

Ucity PRIDE

Homecoming Week

Tradition, Spirit & Celebration

Honoring Excellence

in U. City Schools



A Publication for and about
The School District of
University City, Missouri

FALL 2025-26

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Superintendent of Schools

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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



The 2025-26 SY is off to a great start. We began the year with staff, highlighting our District theme, CommUNITY. The theme celebrates the relationships, partnerships, and collective spirit that make University City such a wonderful place

to learn, work, and grow. Whether in classrooms, schools, or in the community, we know that when we come together, we create the conditions for every student to flourish.

Thanks again for supporting Prop U; we made exciting progress over the summer. Our upgraded UCHS Sports Complex is looking fantastic just in time for Homecoming season. The entire complex now features energy-efficient LED lighting, enabling safe evening use during events and games. That investment helped us make history on August 29, when our Lions hosted their first-ever Friday night home football game. With the Pride cheering them on, our team delivered a 20-0 victory over John Burroughs. It was a night filled with energy, spirit, and joy—one our community will never forget.

We can't wait to continue the celebration with this year's Homecoming events, the week of October 13-October 18, including the biennial Hall of Fame Ceremony, the Homecoming Parade, our football game, and the University City Education Foundation's Lions' Pride & Purpose Homecoming Concert. For more details, please refer to page 6 of this issue, and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

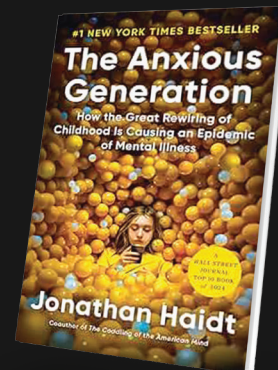
This summer also brought new statewide legislation impacting all public schools. Senate Bill 68, signed by Governor Mike Kehoe in July, requires districts to restrict or prohibit the use of cell phones and other personal communication devices by students during the school day, including breaks and lunch. The goal is to reduce distractions and create a healthier, more focused learning environment.

In University City, our approach centers on:

- **Supportive Over Punitive:** Our focus is on encouraging healthy habits, digital wellness, and human connection, not on punishment. However, consequences will be applied when necessary for repeated or disruptive behaviors.

- **Learning-Centered:** From the first bell to dismissal, policies reinforce student engagement, focus, and interpersonal communication.
- **Clear and Consistent Communication:** Students, families, and staff will receive ongoing reminders and clear explanations of the policy.

I invite you to join me on **Monday, October 13, 2025, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. at the University City Public Library** for a community book study of *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. This timely book examines how smartphones and social media have transformed childhood and contributed to the rise in youth mental health concerns, a particularly pertinent discussion as we implement our new cell phone policies. To register, please visit ucityschools.org/bookstudy.



Learning Reimagined remains our instructional vision. Looking ahead, we are beginning the next phase of planning for our District's growth and direction. Please join us for a **Community Strategic Planning Meeting on Monday, November 10, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in the University City High School Library**. Your input is vital as we shape goals and priorities that reflect our shared values and aspirations for students.

Finally, our Fall 2025-26 edition of Pride provides a snapshot of our work and progress. Thank you for being such an essential part of our U. City community. It is the strength of our connections with students, families, staff, and community that makes this District thrive. As we move forward together, let's continue building a community where children feel supported, all voices are valued, and every student has the opportunity to thrive.

In Service of Our Children,

Sharonica L. Hardin-Bartley

Sharonica L. Hardin-Bartley, Ph.D., PHR
Superintendent of Schools

Board of Education SPOTLIGHT

Greetings from the Board of Education!

The 2025-2026 school year is here, and with it, a fresh wave of excitement and possibilities for our entire community. We know that life can sometimes feel like a whirlwind, leaving little room for reflection and celebration. But as we embark on this journey together, it's important to pause and recognize the incredible resilience, strength, and unwavering commitment that unites us – a community that consistently demonstrates what it means to truly work together.

This past year, I've witnessed the power of our unity. Prop U, a testament to our shared vision, has ensured that our learning spaces are functional, inspiring and secure environments for our children to thrive. From modernized playgrounds at Pershing and Jackson Park Elementary schools to enhanced safety measures at Barbara C. Jordan Elementary, Pershing Elementary and Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center, these tangible improvements are a direct result of our collective effort and investment. We are building a brighter future together!

This year, we're also embracing a new district-wide cell phone policy in alignment with Missouri Senate Bill 68, requiring all public school districts to adopt a policy that restricts or prohibits student use of cell phones and other personal communication devices during the school day, including breaks and lunch. Change can be a powerful catalyst for unlocking new and unforeseen opportunities.

I believe each of us plays a vital role in creating a school district that nurtures every student's potential. We recognize the demands placed upon each of us, and it's in those moments that we see our individual strengths shine. Our educators bring creativity and empathy, crafting experiences that are not only rigorous but also relevant to the diverse needs of our students. Our building leaders champion innovative practices and support teachers in their commitment to every child's success. Meanwhile, our administration and board work to build a district that transforms lives daily.

I am proud of the advancements we've made under the district's "Learning Reimagined" vision, which prioritizes:



Well-being and Joy

Focusing on the holistic development of students and staff, recognizing that a positive and supportive environment is crucial for success.



Racial Equity

Working towards a more equitable and inclusive environment where all students feel valued and supported.



Partnerships

Fostering strong connections with families, community organizations like Alive & Well Communities, and institutions such as Washington University and the University of Missouri-St. Louis to enrich learning opportunities.

The excitement is palpable as we look forward to the new football field at the high school, just in time for homecoming. This new addition symbolizes the revitalization taking place within our schools and serves as a rallying point for our students, alumni, and the entire community.

Together, we can elevate learning and experiences, creating a district that we can all be immensely proud of. Thank you for your continued confidence and trust as we journey forward, hand-in-hand, to achieve even greater outcomes for our children and our community. We are University City, the Heart of the Lion!

Tameka Staten, Director



Meet Our School Board Members



Monica Stewart, Ed.D.
PRESIDENT

Liaison to University City
High School and ROAR
Academy at LLC



LaVerne Ford-Williams
DIRECTOR

Liaison to Flynn Park
Elementary School



Karen Bernstein
VICE PRESIDENT

Liaison to Barbara C.
Jordan Elementary School



Guerin Pichon
DIRECTOR

Liaison to Brittany
Woods Middle School



Kay Gage
SECRETARY

Liaison to Pershing
Elementary School



Tameka Staten
DIRECTOR

Liaison to Julia
Goldstein ECEC



Matt Bellows
DIRECTOR

Liaison to Jackson Park
Elementary School



Whitaker Staudt
**STUDENT
REPRESENTATIVE**

University City High
School Senior

Board Updates

On April 8, 2025, two candidates were named to three-year terms on The School District of University City Board of Education. Laverne Ford-Williams retained her seat for a fourth term as director, and Guerin Pichon was newly seated.

At its May 15, 2025 meeting, the Board voted to appoint Matt Bellows to serve the remainder of a one-year unexpired term and named rising senior Whitaker Staudt as the District's student representative for SY 2025-26.

The Board meets twice a month, except for July, October, December, and April, when there are no work sessions. Work sessions are typically held virtually on the first Thursday of the month at 5:45 p.m. Regular Board meetings are typically held on the third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. in person at the McNair Administration Building at 7700 Olive Boulevard, unless otherwise specified.

For more information regarding upcoming meetings, our current Board, and how to become a school board member, visit ucityschools.org/BOE. For additional information including agendas, minutes, and committee assignments, go to ucityschools.org/BoardDocs.

School Board Elections Public Notice of Filing

The School District of University City invites qualified individuals to file as candidates for the April 7, 2026, school board election. Three, three-year term positions will be on the ballot.

Filing will begin at 8 a.m. on December 9, 2025, and will continue during business hours, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. through December 30, 2025.

Interested persons should visit ucityschools.org/BOE or contact Executive Manager for the Board of Education Lakesha Boyce at (314) 290-4002 or lboyce@ucityschools.org.

Building Excellence:

New Leaders, Honored Educators, and School Achievements



Excellence in Action: Honoring U. City Educators and Staff

The School District of University City is proud to announce its 2025-26 Teachers of the Year and Educational Support Staff Person of the Year, recognized this spring for their outstanding service to students and the community. These annual honors celebrate educators and staff who exemplify both head and heart in their daily work with young people.

Christopher Buschling, Pre-Kindergarten Teacher at Julia Goldstein Early Childhood Education Center, and **Michael Loveless**, Physical Education Teacher at Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School, were named the District's 2025-26 Teachers of the Year. Both educators demonstrate remarkable instructional leadership, a contagious joy for learning, and a deep commitment to nurturing the whole child. Their impact extends beyond their classrooms, enriching their schools and the entire District community.

At University City High School, **Craig Morris**, Lead Well-Being Specialist, was recognized as the 2025-26 Educational Support Staff Person of the Year. Craig's thoughtful and intentional work continues to meet the essential needs of UCHS students and families. His dedication uplifts the school community and reflects the very best of University City's values of care, connection, and service.

The District celebrates these three outstanding educators for their leadership, compassion, and unwavering dedication to students.



District Welcomes New Leaders for the 2025-26 School Year

The School District of University City is pleased to announce several important leadership and staffing appointments for the 2025-26 school year.

At Brittany Woods Middle School, **Christina Sneed**, who served as Interim Assistant Principal during the 2024-25 school year and worked on our Curriculum & Instruction team for several years, will officially join the leadership team as Assistant Principal this fall. She will be joined by **Dr. Danielle DeLoatch**, who brings a strong instructional background and experience at both the elementary and secondary levels, having served in several school districts throughout the St. Louis region. In addition, **Dr. Christina Grove**, a UCHS alumna and former Brittany Woods teacher who most recently served as the District's Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instructional Leader, will return to Brittany Woods as Dean of Students.

At Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School, **Michele Sanders**, who served as Interim Principal last year, will continue as Assistant Principal, working alongside Principal Dorlita Adams and the school's leadership team.



In the area of student support, **Shannon Poynter** has been named SSD Area Coordinator for University City Elementary Schools. Poynter brings more than 15 years of teaching experience, including the last five years as a Resource Teacher at Barbara C. Jordan.



The District also welcomes **Kourtney Gilbert** as its first City Connects Program Manager, a new role supporting the District's partnership with City Connects, an organization dedicated to connecting children with resources to help them thrive.



These appointments reflect the District's ongoing commitment to strong leadership, instructional excellence, and comprehensive student support across all schools.

Pershing Elementary Earns Statewide Recognition for Academic Growth

The PRIME Center at Saint Louis University has released its annual growth reports, recognizing schools across Missouri with the highest student growth in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. Pershing Elementary School earned top honors, ranking **3rd in Mathematics growth** and **5th in ELA growth** among high-poverty schools statewide.

This achievement highlights the dedication of Pershing's students, staff, and families under the leadership of Principal Deitra Colquitt. The School District of University City is proud to celebrate the Pershing team for their commitment to student success.



UCHS

Homecoming

Three Days of Pride, Tradition, and CommUNITY

Hall of Fame Ceremony

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16

The celebration kicks off with the biennial Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, honoring outstanding UCHS alumni and their accomplishments. Learn more about the inductees on page 10. Tickets can be purchased at ucityschools.org/hof2025tickets.



Homecoming Game

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17

The UCHS Lions will take the field against the Affton Cougars in the Homecoming Game at the newly renovated Muhl-Schemmer Stadium.

Homecoming Parade and Concert

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18

The traditional Homecoming Parade will step off at 10 a.m. from University City's City Hall on Saturday, October 18, and make its way to the high school.

The weekend wraps up with the Lion's Pride & Purpose Homecoming Concert, presented by the University City Education Foundation, at 6:00 p.m. at COCA - The Berges Theater (6880 Washington Avenue). Performances include Anita Jackson and Brothers Lazaroff featuring Larry "Fallout" Morris, with special guest and U.City alum Chris Thomas, and Darius Bradford as emcee.



Celebrate the pride, music, and community spirit of University City! Tickets are available at ucityschools.org/ucefconcert.



Prop U Upgrades Shine Just in Time for Homecoming

This summer has brought tremendous progress across the District thanks to Prop U. The upgraded UCHS Sports Complex is already looking fantastic, just in time for Homecoming season. While the full project will be completed in 2026, the new turf has been installed and home games have officially returned to University City. The complex also features state-of-the-art, energy-efficient LED lighting, ensuring safe evening use for scheduled events and games.

Beyond the stadium, Prop U projects have been underway all throughout the District. Crews completed roof replacements, installed front entryway upgrades at Jackson Park and Flynn Park Elementary, and continued renovations that enhance the safety, functionality, and appearance of our schools.

To follow Prop U's ongoing progress, visit ucityschools.org/propu.



Hall *of* FAME

University City High School

The tradition of excellence continues as University City High School (UCHS) Principal Michael Peoples, EdD, and Superintendent Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, PhD, announced that 10 new names will be added to the historic high school's star-studded Hall of Fame.

The University City community continues to take pride in its long-standing tradition of graduating individuals who have made — and continue to make — a difference in the world through philanthropy and significant contributions to their fields.

UCHS alumnus Alan Spector will serve as the keynote speaker for the induction ceremony, which will be held on **Thursday, October 16, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at University City High School** (7401 Balson Ave, University City, MO 63130).

Tickets are available to purchase at ucityschools.org/hof2025tickets.

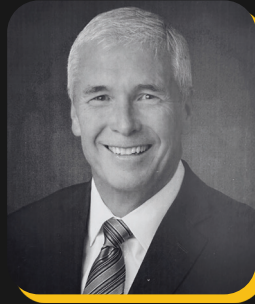


2025 HONOREES



E. Dorsey Ruth*
CLASS OF 1930

Educator, realtor, and advocate who championed equity for youth and co-founded Sherwood Forest Camp for underserved children



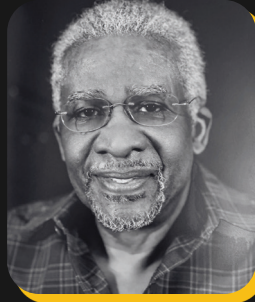
Robert B. Lochhead
CLASS OF 1970

Lawyer, humanitarian, and advocate for domestic violence victims and Ukrainian medical aid



Frances Buss Buch*
CLASS OF 1934

The first female executive and full-time director in U.S. television industry



Lamerol Gatewood
CLASS OF 1973

Internationally recognized abstract artist and educator



Mary Goldstein Stolar*
CLASS OF 1958

Dedicated public servant and historic preservationist who founded Forest Park Forever



Redditt Hudson
CLASS OF 1983

Social justice advocate and co-founder of the National Coalition of Law Enforcement Officers for Justice Reform and Accountability



Cecilia Lacks
CLASS OF 1963

Teacher, author and First Amendment advocate, recipient of the 1996 PEN/Newman Award



Gershon Norfleet, MD
CLASS OF 1994

Trailblazing forensic pathologist and first African American to lead a regional state medical examiner's office



Harley J. Hammerman, MD
CLASS OF 1967

Innovative radiologist, historian, and archivist



Justin Vail
CLASS OF 2001

Public servant and the first Special Assistant to the President for Democracy and Civic Participation under President Biden

**Posthumous*

Full bios of each inductee are available at ucityschools.org/hof2025.

A Roaring Success

Celebrating the Class of 2025

The School District of University City proudly celebrated the Class of 2025 with two unforgettable ceremonies this graduation season. On May 19, University City High School seniors walked across the stage at Chaifetz Arena, marking the culmination of years of hard work, resilience, and U. City Pride. Graduation season officially wrapped up on June 30 with ROAR Academy's Summer Commencement, held in the University City Library.

Together, the graduating class earned more than **\$7 million in scholarships**, a powerful testament to their dedication and bright futures ahead.





TO OUR CLASS OF 2025:

Your journey is just beginning, and we can't wait to see where your dreams take you next.

From the Stage to the Pool: U. City Success Stories

UCHS Alum Andrea Peoples Named University City Municipal Commission on Arts & Letters' Returning Artist for 2025-26

The University City Municipal Commission on Arts & Letters has named renowned professional dancer and choreographer, Andrea Peoples, Returning Artist for 2025-2026. Annually, the program invites a University City High School (UCHS) graduate who has achieved acclaim in the arts. Peoples (UCHS class of 2000), is this year's celebrated artist.

Andrea Peoples is a renowned professional dancer and choreographer specializing in cultural styles, with the privilege of studying under some of the world's most esteemed master dancers and musicians. Her impressive career highlights include collaborating on the film *Sinners* with acclaimed director Ryan Coogler and actor Michael B. Jordan, performing alongside Usher at the 2024 Essence Festival, and working with notable artists such as Jet Life & Curren\$y, Los Van Van, Pedrito Martinez, and CimaFunk.

In New Orleans, Peoples has shared the stage with esteemed acts like Big Freedia, the New Orleans Philharmonic Orchestra, IFÉ, and Big Sam, while also maintaining a long-running drum and dance residency at Ace Hotel New Orleans. Recognized as a cultural bearer for the city, she is also a skilled show producer and cultural arts consultant.

Peoples' expertise extends to various educational and community initiatives, including serving as a dance specialist for the Prism Project, which services special needs students. She has collaborated with Cuba NOLA as a consultant and instructor and produced the NYE program with Grey Goose Vodka and the NOPSI Hotel. Additionally, she co-coordinated for Black Dance USA St. Louis, and has taught and choreographed at esteemed institutions such as Washington University, Tulane University, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Dillard University, and Young Audiences of New Orleans.



Celebrate Andrea Peoples at UCHS

Peoples will be touring schools in The School District of University City during the district's Homecoming week (October 13th-October 18th, 2025). The Commission will host a public reception in Peoples' honor at University City High School (7401 Balson Ave.) on Tuesday, October 14 at 7:00 pm.

Register: ucityschools.org/RA2025



UCHS Senior Made a Splash at Junior Olympics

In July, just a week before senior Morgan Wibben was set to travel to Dallas, Texas, for the 2025 USA Water Polo National Junior Olympics, she was calm, focused, and ready to compete.

Morgan typically plays as a wing or point, and what draws her most to the game is its intensity. "I like physical and hard sports," she explained. "It's more rewarding for me when I do well, considering how tough the sport is."

Interestingly, Morgan doesn't describe herself as a natural-born athlete. She began her athletic journey at University City High School as a freshman volleyball player. It was during one of those volleyball practices that Coach Andrew Wool, SDUC Swim Coach, encouraged her to give water polo a try. That suggestion would spark a new passion.

Since then, Morgan has played both volleyball and water polo for UCHS. She joined the St. Louis Lions Water Polo Club, an outside team whose name fittingly echoes the University City Lions. Competing with the Lions at the Junior Olympics, she helped her team reach the platinum bracket and even scored a goal on the national stage.

She credits U. City for instilling in her the values of teamwork and sportsmanship.

"Being part of U. City sports has shaped the way I work with others," Morgan said.

As she prepares for her senior year, Morgan is equally excited about academics. She is enrolled in the Early College Program and plans to continue her studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis with the goal of becoming an optometrist.

Whether in the pool or the classroom, Morgan exemplifies the resilience and determination that make the U. City Pride shine.



UCHS Agriculture Program Installs First-of-its-Kind Smart Farm System



In June, University City High School's Agriculture and Sustainability Program reached an exciting milestone with the installation of its new Fresh Harvest 365 Smart Farm System, which is a self-contained, hydroponic growing system delivered by crane to the campus.

The high-tech canister, now located between the high school and the natatorium in the area students call The Lion's Den, will serve as an outdoor classroom where students can learn, grow, and even earn an industry credential in hydroponics. With this addition, UCHS became the first area high school to adopt the Smart Farm System and remains the first in St. Louis County and City to house a state-approved career and technical education program in agriculture.

Dr. Pamela Lester, UCHS Lead Agriculture Teacher, said the system will take the school's fast-growing program to the next level. "Our station is equipped with smart technology, which opens up many possibilities for integrating other disciplines into our agriculture curriculum," she shared.

The container, training, and support were made possible through a partnership with Fresh Harvest 365 and community supporters including the Danforth Foundation, Bayer, and Washington University. Operating on just five gallons of water and 180 kilowatts of electricity, the container can yield the equivalent of three acres of food and flowers — helping students prepare for careers in agriculture while exploring solutions to food insecurity.

To see the installation of the Smart Farm container, please visit ucityschools.org/smartfarm.





The School District of University City

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A Night of Community, Safety, and School Spirit in U. City

University City families came out in force for this year's National Night Out/Back-to-School Rally, held in partnership with the University City Police Department. The annual event brought neighbors together around a shared commitment to public safety and student success.

Students and families received free backpacks and school supplies, connected with more than 40 community organizations, and enjoyed meaningful interactions with local police and fire departments.

For the first time, the celebration took place at Centennial Commons, a move made due to Prop U renovations. The new venue further strengthened the spirit of community that defines University City.

The District extends heartfelt thanks to the volunteers, community partners, first responders, and staff whose support made the evening such a success.

