90.1 WIUP-FM
YOUR ALTERNATIVE SOURCE

Summer 2026 Alumni Newsletter

WIU-Proud!

Station Manager **Fox Empson**, Program Director **Riley Yonchiuk**, Afternoon Producer **Brooke Veith**, and Hip-Hop Director **Ismael Negrete** represented WIUP at the 2025 National Student Media Convention in Denver, hosted by College Broadcasters, Inc.

The finale to this weeklong event is the annual awards ceremony. This year, WIUP brought home two awards, recognizing our students' exceptional programming. In the category of "Best DJ," WIUP won two of the top three awards: Brooke Veith won the third place prize for her program *Vintage With Veith*, while Fox Empson brought home the top prize for his show, *For Fox's Sake*!

Reflecting on the experience, Fox said that "CBI is always a humbling experience. Being in a room with the greatest broadcasting skill in the country and walking out with your name on a plaque really cements the greatness we foster in the Communications Media department."

Riley Yonchiuk served as the sole student representative on CBI's executive board for the '25-'26 academic year. Representing not only WIUP but student broadcasters nationwide, Riley played a key role in developing and organizing the conference, ensuring that student interests were always at the forefront.

As seen here, students also represented WIUP in CBI's special webcast, showcasing the station's eclectic musical offerings.

Fox, Brooke, and Riley all graduated from IUP in May, 2026, and we look forward to following their future successes! Ismael is serving as Station Manager for the 2026-2027 academic year, and will continue to push WIUP forward.

Interview: Scott Blasey

*As part of College Radio Day 2025, Dr. Stiegler had a chance to interview Scott Blasey (**'87**) ahead of The Clarks' homecoming show at the KCAC in October. Below are excerpts from that interview.*

The Clarks' identity is so tied to Pittsburgh, but it all started here.

That's right, I was a Communications Media major and I was a disc jockey on WIUP-FM for two years. That was the mid '80s, we're talking '85, '86, '87. The first show I had was kind of like a, I don't want to call it a jazz show, but it was sort of new age-y. I played Stanley Clarke. I was a big Police and Sting fan and Sting was kind of going down that jazzy road, I played some of his stuff and some new age stuff, Andreas Vollenweider pops into my memory and all kinds of really cool stuff like that. And then my senior year, a friend of mine, Dan Beck, Uwe was his nickname, and my nickname was Fido, that was my fraternity name. So we had The Uwe and Fido Experience Monday nights for four hours on WIUP and oh man. That was the era of sort of new wave music, you know, we played everything from The Psychedelic Furs to Frank Zappa and throw in some Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers and The Hoodoo Gurus and R.E.M. and Kate Bush and Siouxsie and the Banshees and The Smiths and all that great sort of '80s alternative, what's really considered now "classic alternative."

Did your time at the station have any influence on the band?

Well, definitely it was exposure to a certain type of music. When I was on radio, we were playing vinyl. You know, they had a huge record collection. So I would go in and sort of peruse the records and pull out stuff, maybe bands that I had heard of or artists that I was unfamiliar with. And at the time, *Rolling Stone*, the last page of the magazine had all these charts in it. You know, the top 40 albums and singles, but they had a college album chart. And I just religiously would look at that college album chart. And I would listen to everything that was on there. That's how I discovered people like Kate Bush, and like a band from Australia called The Hoodooo Gurus that we were big fans of. And so, yes, that exposure to that music definitely informed what the band ended up covering.

Thinking back to those early days of the group, how did it all come together in the first place?

I grew up loving music, listening to the radio. And when I got to Indiana my freshman year, I had some friends on my dormitory hall, Schaefer Hall. And they had a couple guitars and they would sit around at night and play Beatles songs and Neil Young songs. And I picked up the guitar at about 18, 19 years old. And after my freshman year, my dad, who was very supportive of my dream, bought me an acoustic guitar. And then I met Rob through a mutual friend.

And he and Dave, the drummer, it was their idea to start the band. And so in 1985, we started a band called The Administration. It was the three of us and a different bass player than Greg, who's in the band now. And we had a saxophone player. And we were playing songs that featured the saxophone, bands like The English Beat and Joe Jackson, INXS, and things like that. And then those guys graduated. So the fall of '86, Rob invited Greg to join the band. Greg had gone to IUP, he had graduated a few years earlier. And our first gig was in the basement of Sigma Chi fraternity. I think we played for a hundred bucks and all the beer we could drink. And then the next gig we played outside at Flagstaff. And then we played fraternity basements. And we would do shows at the Coney Island. And that's really how we got our start. And then we graduated, I graduated in '87. And we started to evolve and started to write our own music and started to get some gigs in Pittsburgh. And then took off from there. We all just sort of moved to Pittsburgh. But man, IUP was, it's really the homeland. I mean, people say "The Clarks from Pittsburgh," but really it's "The Clarks from Indiana, PA."

Scott returns to Davis Hall, spring 2026 .
(Photo: Sofia Blasey)

Interview: Scott Blasey

That very first record, *I'll Tell You What Man…*, were you still students here when you were putting that together?

We started writing songs then. We recorded it in '87. So we were just out of school at that time. And I think Dave graduated in '88, so he was probably still a student. But yeah, the songs that we had written for that album, some of them had been written in Indiana. The song "On My Way Back Home" I wrote because when I graduated, I didn't have a job lined up, and I had to move back into my parents' house. And that was directly about that experience. So that whole first album is really the Indiana album. In fact, I think on the credits, we say something about thanks to Indiana, PA, the motherland or something to that effect, so it's very much the IUP album.

What does it mean for you when you come back to play in Indiana and especially at IUP?

Well, I love coming back to Indiana. You know, when I first graduated in '87, we would come back Rob and I, Rob James, our guitar player, and we would do acoustic shows at the Coney when it was just the small bar in the back, before it expanded. And we would play at Wolfendale's, Wolfie's. And then the band would play occasionally in the student union. I remember playing in Fisher Auditorium a couple of times, we opened up for Donnie Iris and The Cruisers once. And then Culpeppers expanded in the late '90s, early 2000s. We were playing at Culpeppers a lot. And then we sort of moved to the Indiana Theater. We did a bunch of shows at the Indiana Theater. And then my oldest daughter, Sofia is now a junior at IUP. And so when she started school in Indiana, I really reconnected with the university in that way. I mean, when we would come and do shows, it was kind of an in and out, and I didn't really get to spend a lot of time on campus. But now that Sofia's there, I really reconnected with the school and with the town and just love coming back to Indiana for her now.

Scott performs at the KCAC in October, 2025.
(Photo: Cadence Sninsky, courtesy The Penn.)

Is that like a little mind blowing for you? Is that like a David Byrne, "well, how did I get here" moment?

It's really cool. Yes, that's exactly what it is. How did I get here? The fact that, you know, Sofia knew very early on in high school that IUP was where she wanted to be. And her dream came true. She loves Indiana. She loves IUP. She's having a great experience there. And it's just crazy that, you know, she's going to some of the same places that I went to and loves the 9th Street Deli, all these iconic Indiana places to eat and places to go. So it's just the coolest thing ever.

Back to when you were students here, did you have any inclinations that you'd still be at it 40 years later?

No. Short answer no. I started doing it because I just loved music and I thought it would just be really cool to perform music. And we started as a cover band. We just were singing our favorite songs in front of our friends. And that's how it started. And honestly, even after we graduated the first two albums, when we put those out, I had a good day job. I really didn't expect the band to end up where it did. And it wasn't really until "Penny on the Floor" started getting some serious radio play in Pittsburgh and elsewhere that we quit our day jobs and started traveling. And at that point, I thought, well, maybe let's give this a go and see what happens. And then it took off from there. But to answer your question, no. When we first started. I really had no designs on doing this for the next four decades.

What would your advice be to current IUP students who are just starting out playing music, putting groups together?

Play live in front of people as often as possible. I mean, that's really the key. There is a big difference between rehearsing in your basement or your garage and being on a stage in front of people with monitors and real PA. It's a whole different vibe and the more you do it, the better you get.

What would you say to 20-year-old Scott?

What I would say to my 20-year-old self is, don't take it too seriously, enjoy the ride. It's a lot of fun.

The Clarks are celebrating their 40th anniversary in 2026. Live dates, music, merch, and more can be found at clarksonline.com.

Special Events

We had another busy Homecoming weekend in 2025, kicking off with **College Radio Day** on Friday. As usual, we marked the occasion with 24 hours of non-stop live student broadcasting, with the exception of our interview with **Scott Blasey** (**'87**). By sheer coincidence, **Jenifer Smith** (**'07**) stopped by the studio to visit, which was simply perfect timing! Friday also kicked off our annual fund drive, which ran all weekend, with many DJs putting together special shows for the event. **Nicole Bauer** (**'02**) came back for a special show—you could do the same this year! (see elsewhere in this newsletter for details.)

The fundraiser was once again a success, having met our fundraising goal by the deadline. We know that our alumni are among our biggest supporters, and we are so grateful that you continue to help us grow. This year's premium level (donations of $90.10 or more) included a thank you gift of a WIUP hoodie with our vintage "tower" logo. Check out **Bob Gilmer** ('**93**) showing off his!

The weekend of April 18-19 brought another **Vinylthon** to the airwaves at WIUP: 48 hours of live DJs playing only vinyl! Student DJs and community volunteers once again pooled together to bring us the Diamond Slipmat Award for completing this marathon event. It's an exhausting, but uniquely fun weekend!

Pictured here, current student **Keller McCloskey** ("The Prog Frog") whips out Genesis' *Fox Trot* during an epic Vinylthon set!

Tampa area group **Beyond Chaotic** stopped by WIUP on their spring tour. The Fantastic DJ Fox (**Fox Empson**), welcomed Max (guitar/vocals), Alex (bass), and Dom (drums and percussion) for a special interview and acoustic performance ahead of the band's appearance at Levity Brewing in Indiana. It's rare for a non-Pennsylvania band to pop into the studios, so it was an extra special treat! Beyond Chaotic was out on the road supporting their 2026 EP *Time for Crime*. You can learn more about the band at www.beyondchaotic.com.

Farewell, Dee!

After 20 years, *Dee's Keepin' it Country* drew to a close this May, due to Dee Gryczuk's relocation away from Indiana. Dee was an employee of IUP for 35 years, and also earned her Associate of Arts degree from the university. Dee retired from IUP in 2023, but kept producing her weekly country program on Saturdays, featuring classic, contemporary, and local artists. Dee also frequently produced *Dee's Mix* over academic breaks, showcasing the rock side of her musical tastes. Dee first came on board while Jim Rogers was Faculty Advisor, and learned much of her radio skills through Jim's mentoring and friendship. She already misses being on air (and her many listeners!). Of course, we hope she's able to make some special appearances at WIUP when time allows. Thanks for 20 years of great programming, Dee!

Welcome, Ben!

Following Chris Barber's retirement last year, **Ben Jewart** (**'10**) was hired by the college as our Network Technician. Ben wears many hats and performs many roles, but for our purposes he serves as WIUP's Chief Engineer. Ben has quickly settled into the position, helping us to upgrade and improve equipment, navigating FCC and EAS regulations, and keeping everything in tip-top shape so that WIUP sounds its best over the air and online. Between graduation and being hired last year, Ben worked in various audio-visual roles at IUP's KCAC, the Tsongas Center at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, and most recently, PennWest—Clarion. Ben returns to IUP with extensive experience in video, audio, studio, and live event production, making him the prime candidate to fill Chris Barber's shoes. Reflecting on his first year in the position, Ben shared, "Returning to Davis Hall where I began my journey as a student, is both humbling and extremely gratifying. I'm grateful to continue my career and work among peers whom I've always respected and greatly admired!"

Our Newest Alumni

Congratulations to WIUP's newest alumni, the class of 2026! Pictured here during May's graduation events are **Jordyn Ziesman**, **Brooke Veith**, **Fox Empson**, **Riley Yonchiuk**, **Amanda Coyne**, and **Skye Swartz**. WIUP members **Hannah Poole**, **Marie Smith**, and **Nicole Tougher** are not pictured, but also graduated in May. And we would be remiss to not mention our December 2025 graduates, **Tyler Johnson**, **Thomas "T-Train" Rainey**, **Grace Rusinko**, and **Luke Sell**. We look forward to following their post-IUP journeys. Keep in touch!

Coming Up!

SCAN ME

Labor Day Countdown – Vote!

Last year, we ran our first Labor Day Weekend countdown. We're at it again in 2026! This time around, we're counting down the greatest cover songs of all time—and you can help shape the broadcast!

Fill out the form (https://tinyurl.com/3z6rt9d7 or scan the QR code on this page) with what you think are the ten BEST cover songs of all time. We'll crunch the numbers and count down the top 90 on Labor Day, September 7th. Votes must be in by August 14th. Do feel free to share the link with others – voting is open to the public!

Key Dates:

September 7th: Labor Day Countdown ("From 90 to 1")

October 2nd: World College Radio Day

October 2nd-4th: Annual WIUP Fund Drive

October 9th: 57th Anniversary of WIUP's First Broadcast!

October 10th: IUP Homecoming

April 17th-18th: Vinylthon

IUP

On-Air Opportunities for Alumni!

WIUP folks strike a pose at the departmental "COMM Prom" event in April.

We love when our alumni are able to get back into the booth! This year, our annual fund drive does *not* overlap with IUP's Homecoming, potentially creating even more opportunities for alumni to return to the airwaves in October. We will have a limited amount of slots available, and cannot guarantee being able to accommodate everyone. If you are interested, send a note to Dr. Stiegler (stiegler@iup.edu). We will have current staff on hand to assist on the technological side of things. (If you plan to co-host with another alum, please indicate that as well.) And of course, we always have opportunities for alumni to return over academic breaks!

Tune In, and Stay in Touch!

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