



## Kaur's Story Opens the Door to Life-Changing Opportunities

Most people might see Cassie Kaur sitting in her College of Science classes at Purdue Fort Wayne and assume she's a completely normal, stereotypical student.

But her story is anything but ordinary.

Kaur was 17 years old when she decided to drop out of high school the summer before her junior year. Dealing with some issues, including depression, made attending class difficult. She tried online learning, which didn't work either. A guidance counselor suggested Kaur try for her general equivalency diploma, but, lacking confidence, Kaur decided that seemed quite the stretch.

She started working full-time at a fast-food restaurant, in a way, following her mother's example. A single mother of three children who worked in restaurant management, Kaur's mother also set

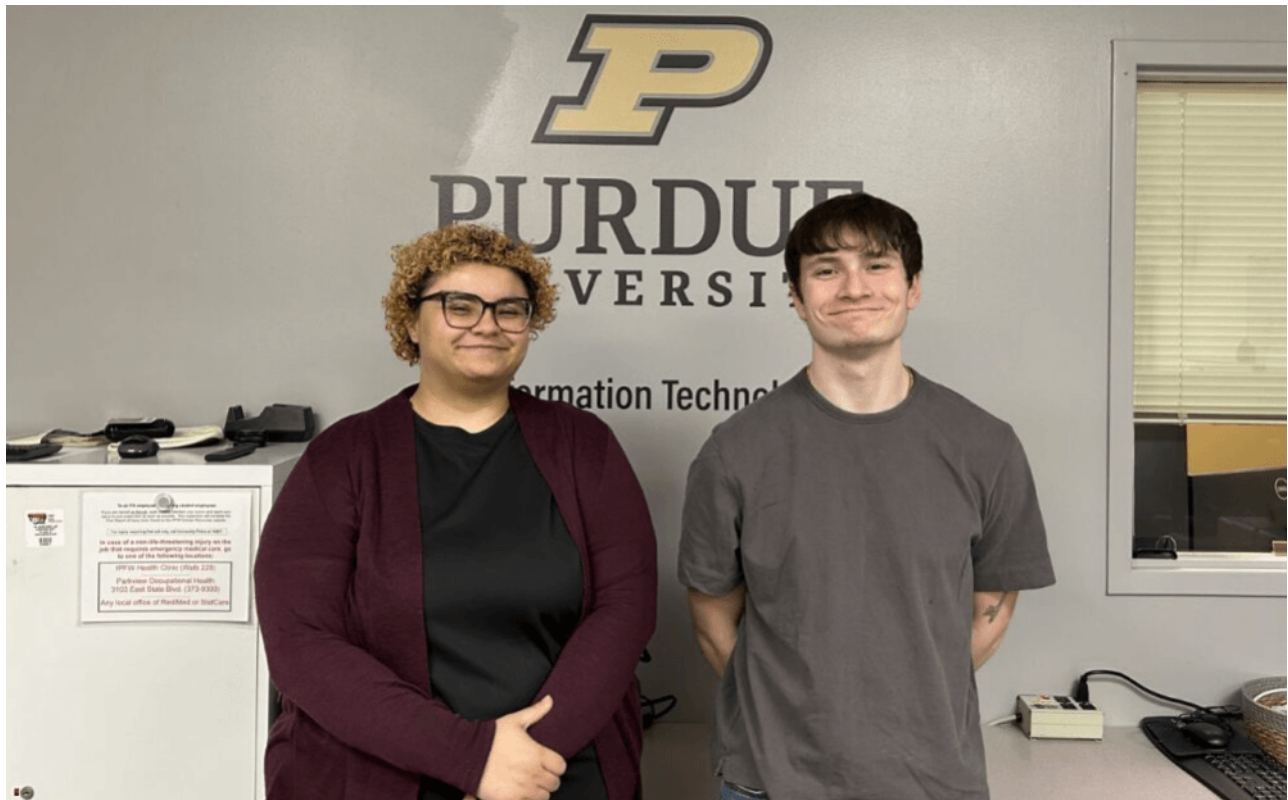
an example by taking night courses to earn a teaching degree.

Working full-time, while picking up any overtime she could, Kaur remembers one of her co-workers telling her she could see Kaur working in fast food the rest of her life. It wasn't said maliciously, just as an observation of how her life might turn out. The comment hit like an uppercut and motivated Kaur to take the GED test at age 18, where she shocked herself by passing with honors in writing, reading, and math.

The results were life-changing.

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Jubee Lipa and Dylan Stroder

## Brightspace Innovation Grant Powers Cross-Campus Service Desk Onboarding and Collaboration

A new Brightspace onboarding course developed through a **Brightspace Innovation Grant** is strengthening how Purdue prepares student workers for success in IT Service Desk roles—while showcasing the impact of thoughtful, cross-campus collaboration.

Led by Purdue IT's Digital Learning Solutions director, Katie Brown, the project brings together faculty (Matthew Perkins Coppola-PFW and Suzanne Pfeiffer-PNW), staff (Jill Lynn and Chris Hallenbeck-Purdue IT), student workers (Alex Sharpe-PNW and Dylan Stroder-PFW), and education majors (Addison Black-PNW and Jubee Lipa-PFW) from across three campuses to develop a Brightspace course for onboarding the student employees who support campus technology services. The course establishes a consistent foundation of knowledge, expectations, and confidence for new hires, while still honoring the distinct operational needs of each campus.

Development work began following grant approval, with planning and proposal efforts in fall 2024 and course building ramping up in summer 2025. The education majors worked directly with the service desk employees through the fall to design practical, relevant, and learner-centered course content, contributing their expertise in online pedagogical design under the supervision of their faculty mentors. Weekly project meetings served to inform each iteration and keep the project on pace.

The resulting course was used this spring to onboard six new hires at the PFW and PNW campuses. Black and Lipa conducted focus groups with the hires on their respective campuses, providing valuable insights into how to further improve the course and how to add courses for additional IT units. With the first phase completed ahead of schedule, the team plans to extend onboarding content into IT Networking—demonstrating how this collaborative model can scale to support broader training and workforce development across the university.



Purdue Fort Wayne Names 2026 Summit Scholars, Awarding

## Top Students Full-Ride Scholarships

Purdue University Fort Wayne has announced the recipients of its prestigious 2026 Summit Scholars awards, recognizing a select group of incoming students for their exceptional academic achievement, leadership, and commitment to service.

The Summit Scholars Program is one of the university's most distinguished and competitive scholarship initiatives, designed to attract and support high-achieving students through a rigorous and personalized educational experience. Scholars are selected through a highly competitive process and represent some of the most accomplished high school seniors in the region and beyond.

Summit Scholars compete for two of Purdue Fort Wayne's most prestigious full-ride scholarships: the Chapman Scholarship and the Doermer Distinguished Scholarship. These merit-based awards provide full tuition, on-campus housing, textbooks, a food stipend, and fees for up to four years.

[VIEW THE RECIPIENTS](#)

Share the story:



## Reminder: New Anthem Plan Administrator

Effective January 1, AmeriBen has become the plan administrator for the Purdue medical plans through Anthem.

With this change, those enrolled will now access copies of their ID cards, claims, and plan information via the **AmeriBen Engage member portal**. Members can also use the portal or the Engage app to search for Anthem in-network providers and compare cost-of-care estimates.

2025 and historical claim information will remain accessible through Anthem's member site, but current information will be housed only on AmeriBen's site.

For more information about AmeriBen, visit **Purdue's website**.

Questions? Contact Amy Jagger in Human Resources at **[anjagger@pfw.edu](mailto:anjagger@pfw.edu)**.



## Office of Development and Alumni Engagement Open House

The Office of Development and Alumni Engagement will welcome PFW faculty and staff at an open house celebrating its new location in the Steel Dynamics Keith E. Busse Mastodon Alumni Center.

Stop by anytime on April 29 between 7:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. on PFW's **Day of Giving**, The Big Give—the university's largest annual fundraising effort. Coffee, breakfast, lunch, and snacks will be available throughout the day, providing opportunities to connect, explore the new space, and join in the excitement of The Big Give.

Whether having a few minutes or a longer break, all are welcome to stop in, say hello, and celebrate this exciting milestone while supporting the future of PFW.



## Cheers to John O'Connell: A Life in Theatre and Leadership

Celebrate the distinguished career of John O'Connell, dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, at a retirement open house on April 30.

Stop by the International Ballroom at Walb Student Union between 4 and 7 p.m. to share your well wishes, enjoy light refreshments, and honor his years of leadership and dedication to the arts community.

# Eventful

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*There's always plenty to do at Purdue Fort Wayne. To find your favorites—or discover new activities—check the full [events calendar](#) often to see what's happening on campus.*

APRIL

23

Today, 6–8 p.m.

## Pop & Rock Supershow #2

This high-energy concert will feature popular music ensembles delivering an exciting mix of classic covers and original hits, making for an unforgettable night of pop and rock entertainment...

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APRIL

26

Sun., 7:30–9 p.m.

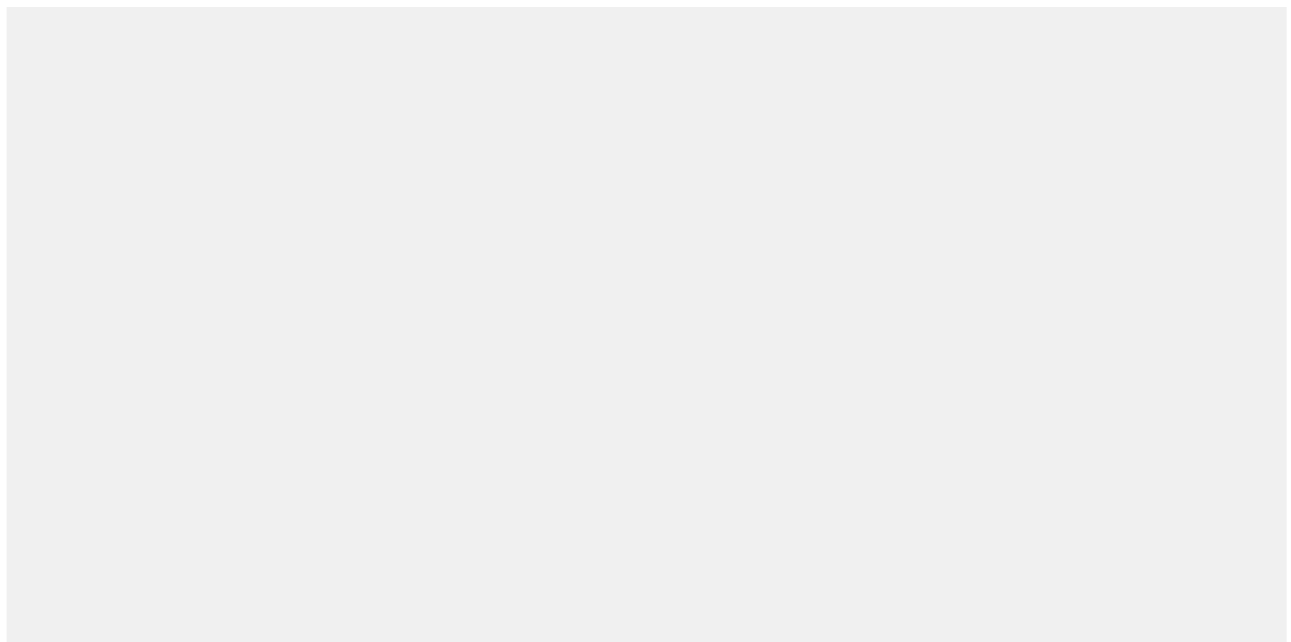
## PFW Jazz Combo Spring Concert

PFW Jazz Combo presents a concert of classic jazz repertoire from the 1950's to the present. Individual improvisational creativity is explored in a variety of styles including bebop, modal, Latin jazz, and jazz-funk...

# In a Snap

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





Chancellor Ron Elsenbaumer congratulated the university's new Chief of Police, Rick Wiegmann, at a formal swearing-in ceremony on April 17. Wiegmann has served the university for more than 16 years, most recently as interim chief and previously as a sergeant since joining the department in 2009.

News Center



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