



Class of 2025 Inductee

Kelley L. Erstine

Kelley Erstine has devoted more than four decades to advancing the insurance profession, championing association leadership and strengthening public institutions through service and advocacy. A native of Sheridan and a graduate of Sheridan High School, where he was student body president, Erstine graduated from the University of Central Arkansas in 1979 with a Bachelor of Science in Journalism. His connection with UCA has spanned roles as a student leader, active alumnus, senior staff member, and trustee.

While a student, he served as president of the UCA Student Government Association, his senior year. In 2019, the UCA Student Government Association began annually awarding a deserving student, the Kelley L. Erstine Engagement Award. In later years at UCA, he held positions as Vice President for Institutional Advancement, spearheading the university's first ever capital campaign (2004–2008), Chief of Staff (2015–2019) serving for both President Tom Courtway and later, Dr. Houston Davis. He is one of only five individuals in the institution's history to serve as Interim President.

Erstine began his professional journey in association management, serving as chief executive of the Arkansas State Dental Association and later in the same role at the North Carolina Dental Society. Erstine served as Executive Vice President of the Independent Insurance Agents of Arkansas from 1996 to 2003, succeeding long-time executive, Lynn Zeno. He then led the Independent Insurance Agents of North Carolina as CEO from 2008 to 2015 before returning to Arkansas, where he again succeeded Zeno, in 2019 as CEO of the Independent Insurance Agents of Arkansas, (Big I Arkansas). He has led and played key roles in legislative advocacy, member services and industry education.

Big I Arkansas currently represents approximately 300 independent insurance agencies located across the state. Erstine is currently serving nationally as president-elect of the Independent Agent Association Executives.

In recognition of his exemplary contributions to professional association management, he received the Ken Graves Memorial Award, the highest individual honor given from the Arkansas Society of Association Executives (ASAE), in 2024. Additionally, he was honored with the Don King Memorial Award by UCA's Sigma Chapter of Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity this year, for his lifelong dedication to leadership and mentorship.

Erstine has served as President of both the Arkansas Society of Professional Lobbyists and the Arkansas Society of Association Executives, underscoring his leadership within the professional and advocacy realms.

Erstine has long been engaged in civic and higher-education governance. Appointed to the University of Central Arkansas Board of Trustees by Governor Mike Huckabee in 2000 and later reappointed to a seven-year term by Governor Sarah Sanders in 2024, he continues to help guide his alma mater's future. In 2022, he was appointed by Governor Asa Hutchinson to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

His civic and philanthropic board service currently includes roles on the Conway Corporation Board of Directors, the CARTI Foundation and the Little Red River Foundation, further demonstrating his dedication to community development and civic advancement.

Kelley and his wife Leslie, also a UCA alum, reside in Conway. They are active members of Calvary Baptist Church in Little Rock. They are proud parents of two daughters, Madison Erstine, of Washington D.C. and Ashleigh Nash (Tony) of Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas, and the loving grandparents of two grandchildren, Maddox and August Nash.