

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FOCUS FOR THE COMMUNITY

Spring 2026

A PUBLICATION FOR THE RESIDENTS OF UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



From the Superintendent...

Robert S. Monroe

The Safety in our Safety and Success Bond Issue

Thank you, UCS community!

Because of your support, our students and staff have a much safer learning environment through the projects you set in motion with the approval of the 2023 Safety and Success Bond Issue.

Some recent examples of these safety improvements include:

- Construction of walls and doors inside schools that were built as “open concept” schools. These schools opened more than 50 years ago without closed classroom spaces – an innovative design at the time.
  In today’s environment, the lack of doors and walls was a significant safety concern.
- Replacement of doors and new safety locks.
- Installation of shatter resistant glass.
- Technology that allows our teachers to send emergency alerts to the office from their classrooms.
- Secure main entryways at all of our schools.

Despite this progress, we recognize there is more work ahead of us.

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Mariam Al Bakos



Gabriella Watson



Gabriel Al Naser

FACES of FAFSA

How UCS is opening new doors for graduates

The completion of a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application is opening doors for students across our district. The work of our staff to guide students through the application is resulting in life-changing stories.

Here are just three examples:

Mariam Al Bakos has a dream of making a difference for cancer patients. For her, this dream career is driven by personal experiences of family members she lost. This goal of becoming a radiologist always seemed so far away for her based on the cost of college, but now this career is a reality for her. Recently, our staff showed her the path to a full scholarship to attend Wayne State University. She will be the first in her family to go to college.

Gabriella Watson has worked hard her entire high school career. She has challenged herself with accelerated and Advanced Placement courses. She learned this month that hard work pays off when our team reported her options expanded to include full scholarships to both Oakland University and Wayne State University.

Gabriel Al Naser had a clear direction for his future as an investment banker. He has worked with a family member in the business and has been accepted to every college that he has applied to. Al Naser has done everything right academically, but his dream was out of reach because of the cost. Last month, he learned he has a full ride to Wayne State University.

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UCS honored nationally for transparency in financial reporting

CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL REPORTING

For the 14th straight year, Utica Community Schools has earned recognition for meeting a high standard of transparency in reporting financial information.

The school district is among approximately 500 nationally to earn a Certificate of Excellence (COE) in Financial Reporting award for its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) from the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International.

The award honors UCS for meeting the program’s high standards for financial reporting.

“This national recognition is an important accountability standard for our taxpayers,” Superintendent Robert S. Monroe said.

“It demonstrates our commitment to transparency and ensuring that UCS resources directly support our educational vision, mission and strategic direction.”

By participating in the COE program, school districts demonstrate their commitment to financial transparency. Applicants submit their ACFR for review by a team of professional auditors, who provide feedback to improve future documents. If the ACFR meets the stringent requirements of the program, the district may receive the Certificate of Excellence. A district’s participation in the COE program is a distinction that also supports bond rating and continuing bond disclosure processes.

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Superintendent's Scholarship program awards more than $40,000 to graduates

Community partners of Utica Community Schools have awarded 39 graduating seniors with a scholarship ranging from $500 to $2,000 to continue their education at a trade school, community college or university.

To be considered for a scholarship, graduating seniors were asked to submit an application and have an appraisal submitted on their behalf from a non-related adult. Applications were reviewed by school and district administration.

Critical to making the Superintendent's Scholarship possible is the UCS Foundation for Educational Excellence.



The Foundation, comprised completely of volunteers, is dedicated to supporting the entire school district community and the future of its students.

Also partnering with UCS are six families who have sponsored individual scholarships, including the Lillian and Gus Demas Scholarship, the Lois Holtgren-Groblicki Scholarship, the William R. Peper and Jean E. Peper Scholarships, the Larry M. Smith Scholarship, the Stefan's Hope Scholarship and the Michele Templeton Scholarship.

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May 5 & 6 | The Palazzo Grande

UCS Foundation
CAREER FOCUS EVENT

UCSFOUNDATION.ORG/EVENTS/CAREER-FOCUS/

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS 6TH GRADE
2,000 STUDENTS

COMMUNITY
200 MENTORS



Career Focus introduces students entering young adulthood to a variety of career options and provides a memorable experience for all attendees.

SUPPORTED BY:
Robert S. Monroe
Superintendent of Schools,
Utica Community Schools

Tom Lietz
President, UCS Foundation

SPONSORSHIP LEVELS

$2,500 PRESENTING

$1,500 CORPORATE

$500 PLATINUM

$250 TABLE

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Points of Pride

Athletic director Robin Dilday honored by MIAAA for lasting impact on student athletics



The Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (MIAAA) has named Robin Dilday, Athletic Director at Utica Community Schools, the Region 10 Athletic Director of the Year. This prestigious honor recognizes outstanding leadership, dedication, and contributions to interscholastic athletics.

Dilday has dedicated an extraordinary 52 years to education and 44 years to athletic administration, building a legacy of leadership and service within Utica Community Schools.

Dilday is a proud graduate of Utica High School where he is in their school's Hall of Fame as a standout baseball, basketball and football player.

All four UCS high schools named to College Board "Honor Roll" for Advanced Placement success

All four Utica Community Schools high schools have been honored by the College Board for student success in the college level Advanced Placement program.

Eisenhower, Henry Ford II, Stevenson and Utica high schools all earned "Silver" status from the College Board. Over the past four years, UCS has experienced a double digit growth in the number of students taking and experiencing success in AP programs.

The College Board creates school honor rolls for schools whose AP programs are delivering results for students while broadening participation.

Schools can earn this recognition annually based on criteria that reflects a commitment to increasing college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit and maximizing college readiness.

Teacher selected for state theatre Hall of Fame



Utica High School teacher Joel Kaczmarczyk was honored statewide for his lifelong commitment and impact on high school theatre.

Kaczmarczyk has been selected for the Michigan Educational Theatre Association Hall of Fame for his strong track record of meaningful theatre productions. He received the award in mid-December at the organization's Michigan Thespian Festival.

Michigan lottery honors teacher with excellence award



A Utica Community Schools educator who is known for helping students overcome challenges has been honored with an Excellence in Education award from the Michigan Lottery.

The award winner, Lisa Prestininzi, is a fourth-grade teacher at Dresden Elementary School.

Junior is state bowling champion



A Utica High School junior is celebrating a state championship bowling title that was nearly 16 years in the making.

And, in the end, Ava Mazza earned the title in the last frame of the final game in the state bowling championship.

"The feeling is indescribable because this is everything I have worked so hard for," she said.

UCS robotics team selected as sole U.S. honoree in FIRST safety animation competition

A Utica Community Schools FIRST Robotics team is one of only three international teams honored – and the only one from the United States – in the competition's Safety Animation Award competition.

Crevolution Robotics was named a finalist last month and will have their animation featured during the playoff rounds of the International FIRST competition, set for late May in Houston. A team from Mexico placed first and a team from Canada was named the second place finalist.



The Crevolution video features Mays – a cat – leading a historic overview of safety and sustainability in the workshop.

UHS teacher honored for technology leadership

A Utica Community Schools high school science teacher has been honored statewide for her leadership to give all students the tools and support to effectively use technology in their classrooms and lives.

Karyn McConachie, of Utica High School, received the Frank Miracola 21 Things Educational Excellence award from The Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning (MACUL) and REMC Association of Michigan.



Nominations sought for 2026 Legacy of Excellence Wall of Fame

Behind the academic excellence of Utica Community Schools are countless individuals who have contributed to the success synonymous with the school district. To honor these important individuals, UCS is proud to sponsor the Legacy of Excellence award to recognize the positive impact former students, staff and community members have had locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

UCS is now accepting nominations. We encourage the public to nominate honorees whose accomplishments are exemplary and noteworthy to serve as role models for the community. The contributions of nominees should be wide-reaching while possessing a high standard of professionalism.

To submit a Legacy of Excellence nomination, **visit uticak12.org/LegacyOfExcellence.**

Nominations require general information regarding the nominee (nominees may be alive or deceased), supporting materials as to why the nominee deserves to be recognized and two (2) letters of recommendation from someone other than the nominator.

Legacy of Excellence honorees will be recognized on a bi-annual basis with a permanent Legacy of Excellence "wall of fame" set in the main lobby of the Administrative Services Center in Sterling Heights. Honorees will be honored at a ceremony in the fall.

If you have questions about the Legacy of Excellence, please contact Tim McAvoy at (586) 797-1100 or Tim.McAvoy@uticak12.org.

Keeping in touch with UCS

UCS is proud of its long legacy of excellence, and the generations of families who built our district.

UCS offers multiple ways for those whose students have graduated – or do not currently have children in our schools – to learn more about our schools through social media sites dedicated to our legacy, mailing lists, partnership opportunities and events.

For more information, visit uticak12.org/legacy.

The Safety in our Safety and Success Bond Issue

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Our staff recently identified overall facility improvements as a continued priority as we look to the future. In this recent survey, our staff – who are in our schools every day – recognize the importance of the ongoing needs of schools that were built over 50 years ago, on average.

We are committed to working with our community to meet these needs. Thanks to your support, we are beginning this transformation toward a safer learning environment that supports achievement and excellence.

FACES of FAFSA

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How UCS is opening new doors for graduates

Thanks to a state grant, UCS has hired FAFSA coaches to sit one-on-one with students to go through their applications. Generally, the process takes about 15 minutes to complete and their package is available in two to three days.

The FAFSA benefits graduates by unlocking access to federal and state aid, scholarships and assistance for work-study programs. Many students walk into the consultation with no idea of the opportunities that are available to them. They leave with scholarships that allow them to dream bigger.

In just one month, our FAFSA applications have increased over last year by 16 to 40 percent, depending on the high school.

FAFSA is an important ticket for the success of our soon-to-be alumni and supports our vision by empowering all students to change their future and the world.

Translation Assistance

Persons seeking or needing district-related language assistance, please contact translations@uticak12.org, or:
- For Albanian: (586) 797-6946
- For Arabic: (586) 797-6906
- For Spanish: (586) 797-6986

Personat që kanë nevojë ose kërkojnë ndihmë gjuhësore (përkthim ose interpretim të çështjeve në lidhje me Qarkun shkollor), mund të kontaktojnë:
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(586) 797-6946
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الأشخاص الذين يطلبون أو يحتاجون إلى مساعدة لغوية متعلقة بالمنطقة التعليمية، يرجى التواصل عبر:
اللغة العربية:
(586) 797-6906
translations@uticak12.org

Las personas que buscan o necesitan asistencia con el idioma inglés para asuntos relacionados a las escuelas de nuestro distrito escolar, por favor comuníquese con:
Para español:
(586) 797-6986
translations@uticak12.org

Notice of Nondiscrimination

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act and the Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act, it is the policy of Utica Community Schools that no person shall, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, age, disability, height, weight, or marital status be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination during any instructional opportunities, programs, services, job placement assistance, employment or in policies governing student conduct and attendance. Any person suspecting a discriminatory practice should contact Utica Community Schools Human Resources at 11303 Greendale, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 or call (586) 797-1000.

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

WWW.UTICAK12.ORG

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FOCUS for the Community

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