

The Extension



President's Message: Dan Abrahamowicz

I read with interest the fall 2020 edition of the *Wright State Magazine*. Wright State's eighth president, Sue Edwards, graces the cover in a great looking portrait and the contents include a number of interesting stories.

What was of particular interest to me though was the caption next to Dr. Edwards' portrait, which read *A Champion for the Students*. This was the title of the article about Dr. Edwards and, I assumed, a declaration as to the priority of her presidency.



As it turns out, being a champion, according to the article, involves "leading the charge" in focusing on student success. As she assumes her presidency, Dr. Edwards is committed to an institutional culture that supports student success (*Wright State...2020*).

Student success is a laudable goal for a president and an institution of higher education, but the article is a little unclear as to the definition of student success. There is a paragraph that refers to helping keep students on track to graduation. From that I infer that graduation is the student result that Dr. Edwards is championing and that student success is defined by student graduations.

There is nothing wrong with this definition of student success. Everyone working in higher education wants students to persist through the collegiate process and graduate. Furthermore, graduations, completions, etc. are essential elements in Ohio to the arcane state subsidy formula. The more students complete coursework and graduate, the more money the state institution receives.

So, student success as graduations has a real instrumental value to a state institution. Student success means more money. But is graduation intrinsically the definition of a successful student? After all, the graduation ceremony is a commencement, the beginning of something. What defines student success after the beginning?

This speaks to the real purpose of higher education, its ultimate value to the students and their families. An article in the *Gallup Business Journal* (2014) asked the question "Is College Worth It?". The answer in the article is yes, but new measures of success are needed. The article claimed that traditional measures of student success—degree attainment, employment, lifetime earnings, etc.—fall short of defining the value of college.

(Cont. on Page 2)

In This Issue

President's Message	2
Artist's Corner	3
Carts and Horses—	4
Retrenchment & Reorganization	
Carts and Horses	5
Fat Cats Act?	
Remembering Nick Davis	6
WSURA Board	
Curl Up with a Good Book	7
Wright State Women	8
Make History	

Upcoming Events

NOTE: These Zoom events are free, but you must pre-register at wsura@wright.edu. We will need your name and e-mail to send you a link to the event. Detailed information at wright.edu/wsura.

"The First 100 Days," a virtual conversation about the Biden administration with Paul Leonard
Tuesday, May 4, 11:30 a.m.
RSVP by Friday, April 30

"Are you an easy mark? Why do identify thieves target senior citizens?" a virtual presentation by Lt. Dave Williams
Tuesday, May 11, 11 a.m.
RSVP by Wednesday, May 5



President's Message (Cont.)

This is especially true as graduates struggle to find well-paying jobs while average tuition levels have risen nearly 250 percent in the past two decades. Students and families have coped with this by amassing student loan debt now surpassing \$1 trillion, which is more than all credit card debt combined and is now proclaimed a national crisis. The article also asks what the ultimate outcome of a college education should be.

College, the article argued, prepares someone not just for graduation or that first job, but for many different jobs and experiences over a lifetime. Through its research, Gallup, for this article and in later research (Gallup-Purdue, 2014) with Purdue University of over 30,000 U.S. graduates, examined the long-term success of graduates as they pursued good jobs and better lives.

To make a long story less long, Gallup says its research shows that the ultimate outcome of higher education is about well-being, which in turn is critically dependent on career and workplace engagement. But this is not about high salaries or prestigious companies, it is about liking what you do, doing your best at it and being in an engaging workplace. Student success, therefore, is connected to well-being and to students figuring out what they like to do and what they do best.

What is it in the collegiate experience that contributes to this student success? The results of the Gallup-Purdue study found that where students went to college hardly mattered at all to their current level of well-being. The secret to success, according to the study is not *"where you go to college but how you go to college."*

Critical elements include having encouraging and caring mentors and professors; having experiences and/or internships that provided application of classroom learning; and being involved in extracurricular activities and organizations. Further, students who felt supported during their time in college were far more likely to have an emotional attachment to their institutions; and those who feel such attachment also are thriving in well-being.

This, to me, is fascinating stuff. How you go to college is what matters, not where you go to college. Involvement, engagement, personal and emotional connection, student centeredness—can institutions be purposeful in building these elements into the college experience and into institutional culture? Those institutions that are good at it really do contribute to student success.

It is possible to survey alumni to determine whether graduates are experiencing well-being. Could be a nice project for someone at WSU. Student success can be counted as graduations, but seems to me that this sells short the real value of higher education and its impact on the lives of students and on society as a whole. Something about the collegiate experience makes lives better and ultimately better lives are the measure of student success.

References

Gallup-Purdue Index Report (2014). *Gallup*. Retrieved from <https://www.gallup.com/services/176768/2014-gallup-purdue-index-report.aspx>
 Is College Worth It? (2014). *Gallup Business Journal*. Retrieved from <http://businessjournal.gallup.com/content164108/college-worth.aspx>
Wright State Magazine (fall 2020) Wright State University Foundation





“Hope” is the thing with feathers

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Emily Dickinson

Artist's Corner

Patients My Brothers and Sisters You will be healed.
The pains will be relieved
It will come down like a summer evening
Soft, warm.
Comfort after heavy green branches.

Patients, my brothers,
A little more patience, a little more stubbornness.
Life is not death waiting behind the door.
The world behind the door, the world is chirping
You will get up from your bed, you will go.
You will discover the taste of salt, bread and the sun all over
again.

To turn yellow like a lemon, to melt like a candle,
to be overthrown like an empty plane tree
siblings, patients,
We are neither lemons, nor candles, nor plane trees.
We are human beings, thank God
Thank God we know,
to our medicine
add hope
saying we need to live
stand up
impose

Patients,
my brothers
you will get better
The aches and pains will be relieved,
A soft warm summer evening will come down,
comfort after heavy green branches.



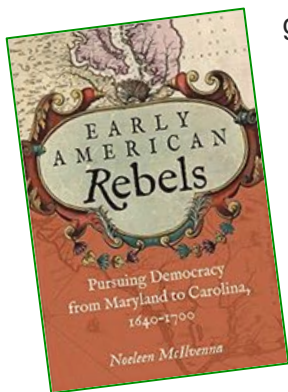
Nazim Hikmet (1901-1963), Turkish poet, playwright, and political activist, who is widely recognized as an important 20th century world poet. This poem was written at the height of the Spanish Influenza.

Friedrich Nietzsche:
“Memory says, ‘I did that.’ Pride replies, ‘I could not have done that.’ Eventually, memory yields.”

Carts and Horses—Retrenchment and Reorganization

A Conversation with Dr. Noeleen McIlvenna, Wright State AAUP President

It's hard to interpret the news about Wright State's current situation—enrollments, finances, faculty, and the impact they will have on future prospects and decisions. In the last five years, we have had three presidents and one short-term interim, Curtis McCray, whose main job was to cut some of the deadwood out of the budget before the more “permanent” president, Cheryl Schrader, showed up on campus to replace long-term Provost and President David Hopkins. Dr. Schrader resigned just two and one-half years later, and her provost, Sue Edwards, stepped into the president's job. These five years have not been good ones for Wright State. Surpluses disappeared, the faculty went on strike, enrollments plummeted. As a result of all these changes, the current administration has announced a dramatic reorganization of the academic structure and the intent to retrench the faculty by as many as 113 positions.



Dr. No, as she is widely known, grew up in Ireland but came to the United States for graduate training in American history, earning her Ph.D. at Duke in 2004. She has published three books on the colonial south: the latest is *Early American Rebels: Pursuing Democracy from Maryland to Carolina*. She won COLA's Outstanding Teacher award in 2017-2018 and was named an outstanding faculty member by the History Department three times. Recognized as a scholar, beloved as a teacher, she took on the job of president of AAUP in 2019, after having served as contract administrator and chair of the Strike Committee. Her term is coming at perhaps the most contentious period in Wright State history. McIlvenna walks a fine line between advocating for the faculty and students and criticizing the actions of the Board of Trustees and university administrators. She is careful to focus on principles over personalities, but her passion for her view of justice for faculty and students burns brightly.

At first it seemed reorganization would come before retrenchment. Charts appeared showing COLA going from eleven departments to four, a new health college, and the recombination of science and engineering. As people were trying to imagine the new “humanities” division, why education was placed where it was, and other proposals, the reorganization was put on hold and the conversation moved on to retrenchment. First, we would retrench and then we would see who was left and decide how to reorganize them.

The specifics of the retrenchment plan for faculty came from interim Provost Douglas Learnan, before he resigned to take a new job as dean of the College of Sciences at Auburn University at Montgomery. Liberal Arts is slated for the biggest hit, 49 positions, about a third of the college's faculty. Science and Math is scheduled for 26, Business 14, Education and Human Services 12, and Engineering and Computer Science 12. Nursing and the Lake Campus are exempted from any cuts in faculty. Learnan based his recommendation on overall student enrollment, which had declined for several years. He projected increased growth in Nursing and in Engineering and Computer Science enrollments, thus accounting for the differential pain inflicted.

It will be up to the deans to decide how to achieve the cuts in their respective units. Of course, they are limited by the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, which specifies that seniority must be honored—non-tenure eligible faculty go before tenure track, and assistant professors go before their more senior colleagues. McIlvenna is convinced that the real target of deep faculty retrenchment was originally full professors, the most expensive and the least productive from the trustees' business point of view. The ultimate goal of many around the country, she says, is to get rid of tenure all together and make all university employees “at will.”

Carts and Horses—Retrenchment and Reorganization (Cont.)

McIlvenna called the projected faculty cuts “horrendous and unnecessary.” Presumably they are based on budget issues and projected enrollments. She points out that the administration does not present a consistent budget picture. First, there is hand wringing over large budget deficits—maybe \$30 million, then a few months later we somehow have perhaps a \$20 million surplus. She notes that over the last five years, Wright State has lost part of its market share of available recruitable students. These are students who might have chosen Wright State in the past but who instead attend another similar Ohio school. This, she argues, is a predictable outcome of all of the bad publicity resulting from the scandals, the strike, and now these faculty reductions. It is all bad for the brand of “Wright State.”

Given that retrenchment alone won't produce the desired result of pruning the old wood, i.e., full professors, and that firing over 100 faculty might be incredibly damaging to the Wright State brand, the university has announced a new tack: an incentive driven voluntary buy out beginning March 19, 2021, with a 45-day window. This honey over vinegar approach may lure some of those full professors who may be close enough to retirement to take the money along with the gratitude of some of their younger colleagues, who might therefore be able to keep their jobs.

Once the number of faculty who accept the early retirement offer is known, then the actual layoff notification process will begin. That process will conclude by the end of June 2021, and those identified will have a grace period of up to 18 months to find other employment. Faculty who agree to early retirement will have until summer of 2022 to leave. The AAUP is arguing that an even longer time frame, say summer of 2023, would encourage more faculty to accept the buyout and further reduce the number of layoffs.

Unfortunately, even such draconian policies will not solve all of Wright State's problems. Further staff cuts are likely, especially once the reorganization and consolidation processes are complete. Fewer staff will be necessary to support fewer students and fewer faculty in fewer departments. That all of this is happening in the context of the worst public health crisis in a century make predictions seem especially unreliable. Will Wright State remain a diminished institution or can a spirit of cooperation be reclaimed?

Dr. No at one point spoke fondly of the old days when AAUP Chief Negotiator Rudy Fichtenbaum sat down with the late Bill Rickert, who represented the administration, and hammered out a contract. After this mostly amiable process was completed, Bill and Susan Rickert often invited the AAUP negotiating committee and their spouses to their lovely home in Bellbrook for dinner and a convivial evening amongst colleagues and friends. It could be so again.

By Mary Kenton

Fat Cats Act?

Former presidential candidate and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren has proposed the Ultra-Millionaire Tax Act aimed at the richest Americans. The bill would raise about \$3 trillion over 10 years. Households with more than \$50 million in assets would pay an additional 2 percent annual tax. Billionaires would be assessed an additional 1 percent surtax. This bill would reclaim only a smidgeon of the tax cuts the wealthy have enjoyed over the last 40 years thanks to the Reagan, G.W. Bush, and Trump Administrations, which reduced the top tax rate from 70 to 37 percent. The 2017 tax reduction will add \$2.3 trillion to the debt over 10 years.

Perhaps even more disturbing to Senator Warren than the cumulative effect of tax policy is the shocking impact the pandemic has had on America's billionaire class. Between March 2020 and January 2021, *Forbes* reported that the number of billionaires in the USA had grown from 614 to 660, a gain of 46. During roughly the same time frame the poverty rate increased by 2.4 (5.4 in the Black community) percent, almost double the largest annual increase in more than 50 years, producing an additional eight million poor people. While many of these people were waiting in food distribution lines for hours, Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos were adding billions to their disproportionate share of America's wealth. Musk, for example, increased his fortune by more than 500 percent during the first 10 months of the pandemic. He and Bezos are in a close race for the title of richest man in the world. Asking them to contribute a little more doesn't seem like too much.

Remembering Nick Davis

We name things for famous and worthy people to make sure that later generations remember their accomplishments and good deeds. So it is with Nick Davis, who died on October 22, 2010.

He was a local boy who graduated from Oakwood High School. He attended University of Michigan for a short while before being appointed to the Naval Academy. After his Naval career, which included a tour in Korea, he came back to Dayton, worked at Chrysler for 20 years, went to Xavier for an MBA and became director of continuing education at the WSU Kettering Center.

He was active in Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, serving as co-president of the parish council and co-chairman of the Greek Festival for many years. He and his wife travelled extensively as representatives of Elderhostel.

After retirement, he got involved with WSURA, serving two terms as president and then as treasurer. The WSURA board established a scholarship in this period but struggled to achieve a balance that would fund even one modest award. Nick and his wife Bea made generous, but anonymous donations, to move the fund closer to the \$30,000 endowment goal. Nick Davis exemplifies the idea of "a life well lived." To honor his memory, the WSURA Board named its fund the Nick Davis Scholarship.

Through the years, the endowment grew to more than \$90,000, and we can now fund two \$2,500 undergraduate scholarships each year with a strong preference for students who have a relative who worked at Wright State. The family member does not have to be a member of WSURA. They can be an aunt or uncle, a grandparent, a step-grandparent, a great grandparent, or a first cousin once removed. All the student has to do to be considered for an award is identify the relative who worked at Wright State on the scholarship application.

Please remind your Wright State student family members of this opportunity. Scholarships at Wright State can be cumulative, so that any one student may have two or more so long as together they don't exceed the "cost of education" as determined by the Financial Aid Office.

We take a personal interest in our Nick Davis Scholars. We invite them to lunch to learn more about their studies and usually feature them in an *Extension* article. Think how nice it would be to read that!

By Mary Kenton

WSURA Board 2020–2021

Executive Committee

President: Dan Abrahamowicz
 President Elect: Judi Engle
 Past President: Joyce Howes
 Secretary: Ruth Schumacher
 Treasurer: Sheryl Provans
 Communications: Mary Kenton

Board Members at Large

Jerry Alter
 Gary Barlow
 Peggy Bott
 Judi Engle
 Mary Gromosiak
 Kathy Morris
 Gary Pacernick
 Donna Schlagheck
 Robin Suits
 Gail Whitaker
 Dick Williams

Standing Committees

Activities: Mary Gromosiak
 By-Laws/Elections: Gail Whitaker
 Communications: Mary Kenton
 Membership Development: Judi Engle
 Sunshine: Peggy Bott
 Scholarship: Richard Mercer
 OCHER: Peggy Bott and Dick Williams
 Historical Preservation: Kathy Morris

Liaisons

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

Webmaster: Robin Suits

Contact Us

E-mail: wsura@wright.edu
 Website: wright.edu/wsura
 Facebook: [facebook.com/groups/WSURA](https://www.facebook.com/groups/WSURA)



The Best Way to Endure a Lockdown: Curl Up with a Good Book

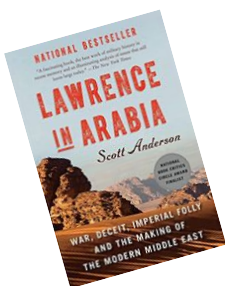
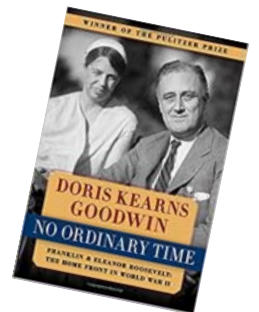
I recently saw a quote: “Books will take us many places when we can’t go anywhere,” and this has certainly been true this past year. Reading has always been an important part of my life. Because of the awe I felt for books and libraries, I wasn’t interested in getting an electronic reader, and then my daughter gave me one for Christmas. I usually resist any new technology until I have it and then very quickly learn to love it and wonder how I ever lived without it. This was true of my relationship with the Kindle.

My favorite book of the past year was *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett. It is the story of two siblings, the mansion that was their family home, and their banishment from it by their step-mother. Their biological mother had left them when they were quite young. It is almost a compilation of several fairy tales but is told with wit and compassion. It is a joy to read. Patchett is the author of another of my favorite books, *Bell Canto*.



Another novel I enjoyed this year is *Friends and Strangers* by J. Courtney Sullivan. This is a contemporary novel that deals with female friendships, the politics of motherhood that play out on various web sites, the gig economy, and income equality. Yet it is told with humor and a light touch. *Maine* is another work by J. Courtney Sullivan that I enjoyed. It is a family saga revolving around their summer home in Maine. This novel is also written with a light touch and obvious affection for the unique family members.

As much as I enjoy novels, the books that I love most are nonfiction accounts of historical events or biographies. For me the best of these is *No Ordinary Time, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. It is amazing to realize what FDR accomplished and the planning that was done to win a two-front war and create a new world order to follow the war. Eleanor was his eyes and conscience during this time. Since FDR had limited mobility, Eleanor would travel the country and the world to report back to the president on what she had witnessed. They had an awkward marriage and looked to others at times for love and understanding. Still, they had a strong relationship and together changed the world. I shudder to think how the modern press might have covered their White House.



Another favorite is *Lawrence in Arabia: Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East* by Scott Anderson. It is set during World War I. Britain and France are at war with the Ottoman Empire, but as Anderson points out, they are so involved in their plans to divide the Middle East between them that they almost forget to win the war. It is also the story of T. E. Lawrence who is tasked with assisting the Arabs who have been promised their independence if they fight with the British against the Turks. Lawrence was so devastated that Britain failed to keep its promise of independence to the Arabs that he turned down a knighthood.

My favorite nonfiction book of the past year is *The Splendid and the Vile* by Eric Larsen. It is about the first year Winston Churchill was prime minister, which was also the first year of the German Blitz or the Battle of Britain during World War II. I resisted reading this book since I had read so much about Churchill and World War II but my sister promised that this book was different. The author had access to the diaries of Churchill's daughter, Mary, and his private secretary, which allowed Larsen to present a more personable portrait of the man. It also gives the reader the sense of being there not only as the bombs fell but also while Churchill presided over a dinner party.



It is certainly more fun to read about history than to live through it. I am amazed to look back at this past year and all that has happened: a worldwide pandemic, a presidential election, an attack on Congress by our own citizens, and two impeachment trials. This has truly been a seminal year and many books will be written about it. I look forward to reading at least the early ones.



WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

Retirees Association
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy.
Dayton, Ohio 45435-0001

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO 551
DAYTON OH 45401

PAGE 8

The E_xension

The Extension is published by the Wright State University Retirees Association (WSURA). All issues can be found on our website: wright.edu/wsura.

Cut off dates for articles:

Nov. 15 – Winter

Feb. 15 – Spring

Aug. 15 – Fall

Editor: Mary Kenton

Editor Emerita: Marlene Bireley

Design Layout: Judi Engle

Send articles/information to Editor:
WSU Retirees Association
210 Foundation Bldg.
Wright State University
Dayton, OH 45435-0001
Or email to wsura@wright.edu

COVID Note: Perhaps we see a bit of normalcy for WSURA activities in our future! Thanks go to our tech wizard Robin Suits and Zoom for making sure we haven't missed a single meeting!

Wright State Women Make History

Winning the Horizon League tournament earned the Wright State women an automatic bid to the NCAA women's basketball tournament held in Texas. On March 22, the 13th seeded Raiders faced a tough 4th seed, the Arkansas Razorbacks, winning in thrilling style 66 to 62. They could not recapture the same energy against Southern Missouri. But even that loss could not diminish their historic accomplishment of winning the first NCAA basketball tournament game by a Wright State team. It was clear to everyone that they were a well-coached squad. Shortly after the team returned home, Katrina Merriweather announced that she would be leaving to take the head coaching job at the University of Memphis. We wish her all the best, but she will be sorely missed.

