FALL SUMMIT · NOVEMBER 11–13, 2026 · UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

ND-US Competes

Rebuilding American Industry from the Shop Floor

MENDOZA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

ND-US Competes is a collaboration between the Mendoza College of Business and iNDustry Labs. It prepares Notre Dame graduate students, especially active-duty service members and veterans, to start, acquire, and grow companies in defense contracting, onshore manufacturing, and other sectors vital to U.S. competitiveness.

EVENT DETAILS

More info & add to calendar

iNDustry Labs event page for the Fall Summit

VISIT SITE

RSVP BY FRIDAY, NOV 6

Reserve your spot

Tell us which sessions and receptions you'll attend

RSVP

WEDNESDAY · NOVEMBER 11, 2026

Buy · Build · Compete

Entrepreneurship through Acquisition

Mendoza College of Business
O'Hara Auditorium & Commons
For ND MBA, EMBA, and ESTEEM students

3:30–6:00 pm

Program

Learn from serial entrepreneurs how to kick-start your journey to acquiring your first business: *acquiring and turning around a U.S. manufacturer, owning and growing through acquisition, common pitfalls when buying a company, and resources for military-connected founders.*

O'Hara Auditorium

6:00–7:30 pm

Networking Reception

O'Hara Commons · VentureVets interviews available by appointment



Dan Fangman *MBA '84*

Former CEO, Atchison Products

Acquired and turned around a failing U.S. manufacturer, converting and managing multiple factories before transitioning to sourcing in Asia. As CEO for 19 years, he led marketing, sales, product development, manufacturing, finance, and international supply chain. The company, named Industry Supplier Entrepreneur of the Year, sold in 2007 to a publicly held member of Europe's CAC 40.



Joe Heieck *BA '05*

Co-Founder & Managing Partner, Heiton Partners

Co-founded Heiton Partners, a permanent-capital holding company that acquires and grows strong, cash-flowing businesses while developing the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders. Joe served 10 years as a U.S. Naval Intelligence Officer.



Thom Kenney *MBA '05*

Serial Entrepreneur & Tech Executive

Founder and C-suite operator whose companies have helped generate more than $2 billion in shareholder value. Thom helped lead AI transformation at Deutsche Bank while at Google and served as Chief Data Officer at U.S. Special Operations Command. He is an Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel.



Mike Keller *MBA '91*

President, Great Elm Commercial Finance

A specialist in distressed investing and restructuring with decades of experience in investments and debt financing. He previously served as a Partner with Credit Value Partner, President of Shannon Capital Management, and a founder of DMD Special Situations Fund.



Courtney Zaugg

VentureVets

Focuses on the operational design and strategic frameworks that enable veteran founders to scale. Her background in economic development and corporate strategy helps VentureVets provide the technical and financial infrastructure to turn military expertise into market-leading ventures.

THURSDAY · NOVEMBER 12, 2026

Defense Contracting & Reshoring

Insights from the Department of War and regional industry

Stayer Commons
University of Notre Dame
For students, faculty, staff, and industry partners

3:30–6:00 pm

Program

How a local manufacturer grew its defense business, how iNDustry Labs accelerates regional growth, a keynote on the strategic importance of the U.S. defense industrial base, and a fireside chat with Patrick Kelleher, Jim Abercrombie, and Thom Kenney on government opportunities to grow your defense portfolio.

Stayer Commons

6:00–7:30 pm

Networking Reception

Stayer Commons

MBA VETS CLUB DINING OUT: *Feel free to stop by the reception en route to the Downes Ballroom on the other side of the stadium.*



FEATURED KEYNOTE & FIRESIDE CHAT

Mr. Patrick Kelleher *BA '88*

Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Materiel Readiness

Serves as principal advisor to the Assistant Secretary of War for Sustainment in overseeing the Department's $90 billion maintenance program. He is also responsible for developing policies and procedures that ensure the Department meets statutory requirements for core depot-level maintenance of major weapon systems, military equipment, and commodities.



Rob Michalak *MBA '07*

President & CEO, Masterbilt Inc.

Also President of R Ray Holdings, LLC. Rob brings a strong foundation in engineering and business from leadership roles at Eaton, including Plant Manager at Eaton Aerospace and several management positions at Eaton Automotive.



Jim Abercrombie

Co-Founder & CEO, TrekFed

Co-founded Trek10 in 2014 and built it into a premier AWS consulting partner, spinning out its government practice as TrekFed before selling Trek10 to Caylent in 2025. TrekFed helps defense industrial base companies meet CMMC 2.0, IL4/IL5, and FedRAMP requirements while migrating securely to the cloud. Jim is a Founding Director of the Midwest Defense Accelerator.



Maria Gibbs *PhD '17*

AVP, AI Strategy & Regional Engagement, University of Notre Dame

Advances Notre Dame's institutional approach to AI and its role as a catalyst for innovation across the South Bend–Elkhart region. As Executive Director of iNDustry Labs, she grew relationships to 300 industry leaders across 130 companies through programs including the Regional Careers Initiative and AI Leaders of Tomorrow.

FRIDAY · NOVEMBER 13, 2026

IDEA Center Demo Day

National Security Innovation Challenge Showcase

See the full Demo Day schedule

IDEA Center at Innovation Park
1400 E. Angela Blvd., South Bend
For students, faculty, staff, and industry partners

11:45–12:30 pm

Welcome Lunch

IDEA Center at Innovation Park, first floor

12:30–4:00 pm

Program

Team pitch presentations, speaker panels on veteran founders and government buying pathways, and awards.
IDEA Center at Innovation Park, Room 109

6:30–7:30 pm

Celebration Dinner

The Indiana Whiskey Company · 1115 W Sample St, South Bend

PLEASE LET US KNOW YOU'RE COMING

Fall Summit RSVP

forms.gle/VyUfYqeqHkTSpDWN7

RSVP no later than Friday, November 6.

Questions? Contact Matt Desrosiers at **mdesros2@nd.edu**

Scan to RSVP