

SLU-Madrid

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News from SLU-Madrid

As SLU-Madrid wraps up a busy and rewarding summer and welcomes the 2026–27 academic year, we're excited to share the latest stories from our community.

SLU-Madrid Homecoming and Reunion Weekend: Nov. 4–8



¡Vuelva a España! Open to all SLU-Madrid graduates, former study abroad students, and current parents, our upcoming homecoming reunion is your invitation to reconnect in Spain. Enjoy an unforgettable lineup of experiences, including campus and city tours. Celebrate your lasting connection to Spain and return to the place that made your SLU-Madrid experience unforgettable.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Successful Celebrations Connect Alumni in St. Louis and Chicago



Nearly 70 SLU-Madrid alumni gathered in St. Louis and Chicago in June to reconnect, reminisce and celebrate where life has taken them since their time in Spain. Rector William P. Johnson joined the groups, which included friends and incoming students, to provide updates from the Madrid campus while fostering connections among Billikeños.

Reflecting SLU-Madrid's ongoing commitment to growing and strengthening our alumni community, these gatherings celebrate the global impact of our graduates and honor the enduring bonds formed on campus. We look forward to exploring new ways to welcome alumni and create additional opportunities for engagement.

Thank you to Brian T. (A&S '71) and Barbara (A&S '71) Morrow, their children Aaron (A&S '06) and Sarah, and their families for hosting SLU-Madrid alumni in their home in Chicago and for their continued generosity and support of SLU-Madrid.

1818: A Saint Louis University Alumni Podcast: SLU-Madrid

Episode Out Now

SLU-Madrid's Rector William P. Johnson, J.D., and Vice Rector, Associate Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Victoria Villarreal (A&S '86, GRAD CSB '88), joined hosts Meg Connolly (A&S '90, GRAD A&S' 92) and Tony Minor (A&S' 03) to explore the milestone moments that have shaped our campus in Spain. Hear what the student experience is like today and their hopes for the campus's future.



Also in this episode, Tim (A&S '71) and Barbara (A&S '71) Morrow shared nostalgic memories of arriving in Spain in 1969 as part of the first class to study at SLU-Madrid, discussing how their tight-knit group of a few dozen students navigated cultural immersion and late-night tapas outings under the legendary leadership of Raymond L. Sullivant, S.J.

[LISTEN NOW](#)

SLU-Madrid Launches 23rd Major: B.S. in Exercise Science With Wellness Concentration

Students can now complete a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science with a wellness concentration at SLU-Madrid, marking the campus's 23rd undergraduate major that can be completed entirely in Spain. Integrating anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, nutrition and behavioral health, with an emphasis on community engagement and interprofessional collaboration, the four-year program prepares graduates for careers focused on promoting lifelong wellness, preventing disease and improving overall health.

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SLU Receives the 2026 Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization



SLU is one of just five U.S. institutions to [receive the Association of International Education \(NAFSA\)'s 2026 Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization](#), recognizing colleges and universities that demonstrate an exceptional commitment to comprehensive internationalization through strategic planning and innovative and creative approaches that advance global engagement across campus. SLU faculty and staff from both the St. Louis and Madrid campuses accepted the award at NAFSA's annual conference, held May 26-29 in Orlando, Florida.

Center for Iberian Historical Studies Hosts International Research Workshop at SLU-Madrid

The Saint Louis University [Center for Iberian Historical Studies \(CIHS\)](#), in collaboration with the Center for Spain in America (CSA), welcomed scholars and students from around the world June 22–26 for the second CIHS/CSA Madrid Research Workshop.



The weeklong program combining academic seminars with firsthand access to leading archives, libraries, museums and cultural institutions in Madrid, Toledo and San Lorenzo de El Escorial, reflects SLU's commitment to advancing research on Iberian history and culture while fostering academic collaboration among institutions throughout Europe and the United States.

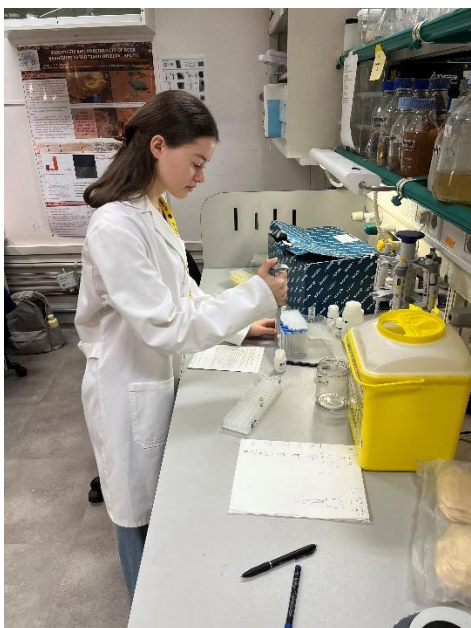
[READ MORE](#)

Universidades Jesuitas (UNIJES) Directors Gathered for the III Focus Forum at SLU-Madrid



More than 45 directors from UNIJES universities and centers gathered at SLU-Madrid on July 13–14 for the III Focus Forum, themed “Leading in the Age of AI.” The forum provided a space for training, reflection and the exchange of experiences around one of the key challenges facing higher education today: how to lead and manage in an age of rapid technological change. Participants also explored how institutions can strengthen collaboration and address the opportunities and challenges of AI through a humanist and Ignatian perspective, helping shape the university of the present and the future.

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Student Spotlight

Rising junior **Veronika Kosareva** worked as a biology intern at the Centro de Astrobiología (CAB-CSIC/INTA) in the extremophile laboratory, applying molecular biology techniques to isolate and cultivate microorganisms from extreme environments.

Kosareva is from Moscow, Russia, and will complete her B.A. in biology in spring 2028. Upon graduation, she hopes to pursue graduate studies in microbiology and contribute to scientific research.

Alumni Spotlights

Lisa Magnelli Pietropola (GRAD A&S '08) teaches high school Spanish in Hershey, Pennsylvania. In 2018, she partnered with a fellow educator to found [Creo en Ti Media](#), a bilingual publishing company dedicated to empowering students while promoting bilingualism and global education. Through the company, students are guided in writing, illustrating, and publishing their own children's books, gaining the tools and support needed to bring their stories to life. The company's books are used in literacy outreach programs in 10 countries.



This August, a group of medical students from Philadelphia took the books to Guatemala on a medical mission trip, using the stories to build trust with children before providing care. Another story, *Plástico No Es Fantástico*, was recently donated to the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center in Surf City, North Carolina, where it supports the organization's educational mission and conservation efforts. [Find that title, and the company's more than 20 bilingual children's books published, on Amazon.](#)

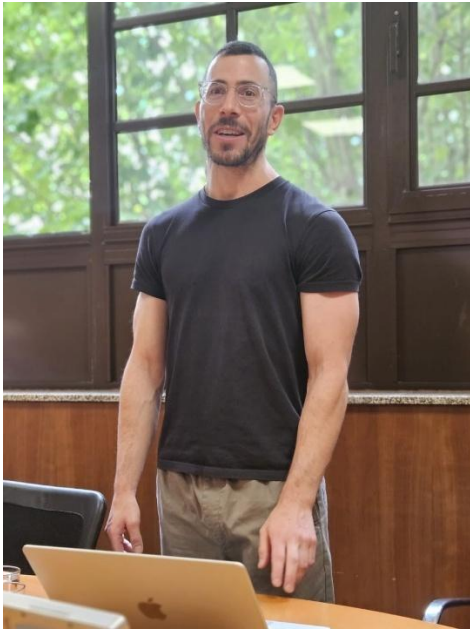


Jon Spayne (CSB '25) spent the summer as the access management venue coordinator for the FIFA World Cup 2026 in Los Angeles, California. He coordinated access control, credential zoning, checkpoint staffing and venue circulation to help ensure safe and efficient match-day operations. Spayne studied abroad on the St. Louis campus in fall 2023, was active in the Sports Business Club, and completed a summer internship with a minor league baseball team in Kentucky. He also created a Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) marketing agency to represent student-athletes in endorsement deals and partnerships. After graduation, he joined Amazon as an area manager. Spayne is eager to continue building his career in sports business, with a focus on event management and operations.

Faculty/Staff Spotlights

After nearly two decades at SLU-Madrid, **James O'Leary, S.J.**, has [retired from his role as campus chaplain and professor of theology](#). Since 2007, Fr. O'Leary has provided pastoral support to students, faculty and staff and encouraged community members to engage deeply with their faith. The SLU-Madrid community thanks Fr. O'Leary for his years of dedicated service and wishes him all the best in retirement, as he returns to his hometown of Chicago, Illinois.





Matthew Andler, Ph.D., (Philosophy) presented his book *Sexual Orientation and Identity: A Philosophical Analysis* (Routledge, 2025) on June 4-5 at a symposium hosted at SLU-Madrid. The event brought together leading scholars from Duke University, the University of Virginia, the Universitat de Barcelona and two Ramón y Cajal Fellows based in Madrid to examine contemporary philosophical debates on gender and sexual identity. Discussions highlighted Professor Andler's recent research on love and kinship, which he also presented this summer at the University of Valencia (Spain), Jagiellonian University (Poland), University of Minho (Portugal), and El Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Spain).

Alumni Engagement Opportunities

- SLU-Madrid [Alumni LinkedIn Group](#) is open to all alumni, whether you spent a semester or four years on campus. Connect, share opportunities, exchange ideas and celebrate achievements while strengthening ties across Madrid, St. Louis and our global Billikeño community. Or, if you are an alum who graduated with a degree in psychology or is working in a similar field, join the [SLU-Madrid Psychology Alumni LinkedIn Group](#) to connect with fellow professionals.
- We'd love to hear your SLU-Madrid story! Share it with us to help strengthen our alumni network and develop meaningful resources. [Submit an alumni story, accomplishment or update](#), and we will contact you.
- Stay connected and help shape the next generation of leaders. If you're interested in mentoring a student, offering internship opportunities at your company or sharing career guidance, please take a few minutes to [complete our alumni engagement survey](#). Your involvement can make a lasting impact on students' professional journeys.

The Billikeño Alumni Newsletter is published by the SLU-Madrid Office of Advancement. For questions or submissions, email alumni-madrid@slu.edu. We encourage you to forward and share this newsletter with the SLU-Madrid alum in your life, whether they studied on campus for a semester or four years.