

# COLLECTIVE STRENGTH, PUBLIC GOOD

ANNUAL REPORT  
FISCAL YEAR 2025



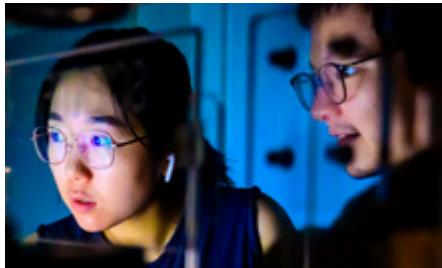
UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS  
SYSTEM



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# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM LEADERSHIP



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

# LEADING TODAY, SHAPING TOMORROW, ALTOGETHER EXTRAORDINARY

U of I System's commitment to the public good accelerates, powering progress across Illinois

**T**he University of Illinois System was created with a singular purpose: to serve Illinois and its people through education, research, and innovation — to provide strength and opportunity for a growing state and to advance the public good.

Today, the University of Illinois System stands as a force like no other, driving progress across our state, our nation, and the world.

For more than 150 years, our mission has endured and continues to guide us today - from when our first students enrolled to today's record enrollment of more than 100,000 across our universities in Chicago, Urbana-Champaign, and Springfield.

Our universities prepare the best-in-class leaders, innovators, and professionals who drive Illinois forward and change the world — and 74% of them stay here,



building their careers and strengthening our state for generations to come.

Collectively, our universities are a research powerhouse, investing well over \$1.4 billion last year in work that drives technological advances, develops new medicines and better healthcare, creates more productive crops, and delivers solutions for our changing climate.

The U of I System convenes and accelerates work beyond our campuses — bringing together partners at the hubs of our Illinois Innovation Network across the state, advancing quantum and technology workforce initiatives at the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park and Discovery Partners Institute where these efforts will expand in the years ahead, expanding access to care through UI Health's network of clinics across Chicagoland and throughout Illinois, and strengthening communities in every Illinois county through Illinois Extension.

We are stronger than the sum of all of that, working with partners across our state and around the world — in communities, government, industry, and higher education — to create opportunities, build workforce, and solve challenges that matter most.

Over the pages of this report, you will find snapshots of our work that together reveal the depth and breadth of our impact over the past year. They demonstrate what's possible when we work together, harnessing our collective strength.

I hope they show you what I know to be true: the U of I System is a one-of-a-kind asset and a powerful force at work every day for the people of Illinois.



# FUELING TALENT, ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE, POWERING THE FUTURE

The future of work is already here,  
and it's powered by Illinois

**A**s industries evolve, the demand for highly skilled, specialized talent is reshaping the global workforce. The University of Illinois System is meeting that demand head-on. Across its universities, students prepare for roles that don't yet exist, guided by faculty whose research is redefining what's possible in technology, health, and the humanities. Together, they form an innovation pipeline that connects classrooms, labs, and industry partners — transforming discovery into opportunity and ensuring Illinois remains a global leader in talent, knowledge, and progress.



# SCALING SMART

Alumni investors and AI startups lead the way

When FirstIgnite CEO and UIUC alum Chase Bonhag shows how his AI platform completes 30 hours of work in three minutes, investors take note. Backed by Illini Angels, the U of I System's alumni investor network, his company grew 388 percent in one year. "Paul tells us what we need to hear," Bonhag said of director Paul Magelli. Since 2023, Illini Angels has invested \$1.7 million in 13 startups, fueling mentorship, capital, and innovation that keep Illinois entrepreneurship thriving.



**Chase Bonhag**  
CEO FirstIgnite,  
UIUC MBA 2016



Opening of the UIC Computer Design Research and Learning Center

## BUILDING UP COMPUTER SCIENCE

“The future of our state’s growing knowledge economy requires appropriately aligned and world-class educational and research programs.”

**UIC Chancellor Marie Lynn Miranda**

**UIC’s new Computer Design Research and Learning Center doubles the university’s computer science capacity** with 21 faculty labs, a 1,200-square-foot robotics lab, and 16,000 square feet of classrooms. Supporting 2,100 students and \$10.5 million in research, the center fosters innovation in AI, robotics, and cybersecurity — preparing graduates to power Illinois’ tech future.

# QUANTUM IN THE HEARTLAND



**B**acked by \$500 million in state funding plus federal and industry support, the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park anchors a \$2 trillion emerging market. Led by UIUC's Harley Johnson and supported by UIC and DPI, the park unites researchers and companies to scale breakthroughs. PsiQuantum has committed over \$1 billion to build the world's first utility-scale fault-tolerant quantum computer on site.

“This was a combined effort that took all of us believing in the potential. It’s a powerful testament to what Illinois can achieve together.”

**Gov. JB Pritzker**

# TAKING ON CANCER

“Our goal is to understand how cancer spreads and identify ways to prevent tumor growth.”

**University of Illinois Springfield assistant professor Natalya Zinkevich**

**Fused cells glow yellow, indicating the way in which tumors form — a new key to understanding how cancer spreads.** Partnering with Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, UIS students study immune and lymphatic interactions that influence tumor growth. This hands-on collaboration advances life-saving research while training students in cell culture and immunology — preparing them for future careers in biomedical science.



Natalya Zinkevich and a student, above. The red-colored image surrounding this story shows immune cells from rats as seen through a fluorescent microscope.

# FIELD TO FACTORY



# \$51M

**Federal investment in precision fermentation**, at UIUC's Illinois Fermentation and Agriculture Biomanufacturing (iFAB) center, where microbes turn corn and soybeans into biofuels, textiles, and food ingredients. The initiative positions Central Illinois as a biomanufacturing hub. "This grant positions Central Illinois as a global leader in biomanufacturing and sets the stage for new jobs and economic growth," said iFAB Regional Innovation Officer Beth Conerty. With partners like Primient, Synonym, and ADM, iFAB is building a \$200 billion industry for the future.

# AI INNOVATION

“The establishment of the Siebel School exemplifies our dedication to pushing the boundaries of knowledge.”

Rashid Bashir, dean of The Grainger College of Engineering



**Forbes named UIUC “The Midwest’s AI Powerhouse”** in 2024, and for good reason. Building on \$270 million in AI research since 2019, UIUC launched the Siebel School of Computing and Data Science with a \$50 million gift from alumnus and C3.ai CEO Thomas Siebel. Housed in The Grainger College of Engineering, the school advances collaboration and discovery to prepare the next generation of AI leaders.

## AI IN HEALTHCARE



# SIOM

Secured by UIC and partners from the federal Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health to transform how data informs care. “Healthcare is an interdisciplinary process, but existing data tools ignore most of the team,” said UIC professor Andrew Boyd. By integrating notes from nurses, therapists, and physicians, UIC is building AI that captures the full patient experience — enabling smarter care for fragile newborns to older adults reclaiming strength. Together, Illinois talent is driving discoveries that could transform health worldwide.

# INNOVATING CARE, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Combining innovation, compassion, and expertise to build healthier futures for Illinois and beyond

**H**ealth and wellbeing are tenets of public good. Through clinical care, education, and research, the U of I System works to improve health outcomes, reduce disparities, and strengthen communities across Illinois.

In fiscal year 2025, we expanded our commitment to care, health, and wellbeing for patients. We also prepared more clinicians to serve where the need is greatest, while furthering evidence-based solutions in water quality, maternal and child health, and community wellness.

NTISTS  
OVATORS  
INEERS  
EARCHERS  
CTORS  
KERS  
NICAL





# HEALTHCARE ON WHEELS

“If you’re talking about people who are unhoused, or people who just have no access to healthcare, having a mobile health unit to go to them is essentially like street medicine. But instead of popping up a tent, we bring a bus with all the amenities of a brick-and-mortar clinic.”

**Summer Park, UIC assistant professor and the mobile unit’s lead practitioner**

**In rural Illinois, a 38-foot RV is closing healthcare gaps.** Inside, patients receive blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol screenings, plus testing for seasonal flu, COVID-19, and sexually transmitted infections — services often out of reach in their communities. The mobile unit also serves as a hands-on classroom, giving students in UIC’s Doctor of Nursing Practice program vital clinical hours while preparing them to be Illinois’ next generation of advanced practice nurses.



## VALUING EVERY SINGLE DROP

UIC's Freshwater Lab shows U of I System's commitment to wellbeing for all

**Access to safe drinking water is a right, not a privilege.** That's why Rachel Havrelock's experience lives where urgent water challenges meet actionable solutions — like the \$1.45 billion pipeline now underway to bring Lake Michigan water to six southwest Chicago suburbs. By blending research expertise with community collaboration, UIC's Freshwater Lab director and her team help Illinois residents protect local water sources. They translate complex science into strategies people can act on, empowering communities through workshops and storytelling while fostering conservation practices that build resilience.



The Freshwater Lab team

## HELPING NEW MOTHERS

Illinois Extension's reach in all 102 counties brings maternal health statewide

**A mother's first day meeting her baby should never be her last day on Earth.** Emphasizing the need for prenatal care, Illinois Extension's new Nurturing Foundations workshops strive for healthier pregnancies, lower-risk births, and strong starts to new lives. The program comes as the U.S. continues to face some of the highest maternal mortality rates among developed nations, with women of color disproportionately affected.

Offered in English and Spanish, the free series — a partnership with Carle Illinois College of Medicine — delivers practical, research-based guidance for pregnant women, parents, healthcare providers, and community health professionals.

RSITY OF ILLINOIS AT SPRINGFIELD



# GROWING ACCESS, ADVANCING OPPORTUNITY

With more than 101,000 students enrolled at U of I System universities, access is more than aspiration — it's a reality

**T**oday, the cost of a four-year degree can delay or derail students' goals. In fiscal year 2025, the U of I System advanced its mission to make higher education more attainable and equitable.

At UIS, the Prairie Promise program — which combines grants to fully cover tuition and fees — serves eligible Illinois families earning \$75,000 or less per year. UIS also expanded offering in-state tuition to students from counties in Missouri, Iowa, and Indiana. At UIC, the new Aspire grant covers tuition and fees like UIUC's grant and scholarship program, Illinois Commitment. Both support eligible families earning \$75,000 or less a year. Each help fulfill the system's commitment to an affordable and accessible world-class education.

Systemwide, an expanded transfer guarantee welcomes qualified students from any college nationwide, and a new partnership with One Million Degrees strengthens support for community college transfers.



## TUITION-FREE PATHWAY

**UIC launched its Aspire grant, a landmark commitment to affordability.** The program ensures qualifying students from families with income and assets of \$75,000 or less can pursue a degree tuition-free. The impact is clear: Aspire lowers barriers for families that too often find higher education out of reach. Students are eligible for up to four academic years of support.

UIC Chancellor Marie Lynn Miranda captured the program's promise: "Access to higher education is essential for building a more equitable society. We are so very excited about the vast opportunities that UIC Aspire will unlock for students and their families."

UIC's Aspire is an invitation for thousands of Illinois students to belong and succeed.

*"By covering my tuition, UIC Aspire transformed my perspective from worrying about college costs to seeing a university as a growth opportunity where I could gain new experiences, meet diverse people, and pursue my academic and career goals."*

**Victoria Betancourt, a first-year UIC political science student**



# COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO COMPLETION

## HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS

Expanded UIS program reaches farther across state lines



**The U of I System is strengthening transfer pathways through Transfer Drive**, a new partnership with One Million Degrees, which supports community college students with academic coaching, financial guidance, and mentoring. System universities are identifying community college partners for the four-year pilot's 2026 launch.

The initiative focuses on helping more students go beyond community college to complete a bachelor's degree at one of the system's universities. Research shows wraparound services like these can double graduation rates for low-income students.

For Illinois, the benefits are clear: more graduates entering high-demand fields, and more families experiencing the social and economic mobility a degree provides.

**At UIS, access took center stage with the expansion of its in-state tuition program.** The broadened eligibility now allows more first-time freshmen from nearby states to pursue an affordable degree close to home.

This change builds upon the long-standing tradition of open arms at UIS, where nearly 70% of students are first-generation or transfer students. For many, cost can be the deciding factor between enrolling or opting out. The expanded program ensures more families see high-quality public higher education as a realistic path to opportunity.

The result? More students from Missouri, Iowa, and Indiana graduating equipped with the knowledge, skills, and experiences a U of I System degree promises.



WORLDWIDE NETWORK

# GLOBAL REACH, LOCAL IMPACT

The U of I System is shaping the global conversation through research, partnerships, and innovation that drive progress at home and abroad

A

cross continents, Illinois collaborations advance breakthroughs in health, technology, and sustainability. International students and scholars enrich our campuses with diverse perspectives that strengthen learning, research, and community life.

From convening world leaders in Chicago to driving discoveries in Brazil, Taiwan, and beyond, Illinois ideas are solving challenges that cross borders and transform lives.

When Illinois leads, the world listens. And everyone benefits.

# FOCUSED ON A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

In June 2025, the U of I System hosted SRI2025, the Sustainability Research & Innovation Congress's first U.S. gathering. Attendees met with one aim: Turn evidence into action on the climate crisis.

Scientists, policymakers, business leaders, and advocates worked side by side, exploring new approaches toward actionable solutions. Young leaders and underrepresented voices led the way, reminding everyone that equity is essential to resilience.

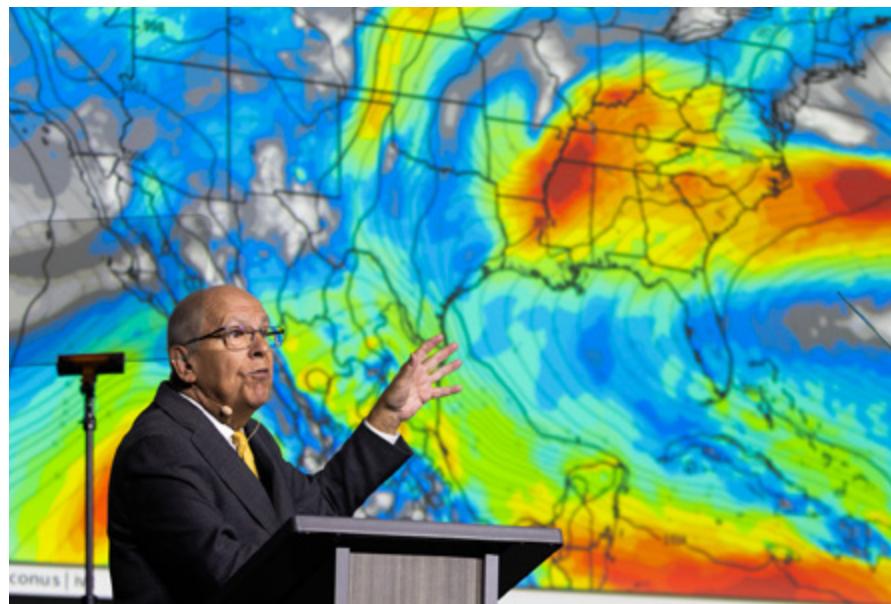
For the U of I System, SRI2025 was more than a conference. It was proof of the public university system at work: connecting people, sharing knowledge, and moving ideas into action.

# 1,700+

Number of researchers, Indigenous leaders, policymakers, business executives, and advocates who attended SRI

# 120+

Number of sessions over the four days of the congress — conversations crossed borders and disciplines.



# ONE SHARED VISION, 20 NATIONS

For a week, 50 delegates from around the world representing government, business, and academia immersed themselves in the U of I System's dynamic network during the 20th Americas Competitiveness Exchange (ACE). From breakthroughs in quantum computing to advances in agriculture, they saw firsthand how Illinois drives progress through education, research, and public-private collaboration. For delegates from Argentina to Costa Rica, the visit sparked ideas for advances in quantum, research collaborations, and new industry partnerships. The U of I System transforms global connections into lasting collaborations — engines of prosperity that drive impact both at home and across the world.



“We made sure to convey a wider view of the state and showcase some of Illinois’ gems outside of Chicago. ACE delegates got to see how we work together and that a win for one of us is a win for all of Illinois.”

**Jeannette Tamayo, the system’s associate vice president for workforce development and community engagement**



## CONNECTING WITH BRAZILIAN INSTITUTIONS

**Spring 2025, Brazil. President Killeen lands with a mission: to expand collaboration, accelerate solutions, and deepen the influence of Brasillinois** — the initiative connecting the U of I System with Brazilian institutions to tackle climate, health, and social challenges.

Since its inception, Brasillinois has become a hub of action. Student and faculty exchanges bring fresh perspectives across sustainability, medicine, public health, and social inclusion. More than 100 Brazilian undergraduates and doctoral students have the chance to study at U of I System campuses, while Illinois faculty travel to Brazil to collaborate on pioneering projects.

Best of all, the results are tangible. Climate innovations are tested, health equity initiatives gain momentum, and inclusive education programs reach new communities.

# THE POWER OF THE HUMANITIES

Discovery isn't limited to  
laboratories and technology

A

t the U of I System, the humanities, arts, and culture reveal new ways to understand our world — and Americans agree. National surveys show that nine in 10 Americans believe the humanities help people better understand others and strengthen democracy. Across our universities, scholars and students advance work that preserves history, fuels creativity, and connects innovation and technology with the human experience. Together, efforts across the system demonstrate how curiosity and creativity enrich lives across Illinois and beyond.



# MUSIC AS MEDICINE

At Carle Illinois College of Medicine (CI MED), physician-innovators are revolutionizing patient recovery by integrating music therapy with advanced technology. Claudio Conrad, a classically trained pianist and associate dean for research and innovation, describes this fusion as a “paradigm shift in personalized medicine.”

For example, a CI MED team is working with Rubato Life, an AI-driven app that tailors music therapy to each patient by analyzing real-time physiological data, such as heart rate and stress markers. The approach ensures music therapy isn’t merely background noise but a dynamic, individualized healing tool.

By combining the arts with clinical expertise and data analytics, CI MED experts are redefining the future of compassionate, patient-centered care.



**Dr. Claudio Conrad, CI MED associate dean for research and innovation**



## PROTECTING ILLINOIS HISTORY

“We estimate that there were perhaps a million or more cultural sites in Illinois in the early 1800s. A good percentage of those, maybe 12%, has already been lost to development and other factors. It’s possible we could lose another 10-12% over the next 100 years, which would nearly double the rate of site destruction.”

**Prairie Research Institute’s Illinois State Archaeological Survey research archaeologist Andrew White**

**Protecting the places that tell our story matters more than ever.** Across Illinois, floods, erosion, and development are putting cultural sites at risk. In a new report from the Illinois State Archaeological Survey (ISAS), Andrew White puts the problem, and the accelerating impact, in perspective. Part of the UIUC Prairie Research Institute, ISAS is identifying vulnerable sites, guiding preservation, and engaging policymakers, Indigenous communities, and the public.



Ellen Gates Starr shown in a recent Hull-House exhibit, "Radical Crafts."

## THE LEGACY OF HULL-HOUSE

Once a progressive hub where Chicago's immigrants found education, art, and opportunity, Hull-House — founded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr — helped redefine belonging in America. It nurtured creativity and civic imagination through community programs that blended learning with social reform. Today, the University of Illinois Chicago carries that legacy forward. Through the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, a new summer seminar equips faculty to weave the site's history, culture, and civic engagement into their courses — turning a historic landmark into a living classroom.

### *The Second City*

#### From Hull-House to The Second City

Long before laughter filled Chicago's improv stages, creativity found its roots at Hull-House. In the 1930s, Viola Spolin developed her "theater games" while teaching drama to immigrants and children there, exercises that would later inspire the Compass Players and evolve into The Second City. What began as a settlement house for social reform became a birthplace for a distinctly American art form: unscripted, inclusive, and alive with possibility.



COLLECTIVE VOICE & STRENGTH

# UNITED FOR ILLINOIS

Change doesn't happen in isolation. It happens when people unite behind a shared purpose

**A**cross Illinois and beyond, the U of I System is mobilizing a powerful community of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and partners who turn ideas into action and action into impact.

From campus quads to the statehouse floor, advocates champion access, innovation, and opportunity. They testify before legislators, collaborate with community leaders, and lead initiatives that strengthen health, education, and the economy statewide — all rooted in equity, access, and the public good.

Together, they advance the message that higher education matters and ensure Illinois' future is built on opportunity, fairness, and collective strength.

# CHAMPIONING STUDENTS, EXPANDING ACCESS

The U of I System's Illinois Connection network showed its strength in FY2025, urging legislators in Springfield and Washington, D.C., to protect access, preserve excellence, and keep Illinois higher education strong. More than a network, Illinois Connection is a trusted partner and powerful voice advancing equity, opportunity, and student success across the state.

# 44,000+

Alumni, students, faculty, and staff joined together in advocacy efforts this year

# 62,000+

Total advocacy actions taken



## RESTORING FREEDOM

**After 124 years collectively lost behind bars, justice finally prevailed.** The University of Illinois Springfield's Illinois Innocence Project (IIP) secured the full exoneration of six men wrongfully convicted of a 1987 Chicago murder, marking one of the largest mass exonerations in Illinois history.

Lowell Higgins-Bey, Harry Rodriguez, Michael McCastle, Fernando Gomez, and brothers Robert and Gregorio Cardona were teenagers when they were coerced into false confessions. Decades later, post-conviction DNA testing—championed by IIP attorneys, staff, and students—proved what they had said all along: they were innocent.

Though Rodriguez did not live to see his name cleared, his son stood in court on his behalf as the men were finally declared free.

This milestone brings IIP's total to 33 exonerations statewide, proof of the university's enduring commitment to truth, justice, and the power of persistence.

## POLICY IN ACTION

**At the Institute of Government and Public Affairs (IGPA), research drives decisions that shape everyday life across Illinois.** IGPA brings academic rigor to public service, translating complex data into actionable insight for state leaders.

Through its Partnerships for Evidence-based Policy Initiative, faculty experts help agencies confront challenges in education, health, and economic stability. Its interactive data hub equips journalists, researchers, and legislators with tools to make smarter, more transparent decisions.

By turning research into results, IGPA transforms data into decisions that touch every community. Its work exemplifies how the U of I System fuels progress rooted in integrity, inclusion, and the public good—shaping a future where informed leadership benefits everyone.



Terry Farmer Photography

## CHANGING LIVES AT SPRINGFIELD HOUSING AUTHORITY

For more than 40 years, Jackie L. Newman has strengthened Springfield through her leadership at the Springfield Housing Authority (SHA). As executive director for two decades, she oversees 900 housing units and 2,400 vouchers, ensuring families have safe, affordable places to live.

Under her guidance, SHA expanded senior housing, rehabilitated properties, and built programs that promote education and financial stability. A proud University of Illinois Springfield alumna and Illinois Connection advocate, Newman credits her education for preparing her journey from receptionist to executive director. She continues to lead with heart, proving that community improvement isn't just about buildings; it's about creating opportunity and lasting change for generations to come.

## DATA DRIVES DECISIONS

The U of I System's Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC) and DPI are using research to close Illinois' opportunity gap. IWERC's Illinois High School to Career study found that graduates with college degrees earn 2.5 times more, nearly \$40,000 annually, than peers with only a diploma. Yet disparities persist across race, gender, and income.

To address those gaps, DPI launched a first-of-its-kind study mapping Chicago's tech ecosystem, analyzing how to better align workforce training with employer demand while expanding access to high-paying tech jobs. Through research guiding workforce development and policy, the U of I System is shaping a more equitable, tech-ready Illinois.

“It’s useful to see how college access can contribute to upward mobility but also sobering to see how far we still have to go.”

**Sarah Cashdollar,  
associate director,  
IWERC Research**

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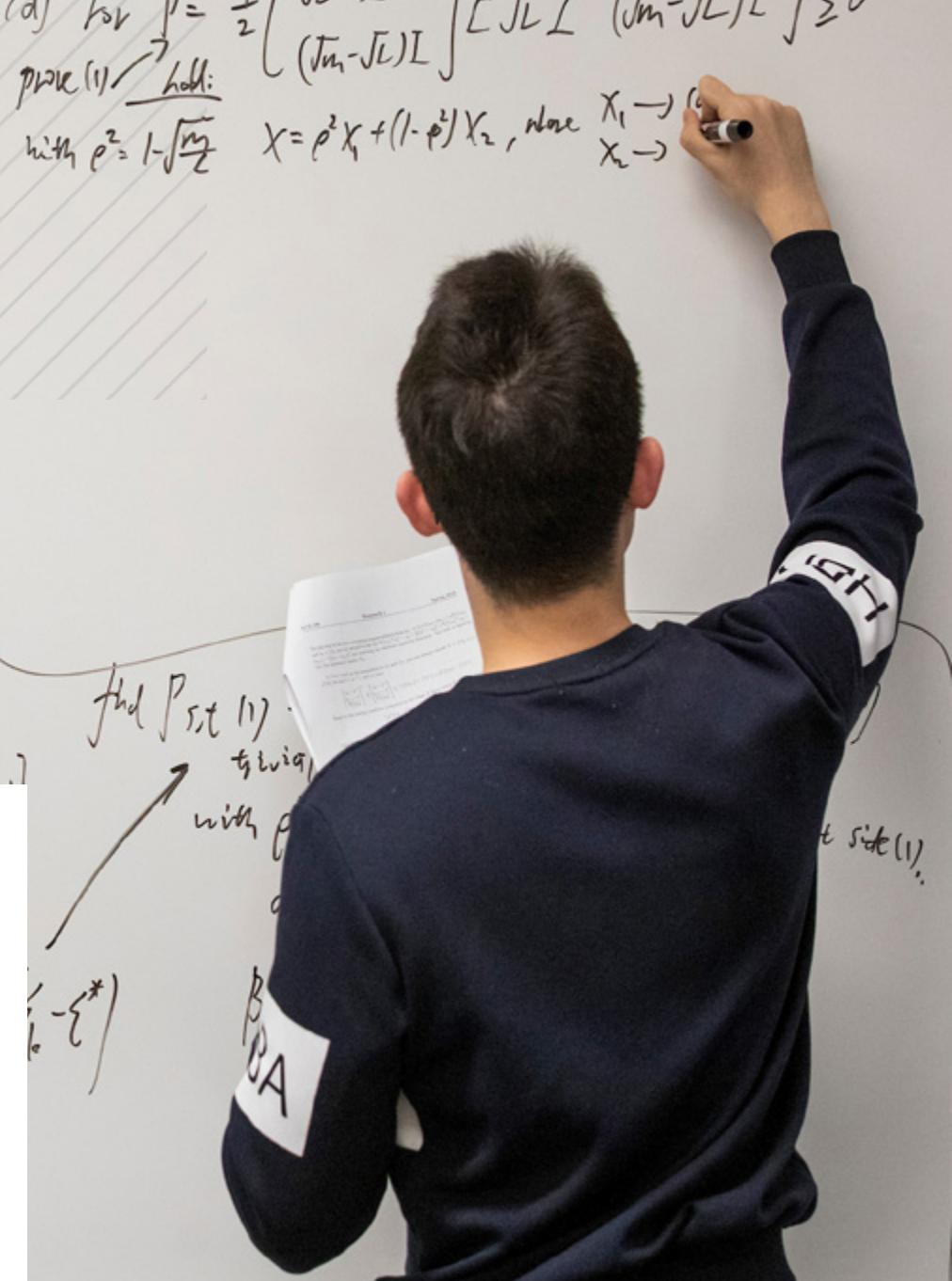
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BY THE NUMBERS

# EXPLORE OUR ECONOMIC IMPACT

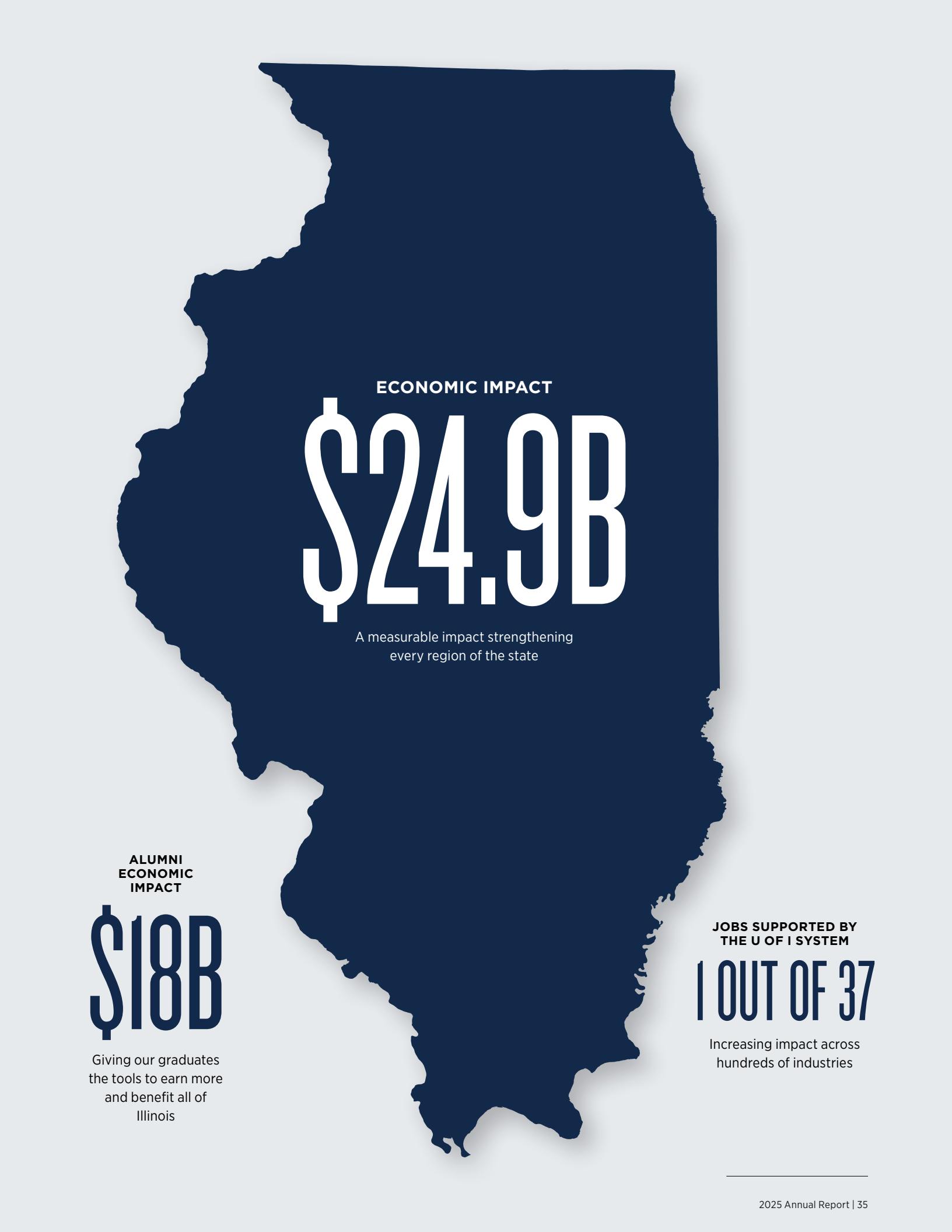


The University of Illinois System is more than a network of campuses. It is a statewide engine of progress. In a recent external analysis, the system generated \$24.9 billion in economic impact, fueling jobs, innovation, healthcare, and opportunity in every region of Illinois. That return is measured not only in dollars, but in stronger communities, healthier families, and brighter futures.

With 37,600 employees and more than 225,000 jobs supported, the U of I System drives prosperity far beyond classrooms and labs. Every investment pays off: Students turn education into lifelong opportunity, alumni add \$18 billion to the state economy, and discoveries spark new businesses and improve lives.

This is more than numbers. It is students shaping patents, graduates building enterprises, and alumni strengthening communities. When Illinois invests in higher education, the impact reaches everyone — in every region and every generation.

**Using annual/yearly data, the following pages detail the enormous impact of the University of Illinois System.**



**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**\$24.9B**

A measurable impact strengthening  
every region of the state

**ALUMNI  
ECONOMIC  
IMPACT**

**\$18B**

Giving our graduates  
the tools to earn more  
and benefit all of  
Illinois

**JOBS SUPPORTED BY  
THE U OF I SYSTEM**

**1 OUT OF 37**

Increasing impact across  
hundreds of industries



**STUDENTS**

**101,081**

Students receiving a world-class education  
across the system in fall 2025

**FACULTY  
AND STAFF**

**37,600+**

Hiring Illinois workers, directly  
employing tens of thousands



DEGREES AWARDED  
SYSTEM-WIDE

**27,041**

Our alumni launch startups,  
lead industries, and give back  
to their communities

ROI FOR EVERY \$1 INVESTED  
BY STUDENTS

**\$4.80**

Transforming education into  
higher earnings and lifelong  
opportunity



**STUDENTS IN  
HEALTH SCIENCES**

**7,782**

Driving breakthroughs in care,  
wellbeing, and helping people live  
longer, healthier lives

**HEALTH PROFESSIONALS  
TRAINED**

**2,400+**

Combining skill and  
compassion to meet  
community healthcare needs





**RESEARCH  
EXPENDITURES**

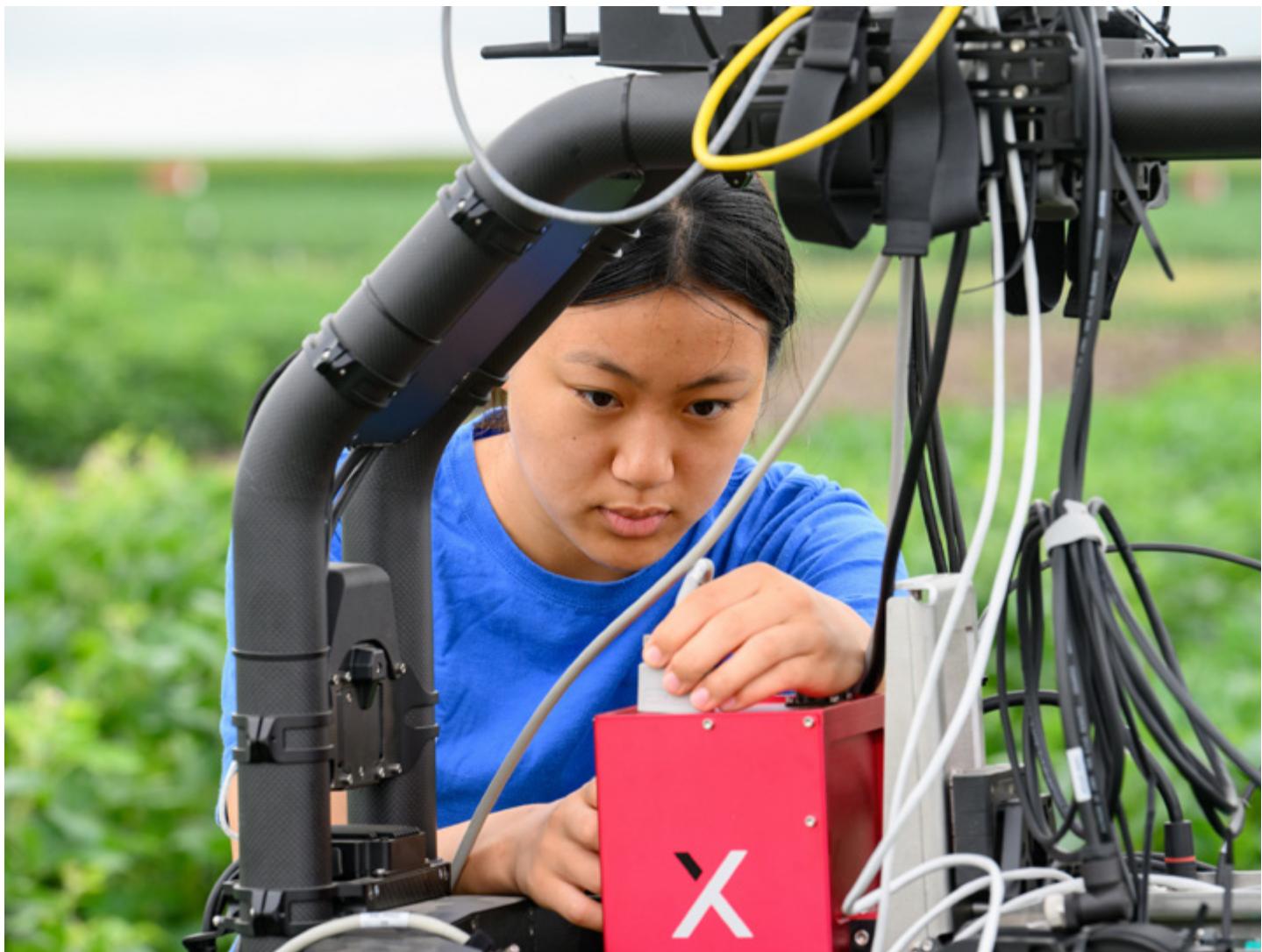
**\$1.2B**

More scientific discoveries  
and high-quality equipment  
for our researchers

**NEW PATENT  
APPLICATIONS**

**1,212**

Big dreams turn into  
businesses and inventions  
right here in Illinois





UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS  
SYSTEM



Explore more at  
[go.uillinois.edu/  
AnnualReport2025](http://go.uillinois.edu/AnnualReport2025)