



For Students

May 14, 2025



Cherry Blossom Festival Continues to Find PFW Campus a Great Place to Cultivate Growth

When Fort Wayne's Cherry Blossom Festival outgrew its downtown location three years ago, the event moved to the campus of Purdue University Fort Wayne. Even with 600 acres to play with, ensuring elbow room is still a consideration.

Last year, more than 12,000 people participated in the **six-hour event** celebrating Japanese Culture. Most of the activities radiated out from Walb Student Union to various other locations in the middle of campus. On Sunday, the 2025 event will stretch even further to accommodate more bodies, booths, and vendors, this time edging toward Gates Sports Center.

The festival runs from noon to 8 p.m., and admission is free. PFW serves as a community partner. Everything starts with Fort Wayne Taiko, a program of the Fort Wayne Dance Collective, playing

its big drum to call spectators into the International Ballroom at Walb for the opening ceremony.

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Purdue Fort Wayne's 2025 Commencement a Moment to Reflect and Celebrate

Although it's happened 56 times before, commencement at Purdue University Fort Wayne has that wonderful knack of seeming like a brand-new exercise each and every spring. That's a testament to the hard work and achievements of students who understand that this may be their first time in the spotlight—but it probably won't be the last.

Purdue Fort Wayne's 57th commencement this afternoon at Allen County War Memorial Coliseum will be a moment of reflection and celebration for nearly 800 students, along with their families and friends, who will join together to experience one of life's most significant milestones. As of Tuesday, 1,408 students were projected to earn their Purdue degree this academic year when the conferral process is completed in August.

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Chancellor Ron Elsenbaumer and College of Science Dean Ron Friedman presented Ryan Miller (center) with a Top 50 award at this year's Top 50 and Exemplar dinner and ceremony on April 25.

Roundabout Journey Led Miller to PFW and Career Passion

Asked how he got to this point in his academic career, Ryan Miller sighs and shrugs before leaning back in his chair.

"I've had a lot more roundabout journey," Miller said. "Let's just start from there."

Miller, B.S. '24, now a graduate student pursuing his master's degree in parasitology at Purdue University Fort Wayne, admits he was a little uninspired during his Angola High School studies. He didn't care much for homework, but was bright enough to do well on the tests with a little effort.

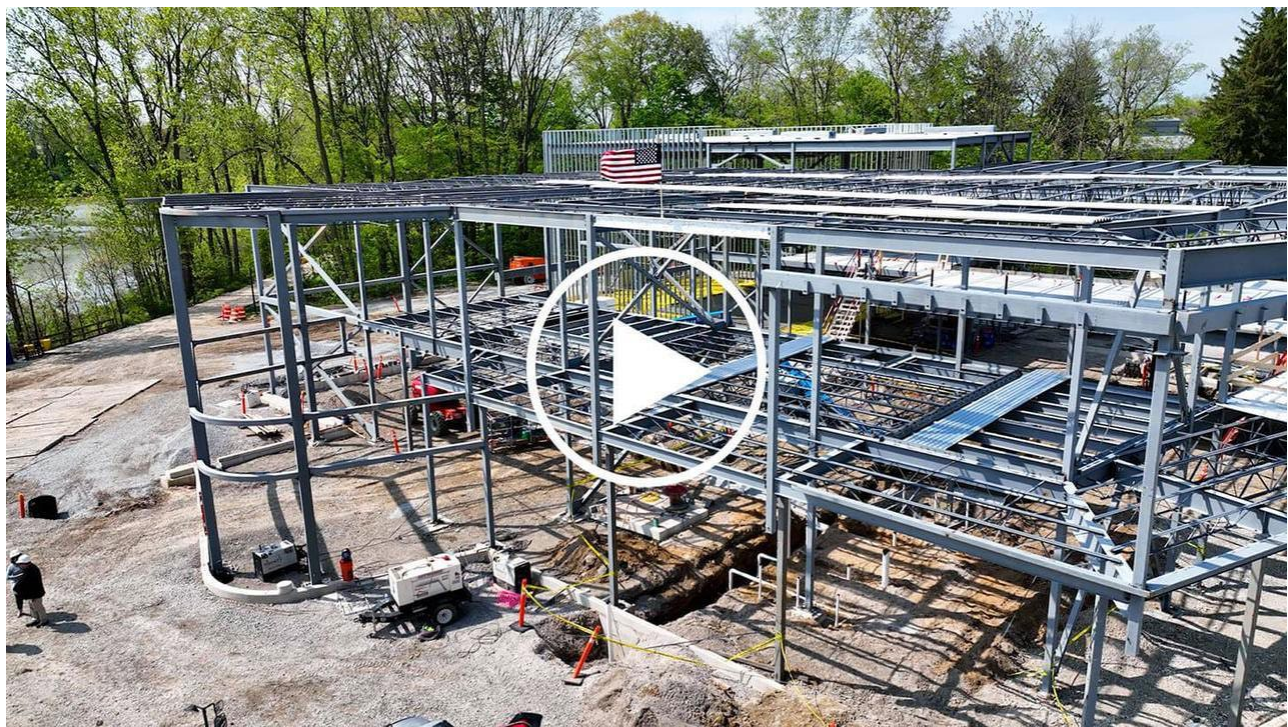
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Students Enjoy First-Ever “Finals and Flapjacks” Opportunity

To cap off the first day of finals week on May 5, more than 165 students ate a late-night breakfast at the inaugural “Finals and Flapjacks” event at Don’s at Walb. With help from 24 faculty and staff volunteers, students were treated to a buffet from Fresh Ideas and games. A few even won prizes such as a TV, Bluetooth speakers, and snap packs, all courtesy of the Student Activities Board.

Several servers photographed above (left to right) included Tina Grady, associate vice chancellor of Human Resources; Rhonda Meriwether, director of the Multicultural Center; Amy Jagger, benefits director for Human Resources; Brianna Kauffman, credentials and support supervisor in the Department of Civil and Mechanical Engineering; and Bryant Williams, academic director for TRIO Student Support Services.



Catch a Bird's-Eye View of the Topping out of the Surack-Sweetwater Music Industry Building

The tradition of topping out a new construction with its last—and often highest—beam was observed Thursday at the site of the Surack-Sweetwater Music Industry Building on the campus of Purdue University Fort Wayne.

Leading up to this milestone, students, faculty, and staff were invited to help leave their mark on the project by signing the freshly painted piece of steel.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

Longtime Backer of University Highlights 2 Students in Year-end Wrap-up

The group Friends of the University at Purdue Fort Wayne has recognized three individuals who were recipients of its annual awards.

Leah Hathaway, a mechanical engineering major, and Weston Tilby, a biology major, will receive \$1,000 students scholarships from the Friends group.

Student scholarship recipients must be an incoming freshman at the start of the fall semester and have demonstrated strong academic performance based on high school GPA and national test scores. They are also required to make a brief presentation at a Friends meeting.

The Friends Outstanding Teacher Award was presented to Suin Roberts, associate professor of German.

Friends started in 1976 to support the university through the engagement of members in a variety of educational meetings, campus-based events, and annual giving. The membership includes current and former professional women who advocate and support the university while also continuing their own passion for learning. In 2023, Art Friedel, a professor emeritus in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, was recruited to become the first male to join the group.

Working through the **Office of Development and Alumni Engagement**, Friends has raised money for campus projects, including more than \$15,000 for the **FRIENDS of the University Pantry**.

Complete the First Destination Survey, Earn a Chance to Win a Diploma Frame

Purdue University Fort Wayne's annual invitation to graduating undergraduate students to share reflections on their experiences launched just over two weeks ago with personal emails sent via Handshake. Those who have not completed the survey will continue to receive periodic email reminders every two weeks until Sept. 25. The survey closes Oct. 9.

As an incentive to share this valuable feedback—and to get removed from the reminder distribution list—the first 200 students who complete the FDS will be entered into a drawing to receive one of 10 diploma frames.

Career Development Center team members will also be hosting a table at Senior Send-off on Tuesday to answer questions and encourage participation.

Any graduating undergraduate students wishing to complete the survey immediately may click on this hyperlink: **Graduating Undergrad Survey SP25**. Eligible students and their email addresses have already been submitted to Handshake.



Be on the Lookout for Special Editions of *Don Life* This Summer

During the 2024–25 academic year, you received 36 weekly and six special editions of *Don Life* delivered directly your inbox. That's in addition to other official communications like messages from Chancellor Elsenbaumer.

For anyone who wants to revisit a previous student newsletter, including Mastodons looking to stay in the loop after graduation, the *Don Life* **archive** is there so you can find back issues in one convenient location. All this and more is easily accessible in the university's **News Center**.

Like many of you, *Don Life* is also going to take some time off this summer. After today, the weekly edition will be on hiatus until Aug. 13. During this pause, important university updates and breaking news will still arrive via special editions—so continue to check your PFW email account regularly.

From all of us at *Don Life*, have a safe and relaxing summer!

Mastodon Moments

Seen and noted around campus. Monitor our university social feeds for more great moments of Mastodon life.



These students added their signatures to the new Surack-Sweetwater Music Industry Building's ceremonial last beam on May 8. See what the finished product will look like by [clicking here](#).

Athletics



Events Calendar



News Center



Don Life Archive



Don Life is an official university communication sent weekly on Wednesday to all currently enrolled students. Don Life Special Edition is a supplement to the regularly scheduled newsletter. It covers breaking news and time-sensitive information directly related to university operations.

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