# Ine MORROW

Where tomorrow meets today through ALEC





Agricultural Leadership
Education & Communications
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

By students, for students



# Growth by Association

As a farmer invested in the Illinois Soybean Association, you directly influence the promotion, advocacy and education ISA upholds yearround to create opportunities and ROI for Illinois soybean farmers. We're proud to unveil our new look and keep working for you, while you help us continually determine what's next.



Learn more and engage with ISA at ILSOY.ORG



Where tomorrow meets today through ALEC

#### VOLUME 1 · NUMBER 1 · MAY, 2022

#### https://alec.illinois.edu/

Published by students in the Publication Development and Production class, Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications Program, College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

#### MANAGING EDITOR

Kali Walker

#### PHOTO EDITOR

Ava Oros

#### **DESIGN MANAGER**

Callie McClay

#### ADVERTISING MANAGER

Sophia Wegeng

#### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Kate Sanderson

#### SECTION EDITOR (LEADERSHIP)

Emma Eathington

#### SECTION EDITOR (EDUCATION)

Ben Kurr

#### SECTION EDITOR (COMMUNICATIONS)

Shealyn Streder

#### SECTION EDITOR (DIVERSITY)

Robbie Henson

#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Steven Migut Sarah Richey

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Abbigail Kepp Rachel McGreal Wendy Majula

Molly Schempp Ava Splear

#### **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Ava Oros Lauren Winterbotham

### MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Robbie Henson

### **EDITORIAL CONSULTANT**

Dr. Owen Roberts

### **DESIGN CONSULTANT**

Troy Courson, Image Graphics Enterprises Inc.

### SPECIAL THANKS

ACES Office of Marketing and Communications, ALEC faculty members, ALEC external advisory board, Dr. Anna Ball, Bevier Cafe, Jesse Campbell, Warren Clark, Kathryn Doan, Dr. Jim Evans, FarmHouse Fraternity, Bonnie Johnson, Dr. Lindsay Kennedy, Kelsey Litchfield, Lyle Orwig, Rachel Peabody, Jay Runner, Melinda Schaefer, Claire Smith, Mike Wilson.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

#### For information about ALEC programs:

Garv Ochs

ALEC Academic Advisor

#### garyochs@illinois.edu

#### For information about The Morrow:

Dr. Owen Roberts

ALEC Specialized Faculty (Communications) oroberts@illinois.edu

Cover photo: Lauren Winterbotham

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS





- Welcome from associate dean Dr. Anna Ball
- 2 This magazine is created by students for students
- 3 Meet the class that produced The Morrow
- 4 Get ready for a great career through ALEC
- 5 Making a national communications connection
- 6 Top 10 reasons you should become an Illini
- 7 Graduate program responds to changing needs
- 8 What drew me to choose leadership
- 11 Classroom observations from a student teacher
- 12 Learning skills that make graduates stand out
- 13 Abbigail Kepp: She's bursting with Illini Pride
- 14 Photo spread: How I relate to agriculture
- 16 It's all about diversity for these students
- Tips for success from ALEC graduates 18
- 20 Hungry? Here's tasty, handy and nutritious food

Friends of The Morrow (from

communications Stephanie Henry

and executive director of marketing

Communications, and Dr. Anna Ball,

associate dean for academic programs

left): Assistant director of

and communications Laura Mabry from ACES' Marketing and

for the College of Agricultural,

Environmental and Consumer

Sciences (ACES).



#SeeYourselfAtACES

### Dear friends of ALEC,

It is my distinct honor to welcome you to the inaugural edition of The *Morrow*.

As ALEC's student-led publication, The Morrow represents the true spirit of experiential learning. That's one of the most important pillars within the academic experience here in the College of ACES.

The Morrow, aptly named for our beloved Morrow Plots, also illustrates that in ACES if we can dream it to be true, we can make that dream a reality.

As you enjoy the stories herein, you will see the talents of our outstanding ALEC students, the magic of experiential learning, and the spirit of innovation that is the thread of all we do here and in agriculture across the state of Illinois.

Dr. Anna Ball

Associate Dean

College of Agricultural, Consumer and

**Environmental Sciences** 

### A comforting touchstone on a busy campus



### By Sarah Richey

When brainstorming potential names for the Publication Development and Production class magazine - the one you're reading now — my mind went back to the first time I ventured onto campus.

Like many other Agricultural Leadership, **Education and Communications (ALEC)** students, I came to University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign from a small rural community. My family's beef cattle farm is near Medora, IL (pop. 380).

Initially, campus felt overwhelming, compared to the junior college from which I transferred.

However, when I toured campus and came across The Morrow Plots, I felt a sense of familiarity.

Growing up in agriculture, seeing the plots in the middle of the hustle and bustle of campus life was comforting.

That day, The Morrow Plots became a landmark for me, while already being a National Historic Landmark in themselves.

And it turns out Morrow is not only the name of Professor George Espy Morrow, the first dean of the College of Agriculture (known today as the College of Agricultural, Consumer and **Environmental Sciences**), but it is also defined by Merriam-Webster as "the future."

The significance of the name to me, to others and to the College, on top of its dictionary definition, made it my choice to offer up as the magazine's name, The Morrow.



### By students, for students

### By Kali Walker

In agriculture and food, communication is the bridge between producers and consumers. The University of Illinois Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications program addresses the sector's need for talented graduates presenting broad skill sets, including publication development and production.

Publications are a distinct end product within communications and journalism; they serve as among the main communication tools for many organizations, commodity groups and businesses.

Creating publications — in our case, electronic publications, like the one you're reading now, The *Morrow* — gives students practical, applied opportunities to exercise leadership values, think critically about their audience, educate and inform that audience and develop specific communications to connect with that audience.

Under the guidance of specialized faculty member Dr. Owen Roberts, a group of 11 undergraduate students worked towards creating a publication that is aimed to recruit and provide beneficial information to incoming students in ALEC studies.

Our motivation is helpfulness and clarity. The entire class agreed that there was a long list of questions that went unanswered when the members first considered being an Illini. So, the overall goal of this publication is to eliminate that uncertainty. "By Students, For Students" describes our effort to help make the next cohort feel at home in Urbana-Champaign.

This magazine takes its name from the highly visible Morrow Plots. Students in our class, as well as the 38 students in AGCM 220 Communicating Agriculture class, each had an opportunity to submit three name ideas for the publication that would then be voted on and eventually established.

That's nearly 150 choices!

In the end, The Morrow was the clear winner, submitted by senior Sarah Richey (see her story to the left of this page).

To me, The *Morrow* not only conveys the importance of The Morrow Plots and their creator Professor George Espy Morrow, but also encourages current and potential students to see themselves in the "near future" when being a part of ALEC.

jali E. Walker

Kali Walker Managing Editor



Emma Eathington is a junior in organizational and community leadership. Hometown: Avon, IL https://www.linkedin. com/in/emmaeathington-b411351b8/



Robbie Henson is a junior in organizational and community leadership. Hometown: Normal. IL https://www.linkedin. com/in/robert-henson-89644921b/



Benjamin Kurr is a senior in agricultural communications concentrating in advertising. Hometown: San Mateo, CA



Callie McClay is a

senior in agricultural communications concentrating in advertising. Hometown: Oakdale, IL https://www.linkedin. com/in/calliemcclay/



Steven Migut is a junior in organizational and community leadership. Hometown: Tolono, IL https://www.linkedin. com/in/steven-migut-4006211ab



Ava Oros is a junior in agricultural communications concentrating in advertising. Hometown: Hettick, IL https://avaoros.wixsite. com/website



Sarah Richey is a

senior in agricultural communications concentrating in advertising. Hometown: Medora, IL https://srichey30.wixsite. com/srichey



Kate Sanderson is a senior in agricultural communications concentrating in advertising. Hometown: Peoria, IL https://www. linkedin.com/in/katesanderson-730029201/



Shealyn Streder is a senior in agricultural communications concentrating in advertising. Hometown: Naperville, IL www.linkedin.com/in/

shealynstreder



Kali Walker is a junior in agricultural communications concentrating in advertising. Hometown: Cerro Gordo, IL https://kaliw25.wixsite. com/kaliwalker12



Sophia Wegeng is a junior in agricultural communications concentrating in advertising. Hometown: Villa Grove, IL https://www.linkedin. com/in/sophia-wegeng-

0a9b441aa/



**Dr. Owen Roberts** is an agricultural communications faculty member. Hometown: Champaign, IL https://www.linkedin. com/in/owenroberts-35718737/

### Get ready for a great career

### ALEC gives students what employers want: skilled, talented graduates who can tackle unprecedented challenges

### By Emma Eathington

Our professors in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program like to use the term "confluence" to describe the connection between their three fields, and how these fields meet to serve students.

To them - and to students like me - it's more than just a term. You actually see that confluence every day.

For example, I'm writing this article for The Morrow, the e-magazine that is a product of the Publication Development and Production course. That course is housed in agricultural communications... but I'm an agricultural leadership major, as are several of my classmates. We take agricultural communications courses to acquire skills that will enhance our leadership abilities.

And in some of my other classes, I'm enrolled with students studying agricultural education. We have our specialties, but we also interact and intersect — because that's what happens in jobs when we graduate.

"The confluence between fields builds your skills, your knowledge, and rounds you out as a student," says program leader Dr. David Rosch. "The world works in systems, and we want our students to be critical thinkers. to understand



Dr. Jasmine Collins

the depth of the agri-food system, to learn how to make informed decisions as adults about issues such as food equity and social responsibility. Graduates with those skills will always be in demand."

Confluence is at the basis of another expression we hear our professors here say:

- Leaders communicate and educate
- Educators lead and communicate
- · Communicators educate and lead

Employers need graduates who can do it all.

Teamwork, communications and leadership continually top lists that describe the skills employers want. And that means all employers, inside

and outside of agriculture, across the continuum of what we broadly consider agriculture and its many components to be at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC): production agriculture, ranching, food, processing and manufacturing, environmental sustainability, rural development and community development, among them.

"We welcome and include students of all demographics to learn and understand what agriculture means to you," says ALEC faculty member Dr. Jasmine Collins, an expert in leadership and diversity. "Agriculture can be about farming, about community, about the complex problems in our society that need to be fixed. We want our students to have a broad experience and learn skills that will help them in a wide variety of careers."

ALEC is still a young program, but it has a long and rich heritage on the UIUC campus, with the separate concentrations having been taught for decades. Now, they all come together to form one unified, modern program.



### Research shows Illini graduates are in demand

The newest edition of the Illini Success report, an annual review of the first career destinations of recent Illini graduates, shows impressive results.

Chancellor Robert J. Jones notes that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, graduates found jobs, enrolled in graduate school or began volunteer programs on par with previous

- 94 percent secured a job, graduate program or volunteer opportunity within six months of graduation
- 75 percent of in-state graduates who began a job or graduate program remained in Illinois for those opportunities
- \$68,701 is the average salary for full-time employed graduates

"This is fantastic news that illustrates the impact of an Illinois degree," the chancellor says. "I am incredibly proud of our recent graduates, and I am extremely thankful for our faculty and staff members who ensure our students succeed."

### Here's where your ALEC degree can take you

Skilled, versatile, talented and employable - those are among the many ways people describe Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) students.

Here are some of the careers that await our graduates.

- · Agriculture teacher
- · Agricultural journalist
- · Strategic communicator
- · Technical writer
- · Professional freelancer
- · Marketing executive
- · Public relations manager
- · Extension professional

- · Lobbyist or advocate
- · Communications manager
- Advertising representative
- · Social media manager
- · Media relations coordinator
- · Promotions manager
- Environmental journalist
- Agricultural science writer

- Non-profit administrator
- · Business/organization executive
- · Service manager
- · Project manager
- · Business and management consultant
- · Youth development educator

### Making a national agricultural communications connection

Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow opens doors for unique partnership

By Rachel McGreal



Rachel McGreal and her cat Liberty

When I came to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as a freshman, I couldn't imagine finding an organization that would open up as many doors for me as the National FFA Organization did in high school.

But at the post-secondary level, Agricultural Communicators of

Tomorrow (ACT) likewise has the world to offer, as I found out.

As an Illini ACT member, and now as the president of the national association of ACT groups, I have been part of several incredible opportunities - the most recent being writing a blog post for Champion

Operating out of the USA and Canada, Champion Petfoods produces high-quality cat and dog food. The company supports research at the University of Illinois and on other campuses in both countries, and publishes monthly pet care blog posts.

I was approached to see if members of our organization would like to work with the company to produce blog content specially related to cats.

It seemed like a good fit. Champion Petfoods' communications leaders have long been involved with the Agricultural **Communicators Network/American** Agricultural Editors Association. Connecting with the company would provide opportunities to get better

acquainted with this professional association, while giving all National ACT members the opportunity to write for a major company.

I took the reins on this project with my college classmate Haley Bickelhaupt, who serves on National ACT as membership relations coordinator, to develop the prototype for this project.

It all worked out, with us writing posts about topics vital to cat care: proper litterbox practices and preparing for a new kitten.

This kind of communications project is an amazing opportunity to bolster your resume and portfolio, and to write to industry standards.

Illini ACT is open to everyone in ALEC, and beyond. I encourage you to take part!

Rachel McGreal is a junior in agricultural communications and President of the National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow.

### **TOP 10**

### reasons for you to become an Illini

٦

Ability to create your own program and chart your own path

2

Small-town feel at a Big 10 university

3

More than 1,000 student organizations to meet everyone's skills and interests

4

Your professors know your name

5

Abundant student resources for health, counselling, culture, public transportation, libraries and more

6

Generous and plentiful scholarships and grants

7

Networking, internships, contacts and Illini reputation

8

Active research community brings excitement to campus and classrooms

9

High retention rates and graduation rates

10

ACES is one of the top agricultural schools in the world

Contributed by AGCM 220, curated by Ben Kurr



Callie McClay catching up with mentor, Jay Runner

## From studying curriculum to creating it

How a marketing and communications internship led to a full-time job

By Callie McClay

Growing up on a farm in southern Illinois, I knew the value of hard work and dedication from the very beginning. So coming to the University of Illinois, those skills were already in my back pocket. But here, they took on a new meaning.

In addition to attending class, I started joining clubs such as Illini Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT) to learn more about professional development and improve my communications skills. Then, I served on my first officer team, which nurtured several more – those that are called "soft skills," such as networking, effective leadership and learning the value of teamwork.

Last fall, it all came together. Through the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program, I was connected to an internship with Cutting Edge Curriculum, a non-profit curriculum development company, to help with its marketing efforts. There, I met bi-weekly with my mentor, Jay Runner, for updates on our social media channels, designing the mailing brochure, website changes and other miscellaneous tasks.

By having the flexibility to take classes I was interested in, I was continuously able to build my resume with these experiences.

I was fortunate to continue my work into this semester. Then with three months left before I graduated, I was offered a full-time job with the company.

The skills learned through my time as an ALEC student were vital for me landing this job.



Field trials in Africa



Kelsie Camling

### Beans without borders

### This ALEC graduate student is helping reduce hunger abroad

By Sarah Richey

Kelsie Camling, a graduate student from Byron, IL (pop. 3,600), has been doing big things since starting her career at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

After completing her undergraduate program with a degree in agricultural communications, she became involved in administration in the campus Soybean Innovation Lab.

Camling and her team work to reduce hunger in Africa by field testing different U.S.-developed soybean varieties there and working up planting guides. The field tests determine which varieties perform the best and could be helpful abroad.

Both the team in Illinois and farmers in Africa have seen trials devastated by extreme weather patterns.

"Farmers could plant everything perfectly and follow the guidebook perfectly, but once weather comes into it, there's not much that can be done," she says.

Several times she and her team members have planned onsite trips to Africa to confer with professionals who have developed the test plots there. And every time, COVID-19 travel restrictions have put a stop to that. The team is hopeful to make the journey soon.

Meanwhile, she's continuing to enjoy her favorite parts of her job: Getting to know people with diverse backgrounds, learning about their struggles and gaining an understanding of how the team can improve the soy value chain in Africa.

### New graduate program responds to changing workforce needs

By Emma Eathington

The new master's degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) got underway in the fall semester of 2021 with a cohort of eight full-time, on-campus students and 20 students in the part-time, online program.

This innovative program grew out of a need to respond to the changing nature of the modern agricultural workforce. Most students who enroll choose to pursue the capstone experience option in which they would take 15 hours of required credits and 17 hours of electives. The required courses provide a solid grounding for students in the three fields that make up the ALEC discipline.

The capstone experience feature of the program requires students to conceive of, develop, implement and assess a real-world initiative that can have broad and lasting impact in the community.

Students can also apply to and pursue a thesis option. In this option, students work closely with a faculty member to produce and publish original research although the foundational courses remain the same as in the capstone experience option.

This new master's program replaces the previous program focussed on agricultural education.

For more information, contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Eric Morgan at elmorg19@illinois.edu.



Graduate students in complementary disciplines often work together to address challenges and seize opportunities. Here, Rob Klein (left) from Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications and Sarah Dodoo in Human Development and Family Studies put their heads together for some statistical analysis.



Dr. Eric Morgan

### Preparing to do great things: that's what drew me to organizational and community leadership







Dr. David Rosch instructs his LEAD 380 class in a "blindfold dodgeball" activity (as seen above) which teaches the importance of teamwork, leadership and trust.

#### By Emma Eathington

I was accepted into the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as an animal sciences student, and later, I declared a minor in leadership studies. After a year, I knew that I wanted to become a leadership major and dual minor in animal sciences and horticulture.

Why's that? Well, I liked the leadership classroom environment, the topics we were studying and the ability to translate the knowledge I learned in the classroom to a future career.

"ALEC professors understand the deep connection between the University of Illinois and the agri-food sector, in the state, the nation and globally," says leadership professor Dr. David Rosch. "Illinois is one of the nation's most productive and important agri-food states. A strong leadership connection between our university and the agri-food sector is foundational."

Rosch says ALEC professors realize that leaders who manage those making the agri-food sector succeed must be

equipped with critical thinking systems and strategies. "So," he says, "we teach how to get people organized to do great things."

I've seen that trait in my classes.

Dr. Jenn Smist (pictured at right) describes it this way: "Leadership classes help students stand out in their career because they have



the intense study of the field of leadership to apply in the real world. Leadership studies bring the real world to the classroom; we help you become a better human, employee and leader."

I believe the leadership studies major allows you to better yourself-and empower others—with the skills that bring about change and transform lives. You're building a powerful foundation with the essential skills every employer seeks-and that serve you for life.

Leadership students...

- · Learn to communicate effectively within diverse teams
- · Explore ethical issues
- · Find solutions to complex problems
- · Proactively track their growth as leaders
- · Gain real-world, hands-on experience through a 10-week internship within the agricultural industry or a community organization

Coming into the university in 2020, all of my classes were online. This had a big impact on the way we learned. But after a few weeks, I realized that I preferred to be active in a leadership discussion on Zoom, rather than be preached to in lecture. The ALEC professors adapted well to the Zoom environment, and it translated to the live classroom setting. In the leadership class the students are able to talk freely and share ideas which allows us to learn from other's experiences and opinions.

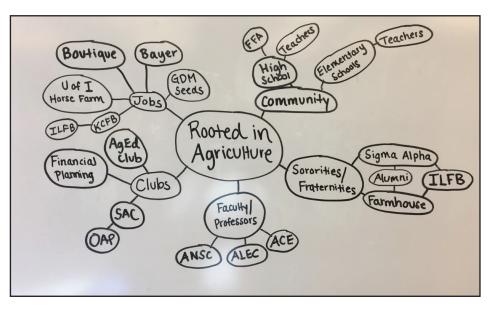
The topics we learn in class are skills, studies and knowledge that we can use in our future careers. I like how the professors prepare us to have difficult conversations and handle challenging situations in the workplace by working through tough scenarios within our class. We have the opportunity to practice the leadership skills that we learn in class in a safe environment. This allows us to get a strong hold on the concepts with real

life scenarios before we even get to the job setting.

I am excited to use the connections, knowledge and skills that I have gained in ALEC in my future career. I will graduate in May of 2023, and I hope to work in the 4-H extension field. I grew up showing cattle in 4-H and I am excited to encourage other juniors in their projects. 4-H has molded me into the person I am

today, and I am blessed to be able to use the knowledge and skills I learn from ALEC to encourage other juniors in 4-H.

And by the way...many students (like me) change their major once we enroll. So don't worry if you don't have your future all figured out when you apply to university!



"ALEC professors understand the deep connection between the University of Illinois and the agri-food sector, in the state, the nation and globally."

Leadership professor Dr. David Rosch



Students in LEAD 480 (Collaborative Leadership) work with Dr. Vivechkanand Chunoo to build what are called social capital maps. These learning devices are visual depictions of the individuals, groups and organizations in the students' lives that they believe will help them be successful in the future. Students build maps individually, then work in groups to combine them into a team map aimed at making positive and sustainable change in areas they've chosen to pursue for the semester. Among the varied topics they've chosen in past semesters are public agriculture knowledge, college student health and wellness, transition to world-of-work issues, food insecurity, environmental justice and the student loan

### Here's where your ALEC degree can take you

By Ava Splear

Internships are crucial for gaining knowledge outside of a traditional classroom setting and for preparing students for their future jobs, says a University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign communications professional.

Laura Mabry, executive director of Marketing and Communications in the College of Agricultural, Environmental and Consumer Sciences (ACES), says that as a former journalist she gained experience from her internship by having access to other journalists. Mabry says internships can help you decide what types of work you want to pursue...and

what you don't.

"Internships help get you ready for the job market in a way that the classroom setting can't," she says.

Mabry offers an internship in her office. There, the intern is responsible for covering certain college events, suggesting story ideas involving students and creating new e-content. She says the ideal candidate for this internship - and others like it — has a passion and desire to interact with people, an enthusiastic attitude, social media experience, proficient writing skills, strong verbal

communication skills and is willing to connect with current and prospective students.

How do you find out about internships? ALEC undergraduate advisor Gary Ochs issues bi-weekly emails with internship opportunities for students in the program. Some recent internships were in corporate communications, marketing, human resources, public relations and customer service.

Ava Splear is a student in AGCM 220 Communicating Agriculture.



More than just the leading online job board in agriculture & food.



### CAREER CONNECTIONS

Offering the most comprehensive selection of career opportunities in agriculture and food



### CARFFR GUIDANCF

Succeed with the help of our online resources and industry-specific expertise



### **INDUSTRY TRENDS**

Join our social community for the latest industry hiring trends

www.agcareers.com













includes areas such as:

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY **HEALTH SCIENCES** BUSINESS FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCE MYcaert.com allows teachers to:

- choose topics
- build course outlines
- access the curriculum anywhere

Lesson Plans & Student Powerpoints

Electronic Textbooks

Web-Based Assessments

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

P.O. Box 14 Mansfield, IL 61854 866-678-2433 MYcaert.com/contact.asp













Students from the agricultural education class of 2023

### Classroom observations reinforce agriculture's valuable role in society

### By Molly Schempp

Junior year in agricultural education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign brings with it the opportunity to see the industry first-hand in a high school classroom. Being there to observe and ask teachers questions in the moment is valuable to a rising senior. Agriculture education within the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) major promotes this first-hand learning in a unique way.



Agricultural education professor Dr. Amy

Here is how it works. After a personal interview, agricultural education students are assigned observation schools that best fit their desires and growth needs. As observers, it is up to us to get the most out of our observations, and leave our school sites with a better sense of classroom management, teaching styles and teacher connections to use as a resource down the road.

Senior year, I will be student teaching at Paxton-Buckley-Loda High School. This is a school chosen for me to gain experiences in a multi-teacher program and in areas of agriculture education that I hope to strengthen, such as agriculture mechanics and business.



Agricultural education instructor Gary Ochs

In addition, Mahomet-Seymour and Prairie Central high schools were assigned as my observation sites for the year leading up to student teaching. In these observation experiences I recognized differences between the programs, various teaching strategies, and took the opportunity to teach my own two-day lesson to students.

Observation time in agricultural education has reignited my passion for this career. Seeing students engaged in learning through the classroom, lab and FFA reminded me that there is a purpose to educate about agriculture, our world's leading industry.

I am thankful to the ALEC program for engaging opportunities such as this.

### Learning to teach others about the agrifood system

By Ben Kurr

Education is a pillar that keeps society growing and thriving. To feed society, we have to teach the next generation about agriculture. And that also means teaching students who are destined to become professional agriculture teachers.

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's Agricultural Leadership, **Education and Communications** (ALEC) program curriculum meets the educational requirements for licensure or certification in the state of Illinois.

If you want to become an agriculture teacher, this is where to enroll.

Dr. Amy Leman, an assistant professor in agricultural education, says the most exciting part of the program is the opportunity to educate people who will be educating others. Students in the agricultural education program learn how they can have the most positive influence on their future students and their communities.

"Teachers have a huge role in molding young lives," she says. "You can have communications and leadership skills in agriculture, but you need to be able to teach it and put it in context. In ALEC, we are able to look outside of agriculture in and of itself and are able to learn about communications and leadership in the community and how it affects us."

As someone who grew up in a urban environment away from agriculture, I think that any kind of education regarding agriculture is vital. Agriculture is one of the biggest and most important industries in the country and indeed in the world. The state of Illinois benefits a great deal from promoting teaching in agriculture and producing high quality agriculture educators.

### We're learning skills that make us stand out

Has there ever been a more exciting time to work together and communicate about agriculture?

### By Shealyn Streder

The field of agricultural communications has grown steadily through the past two decades. And you have the opportunity to be part of it, as a student in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Here's the situation. Society has developed more interest in food production. Food producers depend heavily on technology. And decision makers face extreme pressure to ensure legislation is in place that supports sustainable production.

Where do you come in? All these stakeholders depend on skilled communicators like you to help them make balanced decisions, mobilize knowledge and connect with consumers.

Our faculty members have created a curriculum that combines elements of journalism, communications and marketing. Students graduate with a broad understanding of what it means to succeed in all three of these integrated areas. Our program is designed to enhance real-world learning opportunities and recognize what will stand out to employers.

"We listen to professional communicators, marketers and journalists to learn what they think are the important skills and knowledge our students should to have, and develop our curriculum accordingly," says Dr. Owen Roberts, who teaches agricultural communications with Dr. Eric Morgan. "We integrate their interests with our emphasis on experiential learning, helping prepare students for challenges and opportunities they'll encounter in the workplace."

The agricultural communications field in ALEC prepares students to join an elite group of professionals. Throughout our program, students create a personal portfolio of communications work that will serve as a unique calling card when applying for jobs or graduate studies.



Dr. Owen Roberts and Shealyn Streder discussing content for The *Morrow* 

"This was my favorite class I've ever taken at UIUC, because of the way we worked together and grew as skilled, independent individuals and as a very successful team."

Shealyn Streder AGCM 398 student

As a student, you get to work on skill-based applied projects and assignments with real-world relevance. You become an independent, critical thinker, able to assess information, analyze sources and solve complex issues.

And that's all because our faculty have real-world experiences themselves. They've collaborated to create a fresh agricultural communications curriculum, with new courses that emphasize skill development, critical thinking and global outreach.

One class that I'm among the first to take is Publication Development and Production (AGCM 398) which created and published this premier edition of The *Morrow*.

During the process of creating The *Morrow* I got to know my classmates very well, as well as the professors in our program. A lot of my work was independent, but I never felt that I was on my own. One of my favorite parts about this program overall is how close you become with the people around you.

A lot of our class time was spent talking about our development and publication plan, then executing it and later returning with updates to share on our progress. The process was smooth because of every student's passion for the project. This is my favorite class I've ever taken at UIUC, because of the way we worked together and grew as skilled, independent individuals and as a very successful team.

Besides getting to be a part of such a fun experience, we also get to show off our hard work, and be proud of it. Communicating in a real-world environment in my agricultural communications courses has taught me many valuable skills and experiences that make my classmates and I stand out to employers and recruiters.

### Illini Pride — from gameday tailgates to Block I road trips

By Abbigail Kepp

Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) students have nearly countless opportunities for involvement within the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences...and they can expand their horizons across campus, too.

I'm always looking for ways to further my communications experience through campus involvement. So when the 2022-2023 Illini Pride Executive board applications opened up, I saw it as an opportunity to grow. The Block I Executive Board is responsible for organizing the student football gameday experience, including a tailgate and the infamous halftime card stunts.

After submitting my application, I was selected for an interview and ultimately offered one of the two Block I communications chair positions. Here, I will promote Block I events and opportunities on social media, cover all aspects of the Fighting Illini gameday, and highlight the Block I road trip.

Illini Pride is one of the largest student



organizations on campus. It's in charge of the Illini Athletics student cheering sections, consisting of Block I, Orange Krush (basketball), Olympic (all other sports) and External (Illini Pride Brand).

I-L-L-I-N-I!

Abbigail Kepp is a sophomore in agricultural communications

### Nationwide news release opportunity

In the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications program, we like students to have real-life experiences... and so do those with whom we work outside of the university.

One of our partners is Warren Clark. Farmer Veterans Coalition (FVC) shares news via his AgPR.com news release distribution service for agriculture. He invited us to get involved in writing a nationwide news release about FVC's Homegrown By Heroes program.



### **ACDC:** For research projects, it will rock your world



The Agricultural Communications Documentation Center (ACDC) is the global leader in gathering and housing journals, magazines and other agricultural communications material from everywhere.

The ACDC's collection comprises more than 45,000 agricultural communications documents from 212 countries.

Information services provided by the center are available to students, faculty, researchers, professional communicators and others interested in communications related broadly to agriculture, food, natural resources and rural affairs.

Read more here about the ACDC: https://guides.library.illinois.edu/ acdc

### How I relate to agriculture

Students relate to agriculture in a wide variety of ways. Those with a farm background might connect through their experiences with crops, livestock and production, while those from urban areas think more in terms of agriculture's connection with food and the environment. Their perspectives are varied and diverse, just like agriculture itself. In the photography portion of AGCM 220 Communicating Agriculture, students compile and submit an original portfolio which includes photos showing how they relate to agriculture. Here is a selection of those submissions from last fall and this spring's class.



Piglet photographed by Kate Sanderson



A greenhouse at night photographed by Dani Gillon



Charcuterie board photographed by Ava Oros



Green beans in action photographed by Erin Miller



Inside the greenhouse photographed by Hannah Tappendorf



A night at the fair photographed by Ava Oros



Wagon wheel photographed by Kate Sanderson

### Having pride in our diverse student body



From left to right: Paola Beltran Gutierrez, Robbie Henson, Wendy Majula

### By Robbie Henson

The University of Illinois prides itself in having a diverse student body. I believe the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program is an accurate representation of diversity and what the school as a whole stands strongly for.

Understanding the university's commitment to diversity made my choice to come here so clear and so exciting. Being unconditionally myself, in my own eyes, is a great thing. Growing up in my hometown, people didn't look at it like that. Instead, I felt like an outcast.

But since being surrounded by the people in ALEC I have even learned how to be myself more. That will help me have confidence in the future when it comes to job opportunities.

Some majors in ALEC are grounded in agriculture, but as I found out, an agriculture background is not necessary to succeed. When I first joined the program, the agriculture aspect intimidated me. However, within our programs, we have students who were born and raised on a farm and people who were born and raised in a suburb or city.

ALEC's three concentrations — agricultural education, agricultural communications and organizational and community leadership — are vastly different, yet have correlations between them. Diversity in our programs includes differences in race, sexual orientation, gender, and regional backgrounds. This allows you to feel included, and will help you reach your full potential.

Robbie Henson is a junior in organizational and community leadership.

Welcome to UIUC from Ryker Ewing, an agricultural education freshman. Ryker is studying American Sign Language in SHS 121 Speech and Learning Science as his language option. The Associated Press describes American Sign Language as a complete language consisting of manual signs and gestures, facial expressions, and body positions used by many deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the United States, Canada and a number of other countries.











### Things changed when I advocated for my needs

### By Paola Beltran Gutierrez

Being an Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) student has been a little different for me than for most others.

In my first years, I felt dismissed, unrepresented, and like I couldn't explore agriculture the same as everyone else. I was the only woman of color in most of my agricultural communications classes. I was the only one who spoke Spanish from the southwest side of Chicago.

No one could relate to my stories in a class full of students from rural and suburban Illinois.



But things started changing though when I enrolled in more agricultural communications classes and I learned to advocate for my needs.

I built a community of people in which I felt secure learning and growing within my agriculture courses. Joining and being involved with Minorities in Agriculture, **Natural Resources and Related Sciences** allowed me this safe space that at the time, the classroom could not provide for me.

Now, I can confidently say that I learned about myself and others through my major.

I learned to listen, inquire, research and produce reliable information. I learned how to communicate with different audiences and involve communities in planning

stages and decision-making. And I've learned to intersect my personal identities with those of me as an agricultural communicator.

I realize that there's so much more to ALEC than a classroom. And that's the beauty; the possibilities, opportunities and exploration are truly endless, because agriculture is in every corner of the world.

Paola Beltran Gutierrez is a student in Public Information Campaigns (AGCM 320)

### Making progress, but there's still more to do

By Wendy Majula

Over the years I've noticed a clear lack of diversity in the classroom, in my experience as a minority. This lack of diversity made the learning experience uncomfortable at times, as well as less exciting...when there's only a select few voices being heard or at the forefront of discussions, it makes it quite difficult to feel included or welcomed.

Fortunately, for me, that feeling lessened when I arrived at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. I'm glad to say that here, I find myself surrounded by a wide array of perspectives in the classroom and within the different spaces on campus.



The University of Illinois has made efforts to put diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at the top of its agenda. But there is still further work to be done. DEI is only a piece of a larger puzzle in the issue which is caused by institutional injustice. That

creates disparities in the likes of opportunities, resources and representation.

Acknowledging that there is a problem presents the opportunity to break the pattern of exclusion, lack of diversity and inequity that has riddled institutions for so

Diversity, specifically within Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications, is key for The Morrow, which is giving students the opportunity to voice their opinions, in their own words.

Wendy Majula is a student in Public Information Campaigns (AGCM 320)

"I find myself surrounded by a wide array of perspectives in the classroom and within the different spaces on campus."

Wendy Majula AGCM 320 student

### Tips for success from ALEC grads



Lauren Hadden graduated with a undergraduate degree in Agricultural Leadership Education in 2018, and a Master's in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications in 2020. She is a recruiter for Prairieland FS.

- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for your career?
- A. I really enjoyed how being an ALEC major you weren't designated for one career type. It revealed a ton of different career paths and encouraged students to explore different avenues.
- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for life?
- A. One of Dr. Keating's courses brought in professionals from different career paths. This was my favorite course and greatly influenced how I looked at career options after graduation.
- Q. What is one piece of advice you would like to give to prospective and/or current students?
- A. Do an internship! No, you might not get the fun summer you want, but you will learn so much about yourself with what you do and do not like and how you want to move forward.



Brianna Harmon is a high school agriculture teacher. She graduated in 2015 with an agricultural education degree.

- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for your career?
- A. Majoring in agriculture education prepared me for my career by allowing me to see a lot of programs throughout the state and network with agriculture teachers and supporters from all over, before I even graduated from the U of I. It also gave me a foundation to be able to teach classes, create curriculum and manage an FFA chapter.
- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for life?
- A. I don't know that you can ever be fully prepared for life, but it did give me a great network of people that I knew and could call when I needed advice whether it came to work or personal life. I made a lot of great friends, and those people were and still are great supporters and people I know I can call on when I need help or just have a tough day.
- Q. What is one piece of advice you would like to give to prospective and/or current students?
- A. Take advantage of every opportunity that you can but don't overwhelm yourself. Leave time to relax and have fun sometimes too.



Kelsey Litchfield is the chief communicator for Colleen Callahan Consultancy, based in Edwards, IL. She graduated from the University of Illinois in 2017, with a degree in agricultural communications.

- Q. What does day-to-day look like for you on your job?
- A. A day at work for me involves coaching clients to be more effective communicators, presenters and leaders. I also collaborate with agribusinesses and brands in rural America on communications, marketing, journalism and event planning projects. My latest project is launching C3 Studios - a full-service audio and podcast production studio. I work with clients to develop compelling content to share with audiences across the globe.
- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for your career?
- A. ALEC laid a solid foundation of skills and provided me with many networking opportunities. My classes prepared me for agricultural communications, design, public information campaigns and journalism.

- How did ALEC prepare you for life?
- A. I gained many hands-on experiences through the ALEC program. Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow gave me training in social media and recording skills to prepare for my future.
- What is one piece of advice you would like to give to prospective and/or current students?
- A. When you're starting out in your college career, start wide. It's common to think you know exactly what you want to do, but don't limit yourself. Be a participant, show up to things, try something new, get outside your comfort zone. Once you do that, you can start to "niche down" and build from there.

Sarah Nichols is a high school agriculture teacher at Jersey Community High School. She graduated in 2015, with a degree in Agricultural Science Education.

- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for your career?
- A. Through my classes and student teaching experience I learned about lesson planning, classroom management and managing an FFA program. I use all of these skills on a daily basis. Student teaching gave me first-hand experience when it came to the classroom and working with students.
- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for life?
- A. Time management skills! Between homework, observations and other activities I gained many time management skills that are beneficial in the busy lives of an agriculture teacher.
- What is one piece of advice you would like to give to prospective and/or current students?
- A. Don't be afraid to ask other teachers for lesson plans or ideas. You do not have to create everything on your own. Use all the resources you can.

Kevin Toohill farms full time in Wapella, IL with his dad, Randy and is a part-time crop insurance adjuster with Great American Insurance Group. He graduated in 2021 in agricultural communications with a minor in Food and Agribusiness Management.

- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for your career?
- A. ALEC taught me the communication and networking skills necessary to advocate for this great, vast industry. Also, it has helped me in talking to and negotiating with farmers in my insurance job, as well as salespeople that I interact with on the farm daily.
- Q. How did ALEC prepare you for life?
- A. I wasn't sure how ALEC would prepare me for life. But as I look back, it gave me a great foundation to build upon for my career(s). I have deep roots in the agricultural industry, and I never realized how big of a platform it would provide to advocate for agriculture. I am very thankful for that.
- What is one piece of advice you would like to give to prospective and/or current students?
- A. Do not be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. Be open to new ideas. Join Greek life. Sign up for clubs. Make those network connections. I still talk to a lot of my classmates and colleagues to this day. Knowing I was going to be farming full-time post grad, I really didn't think this degree was necessary. I was wrong. And I wouldn't trade my UIUC career for the world.

Compiled by Sarah Richey





### Veronica's cajun pasta



Try this tasty recipe from FSHN student Veronica Villa

Serving size: 6 oz. pasta, 5 oz. sauteed mix Recipe yield: 4 servings

### **Equipment and utensils:**

- scale
- · knife/cutting board
- medium stock pot (pasta)
- medium sauté pan (sauce)
- meat thermometer, rubber spatula/tongs

### **Ingredients and quantities:**

1 green bell pepper, julienned

1 red or orange bell pepper, julienned

3 oz. diced small onion

1 garlic clove

5 oz. sausage links

1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs

1 tbsp. dijon mustard

1 tbsp. cajun seasoning

2/3 tbsp. garlic powder

8 fl. oz. heavy cream

12 oz. uncooked spaghetti

#### **Instructions:**

- 1. Slice bell peppers, dice onions, and mince garlic. Set aside.
- 2. Slice sausage links into circles.
- 3. Dice chicken into 2-inch chunks and place in a bowl to season. Add the dijon mustard, garlic powder, cajun seasoning, and mix well.
- 4. Fill medium stock pot 2/3 with water and bring to a boil. Then add the spaghetti cook, 10-12 minutes until al dente.
- 5. While pasta is cooking, sauté chicken for about 4 minutes (165 degrees F internal), then add the sausage and continue to cook for 1 minute.
- 6. Add the prepped vegetables and sauté until the onions are translucent.
- 7. Reduce heat to simmer. Add the heavy cream and cook for about a minute.
- 8. Drain pasta and top with sauteed mixture. Garnish with green onions.



### Great food, great convenience

### Source a snack or meal in the student-run Bevier Café

by Steven Migut

Among the many "firsts" you experience as a freshman at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champagne could be sourcing food. It's a big question: When you get hungry, where do you turn?

Well, for students in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (ALEC) program, the Bevier Café couldn't be more convenient.

The café represents the same experiential learning approach for students that distinguishes ALEC itself. The two are a perfect fit.

Here's why. The café is located on the second floor of Bevier Hall, the building where many ALEC classes are held. That makes it a handy spot to grab a drink or a snack between classes.

And what really makes the café unique is that it's run by students in the Food Science and Human Nutrition (FSHN) program. Chef Carter Phillips, a program alum, oversees a class of 5-7 juniors who contribute to running the café during the fall and spring semesters as part of their coursework.

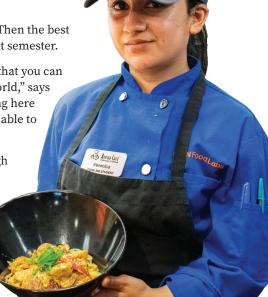
The students give the cafe's lunch menu a personal touch. Each semester, they bring a favorite recipe to class perhaps from their family cookbook, or from some other source - and prepare it for their classmates (see recipe elsewhere on this page).

The students refine it until it's perfect. Then the best recipes are prepared for customers next semester.

"What I love most about Bevier Café is that you can taste unique dishes from around the world," says FSHN student Hannah Tschetter. "Eating here exposes you to dishes you might not be able to try otherwise."

Veronica Villa

The Bevier Café is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. Self-service is available throughout the day; an array of healthy lunches for less than \$10 is offered from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.





For information about ALEC programs:

#### **Gary Ochs**

**ALEC Academic Advisor** garyochs@illinois.edu

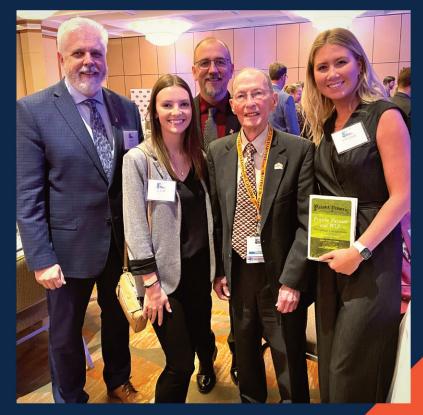
### For information about The Morrow:

Dr. Owen Roberts **ALEC Specialized Faculty (Communications)** oroberts@illinois.edu









FarmHouse Fraternity alum (Iowa State, 1952) and University of Illinois professor emeritus Dr. James F. Evans (center) was inducted into the National Association of Broadcasters' Hall of Fame in November, 2021. Dr. Evans was joined by family, friends and colleagues at his induction. Pictured with Dr. Evans are University of Illinois Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications graduate students Claire Smith (left) and Calyssa Richie (holding an early copy of one of Dr. Evans' publications), along with faculty members Dr. Owen Roberts (left) and Dr. Eric Morgan.

Thank you, Dr. James F. Evans, for cultivating generations of agricultural communicators at the University of Illinois. Your influence and vision reverberate through every class we teach, and indeed, through the entire discipline.

