



FIRST QUARTER HIGHLIGHTS JULY

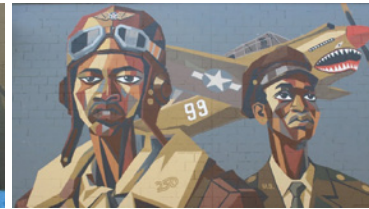
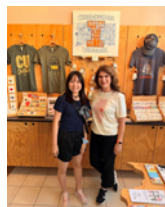
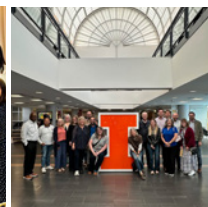
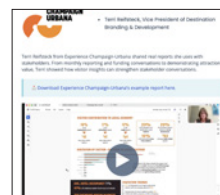
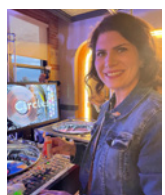
- Four teams competed in the **5th Annual Beep Baseball Tournament** in Savoy.
- Terri spoke to potential **Gies College of Business** students about her career path following getting her degree from the College of Business.
- We hosted a **Heritage Trail Celebration** on July 15 at Douglass Library and released new trail app for iPhone and Android.
- Jayne participated in the Destinations International board meetings and presented **"Inclusive Tourism in Practice: Centering Black Voices in Destination Development"** with Dr. Charis Tucker at the DI Annual Convention in Portland, OR.

AUGUST

- 35 teams competed in the **Team IL Senior Softball Tournament** in Rantoul.
- Jayne participated in the **Mahomet Music Festival**.
- The **Tuskegee Airmen mural**, created by artist Dwight White, II, was unveiled in Rantoul.
- Terri provided **community tours** for new members of the **Carle Talent Attraction** team.
- ECU team participated in the **New Faculty Resource Fair**, the **International Welcome to the FamLLy Social**, the **New Student Fair** at Grange Grove, and the **International Student Fair** at Krannert Center.
- Terri and Carly hosted the **5th annual New Faculty Community Tour**, in partnership with MTD, which ended in downtown Champaign for Friday Night Live.
- Terri and Cristy went to **US Travel Association's ESTO Conference** in Philadelphia to learn the latest trends and technology in tourism marketing, and to network with colleagues from around the country.
- ECU **welcomed Kelly Skinner** as the Office Operations Manager.
- We announced a **new NIL partnership** with Fighting Illini Athletics.

SEPTEMBER

- 92 attendees came to our **New to CU Mixer** at the Colonnades Club, with **Fighting Illini athletes Aidan Flinn (baseball) and Brenna Farmer (softball)** in attendance.
- ECU team was hyped to welcome back the **Fighting Illini Athletics** fall season!
- Jayne and Terri attended the **Chancellor's Tailgate** for the home opener.
- Terri presented a webinar with **Zartico** on **utilizing data to tell a story** to your stakeholders. Over 40 participants attended.
- Jayne attended an opening reception for the **artwork of Jose Vazquez** at the University YMCA.
- Jayne participated in the **ATHENA Awards** reception.
- Terri presented on the use of AI and other tools for small businesses at the **Monticello Bootcamp**.
- We hosted the annual ECU/ECUF Board and Trustee **FAM tour focusing on gaming and recreation** in Champaign-Urbana.
- Gina attended the **Destination Midwest Conference** in Grand Rapids September 21-24 and met one-on-one with meeting planners specifically looking to host their events in the Midwest region.



LODGING + VISITOR DATA

Reporting July–September 2026 | Data provided by Zartico
 Based on 270,169 credit cards and 73,533 mobile devices observed.

HOTELS
 SHORT TERM VACATION RENTALS

	TOTAL REVENUE (IN MILLIONS)	AVERAGE OCCUPANCY	AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY (in days)	DEMAND (in thousands)
Champaign	\$3.9	47.8%	3.5	33.3
	\$14.7	70.9%	1.9	115.6
Rockford	\$2.8	56.6%	5.1	22.0
	\$16.4	80.0%	2.1	116.9
Peoria	\$2.1	57.8%	3.6	18.7
	\$17.2	58.5%	2.1	127.9
Bloomington Normal	\$1.54	52.7%	3.7	13.4
	\$17.2	69.6%	1.8	127.2

VISITOR % OF TOTAL

17%
 of all people
 observed were visitors

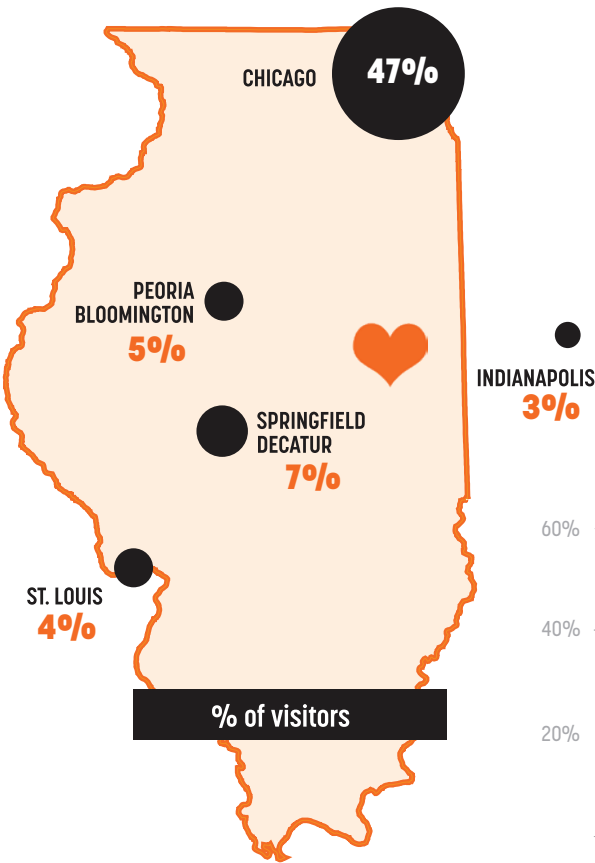
VISITOR SPEND OF TOTAL

17%
 of all spend came
 from visitors

% OF VISITOR SPEND
 toward local businesses

24%

35% of visitors were from out-of-state.



VISITOR IMPACT



21%

visitor spend of total

\$35

avg. daily visitor spend



15%

visitor spend of total

\$61

avg. daily visitor spend



36%

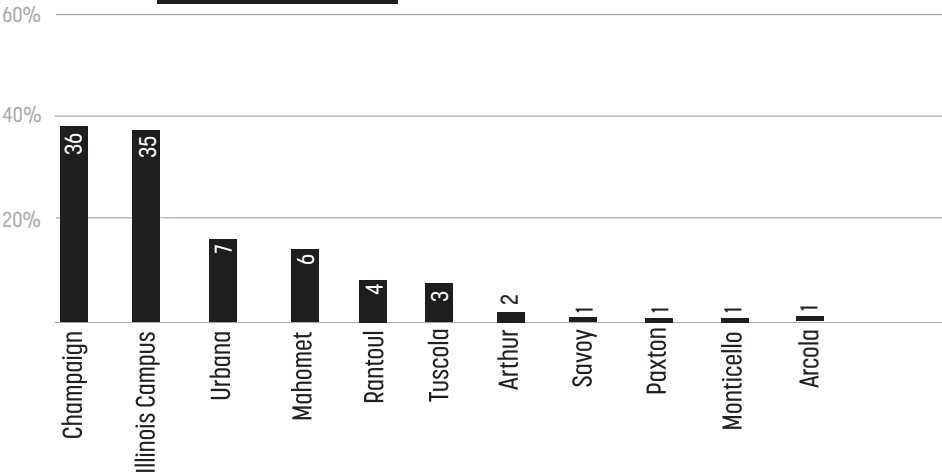
visitor spend of total

\$85

avg. daily visitor spend

VISITATION BY CITY

% of total visitation



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Thank you to **Heartland Coca-Cola** for investing in the ECU Foundation! Through a shared commitment to community connection and opportunity, their support helps celebrate our region's diverse culture, and strengthen the communities where we **live, work, and visit**.



SPOTTED ON LOCATION

Each month, the ECU Board of Directors and ECU Foundation Trustees meet at a different location, allowing them to learn more about area amenities. We are grateful to hear from each location on their specific offerings available for residents and visitors.



JULY

ECU Board—
Hilton Garden Inn



SEPTEMBER

Annual ECU/ECUF Familiarization Tour, with a Gaming & Recreation theme. Stops included Atkins Golf Club, ARC, Titan Games, CUDO Plays, Boneyard Boulders, Araiguma: Advanced Battle Center, and The Yard, featuring Mahjong.



Great work today on the Zartico Connect webinar! You all never cease to amaze me! Your website is amazing; your brand is spot on; Jayne's session at DI was great; I love the work you do with local artists; and now this. I fully have a DMO crush! We have been working with Zartico for two years and have been working to figure out how to share information with our stakeholders. I really like how you set everything up. —Lynn Tillotson, Visit Portland (Maine)



WELCOME KELLY SKINNER

Kelly brings more than 20 years of leadership experience across healthcare, higher education, nonprofits, and membership associations. With a background in marketing communications, organizational leadership, and student affairs, she specializes

in building effective teams and operational systems that advance the missions of organizations. Originally from Pennsylvania, Kelly has called the Champaign-Urbana area home for nearly 20 years, residing in St. Joseph with her husband, Shawn. A proud mother of five and grandmother, Kelly enjoys reading, traveling, and exploring new cultures. Having visited 49 states and more than a dozen countries, she brings a curiosity about people and places to everything she does.



WHAT'S NEW IN FILM

Film CU, the official film office for the Champaign County area, continues to support efforts to bring production to the region. Over the first quarter:

- A feature film about Olympic wrestler **Dan Gable** completed filming in our county.
- A feature film, **Boy Code**, completed filming in our county.
- The **CU Cinema Crawl** committee was formed to plan this new event, March 3–8, 2027.
- A new production called **Last Meals** completed a final scout of our area.



HEARD ON CHAMBANA PROUD

Sam Ihm, Kickapoo Rail Trail

Anthony Benjamin, Triptych Brewing

Pam Lau, Parkland College

Jenny & Vaughn, Haypenny Market

Francisco & Ashlyn, New American Welcome Center and The Refugee Center

Tune in at chambanaproud.com or wherever you podcast every Thursday!



MARKETING MATTERS

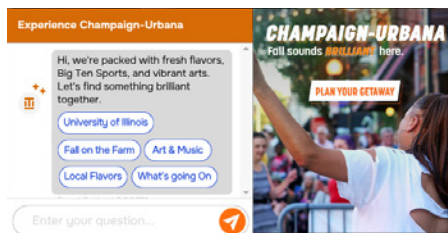


2026-2027 CHAMPAIGN-URBANA AREA EXPERIENCE GUIDE

The annual Experience Guide was released in early August with a large focus on our agritourism industry. The cover features our local producers and makers, with additional features and editorial within the guide. Additional new content includes themed itineraries that help individuals find new places to visit and extend their time in our region. 45,000 guides were printed, with 8,000 distributed in the first month!

TIKI ENVOY REACH CAMPAIGN

This AI chatbot driven campaign was launched in August, designed to reach value-seeking, LGBTQ+, food & wine, and culture-and-history travelers across 8 Midwest states. The campaign pre-populates bubbles focusing on hot topics such as the University of Illinois or Fall on the Farm. It will also answer questions with content provided directly from our website. To date, the campaign has generated **269 queries** and **6,541 clicks** to our website, with over **50% of all traffic** interested in the **University and Local Flavors**. Other hot topics include Fall on the Farm, Art & Music, and What's Going On.



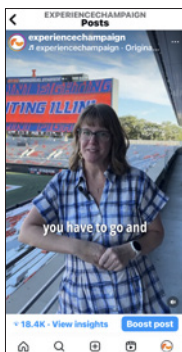
HERITAGE TRAIL HAPPENINGS

Touring and Public Engagement: Hosted a downtown walking tour for University of Illinois education students, a September 16 Food for the Soul presentation, two ClarkLindsey bus tours, and a September 24 FAM tour. Continued discussions with Jack and Jill of America, Cunningham Children's Home, and a Decatur group about future Trail experiences.

Public Art & Preservation: Celebrated Dwight White II's Tuskegee Airmen mural unveiling in Rantoul, supported by the Illinois Arts Council and community sponsors. The loss of a community mural KOFENA, shown above, heightened preservation efforts, prompting reviews of existing agreements, outreach to JSJ Property Management regarding EPOCH, and efforts to identify the Breaking Barriers building owner.

Recognition & Project Advancement: The Trail received the 2026 Landmarks Illinois Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Award for Stewardship, recognizing efforts to preserve and share local Black history. Continued planning with the St. Luke Trail Marker committee.

Educational Partnerships & Sustainability: Initiated discussions with University of Illinois partners on an oral-history collaboration to preserve community voices and develop educational content. Participated in Illinois 250 calls and Champaign County Museum Network meetings to strengthen partnerships.



14,447

followers

245.2K views | 67.2 viewers

2.6K interactions



10,620

followers

136.6K views

3.6K content interactions

HOT TOPIC

Facebook & Instagram: Organic reel of Terri filmed at Gies Memorial Stadium during the New to CU Mixer.

The reel lists things to do in CU, and is a response to international social media influencers visiting U of I. The reel leveraged the talents of the ECU marketing team and is an example of quick and nimble social media that resonates with both ECU followers and non-followers.

24.3K views on Facebook & 18.2K views on Instagram

BOOKED BUSINESS

The **Illinois Economic Development Association** will host their 2027 meeting at the I Hotel & Illinois Conference Center next summer. ECU is assisting with overflow hotel options and welcome bags.

The **American Institute of Architects Illinois** are hosting their annual meeting in Champaign-Urbana in October 2026. ECU assisted the group with an offsite networking reception.

The **Downstate Illinois Government Finance Officers Association (IGFOA)** is hosting their annual conference at the I Hotel & Illinois Conference Center in March 2027. ECU assisted the group with local options for an opening reception.

The **Illinois Tax Increment Association & Illinois Enterprise Zone Association** will host their spring 2027 conference at the Hotel Royer in Urbana. ECU presented conference space options.



OUR MISSION

We promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents.

PARTNERS

DESTINATION FOUNDER

Illinois Office of Tourism
City of Champaign
University of Illinois

DESTINATION LEADER

Busey :: Village of Rantoul :: City of Urbana

DESTINATION BUILDER

Carle Health :: Champaign County :: Village of Savoy
Ameren Illinois

DESTINATION BACKER

Parkland College :: Champaign Park District :: Urbana Park District :: Champaign County Forest Preserves :: Village of Mahomet :: Village of St. Joseph :: Robeson Family Benefit Fund
Heartland Coca-Cola :: Maatuka Al-Heeti Emkes LLC
Lynne & Dick Barnes :: Zach Sehy :: Max Mitchell
Jayne DeLuce

REGIONAL PARTNERS

Arcola Chamber of Commerce :: Simply Arthur :: City of Tuscola
Make It Monticello :: City of Paxton



EXPERIENCE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA TEAM

Jayne DeLuce, President, CEO, & Foundation Executive Director
Terri Reifsteck, Vice President of Destination Branding & Development
Gina Scarpetta, Vice President of Sales
Kelly Skinner, Office Operations Manager
Mark Brown, Director of Event Services & Film
Cristy Gillespie, Director of Marketing
Kimberly Keniley-Ashbrook, Digital Content Manager
Clarissa Amundsen, Visitor Experience Coordinator
Robert White, Heritage Trail Manager
Leslie Lundy, Finance Manager (contracted)



2026-2027 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nathan Escue, Chair, Hamilton Walker's
Caleb Miller, Vice Chair, Carle Health
Sam Santhanam, Treasurer, I Hotel & Illinois Conference Center
Jayne DeLuce, Secretary (ex-officio), Experience Champaign-Urbana
Cassie Arner, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics
TJ Blakeman, City of Champaign
Jeffrey Brokish, Salt Fork Food Works
John Brown, Village of Savoy
Bob Flider, University of Illinois
Jasmine Godia, ClarkLindsey
Sam Hall, Village of Rantoul
Jennifer Lokshin, Champaign County Board
Shayla Maatuka, Maatuka Al-Heeti Emkes, LLC
Vanna Pianfetti, Champaign City Council
Emily Scherzer, Busey
Darius White, City of Urbana



2026-2027 FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Lynne Barnes, Chair, University of Illinois
Zach Sehy, Vice Chair, Christie Clinic
Jesse Hines, Treasurer, Hilton Garden Inn
Jayne DeLuce, Secretary, Experience Champaign-Urbana
Rachel Coventry, Vice Chair, Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Patch
John Hammond, Urbana School District 116
Jeff Kurtz, University of Illinois Gies College of Business
Katie Miller, MH
Max Mitchell, ReMax
Susan Muirhead, University of Illinois Informatics Program
Lowa Mwilambwe, University of Illinois
Jami Painter, University of Illinois System
Jon Salvani, University of Illinois, College of Fine & Applied Arts
Emily Scherzer, Busey
Stephanie Seay, Heartland Coca-Cola
Leslie Lundy, Asst. Treasurer (ex-officio)

