

# The Extension



## President's Message: Judi Engle

Perhaps you, like me, have watched Wright State University capture negative news headlines repeatedly: faculty strike; elimination of staff and faculty positions; financial crisis; major budget cuts; sale of university owned buildings. Remember when we anticipated enrollment topping 20,000? It is now about half of that. Because so many of us invested our time and energy to support Wright State and its students, the bad news can be overwhelming.



So, I went on a quest for a bit of WSU good news. After months amid a COVID pandemic, we all could use some of that.

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Research and Sponsored Program Awards for fiscal year 2020 totaled a very respectable \$103,495,187. A recent \$3 million National Institutes of Health consortium grant to study weakness in aging caught my attention. Sherif Elbasiouny, professor of neuroscience, cell biology, and physiology, will receive about 50 percent of the funding in a joint project with The Ohio State University and Ohio University.

Elbasiouny explains: "For years, age-related weakness and frailty were largely attributed to the loss of muscle mass...but data now indicate that neurological factors are critical in the development of weakness." This grant could have clinical applications for all of us, but don't put those dumbbells aside just yet.

### Upcoming Events

As the Delta variant spreads, we are focusing on outdoor activities this fall: a guided stroll on a Beaver Creek Wetlands trail, a visit to Carillion Park, and/or an historical walk through Woodland Cemetery. Check your e-newsletters for details.



Students are the vitality of any campus, but Wright State's on-campus life during the months of online instruction was sorely lacking. However, more than 1,000 students moved into university housing for fall semester and more than 5,000 faculty, staff, and students enjoyed First Weekend, a three-day event "packed with information, games, advice, and more designed to acclimate new students." Events included

Party in the Woods, Do the U, Cook Out with the President, mud volleyball, and Student Union After Dark. Another 350 students were expected to move in before in-person classes started August 25, and free COVID vaccinations were available to all.

And academics? Wright State's home page touts a student-to-faculty ratio of 13:1 and 140 undergraduate and 136 graduate degree programs.

(Cont., Page 2)



### President's Message (Cont.)

Impressive. Students may not notice, but the academic structure has changed, combining degree programs and support staff into five colleges: Health, Education, and Human Services; Engineering and Computer Science; Liberal Arts; Raj Soin College of Business; and Science and Mathematics. Two schools, the Boonshoft School of Medicine and Graduate School, and the Lake Campus round out Wright State's academic structure.

Scholarships are readily available, and WSURA contributed to this effort, awarding three scholarships this fall. Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds are also being liberally distributed to students to help with expenses: food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare. As of July 7, the university has distributed almost \$11,000 from this fund to 9,578 students.

National awards have been recently granted to several students and student groups:

- Elisabeth Adkins, an M.D./MBA student, has been elected to serve on the Student National Medical Association board of directors as the national community service committee co-chair.
- A group of Wright State students will present a synthetic-biology research project at the International Genetically Engineered Machines (IGEM) competition. This field “applies engineering principles to biological systems to help solve real-world problems.”
- The Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity received the Buchanan Outstanding Chapter Award this past summer, recognizing “superior and sustained achievement.”
- Adaku Ume is the first Wright State student to receive the Porter Physiology Development Fellowship from the American Physiological Society. An M.D./Ph.D. dual degree student in biomedical sciences, Ume researches how immunosuppressant drugs may cause kidney fibrosis.
- Jennae Shelby, also an M.D./Ph.D. student in biomedical science, is the first Wright State student to receive a predoctoral fellowship from the National Institutes of Health. Her research area is cognitive impairment and dementia.



And campus? A new memorial plot sponsored by the National Pan-Hellenic Council should be completed by September. The plot “serves to highlight the university's diversity and inclusion initiative.”

Fellow retirees, the best news is that good news was easy to find.

### References

Wright State University Newsroom  
Wright State Office of Communications



Professor Emeritus of English Lawrence E. Hussman has produced a second chapbook titled *Pre-Posthumous Poems*. It is divided into two sections. The first concerns the natural world and the second deals with longing and loss. Though only 47 pages, this little volume packs a punch.

A sample:

### Seaside Storms

Rain is best when blown aslant,  
its thrust, the wind, at its side.  
Resounding on roofs to remind  
those inside they're still alive.

Trees dance to blustery music,  
the storm gains strength,  
adds drama to a swelling tide,  
a statement more profound  
than tame summer's stillness  
can provide.

Some insist on the comfort  
of fair weather, curse when  
gales rage and skies pour,  
assailing poles, snuffing  
light, heat, most pursuits.  
But ever give me tempests  
stripped of all beguilements.  
The better to nurture focus,  
draw clean borders between  
crib and crypt.

To read more poems from this collection,  
check out our website: [wright.edu/wsura](http://wright.edu/wsura)

## Artist's Corner

Driving around the village of Yellow Springs, it's impossible not to notice the yard signs. The most common is "Black Lives Matter" followed closely by "Be Kind." This poem has a few more thoughts on the subject.



### Kindness

Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.  
What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness.  
How you ride and ride  
thinking the bus will never stop,  
the passengers eating maize and chicken  
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness  
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho  
lies dead by the side of the road.  
You must see how this could be you,  
how he too was someone  
who journeyed through the night with plans  
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,  
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.  
You must wake up with sorrow.  
You must speak to it till your voice  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
and you see the size of the cloth.  
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,  
only kindness that ties your shoes  
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,  
only kindness that raises its head  
from the crowd of the world to say  
It is I you have been looking for,  
and then goes with you everywhere  
like a shadow or a friend.

From *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems*.  
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## Wright Sized

The college-aged student population has been declining for years, leading many schools, Wright State included, to look for ways to reduce the number of faculty at all ranks. The Wright State administration decided that the goal would be to reduce the faculty by 113 positions. First, the university offered an incentive program to encourage early retirement. Originally, 90 people accepted the offer, but so many people in Computer Science were prepared to leave that two were told they had to stay on. COLA accounted for 33 of the voluntary separations and CEHS six.

The administration wanted to reduce COLA by 49 positions, 12 were retrenched and 4 more left voluntarily. Of the 12 retrenched positions, 3 were lecturers, 1 was a senior lecturer, 7 were associate professors, and 1 full professor. Higher ranking positions were able to be eliminated because the university decided to make some cuts at the program level rather than the department level.

The impacted departments were English, Modern Languages, Religion/Philosophy/Classics, History, Art/Art History, and the School of Public and International Affairs. Four faculty were retrenched in Education. All other colleges met their quotas. The AAUP negotiated another month until the end of September to give faculty more time to make decisions that would impact the rest of their lives.

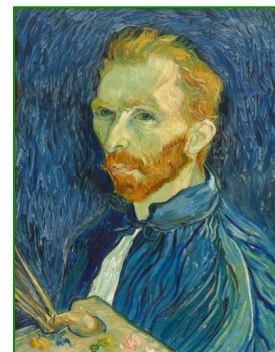
Those who turned down the Voluntary Separation Plan (VSP) retained their legal rights. Those who accepted it waived any right to legal intervention. The retrenchment phase of reorganization is over. Bobby Rubin, current AAUP president, concluded that the university offered “a pretty good deal for people in bad circumstances.” In some instances the university offered better terms than the Collective Bargaining Agreement called for.

Rubin, who has spent his career at Wright State, is optimistic about its future. He takes the broad view of a university education. At its best it doesn't prepare graduates for just one job. Rather it prepares them to be flexible, trainable good employees. He sees Wright State poised for a once in a lifetime opportunity. He is cautiously optimistic that we can get enrollments up. “We provide,” he says, “a fantastic, affordable education.” It's time to stop being one of Ohio's best kept secrets and let everyone know what we can offer.

By Mary Kenton

## My Friend Vincent

Over the past few months I have become close friends with Vincent van Gogh, the Dutch painter who lived from 1853 to 1890. During my undergraduate and graduate art history courses, I came to know him and his work, but lately I know him in a new, more intensive way. It has not been an easy journey, because Vincent is complicated, but it has been so interesting that I plan to continue this exploration.



With the current focus on van Gogh and the traveling visual presentation/show that is visiting many cities, the general population will have a chance to experience this phenomenal artist in a new way, and similar to the way that Vincent observed (and related to) people, nature, color, and other things in his surroundings. He saw swirling forms in the sky and in cypress trees. His visions of color were new and spectacular. His self portraits were a testament to a man who was not afraid to present himself in different stages of living.

Van Gogh's short life (just 37 years) was plagued by repeated bouts of severe depression. He took up painting at 27 after failing at other professions and sold only one painting during his life. His depression often interfered with his painting.

Vincent was close to his younger brother Theo all of his life, but had difficulty establishing and keeping personal relationships with his father, mother, neighbors, and other artists. Many of Vincent's paintings are part of the popular culture, especially “*The Starry Night*.” Theo promoted his work in Paris during the Impressionist movement. Ultimately, Vincent's experimental nature drove him from impressionism, through post-impressionism and, according to some scholars, into early abstract modernism, a development that was cut short by his untimely death.

I plan to lead a workshop that will provide additional information on Vincent's life, his relationship with his pastor father, and his fellowship with Paul Gauguin and other artists. I will highlight museums that have van Gogh paintings (some are nearby), as well as prices that have been paid for his work. The workshop will be scheduled as soon as it seems safe to meet without masks. Stay tuned for details.

By Gary Barlow

## Why So Skimpy?

If you are a typical retiree, you have been spending more time at home than usual. No recreational shopping, no lunching with friends, reduced travelling. Some of us fill the time with worthy activities like cleaning the garage or basement, gardening, reading important books, or volunteering at the food bank. Others have increased their TV time. This summer the Olympics offered a huge improvement over the usual news-oriented daytime fare. As a viewer, I was often struck by how few clothes the women athletes were wearing. Female beach volleyball players are a notable example. Their often very revealing bikinis look out of place for an international athletic competition. The men play the same sport dressed in jerseys and loose -fitting shorts. Women's gymnastics' costumes are colorful, sparkly, and sparse. By way of contrast the German team sported full-length leotards, but since they didn't make the finals not everyone saw them.



In some Olympic sports, skimpy uniforms are specified and required for international competition. The International Handball Federation mandates that women's beach handball players must wear bikini bottoms "with a close fit and cut on an upward angle toward the top of the leg." The sides can measure no more than four inches.

When the Norwegian team wore shorts to the bronze medal match, they were fined 1,500 euros. In countries where modesty is emphasized, many young women don't take up the sport because of the requirement for bikini bottoms and sports bra tops.

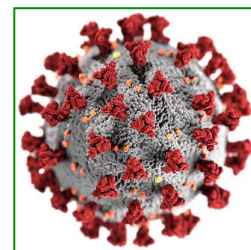
It's not unusual for spectators to take embarrassing photos and post them on social media. Naomi Mataua Aasa, who plays for the American Samoan team, told *The New York Times*: "The uniform rules indicate that we are there to put on a show rather than being marked as athletes equally." Every athlete should be able to compete in uniforms appropriate for their sport that meet basic standards for modesty.

*By Mary Kenton*



## COVID Chronicles

Most extended families have their COVID tales. Though far too many cases end tragically, most of us live to tell our stories. My husband, David Barr, and I became sick simultaneously after a trip to Nashville to visit family, and by the second day we were sure we had COVID. A test at CVS confirmed our suspicions.



You may have read that while being vaccinated may not entirely prevent you from contracting COVID, it will most likely keep you out of the hospital. That was our experience. David had a cough, headache, and fatigue for about a week to 10 days. Then he was pretty much over it. I, on the other hand, had all of that plus I lost all sense of smell and taste for almost three weeks. It is surprising how difficult it becomes to eat when you can't identify what you are chewing. I am slowly regaining smell and taste. Yesterday, I peeled a perfectly ripe peach and relished the exquisite signature taste of late summer.

People always ask how we got it. The honest answer is "I don't know." Though I exposed everybody on the WSURA Board, no one came down with the illness and all those who tested were negative. No one in our family was infected. Our best guess is that I picked it up at a crowded Louisville McDonalds when we stopped for lunch. The drive through line stretched for what seemed like miles, so I went inside to place our order. After all, I was vaccinated!

Every month we learn more about the virus, how it spreads, and what we can do to protect ourselves. If I went into that McDonalds today, I would be sure to wear a mask. I am more hesitant to enter public spaces now than I was a few months ago. We will probably be dealing with this pandemic until next spring, if not longer. Check your mask supply, stock-up on books, and record a few movies. It's better to be patient than to be a patient.

## The Retirees Association Board

Readers may be pleased to know that the WSURA board has carried on through the pandemic. We have not missed a meeting, thanks to Zoom. Routine functions have continued. We recruit and welcome new members to the organization and to the board. Our most recent addition is Betty Kangas from the Boonshoft School of Medicine. Oral history interviews are taped and transcribed. All members received the results of a major project: the revision, redesign, and reprinting of the membership directory. We awarded scholarships and raised funds. We keep saying we are going to clean up our supply/storage room, but like so many of your vows about the basement or garage, we haven't gotten around to that yet. We have even offered some programming via Zoom. Paul Leonard led a lively discussion before last fall's election and by the time you receive this, Donna Schlagheck will have delivered a talk and moderated a Zoom discussion about the 20th anniversary of the attacks of 9/11.

It is exceedingly difficult to plan for in-person events, even those projected well into the future. President Judi Engle initiated a brainstorming session with the board to come up with activities. Another discussion led to a prioritized list. As conditions permit, the board will work hard to implement as many activities as possible. Many retirees have spent the last 18 months largely isolated from friends and extended family. It is wearing thin for us all. Until the all-clear, take care of yourself and stay in touch. Call, text, video chat with a friend.

Perhaps in the spring we'll be able to get together for our annual luncheon. We'll discuss the pandemic in the past tense as a terrible thing that we all endured. Then we'll have a silent prayer in remembrance of those who are no longer with us. Finally, we will lift our glasses for a robust toast to a future that allows us to be among friends once more.

*By Mary Kenton*

## WSURA Board 2021–2022

### Executive Committee

President: Judi Engle  
 President Elect: Dick Williams  
 Past President: Dan Abrahamowicz  
 Secretary: Gail Whitaker  
 Treasurer: Sheryl Provens  
 Communications: Mary Kenton

### Board Members

Jerry Alter  
 Gary Barlow  
 Peggy Bott  
 Mary Gromosiak  
 Betty Kangas  
 Kathy Morris  
 Donna Schlagheck  
 Robin Suits  
 Gail Whitaker  
 Dick Williams

### Standing Committees

Activities: Mary Gromosiak  
 By-Laws/Elections: Joyce Howes  
 Communications: Mary Kenton  
 Membership Development: Judi Engle  
 Remembrance: Peggy Bott  
 Scholarship: Jerry Alter  
 OCHER: Peggy Bott and Dick Williams  
 Historical Preservation: Kathy Morris

### Liaisons

Alumni Affairs: Dick Williams  
 Athletics Council:  
 Mary Kenton and Dan Abrahamowicz  
 Community Affairs: Donna Schlagheck  
 Friends of the Libraries: Gary Barlow

**Webmaster:** Robin Suits

## Contact Us

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



*ZOOM Board Meeting Screen Shot*

*Top Row: Gary Barlow, Robin Suits, Gail Whitaker*

*Second Row: Judi Engle, Sheryl Provens, Dick Williams*

*Third Row: Donna Schlagheck, Dan Abrahamowicz, Kathy Morris*

*Bottom Row: Mary Kenton, Joyce Howes*

*Missing from this Zoom: Jerry Alter, Mary Gromosiak, Betty Kangas*

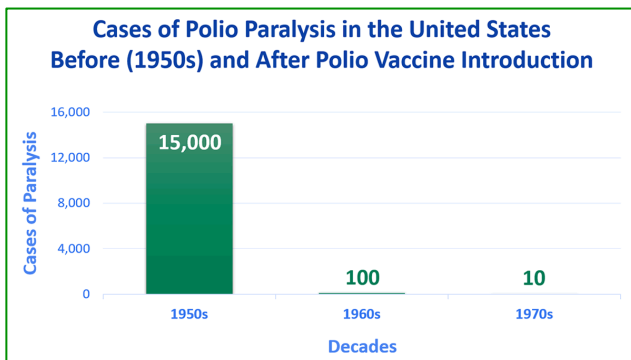


## A Bit of Vaccine History

Vaccines have a long history in North America. Those who have an interest in the Revolutionary War period may recall that more soldiers were lost to disease than in battle. George Washington had his soldiers vaccinated against smallpox, the scourge that killed tens of millions of people in North and South America. Approximately 90 percent of the native population, which had no natural protection, died. Thanks to the work of Edward Jenner, smallpox was the first disease to be eradicated through vaccination.

Routine vaccinations for infants and young children became common in the World War II era: smallpox, diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis. Many retirees born in the 1940s were the first generation to receive these life saving jabs. One result was that American life expectancy increased dramatically in that period.

The success of these vaccines increased the urgency to find a way to prevent polio, a disease that had crippled a president and terrified a nation. By 1952, at least 60,000 children were infected and more than 3,000 died. Mothers went door to door collecting dimes to help support research by the newly founded National Institutes of Health. When the Salk vaccine began trials in 1954, parents volunteered their own children as subjects. When it proved safe and effective, the nation celebrated. Church bells pealed and the radio blared the news.



As parents were lining up their children to get the life-saving medicine, a facility in California distributed a batch of Salk vaccine that contained an active virus, which was administered to 200,000 children—40,000 got polio, 200 were paralyzed and 10 died. Once the source of the problem was identified, vaccinations resumed after a short pause. Parents were determined to provide their children with protection the Salk and Sabin vaccines provided. Again, almost all Americans of a certain age have memories of lining up in school to receive their cup or their shot. Eventually, polio—like smallpox—was no longer a threat in the United States or around the world.

In the years after World War II Americans trusted science and medicine in a way that seems quaint today. They wanted the benefits that new medicines like antibiotics had to offer. They were open to innovation and advancement. There was social unity about the importance of eradicating polio. It never became a political football. It seemed for a while that the same might be true for the COVID-19 vaccine as well. Research and development began under President Trump and implementation has been carried out by the Biden administration. Though both President Trump and his wife received the vaccine, many of his supporters are anti-vaxxers—so much so that he was booed at a recent rally when he urged the audience to get shots like he did. Explanations range from legitimate to ridiculous. What is true, though, is that compliance or resistance breaks down along a Democratic/Republican axis. The same is true for mask mandates, vaccination passports, and any other mitigation strategies. It's ironic that ageing leftwing Boomers need to look past the 1960s back into the 1950s to find the social cohesion we so desperately need today.

*By Mary Kenton*

*Factual information drawn from a May 3, 2021, NPR piece by Susan Brink:  
**Can't Help Falling In Love With A Vaccine: How Polio Campaign Beat Vaccine Hesitancy***



# WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

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### *Images from Welcome Weekend*

