AMU Alumni Share Career Journeys and the Lasting Impact of a Liberal Arts Education

Event Recap

October 31, 2026

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During Homecoming, alumni and students gathered on campus for an inspiring conversation about the many ways an Ave Maria University education continues to shape lives and careers. Four alumni, Don Orrico, Dr. Tauni Grossklas, Dr. Jonathan Larochelle, and Kailie Kent, shared their journeys in business and public service, classical education, medical research, and digital media entrepreneurship. Though their careers have taken them in different directions, they shared a common appreciation for the liberal arts foundation they received at AMU and the professors who encouraged and guided them along the way. Their stories offered students a glimpse of the many possibilities ahead and a reminder that the lessons and relationships formed at Ave Maria stay with you long after graduation.

Don Orrico: Business Development, Public Service, and Leadership

Don Orrico serves as Senior Vice President of Business Development at KrateoSky. His professional journey has included work on Capitol Hill, political campaigns, executive fundraising, education, and nonprofit leadership. An active member of the AMU Alumni Board and an Institute Advisor, Don has remained closely connected to the University and its mission. During the panel, he reflected on how his liberal arts education and the guidance of AMU faculty helped prepare him to navigate different professional environments, build meaningful relationships, and approach leadership with purpose.

Dr. Tauni Grossklas: Classical Education and Forming Future Generations

Dr. Tauni Grossklas serves as Manager of Classical Model Schools at Charter Schools USA. Her career has been dedicated to education, including teaching, research, and school leadership, with a particular focus on the classical model of education. Through her work, she helps schools form students intellectually and personally through the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness. Tauni shared how the strong academic foundation she received at AMU, along with the encouragement and mentorship of her professors, prepared her for advanced study and leadership in education.

Dr. Jonathan Larochelle: Medical Research and Innovation

Dr. Jonathan Larochelle is a Clinical and Medical Affairs professional with Stryker Neurovascular. After earning his degree in biochemistry from AMU, he went on to complete his doctorate in Medical Sciences and Pharmacology at the University of Florida. His work has included stroke research and the advancement of neurovascular medicine. Jonathan's career demonstrated how an AMU education can provide a strong foundation for highly specialized and continually evolving fields. He spoke to the importance of critical thinking, rigorous academic preparation, and faculty guidance in helping him pursue opportunities in science and medicine.

Kailie Kent: Communications, Digital Media, and Entrepreneurship

Kailie Kent graduated magna cum laude from Ave Maria University in 2025 with a degree in Communications. She currently serves as Head of Support and Operations at Truthly AI and is also a Catholic digital creator and public speaker. Working in the rapidly changing world of digital media and technology, Kailie has found that the ability to communicate clearly, think creatively, and adapt to new challenges is essential. She reflected on how her AMU education and the support of her professors helped prepare her to pursue new opportunities and navigate an evolving professional landscape.

A Foundation That Lasts a Lifetime

Although the panelists' careers span very different industries, their stories shared a common thread: the lasting value of an Ave Maria University education. Each spoke about how the liberal arts foundation they received at AMU continues to shape their professional lives, giving them the tools to think critically, communicate effectively, and adapt as new opportunities arise. Just as important were the faculty members who took the time to know them, encourage them, and help them discover their strengths.

The panel served as a wonderful reminder that an AMU education is about more than preparing students for their first job. It is about forming individuals who can pursue truth, serve others, and make a meaningful contribution wherever God leads them. The event also highlighted the strength of the AMU alumni community and the many ways graduates continue to give back by sharing their experiences, offering guidance, and helping the next generation find its way.

Read online for photos and videos:

https://alumni.avemaria.edu/news/2026-homecoming-alumni-career-panel