top goal.

"Student success is and must continue to be at the heart of everything we do," the president said.

He noted several campus projects focused on improving the student experience, including the new Center for Advocacy and Student Experience that opened this fall.

"This is indeed a pivotal moment for our University, requiring each of us to be a part of the solution. Bring forward your great ideas. Let us face these challenges head on," he said. "Together, let us embrace this opportunity to reimagine UToledo."



UToledo President Gregory Postel delivered his third State of the University Address in University Hall – the first building on the Bancroft campus.

The activities that took place on April 19 also recognized Toledo's unofficial 419 Day holiday connected to the 419 area code and celebrated UToledo's connection to the city and region.

Community partners, including the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo-Lucas County Public Libraries, Healthy Lucas County and Urban Wholistics, also participated in the event.

In addition, more than 70 coaches and staff from The University of Toledo Athletic Department lent a helping hand to the Toledo community on 419 Day by volunteering their time in a number of community projects. The Rockets collaborated with leaders from the Art Tatum Zone, a nonprofit organization named after the jazz legend that promotes projects to revitalize area neighborhoods. 📍



CELEBRATE 150 YEARS WITH YOUR GIFT TO A DESERVING STUDENT BY JUNE 30:
utoledo.edu/give150



[VIEW THE PLAN ONLINE](#)



To read the complete 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, including UToledo's vision, priority areas, goals and milestones, scan the code here or visit: utoledo.edu/strategicplan



CREATING CHAMPIONS

Rocket Student-Athletes Pair Championships with Classroom Accolades in 2022-23 Academic Year

The University of Toledo has a proud tradition of training student-athletes who consistently succeed in competition as well as in the classroom.

For the 2022-23 academic year, six programs claimed Mid-American Conference (MAC) championships.

Academically, the Athletics department collectively earned a 3.472 GPA for the spring 2023 semester, which is the highest semester GPA ever recorded by the program using a normal grading scale. It is the sixth consecutive semester in which Toledo student-athletes have set a new GPA record and the ninth consecutive semester in which they have earned a semester GPA of 3.3 or higher.

Women's Cross Country

Sophomore Joy Chirchir and senior Faith Linga had a 2-3 finish to lead the University of Toledo women's cross country team to its second consecutive MAC Women's Cross Country Championship title in October. Toledo placed five runners in the top 10 on the way to their eighth MAC Championship overall.

The team earned a 3.670 team grade-point average for the 2023 spring semester, with 11 runners earning a 4.0 GPA.

Football

After earning their 12th MAC Championship title over Ohio, the Rockets went on to defeat Liberty at the Roofclaim.com Boca Raton Bowl on Dec. 20. It was only the second time in Toledo history, and the first time since 2001, that the Rockets won both the MAC Championship Game and a bowl game in the same season.

The team followed up their on-field success as one of only seven schools to receive the American Football Coaches Association's 2022 Academic Achievement Award. Toledo earned the award for the first time after recording a 100 percent graduation rate for members of its 2015 freshman football student-athlete classes. The Rockets also set a team record with a 3.202 GPA in the 2023 spring semester.

Women's Basketball

With their victory over archrival Bowling Green in the MAC Championship finals on March 11, Toledo earned an automatic berth into the NCAA Tournament, the ninth tourney appearance in its history and first since 2017. They would go on to capture one of the biggest wins in program history, defeating No. 5 seed Iowa State 80-73 in the first round of the 2023 NCAA Tournament.

The victory was the Rockets' 17th straight win, a new school record, and propelled them into the second round of the Big Dance for the first time since the 1995-96 season. Toledo's

win was also its largest upset triumph in terms of seeding in school history, and the performance matched the MAC record for highest seed to win an NCAA Tournament game, last accomplished by No. 12 seed Ball State in 2009.

Later in March, seven members of the Toledo women's basketball team were named Academic All-MAC and six earned perfect 4.0 GPAs in the 2023 spring semester.

Men's Basketball

The Rockets became the first current MAC school to win three consecutive Championships when they won the league's regular-season title with a 16-2 conference record. Toledo went on to play Michigan in the first round of the National Invitation Tournament and finished with a 27-8 overall mark.

Senior J.T. Shumate was named to the College Sports Communicators Academic All-America Men's Basketball First Team. Shumate is the first Rocket men's basketball player to ever earn first Academic All-American in back-to-back seasons and just the third Rocket ever in any sport. RayJ Dennis, A.J. Edu and Elijah Wilson joined Shumate on the Academic All-MAC team.

Men's Tennis

Junior Pawit Sornlaksup clinched match point in a dramatic victory to help the Toledo men's tennis team capture its first MAC Tournament title since 1973. The Rockets took down Western Michigan in a 4-3 decision on April 23. This is the first tournament title for Al Wermer since becoming Toledo's head coach in 1996. With the victory, the Rockets earned an automatic into the NCAA Championship Tournament.

In May, Sornlaksup was recognized for his outstanding athletic and academic performance this season when the College Sports Communicators announced its 2023 Academic All-District Men's Tennis Team. A junior from Rayong, Thailand, he holds a 3.843 GPA and is pursuing a degree in information systems.

Women's Tennis

Women's Tennis clinched its first ever MAC regular-season championship title with a perfect 10-0 record in MAC matches, compiling a school-record 20 wins in the process.

Cassie Alcalá, Julia Kuszynski, Mariaona Perez and Shalini Tallanraju were all named to the 2023 Academic All-District team by the College Sports Communicators (CSC). 🏆



CAUSE TO CELEBRATE

Rockets Raise the Bar With \$2,193,302 in Day of Giving Fundraising

In an already historic sesquicentennial year for The University of Toledo, Rockets set a new milestone with \$2,193,302 in donations March 29-30.

The total is a nearly 11% jump from 2022 and a record in the six-year history of the campaign.

A total of 3,177 donors collectively participated online and during live events in Toledo during the 36-hour fundraising effort.

Donors set another new standard after increasing their individual support in 2023 — the average gift was \$690, an 11% boost over the previous year and a campaign record.

Rocket alumni around the world, numbering more than 168,000 strong, continued to fuel the campaign's impact. This participation is crucial, in terms of pure financial support for the University and in reinforcing its reputation nationwide.

Alumni giving rates are factored into the collegiate rankings of several publications.

"We are extremely grateful for the tremendous support from our loyal alumni and donors. To set another record demonstrated their commitment to the mission and success of our University and students," says William Pierce '99, '09, associate vice president of alumni engagement and annual giving.

In deciding how their gifts would be designated, donors were able to choose from more than 2,000 funds available at The University of Toledo Foundation, supporting scholarships, athletic and educational programs, research, healthcare and community services, which make an impact throughout northwest Ohio, the Great Lakes region and elsewhere.

Building on recent tradition, local businesses lent their support to Day of Giving.

Customers at Toledo locations of The Blarney Irish Pub, Bubba's 33, Buffalo Wild Wings, Campus Pollyeyes, Fusian, Home Slice Pizza and Jake's Saloon had the opportunity to donate by rounding up their purchase during the campaign.

Carlos' Poco Loco, Domino's Pizza, Four Seasons Bistro at The University of Toledo Medical Center, Jersey Mike's Subs, State Bank and Rocket Sports Properties also provided support to Day of Giving.

"Our entire campus community is extraordinarily grateful to Rocket Nation for their continued support of Day of Giving this year," said Floyd Akins, vice president for university advancement.

"This level of sustained generosity is a point of pride and a reason to celebrate The University of Toledo — every donation, no matter the amount, helps to ensure the future for our students, educators, patients, caregivers and so many others." 🚀



Ambrea Mikolajczyk '03. Photo by Nick Amrhein.

Career Change Takes Alumna From Medicine to Masonry

HGTV is missing an opportunity for a renovation show with Ambrea Mikolajczyk '03 — who is obsessed with creating something special from “undesirable properties” in neighborhoods that traditionally lack investment.

Ambrea and her husband Kevin Mikolajczyk '04 are the owners of ARK Restoration & Construction (ARK), which restores and beautifies buildings that have been forgotten about, paying close attention to quality and detail.

Owning and managing ARK is just the start. Ambrea is a creative mother of four, a real estate developer, property manager and TEDx speaker. A Toledo native, she is committed to the success of her hometown. She attended Start High School and graduated from The University of Toledo with a bachelor's degree in pharmaceutical sciences. In 2019, she received the prestigious 20 Under 40 Award for her ongoing community work.

In 2023, Mikolajczyk received a Milestone Award for business, one of the few awards for women in the state of Ohio presented by the YWCA.

The Mikolajczyks live in downtown Toledo in a former tobacco factory they restored with their children.

“Attending The University of Toledo was an easy decision for me,” Mikolajczyk stated. “I am a native Toledoan, so having the opportunity to stay close to my family and boyfriend, now husband, was ideal.”

Following graduation, Mikolajczyk had a successful career as a pharmaceutical sales manager for two of the largest drug manufacturers in the world. She thrived in that role for 15 years while she and her husband started renovating single-family homes.

They soon realized their true passion lay in restoring abandoned structures. Mikolajczyk took a leap of faith and resigned in 2017 to start ARK.

“We had garnered the skillset, the professional relationships, and the knowledge to restore these types of structures. The market had a problem, and we knew how to solve it,” according to Mikolajczyk.

The Mikolajczyks have renovated several homes and buildings throughout Toledo and the surrounding areas. Their most recent project was a former vacant Wonder Bread Factory, which they converted into 33 luxury apartments. The renovation earned “The Best Commercial Rehabilitation Award in a Large Community” from Heritage Ohio in 2022.

As Mikolajczyk began her journey to revitalize Toledo, she immersed herself in the community and now serves on various boards including the UToledo Alumni Association Board of Trustees.

“UToledo continues to do so much for me both personally and professionally. Therefore, I want to give back with my time and finances.” 🐦



30 YEARS OF ART ON THE MALL

Annual Summertime Tradition Welcomes Artists and Art Lovers of All Ages to Campus Sunday, July 30

The 30-year-old family-friendly tradition for artists and patrons is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, July 30, at Centennial Mall on UToledo's Main Campus.

A spotlight of nearly 100 artists from around the country, the free, public event will feature a range of artwork that includes acrylic, glass, pen and ink, oil, mixed media, metals, photography, ceramics and jewelry for viewing and purchase with either cash or credit card directly at an artist's booth.

In celebration of Art on the Mall's 30th year, a competition was hosted calling for artist submissions to help inspire the official promotional materials for 2023, including event programs, posters and flyers, digital marketing such as email and social media advertisements, and t-shirt designs.

Kathy Rennels, a returning artist who specializes in graphic design, submitted the winning artwork.

"It is exciting to be celebrating 30 years of Art On The Mall," says William Pierce '99, '09, associate vice president of alumni engagement and annual giving. "This signature, annual event from the Alumni Association has fun and entertainment for thousands of art lovers of all ages."

Art on the Mall will offer activities and entertainment throughout the day, including a young artist area for children and live music, as well as a variety of dining options.

Representatives from the Detroit Institute of Arts will jury the artists' work. Prizes will be given to the top artists, and UToledo's Best of Show award will be presented to an artist who is affiliated with the University.

"Year after year, artists tell us that this is one of the best art shows they participate in," notes Pierce. "We're proud to continue the tradition of hosting this show and look forward to our best show yet."

Free parking will be available as well as a golf cart shuttle service to transport guests and their packages to and from their vehicles.

Art on the Mall is hosted each year by The University of Toledo Alumni Association, and is supported for 2023 by Mail-It Corporation of Toledo.

Full event details can be found at artonthemall.org.

For more information, contact Ansley Abrams-Frederick at 419.530.2586 or ansley.abrams@utoledo.edu. 📍





INNOVATING EDUCATION

Dr. Gabriella Baki, director of the Cosmetic Science and Formulation Design Program

Trustees Approve New Degrees and Efforts to Recruit Online, International and Out-of-State Students

Two new degrees are being launched at The University of Toledo to meet industry demands for more cosmetic scientists and cyber security professionals.

A new master's degree in cosmetic science and formulation design builds on UToledo's existing bachelor's degree in the field, which is the only undergraduate program of its kind in the country.

To support the \$500 billion global beauty industry, the new completely online master's degree in the College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences is designed to train professionals in formulation science and sustainability in personal care products.

In the College of Engineering, a new bachelor's degree in cyber security will train professionals for national security, advanced manufacturing, smart infrastructure, connected healthcare, financial and other industries.

The new degrees were approved by the UToledo Board of Trustees. The next step is approval from the Ohio Department of Higher Education. The goal is to enroll the first students in the programs in spring semester 2024.

Trustees also approved several measures to support recruitment of students outside Ohio, including various tuition surcharge rates for non-resident students and moving forward with a contract with an agency to attract international students.

The Board approved University leaders to negotiate a five-year agreement with Wellspring International Education to engage its network of more than 800 recruiting agents to extend the geographical reach of UToledo.

UToledo currently has agreements with 41 agents in 13 countries to recruit international students who contribute to a diverse and thriving student body and have high retention and graduation rates. The partnership with Wellspring would provide UToledo access to

prospective students in a number of new territories. The cost of the agreement is estimated to be at least \$1.7 million.

With the approval of the Trustees, students who are residents of Monroe County, Mich. will pay only a \$1 non-resident surcharge per semester enrolled. UToledo has offered an in-state tuition rate to residents of the county since 1978 as part of an agreement between the states of Ohio and Michigan that is now expired. The \$1 surcharge is a way for UToledo to continue to provide that benefit to the more than 1,300 students from Monroe County who are currently enrolled at UToledo.

In addition, trustees approved continuing a surcharge of only \$5 for students outside Ohio enrolled in 100% online courses to continue to offer high quality online education at a nationally competitive price. 📖



HERE TO HELP YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Since 1872, The University of Toledo has been empowering and preparing driven individuals to make an impact on the world. The University of Toledo Foundation and The University of Toledo Alumni Association are committed to supporting the global Rocket alumni network and ensuring the University's future through prudent asset management and philanthropy.

We provide financial and strategic support for The University of Toledo's vision to improve the human condition.

ABOUT CORNERSTONES

Your support and generosity are fueling tomorrows for UToledo students, educators, researchers and caregivers.

As stewards of that generosity, **Cornerstones** is how we demonstrate the returns on the investments made in us by stakeholders in the state of Ohio and beyond — including parents, taxpayers and neighbors in surrounding communities.

In addition to this twice-yearly publication, we share stories each day about how your support is empowering Rockets to enact change as the coming generation of leaders, critical thinkers and problem solvers. Read more at:

utfoundation.org | toledoalumni.org

HOW TO SHARE STORY IDEAS

Is there a recent accomplishment or story you're eager to share with the Rocket community? In addition to Cornerstones, the Alumni Association publishes most alumni news and success stories in its **quarterly eMagazine**.

Send us your story idea by visiting:

alumninews.utoledo.edu

POINTS OF PRIDE



The University of Toledo is recognized among the top universities in the world by **U.S. News & World Report** in its 2023-24 Best Graduate School rankings. Improving in a variety of specialties, UToledo's ranked graduate programs include part-time MBA, graduate engineering, education, physician assistant, doctoral chemistry, doctoral mathematics, nursing masters, doctor of nurse practitioner, public health and doctoral physics. The rankings are based on expert opinion about program excellence and statistical indicators that measure the quality of faculty, research and students.




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The University of Toledo Alumni Association and The University of Toledo Foundation share offices in the **Center for Alumni and Donor Engagement**. In a transformational gift, the state-of-the-art, LEED-certified office buildings and 100 acres of land were donated in 2017 by Welltower, Inc. for the benefit of The University of Toledo.