

# The Extension

## President's Message: Richard Williams

### Wandering Retirees

*Why Oh Why Oh Why Oh  
Why did I ever leave Ohio?  
Why did I Wander  
to find what lies yonder?  
Life was so cosy at home*



I think of these lyrics from the musical *Wonderful Town* (1953) when we begin to plan for the latest move of the Retirees Association office to renovated quarters in the Student Union. Our first location when the Retirees Association was formed back in the 1990s was in Millett Hall. There was a sizable office for our officers to use and board meetings were held in the Liberal Arts conference room. This was our home until 2015 when the university needed our Millett space for other purposes and moved us to the WSU Foundation Building across Col. Glenn Highway (behind Wendy's). We were provided with a very large room with plenty of space and furniture for our board meetings as well as space for a desk, computer, printer etc., space for supplies, coffee pot etc., and a small storage room for our archives. The Foundation Building space served us well until 2022 when we were informed that the Foundation, in partnership with altafiber and Nokia, intended to use our space to create a 5G Test Lab as part of the new Emergence Center One. The Retirees Office officially moved from the Foundation Building to temporary space back on campus in 328 Fawcett in the December of 2022. Just recently the university told us we would be moving this summer to the third floor of the Student Union where, until recently, the Graduate School and UCIE were housed. We will be joined there by the Alumni Association and, possibly, advancement staff. Where do we wander indeed!

### Declining Enrollments and Budget Cuts

On a different subject you may have read that Wright State recently announced plans to "deactivate" 34 associate, bachelor's and master's degree programs with the goal of keeping Wright State "competitive and effectively managing its resources." While most of the programs that were deactivated enrolled very few students, the university uses words like "sustainability" and "evolve" to indicate that further reductions may be coming in the future. In fact, Wright State has already done a great deal of evolving since Main Campus enrollments started falling in the late teens due to the university's financial crises and then the COVID shutdown.

*Continued*

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### Upcoming Events

**Tuesday, June 11, 10:30 am**

Guided tour of Carillon Park

**Friday, September 20, 1:30 pm**

Retirees Picnic, Rotary Park, Beaver Creek

WSURA sponsored activities are announced by email, so make sure that we have yours on file!



*Continued from Page 1*

However, Wright State was not alone. Other state universities in Ohio were also experiencing enrollment declines, notably Akron (-50%), Toledo (-29%), Youngstown State (-20%) and Kent State (-11%). Not surprisingly, all of these universities have recently announced major program cuts. Furthermore, all universities across the country are preparing for the “demographic cliff” that will hit in 2025 when the smaller number of Great Recession era children reach college age.

Unfortunately, many of the programs being eliminated are in the humanities. Administrators say they are responding to budget shortfalls and waning student interest in humanities courses as well as pressure from parents who want their children to major in subject areas that will hopefully result in good paying jobs after graduation.

To quote Gordon Gee, former president of Ohio State University and now president of West Virginia University, “Are we going to revert back to ‘normal’? No, we will have a new normal ... We have to change. We can no longer be everything to everyone. We’ve got to make choices.”

## The Pig in the Python

Many, if not most, Wright State retirees are “Baby Boomers,” defined as those who were born between 1946 and 1964, when the US population increased by almost 2.4 million. Throughout our lives society has scrambled to meet our needs. Anthropologists point out that soldiers summoned to war often leave a pregnant wife behind, and if he (it was mostly “he’s” until very recently) survived another baby often followed. Such was the pattern in my family. My sister, Sande, was born in 1944 and I came along in 1948. There were at last three other such patterns in my graduating class (approximately 650) at Beaver Creek. My best friend Wilma had a sister, Dixie, in my sister’s class (450). Wolfgang Mink had Gundula, and Mike Fisher had Jack. Beaver Creek had to build schools to accommodate us. A second primary was added next to Main Elementary on Dayton-Xenia Road and later Ferguson Junior High came into being to make room for the continuing influx into the system.

A strong argument can be made that Wright State was, in large part, created to serve this population. Gov. Jim Rhodes wanted a state university within driving distance of every Ohio high school graduate. Eager students flocked to enroll, and one building soon became four. We all know the rest of the story. For many years construction was a fact of life on campus and enrollment peaked at around 19,000 students in 2015. We held steady for a while, but lower birth rates, the pandemic and economic decline have taken their toll. Enrollment fell 30% from 2015 to 2020. The pandemic had something to do with this as did the continuing popularity of distance learning. Thankfully, 2023 brought a 2.2% enrollment increase in fall semester. Nevertheless, campus often feels sadly empty. Parking is no problem, classrooms go unused. It’s not that the university isn’t thriving, it’s just that it was built to accommodate a population that no longer exists.

Now we are stressing retirement systems. A Google search will pull up such articles as “Will Baby Boomers Bankrupt Social Security?” Current workers are a smaller cohort and boomers are living longer. Various solutions have been proposed, including having benefits pegged to individual contributions. Ohio’s state employee retirement systems, OPERS and STRS, are solvent and those benefits are secure. We are fortunate to have good managers at the state level. Our children and grandchildren will work longer to support us as we reach more advanced ages than previous generations. We owe them the economic prudence that will produce a nice inheritance someday and maybe a little sharing along the way. Many of them, as I can personally attest, have earned it several times over.

*by Mary Kenton*

## Poetry Corner

### God Says Yes to Me

by Kaylin Haught



I asked God if it was okay to be melodramatic  
and she said yes

I asked her if it was okay to be short  
and she said it sure is

I asked her if I could wear nail polish  
or not wear nail polish

and she said honey  
she calls me that sometimes

she said you can do just exactly  
what you want to

Thanks God I said

And is it even okay if I don't paragraph  
my letters

Sweetcakes God said  
who knows where she picked that up  
what I'm telling you is  
Yes Yes Yes



David Lee Garrison

In this poem, Kaylin Haught (1947-2018) tells us about her dialogues with God, which are so affectionate and personal they make me giddy.

While she was born in Illinois, the poet spent most of her life in Oklahoma, and that may account for the country western twang of her diction.

I'd like to be on the kind of intimate terms with the Almighty that she is.

## Spotlight on the Student Union — Evolving to Meet Student Needs

The Student Union has always been the center of campus life at Wright State University. From its early days as the University Center through construction and renovation projects, the Union has served as that “living room” or “third place” for thousands of students. As director, one of my favorite things is to encounter alumni who have returned after several years and see the look on their faces as they investigate the changes and reminisce over how the Rathskeller has changed or what the atrium used to look like. Visitors to the Union this year will again see changes.

### The Landing

In the summer of 2022, the university began a partnership with eCampus.com, a premier online retailer of textbooks and digital course materials. Moving to a more modern and convenient way to rent and purchase textbooks allowed for a reduced footprint. The new space has a more modern feel with a variety of new options for branded and other merchandise. The renovation included the creation of two new spaces for future retail or other amenities for students.



### Culture and Identity Centers

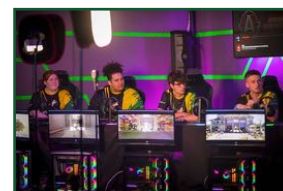
In late summer, the Student Union welcomed the Division of Inclusive Excellence's cultural and identity centers which were formerly located in Millett Hall. Centers include:

- Asian and Native American Center
- Bolinga Black Cultural Resources Center
- Disability and Neurodivergence Cultural Center
- Latino Center
- LGBTQA Center
- Women's Center

Through these centers, the Division of Inclusive Excellence fosters a welcoming campus environment and institutional culture that supports accessibility, inclusion, and belonging for all.

### eSports

Newly located in the former student organization suite in the lower atrium, the eSports space is operated by the Collegiate eSports Club and is open from noon to 6 p.m., Monday-Friday. The space includes a competition room, three rooms with gaming PC's, two console rooms with 75-inch monitors, hangout space and gaming chairs. The club has more than 700 active participants and is open to all students at all gaming skill levels. The eSports Club operates multiple competitive teams that compete in intercollegiate tournaments each semester in games such as Overwatch, Rocket League, and more.



### Student Involvement and Leadership Center

Last fall, we introduced a new Student Involvement and Leadership (SIL) Center in the upper atrium. The new space includes the SIL staff offices, two small meeting rooms for student organizations, a leadership lab with leadership resources and art supplies, storage lockers, a small programming/presentation space, the Student Government Association office, seating and gathering spaces, writeable walls, and a creative planning space called the think tank.

This open concept welcomes all student organizations to gather, connect, and collaborate. Students who are looking for engagement can meet with one of our involvement mentors and talk about their interests and discover resources.

Even more changes are planned for 2024-25!

*by Eric Corbitt  
Director, Student Union/Campus Recreation*

## Funeral Potatoes

Preheat oven to 350.

Mix:

1 can cream of chicken soup  
 1 can cream of mushroom soup  
 1 pint of sour cream  
 1 ½ cups of grated Cheddar cheese  
 1 30-ounce package of *thawed* hash brown potatoes (or cut up potatoes)  
 3 T of onion dip  
 Salt and pepper to taste



Put everything into a 9" by 13" casserole dish.

Top with 1 cup of sour cream potato chips.

Bake uncovered for 45 minutes.

For a main dish, add chunks of ham or bacon. (You can mix everything but the chips the night before, cover, and then add the chips just before baking.) This dish is often served at post funeral gatherings, hence the name.

## Scholarship Awards

One of WSURA's annual events is selecting students to be awarded a scholarship, focusing on those students who are related to a retiree. WSURA is pleased to announce a \$1,500 scholarship to each of the following for 2025-2026:

**Josh Hivner**  
 2026 Grad Year  
 Computer Science Major

**Caroline Leffel**  
 2026 Grad Year  
 Middle Childhood Education Major

**Amalia Petreman**  
 2025 Grad Year  
 Liberal Studies Major

**Caitlin Wilson**  
 2025 Grad Year  
 Chemistry

Congratulations and we wish each of you success in your future endeavors.

## WSURA Board 2024–2025

### Executive Committee

President: Barbara Bullock  
 President Elect: David Garrison  
 Past President: Dick Williams  
 Secretary: Gail Whitaker  
 Treasurer: Carolyn Smith  
 Communications: Mary Kenton  
 Webmaster: Robin Suits

### Board Members at Large

Dan Abrahamowicz  
 David Garrison  
 Joyce Howes

### Standing Committees

Activities: Mary Gromosiak  
 By-Laws/Elections: Joyce Howes  
 Communications: Mary Kenton  
 Historical Preservation: Kathy Morris  
 Membership Development: Judi Engle  
 Publications: Judi Engle  
 Remembrance: Peggy Bott  
 Scholarship: Dan Abrahamowicz,  
     David Garrison, Joyce Howes  
 Ohio Council of Higher Education  
 Retirees:  
     OPERS: Barbara Bullock  
     STRS: Dick Williams

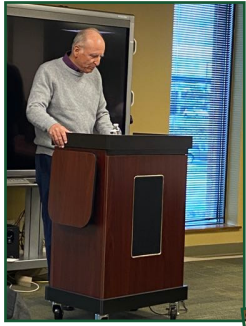
### Liaisons

Alumni Affairs: Dan Abrahamowicz  
 Community Affairs: Donna Schlagheck  
 Friends of the Libraries: Peggy Bott  
 Raider Food Pantry: Kathy Morris

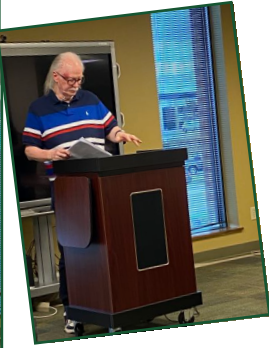
## Contact Us

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 Website: [wright.edu/wsura](http://wright.edu/wsura)  
 Facebook.com/groups/WSURA

## Recent WSURA Activities



Three emeritus faculty members read their work at a well attended **Poetry Month Wine and Cheese** gathering early April. (Clockwise: David Garrison, Jimmy Chesire, David Petreman)



Paul Leonard, former Dayton mayor and lieutenant governor of Ohio, met with a large group of retirees to discuss **“Primaries and Prosecutions.”** He led us through six topics that may greatly influence the election:

- the economy
- being fit for office
- abortion/women’s rights
- Middle East war
- third party candidates
- immigration



Professor Liam Anderson updated us on the second year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, described as the biggest attack on a European country since WWII.

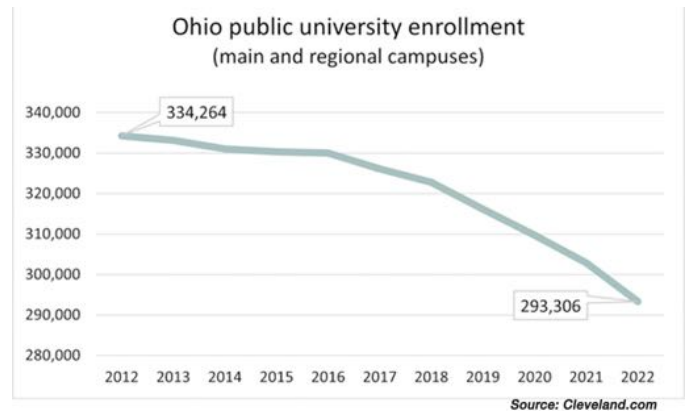


**Annual Retirees Luncheon** included awards and a fun Wright State trivia game (see page 8). The Lewis K. Shupe Faculty Award was given to James Amon, professor emeritus of biological sciences (left). The Richard A. Johnson Staff Award was given to Lorna Dawes, retired director of the University Center.

## Enrollment Decline in Ohio

While running for Ohio governor in 1962, James Rhodes said he wanted to establish a public college or university within 30 miles of every Ohioan. After the Republican won office in 1963, new schools opened: Cleveland State in 1964, followed by Wright State in 1967, Northeast Ohio Medical University in 1973 and Shawnee State in 1985. Today Ohio has 14 public universities, 23 community colleges, about 50 independent, nonprofit private schools, and roughly 30 for-profit schools.

About 70,000 students were enrolled in Ohio colleges and universities when Rhodes made his pledge. Fifty years later, in 2012, there were about 527,000 enrollees. But the upward trend began to reverse around that time. By 2022, Ohio higher education enrollment dropped to 463,000, according to the Ohio Department of Higher Education.



“We saw a decline from 2012 to 2020 of about 12% in the public sector — both in the four-year and the two-year [schools],” said Chancellor Mike Duffey of the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

Duffy blames fundamental demographics, declining birth rates nationally and in Ohio, and declining college-going rates for the decline. “Fewer students are choosing to go to college after high school.”

According to the Pew Research Center, in 2022, 39% of 18- to 24-year-old men who graduated from high school were enrolled in college, down from 47% in 2011. In the same period, women’s rate of enrollment fell from 52% to 48%.

While Ohio is hardly alone in its enrollment declines, the state’s losses cut deeper than much of the rest of the country. In Ohio, just over 30% of adults 25 and older have a bachelor’s degree or higher, below the 35% share nationwide and the 15th lowest among all states.

Sara Kilpatrick, executive director of the Ohio Conference of the American Association of University Professors, notes that Ohio’s support of higher education lags the national average.

In 1980, Ohio spent on average \$11,700 in revenue per full-time equivalent student, when adjusting for inflation. In 2022, it was \$14,890, a 27.3% increase. But nationally, it averaged \$12,102 in 1980 and \$17,393 in 2022, a 43.7% increase.

Rather than increase financial support for higher education, the Ohio Legislature seems to believe schools need to tighten their belts by cutting programs and people. Senate Bill 83 would allow schools to lay off faculty through cutting programs. It has passed the Senate and is awaiting a vote on the House floor,

AAUP’s Kirkpatrick is worried about the future of faculty collective bargaining rights. University presidents come and go, but faculty members usually stay at a school for their entire careers, and with that longevity comes unique insights, she said.

“It’s really important for faculty to maintain their collective bargaining rights,” she said. “Besides the state disinvestment, what we’ve seen at a number of institutions is mismanagement, and a lot of people think that institutions of higher education should operate like businesses. But it’s exactly this business top-down model that has created problems at colleges and universities.”

by Robin Suits



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## So You Think You Know Wright State?

How well can you answer the following questions from the WSURA Luncheon trivia game? (Answers below)

The Alma Mater, which begins "Wright State stands above the valley, glorious banner green and gold," was written by two faculty members. Name them.

Name the first four buildings of Wright State that form the Founders Quadrangle, commonly known as the Quad, in the order of construction.

How good are you at numbers? Wright State is widely recognized for its underground tunnel system. How long is it in miles?

Wright State's campus was partially purchased and partially deeded by the US government for 190 acres adjacent to Wright Patterson AFB. How many acres is the campus today?

*Thomas Whissen (music) David Garrison (lyrics)*  
*Allyn, Oelman, Millett, Fawcett*  
*Two miles*  
*557 acres*