



Dear Alumni and Friends,

Each November 8th, the Concordia-Chicago community celebrates **First Generation College Celebration Day**, honoring how our "Trailblazer" students Stand Tall for determination and resilience. Over half of CUC's undergraduate student body is comprised of first-generation students, and our commitment to serving these students is reflected in CUC's recognition as a [Top Performer on Social Mobility](#), by *U.S. News & World Report*, ranking #20 among regional universities in the Midwest.

We also reflect in gratitude on the many **Trailblazer Alumni** who have paved the way for current and future scholars. This month's alumni spotlight story features a former CUC First Generation College student: **Cristian De Avila BS '18**. Read more about her story below.

Please share the following stories with family and friends, and stay connected with us on social media and by attending our various upcoming events.

In Christ,

Jeff Hynes
University Foundation President/CEO
Sr. Vice President University Advancement

Alumni Spotlight



Cristian De Avila, Class of 2018

Cristian De Avila BS '18 has always had a passion for education and business. Today, she co-owns and operates Magic Forest Daycare in Berwyn with her mother, and after nearly a decade of dedication, they are expanding by opening a second location in Oak Park.

"I always knew I wanted to own my own business. I was very thankful to everybody at Concordia that guided me through my studies and gave me advice on what could be."

Cristian's vocational journey was not without challenges. As a trailblazer student, she started her undergraduate studies at 27 while balancing life as a new mother and running Magic Forest. The welcoming atmosphere at CUC gave her the confidence to ask for help—a lesson that has stayed with her, especially as a first-generation college student navigating both business and higher education.

"I was nervous going back to school as an adult, but Concordia's support system made me feel welcome. I never felt like the 'old person going back to school.' CUC was always really big about offering different resources, even for things I didn't know I could ask for, and I really felt supported by everyone there."

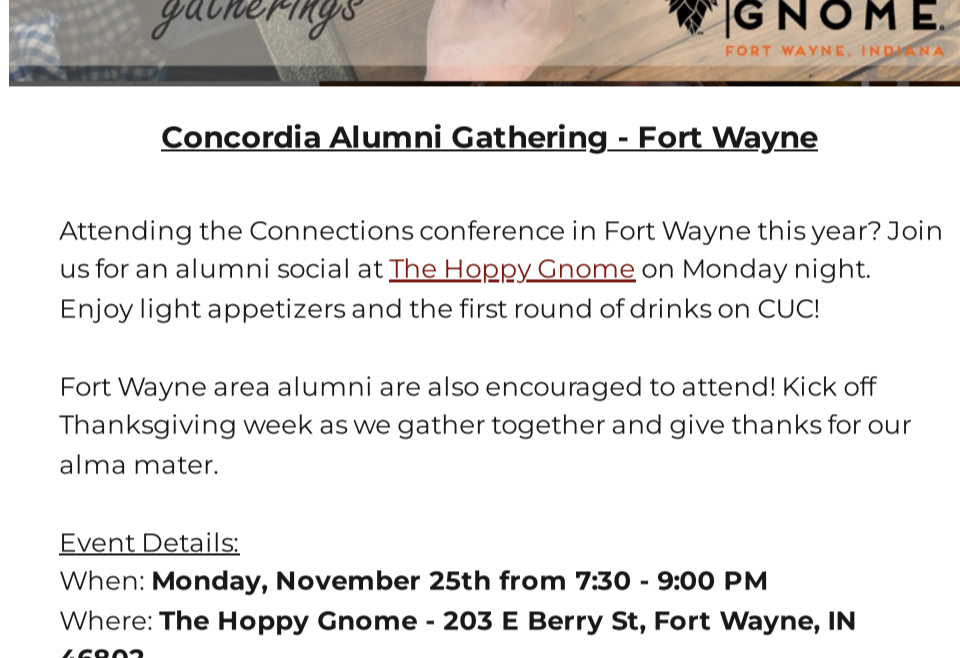
Her Concordia experience, which included a mission trip to Guatemala and participation in the childcare program, shaped her approach to education and her dedication to making Magic Forest Daycare a nurturing space with a Christian mission.

The daycare's philosophy states, *"We believe children are a gift from God and we as adults have the responsibility and the privilege to love, develop, and educate them to the best of our abilities and resources."*

Cristian further reflects on how Concordia's pillars of truth, freedom, and vocation shaped her personal mission as an educator by inspiring her to integrate faith into every aspect of learning.

"We emphasize prayer and thank God every morning for giving us life, food, a mommy and daddy - simple things to show we are thankful - and we say grace before our meals. I believe it's our job, even though a lot of our families are not religious, it's important for children to start hearing that kind of vocabulary and start understanding God and being thankful, good human beings."

Cristian's vocations as educator and business owner are rooted in her desire to serve her community. As Magic Forest continues to expand with a second location, Cristian looks forward to reaching even more children and families. Her story is a shining example of how our CUC alumni Stand Tall for Community, Resilience, and Excellence!



Concordia Alumni Gathering - Fort Wayne

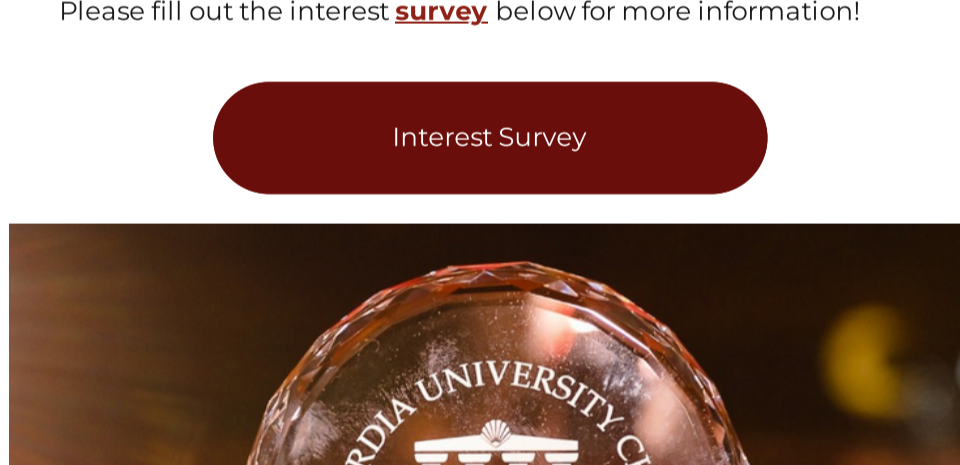
Attending the Connections conference in Fort Wayne this year? Join us for an alumni social at [The Hoppy Gnome](#) on Monday night. Enjoy light appetizers and the first round of drinks on CUC!

Fort Wayne area alumni are also encouraged to attend! Kick off Thanksgiving week as we gather together and give thanks for our alma mater.

Event Details:
When: **Monday, November 25th from 7:30 - 9:00 PM**
Where: **The Hoppy Gnome - 203 E Berry St, Fort Wayne, IN 46802**

Register below or at this link: 4agc.com/event/fwalumnisocial

Register



2025 Classical Education Study Trip

Alumni, you're invited to Greece and the Greek Isles from May 6-15, 2025! Join Rev. Dr. Patrick Bayens, CUC Professor of New Testament, as we travel to Athens, Corinth, Mykonos, Santorini and more. The trip is hosted by the Classical Education Program of CUC.

Please fill out the interest [survey](#) below for more information!

Interest Survey

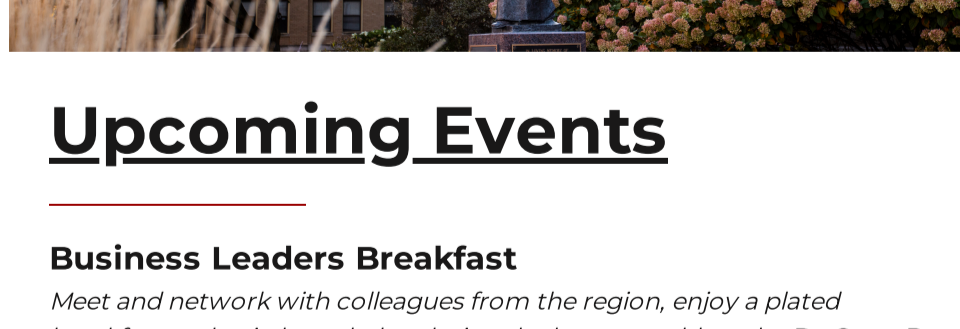


Nominate an Alum - 2025 Alumni Awards

Each year, Concordia is honored to recognize outstanding alumni and friends with our distinguished awards. Do you know an outstanding Concordia-Chicago (or River Forest!) alum who should be recognized? **We are accepting nominations for next year's cycle until December 1.**

For more information and to submit an individual, click below or visit cuchicago.edu/alumni/honors-awards

Nomination Form



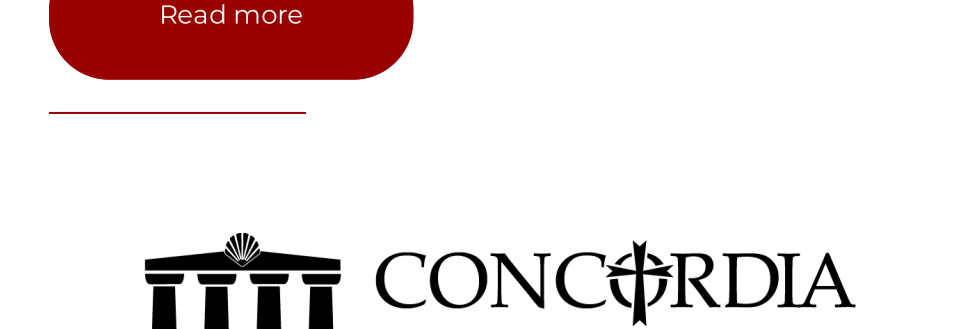
Men's Basketball CUC Legacy Day

Calling all Concordia-Chicago (RF) Men's Basketball alumni!

Join us on Saturday, December 7th to celebrate Men's Basketball CUC Legacy Day! Alumni from every generation are invited to reconnect with former teammates and celebrate the rich history of Concordia-Chicago Men's Basketball.

A full day of activities, as well as a t-shirt, ticket to the game, and all meals, are included with your registration.

Schedule of Events:
9:00 am – Men's Basketball Shootaround (a light continental breakfast will be served)
10:00 am – Alumni Game warmups
10:30 am – Alumni Game Tip Off (optional and open to the first 22 registrants)
12:30 pm – Alumni Brunch in Crossroads Cafeteria
2:00 pm – Concordia Cougars vs Edgewood University game
5:30 pm – Alumni social in the Alumni Room (Koehneke Community Center)



Register

(re)generations by Dave Sobotka

This is the last week to enjoy the free art exhibition at Ferguson Art Gallery: Sobotka's work investigates themes of mortality. The title of the exhibition, "(re)generations," is tied to the biblical passage from Ecclesiastes, "What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever."

Date: Ends November 16th
Location: Ferguson Art Gallery

Read more

Lessons and Carols

Concordia-Chicago's annual Christmas services are a beloved tradition, featuring scripture readings, choral music and congregational singing in celebration of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Music ensembles will include Kapelle, Laudate, Männerchor, Handbell Ensemble, Schola Cantorum and Chamber Orchestra.

Dates: December 7 & 8
Saturday, December 7 at 4 p.m.
Saturday, December 7 at 7 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 8 at 4 p.m. (online streaming video only)

Location: Chapel of Our Lord & Livestream

Read more



Alumni Relations