DEAR FRIENDS,

Yes, that really is me in the Scarlet Hawk costume. A few years ago, alumnus Ray Ballard’s (CHE ’10) friends and classmates asked for Talon the Hawk to appear at his outdoor wedding reception. I thought it would be fun to surprise Ray and also have Talon be someone he knew from our office, so I made what will probably be my one and only appearance as the Hawk!

The photo seemed appropriate to include in this special issue of Impact magazine that reflects the spirit of Illinois Institute of Technology. It is a spirit born 125 years ago, when Frank W. Gunsaulus preached his famous million dollar sermon, and Philip Danforth Armour answered the call. You can read the story of the Armour family legacy here, as well as stories of those who are keeping that spirit alive today.

Donors featured have gone above and beyond to show their Illinois Tech pride. Some give to help improve the future of our nation. Some give to say thanks for all they have received. From civic leaders who see the value of IIT in the Chicago tech-ecosystem, to young alumni who began giving when they were still students—I am inspired by the way they all step forward and embrace Illinois Tech and work toward securing its future.

Thanks to your generosity, our Fueling Innovation campaign stands at $215 million raised toward our $250 million goal. As the university embarks on a new era under President Alan W. Cramb, we will rely on your support more than ever. But this campaign is about much more than just raising money; it is also about increasing visibility and being proud of not just our great legacy, but also our present and future.

While I may not wear the Hawk costume again, I will continue to look for ways to display the tremendous pride I have in Illinois Tech. And I hope each of you will continue to find your own way of showing your Scarlet Hawk spirit. On behalf of all the Illinois Tech community, I thank you for your generosity and for keeping the IIT spirit alive and thriving!

Sincerely,

Betsy Hughes
Vice President, Institutional Advancement
hughes@iit.edu
Love at first sight is alive and well at Illinois Tech’s Institute of Design. Brianna Sylver (M.S. DSGN ’03) and Adriano Galvao (M.S. DSGN ’02, Ph.D. ’06) met on registration day and knew they were meant to be. What started as a shared love for innovative design thinking blossomed into building their lives together, raising a daughter, and running a business.

Brianna calls herself an “accidental entrepreneur.” Rent was due, and the bank account was low—and so Sylver Consulting was born. But “accidental” Sylver Consulting is no more. In the 12 years since its inception, Brianna and Adriano have grown the company to a staff of eight and added a Brazil location. The innovation research and strategy firm supports Fortune 500 companies in bringing clarity and purpose to their innovation and growth agendas. "We’re hard-wired to approach projects with a problem-solving mindset while consistently keeping market context front and center,” Brianna says.

Sylver Consulting has seen continued growth since its inception in 2003, but Brianna and Adriano have not forgotten their roots. "If not for ID, Sylver Consulting would not have happened,” Brianna says, "and neither would our marriage, for that matter!” Because of all ID has done for them, they make a point to give back. They established ID’s Sylver Consulting Fellowship, which provides a portion of annual tuition to a student of outstanding promise.”

"Our business is the representation of what we’ve been able to achieve as a result of this education,” Brianna continues. “We owe it to ID to do what we can to pay it forward.”
Rosemarie and Tom Mitchell are best described as an irrepressibly energetic couple. They met on a blind date at Northeastern University—Tom was captain of the football team and Rosemarie the homecoming queen—and have been together ever since. Really together. In 1982 they founded ABS Associates, a company that provides enterprise-class IT solutions to large and mid-size businesses, from their basement and grew the business together. Living, working, and raising four children together might be more than enough togetherness for some, but not these two. They even earned M.L.A.s together at the University of Chicago, with some good-natured competition for the best G.P.A. along the way. Married 54 years, they learned long ago the secret to blending marriage and work—recognizing and appreciating their different strengths. Their togetherness also extends to supporting Illinois Institute of Technology. Rosemarie recalls that Tom was the one first asked by their friend Trustee Emeritus Don Hollis to become involved with Stuart School of Business in 1996. Tom declined, but Rosemarie eagerly volunteered to join the school’s Board of Overseers and dove in with characteristic enthusiasm. She now chairs the board and has joined the Board of Trustees and the university’s finance committee. She says, “Over the years, I slowly fell in love with not only Stuart, but with all of IIT,” which she describes as a great university with brilliant minds, strong leaders, and students who are smart and will be future contributors. Tom has also built strong relationships at Illinois Tech, and today, the Mitchells are great friends to the university on many levels, sharing their skills and business acumen, attending and sponsoring events such as the 125th Anniversary Gala, and exposing others in the Chicago business community to the university. Their goal has always been to broaden the base of supporters to include more people who are not graduates of IIT. Rosemarie and Tom have been generous donors to Stuart School and find great joy in giving. Rosemarie muses that it’s perhaps because she is “happiest when doing something for someone else.”
Illinois Institute of Technology was a whirlwind for Art Hill (CHE ’71). He enrolled part time and worked full time, which left little time for things like sports, clubs, or parties. But he did find time for one thing. “I went out on dates—I’d bring a girl to a movie, and I’d fall asleep. She’d have to nudge me awake!” he laughs.

Art started getting impatient as his work colleagues earned degrees before him, so he eventually quit his job and enrolled full time to pick up the pace. “I was 34 when I finally got my degree,” he says, “and it opened up a lot of doors for me.” He took that degree and ran with it, spending many years as a process engineer at CPC International and later finding great success in investing. “My mom taught me the importance of owning stocks,” he says.

With a “strictly business” father and grandfather, it is no surprise that Art inherited a strong work ethic. “Neither of them had much time for pleasure—they did their jobs and came home to rest,” he says. “They were hard workers, and that’s the way I was, too.” Art, who has lived in the same place for most his life, is continuing the Hill family’s legacy on Chicago’s Southwest Side to this day.

In thinking about the mark he wants to leave in life, he decided to honor his family. Art established the George and Dorothy Hill Endowed Scholarship and the Robert Milton Hill Endowed Scholarship in honor of his grandparents and brother, respectively. “They knew the importance of education, and I think they’d be happy to know I’m doing this,” he says.

Now a member of Illinois Tech’s prestigious Philip Danforth Armour Society, which honors the university’s most generous benefactors, Art has pinpointed the mark he wants to leave. “I want to help students find their direction,” he says, which is why he chose to also support the Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship. “I want to help them along their way into the world.”
As a boy, Maurice Watkins (MET ’68, Ph.D. ’73) loved to ride the streetcars on State Street—right through Mies Campus—during visits to see his extended family on Chicago’s South Side. At the time, he could not know that his future would include eight formative years at Illinois Tech, launching a career as a metallurgist for Exxon Mobil that would take him around the world. Maurice was from East Chicago, Ind., and had hoped to study at Purdue, but his Aunt Jenny’s offer of free room and board close to the Illinois Tech campus (and her great cooking) enticed him to come to IIT.

After deciding on metallurgical engineering because the course catalog descriptions looked interesting, he worked hard to make the dean’s list and earn a scholarship, and he was awarded a fellowship to enter Illinois Tech’s Ph.D. program in metallurgy. In graduate school, Maurice worked with international students and developed skills he would later use working with other metals experts from around the world on oil and gas industry regulations. “They made sure we were humble when we left IIT with a Ph.D.,” he says. “Most of us left the department with a sense of appreciation for what we did know, but also a sense of humility and a willingness to work with other folks.”

Maurice and his wife, Joyce, are faithful annual donors to Illinois Institute of Technology, established a named scholarship for students from Chicago Public Schools, and have provided for both their alma maters in their estate plans. “Like most alumni, when I left IIT I hadn’t given much thought to supporting the university financially. I thought that was the task for the very wealthy,” he says. But he later realized that the United States is the only country in the world where a college education is available to everyone, and that availability is highly dependent on successful people providing financial support to higher education.

“I am a beneficiary of other people’s generosity—and we need to be generous also so that students coming behind us can have the same opportunity we had,” he says.
George Zelcs (LAW ’79) knows a thing or two about dedication. In fact, that’s how he ended up at Chicago-Kent College of Law. He was so dedicated to his undergraduate studies that he graduated a semester early and started law school mid-year. As a law student, he continued to define dedication. He worked full time as a law clerk and graduated mid-year—again. And studying for the bar exam was no different. “My roommate and I were studying nonstop,” he says, “and apparently there was a total eclipse during our study session. We didn’t even notice it; we turned on the television for a break and heard about it. We studied right through it.” Now that’s dedication.

He is now a practicing attorney at Korein Tillery in Chicago. “I feel very fortunate to be here,” he says. “I feel like I run to work every day because I have so much fun doing what I do.” He travels about 300,000 domestic and international miles for work every year, but the rest of the year he travels far himself. With the exception of Antarctica, George has been on every continent—and has climbed to the top of them, too. “My partners and I pick the highest mountain on any continent, and we arrange a group climbing trip,” he says. “We’re very careful, though; imagine that group all getting hurt or worse at the same time!” And somehow he finds time to give back. George serves on Chicago-Kent’s Board of Overseers and on the college’s Institute on the Supreme Court of the U.S. Advisory Board. He often collaborates with Chicago-Kent Dean and Professor of Law Hal Krent and supports many philanthropic initiatives throughout the college. His belief is that students are an important resource, and nurturing this resource will improve our country by placing a larger emphasis on education instead of material things. “I paid my own way through school,” he says, “and my family put an enormous emphasis on education. The only way we can improve our future is by investing in education.”
Most college graduates spend the years after school developing their careers and planning the future. Some Illinois Institute of Technology alumni have also used this time to establish a habit of giving back.

Illinois Tech graduates Elizabeth Bilitz (MSE ’07, M.S. ’09), Richard Duncan (AE ’05, M.S. FIN ’07, Ph.D. MAE ’11), Emmanuel Klu (CS ’13), and Coral Pais (ARCE ’12) have already achieved IIT Visionaries status by making yearly gifts totaling $1,000 or more to the university. And all of them have done so less than a decade after receiving their degrees.

Bilitz, who has risen up the ranks at Finkl Steel and is now technical marketing manager, sees giving to Illinois Tech as an investment in her career. “Improving the students of today with better funding and facilities, and getting IIT’s name out there—that helps me in the long run as well,” she says, noting Illinois Tech’s rising reputation among employers.

Duncan founded a program to promote STEM education in impoverished Mingo County, West Virginia, and gives so that the university continues its momentum of growth. When he arrived at Illinois Tech on a Camras Scholarship, builders had just broken ground on The McCormick Tribune Campus Center. He says, “I saw the potential of the campus and believed in it. In the long term, alumni connections could help make it into something great.”

For Klu, who is now a software engineer at Google, an Illinois Tech education has definitely paid off. But the Ghana native remembers his financial struggles before he secured an M.A. Self Leadership Academy scholarship. “Now,” he says, “I am easing the financial burden for other students.”

After growing up in India and Kuwait, Pais was “transformed” by her experience at Illinois Tech. “It forced me to come out of my shell and made me into a confident person,” says the architectural engineer. “When I started my first job, I decided to give one month of my salary to people who influenced and supported me through my journey. IIT has given me so many ways.”

These young visionaries are unanimous in their belief that Illinois Tech will become “more of a household name” in the future, and they hope that gifts inspire fellow alumni to start their own traditions of supporting their alma mater.

Turn to page 34 to learn more about IIT Visionaries.
Illinois Institute of Technology exists because of the generosity of one forward-thinking family who made a $1 million gift 125 years ago. And now, as we celebrate the university’s quasquicentennial, we also celebrate the Armour family’s continued generosity as their giving has now exceeded $10 million.

In 1890, Philip Danforth Armour—a wildly successful Chicago meatpacker—was in Chicago’s Plymouth Congregational Church listening to a sermon by Frank W. Gunsaulus in which he declared that if he had one million dollars he would establish a school to help young people who wanted to help themselves.

“Do you believe in those ideas you have just expressed?” Philip asked Frank after the service. “I assuredly do,” was his firm response. “Would you carry them out if you had the means?” Philip asked. “Most certainly,” “Very well,” Philip said. “If you will give me five years of your time, I will give you the money.” And so Armour Institute was born.

Philip built the Armour Meat empire by trading pork contracts, which expanded the Chicago stockyards to become the largest in the world. By the time he gave the million-dollar gift to found Armour Institute, he had come to use philanthropy to improve the people and things around him. He believed that money was to be useful in the hands of men, and to be useful it should be put forward in development. He showed his commitment by giving away approximately $35 million during his lifetime.

Philip and his wife, Malvina Belle Armour, had two sons, the eldest of whom, Jonathan Ogden Armour, took over as president of the family business in 1901 after Philip’s death. He diversified and expanded the company internationally, growing revenues from $200 million a year to more than $1 billion. It was reported that John D. Rockefeller was the only man in America richer than J. Ogden.

While visiting friends in Chicago, Lolita Sheldon met J. Ogden at a party, and it was love at first sight. Three weeks later, they announced their engagement and were married three months after that by none other than Frank W. Gunsaulus. Together, J. Ogden and Lolita took Chicago by storm. They owned the first horseless carriage and gas-powered automobile—a bright red Panhard—in Chicago, and they had a daughter they named Lolita.

J. Ogden died in 1927 as the result of typhoid fever and a weak heart. After a long illness, Lolita died in 1953.

A trust set up by Lolita continues the family’s legacy of generosity to this day, and we are grateful for this annual, sustaining support. Members of the Armour family have served the university in other capacities over the years, including Philip’s great-grandson, Vernon Armour, who resides in Chicago.

Today, the university’s most generous donors are members of the Philip Danforth Armour Society, which honors families who have made transformative gifts to Illinois Tech. Illinois Institute of Technology owes its very existence to the Armour family, and their legacy endures.

Visit web.iit.edu/about/history or archives.iit.edu/armour to learn more about the Armour legacy at IIT. Turn to page 34 to learn more about the Armour Society.