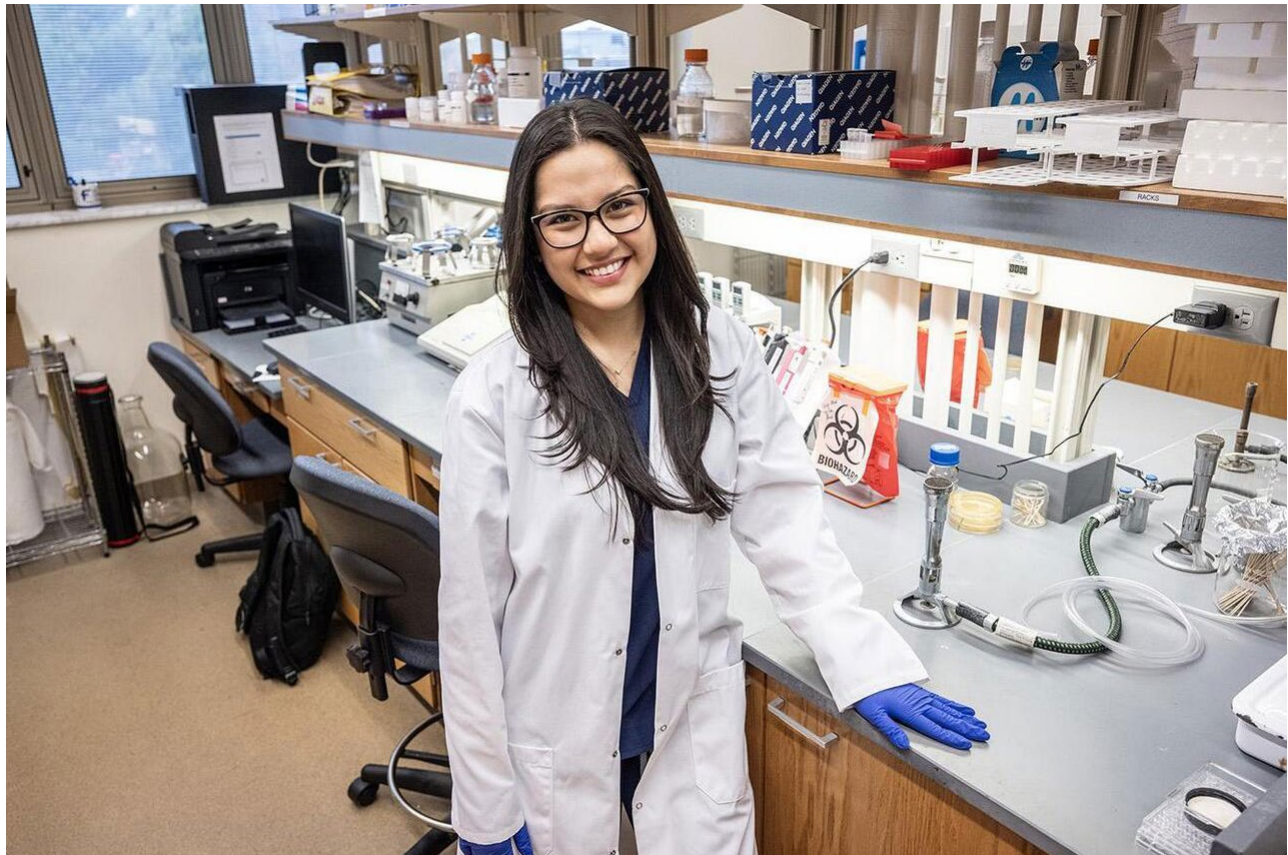




For Students

December 17, 2025



## Grad Student's Journey Shows Power of Perseverance

Her warmth and determination always stand out, but it's Perla Figueroa Fiallos's life story that leaves a lasting impression. Her remarkable journey is defined by perseverance, gratitude, and compassion.

Born in rural Honduras, Perla and her family lived in a cluster of mud huts on a remote farm, existing in poverty near a town of about 2,500 people. There was limited electricity, no internet, and candles were a necessity.

When she was 5, in an attempt to help their daughter build a future, her parents left her with a friend of a friend she had never met in a city six hours away so she could attend private school. Despite those obstacles, Perla thrived, eventually graduating high school at the top of her class.

"I have a sense of gratefulness for every little detail in life, especially the education my parents provided me," Perla said recently.

[READ MORE](#)

Share the story:



## Longtime Purdue Fort Wayne Chemistry Professor Art Friedel Establishes Award to Support Honors Students

The educational pursuits of students in the Honors Program at Purdue University Fort Wayne will soon get a boost thanks to a former faculty member and major supporter of PFW. The Art Friedel Honors Experiential Learning Award is named after the professor emeritus who taught chemistry at the university between 1967 and 2018.

Starting this academic year, the award will be granted through a three-year pilot program to one or multiple recipients, with a total amount of up to \$6,000 per year to provide funding to help provide transformative experiential learning opportunities. Examples include internships, research projects, service learning, study away programs, and other immersive educational experiences, especially those that may present financial barriers to the student.

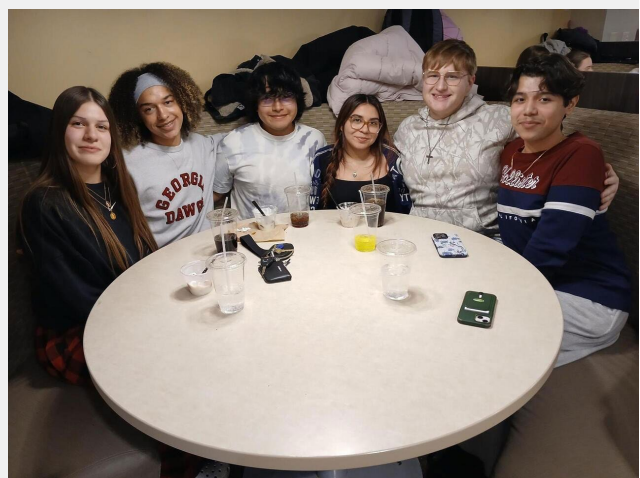


"Since arriving at PFW in 1967, I have devoted my efforts to making this university an exceptional place for students to learn and grow," Friedel said. "My hope is that this award enables the selected honors student to deepen their understanding of the world beyond PFW and to carry those experiences forward in meaningful ways."

Applications for the award are being accepted now through Feb. 27.

[READ MORE](#)

Share the story:



## Late-Night Breakfast Fuels Students for Finals with Food and Fun

Besides providing its students with high-level training in classrooms and laboratories, one of the things Purdue University Fort Wayne does very well is finding ways to enhance their college experience. On Thursday, with help from a few dozen volunteers, **Fresh Ideas** served a free late-

night breakfast inside Don's at Walb to help students fuel up before finals week.

With lines snaking back throughout the atrium, 365 Mastodons enjoyed a delicious spread including pancakes, bacon, sausage, eggs, hash browns, yogurt, biscuits and gravy, sandwiches, muffins, and pastries.

For two hours, there were big smiles, fits of laughter, and lasting memories—a perfect recipe to help everyone relax and enjoy themselves before the important week ahead.



Left to right: Willow Cribb, SGA president; Amelia Yoder, biochemistry major; Demetria Pettie, TRIO SSS director; and LaSar'a Johnson, Lutheran Social Services

## TRIO Program's Support Includes Connections with Off-Campus Partners

The TRIO Student Support Services program at Purdue University Fort Wayne specializes in providing guidance to first-generation students, leading them through the college process, but also sometimes referring them to Fort Wayne agencies that offer a helping hand.

Recently renewed through another five-year government grant, **TRIO** started as part of a program initiated by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 to address poverty. It helps students, as many as 140 per year, find the support they need through mentoring, workshops, counseling, tutoring, social functions, and employment opportunities.



One collaboration the PFW office offers is "**Persistence Pays Off**," which includes United Way of Allen County and Lutheran Social Services. The voluntary program works with college students at PFW and Ivy Tech to encourage them to address issues, continue their studies, and eliminate barriers to completing their degrees.

[READ MORE](#)

Share the story:



## Coach Maria Marchesano Honored by Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame

Purdue University Fort Wayne women's basketball coach Maria Marchesano was named to the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame's **2026 Women's Silver Anniversary Team** on Tuesday. The team recognizes players from the high school graduating class 25 years earlier—in this case 2001. Members of the squad will be recognized at an April 25 banquet in Indianapolis.

Marchesano is in her 5th season as PFW's head coach.

[READ MORE](#)



## English Education Students Present Research at National Convention

Three Purdue University Fort Wayne undergraduate students recently participated in the 2025 National Council of English Teachers annual convention. All pursuing double majors in English and secondary education, Claire Merkler, Josie Platt, and Grace Runion spent a week in Denver seeing presentations from a Pulitzer Prize winner, award-winning authors, and educators who discussed the various aspects of teaching the English language arts. The PFW students also delivered roundtable presentations of their own in a session titled "The Future is Now," designed to give prospective and early career teachers a platform for presenting work they've been developing.

## Good to Know

---

### Winter Break Closures and Reduced Hours

For the duration of winter break, the Fitness Center and both FRIENDS of the University Pantry

locations will be subject to operational changes, including altered hours and closures on specific dates. Additionally, all campus buildings will be secured and locked from 9 p.m. on Dec. 23 through 7 a.m. on Jan. 3. Refer to the **Dec. 10 edition** of *Don Life* for details.

## *Don Life* on Hiatus

Today's *Don Life* is the final regularly scheduled edition of 2025. Publication will resume Jan. 14. While you're away, please continue to monitor your university email account and PFW's social media channels for special editions and breaking news.

## News Spotlight

---

*A sampling of external news coverage of Purdue University Fort Wayne.*

PFW professor breaks down how Indiana's redistricting vote will impact lawmakers, federal funding moving forward

21Alive | Friday

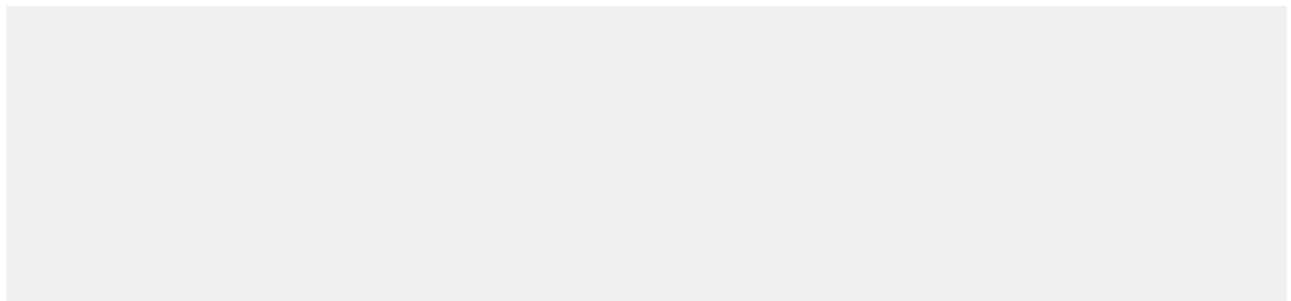
Konchar, Jankowski, Maahs, '99 men's soccer to be inducted into PFW Athletics Hall of Fame

FOX 55 | Thursday

## Mastodon Moments

---

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







Andrew Messmaker, a junior in mechanical engineering, orders lunch at Don's at Walb while making a holiday fashion statement, complete with multicolored flashing lights.

[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.

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY**  
**FORT WAYNE**

