Perdita Felicien, ’03, hurdled her way to glory at the University, becoming the first woman in Illinois track and field history to win a gold medal in an individual event at the World Championships. An Ontario, Canada, native, Felicien attended the University on an athletic scholarship. During her freshman year she won both the 100- and 200-meter hurdles. In 1999, she won the NCAA title in the 100-meter hurdles and established an NCAA record. Her subsequent college athletic career was a string of triumphs (including consecutive national titles in 100-meter hurdles) capped by the gold medal at the 2003 World Championships. With this latter victory, Felicien became Canada’s first ever woman world gold medalist. In 2004 she defeated Gail Devers in the 60-meter hurdles to take gold at the World Indoor Championships. She has since won silver in both the indoor and outdoor world championships and the Pan American Games.

Vivian Zapata, ’08, was named the official artist of the 6th Annual Latin Grammy Awards, becoming the first student to achieve this honor. A native of Chicago, Zapata showed a very early interest in art: she began drawing at the age of four. Throughout her grammar and high school years she especially enjoyed her art classes so it was natural that she would enroll at the University as a painting and sculpture major. When she learned that a Latino arts organization was sponsoring a poster competition for the Latin Grammys, she jumped at the opportunity. Zapata submitted an entry in the competition in 2004. Her design was selected as the official poster of the Latin Grammy Awards. Zapata finished her poster entry three days before the deadline, and then she waited. The good news came in the summer of 2005, and the following November the UI sophomore found herself surrounded by celebrities at Los Angeles’s Shrine Auditorium as the official artist of the Latin Grammy Awards. In 2013 Zapata received an MFA in visual art from Washington University in St. Louis.

Daniel Bruzzini, ’90, journeyed to war-torn Afghanistan in 2007 on a six-month-long mission of mercy: the Air Force lieutenant colonel and neonatologist led a team of military medical personnel in an effort to teach Afghans improved methods of infant care. The Northbrook native combined his love of medicine and the military while a UI undergraduate, majoring in biology and belonging to ROTC. After graduation, he attended the F. Edward Herbert Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland and became a flight surgeon. He eventually settled on a career as a pediatrician—a career choice that led him to Afghanistan and the 2007 mission. He was promoted to colonel in 2012.

Jean Driscoll, ’91, embarked upon her storied career as a wheelchair racer while still an undergraduate at the University—a career that includes eight Boston Marathon wins and five gold, three silver, and four bronze medals in the Summer Paralympic Games. Born with spina bifida, the Milwaukee native was recruited to play wheelchair basketball at the University. Driscoll did well inside and outside of the classroom, receiving on three occasions the George Huff award for athletic and academic excellence. In 1988 she competed in her first Paralympics, coming away with bronze, silver, and gold medals. Beginning in 1990, she won seven consecutive Boston Marathons—the first person to ever do so.
Look at you.
You’re a student of the University of Illinois in its fifteenth decade.
Someday your life story might fill this space.