



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: GARY W. CRAIG



**MAM/HROB, SHRM-SCP (Retired)
1976 WIU Sociology Graduate**

I graduated from Macomb High School (MHS) in 1968 and started at WIU in June as a biology major. I was always a "science-minded kid" and planned a career teaching biology and conducting research. After a tumultuous year pledging a fraternity and consequently flunking out of college, I enlisted in the U.S. Army Security Agency where I served in Signals Intelligence with a Top-Secret Cryptologic Clearance. I was deployed 2 ½ years overseas including Okinawa and Vietnam. I came home to Macomb in July 1972.

Without going into the issues and challenges Vietnam veterans faced back then, I had a basic mistrust of government, business, institutions and yes, even academia. I changed from biology major to English. This was based on my experience as a journalism student at MHS and a winner of the Chicago Tribune "Voice of Youth" contest in 1968. I planned on teaching English. I focused on grammar and reading the classics but needed to pick up a minor. I took my first sociology class in 1974 and somehow, I got "hooked." I completed several more sociology/anthropology classes, where I learned about social problems, mental health, bureaucracy, institutions, social theory, stratification and much more. I ended up with a double major of Sociology/English.

Since I found no teaching positions after I

graduated in 1976, I sought work in helping people deal with life's challenges. My first job was counselor for delinquent boys, then for a community mental health center recruiting, training, supervising, and maintaining a diverse volunteer force of 50 for a suicide prevention crisis line. I later became an outpatient counselor/therapist. After moving to Colorado in 1985, I worked in a probation department.

I pursued a master's in social work (MSW) but after about 1/3 of the way through that program, decided social work was not for me. I returned to WIU as a graduate student in sociology. I took several more courses but because of life's demands, had to drop out in the fall of 1983. I finally completed a Master of Arts in Management with an emphasis in Human Relations and Organizational Behavior in 1989/90 at another university.

With a master's degree in hand, I began my job search to find something in business. I joined a couple of professional societies and began networking. Those efforts led to my meeting with a Founding Partner of Vanguard Consulting Group, which would later become Vector Group, Inc. Vector Group, Inc. was an international consulting firm founded in the UK in 1985 by a group of highly talented individual consultants involved in transforming British Airways from a losing enterprise to "the world's favourite/most profitable airline" in a relatively short time. The founding principals were pioneers at the forefront of creating, developing, and enhancing the field of organizational performance.

The senior partner I met with saw in me talents I did not realize I had. I had very little experience or expertise in consulting with business in the corporate world. He knew that from my background in counseling, which built my interpersonal skills, and my foundation in sociology, I could be of great value to the firm.

As a senior business consultant and later as Managing Partner/COO for the firm, I engaged in large organizational change and transformation projects on an international basis. I conducted systematic and systemic diagnoses of organizational performance leading to highly successful change initiatives.

Based on strong analytical, problem solving and interpersonal and organizational skills, my extensive achievements resulted in sustainable organizational change. Highly regarded for my integrity and strong commitment to delivery of results, I am adept in the human side of change management and leadership development. I have significant domestic and international experience across numerous industries contributing significantly to several large-scale strategic initiatives for companies in 15 countries on four continents.

My career represented over 45 years of experience in individual and organizational change management, human resources development, organizational development, performance improvement and organizational effectiveness. Recognized for my ability in effectively and accurately assessing organizations and recommending and implementing changes aligning organizational culture (human behavior) with infrastructure and strategic business objectives, I was highly skilled in driving for optimal performance within organizations.

The foundation for all my good work falls back to WIU and the sociology curriculum that I so much appreciate. Sociology provided me with not only cognitive abilities but also pragmatic applications of many sociological theories, concepts, and ideologies. To succeed in business, one must not languish in theory but focus on bringing those to reality.

Besides the basic sociology curriculum, I highlighted earlier, the most important concepts I focused on included relationships between people, between people and organizations, culture, social research, and particularly the concept of systems thinking. These provided the foundational knowledge I needed to strongly succeed as a management consultant. I owe a great deal to all the sociology faculty I had the pleasure of working with but particularly with Kenneth "Ken" Mietus, Ph.D. and Richard "Rich" Mathers, Ph.D. both now Professors Emeritus. Their engagement, dedication and support remained with me and driven me all these many years.

CHAIR NOTES

Social Mobility: Sociology, Anthropology and WIU

In November, *U.S. News and World Report* released their 2023 College and University Rankings. Western Illinois University was recognized in multiple categories, including placed 38th out of 167 in the "Best Regional (Midwest) Universities" and 10th as a "Top Public University." Notably, WIU was one of only two Illinois public universities to make the list.

In addition to these accolades, Western Illinois University was identified as 36th nationally as a "Top Performer in Social Mobility." This designation is based on a number of criteria, including the proportion of the student body from low income families, graduation rates, educational costs, and alumni salaries.



This is not breaking news for anyone who has attended Western Illinois University, whose central mission has always been to provide high quality, affordable educational opportunities to students in the Western Illinois region and beyond.

It is also not news for those in our department as Sociologists and Anthropologists spend a lot of time studying social mobility. Research has consistently correlated social mobility with educational access and educational attainment, among other factors.

Upward intergenerational social mobility has declined in the United States over the past several decades due to economic restructuring, technological advances, and the declining influence of labor unions and a decline in union membership nationwide. This shift is coupled with a significant increase in the costs associated with attending colleges and universities and a decline in government-subsidized student aid, making access to higher education even more difficult, particularly for low-income students.

Nationwide, college attendance rates have stagnated or declined, due to



Dr. Tawnya Adkins Covert
Department Chairperson

both economic constraints and a declining population of traditionally aged college students. Within these larger economic, social and historical contexts, the critical importance of institutions like Western Illinois University cannot be overstated.

Anecdotally, my own experience is an example of the role of education and educational access in upward social mobility. A first generation college graduate, I am a product of publicly funded state universities (Marshall University and Purdue University). I am also the first woman in my family to attend college and the first member to obtain a PhD.

I grew up in the rural coalfields of Southern West Virginia. My mother was a high-school dropout who obtained her GED as a young widow with two small children to care for. A few years later, she would complete her cosmetology certification and open her own salon. A decade later, she enrolled at a regional technical center to study phlebotomy, medical transcription, and medical office management. My stepfather was a graduate of barber college and was a certified electrician for underground mining operations.

My parents' educational training was a significant accomplishment as their parents had neither completed high school nor received any additional formal schooling. Their upward economic mobility provided the foundation for my own educational journey.

This is my story, but it is also the story of more than one hundred thousand WIU alumni across the globe. It is also the story of WIU, its past, present, future. It is the university's primary mission: *"to be the leader in educational quality, opportunity, and affordability among regional public universities."** The Department of Sociology and Anthropology continues to proudly serve this mission, our students, our community, and the larger society.

*Learn more about WIU's core values at: <https://www.wiu.edu/corevalues/>

WIU Archaeological Field School



The **2024 WIU Archaeological Field School** will focus on the 1840s historic period city of Nauvoo, Illinois, located right on the Mississippi River, about an hour west of WIU's main campus in Macomb. This will be the first time the field school has been conducted at the Nauvoo site.

The goal of the field school is for students to learn the skills necessary to obtain an entry-level job in field archaeology. They will learn the essentials of fieldwork like pedestrian survey, shovel-testing, and excavation, and basic laboratory skills such as artifact identification, analytical techniques, and organizational and curation strategies. Students also learn how to work as a team.

In addition, students will discuss archaeological ethics, public archaeology, Cultural Resource Management (CRM) archaeology, remote sensing techniques, preservation, and other issues and topics facing archaeologists today.

Dr. Jacob Skousen will lead this field school. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Dr. Skousen at J-Skousen@wiu.edu.

CARL B. & ALICE LARSON SCHOLARSHIP IN ILLINOIS ARCHAEOLOGY

WIU Anthropology majors who participate in the 2024 WIU Archaeological Field School are eligible to apply for this scholarship. The scholarship was created by Dr. Patricia Anderson, Associate Professor of Anthropology, and the former director of the field school.

Donations to this scholarship fund can be made by through the WIU Foundation. Learn more at <https://www.wiu.edu/foundation/>

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Accomplishments and Accolades

Dr. Andrea Alvshere, Associate Professor of Anthropology, named Director of the Office of Assessment, Accreditation and Strategic Planning.



Dr. Andrea Alvshere

Dr. Andrea Alvshere was named Director in Fall 2023. The newly configured position involves "direct consultation and collaboration for University activities to centralize assessment, accreditation, and strategic planning; coordinate assessment and reassessment activities for the institution and individual disciplines; and develop continuous improvement models," according to the WIU Provost's website.

Dr. Alvshere reports that "this administrative position is a great fit for someone with an Anthropology background because it uses so many of the same skills. In Fall 2023, I became the point person for the survey software used by WIU faculty for courses and research, and began attending meetings to learn more about student support initiatives, related grant applications, and where we are in the reporting cycle for maintaining WIU's status as an accredited university.

"In Spring 2024, I'll be gathering information from across the university to prepare this year's accreditation compliance report. I'll also be working with academic departments and the Faculty Senate's Council on General Education to develop a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) assessment initiative, and will be organizing a committee to work on updating the Academic Affairs Strategic Plan.

"I'm deeply honored to have been entrusted with these responsibilities, and for this opportunity to collaborate with University leadership. I'm also genuinely excited about working with programs and individuals across the university to develop increasingly responsive strategies that meet the needs of our diverse student body in an ever-changing world. I'm most especially grateful that this position will require only a partial shift in workload, so I can continue working directly with our amazing students in my classes and research programs, as well."

Sociology BA Capstone Experience Spotlight: ISAAC COPI (Gateway Foundation)

Hello, my name is Isaac Copi. I completed my final semester at WIU this past fall semester. I majored in Sociology with a minor in law enforcement. I live in Springfield IL; I am 35, have a fiancé, two daughters (one that is nine and another that is approaching 9 months old), and two pugs.

I've always been fascinated with culture; however, it was while taking a sociology course at Lincoln Land Community College that I discovered what it was, how it can be used to improve society and almost instantly knew that it was exactly what I wanted to study. The professor of that specific course embodied Sociology and what it meant to help the next person. I was amazed once I began looking through the Sociological Lens and applying it in different areas of life. For that, I want to say, "Thanks Professor Ellen Watkins at LLCC. You have played a major role in shaping my future." Upon completing my associate degrees, with my family's guidance and support, WIU checked all the boxes for where I was looking to attend and further my education. I have a brother, aunt and uncle who are all WIU alumni.

My internship for the Sociology program was completed at the Gateway Foundation, an inpatient, outpatient and recovery home for people with substance abuse disorders. I have worked full time with this organization for the past four years and am now a primary residential substance abuse counselor. My internship responsibilities included working in the Recovery Home, a 90-day sober living unit attached to the other Gateway Foundation units. I also facilitated outpatient groups and filled an intern role in the residential unit. During my internship, I gained insight on the disease of addiction, co-occurring disorders, medication management and client interaction.

Beyond my day-to-day role, I was gifted the opportunity to meet with people. I use "people" because the population we serve have a substance use disorder diagnosis, they are not incurable. They are human. Each hour I spent on these units, I observed as individuals that identified as



Isaac Copi
Sociology BA '23

feeling hopeless being transformed into feeling hopeful. I watched as pain was channeled into a purpose, the tears of guilt became a smile, those who felt lost found direction, and those that felt alone became a part of, instead of apart from.

The disease of addiction doesn't discriminate based on one's race, religion, political affiliation, job title, age, gender, etc. It impacts all walks of life, mine included. I successfully completed Gateway's residential treatment in 2016, followed by three months as a client in their outpatient services, and I am currently in long term recovery.

The sociology program at WIU taught me about human social behavior, patterns of social relationships, culture associated with everyday life, different sociological perspectives and so much more. I was able to take what I have learned and use this knowledge in both my professional and personal lives. Most importantly, the sociology program and my professors allowed and encouraged me to grow as a person, as a fiancé, as a father, as a son, as a friend, as a counselor, and as a recovering alcoholic and addict. In life, we often underestimate the power of believing in someone, so take a chance, invest in those around you and grow together.

We is greater than I.

Faculty Awards & Recognitions

- **Gordon Chang** was elected as ASA Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis Section Council Member.
- **Patrick McGinty** was appointed to the Annual Meeting Committee for the Midwest Sociological Society.
- **Christina Davis** was awarded a Summer Stipend from the Western Illinois Foundation and Office of Sponsored Projects for her proposal "Imagining Mother Tongue and English: The Politics of Language of Delhi University"
- **Christina Davis** was awarded a Provost Travel award
- **Jacob Skousen** was awarded a Provost Travel Award and the Sociology & Anthropology Faculty Research and Travel Award
- **Heather McIlvaine-Newsad** was awarded a Provost Travel Award

Faculty Publications/Presentations

- **Christina Davis** (with co-author Chaise LaDousa) published "Ideologies of Mother Tongue at an Indian University" in the inaugural issue of the Journal of Education, Language, and Ideology (JELI) in September 2023.
- **William Gblerkpor** gave an invited zoom talk on "Applied Anthropology in the Era of Climate Change: Cases in Africa."
- **Jacob Skousen** presented at the 81st Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Tuscaloosa, Tennessee.
 - Locality and Cahokian Spirituality in the Illinois River Valley. (**J. Skousen**, L. Pappenfort)
 - Orr-Heri: Sitting on Top of the Underworld. (S. Boles, R. McCullough, T. Brennan, **J. Skousen**, and E. Benson)
 - Microstratigraphy for Microhistories: Geoarchaeological Insights from the F49 Pit Feature at the Noble-Wieting (11ML24) Cultural Site in Central Illinois. Poster (M. Aiuvalasit, **J. Skousen**, B. Ritchison, and N. Bergerhouse)
- **Jacob Skousen** gave an invited talk "Collaborating with Tribal Nations: The Noble-Wieting Archaeological Project as an Example" given at a meeting of the Illinois Valley chapter of the *Illinois Association for Advancement of Archaeology*, Lewistown, Illinois.
- **Heather McIlvaine-Newsad** contributed an article to *The Daily Climate*

Student Awards & Recognitions

- **Jennifer Ofoe** selected as the 2023-2024 Randall and Delores Lindsey DEI Intern.
- **Ellie McBride**, **Bianna Jones**, **Sylvia Angelova**, **Christopher Dillon**, and **Jennifer Ofoe** were named the 2023-2024 student ambassadors.
- **Amy Bull** was selected as the Fall 2023 Department Scholar for Sociology.

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Fall 2023 News & Events



Recruitment, Retention, and Community Building

Leatherneck Launch Event

Faculty met with incoming freshman and transfer majors in Sociology and Anthropology.

Dr. Gblerkpor and Dr. Skousen demonstrated flint knapping and Dr. Adkins Covert led an activity on group dynamics.

Hands on Anthropology

Dr. Skousen demonstrated flint knapping and pottery making to Anth 111 students and Anthropology majors and minors.

Fall Meet and Greet

Sociology and Anthropology majors and minors, as well as interested students met with department faculty and each other.

Pursuing Archeology and Cultural Resource Management: A Professional Perspective

Dr. Eric Schroeder, a Registered Professional Archaeologist, gave a presentation via zoom on careers in Archaeology. Dr. Schroeder provided an overview of cultural resource management, how the profession is organized and operates, and what skills one needs to cultivate to be successful.

Major and Minor Fair

Dr. Skousen, Dr. Davis and Dr. Adkins Covert met with prospective majors and minors

Why Graduate School at WIU?

Graduate Students Jennifer Ofoe and Ebenezer Mensah shared their experiences and why they chose to pursue the M.A. in Sociology at WIU. Dr. Chang provided information about the program and answered student questions.

Internship: Bridging the gap between education and professional experience

Sociology Graduate Student Asia Billingslea joined faculty members Dr. Lora Wallace and Dr. Heather McIlvaine-Newsad for a discussion of opportunities and experiences with internships in Sociology & Anthropology

Finals Week Potluck Luncheon

Our faculty enjoyed a finals week Potluck Luncheon, which turned into an impromptu chili cook-off with three delicious entries from Robert Hironimus-Wendt, Tawnya Adkins Covert, and our office manager, Roberta Tyson. It was the consensus that all were winners and Roberta won for most unique chili, with a pineapple chili that combined both sweet and spice. Recipes available upon request!

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