

When it comes to human resources education at Indiana Tech, our program has achieved a soaring level of excellence by transforming students into exceptional professionals.

THIS IS TECH'S

Human Resources Dynasty





Indiana Tech professor of business Dr. Jeffrey Walls is the leader of the university's human resources program.

Our story begins unremarkably with Indiana Tech seniors Maysie Hewitt, McKenna Mesclier and Emily Wieland passing an exam—something that hundreds of Warriors have done every year since the university opened its doors in 1930.

When one takes a closer look, however, it doesn't take long to recognize what Hewitt, Mesclier and Wieland accomplished is, indeed, quite remarkable.

They passed the Society for Human Resource Management Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) examination, a competency-based certification exam administered by SHRM, which is considered the industry leader in HR professional development and is the world's largest HR membership organization.

The SHRM-CP exam is not a walk in the park. It lasts for four hours and consists of 160 questions—95 of which are knowledge-based and 65 of which are based on situational assessment. Of all who took the exam, worldwide, during the May-July 2018 exam period, 33 percent failed.

“Without question, these three ladies have accomplished something very impactful in the HR environment—something that puts them on a different plateau professionally,” said Dr. Jeffrey Walls, Indiana Tech professor of business and leader of its HR program.

“Passing this exam requires more than just memorizing numbers and facts. It's all competency-based. It shows that one has the ability to apply what they have learned to be successful in today's fast-paced and demanding business environment. As soon as a hiring manager sees this credential on a resume, they get it.”

So how does it happen that three Indiana Tech students passed the SHRM-CP exam in 2019 when one out of every three people who took the exam, worldwide, during a three-month period in 2018, failed?

Clearly, Maysie Hewitt, McKenna Mesclier and Emily Wieland are special students—competitors to the end who never stop learning and never stop trying to improve. As Dr. Walls said, “They could go anywhere and be that school's top HR student.”

It's when you introduce talent to a learning environment that was constructed to help students excel that something exceptional happens. That is the world Indiana Tech's HR students learn within each day.



Emily Wieland

Emily came to Indiana Tech to play basketball and pursue a business administration degree with a concentration in financial services. However, she quickly realized that accounting was a better fit for her.

“I have always loved the money side of business and working with numbers, so I switched my major,” Emily said. “After I took Dr. Walls' HR management course, I became a double major. I found I enjoyed the concepts of HR and I thought having a degree in the field would be beneficial.”

She was right. The business administration degree concentrating in human resources introduced her to the career path she is pursuing—as a compensation and benefits accountant.

“It's a position that would be the best of worlds between my two degrees,” she said.

After graduation in May, Emily will sit for her CPA exam and begin pursuit of an MBA, as well.

THE BEGINNING

Dr. Walls was recruited by Indiana Tech's seventh president, Don Andorfer, to head up an HR education program in 1989. Around the same time, the American Society for Personnel Administration was restructuring and bolstering its approach to human resources education, and it began branding itself as the Society for Human Resource Management. The timing was perfect as Dr. Walls recognized SHRM was the primary resource he needed to consult to build an effective program.

A year later, he attended his first SHRM annual conference in Cincinnati, which was eye-opening.

"I experienced how impactful the annual conference could be for students from an educational and a networking perspective, so I asked President Andorfer if I could take a group of students to a future conference. He let me do it for the 1993 conference in Washington, D.C. He said, 'I'm going to approve this this one time because I don't think you're going to get students to go. And if you do, I don't think you'll get students to go back a second year,'" Dr. Walls said.

Dr. Walls hasn't missed taking a group of students to an annual conference since.

"What Don was worried about, I was confident about," Dr. Walls said. "I knew students would come back and say, 'Oh my gosh, that was the most amazing thing I've ever seen in my life,' and by word of mouth, we would be able to generate interest in this program."

With momentum building, Dr. Walls recognized he needed to become SHRM certified.

"I saw the power of the certification with all the top HR people in the world and I knew to seem legitimate with our students, I needed to be certified," he said.

So, at the 1994 conference in St. Louis, Dr. Walls took and passed the exam.

"It's a hard exam, but from that time on, I believed I could help students pass it," Dr. Walls said. "I began aligning our curriculum with the exam study process and made sure our books were the ones SHRM was using. While other programs may allocate specific time for exam prep, students in our program are getting exam prep in their everyday curriculum."

The effort has not gone unnoticed by SHRM. Indiana Tech's human resources program has been fully endorsed by the organization through 2021, meaning our curriculum has

Seniors Emily Wieland, left, and Maysie Hewitt, right, share a laugh during class with Dr. Walls.



been thoroughly reviewed by SHRM and deemed in alignment with its curriculum guidelines. As a result, Tech students can take the SHRM-CP exam prior to graduation. Students in non-endorsed programs must qualify to take the exam with education and experience.

Since 1989, just over 50 Indiana Tech students have passed the SHRM certification exam.

STRONG PERSUADER

Why do students choose to pursue a concentration in HR at Indiana Tech?

“Think about it: no one in high school or in grade school says, ‘Yes, I want to grow up and be the one who gets to hire and fire people,’” Dr. Walls said. “But then you take that required HR management class during your sophomore year (an initiative that was implemented for all business administration majors in 1990) and then you start thinking, ‘Hey, I might be a people person. Let me go to that conference, I might want to figure this out.’”

For several graduates, it happened just that way. Jessica Rambo (2010) was pursuing a networking degree in the College of Engineering when she decided to switch majors. Jessica is now a human resources business partner at BAE Systems. Baily (Tom) Beiswanger (2012) was a therapeutic recreation major. She switched and parlayed her degree into a position at Micropulse as its human resources manager.

“For Jessica and Baily, this HR program changed their lives; they have very solid positions within tremendous organizations,” Dr. Walls said. “It has happened for so many others, as well.”

Human resources was not the first choice for Hewitt, Mesclier and Wieland, when they arrived at Indiana Tech. Yet, the program has created opportunities they never thought existed.

“Tech’s HR program has made a huge impact on my life,” Hewitt said. “Dr. Walls actively seeks out talent and helps students reach their full potential through mentorship and encouragement. Without Dr. Walls or Tech’s HR program, I never would have known about the SHRM certification, let alone had the confidence to take the exam.”

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Since 1993, groups of Warrior students have become an expected sight at SHRM’s annual conference. More importantly, Indiana Tech HR students are known as some of the best and most-engaged students in the country.

Each year, the Society for Human Resource Management Foundation has recognized the top 11 undergraduate HR students in the nation. Seven Indiana Tech students—Mike Torres (1995), Theresa Dubea (1999), Ashlie Sklenicka (2008), Ashley Benvenuti (2013), Morgan York (2016) and the aforementioned Rambo and Beiswanger—have earned this honor.



Maysie Hewitt

Like Wieland, Hewitt is a double-major, who started out pursuing a management degree and added on the HR major after taking Dr. Walls’ HR management class.

“His exams are difficult, and they forced me to rise to the challenge in a way I never had to before,” the Peru, Indiana, native said. “Because of my success in his HR class, he encouraged me to take the SHRM-CP exam. Passing it gave me college credit for four of the five classes needed for the HR concentration, so it was a no-brainer to add it to my degree.”

Maysie currently works as an intern in purchasing at Schneider Electric and will join the company full time after she graduates in May.

“I will be in a rotational position for two years where they will place me at a different plant each year. I will work a total of four different positions in global supply chain during the rotation,” Maysie said. “I’ve been working with Schneider Electric for two years already, so I am excited to stay on with them after graduation.”

McKenna Mesclier

The impact Indiana Tech's HR program has had on McKenna's life has been immense. It helped her identify where her talents lie, and it has afforded her a little more time to identify her calling.

"It prepared me to pass the SHRM-CP exam, which enabled me to meet my degree requirements a full year early," she said. "Now, instead of graduating in May, I have the opportunity to participate this

summer in Tech's study-abroad trip to Italy. I will earn credits toward a humanities minor to supplement my business degree."

With an impressive credential already on her resume and more valuable experience coming this summer, McKenna will be a highly sought-after talent when it comes time for her to enter the workforce.



Additionally, Indiana Tech's SHRM student chapter, which is the largest single student organization on campus, has earned the Superior Merit Award from SHRM every year since 1998. SHRM presents this award to chapters that excel in various areas, primarily the professional development of its members and the way it promotes the human resources profession.

Along with the national recognition the program has achieved over the last 29 years come awards—a massive array that covers nearly all of the largest wall in his office. An extremely competitive Dr. Walls is not bashful about how proud he is of the display and he is quick to admit he still enjoys working with new students each year to maintain and keep improving the excellent program.

"Every award you see on this wall is there because of a student," Dr. Walls said. "What did I do? I got in their ear and told them, 'Look, you have the talent to accomplish this,' or 'Hey, I think you have a real shot at winning this award.' Those awards are there because of students."

THE NETWORK

Year after year since launching the program, Indiana Tech has sent hundreds of excellent human resources professionals out into the working world. And, as a result, there is an extensive network of Tech alumni who mentor, provide internships and hire the latest graduates of the program.

"The success of our program is all based on the success of our students. It's about building relationships and it's everything we talk about here," Dr. Walls said. "Our graduates go get jobs and then they call back when they have needs. Because of the

success they had at Indiana Tech, they know this program produces the kind of quality candidates they are looking for. And so, the program keeps building on itself."

Dr. Walls gave an example of a local HR manager and Indiana Tech grad reaching out to him recently to inquire about intern candidates. Immediately, he identified a student best suited for the opportunity and, within minutes, the student's resume was on its way to the HR manager. A few years back, Dr. Walls gave her another recommendation for a full-time position. The HR manager still raves about it being one of her best hires ever.

"If you look through my emails and my texts, that is a regular occurrence," Dr. Walls said.

He went on to talk about getting a text from a student while he was reading the paper one Sunday morning. The student saw a job posting in Indianapolis he was interested in, and within a few minutes, Dr. Walls had him connected with the HR person at the organization. He continued reading his paper and found a job opportunity he thought would be appropriate for a handful of his seniors. Seconds later, it was in their inboxes.

THE FUTURE

Since its inception, the HR program at Indiana Tech has helped launch hundreds of careers and changed so many lives—products of creating and maintaining an excellent degree program. With new groups of talented and hard-working students joining the university each year, an active and committed alumni network, and an experienced and competitive program leader, the HR program is sure to continue this success well into the future.