



Lilly Scholars Network

Links

HIGH ACHIEVERS to Each Other and Indiana

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Isaac Janson distinctly remembers the day in 2002 when, as a high school senior in South Bend, Ind., he learned that he had been awarded a Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship.

A big weight lifted from his shoulders, Janson recalls. The scholarship paid for four years of tuition at Purdue University and enabled him to earn his undergraduate degree without massive student loan debt, which eased the financial considerations of entering a Ph.D. program in materials engineering at the University of Michigan.

Today, the feeling is one of gratitude. “It was absolutely a phenomenal opportunity and an honor to receive the scholarship,” says Janson, who has since returned to Indiana and works in a research role with the Indiana Hemophilia & Thrombosis Center in Indianapolis. “If I can pay that back in some small way by being involved in improving life in Indiana, I think I have that responsibility and desire to try to make a difference.”

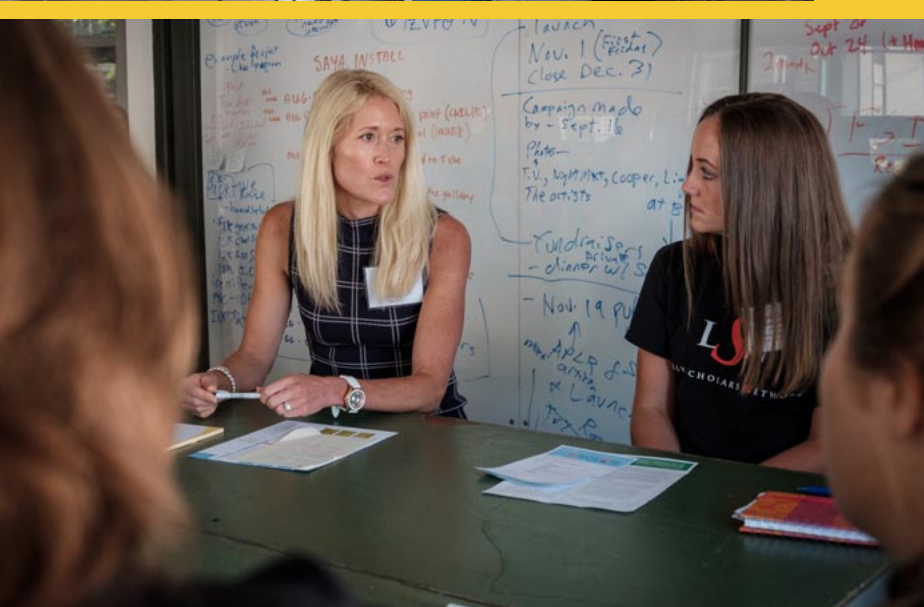
Janson and other Lilly Endowment Community Scholars have turned their gratitude into action through the Lilly Scholars Network. In 2006, Lilly Scholars from Butler University and Wabash College started the grass-roots organization with two main objectives: giving back to the community and creating a network of scholars from across Indiana.

To support the Lilly Scholars Network and help it grow, the Endowment in 2019 made a \$1.05 million grant to Independent Colleges of Indiana (ICI). The funding will enhance and expand the ways current and alumni scholars can serve and lead in the Indiana communities they call home, including where they live now, their hometowns and the towns and cities where they attended college.

The grant builds on the successful statewide scholarship program that the Endowment launched more than two decades ago. Based on its long-held belief that education at all levels is important to the personal, civic and economic well-being of Indiana, the Endowment created the scholarship program to encourage talented students to attend college in their home state.

Though the program is administered by ICI, community foundations serving each of Indiana’s 92 counties play a significant role in the program. The community foundations establish their own criteria for the full-tuition scholarships, which also fund fees and book stipends for four years at any accredited, four-year public or private Indiana college or university chosen by the scholar. Indiana high school students apply for the scholarships through their local community foundations.

More than 4,700 students have received the scholarships since the first were awarded in 1998, who represent a deep, diverse pool of talent.



“Deeply personal”

Like Janson, Domini Martin-Urban was considering leaving Indiana for college when she was awarded a Lilly Community Scholarship in 2008. Although she was attending Canterbury High School, a private high school in Fort Wayne, Martin-Urban lived in an underserved part of Fort Wayne, and was keenly aware of the challenges and disadvantages facing her peers.

“At first, I was pretty convinced my best shot at better economic opportunity was outside of the state,” she says. “But I really wanted to change what my neighborhood looked like, and that’s difficult to do from afar.”

The Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship allowed Martin-Urban to attend Indiana University, where she earned a degree from the top-ranked Paul O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, studying abroad in both France and Australia and interning for a semester in Washington, D.C., along the way.

“The impact of the scholarship was really profound,” Martin-Urban says. “I could study at one of the best public affairs programs in the country, and study abroad—not once, but twice. I didn’t have to worry about debt, so I was able to pursue jobs I was interested in and could learn from, instead of worrying about paying off student loans.”

Martin-Urban did just that, working as a field organizer for political campaigns, as a sales consultant, and as associate director at Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, where she combined her interest in education and community development with a love and appreciation for her hometown of Fort Wayne.

Now living in Indianapolis, Martin-Urban manages the human capital side of Indianapolis’ development efforts as project manager for Develop Indy and helps lead the Indy Chamber’s work on talent initiatives. But she maintains her connection with the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne by serving as a reviewer of Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship applications. For the last seven years, she has served as a “big” with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Indiana and is proud of the accomplishments of her “little sister” and the teenager’s mother, who have both worked to improve their lives through education.

“It’s very important for me to live out the goals I set for myself as a Lilly Scholar, both as a volunteer and through my day job,” Martin-Urban says.

“I’m very thankful that the scholarship enabled me to stay in Indiana and use what I learned to further the mission of growing and keeping talent here and to help our communities succeed and compete on a global level,” she says. “It’s my professional mission, but because of my background and experiences, it’s also deeply personal.”

Lilly Scholars like Martin-Urban demonstrate a unique level of commitment in their professional and civic work, according to Janson, who serves as chair of the all-volunteer Lilly Scholars Network Advisory Council.

“We want to capture that energy to fuel positive and noticeable change throughout the state,” he says.

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A common thread

Fueled by the new Endowment grant, ICI is collaborating with Indiana Humanities to help the Lilly Scholars Network engage current and alumni scholars in three ways: connecting them to service projects across the state; helping them learn about significant challenges facing Indiana; and strengthening their leadership skills so they can help improve the quality of life in Indiana communities.

■ The Lilly Scholars Network Summit in 2019 gathered alumni of the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship program and current scholars for workshops on community engagement, service and leadership (page 15, opposite and above). ■ Kristen Fuhs Wells (opposite top, left) and Mary Dickerson (opposite top, right) are helping to coordinate the network.

The grant expands upon the foundational work of organizers like Bryana Schreiber, a 2008 Butler University graduate from Posey County who helped start the Lilly Scholars Network with a small group of fellow scholars in 2006.

Schreiber, who majored in integrated communications at Butler, recalls the group quickly found a shared interest in bringing together scholars so they could express their gratitude through community service and work together to find other opportunities for community engagement.

“Beyond providing funding for college, the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship was empowering because it showed me that my community believed in me,” says Schreiber. “I felt—and still feel—driven and compelled to pay it forward. I think this is a common thread among the Lilly Scholars who have participated in the Lilly Scholars Network.”

In 2012, the Lilly Scholars Network Alumni Board was formally established to provide support for collegiate chapters and expand the reach of the organization. “It has been a great platform to make connections, serve as leaders in a community, and show how incredibly grateful we are for the opportunities provided to us as Lilly Scholars,” Schreiber says.

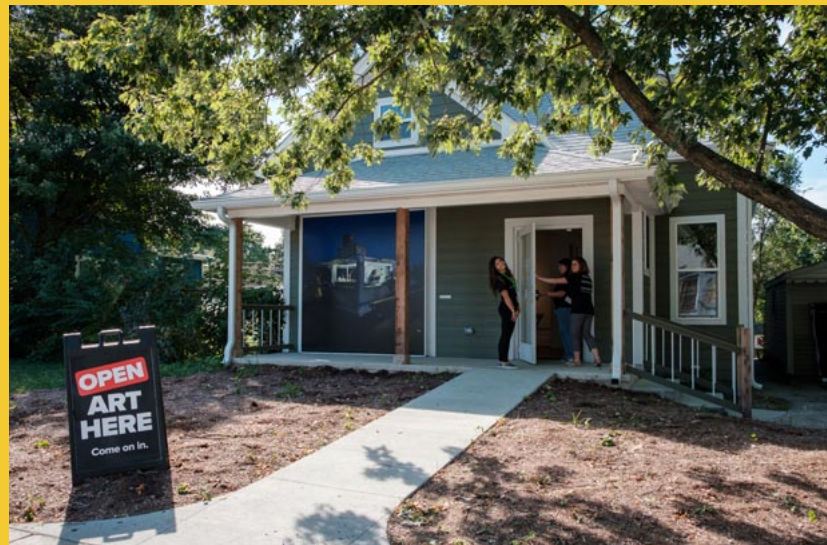
Since its founding, the Lilly Scholars Network has hosted an annual gathering in Indianapolis to bring together current and alumni Lilly Scholars from around the state for learning and service.

In September 2019, Lilly Scholars gathered for the “Innovate Summit,” with a keynote address by entrepreneur Santiago Jaramillo, CEO and co-founder of Emplify, an Indiana-based software company that helps companies build cultures of workplace engagement. Summit organizers introduced 15-minute roundtable discussions with six leaders who offered perspectives about diverse topics. The topics included K-12 education, the environment, opioid misuse, community foundations and nonprofits, and poverty and mental health. Scholars also worked together to paint a mural with guidance from Big Car Collaborative, the Indianapolis-based arts organization that has deep roots in the Garfield Park neighborhood.

“Sometimes it’s difficult to stay on top of the issues in our community,” Janson says. “If we can get scholars talking to each other, friends and family, and government leaders, we may be able to give back to our communities in big and small ways.”

The most recent summit is evidence of how the Lilly Scholars Network continues to evolve, according to Mary Dickerson, who works with the organization as part of her role as director of programs for ICI.

To continue those efforts, the Lilly Scholars Network is creating a digital platform to connect current and alumni scholars, share community service and leadership development opportunities, and host issue-focused events around the state to inform scholars about the challenges facing Indiana and the strategies being used to address them. Plans also are in place to establish a leadership training academy and offer a “mini-grant” program to network members who have specific ideas about projects to help their communities.



Lilly Scholars for life

Previous Endowment grants in 2017 and 2018 to Indiana Humanities supported the foundational research for revamping the Lilly Scholars Network, which included a survey and focus groups of current and alumni scholars. Among the findings:

- **89 percent of current and alumni scholars say that the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program created or increased their awareness about their community foundation and awareness about the importance of giving back**
- **66 percent agreed that the scholarship increased their commitment to Indiana's future**
- **Scholars are more likely to take action on issues or causes that they care about than their millennial peers, such as serving on the board of an organization, volunteering, contacting political representatives, voting, changing the way they purchase products and services, and more**
- **61 percent of alumni continue to live in Indiana**
- **43 percent of scholars who have left Indiana plan to return**
- **Scholars outperform the norm in educational achievement: 30 percent have master's degrees and 18 percent have doctorates. That compares to U.S. Census data that finds 10.9 percent of Americans age 29 to 34 and 13.8 percent age 35 to 44 have advanced degrees beyond a bachelor's degree.**

None of this is a big surprise to Indiana Humanities Vice President Kristen Fuhs Wells, who describes Lilly Scholars as “high-achievers, talented, accomplished, and committed.”

Fuhs Wells, a native of Spencer, Ind., knows of what she speaks: She received a scholarship after being nominated by the Owen County Community Foundation in 2001, but she bases her observations on Indiana Humanities' research, as well as the scholarship recipients she meets through the network.

“I see so many young scholars who are passionate about service in their communities and state,” she says. “I'm excited about the new role the network can play in connecting them with each other and providing the resources they need to help propel Indiana forward.”

That's true for Lilly Scholar alumna Katie Goodrich, who received her scholarship in 2013 after being nominated by the Legacy Foundation, Lake County's community foundation.

Goodrich says she's always had important ties to community service. She grew up in Hammond, Ind., where she benefited from summer camps and Girl Scouts, and volunteered as a high school student. “I always wanted to give back,” she says.

Like Schreiber, Goodrich attended Butler University with the Lilly Community Scholarship, taking her activism with her. She volunteered at food banks, a women's shelter, and with Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, and, as an intern at ICI, connected with the expanding Lilly Scholars Network.

After graduating from Butler, Goodrich left Indiana to join the national service program AmeriCorps. She traveled the West Coast in a 15-passenger van, sleeping on cots, and working with fellow AmeriCorps team members at several nonprofit organizations. At one worksite, she learned to use a chainsaw helping a community in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains that was affected by a forest fire.

Now back in Indiana and in her first full-time professional job in the Office of Scholarships at Indiana University in Bloomington, Goodrich is happy to find connections again through the Lilly Scholars Network.

“It's so beneficial to know people throughout the state, and the beauty is that, among Lilly Scholars, so many are doing great things in the areas of environment, poverty relief, and education,” Goodrich says. “If you put enough Lilly Scholars in a room, I am sure that there is no problem we can't help solve.”



Lilly Scholars Network will put that theory to the test, offering Lilly Endowment Scholars the opportunity to “be a Lilly Scholar for life,” according to Fuhs Wells.

“Through the Lilly Scholars Network, the scholarship is more than a scholarship,” she says. “It provides the tools and resources for individuals to become changemakers.”

- Indianapolis' Garfield Park was the location for the 2019 Lilly Scholars Network Summit (opposite), which featured artmaking with Big Car Collaborative and workshops (above).