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# THE CIRCLE OF GIVING

**The Engineering Visionary  
Scholarship Initiative**

2018 Impact Report



THE CAMPAIGN FOR  
**ILLINOIS**

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## The Engineering Visionary Scholarship Initiative


Five years ago, Illinois Engineering, in partnership with The Grainger Foundation, launched an ambitious initiative to raise \$100 million in endowment support with a special emphasis on unrestricted scholarships. The Engineering Visionary Scholarship Initiative has since paved the way for hundreds of deserving students to make their dreams of becoming an engineer a reality.

The Engineering Visionary Scholarship Initiative attracts the brightest students, ensures a diverse and talented class, and helps reduce debt. Your gift is the catalyst for access to education, for nurturing ambition, and for turning students' passions into possibilities. Your investment changes lives. Over the last year and a half, our donors have doubled the impact of their investments through The Grainger Matching Challenge.

Through the end of 2019, all gifts made to the Engineering Visionary Scholarship Initiative will be matched dollar-for-dollar, up to \$25 million. The Grainger Foundation, a longtime supporter of our college, is providing this matching opportunity. Since this opportunity began, The Grainger Foundation has matched more than \$10.7 million in gifts. This has boosted our progress towards our fundraising endowment goal, as well as making our top engineering program more affordable for our students.

Because of your generosity, we can ensure our doors are open to the most deserving scholars, who will leave us better equipped to solve tomorrow's grand challenges. In the following report, you will read about seven of the students who have benefited from Engineering Visionary Scholarships. Thank you for supporting scholarships that enrich the educational experience and attract the most promising scholars to Illinois Engineering.



A photograph of Melina Megaridis, a young woman with long brown hair, smiling and wearing a white lab coat and teal gloves. She is standing in a laboratory setting with various equipment and bottles visible in the background. The text 'MELINA MEGARIDIS' is overlaid in large, bold letters, with 'MELINA' in white and 'MEGARIDIS' in red. Below it, 'Bioengineering' is in white and '2019' is in a larger white font.

# MELINA MEGARIDIS

## Bioengineering 2019

“I want to make my impact on the world by working for a company that creates biomedical devices and helps people who have trouble just living life every day.”


Melina Megaridis is a junior in the Department of Bioengineering at Illinois. She chose this field because she wants to create biomedical devices that improve everyday life.

Receiving a scholarship was the most significant factor in Melina’s decision to enroll at Illinois Engineering. Although the bioengineering program is fantastic, the tuition is a challenge for many students. The Engineering Visionary Scholarship helped Melina offset the cost of attendance. Receiving the Engineering Visionary Scholarship also takes some of the financial worries off of her and her family. With scholarship support, Melina can focus on school.

Melina is minoring in the Hoeft Technology and Management Program and will be traveling to Germany and China this year with the program for business plan competitions. Melina is also a member of the Cancer Research Scholars program, where she gains experience solving real-world problems. Currently, she also works in Professor Roy Dar’s Noise Biology Lab with cell and tissue cultures.

Melina is honored to be a recipient of an Engineering Visionary Scholarship. This scholarship has opened up opportunities for her to grow and study bioengineering.





# LAION NEVES

## Materials Science and Engineering 2019

“I always strive to better myself as much as I can, and the world class education at the University of Illinois is instrumental in achieving my educational goals.”

Laion Neves is a junior in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Illinois. Born and raised in a fishing town in Brazil, Laion has lived in the United States for more than seven years and is amazed at how welcoming this country, and the Illinois community, has been to him.

While Laion is currently undecided on a concentration for his degree, he is leaning towards a focus on metals or ceramics. He is very interested in becoming more involved in research. Receiving the Engineering Visionary Scholarship will help him achieve this goal.

His favorite class at Illinois Engineering has been MSE 307, Materials Laboratory I, which focused on laboratory testing instruments. After graduation, Laion plans to pursue a graduate degree. He would like to eventually work in research in the private sector or in academia.

When he's not busy with his coursework, Laion enjoys spending time with his friends, family, and his cats. He and his wife also enjoy playing board games.

Attending a world-class university like Illinois has always been a dream of Laion's both because of the academics and the Illinois community. The Engineering Visionary Scholarship helps cover his tuition, fees, and other educational expenses, and it allows him to focus more on his studies.



A portrait of Siobhan Fox, a young woman with long reddish-brown hair and glasses, smiling. She is wearing a light pink textured sweater and has a blue backpack strap visible over her shoulder. The background is a green wall with a black geometric line pattern.

# SIOBHAN FOX

Systems Engineering  
and Design  
2019

“Receiving the Engineering Visionary Scholarship helped me understand the benefits of collaboration and supporting others. Accomplishing any great feat in life is dependent on the team supporting us.”

Siobhan Fox, a junior in the Department of Industrial and Enterprise Systems Engineering, is grateful for her scholarship support as it is allowing her to continue her education at Illinois Engineering. Siobhan says, “If it were not for this scholarship, I would not have been able to afford this academic year and was considering taking time off to save money.” Siobhan has a younger brother who also attends the University of Illinois and her scholarship support allows her family to focus more on supporting him at the beginning of his studies.

Siobhan is involved with Alpha Epsilon Phi and with the Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineers. In her free time, she enjoys playing the ukulele and writing poetry. Siobhan says, “Much of my time outside of schoolwork is spent running and hanging out with people in my sorority.”

Siobhan’s favorite class is ECE 473, Fundamentals of Engineering Acoustics, because “it connects the dots between so many different disciplines of engineering.” Siobhan is proud to be an Illini because “during my campus visit I felt like I was an individual that mattered.”



# The Circle of Giving Connects Generations

## An Example of Giving and Helping Others

Through scholarship support, three-generations of Illinois alumni are connected and committed to helping others fulfill their educational dreams.

Bruce (BS, MechSE '66) and Linda Koe (BS, LAS '65) are Illinois alumni. Since their retirement, the Koes have been focused on philanthropy, "We decided that rather than go on cruises or such that we wanted to give back. And we hope to be an example of giving back to our children, grandchildren, and others ... and inspire them to reach out and help others."

The Koes established the Kirkwood Scholarship for Women in Engineering 15 years ago. Named after Linda's grandmother, Flossie Kirkwood Massock, the Kirkwood Scholarship for Women in Engineering supports female engineers. Flossie, born in 1892, was not an engineer. She was, however, one of the first women graduates of Bradley University and a trailblazer in her day. This scholarship is awarded to female students and it is intended to help motivate them to finish their degrees. To date, this scholarship has helped 22 women graduate from Illinois. It currently supports five students.

Witnessing the accomplishments of the women engineers who have benefited from this scholarship gives the Koes a great deal of personal satisfaction. "Some of the [Kirkwood Scholar] graduates are already giving back to the University, and some are now helping their siblings receive a college education. So, the circle of giving goes on."

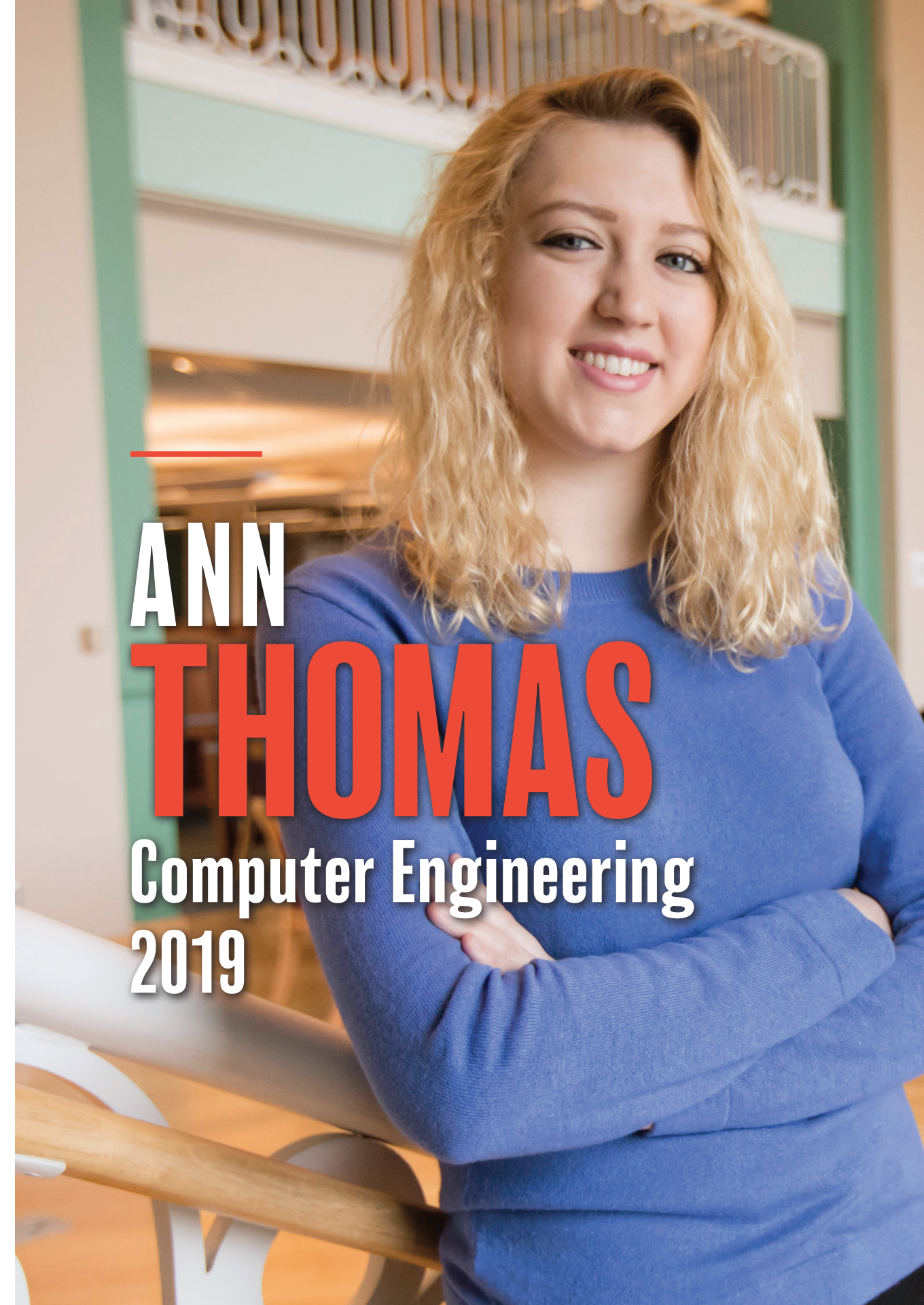
## Inspired Scholarship Recipient Makes her First Gift

After earning her bachelor's degree in english with a minor in physics, Katherine Coles returned to college to pursue a second bachelor's degree at Illinois Engineering. Going into her sophomore year, Katherine faced financial hardships. She exhausted the amount she could borrow for federal student loans and spent her savings on tuition. She dropped to part-time enrollment and worked two jobs to pay her way through college. Her dream of becoming an engineer seemed distant.

During the fall semester of her sophomore year, Katherine found an answer to her prayers: the Kirkwood Scholarship. "The afternoon I found out that I was receiving the scholarship is one I'll never forget. I was turning in my time card for working in the research lab, and a staff member asked, 'how would you like to receive a scholarship?' After that, I pretty much walked on air for about a week!"

That same week, Katherine enrolled as a full-time student, cut down her hours at other jobs, and took on more hours in the research lab. Katherine graduated with her bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 2009.

Since graduating, one of Katherine's goals has been to contribute to the Kirkwood Engineering Visionary Scholarship fund to help another student like the Koes helped her. In November, she made her first gift to the Kirkwood Engineering Visionary Scholarship fund. Katherine's employer matched her contribution. Her gift, combined with The Grainger Match and her company's match, tripled what her gift would have been alone, making it even more meaningful.



## Investing in the Next Generation

Last spring, Ann (Annie) Thomas, a senior in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, took the semester off to have two complete hip reconstruction surgeries. These surgeries forced her to move back home to Virginia to recover with the support of her family. The medical bills from her operation combined with the travel expenses to and from Illinois were astronomical. This increased the financial burden on her and her family, making it difficult to afford college.

When Annie returned to campus in the fall, she found out that she was selected for the Kirkwood Scholarship. Not only did this scholarship alleviate some of her financial burdens, but it also allowed her to be involved with more student activities because she didn't have to work off-campus. Annie's scholarship support will enable her to focus more on her academics.

During the fall semester, Annie began working in a research lab in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. She engages with many student organizations on campus. Annie is the corporate director for the iRobotics Club and the electrical lead for the Junior Robotics Team. She is also a member of the Society of Women Engineers and serves on their membership enrichment committee.

Annie's scholarship inspires her to pay it forward. She volunteers with the Women in Engineering Orientation, leading groups of freshman computer science students. Annie is a mentor to these students during their first days on campus.

Annie is also an Engineering Learning Assistant, where she teaches incoming students about campus resources and mentors them throughout their first year on campus. Annie is honored to receive this scholarship because it enabled her education.







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# ANNA RODRIGUEZ

Computer Science  
2021

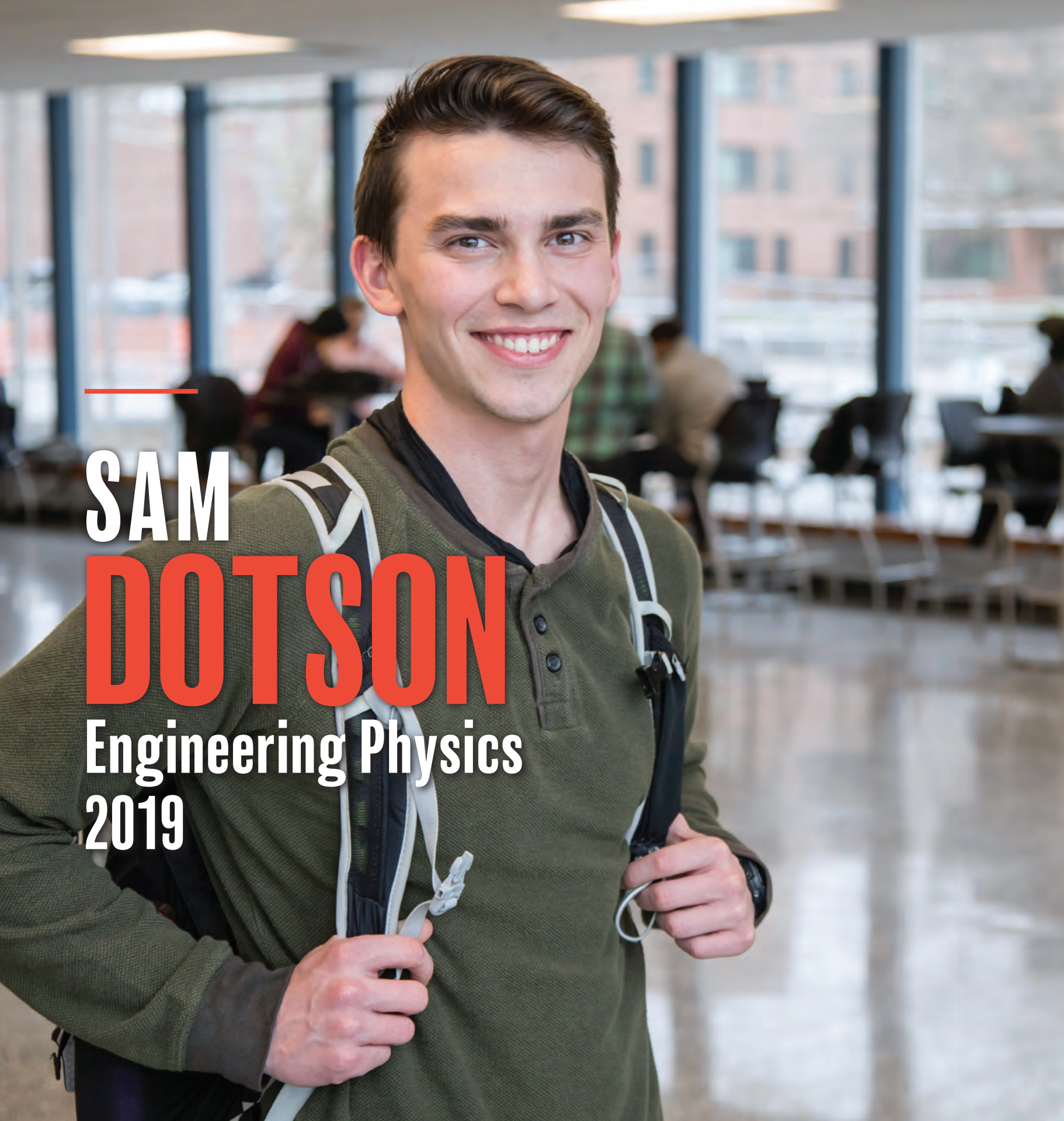
“It would be an honor if after I graduate I have the ability to give a donation to a student in my current position.”

Anna Rodriguez, a freshman in the Department of Computer Science, chose to attend Illinois Engineering because it has “one of the top Computer Science programs in the country, has a great female to male ratio, and it isn’t too far from home.” Originally from Bloomington, Illinois, Anna was an active member of volunteer organizations like Habitat for Humanity and was a tutor during high school. As a new student at Illinois Engineering, Anna plans to be equally involved on campus, and has joined Engineering Without Borders, Engineering Council, and Women in Computer Science.

In her free time, Anna likes to read, doodle, listen to music, and watch mystery shows on Netflix. She also enjoys working out and spending time relaxing in her hammock.

Anna shares, “Scholarship support, along with in-state tuition, greatly influenced my decision to enroll in Illinois Engineering.” Anna is grateful for the Engineering Visionary Scholarship as it allows her to have more time to focus on her studies and extra-curricular activities.





# SAM DOTSON

## Engineering Physics 2019

“I worked really hard in my first two years at community college and it was nice to receive recognition for my effort through the Engineering Visionary Scholarship.”


Sam Dotson is a junior in the Department of Physics at Illinois. In 2017, he transferred from the College of Lake County, a community college in northern Illinois.

Receiving an Engineering Visionary Scholarship helped Sam make a smoother transition from community college to the University of Illinois.

Sam loves being an Illinois Engineering student, and he loves to call campus his home. Sam says his classes are enjoyable and engaging, and the professors teach with enthusiasm and love what they do.

Currently, Sam is pursuing undergraduate research opportunities. After he graduates next year, he would like to pursue a master's degree in physics or take a year off to work on research. He is interested in the intersection of three topics: quantum information systems, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and game theory. He believes the combination of these fields will pave the way for advances in many areas of technology.





# ELIZA WRIGHT

## Nuclear, Plasma, and Radiological Engineering 2020

“Most of my free time is spent giving back to the community to help other underrepresented minorities get interested in engineering. I hope to teach them that engineering is for everyone.”

As a sophomore in the Department of Nuclear, Plasma, and Radiological Engineering, Eliza Wright chose to attend Illinois Engineering because of the people here. Eliza says, “As a prospective student, I was able to meet my future advisor, my department head, and several of my future deans. I feel respected and heard as a student at this university.”

Eliza is actively involved in the National Society of Black Engineers, where she serves as programs chair. She is also involved with the Dean’s Student Advisory Committee and is a co-founder of Women in Nuclear Engineering. In addition to her extra-curricular involvement, Eliza is busy learning Dutch. It’s her dream to one day move to the Netherlands, so she has been “practicing Dutch so I am ready once I get there!”

Eliza is grateful for her scholarship support. “Receiving the Engineering Visionary Scholarship has had such an impact on my education and extra-curricular activities. Instead of worrying about needing a part-time job, I am now able to participate in activities I know will help me professionally.”



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## Strength in Numbers

# \$69.7 million

raised towards the \$100 million initiative as of May 1, 2018.

# \$4.7 million

in scholarships awarded during the 2017-2018 academic year.

# 1,851

donors have supported the initiative to date.

# 1 in 3

scholarship recipients were from underrepresented populations.

# 276

women received scholarships during the 2017-2018 academic year.

# 32%

of scholarship recipients were the first in their family to attend college.





## College of Engineering

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