



**“Access, diversity and degree completion
are in our institutional DNA.”**

– Todd Diacon, PhD
President, Kent State University

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New Name for
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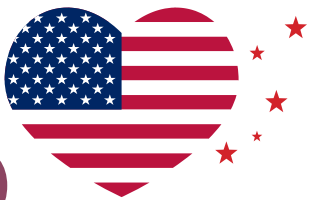
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Squirrel Search

In each issue, we hide an image of a black squirrel on three pages (not counting the Table of Contents). If you find all three, you qualify for a drawing to win a squirrel-themed prize. Each squirrel will appear like this:  (shown actual size and will not be distorted or rotated).

When you find them, send us an email at magazine@kent.edu, listing the three page numbers and places they appear, plus your name and mailing address. For rules and eligibility requirements see www.kent.edu/magazine/rules.

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Kent State Magazine is published by Kent State University Communications and Marketing. It is available to faculty, staff, alumni, donors and friends of the university two times a year (fall/winter, spring/summer).

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readers **RESPOND**

And the Winner Is...

Congratulations to **Drew Cate, BBA '84, MBA '88**, Tallmadge, OH, the winner of the random-generated drawing from correct submissions to the Squirrel Search contest. He received a box of squirrel-themed swag from McKay Bricker Framing & Black Squirrel Gifts in downtown Kent. Check out the gifts he's showing off in the photo he sent in (at right).

The black squirrels can be found in the spring/summer 2021 PDF on page 4 (the mass vaccination site at the Field House, in the lower right corner), page 21 (in front of Verder Hall, in the lower right corner) and page 43 (next to the Rock, at the right). (This time, we'll tell them to head in different directions!)

Last issue's winner, **Cindy Dalton, MBA '82**, Gaithersburg, MD, also sent in a photo that shows her modeling her gifts. "I am enjoying my black squirrel stuff," she writes. "And I am getting compliments on it when I wear it!" Although we didn't receive her photo in time for it to appear in the spring/summer 2021 issue, we're sharing it in this one. (We noticed that the last two winners earned MBAs in the '80s! Is it a trend?)

For a chance to win some squirrely stuff, check out the PDF of the print layout, which will be available for download on the digital edition Dec. 15. Happy squirrel searching!



Drew Cate, BBA '84, MBA '88, poses with his prizes. Inset: Cindy Dalton, MBA '82, poses with hers.

The Rest of the Story

Many Kent State alumni have heard the story of how Grounds Superintendent Larry Wooddell and former Davey Tree employee "Biff" Staples relocated 10 black squirrels from Canada to the Kent Campus in 1961.

Sargeant Aylies, BS '61, Sanford, NC, president of the Class of 1961, called to fill us in on who paid for that endeavor.

As a senior class gift, the Class of 1961 left the university 30 redwood benches (mostly constructed and stained by Aylies), 10 chestnut trees and some audio equipment for the library. The gifts were officially presented to President George A. Bowman at the commencement ceremony, to be placed on the Kent Campus.

However, Aylies says that after graduation he received a call from Mark Anthony, assistant dean of men, telling him there was money left in the class fund after the bench project was completed.

"Mark Anthony told me that Wooddell had the idea of bringing the black squirrels to Kent and asked if the Class of 1961 would like to use their remaining monies to buy the 10 squirrels," Aylies recalls. "I thought it was a great idea and told them to go forward with the project."

And the rest is history. So the next time you see black squirrels running around the Kent Campus—and it won't take long—remember you have the Class of 1961 to thank for them!

Lost in Time: Can You Help Us Solve This Mystery?

Stephen Hanzely, BS '62, Youngstown, OH, retired Youngstown State University professor of physics and astronomy and former Fulbright Scholar, shared some stories about his favorite Kent State professors in a StoryWorth post (StoryWorth publishes keepsake books, which are compiled over the course of a year by sending weekly prompts to the person who wants to share their story with others.)

In the post, he mentioned: "There is a curious footnote to [Kent State's] semicentennial celebration. In honor of the event, a time capsule was ceremoniously prepared, sealed and buried somewhere on campus in 1960 to be opened during the university's centennial year. However, when it came time to open the capsule in 2010, NOBODY COULD REMEMBER WHERE IT WAS BURIED! To my knowledge, it has not yet been found as of 2021."

He forwarded this post to us with a P.S.: "Did anyone find the time capsule yet?"

Intrigued, we contacted Special Collections and Archives to see if they knew. Amanda Faehnel, public services librarian and associate professor, responded: "No, unfortunately, the mystery still remains. Luckily, Kent State documented the legend/

search for the 1960 Capsule really well as part of the Centennial Celebrations of 2010.

"However, our department has not received any new information or leads since the time of that search. It's been written about quite a bit, and is still unsolved. We have no documentation to give any further guidance. In contrast, the 2010 Centennial Time Capsule burial has been well documented for future reference, which is a big relief!"

If YOU happen to remember the location of the 1960 time capsule, please contact magazine@kent.edu!

We want to hear from you!

Respond to magazine content or comment on topics related to Kent State by writing: *Kent State Magazine* P.O. Box 5190 Kent, Ohio 44242-0001 or magazine@kent.edu. Responses may be edited for style, length, clarity and civility.

Visit us online

www.kent.edu/magazine

Extending Our Reach

I want to share some exciting news for Kent State University—our Kent Campus now has the highest six-year graduation rate of any public university in Northern Ohio.

Our record 67.5% graduation rate surpasses our prior record of 65% and is the fifth highest among all of Ohio's public universities, behind The Ohio State University, Miami University, University of Cincinnati and Ohio University.

The fact that we reached this achievement during a global pandemic is a testament to the true grit and determination of our students and the outstanding efforts of our faculty and staff. It also reflects our commitment to welcoming students as they are, from wherever they are, and providing them the needed support to get them to degree completion.

Kent State has received 12 national awards in the last six years for our exemplary student support services and is consistently recognized for its innovative programs that get students to the finish line.

Our high graduation rate also reflects our commitment to offering the promise of higher education to a wide and diverse group—those who never thought college was a possibility because they didn't have the advantages of some.

Even before they attend classes at Kent State, we assist them as they

explore programs and go through the application process. We provide first-year experiences to help them connect to campus, register for classes and meet their peers—all the while assuring them, "Yes, you can!" From enrollment through graduation, we continue to stand by students to ensure that their dream of a degree becomes a reality.

**"FROM ENROLLMENT
THROUGH GRADUATION,
WE CONTINUE TO STAND
BY STUDENTS TO ENSURE
THAT THEIR DREAM OF
A DEGREE BECOMES
A REALITY."**

Access and diversity have been at the core of Kent State's mission since our inception, as you'll read about in this issue's cover feature on access ("Creating a Community of Belonging by Embracing Access for All").

Now we are primed to expand college access even further. This means enrolling more students with high financial need, more first-generation students, more nontraditional students and more students from regions with low rates of college education.

The goal of helping students is the driving force behind our *Forever Brighter* campaign, which has a goal of raising \$350 million to support student success, expand university initiatives and build for the future. You can read more about the campaign in this issue ("A Campaign of Brilliant Proportions") and at the campaign website (www.kent.edu/foreverbrighter), where you will find many ways to give.

Please know that your generosity will help Kent State remain true to its core responsibility as a community-based university system, to meet our students where they are and to offer them the bright future that higher education will provide—not just for the fortunate few, but also the meritorious many. These students aren't lacking the ability to succeed; most of the time they are just lacking the money.

Kent State's commitment to access and student success is in our institutional DNA. It's who we are, it's what we do and what we will *always* do. Most importantly, it's the right thing to do.

Todd A. Diacon, President

Email: president@kent.edu
Instagram: [@ksupresdiacon](https://www.instagram.com/ksupresdiacon)



President Todd Diacon congratulates a Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine graduate at the spring Commencement ceremony.



South facade of Crawford Hall, the new home for the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship at Kent State University. (Rendering courtesy of The Collaborative Inc. in partnership with Perkins + Will)



Pictured (left to right), former Ambassador Edward F. Crawford; Deborah Spake, PhD, dean of Kent State University's Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship; Crawford's wife, Mary; and Kent State President Todd Diacon.

New Home, New Name for Kent State's Business College

Kent State University business students, faculty, staff and alumni will soon have a new building to call home on the Kent Campus. Thanks to a generous gift from Cleveland businessman, entrepreneur and former US ambassador to Ireland, Edward F. Crawford, the capital campaign for the new business building is now complete. The Kent State Board of Trustees approved the building construction on behalf of the college in a special meeting held Friday, Oct. 22.

In gratitude to Crawford and his family for what Kent State says is "the largest single gift" in its history, the university will name the new building Crawford Hall and has renamed the College of Business Administration to the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship. The Crawford family gift is a cornerstone of the recently announced *Forever Brighter* \$350 million comprehensive fundraising campaign.

"Ambassador Crawford has spent his life as a successful entrepreneur and business owner, growing his company from the ground up," says Kent State President Todd Diacon. "To have earned his confidence in our College of Business Administration, which will bear his name both for the college

and on its new building, makes us very proud. Our students will not only be educated in an iconic facility, with a forward-thinking design, but they will also be able to look to him as a mentor for their own entrepreneurial and business endeavors. We are very thankful for his support."

The son of Irish immigrants, Crawford began his entrepreneurial career in 1962, starting his first manufacturing business while attending college classes at night. Beginning in 1992, he became chairman and CEO of Park-Ohio Holdings Corp. and, through a series of more than 100 transactions, he grew it from a small local manufacturer into a successful international company that provides supply chain management components used to assemble products for a diversified customer base.

Under his leadership, Park-Ohio became a publicly traded corporation. It employs 8,000 people worldwide in 125 manufacturing, distribution and service facilities, with revenues of approximately \$2 billion. His son is now the corporation's chairman and CEO. Crawford was named Ohio chairman for the Trump campaign in 2016 and was appointed ambassador to Ireland in 2019. Upon his return to the United States in January

2021, he became chairman of the board of directors of Crawford United Corp., a director of Park-Ohio Holdings Corp., and he remains founder of The Crawford Group.

His transformative gift enables the university to move forward with its Gateway to a Distinctive Kent State master plan. The plan proposes the creation of a new signature gateway entrance to the Kent Campus that features Crawford Hall.

"Crawford Hall will be instrumental in how we prepare students for modern business careers," says Deborah Spake, PhD, dean of the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship at Kent State.

"This new building—which will be one of the largest buildings on any Kent State campus to house an academic program—and its enhanced technology will continue to bolster our reputation for both international business and entrepreneurship education. We anticipate a continued increase not only in domestic enrollment but also for international students seeking a top-tier education. With this gift and new building, the future is bright for the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship."

Challenge Met!

At the start of 2021, Bob Archer, MBA '61, who had already provided private support for the new business building, pledged another \$1 million gift in support if the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship could raise a total of \$19 million by the end of 2021. The college surpassed expectations and exceeded the \$19 million challenge. Archer fulfilled his commitment, and the impressive new Crawford Hall is moving forward.



Rendering of the College of Aeronautics and Engineering Expansion, courtesy of DS Architects, LLC.

Kent State's College of Aeronautics and Engineering Is Growing in Students and Square Footage

Kent State University's College of Aeronautics and Engineering is the only college in the country that combines the disciplines of aeronautics, engineering and engineering technology in one cohesive college, enabling cross-disciplinary synergy in academic programs and research. Programs such as mechatronics engineering, cybersecurity engineering and unmanned aircraft systems flight operations are unique in Ohio, providing much-needed expertise in these emerging technical disciplines.

Enrollment growth in the college has exploded, with a 53.6% increase in enrolling first-year students and 21% percent enrollment growth college-wide since 2018. To support current and future enrollment growth, the university will construct a 44,000 square-foot expansion to the Aeronautics and Engineering Building that will include collaborative spaces, state-of-the-art classrooms and research laboratories, and office space.

"Kent State recognizes the importance of virtual education in this rapidly changing landscape of higher education," says Christina Bloebaum, PhD, dean of the College of Aeronautics and Engineering. "The expansion's two new classrooms, as well as teaching laboratories, will be equipped to enable virtual delivery in a streaming, synchronous mode, which will also support the college's efforts to create pathway opportunities with our regional campuses and partner organizations."

The Timken Foundation of Canton has donated \$1.5 million to the expansion project. A groundbreaking ceremony was held Oct. 1, 2021, to officially begin this project, which will add 80% more space to the college's facilities. The college plans to take occupancy of the new addition for the 2023 spring semester.

The new building will feature a two-story atrium that will provide a unique environment for the unmanned aircraft systems flight operations program and will allow researchers

to fly indoors year-round, while also creating a dynamic public space to encourage collaboration and community. An almost 3,000-square-foot auditorium will provide a high-tech space to support larger classes, student competitions, and K-12 outreach and other community-oriented events.

"The Timken Foundation is proud to honor Henry and Louise Timken, pioneers in flight, through this gift," says Ward J. "Jack" Timken, president of the Timken Foundation of Canton (a private, nonprofit, family foundation).

At its quarterly meeting in December, the Kent State University Board of Trustees voted to designate the atrium as the Henry and Louise Timken Atrium, in honor of Henry H. Timken Jr. (son of Henry H. Timken Sr., founder of the Timken Foundation of Canton in 1934) and Louise Timken, who were both aviation enthusiasts. Louise Timken was among the first women to earn a jet pilot's

license and, in 1965, she became the first woman to be type-rated in a Learjet. This association underscores the college's priority to encourage greater female participation in STEM fields (16.2% female students as of September 2021).

"The successful completion of this project, as part of our master plan, will support Kent State's ability to produce the highly qualified STEM graduates needed for the state's and region's manufacturing and engineering sectors," says Kent State President Todd Diacon. (Ohio is the No. 1 supplier of manufactured parts to the aerospace industry and the No. 1 supplier to both Boeing and Airbus.)

"We're very grateful that the Timken Foundation of Canton has partnered with us to enable the College of Aeronautics and Engineering to contribute even more to the sustainability of the region's engineering and manufacturing workforce—a vision both organizations share."



Rendering of the new expansion's atrium, courtesy of DS Architects, LLC.

Kent State's College of Podiatric Medicine Is on a Secure Footing

The Podiatry Foundation, in Independence, Ohio, has made a \$10 million donation to Kent State to fund scholarships, research and continuing medical education programs within the Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine. The foundation recently approved a lump-sum gift of \$5 million and has pledged \$250,000 annually for the next 20 years to support the college.

In recognition of this gift, the current clinical space located on the first floor of the college in Independence will be named The Podiatry Foundation Foot and Ankle Clinic. Any auxiliary spaces associated with the clinic, including the clinical space in Cleveland's MidTown neighborhood, will also bear this name.

research and continuing medical education allows us opportunities to grow our national reputation as a best-in-class medical research and educational institution."

At least one of the scholarships created through this gift will be named the Thomas V. Melillo Scholarship. Thomas Melillo, DPM, was president of the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine (now the Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine), from 1984 through 2012, when the merger with Kent State took place.

In July 2012, as part of the merger, a foundation was established for charitable and educational purposes. Since 2019, the foundation has done business as The Podiatry



Students walk from the Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine in Independence, Ohio.

"A gift of this magnitude is transformational to the future education of our podiatry students, not only through our ability to award more scholarships, but also because of the increased credibility that will come from our enhanced research and continuing medical education," says Kent State President Todd Diacon. "The longstanding relationship between the college and The Podiatry Foundation has been instrumental in Kent State's recognition as a leading college in the important field of foot and ankle medicine. We are very grateful for their visionary support."

Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine, one of nine accredited podiatry colleges in the United States, is a four-year, graduate-level medical college, granting the degree of Doctor of Podiatric Medicine. The college's mission is to educate students to be highly competent doctors of podiatric medicine who will excel in residency training.

"We must be able to support these high-achieving future doctors through scholarships to ensure our field has enough qualified practitioners in the future," says Allan Boike, DPM, FACFAS, the college's dean. "Additionally, the support for our

Foundation, whose purpose is to serve and nurture education and research in podiatric medicine. Since its inception, the foundation has assisted many national, state and local podiatric medical organizations as well as students and residents in the Greater Cleveland area.

"This gift is the culmination of several years of dialogue between the foundation and the university," says David Nicolanti, PhD, executive director of The Podiatry Foundation. "It will help to secure the financial strength of this important local institution."

Founded in 1916 as the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine, the college has graduated more than 6,000 podiatrists who have made outstanding contributions to the field and study of podiatric medicine. Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine has regional and national affiliations with more than 50 hospitals worldwide and more than 300 private practitioners nationwide that provide externship training to the college's students. Currently, the college maintains an average four-year enrollment of 425 students and typically graduates 85-100 podiatrists each year.



PURSuing A PASSION FOR RESEARCH

How a seventeenth-century woman artist inspired a twenty-first-century award-winning thesis.

By Jan Senn

Kent State University Honors College graduate Sarah Hagglund, BA '21, was named a 2021 Portz Scholar by the National Collegiate Honors Council in September. She is one of four honors students from across the country selected in a competition for most excellent undergraduate thesis in several academic areas. Hagglund, who majored in history and anthropology, received this year's Portz Prize in the Humanities and is the 10th honors student from Kent State to become a Portz Scholar since the national competition began in 1990.

However, months before she began conducting research into the thesis topic that would earn her this distinction, Hagglund was simply writing a final paper for a course on Baroque art history. In the process, she was introduced to a seventeenth-century Bolognese artist, Elisabetta Sirani, who died in unexplained circumstances at age 27.

"In the 10 years or so she actually worked, she still produced around 150 works of art (that we know of), which is a testament to not only how popular she was, but how skilled she was to be able to make art so quickly," notes Hagglund. "Because she was basically supporting her family through her work, it is thought she likely died from an ulcer, based on the symptoms reported and because she worked constantly. Despite all this, she found time to start a school for women artists and educate them about various kinds of art processes. She was incredible!

"I was immediately struck by her work, Hagglund adds, but what really caught my attention were the countless articles

I found during my research that mentioned the positive and seemingly progressive environment of early modern Bologna, which allowed women like Elisabetta to thrive."

Those articles left Hagglund with questions she wanted to explore—"Was Bologna actually a place where women were afforded more opportunities compared to other city-states at the time? And if so, was this true for women of all social classes?"

Hagglund decided that exploring that topic—"the myth of Bologna" as she termed it—would be one of the central themes driving her research for a senior honors thesis. She had been interested in doing one since it was first mentioned to her by her honors academic advisor, Frank Congin, director of academic programs for the Honors College. Students who wish to graduate with honors from Kent State's Honors College must complete and successfully defend a senior honors thesis/project.

"I figured a thesis would provide some good practical experience for grad school," Hagglund says. "And I was really excited to have the opportunity to research a topic I could choose and explore on my own."

"Exploring this topic allowed me to combine my diverse academic interests—such as art, history, culture, literature and women's studies—and use an interdisciplinary approach," she says. "I think having a broader perspective and using different disciplines is key to understanding the experiences of women in the past. And it helps to expand our knowledge of history for all underrepresented groups."

A week or two after she'd been in touch with the two thesis advisors who had agreed to help her with the project—Matthew Crawford, PhD, associate professor in the Department of History, and Gustav Medicus, PhD, associate professor in the School of Art—the pandemic hit. It made her research more challenging than she had expected.



Elisabetta Sirani, *Self-Portrait as Allegory of Painting*, 1658, oil, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (public domain, <http://mujeerespintoras.blogspot.com>)

"OhioLink was closed for a long time, so for a while I was just waiting to be able to order books," Hagglund says. "Thankfully, the Honors College had some scholarship funds, and my advisors were able to help me as well with gathering research materials and purchasing books. But a lot of what I could gain access to was digital. Gaining access to Italian sources was particularly difficult, and I was not able to access as many primary sources as I had originally hoped. But at the end of the project, I felt I had been able to conduct some really thorough research, especially when considering the circumstances."



Agostino Parisini, *Trades Practiced in Bologna*, ca. 1640, etching, 5 1/4 X 9 1/8 in. (13.34 x 23.18 cm). LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), Los Angeles (artwork in public domain, published under fair use)

Her award-winning thesis, "The Myth of Bologna? Women's Cultural Production During the Seventeenth Century," views the experiences of women in the city of Bologna through three lenses: history, art and material culture. "One part of my research that was especially rewarding was being able to trace a lineage of important women almost throughout the entire history of the city," Hagglund says. "By the end of the project I had built a timeline—a heritage really—of women important to the legacy and history of Bologna."

As for whether this cultural participation included women from all social classes, Hagglund says it did—but not necessarily in the same way.

"Rich women, women with familial ties and educated women had much more influence in the city as compared to women working in the silk trade," she says. "The booming silk trade of the city in the seventeenth century relied heavily on the labor of women and girls. The conditions were typically pretty bad and the pay a fraction of what their work was worth. However, when compared to other textile trades in nearby cities, women in Bologna were much more involved in all levels of production and were likely paid a little more than what was typical (although that doesn't actually mean much)."

"Women in religious realms seemed to have a separate kind of importance to the identity of the city," Hagglund adds. "Having a Bolognese native in the 15th century, Caterina de' Vigri, as the Catholic patron saint of artists added to the city's support of women artists." (Catherine of Bologna was a Poor Clare nun, writer, teacher, mystic and artist who was venerated for nearly three centuries in her native Bologna before being formally canonized in 1712.)

Other factors allowed women of the time to take a greater role in society. "Bologna was second only to Rome in the eyes of the Catholic Church, which protected the city from a lot of warfare and fostered a desire for independence and identity outside the church," Hagglund says. "And the legacy of the University of Bologna was also a point of pride since it is the oldest university in Italy and maybe all of Europe. Women were seemingly allowed to attend at varying levels since its founding. Having an educated female populace was a part of Bolognese pride and identity at the time."

Hagglund's work with thesis advisors Crawford and Medicus took place over three semesters, beginning her junior year—and because of the pandemic they did not have a single in-person meeting until after her thesis was complete and her defense had taken place.

"I had many supporters throughout the thesis process, but Dr. Crawford and Dr. Medicus both sacrificed so much time and energy into helping me succeed," says Hagglund, who graduated in May from the Honors College with university honors and distinction in history. "They championed my voice but also challenged me to produce a thesis I would be proud of. Although I am so honored to be recognized for this award, I really would not have made it through the process without their guidance and support. They stuck with me through it all."

"Having a broader perspective and using different disciplines is key to understanding the experiences of women in the past. And it helps to expand our knowledge of history for all underrepresented groups."

Hagglund participated in a 20-minute presentation of her thesis at the National Collegiate Honors Conference in Orlando, Florida, in October. "I was able to fly down, with the support of Kent State's Honors College, to present my research alongside two of the other three Portz Scholars and accept my award," she says.

"Presenting at the conference was a rewarding experience but getting to meet the other Portz Scholars and hear about their research was the highlight of the trip for me. Our research interests overlapped, and I was so inspired by their projects. And getting to present in person and engage with other students and educators meant a lot to me, given most of my research was undertaken in quarantine last year."

Currently, Hagglund is a master's student in Baroque art at Boston University's Department of History of Art & Architecture. "I hope to continue this research in grad school," she says. "At the very least, I want to continue focusing on the women artists of the Baroque period. But my program encourages interdisciplinary studies, so I am hoping to continue my approach with that as well. I have a passion for this research, so I will try my best to continue it in some capacity." ⚡

Meet ^{the} Mayors

Local government plays a key role in our daily lives—and the pandemic has made that role more challenging. We asked the three Ohio mayors on Kent State’s Board of Trustees for their perspective on the path forward for their cities and the university.

By Jillian Kramer, BA '06

The pandemic has exposed deficiencies in the nation’s infrastructure, healthcare system, housing, economy and more—deficiencies that put into sharp focus the importance of local governments in maintaining a good quality of life for residents.

Despite the added pressures and problems, the three mayors who sit on Kent State University’s Board of Trustees have chosen to lean in. They face challenges, to be sure, but they also see opportunities for their cities and the

university to help people adjust and thrive in the post-pandemic world.

We asked those mayors—Don Mason, mayor of Zanesville; Pamela Bobst, mayor of Rocky River; and Ann Womer Benjamin, mayor of Aurora—to tell us about their hopes for the future of their cities, their community’s relationship to higher education and their involvement as trustees.

Here are some highlights.

**Responses have been edited and condensed for clarity.*



MAYOR OF
ZANESVILLE

Don
MASON, JD

Board of Trustees member
through May 2029

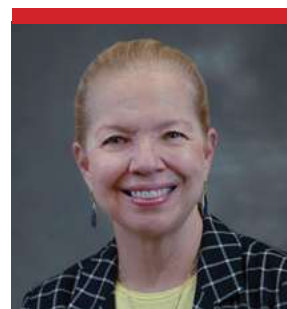
Transitioning to a new economy: Muskingum County is primarily a blue-collar region. In the past, we’ve had significant employment in natural resources, timber, oil and gas, coal and mining, but we are transitioning into a new economy, in which more people are working from home.

I don’t think a person necessarily has to live in a suburb of Columbus to work for a Columbus-based company. I would like to pull those people further east—to work from home in Zanesville. But to do that, we’ve got to have more housing. I’m focusing on trying to get new housing built at all levels—whether that’s rental properties, subsidized properties, first family homes or retirement homes.

Dealing with the educational divide: We’re still working on a lot of what I’ll call “social-economic issues” that affect the city. Some people are able to get an education and have good-paying jobs. But we have a lot of people who are being left behind—with low-paying jobs and sometimes more than one job to make ends meet. We continue to see a large divide between those who end up being educated and going to college, and those who fall out before they get to their senior year in high school.

Putting people first: I always try to think about what the public needs on a day-to-day basis. When I go to Kent State board meetings, I’m really pleased that the university is focused on the student experience—on making sure the students don’t have artificial obstacles in front of them.

Once a person begins that first year of college, we are committed to trying to help that student get their degree so the money they’re borrowing—or the money they’re working for in a part-time job—isn’t wasted. We’re trying to make sure it’s invested in their education so that in four or five years they’ll be able to be well employed.



MAYOR OF
AURORA

Ann
WOMER BENJAMIN, JD

Board of Trustees member
through May 2028

Appealing to all: Aurora was founded in 1799, so it’s a very old and historic community. We have residents who have been here for decades; we also have newer residents moving here from the suburbs, and they bring a different set of expectations. Reconciling those changing demographics and divergent interests can be challenging. I’m trying to implement ideas and programs that will appeal to the entire community. Actually, I’ve found that decision making for a large community and responsiveness to various constituencies are similar for a mayor and a university president, although perhaps on different scales.

Managing growth: As a very desirable community in Northeast Ohio, we are growing. And that growth is something we want to control and manage. We have been buying up green space to preserve it and to help control development. In addition, though, with growth you have to look at infrastructure—what you will need down the road to accommodate not only the increasing numbers of residents, but also of our visitors.

I want to continue to maintain a beautiful, desirable community with 21st-century amenities while preserving our small-town charm—despite the growth that will undoubtedly occur. We also have some recreational opportunities: We have parks and green spaces across our city, and we need to develop a plan to link all of those. We need trails to provide people the opportunity to traverse the city through our parks.

Connecting people with jobs: We are a highly educated community. Many of our residents have their own businesses or are entrepreneurs, or they work in big companies in Northeast Ohio. We have a vibrant manufacturing and industrial sector, however, that is struggling to find employees. I think some of it is a result of the pandemic. We are working closely with local and regional institutions of higher learning to make connections for our employers and find people willing to work on a manufacturing line who also have the technical skills—and in some cases, the computer and mathematical skills—necessary for the jobs.



MAYOR OF
ROCKY RIVER

Pamela
BOBST, MEd '85

Board of Trustees member
through May 2030

Listening to all perspectives: Whenever we’re faced with a challenge—pandemic or not—there are a lot of perspectives to consider before a decision can be made. Listening to all perspectives and all voices is so important because sometimes you only get one chance to make a good decision.

Aligning education with business: A lot of our high school students take college-level courses through our community colleges. That’s an effective transitional piece on a path to a four-year university like Kent State. It’s very helpful for students who are trying to figure out their career or education path and for parents who are paying for their child’s education. And maybe these are individuals who never thought they would graduate from a four-year university but now have an opportunity because they can transition so effectively.

This is something that I shared with Kent State President Todd Diacon: I think the alignment of the university with the needs of businesses is very important—listening to businesses in terms of what they need, then incorporating that into the curriculum and providing opportunities where students are placed and learn on-the-job skills. It’s important to do, and something the university has done. You see it in its strategic planning and some of the investments it’s made.

Working together productively: As the mayor, I work with the city council; the president of the university works with the board. And we work with several audiences all at the same time. As the mayor, I am responsible for the safety and welfare of a large population—and so, I am sensitive to some of the university’s similar challenges. I also understand the importance of communication, transparency and—above all—accountability. ⚡



CREATING A COMMUNITY OF BELONGING BY EMBRACING ACCESS FOR ALL

Founded on a principle that education should be available to every citizen, Kent State is committed to breaking down barriers that inhibit access and hinder degree completion.

BY KAT BRAZ

Kent State boasts a legacy of inclusivity that traces back to its first full academic year on the Kent Campus in fall 1913. With a class of 138 women and six men, Kent State Normal School began as a school for working adults, educating women at a time when many universities enrolled very few—if they were admitted at all.

Years later, baby boomers—primarily first-generation children of immigrants to Northeast Ohio and African American migrants to Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown—enrolled in large numbers on the Kent Campus and at the university's Regional Campuses. This diverse enrollment trend led to the founding of Black United Students and the first celebration of Black History Month—established at Kent State in February 1970 by students and faculty in Pan-African Studies, preceding the national holiday designation in 1976.

As Kent State University President Todd Diacon puts it, “Access, diversity and degree completion are in our institutional DNA.” And as the university looks to the future, it remains

committed to being a place of belonging where all students can cultivate their talents and create a brighter tomorrow.

“Universities are driven by foundational cultures and histories—and Kent State is no exception,” Diacon says. “Broad accessibility and a diverse student body have been ever-present at Kent State.”

Today, embracing a new wave of access and diversity at Kent State means enrolling more underrepresented students as well as first-generation students, nontraditional students and students with high financial need. Historically, these populations have lower rates of attending and graduating from college. Often there are intersections across these populations. Understanding the barriers to access and dismantling them are the first steps toward further increasing graduation rates.

Read on to learn how Kent State continues to expand on its commitment to the founding principle that education should be available to every citizen.

Affordability Is Paramount to Expanding Access to Education

The university hit a record graduation rate this year, with 67.5% of first-time, full-time freshmen who enrolled in fall 2015 earning their bachelor's degrees within six years. Ten years ago, the graduation rate for the Kent Campus was 49%.

“Our data shows that students who fail to earn a degree at Kent State, particularly at the Kent Campus, drop out because they cannot afford college,” Diacon says. “We need to crack this nut of affordability for roughly 20% of our Kent Campus students with the highest levels of financial need and the lowest rates of graduation.”

The threat of choking off access to a college degree due to the rising costs of higher education led Kent State to introduce the Flashes Go Further Scholarship Program earlier this summer. The ambitious effort reallocates 3.3% of the annual university budget—about \$20 million each year—to help eligible students cover the costs of tuition, general fees and books. It was established to help those students stay in school and get to graduation with as little student loan debt as possible.

“We recognize the power of education to reshape a person's trajectory, not just for themselves, but often also for their family,” says Sean Broghammer, PhD, interim vice president for enrollment management. “Social mobility can be positively impacted by a degree from Kent State, but one of the primary barriers for students to gain access to the university is cost.”

Students qualify if they are taking at least 12 credit hours on the Kent Campus and their expected family contribution (EFC on the FAFSA) is \$10,000 or less. This applied to about 20% of the first-year entering class this fall 2021. For these students, Flashes Go Further will cover the difference between the cost of tuition and the amount of grants and scholarships a student receives. Students do not have to apply to the program, they only need to file the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Financial need is determined by the results of the FAFSA and Kent State automatically makes the award.

“Flashes Go Further provides an avenue for students who otherwise might not think completing a college degree is a possibility for them because of the cost,” Broghammer says.

Learn more about the Flashes Go Further Scholarship Program at www.kent.edu/financialaid/flashes-go-further-scholarship-program.

“Social mobility can be positively impacted by a degree from Kent State, but one of the primary barriers for students to gain access to the university is cost.”

—
Sean Broghammer, PhD,
Interim vice president for
enrollment management

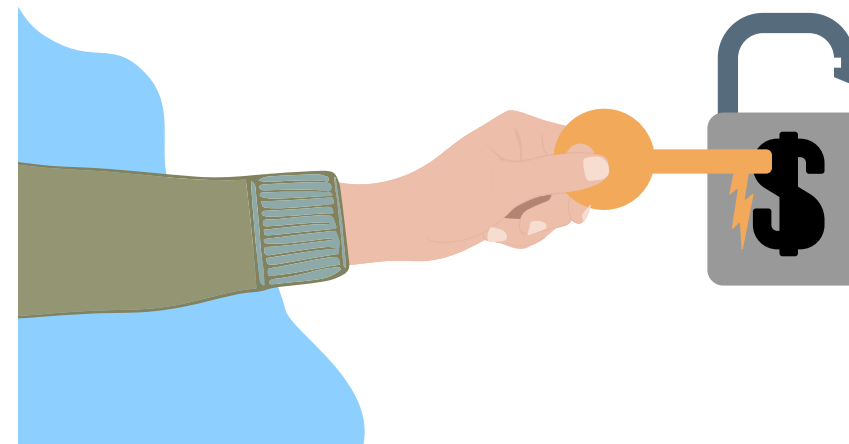
How is Expected Family Contribution (EFC) Calculated?

A student's EFC is an index number that college financial aid staff use to determine how much financial aid a student receives. The EFC is calculated using information reported on the student's FAFSA such as the family's taxed income and untaxed income, assets and benefits (e.g., unemployment or Social Security). Also considered are family size and the number of family members attending college during the year.

—U.S. Department of Education

Flashes Go Further Scholarship By the Numbers

- 2,745** Number of students who received an award for fall 2021 as of 9/29/21
- \$2,588** Average scholarship award for fall 2021
- 8** Number of semesters new freshman may receive the award
- 6** Number of semesters incoming transfer students may receive the award





From a DEI perspective, much of the work to become a student-ready college—one prepared to welcome and support all types of students entering the institution—hinges on ensuring that policies, procedures, processes and programs are equitable.

A Sense of Belonging Begins With Equitable Access

Cost may be the single biggest barrier to student access, but economic challenges extend beyond dollars and cents. Other factors, such as access to social capital and resources, must be considered as well.

“Social capital includes the social network of students,” says Amoaba Gooden, PhD, vice president for the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). “Do they have mentors who might guide them down a particular path? Do they have school counselors who talk to them about scholarship applications? Do they have individuals in their lives who will support them in their decision making, in filling out their applications?”

“When it comes to access, we have to think beyond traditional students and include nontraditional students who might have some of those same challenges. They may also be caregivers of additional family members. Do they have the resources within their community or their network that they can tap into to achieve their dream of attending an institution of higher learning?”

From a DEI perspective, much of the work to become a student-ready college—one prepared to welcome and support students from all backgrounds and levels of academic experience—hinges on ensuring that policies, procedures, processes and programs are equitable. Faculty and staff working across Kent State’s campuses must be equipped with the skills to assess and promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

“People often equate diversity with race or ethnicity and conflate the two,” Gooden says. “In its first iteration, diversity was primarily based on access for African Americans to traditionally white institutions. Diversity is now more nuanced and complex and has evolved over time.

“In DEI, we’re focusing on populations that have been historically marginalized and excluded because of factors such

as race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, veteran status and socioeconomic status. We also focus on how those identities combine and create different forms of discrimination. And we work with areas across our campuses to ensure that that our programs also foster a sense of belonging and inclusion and there’s equitable access to all.”

To foster that sense of belonging, Kent State must continue to establish and maintain an inclusive environment in order to reach its goals for access, completion and outcomes. If prospective students do not feel represented on campus, they may not enroll. Or if they do come—and don’t receive the support they need—they may not graduate and go on to a successful career.

The Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion advocates for individuals by connecting them with resources to resolve issues. It also offers professional development opportunities and educational training for students, faculty and staff.

Earlier this year, the university embarked on a university-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategic plan to decentralize diversity efforts and improve Kent State for all

members of the community. The four-year effort will build and execute a strategy that will embed diversity, equity and inclusion practices throughout the eight-campus system.

While many programs and units exist to support DEI efforts, a university-wide DEI strategic plan will create more systemic and intentional ways of addressing equity as well as dismantling policies, procedures and processes that marginalize members of the community.

“The goals of the division are strategic institutional goals,” Gooden says. “As we work to expand access across the university, one of our goals is for the population of Kent State to better reflect the population of the state. The division will work in collaboration with the Kent State community to realize that goal.”

Learn more about the Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at www.kent.edu/diversity.

Coming Together for Conversations About Social Justice Issues

The Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

(DEI) began hosting a series of town hall events titled “Shaping a Better Future: Dialogues and Strategizing for Change” in 2020. Forums included the Black American Experience, the Asian American Experience and the Trans Experience, among others.

“The town halls bring the university together to provide an environment where we can grapple with social justice issues,” Amoaba Gooden says. “Students, faculty and staff are willing to be vulnerable in this space and share their personal experiences. These are powerful conversations that build knowledge and understanding.”

This fall, in collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences, DEI announced a continuation of last year’s series. Titled “Empowering Kent State: Valuing the Strength of Diversity,” this series expands the conversation, covering topics such as (dis)ability, critical race theory and intersectionality, and international and immigrant experiences.



Addressing Complex Questions Requires Innovative Approaches

Offering 10 multidisciplinary minors and three majors, the newly formed School of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities provides an academic home for students asking complex questions in pursuit of courageous answers.

“The school has everything from Jewish studies to LGBTQ studies to women’s studies to Latin American studies,” says Julie Mazzei, PhD, associate professor of political science and interim director of the school. “This is a place where students seek out degree programs where they can pursue their intellectual curiosity in places that feel safe and reflective and joyful for them for whatever reason, whether they identify with these groups or not. It’s a mode of access, but it’s a mode of advocacy, too.”

Established this fall within the College of Arts and Sciences, the school also houses the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, which was the first in the state when it began in 2015.

“The center may not have been designed with belonging or community in mind,” Mazzei says. “It was designed to address a really important research question and dedicate intellectual energy to it. Organically, it has become one of those spaces where students recognize they are at home because it’s a safe and welcoming place where people show value and commitment to issues that are real to them.”

Learn more about the School of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities at www.kent.edu/multidisciplinary-studies.



“I chose to be an LGBT Studies minor because my major didn't address the unique needs of LGBTQ people in health. After graduating, I want to go into LGBTQ cultural competency in healthcare and continue pursuing the study of gender and sexuality in graduate school.”

Kent State student

Complex Questions

Courses within the School of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences and Humanities cover a range of complex questions within their curricula. Here are some examples:

- Black Lives Matter became a global call for action. But the organizing was very local. How and why do local anti-racist movements gain traction around the globe?
- The celebration of lived experiences, both those of the past and those wished for the future, is often visible in the art, literature and communal practices of immigrants. What can we learn about the migration experience from these cultural expressions?
- Pride parades have evolved from declarations for freedom that entailed great personal risk to incredibly popular events with very little risk to participants. How does this evolution happen? Who leads the shift in social “norms”?
- Why and how does anti-Semitism persist? Are hate groups increasing in number? Who is funding them? What can communities and governments do to combat anti-Semitism?

Subsisting on Instant Ramen Shouldn't Be a Badge of Honor

There’s an outdated narrative that persists among college campuses and their alumni about the disheartening situations previous generations toughed out as students. Ericka Shoaff, BA '11, inaugural director of the CARES Center, has heard it all before: “I lived paycheck to paycheck.” “I didn’t have an apartment and crashed on people’s couches.” “I survived only on ramen when I was in college; it’s no big deal.” Except, it is.

“Some of these narratives have been normalized,” Shoaff says. “But we can see that these are issues of basic needs insecurity and of lack of access to resources. If a student doesn’t know where their next meal is coming from or if they don’t have a stable place to sleep, it’s incredibly challenging to maintain their academic pursuits much less thrive.”

The CARES Center, which stands for Crisis, Advocacy, Resources, Education, Support, opened this fall in the Kent Student Center. The idea emerged from students who participated in the 2018 kaizen event hosted by the Great Place Initiative. (“Kaizen” is a Japanese word that essentially means “change for good.” It relates to a business philosophy of continuous improvement.) In its first semester, the center received more than 100 referrals for its case management services.

“The fact that the idea of the CARES Center came from student voices is really inspiring,” Shoaff says. “A few years ago, it was an idea on paper. Now it’s an actual physical space with services and a mission. It’s a testament to Kent State’s willingness to listen to student voices and implement real change. That’s very meaningful.”

The CARES Center, under the Division of Student Affairs, acts as a centralized resource hub where students can connect with service providers, both on campus and off, for assistance in four main categories: food security, stable housing, financial sustainability and mental well-being.

Kent State CARES

The four priority areas of the CARES Center are:

- **Food security** The Flashes’ Food Pantry at the center provides access to nutritious food. Case workers can also help eligible students sign up for SNAP benefits.
- **Housing stability** When emergency homeless situations arise, the center facilitates the intake and finds temporary housing while connecting the student to community agencies that help secure long-term housing. Case managers can help students look for available housing options and find resources for utilities.
- **Financial sustainability** The center offers emergency aid for basic needs and can connect students with other emergency grants and funding available on and off campus for a variety of needs. Case managers can help students develop financial skills such as creating a budget.
- **Mental well-being** Although the CARES Center does not offer clinical therapy directly, its case managers are licensed social workers who can guide students to the resources and services available on campus and in the community.



Nationwide, 29% of students enrolled at four-year institutions reported experiencing food insecurity in 2020.

The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice at Temple University 2020 #RealCollege Survey

“Students come to us from all walks of life with a variety of backgrounds and experiences,” Shoaff says. “We value meeting students where they are and rallying around them with support. We want to connect students with the resources they need to help them succeed both personally and academically.

“It’s my hope that the presence of the CARES Center contributes to the destigmatization of accessing resources, so that conversations about basic needs are had often and without hesitation.”

Learn more about the CARES Center and find out how you can partner with it to support students at www.kent.edu/CARESCenter or on social media @KentStateCares.

No One Should Face Discrimination Based on Sex or Gender

The Office of Gender Equity and Title IX, recently reorganized under the Division of Student Affairs, is one of many groups in the university dedicated to fostering a sense of belonging, inclusivity, well-being and safety. “Kent State has a legacy of collaborative partnerships working together to keep our campuses welcoming, inviting and safe,” says Tiffany Murray, JD, director of the Office of Gender Equity and Title IX, and Kent State’s designated Title IX coordinator.

Murray points to Kent State’s national recognition as a “Great College to Work For” (Chronicles of Higher Education, 2020) and one of the “30 Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs” (American College Personnel Association, 2021) as evidence of the work being done to create an inclusive campus. The university also was ranked the safest campus in Ohio in six of the last 10 years (FBI Uniform Crime Statistics).

The Office of Gender Equity and Title IX is tasked with maintaining and enforcing university policies and compliance efforts regarding gender equity and Title IX, including reports involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking. Title IX’s sexual harassment prohibitions apply to all students, faculty, staff and visitors. Previously, these functions were implemented by the Division of Human Resources.

Murray and her staff—now located in the Kent Student Center in Room 250—also implement ongoing prevention initiatives across Kent State’s eight-campus system. “We’re not just the office that investigates matters,” Murray says. “We proactively work to prevent these violations from occurring in the first place. We do this by educating staff and students on the university community standards and our commitment to inclusion and refraining from engaging in unwelcomed and unwanted contact.”

Learn more about the Office of Gender Equity and Title IX at www.kent.edu/studentaffairs/genderequity-titleix.

Why the Office of Gender Equity and Title IX Was Reorganized:

- To strengthen university partnerships and bring together student-facing resources.
- To streamline operations and improve resolution response strategies related to discrimination and harassment.

Title IX Defined

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law enforced by the U.S. Department of Education that requires all federally funded institutions (such as Kent State) to operate free of discrimination based on sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

“We proactively work to prevent these violations from occurring in the first place. We do this by educating staff and students on the university community standards and our commitment to inclusion and refraining from engaging in unwelcomed and unwanted contact..”

—
Tiffany Murray, JD

It’s Not About Meeting a Quota; It’s About Genuine Representation of Experiences and Identities

Lamar R. Hylton, PhD, senior vice president for student affairs, knows firsthand about the transformative power of education. He was born the summer before his mother started her senior year in high school. His father was already in the workforce. Hylton, the first Black person in the university’s history to hold the title of vice president for student affairs, is a first-generation college student.

“I watched my parents climb their way up,” Hylton says. “It’s hard to do that on a high school education. When I had the ability to go to college, I needed scholarships and financial assistance. I needed help navigating this new environment. My parents weren’t positioned to help me financially.

“My immediate family’s experience is very different than what my lived experience was growing up, in a very good way. I firmly believe that the changing catalyst for me was obtaining a college degree and, eventually, my PhD. It’s exactly the reason why I feel so strongly about the way we position a collegiate education because it can be transformational, particularly for those students like me who did not come from means or experiences that would indicate opportunities to be successful in a university setting.”

Putting more emphasis on the resources available to underrepresented or marginalized students helps break down the stigmas surrounding barriers to access. Hylton, who was promoted to senior vice president for student affairs at the start of the school year, embraces a student-focused approach to leadership that equips students with the resources and support they need to succeed academically.

It’s an approach that’s gained him local and national recognition. In recent months, Hylton has been named the recipient of the NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) Region IV-East Scott Goodnight Award for Outstanding Senior Student Affairs Officer for 2021, named to Crain’s Cleveland Business Forty Under 40, selected as a recipient of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Diamond Honoree award and is a member of the 2022 class of the NASPA Pillars of the Profession award.

“Our student experience is the way that we begin to open the doors and remove the barriers to accessing an education.”

—
Lamar Hylton, PhD

“I firmly believe in centering the student experience and acting in the best interest of the students we are called to serve,” Hylton says. “Our student experience is the way that we begin to open the doors and remove the barriers to accessing an education. I’m proud that our campus community is not only thinking more broadly about the ways in which we remain as accessible as possible to everyone and anyone who would want an education from Kent State but also how we are taking action to implement real change.”

Learn more about the Division of Student Affairs at www.kent.edu/studentaffairs.

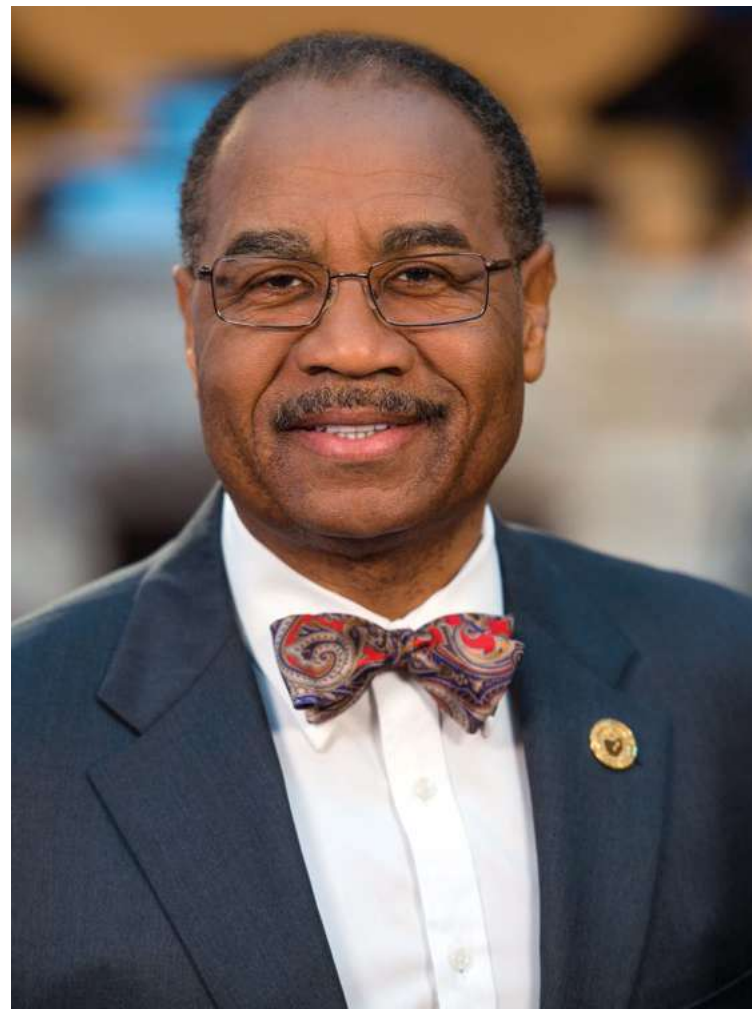
Call to Action

Although the university has made significant progress in its goals to expand access and increase rates of completion, there is more work to be done. Lamar Hylton describes his appointment as the first Black vice president of student affairs as a double-edged sword. He’s honored to be named in the annals of the university’s history by way of his historic vice presidency, but he also recognizes his status as “the first” as a call to action that there is more work to be done at the institution.

“If we are committed to a sense of belonging as an institution, a part of that belonging is seeing others who look like you,” Hylton says. “It’s no secret that people of color, more specifically Black or African American identifying students, have given voice to being the ‘only’ in their class. Being an ‘only’ can negatively impact your academic experience. Whether it’s the only Black person, the only woman, the only LGBTQ+, the only differently-abled, it’s hard.

“It’s wildly important for us to make sure that our campus represents a diverse spectrum. Not just racially or ethnically, but across all categories. I don’t want the university to meet a quota. I want us to have some genuine representation of people and experiences and identities that make Kent State University the best place it can possibly be. And that starts with ensuring equitable access for all.” ⚡





THE VISION OF VERNON SYKES

DURING PART OF HIS LONG CAREER AS A POLITICIAN AND PROFESSOR, VERNON SYKES DIRECTED A PROGRAM AT KENT STATE THAT EDUCATED STUDENTS ABOUT THE ROLE STATE GOVERNMENT PLAYS IN THEIR LIVES—AND OFTEN SPARKED THEIR PARTICIPATION IN IT.

By Jillian Kramer, BA '06

Spend even five minutes with state Sen. Vernon Sykes (D-Akron) and you'll probably come away knowing more about how state government works and the significant role it plays in your life.

"In order for people to get the very best government, a government that works for them, they have to understand it," Sykes says. "Government is so mystical to a lot of people that they refuse to engage in it. They say, 'Politics has nothing to do with me.' But that's not true at all."

Sykes, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Kent State, brought that philosophy to bear as the inaugural director of Kent State's Columbus Program in State Issues. Since 2001, the semester-long intensive program has aimed to open students' eyes to the workings of state government—even if, Sykes says, those students thought they had no place in it.

The program paused in 2020 amid the pandemic, and Sykes stepped down as director after 19 years in June 2020. The university is seeking a new director and plans to restart the program in fall 2022.

With more than 30 years in politics, Sykes considers himself a trustee: someone who will do what is in the best interest of his constituents, even if some decisions are unpopular. And the more people know about how decisions are made, he says, the better they can see how the process affects them and where they might find a place in it.

That's where the Columbus Program, as it is known, comes in. The program has welcomed about 24 students each fall to Ohio's capital to explore state government in three ways: via classes, through on-site briefings (with elected state officials, state agencies, lobbying firms, think tanks and nonprofit policy/advocacy organizations) and in individualized internships that exposed students to the facets of state government.

Each Monday and Tuesday morning, students gathered in a hearing room of the Ohio Statehouse for class. Ohio Rep. Jamie Callender (R-Concord)—an adjunct professor at Kent State for more than 12 years, whom Sykes brought in as an instructor—would teach government theory. Sykes, often listening in the back of the room, would sometimes debate a point or introduce a different perspective—intentionally exposing the students to the complicated relationship between Republicans and Democrats and the role of partisan politics in developing and implementing public policy.

In the afternoons, students visited dozens of state agencies with Sykes, from the Governor's office to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio to state prisons, speaking with the people who plan, administer and operate governance at the state level. Internships, which Sykes helped arrange, took up the rest of the students' weekdays.

By 2019, 367 students had completed the Columbus Program in State Issues.

Launching the program gave Sykes the chance to shape it with a simple but important goal: "I wanted to make sure that the students would understand and appreciate the significant role that state government plays in all of our lives," he says. It has a hand in everything from issuing business licenses to entrepreneurs to funding school, prison and healthcare

systems. Given that, he says, everyone "should be exposed to the big actors—to the stakeholders, the administrators, the planners" in their home state—even those who don't plan to work in government.

Still, Sykes believes that revealing government's inner workings encourages citizens to participate, says Sykes' youngest daughter, state Rep. and House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (D-Akron), BA '08, who participated in the Columbus Program in 2006. So, "it's not really shocking that he would have gone to great lengths to put together a program like this," she says. "It's just another way he's encouraging participation."

As he spoke in classes across Kent State's eight campuses to recruit for the Columbus Program, Sykes often heard students lament that they had no place in a government-focused experience because they weren't political science majors. "They would just shut off and think, this is not for me," he says. But he was "able to spark their interest" in the program by showing how they could tailor participation to each student's interests.

The internships were Sykes' chance to convince students they had a place in the program. He would ask them what they wanted to do and where they might want to intern to find the best match, says Kathleen Loughry, administrative assistant for the Columbus Program since 2004. "We would sometimes research what was available, but they would have to submit their résumés and schedule interviews."

**"IN ORDER FOR PEOPLE TO GET
THE VERY BEST GOVERNMENT,
A GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS
FOR THEM, THEY HAVE TO
UNDERSTAND IT."**

—Vernon Sykes, PhD

A fashion merchandising major could benefit from the experience, Sykes reasoned, by learning how corporate taxes and regulations affect retailers, so he helped secure an internship in the government relations department at the corporate headquarters of what was then known as Limited Brands. A journalism major could gain valuable reporting and government experience with an internship at the *Columbus Dispatch*. And an accounting major could just as easily crunch numbers at the state auditor's office as at an accounting firm.

The internships were often life-changing for the students, says Loughry, who helped the students navigate the program from start to finish. "Maybe when they went in, they didn't know what they wanted to do," she says. But "sometimes when they left, they were completely committed to another direction because of what they saw and what they experienced over their internship."

SYKES' CAUCUS

Access—including access to state government and to career opportunities—is important to Sykes. And that comes as no surprise to anyone who knows his story.

Though Sykes has served for more years in various political offices than most of his students have been alive—three years as an Akron City Council member, 26 years in the Ohio House of Representatives, and now in his fifth year in the Ohio Senate—he did not always believe that such opportunities would be available to him.

“When you’ve been poor, and you’re a minority Black male from the inner city, and you start to see some of the challenges you face—sometimes you get a little discouraged,” he says.

Sykes was one of five children raised in Akron by a single mother who needed welfare to make ends meet. As a pre-teen, Sykes thought the way to improve his circumstances—and put a little money in his pocket—was working as a paper boy for the *Akron Beacon Journal*. But his mother saw things differently. She wanted Sykes to participate in the U.S. Department of Education’s Upward Bound program, which gives low-income students a better chance at attending college.

“My mother sat down with me and cried,” Sykes recalls. “She said that she didn’t have money to help me go to college. She didn’t go to college. She went to beauty school. And she doesn’t know that much about this program. But she knows that if I go . . . I’m going to have a better life. So, I begrudgingly went to the program, and it was one of the best things that happened to me.”

He took college-level classes. He flew for the first time. He attended a live play. In other words, Sykes got to do and see things he never had before. “They brought me to an environment and just gave me the experience.”

And that is, after all, what he wanted to do for his students through the Columbus Program: to give them the chance to do and see things they never had before, and help them learn how they, too, can make a difference.

“ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS WE LEARNED FROM DR. SYKES IS THAT LIFE WILL CONTINUE TO EVOLVE—THAT YOU SHOULD FOCUS ON THE MOMENT YOU’RE IN BUT ALSO KNOW THAT IT CAN CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.”

—Lubna Najjar, BA ’08

Through the Columbus Program, founder and director Vernon Sykes, PhD, helped 367 students realize the impact that state government has on their lives. During orientation, he would gather that year’s cohort and say, “You are now The Caucus”—a group of people meeting to support a movement—and the students would elect the leadership for their cohort.

“Many of them have stayed close,” says Kathleen Loughry, the program’s administrative assistant. “To this day, they will come to events we have. They are more than willing to promote the program.”

Here, four members of The Caucus look back on their experience with the Columbus Program and how it helped shape what they are doing today.



MATAR GUEYE, BS ’11

Matar Gueye and his Columbus Program classmates had a nickname for Sykes: A Cool Breeze.

While the 2010 cohort chose the phrase because of Sykes’ stylish attire and “shiny car,” Gueye says, the moniker held another meaning for him. In Sykes, Gueye saw a man who could do it all: “It blew my mind that he was a state legislator *and* a professor.”

Gueye decided he wanted to be like that. Today he is the digital campaigns manager of BlueGreen Alliance—a nonprofit coalition of labor unions and environmental groups pushing for a cleaner environment and a clean, thriving economy. He balances managing multiple social media campaigns with crafting communications that go directly to legislators. On a recent day, Gueye helped draft a “Build Back Better” fact sheet sent to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer’s office, urging the politician to support investing in the manufacturing of clean vehicles and energy.

It’s a busy, demanding job. But Gueye says Sykes and the Columbus Program prepared him for it.

In the program, Gueye learned everything from how to send a professional cold email—a skill he used in President Barack Obama’s 2012 reelection campaign—to the power of networking. He was so engrossed in the program, he says, that he got straight A’s for the first time in his Kent State career. And that was no small feat: “Nothing gets past Vernon Sykes,” Gueye laughs now. “He didn’t give anyone any breaks. He held everyone to account.”



MADISON LISOTTO WHALEN, BA ’11

You could say Madison Lisotto Whalen owes her career path to the Columbus Program. *She* certainly says it.

Whalen is a partner at CHW Advisors in Columbus, a full-service government and political affairs firm that helps clients navigate the regulatory and political landscape. She co-owns the firm with Matthew Carle and Melissa Hoeffel. Whalen interned for Hoeffel, an attorney, during the Columbus Program. And she credits Sykes for the placement. After exploring Whalen’s interest in law during a pre-program interview, he introduced her to Hoeffel and set her internship in motion.

“It’s kind of amazing that, 11 years later, I’m still working with her,” says Whalen, who graduated from Capital University Law School in 2015. “And it was thanks to that connection that he [Sykes] made when I was explaining what my interests were.”

It’s also thanks, in part, to a Columbus Program lesson that Whalen took to heart as she met government officials, lobbyists and stakeholders. Sykes “talked a lot about how far you can go with connections and, if you need a job, that you’re often going to get it through a connection,” she says. “You hear that a lot when you’re an undergrad, but in the program, you could actually see it come to life.”

At CHW Advisors, Whalen focuses on lobbying the state legislature, a career she learned about in the Columbus Program. “The Columbus Program teaches you about state government and lobbying, and how to work with legislators, and that’s exactly what my firm does,” she says. “I was very influenced by the program; it changed the trajectory of my whole career path.”



LUBNA NAJJAR, BA ’08

Politics may seem far removed from fashion, but for Columbus Program graduate Lubna Najjar, working within government helped her launch a successful fashion label, which she has since sold, and later, her Columbus-based women’s fashion business development firm, IL Moda.

Her fashion label’s biggest customers, Najjar says, were the legislative aides, lobbyists and attorneys she met through the Columbus Program. Today, when IL Moda hosts industry mixers, city council members and the mayor often attend.

As Najjar says, the business succeeds in Columbus in part because of her government work.

The Columbus Program launched Najjar into a series of government jobs—including legislative aide in the Ohio State House of Representatives and policy analyst for the Ohio Board of Regents—that ultimately helped her corporate career take off. And it all began with an internship at Homeland Security that wasn’t sufficiently challenging—and a life lesson from Sykes.

When Najjar told Sykes she was not challenged enough by her internship, he suggested she volunteer with the Ohio Democratic Party. There, she canvassed for the reelection campaign of then-Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman. She gained a mentor in the mayor, and new insight.

“One of the most valuable things we learned from Dr. Sykes is that life will continue to evolve—that you should focus on the moment you’re in but also know that it can change for the better,” she says. “If you’re not happy in this exact moment, there are people who will help you.”



DESMOND BRYANT, BA ’11

After attending a class at the Kent Campus that allowed him to explore the ins-and-outs of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Desmond Bryant knew he had to go into politics. And then he ran into his friend, Emilia Sykes, in Bowman Hall.

He told her about his newfound interest. She told him about the Columbus Program. “The rest,” he says, “is history.”

Bryant entered the program, where he scored an internship with the governor’s (Gov. Strickland) administration. There he learned more about “who lobbyists are and what it is that they do,” he says. “And that’s kind of what sparked everything.”

Today, Bryant is the vice president of government relations at the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, where he lobbies and advocates for small and large businesses throughout Central Ohio. He also works as a government affairs consultant for Thomas Ingram Law Group.

While his work is nuanced, Bryant, who earned a master’s degree in education policy and administration from the University of Dayton in 2012, sums things up this way: “I build and cultivate relationships and partnerships with elected officials to work to influence policy.”

Knowing what that is worth, though, is something he can trace back to the Columbus Program and Vernon Sykes.

Sykes was excellent at “drawing out greatness from within us,” Bryant says. “Some folks have it in them, but they don’t know how to express it or how to carry themselves in a room. Dr. Sykes was able to help me with knowing my worth. He would say to me, ‘You’re in this program for a reason, so carry yourself in that way. Work the room. Meet as many people as you can. And tell people what you want to do and what you want to become, because folks will help you do it.’” ⚡

REINVENTING LOCAL NEWS

HOW MEMBERS OF THE KENT STATE COMMUNITY AND WORKING JOURNALISTS ARE FINDING WAYS TO REINVENT AND, IN SOME COMMUNITIES, REVIVE LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE.

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By Mark Oprea, BA '15

After years of reading *The Plain Dealer*, in January 2020 I was finally about to be published in its pages. A freelance journalist with five years of experience, I drove proudly to its headquarters in the Cleveland suburb of Brooklyn, shook hands and signed a freelance contract. “Hey, if this goes well,” then-editor George Rodrigue told me on Jan. 8, “we could bring you on monthly.” To say I was elated would be an understatement.

In February, I learned that Rodrigue was leaving the paper after accepting a role as editor-at-large for Advance Publications, parent company of *The Plain Dealer*. Advance owns other newspapers across the country and operates nine digital media groups, including the *PD*’s sister company, *cleveland.com*.

Then, in March, the pandemic took hold. Advertising budgets, which had been shrinking for decades, took another hit. On March 9, two weeks before Gov. Mike DeWine instituted stringent lockdown orders, *The Plain Dealer* announced plans to lay off employees—and my contract was scrapped.

“The reason is strictly financial,” new editor-in-chief Tim Warsinskey explained in a letter to the public. “The industry revenue model has changed, and print newspapers have struggled to overcome deep losses in subscriptions and advertising. More people access the news on digital platforms than ever before. Younger audiences are not subscribing to print editions of newspapers anywhere near the levels previous generations did.”

On April 3, 22 full-timers were laid off. The



The economic slowdown brought about by the pandemic simply sped up print journalism’s steady decline.

PD had a newsroom of 372 in 2006, now it had fewer than 20. A week later, more staff losses left just four in the *PD* newsroom, and they soon signed on with *cleveland.com*.

The economic slowdown brought about by the pandemic simply

sped up print journalism’s steady decline. According to a June 2021 report by the Pew Research Center, “Since 2008, newsroom employment has plummeted at U.S. newspapers while increasing in the digital publishing sector.

Newspaper newsroom employment fell 57% between 2008 and 2020, from roughly 71,000 jobs to about 31,000. At the same time, the number of digital-native newsroom employees rose 144%, from 7,400 workers in 2008 to about 18,000 in 2020.”

In Greater Cleveland, *cleveland.com* assumed responsibility for local news coverage that appears in *The Plain Dealer*, but its news staff is much smaller than the staff in the newspaper’s heyday. Local coverage of many Northeast Ohio communities is bolstered online and in the paper by *Sun Newspapers*, a chain of weekly papers also owned by Advance.

Even so, with a pandemic and the spread of disinformation on the internet, providing local readers with pertinent, timely news is more important than ever. Research shows that communities with diminished local news sources have higher taxes, more political polarization, less civic engagement and worse economies.

As alarming as these findings are, there is hope. Digital media circulation and digital advertising dollars are stronger than ever—the former up 27% in 2021—as news startups and Silicon Valley-funded experiments seem to be announced in every weekly media newsletter.

However, creating community-focused coverage with sustainable business models for local news remains a challenge. Ideas abound—and some are being generated by members of the Kent State community. Highlighted below are several efforts that boost local news coverage in parts of Northeast Ohio—and may signal a path forward for other communities as well.

THE PORTAGER

While newspapers across the United States were reeling from the recent effects of the pandemic, Ben Wolford, BS '11, was devising a remedy of his own—1,646 miles south in his home office in the Dominican Republic.

It was February 2020, and Wolford, a go-getter media prodigy from Randolph, Ohio, was searching for a freelance project to keep him occupied during his family’s stint in Santo Domingo. His wife, an attorney with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, was applying for new postings while helping raise their two children.

Then, on March 30, Gannett, the company that has owned Portage County’s *Record-Courier* since 2017, announced companywide furloughs for reporters making over \$38,000 and other cost reductions. Soon, 30% of the paper’s staff would be laid off.

Initially gathering material for an article on “newsroom turmoil” to pitch to *The Atlantic*, Wolford called up his first boss and mentor, former *Record-Courier* editor Roger Di Paolo, BA '77, who’d been laid off, to discuss Portage County’s fraught media scene.

Their conversation was revelatory: Pages had been reduced, subscription costs had increased, and local organizations couldn’t get information about their events published in the paper.

“I hung up the phone and thought, ‘This isn’t just a story, this is a market opportunity,’” Wolford recalls. So instead of reporting the news of local journalism’s decline, he decided to do something about it.

Wolford assembled an advisory board, talked with local Portage County residents, crafted a business plan and opened a MailChimp account for \$50. On March 25, 2020, he sent out the inaugural issue of his email newsletter, *The Portager*, to an initial list of 285 people who had expressed interest. “At the time, I didn’t feel like I was ready, but the pandemic had just set in and people were scared,” Wolford says. “They needed good, local information.”



Ben Wolford, BS '11

“I hung up the phone and thought, ‘This isn’t just a story, this is a market opportunity.’”

—Ben Wolford

In Wolford’s inimitable editorial tone, a cross between what he calls a “metro columnist and Twitter speak,” he reported on the pandemic and—with help from Kent State student media interns and freelancers—an array of other news topics, including school board controversies, public spending by the Sheriff’s office, a quirky dairy farm, a homeless camp relocation, bake sales, county government and more. Feedback was positive. By October 2020, 3,200 people were getting *The Portager* emailed to them—113 of them paying subscribers.

Mike Beder, BS '00, a Kent-based entrepreneur (who owns Water Street Tavern, Venice Café and Kent Sportswear), says Wolford's idealism sold him on The Portager in summer 2020. A frequent newsletter advertiser, Beder joined Wolford's advisory board. He cites his fear of news deserts and his trust in Wolford's mission. "Ben has so much integrity," Beder says. "I haven't second guessed it since. Also, he's been very transparent. His email and phone number are at the end of every newsletter. I mean, who else does that?"

Since March 2020, Wolford has published an email newsletter every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. He's hired a full-time reporter and some part-time staff—his sister, Natalie Wolford, as managing editor, and a part-time reporter—plus freelancers, including former *Record-Courier* sports columnist Tom Hardesty.

In March 2021, he built and launched a website, ThePortager.com, which has grown to approximately 80,000 page views per month. He currently has more than 5,600 subscribers, with about 10% of them paid. Readers can sign up for free or start a paid subscription; Wolford even offers a "pay what you can" option. Advertisers increased during the election cycle, and he hopes to eventually hire a business development officer to target prospects and increase ad revenues.

Although he recently was able to start paying himself, Wolford has other jobs to help make ends meet. He works for his father's marketing firm, Wolford Communications, and edits the English edition of *il manifesto*, an Italian daily newspaper.

"In some ways, the pandemic was a catalyst for making The Portager even possible." —Ben Wolford

Wolford and his family have been based in Brasilia, Brazil, since last July. He travels back to Portage County as much as he can, but he's basically running a hyper-local news publication from 7,000 miles away.

"In some ways, the pandemic was a catalyst for making The Portager even possible," Wolford says. "I don't think I would have been able to start this and run it as effectively if the whole world hadn't transitioned to a kind of virtual, global arrangement where you can be anywhere and still be local. I'm even a member of the Rotary Club of Kent—its first foreign member."

Is The Portager sustainable for the long run? Wolford remains optimistic. "We've grown every month, so the numbers are pointing in the right direction. With our for-profit model, we can move quickly and iterate often. We're in constant feedback with our readers, finding out what they like, what they don't like, and trying to meet their needs. If they feel it's valuable, they'll pay for it. Of course, 90% of startups fail. But I'm happy to report that our funding is sustainable, and we're doing well."

COLLABORATIVE NEWSLAB AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

As COVID-19's devastation reached universities, Maria McGinnis somehow maintained her composure.

Holding editor positions at *KentWired*, *The Burr* and *A Magazine*, McGinnis, BS '21, knew she couldn't let lockdown doom and gloom alter her career path. Last April, she watched as internship opportunities fell away or went remote, as COVID effectively ended in-person reporting and shut down in-person classes. "I think it's really heavy," McGinnis said at the time. "The feeling is, 'Oh wow, all these things are changing, my internship [is now] remote. How will that change my experience?'"

As students fled campus and returned home, Susan Kirkman Zake, professor in the School of Media and Journalism and faculty advisor to the student-run news outlets, was polishing her antidote to McGinnis' anxieties. By June 2020, Zake had created the Collaborative NewsLab at Kent State University, an experiential learning environment that connects student reporters with outside professional partners.

Using a private donation and a \$7,500 grant she secured from the Scripps Howard Foundation, she and Kevin Dilley, director of student media, would pay seven hungry—and COVID-depressed—student journalists, including Maria McGinnis, to write in-demand news for outside sources while earning internship credit. (Some students already had earned the required hours in a previous semester; others are eligible to apply for internship credit via their NewsLab work.) NewsLab would also help new digital publications like The Portager.

"I'm a student broker," Zake says about her role. "I'm trying to find good professional outlets or good professional partners so that my students can do a higher level of work."

In addition to Zake's senior-level practicum course, where students typically work on semester-long multimedia projects with area editors, NewsLab offers an alternative to entry-level duties such as fact-checking, writing news briefs and redirecting phone calls to editors. Instead, Zake says NewsLab is a "pipeline builder," a way of working with local editors, instead of just working for them. "It's a way of getting the students more job ready before they actually apply for their first real job."

With a seismic shift in workflows and work formats, more journalists are freelancing than ever before. (The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a 2% drop in the freelance unemployment rate since 2014.)



Susan Kirkman Zake

"I'm a student broker. I'm trying to find good professional outlets or partners so that my students can do a higher level of work."

—Sue Zake

Though Zake isn't teaching the School of Media and Journalism's new class on freelancing in Spring Semester 2022—professor Jacqueline Marino, BA '94, will teach that—she encourages NewsLab hires, like McGinnis and senior Zaria Johnson, to make the most of their work relationships. Johnson, a recent editor of *The Kent Stater*, has turned a NewsLab summer environmental justice initiative with The Land (a local news startup in Cleveland) into a part-time freelancing gig.

McGinnis finished an internship with The Land in June and continues to freelance for other digital media sites like The Portager. Still, out of either her own propensity for work or the demands of the industry, she feels somewhat incomplete. "Even being so busy, I feel like I'm still not doing enough," she says. "It's a weird way to feel."

The NewsLab hired 10 journalism students in summer 2021, with funding from the Cleveland, Gund and Scripps Howard foundations, as well as internal funding from the School of Media and Journalism and

the College of Communication and Information, and money from student media's budget. Two interns were unpaid since they needed the credit and couldn't secure an internship on their own—Zake added them into NewsLab so they could stay on track for graduation.

Zake would like to increase the intern base in summer 2022, if they can get additional funding from grant foundations and new donors. She'd also like to increase the current \$10-\$12-an-hour pay, while making unpaid internships passé by 2023.

"The goal is to keep students from working in fast food," Zake says, smiling, "and pay them well."

WKSU AND IDEASTREAM PUBLIC MEDIA

It is indisputable. Ever since the presidential election of 2016, more Americans have less trust in their news sources. In June, the Pew Research Center confirmed this decline: 18% fewer adults trust national media than did five years ago. And 7% fewer trust local media.

So how does a public radio station like WKSU handle such issues of trust? Put some seeds of story creation in the hands of listeners, says Wendy Turner, former general manager and executive director of WKSU, who was recently named the first general manager of Ohio public media services for Ideastream Public Media.

"Decades ago, it was just editors and reporters making pitches," Turner says. "It was always, 'The newsroom decides what the public needs to know.' Now, we're more like, 'Let's ask our audience what they want to know.'"

Turner's role changed in October 2021, after Kent State University entered into a public service operating agreement with Ideastream Public Media for the management and operations of WKSU and its sister stations. (Kent State University still retains FCC licensing for the WKSU stations.)

Under the agreement, Ideastream Public Media assumed operations for WKSU on Oct. 1, 2021. In 2022, WKSU will become the sole NPR news and information station in Northeast Ohio, while Ideastream Public Media's WCPN will shift to expand classical music service.

"This partnership is building on decades of award-winning journalism from two of the region's leaders in news and information," Turner wrote in an email to WKSU supporters. "Together we will be able to serve more than 3.5 million people in the community. The decision to pursue this agreement was reinforced by an analysis supported by the Corporation for Public



Wendy Turner

“This partnership is building on decades of award-winning journalism from two of the region’s leaders in news and information. Together we will be able to serve more than 3.5 million people in the community.”

—Wendy Turner

Broadcasting. That analysis found that working together would result in even stronger public service journalism.”

In her new role, Turner leads the services Ideastream Public Media manages on behalf of all Ohio public television and radio stations. These include The Ohio Channel, the Ohio Public Radio and Television Statehouse News Bureau and the recently formed statewide news collaborative (which will coordinate with 10 public radio stations across the state to develop Ohio’s only daily statewide radio and digital news service). She is part of Ideastream Public Media’s executive leadership team, reporting to President and CEO Kevin Martin.

Turner’s position aligns with Ideastream Public Media’s efforts to sustain and expand local journalism. “Ohio’s public media organizations have a history of working together successfully to serve all Ohioans,” Turner says. “By resourcing the coordination and administration of these investments, we have the

opportunity to greatly expand the reach and impact of our shared services.”

According to the Pew Research Center, while print took a hard hit during the pandemic, interest in public radio increased dramatically. From 2016 to 2020, membership counts shot up from 2.1 million to 2.3 million; the number of NPR affiliates nationwide grew by over 100 stations.

According to the Pew Research Center, while print took a hard hit during the pandemic, interest in public radio increased dramatically.

WKSU just marked its 71st anniversary, making it one of the oldest radio stations in the country. With more than 600 new members in the past year, Turner credits this membership growth to the recognition of WKSU’s importance in providing local information during the pandemic.

Intensified by the 24/7 demand for COVID-19 alerts and testing-site info—WKSU web traffic ballooned by 200% last summer—this tilt toward local concerns has taken various forms, including The Frequency, WKSU’s weekly newsletter highlighting behind-the-scenes coverage of WKSU and trending stories from public media, and The To Do List, a monthly newsletter that shares staff suggestions on activities for the region.

But no effort, Turner says, highlights the COVID-era hunger for WKSU’s brand like OH Really?, a Q&A-style segment that allows audience members to ask reporters and editors questions about Ohio. (“What Happens After Akron Police Seize a Firearm?” and “Why Is Toilet Paper Flying Off the Shelves?” were two of the most popular in 2020.)

For OH Really? stories, Turner says WKSU used a tool and methodology called Hearken, which is used by lots of public radio stations and other journalism initiatives. “This method introduces the public to the reporting process and gives reporters broader sources for story ideas,” she says. “Because the radio story often includes the question asker, there is a transparency in the process that I think could lead to greater trust.

“And sometimes it’s more effective, from a reporting standpoint, to tell a story not from the Washington, D.C., policy angle, but from what’s happening in Zanesville, Ohio,” Turner adds. “But that’s just my opinion.”

MAHONING MATTERS

What happens when your trusty hometown newspaper of 150 years suddenly implodes, lays off all remaining 44 staff members, and leaves all coverage to another newspaper 20 miles up the road?

That’s what longtime readers of the *The Vindicator* in Youngstown, affectionately known as the Vindy, wanted to know when the paper shut down at the end of August 2019. The 50,000 loyal Vindy subscribers were asking: Are we bound to live in a news desert? Where do we source daily information, like sports wins and obituaries? And, most importantly, who is going to keep political forces in check?

The *Tribune Chronicle* in Warren began publishing a daily Mahoning County edition under *The Vindicator* name in September 2019, but Mandy Jenkins, BS ’02, MA ’04, also stepped in with an alternative answer. A 16-year digital media jack-of-all-trades, Jenkins had been hired as the general manager of The Compass Experiment, an all-digital news laboratory funded jointly by newspaper group McClatchy and Google three months before the Vindy closed. The three-year project aimed to replenish three handpicked U.S. news deserts, while testing revenue stream models to serve as examples for other startups.

“It was pure outsiderism. At least until readers found out that we were all from here originally.”

—Mandy Jenkins



Mandy Jenkins, BS ’02, MA’04

A Zanesville, Ohio, native, Jenkins advocated to have Google’s first venture set in Youngstown. Google agreed: Compass’s breakout news site hit the internet in October 2019, backed by a team of five. Since the site is based in Mahoning County, Jenkins and team named it Mahoning Matters.

As with other startups aiming to fill gaps left by withering papers, Mahoning Matters faced a new-kid-in-town conflict with Youngstowners who doubted its street cred. It’s why Jenkins flew repeatedly from New York City (where she lives) to Youngstown, to reassure skeptics that it wasn’t Google doing the reporting. “A lot of what we heard [at listening sessions] was mostly, ‘How dare you come here and do this new thing!’” Jenkins says. “It was pure outsiderism. At least until readers found out that we were all from here originally.”

Since Mahoning Matters’ launch two years ago, it has grown into a reputable source for a range of information. Because of the project’s seed funds and its growing reader base—8,000 email subscribers and 200,000 monthly views as of October 2020—it has a decent chance at surviving the whims of today’s wild digital media environment.

And with a staff of Vindy veterans, like Justin Dennis, Mark Sweetwood and Jess Hardin, Mahoning Matters has, by now, convinced Youngstown that it’s a force to reckon with in terms of watchdog reporting. “If we were an [outside] parachute operation instead? I don’t think this would’ve worked,” Dennis says. “But it just does.”

Or, more accurately, *kind* of worked. In February, due to a bankruptcy, McClatchy was sold to new hedge fund owners, who, to Jenkins’ chagrin, decided The Compass Experiment wasn’t as much of an asset as the original owners thought it was. In March, Mahoning Matters was cut off from future Google investment and absorbed into the McClatchy network. Compass’s second startup, The Longmont Leader in Longmont, Colorado, was subsequently sold to Village Media. (The reporters kept their gigs, however.)

Like five times before in her 16-year-long career in media, Jenkins once again had to find a job. “It was more personal this time,” she says. “Because I had a hand in making [Mahoning Matters]. It was, well, my baby.”

But Jenkins seldom frets. Now head of product at Factual, a Seattle-based breaking news technology company, she knows that her tendency as a journalistic renaissance woman—“To do *everything*,” she says, from audience building to UX design—has calmed a lot of overarching fears that plague midcareer media workers.

Such a mentality, Jenkins thinks, will also suit Justin Dennis well as he replaces retiring 33-year veteran Mark Sweetwood as Mahoning Matters’ editor.

“Justin’s always been very responsible and understanding of both the business-side realities as well as what’s needed from a workflow perspective,” Jenkins says. “And that’s not always the case with reporters. Trust me, I’m married to one.” ⚡



A CAMPAIGN OF BRILLIANT PROPORTIONS

Kent State announces *Forever Brighter*,
a \$350 million fundraising campaign.

Kent State University launched the public phase of a \$350 million comprehensive fundraising campaign Saturday, Oct. 2, during a special halftime announcement at the Homecoming football game. Campaign co-chairs Sandra C. and Lawrence B. Armstrong, BS '79, BArc '80, joined Kent State President Todd Diacon to publicly unveil *Forever Brighter* to thousands of alumni, donors and friends.

"We are consistently recognized nationally for our success in graduating more students," Diacon said. "Our graduation rate is already the highest in northern Ohio and the fourth highest in the state among universities, but we won't rest until all students we enroll graduate with the skills to succeed in their first jobs, graduate programs and careers they haven't even dreamed of yet. Philanthropy is key to illuminating a brighter future for our students and their communities."

To date, more than \$311 million has been raised toward the \$350 million goal during the quiet phase of the *Forever Brighter* campaign, which focuses on three key areas: prioritizing

student success, expanding university initiatives and building the future. Within each of these areas are specific projects, programs and initiatives to enhance student experiences and elevate Kent State's reputation as a leader in student support, athletics, research and innovation—both nationally and internationally.

"It is a special time at Kent State University," Sandra Armstrong said. "For too long, our alma mater had been a hidden gem amongst higher education institutions. Now, our reputation is strong, our rankings are soaring and our students are learning how to harness their passions to find their purpose in life."

"We are launching into a new era at Kent State, and we are so proud to co-chair this transformational campaign," Lawrence Armstrong added. "We have been given the opportunity to fund scholarships and new programs for deserving students—and there is no more rewarding feeling for us than changing the course of our students' lives in a positive and encouraging way. We call on all alumni and friends to

President Diacon, his wife, Moema Furtado, and campaign co-chairs, Sandra and Lawrence Armstrong, don sunglasses to announce the launch of *Forever Brighter*, the university's most ambitious comprehensive campaign in its 111-year history.

join us in this effort to build a brighter future for Kent State."

This is a campaign for everyone, says Valoree Vargo, Kent State's vice president for philanthropy and alumni engagement. "Whether you can give \$100 to be used for a last Dollar Scholarship to enable a student to pay a final bill and make it to graduation or you can give millions of dollars to endow a professorship, every dollar is focused on the success of our hardworking and talented students.

"Our donors are truly transforming lives of students who need their support now more than ever. Our campaign tagline is 'At Kent State, what sets us apart is how we come together.' It's that spirit that will propel us forward in this effort to leave the university and the lives of our students *Forever Brighter*."

Learn more [HTTPS://WWW.KENT.EDU/FOREVERBRIGHTER](https://www.kent.edu/foreverbrighter)

"Philanthropy is key to illuminating a brighter future for our students and their communities." —President Todd Diacon

HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CAMPAIGN'S THREE PRIMARY PRIORITIES:

PRIORITIZING STUDENT SUCCESS

Raising funds to align with scholarship needs enables the university to support students from the day they receive their letter of acceptance to the day they receive their degree. Scholarships assist students by:

- Ensuring access to a Kent State education for all students, regardless of their financial situation.
- Rewarding the highest-achieving students with additional support.
- Providing high-impact experiences and study-away opportunities to elevate career readiness.
- Fostering and supporting students as they complete a degree.



By the Numbers:

32%
of the Class of 2024
is first-generation

2x is the
amount our
four-year
graduation
rate has
increased in
10 years

572 is the
number of
Honors College freshmen
in the Class of 2023

30% of first-year
students are eligible for
the federal Pell Grant

82% of students need
financial assistance
to attain degrees

Goal: To raise \$100 million to provide scholarship support for students.



"Students from backgrounds like mine are not supposed to make it to college. Some say we are forever bound to the environment we grew up in."

— JOHN MCDERMOTT, BA '20, accounting major, scholarship recipient and first in his family to continue his education beyond middle school. Since graduating from Kent State, he has completed a master's degree and is employed as an accountant at Deloitte Cleveland.



EXPANDING UNIVERSITY INITIATIVES

During the last few decades, Kent State has gone from an academic, athletic and economic driver in Northeast Ohio to a thought-starter, fierce competitor and innovation leader at the national and international levels. Research and programmatic additions to the university—such as the following—have elevated the university's reputation and cemented its place on the world stage:

Brain Health

The Brain Health Research Institute (BHRI) is a collaborative effort that taps passionate faculty members from across Kent State University—not just in science-based departments, but also in social sciences and humanities—to combine their unique strengths as they collaborate to solve brain-related challenges. The institute is the epicenter of training for undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in an environment that thrives on hands-on access, mentorship, resources and opportunities.

By the Numbers:

176 student participants

25 Brain Health Research Institute undergraduate fellows

17 pilot grant awardees

Goal: To elevate the profile of neuroscience and bring together people from different disciplines to expand discoveries in preventing and treating brain disease.



“This has been a great opportunity to do research, and I plan on having my own research lab once I graduate.”

—NATHAN RITCHEY, mathematics and neuroscience major, Brain Health Research Institute fellow, capstone project: “Increasing Quality of Life for Spinal Cord Injury.”

Design Innovation

The Design Innovation (DI) initiative focuses on developing solutions by reaching across academic fields and partnering with industry to enhance collaboration, communication skills and creativity.

Design Innovation is an ecosystem of physical, human and intellectual resources to help students become creative, intersectional problem-solvers. Coursework and co-curricular projects, competitions, hackathons and grand challenges bolster this “challenge-based innovation” strategy.

Kent State was recognized in *Newsweek*’s 2021 list of the Best Maker Schools in Higher Education, an international list that includes some of the most prestigious universities in the world.

By the Numbers:

30 DI nodes (makerspaces and resource laboratories) across Kent State campuses

28 DI fellows

1 DI Hub

Goal: To leverage and elevate the entire Design Innovation Ecosystem to create a powerful and diverse community of fearless collaborators in the face of complex problems.



—JANDA VAN DYK, BFA ’22, fashion design major, one of a team of Kent State biology and fashion design students that received the Outstanding Science Award from the Biodesign Challenge Summit 2020. The fashion industry currently uses synthetic dye to create the color black, so the team worked with bacteria to create an eco-friendly replacement.

“I was excited about the biology aspect of the course because I was not familiar with integrating biology and fashion for the purpose of creating an innovative product.”

I would not have been able to complete my college journey without my scholarships, and for that, I will be forever grateful.” —Vanessa Vodan, BS ’20

Employee Talent

Kent State University’s rising stature among the nation’s best research institutions depends on the success and achievements of its employees. Perpetual support allows faculty, administrators and staff to advance their work, assist in research, purchase equipment and push the boundaries of the unknown for generations to come.



“This model is an explicit example of how cross-disciplinary work is essential to holistically examine the processes that lead to improved safety outcomes.”

—SARAH BAYRAMZADEH, PHD, coordinator of and Elliot Professor in the Healthcare Design Program at Kent State’s College of Architecture and Environmental Design, was awarded a \$2.47 million grant to improve efficient care in Level 1 trauma room design. The project brings together a team of researchers from Kent State and Cleveland Clinic Akron General Hospital for the next four years.

By the Numbers:

5,000+/- employees work across Kent State’s eight campus system

17 faculty positions are endowed

73% of faculty members have doctoral degrees

12+ is the average for years of service by Kent State employees

Goal: To double the number of endowed chairs, professorships and other positions across the eight-campus system and provide perpetual support for the university’s most distinguished employees and their corresponding work.

Intercollegiate Athletics

Kent State Athletics’ vision is to be a nationally recognized, comprehensive athletics program that inspires communities and transforms lives. The landscape of Division I intercollegiate athletics is changing constantly and the need for resources is at an all-time high. Philanthropy is integral to the program’s innovative mindset in resource management, with a focus on sustainability and sound financial stewardship. More resources are needed to focus on its mission to win championships and graduate student-athletes who are prepared for life after sport.

By the Numbers:

\$6.1 million in scholarships awarded annually

476+/- student-athletes

81 athletics endowments

19 varsity sports

19 straight semesters with department grade point averages of 3.0+

Goal: To increase the number of athletics endowments by 20%.



—VANESSA VODAN, BS ’20, (softball, track and field) speech and pathology major, winner of the 2020 Judith K. Devine Award for excellence in leadership in all facets of college life.

“My goal is to become an audiologist and work in a hospital setting or work with children in an elementary school. I would not have been able to complete my college journey without my scholarships, and for that, I will be forever grateful.”



BUILDING THE FUTURE

Kent State's vision is to be a magnet for talented students who want to change the world and a flagship for faculty and staff who have the talent to lead such a bold initiative. To achieve this, its physical spaces must match the innovative and transformative experiences taking place across its educational system. New and updated facilities for the Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship and the College of Aeronautics and Engineering will lay a foundation for what is possible when physical spaces accurately reflect stellar programs.

Ambassador Crawford College of Business and Entrepreneurship

This is the home for students who will go on to become global business leaders, transforming their future industries across every aspect of society. It has experienced double-digit enrollment gains since 2010 and is one of Ohio's largest business colleges. The college's proposed building, Crawford Hall, will enable teamwork and the use of new technology to prepare students for future careers in business.

"Going to New York City and getting to represent Golden Flash Asset Management was something I'll always remember."



—ANNE RITTS, BBA '21, finance major, member of the GFAM team that took first place with their Fixed Income portfolio at the nation's largest student finance competition, the Quinnipiac Global Asset Management Education Forum in 2019. Her accomplishments have inspired other women to participate in GFAM as well.

By the Numbers:

8,400+ students enrolled in business classes. **3,700** business majors study across the Kent State system

200+ business students who have studied abroad in recent years

40 countries represented by business students

50% more square footage will be added in the new building

Goal: To continue to attract and retain top faculty and scholars.

College of Aeronautics and Engineering

The College of Aeronautics and Engineering (CAE) has grown in both size and stature in recent years. With the addition of notable faculty and related research funding, the college's impact on future industries will be remarkable. Passionate students experience immersive instruction that will prepare them to compete in a rapidly changing global economy. The college's academic program is supported by cutting-edge research and state-of-the industry facilities designed to prepare students in the fields of aerospace engineering, mechatronics engineering and cybersecurity engineering, all of which are vital to business, manufacturing and aviation.

"Joining the robotics team had the biggest impact on my career. I had the opportunity to learn and experience so much by being involved with the organization."



By the Numbers:

\$2.6 million is awarded in scholarships

83% of students receive scholarships

29% of freshmen are first-generation students

3.7% is the increase in underrepresented enrollment

3% is the increase in women enrollment

4x is the amount of growth in research

Goal: To complete projected funding for the engineering wing expansion that will add 44,000 square feet to the existing building. External funding of \$12 million has been committed, and \$6 million more is needed to reach the total estimated cost of \$18 million.

—MICHAEL PARKER, BS '20, mechatronics engineering/mechatronics engineering technology. As president of the Kent State Robotics Club, he attended the NASA Robotics Mining competition held at the Kennedy Space Center. One of his internships was with The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. doing process development with its innovation team. He has been a mechatronics engineer with Goodyear since graduation.

WHAT SETS US APART IS HOW WE COME TOGETHER.

There are many ways you can transform the lives of our students with your generosity. Philanthropic gifts enhance academic excellence and innovation, expand breakthrough research and provide contemporary, high-tech facilities for learning, study and research. Together we are a force for the future—and a source for good. Together we will make the world *Forever Brighter*. Help us achieve our goal of raising \$350 million to support our students.

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SLEEP SPECIALIST

Neuroscientist Maj. Allison Brager, PhD '11, wants you to get a good night's sleep—tonight and every night. It's how she's achieved success as an elite athlete, scholar and soldier—and how she's helping her fellow soldiers survive stressful situations.

By Bethany Sava, BS '12

As a soldier and elite athlete, Maj. Allison J. Brager, PhD '11, is familiar with pushing herself physically and mentally. But as an Army neuroscientist who studies sleep—particularly in extreme environments and high-stress situations—she also knows how her commitment to sleep has contributed to her success, including in academics and athletics, throughout her life.

"I grew up in a community that prides itself on discipline, grit and the pursuit of excellence through sport," says Brager, a native of Youngstown, Ohio. She began dance lessons as a toddler, started gymnastics soon after that, and in high school became a formidable competitor in track and field. As a junior, she was one of the first women in Ohio to compete in pole vaulting. Her skill attracted interest from several Ivy League schools, and she chose to pursue an undergraduate degree at Brown University.

"A lot of my family did not go to college," Brager says. "And so to be pretty much a first-generation college student made me value academics and being a scholar athlete more than anything else."

But even in college, with demanding course loads and intense training schedules, "I would say my secret weapon—in terms of making sure that I was not just the top athlete in the school, but also the top student—was making sure I got adequate sleep," Brager says. "It didn't matter how much homework I had left to finish after training four to six hours a day; I always made sure I got eight hours of sleep."

Although as an athlete she was interested in both human performance and sleep, it wasn't until she signed up for a course called The Psychology of Sleep (hoping to get an easy A) that she discovered the connection between the two—and found an area of study that fascinated her and helped her forge a career path.



Maj. Allison Brager, PhD '11

"I would say my secret weapon—in terms of making sure that I was not just the top athlete in the school, but also the top student—was making sure I got adequate sleep."

—Maj. Allison Brager, PhD '11

After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in psychology from Brown in 2007, Brager set out to earn a PhD in neuroscience. She wanted to learn more about the relationship between sleep and brain function. And she was particularly interested in circadian rhythms (physical, mental and behavioral changes that follow a sleep-wake cycle and repeat roughly every 24 hours) and how neurotransmitters (such as serotonin and dopamine released during exercise) play a role in sleep.

"I wanted to work with the world's leading expert; that's why I went to Kent State," Brager says. That expert is J. David Glass, PhD, now Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences, who has been with the university since 1983. He ran The Circadian Rhythm Laboratory, which focuses on the neurobiology of mammalian biological rhythms. One aim of his research is to study the effects of ethanol (also called alcohol) on the circadian rhythm timing system. Alcohol use and withdrawal have profound effects on circadian rhythms and sleep.

As a graduate student, Brager was one of the first authors with Glass on several high-impact papers, including a 2009 research paper that reported how chronic alcohol consumption altered nocturnal activity patterns in hamsters and suggested a mode for the disruptive effect of alcohol abuse on human circadian rhythms. This was the basis for her prestigious predoctoral National Institutes of Health research award.

After earning a PhD at Kent State, Brager served as a postdoctoral research fellow in the Neuroscience Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta. During her postdoctoral work, she wrote *Meathead: Unraveling the Athletic Brain* (Westbow Press, 2015), a popular science book debunking the "dumb jock" myth and focused on using neuroscience to enhance athletic performance and recovery. She also has written more than 30 peer-reviewed papers, numerous op-ed and column pieces for professional societies and has co-authored the first edition of the NCAA student-athlete mental health handbook.

In 2016, Brager joined Walter Reed Army Institute of Research as a National Research Council Fellow. A year later, she became a commissioned Army officer to support sleep



and human performance research and development as one of the few active duty neuroscientists. She served as chief of the institute's Sleep Research Center until June 2019. She also sits on fatigue management working groups for the Office of the Army Surgeon General, the United States government and NATO.

During the pandemic, Brager served as chief of the COVID-19 Response Laboratory at the Javits Center, which had been converted into an auxiliary medical center in the worst of the New York City crisis. She was responsible for securing scarce medical supplies to treat those who fell ill.

Brager currently is director of human performance operations and outreach education for the U.S. Army Warrior Fitness Training Center in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Its mission is to support the elite athletic endeavors of active duty soldiers and future research and development of human performance technology and training programs.

As an Army neuroscientist, Brager studies resilience to environmental stressors such as exercise, jet lag and sleep deprivation, all of which are realities for many soldiers. Her research includes studying why some individuals are resilient and others vulnerable under such conditions.

"In order to develop and test new ideas in the lab, we have to understand what it looks like in real life," says Brager, who has traveled to collect data in realistic settings for the military. "Basically, what I'm asked to do is to develop tools and technologies—based on the principles of biology and what is known about the biology of sleep—in order to help service people adjust to time zones very rapidly.

"We're constantly searching for some new function of sleep," she adds. "It's also about finding new biological factors that can be tweaked in some way, in order to have humans perform at a higher level under stress in less-than-optimal conditions."

According to a recent Defense Department report to Congress, active-duty service members suffer from sleep deprivation at a rate roughly twice that of the civilian population. Inadequate sleep (less than seven hours a night) can contribute to mental health disorders, physical illness and compromised military effectiveness. The report describes it as "a reduced ability to execute complex cognitive tasks, communicate effectively, quickly make appropriate decisions, maintain vigilance and sustain a level of alertness required to carry out assigned duties."

In high-stress environments such as deployment, soldiers may not get adequate sleep, even though they need it to rest and recover. "It's not until the stress has subsided that fatigue sets in, and that is where danger and loss of life are most imminent as a result," Brager explains. "Our HPA axis [the

interaction between the hypothalamus, pituitary gland and adrenal glands that activates the body's stress response] has this uncanny ability to keep us awake and alert for extended periods of time, but the crash is unbearable."

With her background and expertise, Brager helps soldiers develop better sleep habits and routines. She also determines whether naps on duty day, referred to as tactical napping, are advisable. She even identifies those select few individuals who possess the short sleep gene or are extreme morning risers, which are determined by genetics—and quite rare. Those soldiers can be placed on missions and in environments where sleep is limited because they can withstand the effects better than others.

Inadequate sleep (less than seven hours a night) can contribute to mental health disorders, physical illness and compromised military effectiveness.

While it may seem counterintuitive, Brager's commitment to sleep hasn't lessened the drive to compete that has been ingrained in her since she was a child. In fact, it could be what fuels it. In addition to serving as a scientist and soldier, Brager is an elite athlete. In 2018, she competed in the 10th Gay Games in Paris, where she won eight gold medals and one silver medal in track and field—and set a record for the women's pole vault. She's also a two-time CrossFit Games competitor and competes regionally as well.

"I try to be as efficient as possible in terms of getting my workout in appropriately," says Brager, who traveled almost 150,000 miles and stayed in hotels for 264 days in 2019. She credits her continued good health to her commitment to exercise, even on the road—and, of course, to sleep.

"One of the classic principles of biology is the idea of homeostasis," Brager says. "If you overdo something, it requires a period of rest in order to get the system back to normal.

"I really do attribute a lot of my success to sleep. Obviously, I'm biased, but sleep is right up there with hydration, food, and all the other basic survival mechanisms."

SLEEP SAVVY

We asked Allison Brager about the importance of sleep and how to maximize the benefits of a good night's rest. Here's what she had to say.

Why is sleep so important?

Very bluntly, if we don't sleep, we die. There is a reason why we spend (or should spend) one-third of our lives asleep. Sleep helps us repair, recover and replenish energy stores and refine systems for optimal functioning the next day.

How do you define good sleep?

Objectively, it is about having sleep saturated with more than 30% of slow wave activity (SWA), which is often called deep sleep, as identified from a full electroencephalogram (EEG) montage [a test that monitors and records electrical activity of the brain]. Subjectively, simply asking "Do you feel refreshed or do you feel like you need stimulants to function?" goes a long way.

Is there an optimal time for most people to catch their 7-9 hours—and do they need that much?

Yes! The magic number is 8.4 hours. Like Ben Franklin said: "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

What is the most restorative time period during sleep?

There are two. The deepest stage of non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep (termed slow wave activity) and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Usually, people who have a sleep disorder don't fully enter REM sleep from NREM or hit the deepest stage of NREM at all.

How about napping? Is there an optimal length or time?

Tactical napping is what the cool kids do. Try for 20-30 minutes in the afternoon when the physiological drive to sleep (in general) is the greatest.

What is the most common sleep-related challenge?

Getting to bed early—because you get wrapped up in work or social media; staying off your phone prior to bed!

How do screens affect our sleep?

Enriched blue light (from smartphones, tablets, computers and TVs) actually stops the release of melatonin, the hormone produced by the connection from the retina to the pineal gland that helps to initiate and consolidate sleep.

What can you do to optimize your sleep—even in a high-stress environment?

Create a sleep friendly environment that is **dark** (no phones or any light really), **quiet** (or use a noise machine if you are like me and have slept next to a flight line) and **cool** (super easy to do in the desert).

Any advice for those with trouble falling asleep or staying asleep?

The psychology of sleep is just as important as the physiology of sleep. Set up your room to be sleep friendly. No TVs and only use your bed for sleeping and sex. Block off light emitted from a device. Position your bed near a window to allow natural light to prime your body to wake in the morning. ⚡



Homecoming Weekend 2021

The Kent State University community came together both in person and online to celebrate Homecoming Weekend 2021 from Friday, Oct. 1 through Sunday, Oct. 3.

"It was great to welcome alumni and friends home to make new memories and take part in many favorite homecoming traditions," says Valoree Vargo, vice president for philanthropy and alumni engagement. "Last year, we learned that our Golden Flashes enjoyed the opportunity to participate online from wherever they are, and we were excited to see alumni celebrating both on campus and across the globe once again."



Here are some highlights from Homecoming Weekend 2021:

Class of 2020 Commencement

1. Sean Joseph Beckwith, BSE '20, a graduate of the College of Education, Health and Human Services, reveals that he was Flash—with help from President Todd Diacon and Melody Tankersley, senior vice president and provost—at the special outdoor Commencement ceremony for the Class of 2020 held on Manchester Field, Friday, Oct. 1. Commencement for the class was held virtually last spring due to COVID-19 restrictions, but nearly 600 members of the class and their families returned to the Kent Campus during Homecoming Weekend 2021 to celebrate their milestone in person—and about 440 graduates crossed the stage for recognition.

2. Kent State President Todd Diacon addresses the Class of 2020 at the special Commencement ceremony. "You are here today for what I hope and expect will be a one-of-a-kind event in the history of this great university," Diacon noted. "You will be unique in the annals of Kent State because yours will be the only class to celebrate Commencement and return to campus as alumni at the same time."

International Homecoming

3. At the International Homecoming Festival, held on Friday afternoon, attendees learn about the diversity of cultures represented at Kent State. They viewed cultural performances and picked up "passports" that were stamped at stations set up

on the Student Green adjacent to Risman Plaza and redeemed for free food. At each country's station, international students and alumni shared the history and culture of their homeland through posters, artifacts, displays and native foods.

Homecoming Kickoff

4. Members of the 2021 Kent Campus homecoming court are introduced at Homecoming Kickoff, a new event to mark the start of homecoming weekend. The celebration, held Friday evening on the lawn by The John Elliot Center for Architecture and Environmental Design, included food, fun and music by the Kent State University Marching Golden Flashes. Attendees also heard from Randle L. Richmond, new director of athletics, and Kent State President Todd Diacon.

Fireworks Show

5. Fireworks light up the sky over Kent following the Homecoming Kickoff event. Kent State invited the community to assemble downtown by the West Main Street bridge for the best view of the fireworks show, which began at dusk on Oct. 1.

Bowman Cup 5K Walk/Run

6. Racers compete in the annual Bowman Cup 5K Walk/Run during Kent State's homecoming. The race, named after former Kent State President George Bowman, began at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 2, at the university's Beverly J. Warren Student Recreation and Wellness Center. President Todd Diacon ran in the race dressed as Elvis. His wife, Moema Furtado, came in first in her age group. Those who weren't able to attend could participate in a virtual walk/race.

Homecoming Parade

7. Members of the Class of 2020 lead the way down Main Street, serving as the 2021 homecoming parade grand marshals. The parade began at 10:30 a.m. on Oct. 2 on the corner of Midway Drive and Main Street and traveled west on Main Street into downtown Kent. For those attending virtually, a first-ever livestream was hosted by Kent State students. It featured a coffee chat with President Todd Diacon and a question-and-answer session with Randle L. Richmond, director of athletics, and Melody Tankersley, senior vice president and provost.

8. The Marching Golden Flashes head down Main Street during the homecoming parade. The parade featured dozens of floats, local high school marching bands, the homecoming court, Kent State cheerleaders and athletes, student organizations, local officials and more.

Kiss on the K

9. Kent State President Todd Diacon and his wife, Moema Furtado, take part in "Kiss on the K" along with other Kent State couples during Homecoming 2021. Couples who feel that Kent State played an important role in their relationship gathered on the K at Risman Plaza (in front of the Kent Student Center) at noon Saturday and kissed when the bell rang at 12:30 p.m.

Flash Nation Tailgate

10. Alumni and students attend the Flash Nation Tailgate at Dix Stadium before the football game. The Black Alumni, Cleveland and Lake County chapters, also hosted tailgates with food and friends in the parking lot outside of Dix Stadium.

11. Randle L. Richmond, MS '06, Kent State's new director of athletics, speaks at the Flash Nation Tailgate. He spent 10 years as a Kent State athletic department staff member prior to accepting the senior associate athletic director position at Old Dominion in 2015. He assumed his new duties on May 1.

Homecoming Game

12. Jatiea Caples and Andrew Pitko pose together after being announced as 2021 homecoming royalty during halftime of Kent State's homecoming football game at Dix Stadium. Caples is an integrated social studies major sponsored by the Women's Center. Pitko is an environmental conservation bio major sponsored by Phi Delta Theta fraternity. They are pictured with 2020 homecoming royalty, Annemarie Guta, BSE '20, and Kent State President Todd Diacon.

13. Golden Flashes who attended the homecoming football game don special gold or blue sunglasses as part of the official *Forever Brighter* campaign kickoff during halftime.

14. Fifth-year quarterback and grad student Dustin Crum, No. 7, leads the game-winning drive against the Bowling Green State University Falcons. Crum completed 15 of his 28 pass attempts for 134 yards. He had a season-high 93 yards rushing, with one touchdown. "Maybe it's that engineering degree, maybe he understands angles better than I do, says head coach Sean Lewis. "He does an incredible job creating and seeing completions."

15. Kent State Golden Flashes ring the Starner Victory Bell at Dix Stadium after beating the Bowling Green Falcons 27-20 during Kent State's homecoming football game on Oct. 2.

16. President Todd Diacon celebrates with the Marching Golden Flashes in the stands of Dix Stadium.

"It was great to welcome alumni and friends home to make new memories and take part in many favorite homecoming traditions."

—Valoree Vargo

alumni LIFE
class NOTES

1930s



Miriam Grace (Schnitzer) Wiles, BS '31, MA '31, Burbank, OH, turned 105 years old on July 10, 2021. According to an article in The Daily Record in Wooster, Ohio, she was able to celebrate the special day with her family. The Hartsville native graduated from Kent State with degrees in education and taught at several school systems in Ohio. She met her husband of 50 years, Sylvan L. Wiles, BS '39, at Kent State, but kept it a secret because at that time you couldn't teach if you were married. However, teachers were needed because of World War II, so she was allowed to continue, even after her father—who was superintendent of the school system—found out. (Her husband died Oct. 1, 1991.) When asked the secret of her longevity, she responded, "Don't worry and eat lots of M&Ms!"

1950s



Elizabeth C. Fesler, BS '52, MED '61, PhD '74, Akron, OH, wrote, "In looking back at my nearly 70 years as both an educator and community volunteer—years during which I learned first-hand the importance of reaching out to make communities better places for more people—I fondly recall an early life experience that set me on this path. "When I was 14 years old, at the bidding of our school's debate coach, my 15-year-old brother and

I walked door to door through our neighborhood of largely first-generation residents. Our mission was to share information with our neighbors about the newly formed United Nations. I still remember my sense of excitement about the idea that if different nations could come together in peace, so many of the world's problems would be solved! "My many decades as an educator and community volunteer started with a KSU scholarship in 1948. [Those decades included] nearly 40 years in the Akron Public Schools, where I held positions ranging from teacher and counselor to principal and psychologist. Fourteen more years followed in the private-school sector, where I was hired as director of the upper school at a well-known Cleveland academy. It was also during this time that I began working with both individuals and families in my own private office as a licensed psychologist. "In closing, it is with a grateful heart that I recall the inspirations from some of the distinguished KSU faculty—Dr. Mona Fletcher, Dr. Popa and Dr. Donald Wonderly." Fesler and her husband, William Fesler, BA '51, established the Elizabeth and Bill Fesler Undergraduate Scholarship in Literacy at Kent State. It is based on her belief that early intervention in reading and language has the most profound effects on children. Many studies have shown that improving children's reading competency by the time they are 8 leads to success later in life and is often the key to eliminating poverty. Allan G. Kaupinen, BBA '57, Alexandria, VA, presented a bust of his former Golden Flashes football teammate, Jack Rittichier, BFA '56, to the US Coast Guard in June 2021. The bust will be on display in Florida and will be installed in the future National Coast Guard Museum to be built in Connecticut. During the Vietnam War, Lt. Rittichier was a Coast Guard aviator serving in Vietnam on exchange with the Air Force. On June 9, 1968, he and three Air Force crewmen attempted to rescue a Marine Corps pilot who had been shot down near the Laotian border. During the mission, bullets struck Rittichier's helicopter, causing a fire. As he attempted to set down in a nearby clearing, the helicopter lost altitude and exploded as it hit the ground. Rittichier was the first Coast Guardsman killed in action during the Vietnam War. His remains and those of his crew were recovered in 2002, and he was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery in 2003. In his time at Kent State, Rittichier was captain of the football and track teams. He is remembered for his 90-yard touchdown run against Bowling Green that propelled Kent State into its first bowl game, the 1954 Refrigerator Bowl in Evansville, Indiana. Kent State University's Golden Flashes football team named the Most Valuable Player award after Lt. Jack Columbus Rittichier in 2009 and has presented a bronze trophy (based on a sculpture titled "Jack's Run") to the team's MVP each year since 2014.

Anne Rankin Mahoney, BA '59, Denver, CO, wrote, "Dr. Oscar Ritchie was my advisor and my best teacher at Kent State. He was my model for the kind of college teacher I wanted to be. I hope I have done him justice over the years. At the end of my senior year, I was awarded the Engleman Creative Writing Award from the English department and the Outstanding Woman in Sociology Award from the sociology department. I pursued both writing and sociology at Kent State and have ever since. I was elected to the Laurels Women's Honor Society, and am also a member of Alpha Chi Omega, Gamma Lambda chapter." Mahoney's new memoir, Both Career and Love: A Woman's Memoir 1959-1973 (Outskirts Press, Dec. 17, 2020), covers her struggle to achieve her goal of being a sociology professor and having a partnership marriage in which she and her husband both worked and were actively involved with their family. Part women's history, part love story, the book follows her from the time she graduated from Kent State until she was hired as a sociology teacher in 1973 at the University of Denver, where she is now a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology.

1960s



Albert Prazniak, MED '60, Canton, OH, and his wife, Patricia, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on June 30, 2021. During the early years of their marriage, Prazniak's wife helped him earn a master's in school administration from Kent State while they started a family. He started his teaching career in Mineral City, Ohio, and returned to his hometown of Massillon to teach history and physical education at Longfellow Junior High School, where he also coached the junior high football team. He was recruited for a teaching and coaching job in upstate New York and served as an administrator at several districts before retiring in 1981. The couple returned to Ohio, settling in Jackson Township after he became assistant superintendent at Springfield Local School District. The couple agree their greatest accomplishment is raising their five children, who returned home to host a party in honor of their parents' milestone anniversary.



Hector Rodriguez (middle) salutes aside members of Veterans United for DC Statehood in May 2017. Courtesy of Hector Rodriguez

Hector Rodriguez, BA '65, Washington, DC, founder of Veterans United for DC Statehood, was selected by Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, who represents the District of Columbia, to accompany her at the Biden inauguration. "Hector not only served our country without voting representation, but he has continued fighting for representation for all veterans and Washingtonians," Norton said. DC residents can't vote for representatives or senators and their delegates do not have a vote in Congress.

Rodriguez organized Veterans United in 2017 to advocate for equal representation and voting rights. After graduating from Kent State, where he majored in political science, and commissioning through Army ROTC as a second lieutenant, he became a captain in the US Army Strategic Communications Command. He moved to Washington, DC, in 1968, where he established himself as a political leader and advocate for veterans and Latino Americans.

Barbara Gregorich, BA '64, Chicago, IL, wrote: "I'm happy to report that my first young adult novel, The F Words, was published Sept. 1, 2021, by City of Light Publishing. It's a story about the struggle for social and political justice in which the 15-year-old main character, caught spray-painting the F word on the school walls, is required to write two poems a week for his English teacher, each about a word that begins with the letter F.

"Here is a testimonial: 'In The F Words, Gregorich's beautifully crafted, diverse characters use the power of words to fight racism and injustice. They tackle today's issues in a take-your-breath-away page turner that teens will want to read in one sitting. I hope this finds its way into every high school classroom.'—Roxanne F. Owens, PhD; Chair, Teacher Education, DePaul University, College of Education; Editor, Illinois Reading Council Journal."



Barbara K. Andreas, BA '68, MA '70, PhD '80, South Bloomingville, OH, was inducted into the Ohio Natural Resources Hall of Fame, the state's highest conservation honor, on Aug. 4, 2021. She dedicated more than 40 years of her professional life to the preservation of Ohio's natural lands. While focusing her research efforts on the distribution of mosses, Andreas also conducted plant inventories of public lands and contributed to the overall knowledge of the state's flora and natural environment. She discovered several significant natural areas that later became state nature preserves, including Flatiron Lake Bog and Beck Fen. Her research efforts

also were instrumental in developing the Floristic Quality Assessment Index, now used statewide and federally to assess a site's biological quality. Andreas currently serves on the board of the Ohio Natural Areas and Preserves Association and is a fellow of the Ohio Academy of Science. She is co-founder of the Ohio Moss and Lichen Association, was on the board of the Ohio chapter of the Nature Conservancy for 22 years, was vice president of the Native Plant Society of Ohio, member of the Ohio Natural Areas Council and served several other notable botanical and conservation-related organizations. She has written many papers and four books, including a Catalog and Atlas of the Mosses of Ohio (Ohio Biological Survey, 1996) and The Vascular Flora of the Glaciated Allegheny Plateau Region of Ohio (Ohio Biological Survey, 1989). Additionally, Andreas has been a leader in conservation at many higher education institutions. At Kent State, she received multiple awards for her work, including the Outstanding Teaching Award in 2008, and she was a keynote speaker at one of Kent State's fall 2018 commencement ceremonies. Andreas is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Biological Sciences (1990–2012) and former curator of the Tom S. and Miwako K. Cooperrider Herbarium at Kent State University, which houses many of the specimens she collected and identified in its bryophyte collection. She now lives in Hocking County and is an adjunct assistant professor at Ohio University. Andreas and her husband, G. Dennis Cooke, BS '59, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Biological Sciences (1967–2003), established the Dr. G. Dennis Cooke and Dr. Barbara K. Andreas Scholarship in Biological Sciences at Kent State.

Emma Lou Buck, BA '69, Ashtabula, OH, a retired Ashtabula Area City Schools elementary school teacher, has been recognized by Marquis Who's Who Top Educators for dedication, achievements and leadership in social studies education, as well as the Humanitarian Award for 2021 Lifetime Achievement. Buck taught from 1969 to 1998 in the Ashtabula schools. She was named Ashtabula County's Senior Citizen of the Year in 2018 and received a resolution of recognition from the Saybrook Township trustees.

1970s

Barry A. Franklin, BS '70, PhD, West Bloomfield, MI, director of preventive cardiology and cardiac rehabilitation at Beaumont Health, Royal Oak, Michigan, was recognized as a "Pillar of Vibrancy: Wellness" by the Bates Street Society in September 2021. The Bates Street Society recognizes donors who make significant charitable contributions to support the work of The Community House in Birmingham, Michigan. Franklin's interests combine exercise physiology with cardiology. As a secondary pursuit, he has studied highly successful people in all walks of life, using the methodologies of a research scientist. He developed a college course, GPS for Success, which he taught at Central Michigan University (2012–2017). He has spoken widely on this topic since the mid-1990s and has given success-related commencement addresses at major universities. He is currently writing his 27th book, GPS for Success: Behavioral Skills, Strategies, and Secrets of Superachievers.



Roseann “Chic” Canfora, BS ’76, MA ’87, PhD ’01, Aurora, OH, May 4 activist, joined Kent State’s College of Communication and Information as professional-in-residence in the School of Media and Journalism in fall 2021.

She is an eyewitness and survivor of the shootings at Kent State, where the Ohio National Guard killed four and wounded nine students, including her brother, Alan, on May 4, 1970. A “Kent 25” defendant, she was indicted by an Ohio grand jury, and later exonerated, for activism during a weekend of protests against the invasion of Cambodia during the Vietnam War. She has been a regular contributor and speaker at May 4 Commemoration events and is a member of the May 4 Presidential Advisory Committee.

Canfora has served for a decade as the chief communications officer for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and has taught high school journalism for more than 20 years. She has taught as an adjunct in Kent State’s School of Media and Journalism since 2006.

She has received the Kent State Alumni Leadership Award, and Ms. magazine has recognized her as one of 100 Women of the Century in its millennium issue. She is a stalwart advocate for May 4 remembrance and for the importance of connecting the lessons of the anti-war movement to emerging movements today, including Black Lives Matter and March for Our Lives.

This fall Canfora is teaching two courses: Media, Power and Culture, and Ethics and Issues in Mass Communication. As a professional-in-residence, she will also work with the Office of the President and the May 4 Presidential Advisory Committee to plan the May 4 Commemoration and develop future May 4 initiatives. In 2019, the Kent State University Board of Trustees affirmed a commitment from the president’s office to hold the annual May 4 Commemoration as a university-level event and to preserve the important traditions established over the years.

Research Papers, Theses, Dissertations and Manuscripts Related to May 4 collection at Kent State Universities Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, <https://www.library.kent.edu/miscellaneous-research-papers-theses-and-mss>. It is digitized and available in the Kent State Shootings Digital Archive at <https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/8477>.

Thomas Matijasic, MA ’78, Hagerhill, KY, discussed conflicting interpretations of Americans’ collective heritage in a guest column for *The State Journal*, a Frankfort, Kentucky, newspaper in June 2021. He received a doctorate in history in 1982 from Miami University of Ohio and has taught history at Big Sandy Community and Technical College in Prestonsburg, Kentucky, since 1983.

David Lucht, BS ’79, MBA ’84, Wilmington, NC, was appointed to the board of directors of Live Oak Bancshares (a financial holding company and parent company of Live Oak Bank) and of Live Oak Bank in February 2021.

Lucht is a founding member of the Live Oak Bank team and most recently served as executive vice president of credit. He retired in December 2020. He joined Live Oak in 2007 and helped design the bank’s approach to identifying and managing credit risk. He also helped shape the corporate culture of the company.

Prior to his career at Live Oak, he served as chief credit officer, executive vice president and director at the \$10.5 billion First Merit Bank in Akron, Ohio, where he led a turnaround in credit culture and performance. Prior to First Merit, Lucht served as senior credit officer of National City Bank.

Larry Rudawsky, BA ’79, Trenton, MI, has been hired as senior counsel at Barrett McNagny LLP, a law firm that serves clients in northern Indiana, western Ohio and southern Michigan.

He had served as an attorney for a New York City firm and as vice president for a multistate trust company. He has a JD from Case Western Reserve University.

1980s

Elizabeth Z. Bartz, BA ’80, MA ’82, Akron, OH, is president and CEO of State and Federal Communications Inc., with offices in Akron, Ohio, and Washington, DC. Founded in 1993, the firm provides government compliance information and consulting to Fortune 500 and other leading companies worldwide. The firm’s in-house staff of attorneys is expert in state, federal and municipal laws regarding lobbying, political contributions and procurement.

Douglas Tulino, BBA ’80, Aldie, VA, a 41-year veteran of the US Postal Service, was appointed deputy postmaster general, reporting directly to Postmaster General and CEO Louis DeJoy, effective May 2021. Tulino also becomes a member of the Postal Service’s Board of Governors and continues in his current role as chief human resources officer.

Tulino will ensure that the organization’s culture, talent, labor relations and leadership development will contribute to the successful implementation of Delivering for America, the 10-year plan unveiled on March 23, 2021, to restore service excellence and financial sustainability to one of America’s most treasured institutions and a vital part of the nation’s infrastructure. He will also play a key leadership role in stakeholder outreach.

Vickie Deane, BFA ’81, Santa Fe, NM, painter and jeweler, moved to New Mexico in the mid-80s and started making jewelry about 25 years ago, in addition to continuing to paint. Pre-COVID 19, she traveled the country for art markets and fairs. She now sells her work at the Fuller Lodge Art Center in Los Alamos, the Georgia O’Keefe Gallery in Santa Fe, the Fine Arts Museum in Albuquerque and the Harwood in Taos, as well as other venues outside New Mexico. She’s not going back on the road for now but plans to attend local events once they start up again. See www.vickiedeane.com.

Rinku Dutt, BS ’81, Murrysville, PA, ophthalmologist, now provides glaucoma treatment and other services at Luna Vision, an eye care center and medical spa based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dutt is a board-certified member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons, and the Pittsburgh Ophthalmological Society. She has performed over 6,000 LASIK and 5,000 cataract surgeries and has more than 10 years of experience in refractive surgery.

She received an MD from Case Western Reserve Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio, interned at the Cleveland Clinic and completed residencies at University Hospitals in Cleveland and UTMB, Texas. She has fellowships in glaucoma from Cornell and cornea and refractive surgery from the Tulane Medical Center. She has been a private practitioner for more than 20 years.



Alan R. Miciak, BBA ’83, PhD ’93, Wexford, PA, is the new president of John Carroll University, effective June 1, 2021. With 28 years of experience in teaching, research and leadership at top colleges and universities in Canada and the United States, Miciak is John Carroll’s 26th president.

He had served since 2018 as dean of the Boler College of Business at the university, where he drove enrollment growth, strategic investment and program innovation. Under his leadership, the business college developed new programs and facilities across its schools and departments, and secured three significant naming gifts, part of \$25 million raised in the college’s *Inspired Lives* campaign.

Craig Koehler, EDS ’84, MeD ’85, PhD ’92, Avon, OH, retired in July as principal at Avon Middle School. Under his leadership the school was named a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education.

With a background in school guidance and counseling, Koehler joined the administrative team of the Avon Local School District in 1994, moving into administration after receiving two master’s degrees in education and an educational specialist degree. In 1988, he began work on a doctorate at Kent State and earned a PhD in educational administration.

Koehler is president of the Board of Directors of the Lorain County Prevention Connection and vice president of the Board of Directors of the Lorain Community Music Theater. His plans for retirement include traveling and writing more books, as well as consulting work.

Kerry Schrader, BBBA ’84, MBA ’02, Hoover, AL, is co-owner with her daughter, Ashlee Ammons, of Mixtroz, a networking mobile app that has a new, enhanced version. Mixtroz (the name comes from the combination of the words “mixer” and “introduction”) is an event planning platform that engages attendees and improves event experiences, while collecting data for event hosts—including colleges and universities, enterprise organizations and event planning companies.

Attendees download the app and complete a virtual name tag and survey customized by the organizer. The app matches up attendees and guides them to a group connection experience in real time. After the “mix,” the organizer can use the survey data collected from the interactions to drive future revenue-generating, cost-cutting measures.

The new enhancements allow attendees to access information from past events and re-engage with their contacts through the app. Attendees can use metrics from the app as conversation starters and icebreakers. Learn more at www.mixtroz.com.

Claudia Amrhein, BA ’85, MA ’87, Kent, OH, general manager of the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority, has been appointed to the Hattie Larlham Foundation Board of Directors for a three-year term. Hattie Larlham is a nonprofit organization that creates opportunities for more than 1,800 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the state of Ohio.

Amrhein joined PARTA in 2004 as the director of human resources and has served as the organization’s general manager since 2014. She also holds positions on local and statewide boards, including Ohio Public Transit Association, Ohio Transit Risk Pool, the NEORide council of governments, Portage County Transportation Improvement District, Ohio Health Transit Pool, Children’s Advocacy Center of Portage County and Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study. She and her husband, Jack, have two adult sons.



Michael Finnegan, BS ’85, Cincinnati, OH, retired in May after 36 years of teaching. He taught physical education in Cincinnati Public Schools for 33 years, most recently at Withrow University High School in Hyde Park. Finnegan developed Withrow’s fitness program, which now will be implemented in all CPS schools.

He recently created the Mike Finnegan Health and Wellness Scholarship Fund to help vulnerable Withrow students through college. He planned to ride about 500 miles a week to raise awareness and money for the fund during a biking adventure from Santa Monica, California, to Washington, DC, in summer 2021.

As he set off on his cross-country journey (with two friends coming along in a camper van with food and other supplies), Cincinnati Vice Mayor Christopher Smitherman proclaimed Saturday, June 5, 2021, Mike Finnegan Day as members of the Major Taylor Cycling Club of Cincinnati and his friends and family cheered.

Finnegan grew up in Canton, Ohio. A first-generation college student, he paid for his degree at Kent State with the money he earned working weekends, summers and Christmas breaks at a bakery.

alumni LIFE

He started as a physical education teacher at Schwab Middle School in Northside in 1988 and moved to Withrow in 2001. He had served as a coach and teacher in Niger, West Africa, in the US Peace Corps and had a stint teaching English in Tokyo.

He was a physical education teacher, athletic director, fitness instructor and coach of football, basketball and track in the Cincinnati schools.

Rob Gentry, BS '85, Perrysburg, OH, retired in May 2021 after 34 years as theater director at Perrysburg High School, where he staged 100 shows. He originally planned to be a professional actor and earned a theater scholarship to Kent State, but decided it wasn't for him. Instead, he switched majors to comprehensive communications with the goal of becoming a high school drama teacher.

Alice Licata, MA '85, PhD '88, Dayton, OH, has published her debut novel, *Whitecaps on the Lake* (TouchPoint Press, March 2021). In the book, Licata explores complex human emotions within the context of an adventure to find treasure—bringing readers through the shock and heartache of sudden loss, the despair and hopelessness of a slow demise and the desperate pursuit of happiness under it all. Her unique perspective takes readers on an emotional journey of learning to let go of those we love most.

Licata, a psychologist, spent years teaching in Charlottesville, Virginia, before turning her energies toward raising her two daughters. She wrote *It's Not Rocket Science: Down-to-Earth Advice on Raising Stellar Kids* (Lulu.com, 2009), hoping to empower other parents.

When her daughters were fully launched, she returned to teaching—now grades 6–12—where she makes it her mission to make sure today's kids still know how to use an old-fashioned dictionary and tell time on an analog clock. She also has been a high school diving coach for the past 20 years, helping student athletes reach new heights both on and off the diving board.



Keith B. Wilson, Med '85, Lexington, KY, has received recognition from two national associations in the mental health and rehabilitation counseling field. The American Mental Health Counselors Association recognized him as a fellow in clinical mental

health counseling education and research at its annual conference in June. He also received the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns fellow credential, which honors those who contribute to multicultural concerns in rehabilitation professions through research, education, practice and leadership.

Wilson is a professor of rehabilitation and counselor education in the Department of Early Childhood, Special Education and Counselor Education at the University of Kentucky College of Education. He previously served as an administrator and faculty member at Pennsylvania State University for 15 years and was dean of the College of Education and Human Services at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He received his doctoral degree from The Ohio State University.

His research interests center on cross-cultural and multicultural issues among persons in the US with disabilities, and privilege based on phenotype, such as skin color and gender. His current research focuses on improving multicultural competencies through application-based approaches to cross-cultural training in education and health services. He has more than 100 scholarly publications and has given an estimated 170 presentations across the US and internationally.



Eric S. England, BFA '86, Oxford, OH, displayed his artwork at the Cincinnati Arts Association's Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery in Cincinnati, Ohio, from July 10 to Aug. 28, 2021, and gave an artist's talk on July 17. In an exhibit titled *25¢ gods*, England displayed a collection of large-scale sculptures inspired by the comic book heroes of his youth. The individual sculptures inhabited a carnival-like setting in the gallery's street-level space, suggesting a festive and titanic competition between these superheroes.

He wrote, "The goals of my work are simple: to pass on a love for the history and the medium of the comic—its artwork, its stories, its inspirations, its entertainment, its past and contemporary Masters—to revisit, re-examine

and share the thrills I've known and await in the pages, films and games yet to come."

England earned an MFA from Miami University in 2016, and his work has been featured in numerous exhibitions throughout Ohio. He lives and has a studio in Oxford, Ohio.

Mary Jamis, PhD '86, Mocksville, NC, president of M Creative, was recognized among other Outstanding Women in Business for 2021 by *Triad Business Journal*. Her firm, which specializes in values-driven strategic communication, has helped clients raise more than \$700 million in capital campaign gifts over the last 12 years. M Creative is a certified B Corporation, a designation granted by B Lab to organizations that believe in the power of business to solve social and environmental problems.

Alice Ripley, BFA '86, Long Island City, NY, received a 2021 Mid-Career Artist award from the Cleveland Arts Prize for expanding the role of the arts in the community. She received a Tony Award (Best Actress in a Musical) for her performance in *Next to Normal* as Diana. In her band RIPLEY, she plays guitar and drums, and has produced three albums.



Jyotsna J. Sreenivasan, BA '86, Columbus, OH, published a debut collection of short fiction, *These Americans* (Minerva Rising Press, May 2021), which won the press's Rosemary Daniell Fiction Prize. The eight stories and a novella explore what it means to live between Indian culture and American expectations.

Sreenivasan's short stories have been published in literary magazines and anthologies. She was selected as a Fiction Fellow for the 2021 Sewanee Writers' Conference and was a finalist for the 2014 PEN Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction. She received an artist fellowship grant from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

Her 2012 debut novel, *And Laughter Fell from the Sky* (William Morrow Paperbacks, June 2012), is a contemporary story about two young Indian Americans trying to find love and their place in the world, while dealing with the confines and pressures of their culture and families. Sreenivasan's parents are from India, and she was born and raised in northeastern Ohio. She has an MA in English literature from the University of Michigan and has lived in Washington, DC, and Moscow, Idaho.

Carl Williams, BS '86, MS '90, Haddonfield, NJ, who teaches computer science at Temple University, has received the university's Part-Time Faculty Excellence in Teaching and Instruction Award. He also was recently inducted into the New Internet IPv6 Hall of Fame, which recognizes and celebrates the experts and evangelists of Internet Protocol version 6 who have made extraordinary contributions to the design and large-scale deployment of IPv6 around the world.

At Kent State, Williams majored in computer science and software engineering, and participated in internships at Hewlett-Packard, Digital Equipment Corp. and Firestone Research Labs. After graduation he worked at Sun Microsystems for 10 years, working on the development of IPv6. Internet Protocol provides locations and identifications for computers on networks and routes traffic across the internet.

A significant portion of modern devices still use IPv4, and Williams says a key to the newer version is global accessibility. Around four billion IPv4 addresses have been exhausted, and experts say IPv6 is more efficient, increases security and improves performance.

Jennifer Podnar, BS '87, Med '91, New Franklin, OH, a fourth-grade math and science teacher at Sauder Elementary in the Jackson Local School District, was named in *The Repository* as a Walsh University Teacher of the Month for March 2021. She began teaching second grade in the Revere Local Schools in the early 1990s. She has taught fourth grade at Jackson for 10 years and previously was a reading tutor for two years.

In a March 14, 2021, *Repository* article, when asked the most challenging part of her job, she responded, "Before the pandemic, I wasn't the 'techiest' of teachers, but now I can hold my own with making videos, teaching using Google Meet, and creating and uploading material that is accessible to our eLearners."

She said her students might be surprised to know she was a bus driver for Kent State University while in graduate school. "I needed a job and working for Campus Bus Service, driving a 35- to 40-foot bus, was the best paying job on campus at the time."



Colleen VanNatta, BS '88, North Canton, OH, a retired US Air Force lieutenant colonel, and **Justin Speight, BA '13**, Uniontown, OH, a retired US Air Force Reserve master sergeant, are the new ROTC instructors at Green High

School in the Green Local School District, Uniontown, Ohio. Formerly, they had worked together while at the Youngstown Air Reserve, and they plan to rebuild the high school's ROTC program and attract additional students.

Pamela R. Anderson-Bartholet, AA '89, MA '94, MFA '12, Munroe Falls, OH, wrote, "I have two more books being published this year: *The Galloping Garbage Truck*, a short collection of poems for children (Kelsay Books/Daffydow Dilly Press, May 2021), and *Widow Maker* (Finishing Line Press, July 2021).

"During the COVID-19 lockdown, I began writing short poems for my two grandsons, and the whole collection took off from there. The title poem, "The Galloping Garbage Truck," is a whimsical tale of a boy sitting on his front porch, waiting for the garbage man. Children do not have barriers to friendships, and I hope that these poems are good reminders that we all have a place in this world. The cover art and inside illustrations are by my daughter, **Rachel (Lysa) Anderson, BA '19**, Kent, Ohio.

"*Widow Maker* is a chronicle of the 2015 sudden cardiac arrest and recovery of my husband, Al Bartholet. I wrote these poems to help make sense of everything that was happening to Al and as one way to honor and thank the many people who worked so hard to save his life. The cover was co-created by my niece **Meredith Balogh, BFA '09**, Evanston, Illinois, and my daughter, Rachel." For more information, see <https://www.pamelaranderson.org>.

Michelle Duffy, BFA '89, Los Angeles, CA, professional actor and vocalist, was featured in the Minerva Area Chamber of Commerce's eighth annual Evening of Celtic Music, livestreamed from Roxy Theatre in Minerva on March 27, 2021. Duffy has performed professionally for more than 30 years, throughout the country and abroad, from small theaters to off-Broadway and Broadway, as well as doing extensive on-camera work.

Mitch Gruber, BBA '89, Columbia Station, OH, is the new director of the SCAN Hunger Center food pantry in Berea. He filled the vacancy left by the Feb. 27, 2021 death of his mother, Lona Gruber, who founded the pantry 20 years ago and served as its director. In a *Cleveland.com* article, Gruber says, "In working side-by-side with my mother, I have a great understanding of not only what SCAN meant to her, but her views of what she founded SCAN to accomplish. SCAN will continue to serve the people in need in the communities it services with the respect and dignity they deserve."

Steve Sosebee, BA '89, Kent, OH/Ramallah, Palestine, is founder of the Palestine Children's Relief Fund, a humanitarian NGO that supports children in the Middle East. PCRf's main office in Gaza was extensively damaged during an airstrike by the Israeli military on the evening of May 17, 2021. No one was in the office at the time, but the organization will have to relocate.

According to a May 2021 interview in The Portager and his bio on the PCRf website, Sosebee, a Kent native, was a junior studying

international relations at Kent State when he was chosen for a three-week human rights evaluation delegation to Palestine in December 1988, a trip which made a lasting impression.

After graduation, he returned to Palestine to work as a journalist and wrote a story about a boy who lost his legs in a bombing in the West Bank. He befriended the boy's family and in 1990 arranged for free medical care in Akron for him and his sister, who also had been injured. Sosebee worked as a landscaper in the US to earn money and would return to Palestine in the winter to work as a journalist. As word got out, more people came to him for help, and he started arranging free treatment for other Palestinian children in American hospitals.

He married a Palestinian social worker with the YMCA in Jerusalem in 1993 and they had two daughters. They built the Palestine Children's Relief Fund with many volunteers around the world and sent hundreds of children to the US for free care. His wife died of cancer in 2009, and he built the first public pediatric cancer department in Beit Jala Governmental Hospital in the West Bank in her name.

Sosebee married again in 2016. His new wife is a pediatric oncologist who also volunteers with the PCRf. He has expanded the organization to bring thousands of doctors from all over the world to Palestine to provide medical care on the ground. He continues to run an effective and efficient humanitarian relief organization, funded mostly by private individuals.

1990s

Lorna Hernandez Jarvis, MA '90, PhD '93, Spokane WA, was named the first vice president for institutional equity and diversity at the University of Puget Sound, effective July 1, 2021. She previously served as chief diversity officer and associate vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion at Whitworth University in Spokane. She also served on the Spokane Human Rights Commission, the College Success Foundation Regional Board and the Hispanic Business and Professionals Association.

A cognitive psychologist, Hernandez Jarvis has an extensive background in intergroup dialogue, has conducted and published research in acculturation processes and psychological well-being in adolescents, and is a published author in the field of semantic development in young children, bilingualism and bilingual education.

Brian Schubert, BSE '90, Bellevue, OH, retired after 16 years as the athletic director at Bellevue High School. His father was athletic director at Bellevue for many years and Schubert, a 1986 Bellevue graduate, was a three-star athlete (baseball, basketball, golf). He went on to star at Kent State in baseball and was the 1990 Mid-American Conference Pitcher of the Year. His professional baseball career was cut short by a shoulder injury. After teaching for two years at Sidney High School, Schubert returned to



ATO group photo, 1970 *Chestnut Burr*, December 1969 (Mike Finnen, front row, holding #47)

Alpha Tau Omega 50th Reunion



ATO group photo, 50th Reunion, September 2021 (Mike Finnen, front row, wearing a purple shirt)

Mike Finnen, BA '72, Jacksonville, FL, wrote: “The first draft lottery [since 1942] was held on Dec. 1, 1969. For men ages 18–26, this event determined the order of call into service for 1970. Student deferments expired at graduation, and every guy on every campus across the country awaited his fate.

“Since the lottery was nationally televised, it seemed like the right occasion to party. At Kent State dorms, apartments and fraternity houses, beer flowed as the numbers rolled. The atmosphere was charged, like the feeling before a big game. At the Alpha Tau Omega party, we tacked a white bedsheet to the wall, ready to list the top 10 brothers whose birthdays were called.

“But the excitement was short-lived. As the birthdays were announced, we took multiple early hits. Two No. 2s, a 10, a 23, a 30, two 35s (twins), a 47, a 59 and so on. And then it was over—and with it the uncertainty of life after Kent.

“A few weeks later, it was time to have our fraternity photo taken for the 1970 *Chestnut Burr*. Since it was just weeks before Christmas, one of our brothers suggested we hold our draft lottery numbers in front of the Peace on Earth sign on Front Campus.

“Little did we know that five months later school would close due to the May 4 shootings. And many years later, when the May 4 Visitors

Center was built [dedicated in 2013], we were surprised to learn that our 1970 yearbook photo was among the artifacts on exhibit.

“During a golf outing in 2016, several of us visited the center and realized that in four years it would be the 50th anniversary. We planned an ATO reunion for the May 4 weekend in 2020, but COVID-19 forced numerous postponements.

“Finally, our fourth attempt was a charm. From across the country, more than 50 brothers, wives and girlfriends descended on Kent on Sept. 17, 2021.

“We kicked off the weekend activities with a 5 o’clock happy hour at Ray’s Place. Kent’s annual ‘Round Town Music Fest also was happening that Friday evening. We were treated

to outdoor music, while inside Ray’s our ATO brothers had a hug fest as we greeted each other for the first time in decades.

“Saturday morning, we had a private tour of the May 4 Visitors Center. We posed for photos in front of our lottery number photo and watched the 13-minute film about the events that culminated on Monday, May 4, 1970.

“Then we headed downtown for our luncheon at the Kent State University Hotel. We showed photos from our scrapbook on big screens at the front of the ballroom, sang dirty limericks, toasted the brothers we had lost since graduation and held an open mic for storytelling.

“One of our brothers owns Woodsy’s Music downtown, so in the early evening we were entertained there as the trio Bandit played a variety of songs from our era. We spent Saturday night drinking at the bars we’d frequented when we were students.

“After breakfast on Sunday morning, several of us toured the Kent Campus and observed what you’d expect: Some things were unchanged and others were very different.

“During the weekend, one thing stood out for us all—once we reconnected, it was like time had never passed. We just picked up where we left off. And when it was all over, everyone agreed that 50 years was too long between reunions and we should cut it to 25.”

Bellevue and taught math. He was promoted to assistant principal before taking over as athletic director.

Melvin J. Gravely II, MBA '91, Cincinnati, OH, a civic leader and CEO at TriVersity Construction Company, published *Dear White Friend: The Realities of Race, the Power of Relationships and Our Path to Equity* (Greenleaf Book Press, July 2021). The book is structured around three critical questions: 1) What is really going on with race in our country? 2) Why must we care? 3) What can we do about it together?

The book is candid yet collegial, thought-provoking yet full of practical solutions and direct without placing blame. At the end, he calls upon readers to ask themselves, *What is my role in all of this?*

He is the majority owner of TriVersity, which is among the largest construction companies in the Cincinnati region. He has chaired the board of the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, served on the board of the United Way, was a founding board member of the Cincinnati Regional Economic Development Initiative and was vice chairperson of ArtsWave, the largest community arts fund in the nation. He co-chairs the Cincinnati Regional Business Committee, a group of 100 middle-market CEOs working collectively toward meaningful civic action. He is also a board member of two private companies.

Gravely earned a bachelor’s in computer science from the University of Mount Union and a PhD from the Union Institute and University. He has written eight business books. Learn more at www.DearWhiteFriend.com.

David Murray, BA '91, Chicago, IL, recently published *An Effort to Understand: Hearing One Another (and Ourselves) in a Nation Cracked in Half* (Disruption Books, 2021). Murray is a bestselling author, executive director of the Professional Speechwriters Association and editor and publisher of *Vital Speeches of the Day*, an 85-year-old collection of the best oral communication in the US and the world. He has been a prominent commentator on communication issues for 25 years.

In his new book, Murray shares his observations about how Americans could communicate more effectively with family, co-workers and those with political and other differences. The book has been endorsed by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, Gen. David Petraeus, David Kusnet (President Bill Clinton’s chief speechwriter) and more.

Mark Nolan, BA '91, Cleveland, OH, launched *The Mark Nolan Show* on iHeart Media Cleveland’s Majic 105.7 in March 2021, a revamp of *The Majic Morning Show* that Nolan joined in 2014. The new show broadcasts weekdays, 5 to 10 a.m., and Nolan and his two contributors play classic music from the '70s and '80s, discuss current events and promote all things Cleveland. Nolan has more than 25 years

of broadcast experience, including nearly 20 years as a television meteorologist and anchor. He previously held positions at local television stations WKYC and WOIO. Throughout his career, he has received seals of approval from the American Meteorological Society and the National Weather Service.

John Paxton, MBA '91, Charlotte, NC, was appointed CEO of Material Handlers Industry Association on Dec. 31, 2020. He was named MHI COO/CEO Designate in August 2018. He brings over 30 years of experience, including more than 20 years of executive leadership at Demag Cranes and Components. Paxton previously had been recognized for his volunteer leadership at MHI, including serving as president of the Crane Manufacturers Association, president of the Hoist Manufacturers Institute and as the chairman of the board of MHI. He holds a bachelor’s in mechanical engineering from The Ohio State University.

Leandra Drumm, BFA '92, Akron, OH, was honored by Summit Artspace with a 2021 Arts Alive award as Outstanding Visual Artist. She earned a BFA in graphic design from Kent State and has grown her brand, Leandra Drumm Designs, over the past two decades. Her artwork—which includes pewter jewelry and glassware etched with her designs—combines visual storytelling and whimsical imagery with functional purpose.



Candy Coated, BFA '93, Sullivan, OH, (née Candy Depew), multimedia artist and current Akron Soul Train resident artist, exhibited at the Akron Soul Train Gallery from July 14 to Aug. 28, 2021. In *Interwebbing*, she explores the interconnectedness among nature, humans and objects.

Driven to combine many media—including ceramics, fabric, pattern, print, vibrant color and reflective surfaces—she notes, “Such combinations visually and energetically speak about growth, nature, place, metaphysics/alchemy, compassion and issues of being a human(itarian) in these twilight-zone times of our lives.”

She was an artist-in-residence over the past several years in Pennsylvania, California and China before the pandemic brought her back to her native Ohio. For more information see <https://www.candycoated.org>.

Ray Gargano, BSE '93, Cincinnati, OH, was named vice president of community investments for ArtsWave, the nation’s largest community arts campaign and the greatest source of local arts funding for many organizations. Working closely with businesses, civic and arts stakeholders, Gargano will lead the grantmaking process and help ArtsWave advance its 10-year Blueprint for Collective Action, a strategy used for allocating and evaluating its funding investments.

Strong funding for the arts has allowed Cincinnati to become a national draw and regional asset. ArtsWave will manage \$7 million the city has allocated to support performing arts organizations and public performances and invest as part of the American Rescue Plan.

Recently, Gargano was the grants program officer for the city of Sacramento, where he worked to advance cultural diversity, equity, inclusion and access initiatives, including the management and distribution of \$10 million through CARES Act funding.

Lillian Kuri, BS '93, BARC '94, Cleveland, OH, was promoted to the newly created position of executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Cleveland Foundation, effective March 1, 2021. In this role, Kuri, a 14-year veteran of the foundation, oversees day-to-day operations of the foundation’s headquarters and development of a new strategic plan, designed in partnership with the community as part of the foundation’s upcoming move to the intersection of the Midtown corridor and Hough neighborhood. She also serves as the vice chair of Cleveland’s Planning Commission.

Mulatu Lemma, MA '93, PHD '94, Savannah, GA, professor of mathematics at Savannah State University, was honored as a top decorated mathematical researcher by *Marquis Who’s Who* in 2021— his 10th award as an educator. His number of publications has now reached 145, and he says his success is a result of his education at Kent State.

According to Lemma, his goal is “to expand research activities by working with my students and encouraging them to go to graduate school. I am highly committed to improve the representation of African Americans in mathematics.”



Karen Patterson, BSE '93, MED '95, PHD '03, Jacksonville, FL, was named provost and vice president of academic affairs at the University of North Florida, effective April 17, 2021.

Patterson oversees an integrated academic affairs, student affairs and enrollment management structure as part of UNF President David Szymanski's senior leadership team.

Patterson co-chairs UNF's Commission on Diversity and Inclusion. She is a former chair of the Department of Exceptional, Deaf and Interpreter Education and is an Outstanding Teaching Award recipient. She started at UNF in 1999, serving in roles that include associate vice president for faculty development, leading the Office of Faculty Enhancement, dean of undergraduate studies and associate vice president for faculty resources.

Her research focuses on improving practices for underserved students, college students with disabilities, collaborative partnerships and parental involvement for students at risk for failure.

Curtis Searcy, BBA '94, St. Louis, MO, was named president of the Trust and Family Office division of Parkside Financial Bank & Trust. He is responsible for establishing strategic direction, building a high-performing division, attracting top talent and supporting existing team members as they develop their skills and expertise. He also serves on the Parkside board of directors.

Searcy previously served as market leader, senior vice president, for US Bank Private Wealth Management in St. Louis. He earned an MBA from Eastern Kentucky University in 2001 and is a certified financial planner.

Karen Eck, MA '95, PhD '98, Norfolk, VA, assistant vice president for research at Old Dominion University, has been named a 2021 Fellow of the National Organization of Research Development Professionals, in recognition of her significant contributions to their professional mentoring program over the past seven years.

A NORDP Fellow is the organization's highest professional distinction and only 1% of NORDP members are named annually. Eck has been a member of NORDP for 11 years, serving as president from 2018-2019 and co-chair of the strategic alliances committee. In 2020, she helped launch NORDP onto the international stage when it gained membership in the International Network of Research Management Societies.

Heather Gooch, BS '95, Seville, OH, has been promoted to editor-in-chief of *Pest Management Professional* magazine by North Coast Media. Gooch advances from her role as editor of *PMP*, a business-to-business brand she has served for more than 25 years. She joined *PMP* in 1995 as assistant editor and has been promoted three times.

PMP is pest control's leading integrated media brand, encompassing monthly print and digital editions, a website, several e-newsletters, a blog, several social media channels, the industry's premier recognition event (*PMP* Hall of Fame) and an exclusive buyer-seller networking event (*PMP* Growth Summit). Over the past eight years, *PMP* has garnered 53 Azbee Awards of Excellence from the American Society of Business Publication Editors.

Tai (McLemore) Green, BA '95, Mesquite, TX, is the new development officer for the Dallas and East Texas division of Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services, which offers foster care and adoption services and assists families in crisis. Green earned a master's degree in human resources management, personnel administration, from Dallas Baptist University, and nonprofit leadership certification from Southern Methodist University.

Willietta Bunch Marbury, AAB '95, Ashtabula, OH, celebrated her 80th birthday in style on April 12, 2021, wearing a gold-colored "80 and Fabulous" sash and crown while being treated to dinner by a dear friend at her favorite restaurant, Olive Garden, in Erie, Pennsylvania. Her children celebrated with her via Zoom.

Marbury, is a retired housing manager at the Ashtabula Metropolitan Housing Association and a retired greeter at Ducro Funeral Services, where she worked until two years ago. She is a substitute aid at Buckeye Local Schools and a substitute lunch aid at Ashtabula Area City Schools. She serves as director of Christian education at People's Baptist Church.

Ron Christy, AAB '96, East Liverpool, OH, was celebrated by Hill International Trucks in honor of 25 years of employment. He was recruited at a Kent State job fair after graduating with an associate degree in business and computer technology. He served in the US Army as a procurement specialist. He has held several positions within the Hill parts department, from counterperson to core and warranty administrator. At his anniversary celebration, remarks by company leadership were followed by an award presentation, with cake and refreshments served to employees and guests.

Kelly Sims Horter, BA '96, Brecksville, OH, celebrated the 11th anniversary of Kelly's Café in May 2021. A native of Cleveland Heights, Horter grew up in the restaurant business; her father owned three restaurants. In a 2010 article in *Cleveland.com*, Horter notes, "My folks sent me to Kent State trying to change my mind about being in the restaurant business. They wanted me to have a normal job, so I have a degree in Spanish and international relations. It didn't change my mind." It did give her a break and the chance to travel, however.

According to a recent article in the *Akron Beacon Journal*, she spent some time living in Europe, but while living in Chicago in the 1990s, she was inspired by all the great savory crepes she discovered in the city. In 2010, she opened Kelly's Café in Brunswick, Ohio, focusing on ice cream and coffee, with 10 crepe choices. The café now offers more than 30 crepe varieties, including sweet, savory and vegan options. The food is fresh and made to order, so it takes a little time. "It's not fast food. It's slow food," Horter says. "I actually love that about my place."

Heath Horton, BA '96, Brecksville, OH, became principal of Kensington Intermediate School on Aug. 1, 2021. Horton has more than 15 years of administrative and teaching experience, including the last four years as an assistant

principal at Rocky River High School. He was an assistant principal at Brooklyn High School from 2012-2017 and taught language arts in the South Euclid/Lyndhurst City Schools from 2006-2012. In addition to a bachelor's in middle childhood education from Kent State, he holds a master's in educational administration from Ashland University and a superintendent's license from Cleveland State University. He is working toward a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Findlay.

Jennifer (Sanftner) McGraw, MA '96, PhD '99, Grove City, PA, has been a psychology professor at Slippery Rock University for 20 years. Her study and research focus on eating disorders, disordered eating and body image. Over the years, she says she's learned that almost all women struggle with body image at some point because we live in a culture that is toxic for women's ability to love and accept themselves as they are.

She is chair of the psychology department and directs the department's internship program. She also is founder and director of the Slippery Rock chapter of the Reflections Body Image Program. McGraw is a member of the President's Commission on Mental Health and is involved with the women's and gender studies work at the university. She recently co-authored the book, *Multifamily Therapy Group for Young Adults with Anorexia Nervosa*, (Routledge, November 2020).

Amy McKenzie, BS '97, Washington, MI, associate chief medical officer of provider engagement for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, was appointed by Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to the Certificate of Need Commission. McKenzie will serve for a term that began March 11, 2021 and expires Jan. 1, 2024.

She earned a Doctor of Medicine from Northeast Ohio Medical University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Matthew Welsh, BS '97, Columbus, OH, has been hired as the new athletic director at Madison-Plains Local School District, effective June 15, 2021. After more than 20 years in the corporate world, Welsh went back to school to earn a master's in athletic administration at Ohio University. He holds an MBA from Ohio Dominican University and a bachelor's in health and physical education/athletic training from Kent State. While his position at Madison-Plains will be his first job in education, he has completed internships at some large high schools and says he is ready for the challenge of being a full-time athletic director.

Eric G. Williams, MEd '97, Milwaukee, WI, serves as the assistant vice provost for student diversity and scholarship programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has spent his career improving equity, inclusion and diversity in higher education.

Williams, who received the Presidential Award for Community Multicultural Enrichment when he was an undergraduate student at Virginia Commonwealth University, played a



The 15 charter members of the Sigma Alpha chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority pose for a group photo on the Kent Campus on June 5, 1971, the day the chapter was chartered. Standing with them are the Zeta Phi Beta's national grand president and vice president at the time. (Oretha (Colston) Carpenter is standing sixth from left, wearing a white ribbon in her hair.)

Zeta Phi Beta 50th Anniversary



Members of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority celebrate the Sigma Alpha chapter's 50th anniversary at a tailgate party during Kent State's Homecoming Weekend 2021. (Oretha (Colston) Carpenter is standing fourth from left, wearing a white jacket.)

Oretha (Colston) Carpenter, BS '73, Cleveland, OH, wrote: "June 5, 1971, will long be remembered as the day the Sigma Alpha chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. was chartered at Kent State University, with 15 charter members. More than 500 Zetas, family and friends traveled from across the nation for the installation of the sorority's newest chapter.

"Zeta Phi Beta was founded in 1920 at Howard University and is one of nine historic Black Greek letter organizations that make up the National Pan-Hellenic Council, referred to as 'The Divine Nine.'

"Life takes us many places, but love brought the Zetas back to Kent State University for homecoming and to celebrate the chapter's 50th anniversary. The Sigma Alpha chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority took a ride down memory lane during Homecoming Weekend 2021. Just being on the beautiful Kent Campus was awesome and amazing—and the occasion was filled with excitement, Zeta pride and pure joy!

"Homecoming started out with a bang as the Sigma Alphas marched in the parade, waving to all the sisters smiling on the sidelines. The Zetas wore T-shirts adorned with a big 50 that included the names of all 15 charter members. The excitement continued as we gathered on the front lawn of Oscar Ritchie Hall to take a drone photo that will be placed in the hall. The historic photo will depict the Zetas' legacy at Kent State University throughout the decades.

"We Zetas wore our colors, royal blue and white, as we mingled at our tailgate party at Dix Stadium. We had a blast! People were dancing, talking, laughing, hugging, taking pictures and enjoying delicious food and drinks. The Stepping in the Yard [a type of line dance unique to each Black fraternity and sorority] was more than entertaining—it energized your soul!

"I was the first president of the Sigma Alpha chapter, and I prepared a 50th anniversary souvenir booklet with the history of Zeta Phi Beta, biographies of the Sigma Alpha chapter charter members and photos. One highlight of the tailgate party was when Kent State President Todd Diacon and Randalie Richmond, the new director of athletics, came to our tent to greet us.

"The night ended with an old-school dinner dance at Black Wolf Hall in Stow. The

Zetas were honored and celebrated by Silas Ashley, president of the Kent State Black Alumni chapter, and we enjoyed a special champagne toast and a cake iced with a blue and white 'Happy Anniversary' message.

"What a weekend! The Zetas showed up and showed love! We were interviewed by [Cleveland rapper and hip-hop historian] Kevin 'MC Chill' Heard and talked about the history of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority and how it got started on the Kent Campus.

"On Sunday, during the Sensational Sigma Alpha Brunch at the One Red Door Restaurant, the charter members were presented with a certificate of recognition for the chapter's 50 years from Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson. We ended our celebration by presenting a donation to the current undergraduate members of the Sigma Alpha chapter, who are grateful to have participated in this historic event.

"Zeta Phi Beta Sorority has brought much joy to my life and a lifetime of friendships. As we move ahead, we will continue to uphold the principles of our great sorority: service, scholarship, sisterhood and finer womanhood. And we honor the legacy and life of Hester Shoto, our first Sigma Alpha chapter advisor, for planting the seed of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority at Kent State University. It has continued on the Kent Campus for 50 years—and is still growing today."

central role in the 1988 founding of VCU’s Office of Minority Student Affairs, today called the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs.

Following his graduation from VCU with a bachelor’s in African American community and cultural studies, Williams earned a master’s in higher education and college student personnel at Kent State and a PhD in educational leadership and policy studies at Virginia Tech. He has served in positions related to equity, inclusion and diversity at Radford University, Virginia Tech and Marquette University.

Williams says he is proudest of improvements in the retention and admission of students of color at the universities where he has worked and improved hiring practices of faculty and staff. He says the establishment of affinity groups at those schools has not only helped students, faculty and staff navigate challenges together, but also has led to better institutional practices.

Jeremy Drummond, BS ’99, BArc ’99, MArch ’99, Media, PA, has joined Formcraft as the company’s design principal. Formcraft is a premier office design and renovation firm based in Center City, Philadelphia. Drummond, a registered architect with LEED Building Design + Construction certification, is a former principal at L2P with more than 22 years of experience in interior architecture, design and management. He has designed more than 4 million square feet of curated workplace environments across several market sectors, including financial, legal, marketing/design, professional services, pharmaceutical and technology industries.

Doug Henderson, BA ’99, San Francisco, CA, recently published *The Cleveland Heights LGBTQ Sci-Fi and Fantasy Role Playing Club* (University of Iowa Press, April 2021). As one reviewer notes, “Henderson has created something special—part *Hobbit* and part *Breakfast Club*—a bittersweet story of love and friendship that tackles big subjects like homophobia, social anxiety and coming out, with a touch of magic.” —K.M. Soehnlein, *The World of Normal Boys*. Henderson won the 2019 PEN/Robert J. Dau Short Story Prize for Emerging Writers and made his short story debut in the *Iowa Review*.

2000s

Aaron Calvert, BFA ’00, Russellville, AR, ceramic artist, is the recipient of an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Arkansas Arts Council. The fellowships are unconditional \$4,000 awards made directly to individual Arkansas artists working in categories that rotate each year. He was honored in a virtual evening program on Oct. 6, 2021.

He also was featured, along with another artist, in an exhibit titled, “Gone to Seed,” which ran from May 14 to Aug. 22, 2021, at Historic Arkansas Museum’s Trinity Gallery. His colorful ceramic figures on display included a raccoon, deer, bear, squirrel and a pair of rabbits. Each is brightly decorated with drawings of patterns, figures, codes and phrases—some of the things he thinks about as he works on the

figures. A similar figure, “Rocket Rabbit,” won the Grand Award in the Arkansas Arts Center’s 2020 Delta Exhibition.

Calvert has a Master of Fine Arts in ceramics from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and teaches art at Henderson State University.

Kelly Harris-DeBerry, BA ’00, Baton Rouge, LA, is an author, poet and digital storyteller. She published a second edition of her collection of poems, *Freedom Knows My Name* (Xavier Review Press, August 2020), which combines the truths of her Midwest upbringing with her adult life in the South, bearing witness to a changing America. The back cover includes a QR code that gives access to free audio versions of select poems, plus bonus content. The book is available at www.kellyhd.com.

Harris-DeBerry received an MFA in creative writing from Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She has received fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and the Cave Canem Foundation and has been published in numerous journals and magazines. She is a former guest poetry editor for *Bayou Magazine* at the University of New Orleans. A cultural leader with business savvy, she serves her literary community as the New Orleans Poets & Writers’ literary coordinator and on various boards.

Cari Root, BA ’00, MED ’01, EDS ’03, Macedonia, OH, a school psychologist for Solon City Schools since 2003, was named the district’s next director of pupil services, effective Aug. 1, 2021. She was school psychologist at Solon Middle School. In her new position, Root coordinates services for students in special education, gifted and enrichment programs, English as a second language and centralized registration. She also oversees compliance with Ohio’s complex Education Management Information System, a collection and reporting system of financial data and information regarding student demographics, attendance, course offerings and testing results.



Rachel Carosello, BA ’01, MA ’11, Canton, OH, a Louisville police officer, was chosen the 2021 School Resource Officer/D.A.R.E. Officer of the Year by the Ohio School Resource Officer Association. She was honored at the group’s annual conference in June at the Great Wolf Lodge near Cincinnati. According to an article in *The Repository*, the nomination letter included statements written by students and noted, “She builds relationships, she dedicates her time, she changes lives.”

After earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in criminal justice from Kent State, Carosello worked part time for the Victim Assistance Program of Summit County and then full time for Stark County Adult Probation. She was hired at the Louisville Police Department as a patrol officer and has worked there for nine years, eight as the Louisville School District school resource officer. She also serves as the department’s domestic violence officer.

Carosello, who has twin 13-year-old daughters, speaks with students at Louisville schools and St. Thomas Aquinas High School about internet safety, drug prevention and anti-vaping. She participates daily with students in the multiple disability classroom and is part of the Stark County CARE Team initiative, which focuses on struggling children.

Scott Clymire, BS ’01, BArc ’02, Akron, OH, was appointed CEO at Whitacre Engineering. He joined Whitacre in 2013 as chief operating officer. He now directs operations and resources for the 101-year-old company which provides complete rebar services. Headquartered in Canton, Whitacre has an office in Syracuse, New York, and works with customers in Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan and West Virginia.

Amie Cochran, MED ’01, Salem, Ohio, a seventh-grade science teacher at Salem Junior High School, received the 2021 Golden Apple Award from the Salem Rotary Club and the Salem Rotary Foundation for her dedication to her students and teaching. Cochran received the award and \$1,000 in award money during a science class. She graduated from Salem High in 1990 and began her teaching career there in 1994. She is an advisor for the Salem High School Key Club and recently completed a 17-year stint as head coach of the girls track and field team.

Athena Dixon, BA ’01, Philadelphia, PA, is a poet, essayist and editor. She is the author of *The Incredible Shrinking Woman* (Split/Lip Press 2020) and *No God in This Room* (Argus House Press 2018). Her work has also appeared in various publications online and in print, including *The BreakBeat Poets, Vol. 2: Black Girl Magic* (Haymarket Books).

She is a Pushcart Prize nominee (2016, 2017), a Best of the Net nominee (2017), a Callaloo fellow (Oxford 2017), a VONA fellow (2018) and a Tin House Workshop attendee (Winter 2019). A member of the Moving Forewords Memoir Writers Collective, she also has presented at AWP (2013, 2020), HippoCamp (2016–2020) and The Muse and the Marketplace (2019), among other panels and conferences. She is founder of Linden Avenue Literary Journal, which she launched in 2012, and is the co-host of the New Books in Poetry podcast via the New Books Network.

Dixon was born and raised in Northeast Ohio. She was an Oscar Ritchie Memorial scholar while majoring in sociology at Kent State. She has a bachelor’s in English from Youngstown State University (2005) and an MFA in creative writing from Queens University of Charlotte (2008).

Colleen Longshaw Jackson, BFA ’01, MFA ’15, Cleveland, OH, was appointed the city of Shaker Heights’ first chief officer for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), effective June 1, 2021. She previously was the director of community partnerships and programming at Cleveland Play House, where she was part of the team to develop and implement the Compassionate Arts Remaking Education program. She managed community programs such as Say Yes Cleveland and MYCom, which has had a presence in South Shaker Heights. She also performed in the Play House’s last virtual play of the season, *Blackacademics*.

Jackson has worked behind the scenes at Cleveland Play House since 2015, including on DEI-related issues for professional development initiatives.

A certified trauma professional, Jackson also has extensive experience as a facilitator and trainer. She has helped organizations, including the Play House, Kent State and Baldwin Wallace University, with strategic planning around diversity, equity and inclusion.

After graduating from Kent State, she lived and worked in New York City for 10 years. She also earned a certificate in diversity and inclusion from Cornell University.

Amy M. Arbogast, BBA ’02, MBA ’05, Sheffield Village, OH, was hired as the new vice president for finance and administration at Thiel College, following a national search. As vice president, she is a member of the president’s cabinet and will be chief financial and administrative officer. She will provide financial leadership to the campus community and collaborate with other members of the cabinet to accomplish strategic priorities. She will supervise business and account services functions, human resources, maintenance and facilities, and information technology.

Previously, she was chief financial officer and treasurer at Vocational Guidance Services in Cleveland, where she directed financial, budgetary and accounting practices and coordinated its relationships with lending institutions and the financial community.

Arbogast recently earned an executive scholar certificate in nonprofit management from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. A graduate of the Cleveland Leadership Center’s Leadership Cleveland Class of 2019, she is also a member of the finance council for St. Joseph Parish in Avon Lake and is active with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Amanda Clark, AAS ’03, BSN ’11, Jefferson, OH, director of emergency services at Ashtabula County Medical Center, leads the emergency department, nursing supervisors and behavioral medicine unit teams. She is also part of ACMC’s hospital incident command team for COVID-19 crisis response, according to an article in Ashtabula’s daily newspaper, the *Star Beacon*.

Clark started her career with an associate degree and worked as a pediatric intensive care unit nurse and in a cardiac catheterization lab. She completed a bachelor’s in nursing at Kent State University at Ashtabula and a master’s in

the science of nursing with a focus on executive leadership at Saint Xavier University in Chicago. She has worked at ACMC since 2010.

Scott Maidman, BS ’02, Mt. Lebanon, PA, senior vice president and wealth management advisor at Merrill, the brokerage affiliate of Bank of America, was named to the 2021 Forbes “Best-in-State Wealth Advisors” list. (He also appeared on the list in 2020 and 2019.)

Since arriving at Merrill in 2007, he has become a certified financial planner. He is a qualified portfolio manager who provides traditional advice and guidance and can help clients pursue their objectives by building and managing his own personalized or defined strategies, which may incorporate individual stocks and bonds, Merrill model portfolios and third-party investment strategies.

Maidman earned a bachelor’s in finance from Kent State, where he also played hockey. He interned at Morgan Stanley and Merrill while earning an MBA in corporate finance from Robert Morris University.

Ben Curtis, BS ’03, Kent, OH, former British Open champion, is the namesake of a golf training center, Ben Curtis Golf Academy at The Bunker, which opened in October 2021 as part of the Debartolo Commons at the reimagined Southern Park Mall in Boardman, Ohio. The Bunker includes a front bar and lounge, family dining and an area for indoor golf lessons and practice. The Bunker’s owner, Jonah Karzmer (who attended Kent State in 1999–2001 and transferred to Youngstown State University as a sophomore), played golf with Curtis for Kent State. (Karzmer is also co-founder and president at The Karzmer Insurance Agency, Youngstown, Ohio.) According to an article in the *Boardman News*, Curtis plans to spend a few days a month at the center and will be available for golf lessons.

Curtis was inducted into the Greater Cleveland Sports Hall of Fame in October 2021. He was inducted into the Mid-American Hall of Fame in 2012. In 2018, Curtis retired from the PGA Tour and launched the Ben Curtis Golf Academy at The Country Club of Hudson (Ohio). He and his wife, Candace, established the Ben Curtis Family Foundation in 2013 with a mission to end childhood hunger in Portage and Summit counties.

Geoff Hagan, BA ’03, Avon Lake, OH, was promoted to vice president of operations at Tecta America, the nation’s leading commercial roofing company based in Rosemont, Illinois, with 70 locations nationwide. Hagan, who earned a degree in justice studies from Kent State, has been with Tecta for nearly 15 of his 25 years in the roofing industry. Starting as a project manager and estimator in 2006 in Central Florida, he was promoted to operations manager and soon started the environmental solutions division. In 2010, he became environmental solutions director and SE regional sales manager. He helped revive the national business unit in 2013 as an account manager and joined the service team in 2019 as director of service.

Charissa N. Walker, BA ’03, Copley, OH, was named by Tucker Ellis LLP as a member of the class of 2021 in the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity. A counsel in the firm’s Cleveland office, she is among the 404 attorneys named to the 2021 class of pathfinders, a program to train high-performing, early-career attorneys in critical career development strategies, including leadership and the building of professional networks. Founded in 2009, the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity is a growing organization of more than 350 corporate chief legal officers and law firm managing partners who are committed to creating a more diverse and inclusive legal profession.



MBrandee (McClenic) Wilkinson, BA ’03, Akron, OH, is the first Black woman to own a funeral home in Akron, according to a Feb. 21, 2021, article in the *Akron Beacon Journal*. Wilkinson and her husband opened the Wilkinson Funeral Home in April 2019, after buying and renovating a building that had housed the former J.E. Scott Funeral Home before its owner, also a Black funeral director, retired.

During the pandemic, they were one of the first to offer livestreaming of funerals so family members could watch the service without attending physically.

Wilkinson pursued a career in the field after she earned a bachelor’s in psychology and became interested in grief counseling. She earned a mortuary degree from the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science in 2005. Now a licensed funeral director and embalmer, her experience includes work at Stewart & Calhoun funeral homes in Akron and Cleveland, as well as Newcomer Funeral Home.

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Deadline for submissions:
Spring/Summer January 31
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Terry Armstrong, BSE '04, Howland, OH, and his daughter, Moira, a Kent State senior majoring in English and US history, recently published *Aerosmith to ZZ Top: A Dad & Daughter's Rock & Roll Journey* (Noodle Salad Publishing, June 2021). The book chronicles their mutual love of classic rock and the memories they've made together while listening to music and attending concerts. He and his daughter have traveled as far as Florida to see a concert and have seen 59 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductees perform live. Armstrong has worked as a teacher, principal, superintendent and administrator in several area school districts and is currently treasurer/chief financial officer for Boardman Local Schools.

According to an article in the *Tribune Chronicle*, **Kimberly Armstrong, BS '96, MA '96**, gave her husband and daughter *The Reading Promise*, a memoir by Alice Ozma, about how her father read to her every night and the books they shared. It inspired the idea for the Armstrongs' book about the music they've shared.

Moira Armstrong, who also has published a chapbook of her poetry, has kept a color-coded spreadsheet of all the shows they've seen, when and where they saw them and which acts have been inducted into music-related halls of fame, which helped the process. They enjoyed writing and reliving their experiences, especially during the pandemic when they couldn't go to shows. The break during the pandemic is the longest they've gone between concerts.

Michael Faehnel, BFA '04, Kent, OH, opened Squirrel City Jewelers in downtown Kent in 2019, taking over the space when the owners of Standing Rock Jewelers retired. The shop features jewelry from local artists, including Faehnel's pieces. He majored in jewelry, metals, enameling and glass at Kent State.

Monique M. Pizzute, BS '04, MBA '14, Copley, OH, was appointed director of franchise support for SarahCare Adult Day Services, a subsidiary of Innovative MedTech Inc., a provider of health and wellness services based in Blue Island, Illinois. SarahCare offers older adults daytime care and activities ranging from daily exercise and medical needs to nursing care and salon services. In this newly created position, Pizzute will also oversee the development and launch of new programs

and ensure that SarahCare franchises comply with changes in state regulations.

Pizzute joins the corporate office of SarahCare after serving as an executive director at its Stow, Ohio, location. She previously served as executive director of Brookdale Senior Living Center in Richmond Heights, Ohio. She has served as an administrator for multiple adult care and nursing homes throughout Ohio since 2004.

Daniel Schlegel Jr., BA '04, Monroe County, IN, is the new director of the Monroe County History Center, effective July 6, 2021. Schlegel is an experienced museum professional with 20 years in the field. The history center is a nonprofit whose mission is to collect, preserve, research, interpret and present the genealogy, history and artifacts of Monroe County and provide an accessible learning environment.

Schlegel earned a master's degree in public history from Wright State University (2009). Following stints in local interpretation, visitor experience, archiving and exhibits in Dayton and at Wright State, Schlegel served as the executive director of the Scurry County Museum in Snyder, Texas, from 2010 to 2018. He comes to Monroe County after serving as the director of operations at the Mines Museum of Earth Science in Golden, Colorado.

Kim Yoak, MA '04, PhD '14, Stow, OH, is a mathematical education consultant and executive director of the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics. According to an article in the *Akron Beacon Journal*, as a child she played games that involved math (dice, counting, problem-solving or pattern recognition) and developed confidence in her mathematical abilities. Now she works to instill that same confidence in both teachers and students—with the goal of democratizing the discipline and bringing equity into the classroom.

Yoak studied math education at Bowling Green State University and taught at Kimpton Middle School as an eighth-grade math teacher. She earned a master's degree at Kent State and became the Stow-Munroe Falls School District's math specialist, a role she held for 10 years. In 2014, she earned a doctorate in curriculum and instruction/mathematics education and started Summit Mathematics Education Enterprises LLC to help districts and math teachers all over Northeast Ohio reexamine how they teach math.

According to Yoak, data shows that by eliminating tracking (putting students into honors, general and lower levels, where white and Asian students are overrepresented in the honors track and students of color are overrepresented in the lower tracks) and replacing it with a student-focused, equity-centered and reason-based math experience, all students improve.

Sam Harper, BBA '05, Washington, DC, was recently hired as vice president of data intelligence and technology at the Colorectal Cancer Alliance, the Colon Cancer Alliance, is the nation's oldest and largest colorectal cancer advocacy nonprofit organization. According to an article in *Kent Wired*, **Steve Bushong, BS '09**, Tallmadge, OH, senior manager of strategic

communications at the Alliance, contacted Harper before announcing the new hire in a press release. Harper then looked Bushong up on LinkedIn and discovered the Golden Flash connection. The small organization of 45 now employs two Kent State alumni.

Kenneth Johnson, MTec '05, Rosburg, WA, was named chief executive officer/general manager of Western Wahkiakum Telephone Co. by WWest Communications, based in Rosburg, effective June 2021. Johnson spent more than two decades with Conneaut Telephone Co., doing business as GreatWave Communications in Ohio. He worked in multiple roles, including network engineer, product manager and chief executive officer for 10 years. Johnson also served as executive vice president of broadband business at Valley Electric Association in Nevada.

Brandon LaGanke, BS '05, West Orange, NJ, co-directed a feature film, *Drunk Bus*, which debuted in theaters and online in May 2021. The film won both Best Feature and the Audience Award at the 2020 San Diego Film Festival and appeared in the Cleveland Institute of Art Cinematheque's virtual screening room.

According to an article in *Cleveland.com*, the film taps into LaGanke's past at Kent State University, where as a student he drove a late-night bus that shuttled drunk students to and from campus. Pineapple, the heavily tattooed Samoan security guard who protects the driver in the movie, was LaGanke's actual bodyguard nearly 20 years ago when he drove the campus bus loop. They lived in Dunbar Hall and were in a band together. The film also gives a nod to rock band Devo, which LaGanke credits as a huge influence. "I think Mark Mothersbaugh would probably be like my 'fanboy-can't-talk' moment if I met him."

Aman Ali, BS '06, New York, NY, co-produced a documentary highlighting the experience of Black-American Muslims with his brother, NYU film graduate Zeshawn Ali. According to *Kent Wired*, the film, *Two Gods*, tells the story of Hanif Muhammad, a casket maker and ritual body washer, as he coaches two young boys into his work.

While growing up in the Columbus suburbs, the Ali brothers faced a lack of diverse representation in their community and in the media. They wanted to tell a story that had nothing to do with terrorism or current events and to encourage people to be more prepared when it comes to death.

The film has won multiple film festival awards and is a *New York Times* Critic's Pick. It was shown in theatres nationwide and was available to view on PBS.

Matthew Montgomery, BSE '06, MED '09, PhD '20, Chicago, IL, became superintendent at Lake Forest Schools in a northern suburb of Chicago, effective July 1. He was superintendent of the Revere Local School District in Bath, Ohio, since 2015, after serving more than a year as superintendent of his hometown district, Waterloo Local Schools in Portage County.

Corrie Slawson, MFA '06, Cleveland, OH, visual artist, received a 2021 Mid-Career Artist Award from the Cleveland Arts Prize for expanding the role of the arts in the community. After earning a BFA from Parsons School of Design, Slawson earned an MFA at Kent State. Her work representing environmental and social equities has been featured at the Akron Art Museum and the Toledo Museum of Art. She currently teaches painting and drawing part time at Kent State's School of Art. Learn more about her work at <https://www.corrieslawson.com/>.



Sarah Spy, BS '06, Reno, NV, a major in the Air National Guard, has become the first female flight instructor for the Nevada Air National Guard, after completing instructor pilot school in May. According to a story in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Spy says it took years of training to qualify as an instructor. She completed various pilot training courses and over 4,500 flight hours, served multiple deployments and spent over 750 hours as a co-pilot before upgrading to aircraft commander and now instructor pilot. Delta Air Lines hired her as a pilot in 2019, but she continued in the Guard as well.

Janel (Iden) Blankespoor, BACC '07, MED '12, Wilmington, OH, has been named head coach of the Wilmington College women's basketball program, after serving as the program's interim head coach over the last year. She led the program through an odd COVID-19 season to a 7-7 mark. Prior to that, she was an assistant under head coach Jerry Scheve, who recently retired after leading the program for 30 years. Blankespoor came to Wilmington in 2018 from Georgetown High School, where she served as head girls basketball coach as well as career and college advisor for the 2017-18 academic year. She previously had spent five seasons with the women's basketball program at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, the last three years as acting head coach.

Courtney Gumpf, BA '07, Coraopolis, PA, executive producer and co-owner of Flying Scooter Productions, created a digital experience for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's 125th anniversary season, when it had to shut down during the pandemic. Flying Scooter conceived *Front Row*, a series of hour-long episodes to highlight the artistry of the orchestra's musicians.

The series also was a platform to reach the community and shine a spotlight on other artists, spaces and places around Heinz Hall, the orchestra's home. Subscribers and donors have free access to the series on the orchestra's website, and it streamed for free on Comcast six months following its release.

Heralded as one of the best producers in Pittsburgh, Gumpf has extensive background in feature, small screen and commercial projects. Flying Scooter also was recognized in 2019 and 2020 with Telly Awards (Gold, Silver and Bronze) for its work in partnership with Light of Life Rescue Mission.

Anthony Blanchard, DPM '08, Cincinnati, OH, foot and ankle podiatric surgeon, joined the medical staff of the Adams County Regional Medical Center in June 2021. The ACRMC is a 25-bed public hospital near Seaman, Ohio. Blanchard will practice at ACRMC's outpatient clinic on the main campus, offering podiatric services including diabetic foot care and treatment of fractures, trauma, arthritis, wounds and sports injuries.

Blanchard completed a three-year residency at the Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati, specializing in foot and ankle surgery while focusing on emergent diabetic and complex limb deformity correction. He is certified by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgeons and is a fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

Elena Long, MA '08, PhD '12, Rochester, NH, founded LGBTQ+ Physicists in 2010. The organization is devoted to providing networking, resources and advocacy for gender and sexual minorities in physics. She was a central member of the American Physical Society's Ad Hoc Committee on LGBTQ+ issues, and she chairs an APS Forum on Diversity and Inclusion—all while continuing to study atomic nuclei as an assistant professor at the University of New Hampshire. Read more about her story in *Symmetry Magazine's* recent article, "A Strong Force for Inclusion."



Mark Mothersbaugh, attended Kent State 1968–1973, Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, 2008, West Hollywood, CA, launched Postcards for Democracy in 2020, with artist/musician Beatie Wolfe, to generate funds for the US Postal Service and reaffirm its value after it was denounced as a vehicle for voter fraud during the 2020 election year.

According to a March 12, 2021, article in *The Austin Chronicle*, participation in the demonstration/collective art project is simple: 1) Buy stamps. 2) Make art on a postcard. 3) Mail the card to Mothersbaugh and Wolfe. The sacks of postcards the duo received were exhibited May 17 to Aug. 8 in an installation at the Bob

Rauschenberg Gallery at Florida Southwestern State College in Fort Myers—but they never set an end date for the project itself.

Mothersbaugh has been devoted to the mail since his Devo days and before. As an art student at Kent State, he would send postcard art to artists such as Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg and actually get replies. To participate in Postcards for Democracy, mail your postcard to 8760 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, 90069-2206.



Sharon Ware, BA '08, Canton, OH, graduated from medical school in August 2021. According to an article in *The Repository*, she is among the first class of eight students to graduate as part of the Transitional Care Continuum, a program in Ohio University's School of Osteopathic Medicine. TCC students are part of a six-year accelerated program that allows them to gain experience in a clinical setting and go on to a three-year residency there. She was at Cleveland Clinic Akron General, one of two sites hosting students in the TCC program. (Cleveland Clinic's Lakewood Family Health Center is the other site.)

The program aims to create a new generation of primary care physicians. TCC students complete a special project in addition to studies and clinical work. Ware is working with the Homeless Charity of Akron to implement a street medicine program for homeless individuals in Akron. She will work toward launching the program as she continues her residency at Akron General.

Ware earned a master's degree in biomedical sciences at Rutgers University. She says it's important for people in Black communities to see a doctor who looks like them and who can help address health disparities and implicit bias. The Association of American Medical Colleges and American Medical Association have estimated that only 5% of US doctors are Black.

Anna Kowalska, BA '09, MA '14, Marietta, GA, was hired as the new head coach for the women's basketball team at Life University, Marietta, Georgia, effective June 2021. She had worked since 2013 at West Virginia University Institute of Technology in Beckley, serving as acting head coach for the women's basketball team since 2018.

She developed the team on the court and in the classroom. She led 26 National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics all-conference scholar

athletes to two regular season conference championships as well as two conference tournament championships. Kowalska tallied three NAIA national tournament appearances with four NAIA All-Americans and an overall record of 61-26 at the helm of the program. She was named coach of the year twice and the WHoopDirt.com coach of the week on Feb. 25, 2020.

Prior to her coaching days, she played NCAA Division 1 basketball at Kent State, where she won All-America honors and was a first team all-conference student-athlete. She earned a bachelor's in education with a minor in sports administration, then she stayed on at Kent State in a graduate assistant position while earning a master's in sport administration.

Jordan Mincy, BBA '09, Gainesville, FL, was named the 17th head coach of the Jacksonville Dolphins men's basketball team at Jacksonville University on March 25, 2021, replacing Tony Jasick.

He played college basketball at Kent State for both Jim Christian and Geno Ford. He was part of two Mid-American Conference regular season and conference tournament squads, making trips to the NCAA tournament in 2006 and 2008. He left as the all-time leader in MAC history in games played at 135, and in seventh place on Kent State's all-time assists list.

Mincy joined the staff at the University of South Carolina as a graduate assistant for one season before returning to his alma mater for a two-year stint as an assistant coach. In 2013, he joined the College of Charleston's coaching staff for one season before moving on to an assistant coaching spot at the University of Toledo. In 2014 he joined Mike White's staff at Louisiana Tech and followed him to the University of Florida in 2015 as an assistant coach.

2010s

John Dayo-Aliya, attended Kent State 2009-2010, Akron, OH, was named the 2020/2021 Nord Family Foundation Playwright fellow at Cleveland Public Theatre, a program for playwrights and creators from Northeast Ohio that offers opportunities to develop work through staged readings and workshop productions.

According to an article in *Clevelandmagazine.com*, Dayo-Aliya (formerly known as John W. Burton) will develop *Our Lady of Common Sorrows*, a play about a Black family whose faith is tested when they discover that their youngest member, a 14-year-old virgin, has become pregnant. The Akron native has produced eight plays in the last nine years. As a playwright fellow, he welcomes the opportunity to bring Black voices and urban stories to the stages of CPT and create opportunities for other Black artists, who often face challenges to getting their art seen.

Carlos Mojica, BA '11, MA '14, Ravenna, OH, is communications manager with the Columbus Crew, an American professional soccer club based in Columbus, Ohio, and the current Major League Soccer champion.



The co-owners of Bell Tower Brewing Co. (L to R): Jennifer Hermann, Ryan Tipton and Bridget Tipton; Courtesy of Bell Tower Brewing

Ryan Tipton, BA '10, MS '14, Kent, OH, **Bridget Adams Tipton, BA '10, BS '18, MA '19**, Kent, OH, and **Jennifer Hermann, BA '97**, Kent, OH, launched Bell Tower Brewing Co. this fall in a historic church near downtown Kent, following more than a year's worth of delays due to the coronavirus pandemic. The three Kent State alumni co-founded Bell Tower Brewing and purchased the property at 310 Park Ave. in August 2020, after the building's most recent owner, R.W. Martin, moved to a larger space. The building housed the former First Congregational Church from 1858 until the 1940s. R.W. Martin, an industrial laundry equipment company, was headquartered there since the 1950s.

According to a June 18, 2021, *Cleveland.com* article, the trio hope the brewery, with its unique setting and proximity to downtown Kent, will become a neighborhood gathering spot that appeals to both college students and local residents with a mix of easy-drinking beers, shareable menu items and community events. The new brewery can host about 300 people with its patio, main dining area and side rooms (available for reservations).

Ryan Tipton, a user experience designer at Optum, has about 10 years of homebrewing

experience and served as president of the Kent Junior Chamber of Commerce when it brought the first Craft Beer Festival to Kent in 2019.

Jennifer Hermann grew up in Kent, became obsessed with brewing and landed jobs at several brewing companies in Ohio while perfecting her own beer recipes at home. She returned to Kent in 2015 with the dream of running a brewery and connected with Ryan through talks and homebrew demonstrations.

Bridget Adams Tipton, a designer with Paino Architects & Builders, part-time adjunct faculty in interior design at Kent State and a member of the Kent Junior Chamber of Commerce, has transformed the historic building with a new look. The building's back room, formerly a gymnasium, houses a 10-barrel brewing system with plenty of room for expansion as the brewery grows.

Bell Tower offers gluten-reduced beers to accommodate drinkers with diet sensitivities, as well as German lagers, Belgian farmhouse beers, IPAs and more. Hermann likes to brew beers in the 4.5-5.5% alcohol content range, what she calls "lawn-mowing beers." On hot summer days, she says, you can drink a few while hanging out with your friends—and still go home and mow the lawn. Learn more at www.belltowerbrewing.com.

Damien Beauchamp, BS '12, Hillsborough, NC, has been promoted to president of 8 Rivers Capital LLC, a Durham, North Carolina-based firm leading the invention and commercialization of sustainable, infrastructure-scale technologies for global energy transition.

Beauchamp has driven revenue growth, project development and strategic partnerships since joining 8 Rivers in 2016, serving most recently as the firm's chief development officer and previously as chief of staff. He previously founded two startups—for which he was named to the *Forbes* "30 Under 30" list and featured in *Fortune*—while pursuing a master's degree in chemistry from The Ohio State University.

8 Rivers is the inventor of the Allam-Fetvedt Cycle, a net-zero power solution that was named "Breakthrough Technology of the Year 2018" by

the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference and is anticipated to form a cornerstone of clean energy transition. The firm also focuses on developing and deploying technologies for clean hydrogen and ammonia, direct air capture, carbon capture, sour gas sweetening and space-based solar power. For more information visit www.8Rivers.com.

Mackenzie Hughes, BBA '12, Charlotte, NC, competed in golf in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics. The Canadian native was tied with fellow Canadian and Golden Flash **Corey Conners, BS '14**, for 17th at the end of the third round but finished 50th with a -3 overall.

Eric Mansfield, MA '12, Akron, OH, has partnered with a pair of Ohio theaters to professionally produce his original stage plays for their 2021-2022 seasons. *Love in Reserve*, a love story that chronicles the challenges of a military couple separated during the Iraq war, debuted in November 2021 at Rubber City Theatre in Akron; *Whitesville*, an intense family drama that follows the struggles of a mixed-race family in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's murder, premiers in April 2022 at the Akron Civic Theatre in partnership with the Millennial Theatre Project. *Love in Reserve* was named a national semi-finalist for the Bridge Award by Arts in the Armed Forces.

Currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing-Playwrighting at Kent State, Mansfield is a member of the Dramatist Guild (NYC) and a contributing member of the United State Veterans' Arts Alliance (Los Angeles).

Mansfield currently works as assistant vice president, content strategy and communications, at Kent State University. Prior to coming to Kent State, Mansfield completed concurrent 20-year careers as a broadcast journalist at WKYC-TV (NBC) in Cleveland and as a commissioned officer with the US Army and Ohio Army National Guard.

Frank Yonkof, BS '12, Washington, DC, has joined the engineering team at *The Washington Post* as an apps product manager, supporting reader engagement and retention efforts. Since joining *The Post* in 2012 as an editor on the Hub, he has shaped how digital users consume the newspaper's journalism. In 2019, he was the Hub's lead editor on apps and part of a team of product managers, designers, engineers and traffic analysts charged with improving the user experience on existing apps and building the prototype for a new one. He played an integral role in the launch of PageBuilder Fusion last fall, providing user feedback, feature ideas and testing the new content management system.

Megan Armbruster, MA '13, Hudson, OH, screenwriter and poet, collaborated with her husband, Moroccan director Simo Ezoubeiri, on the short film *Speck of Dust*, which screened in the Short Film Corner category at the Cannes Film Festival, July 12-16, 2021. The plot deals with older generations, once necessary and now in need, forced to question their worth in the face of unmet socio-emotional needs: Should our journey, ability or value end with our youth?

Leighann (McGivern) Bacher, BS '13, Allison Park, PA, created a Facebook group on Jan. 31, 2021, to share COVID-19 vaccine information and tips with Pittsburgh citizens after attempting to secure vaccines for her family members in the early days of the vaccine's release. She reached out to two women who were also posting vaccination appointment openings to their personal Facebook pages and the three decided a Facebook group would be the best way to connect people with opportunities.

The Getting Pittsburgh Vaccinated-COVID-19 Appointment Tip Page now has about 30 administrators and more than 30,000 members. Bacher and the other administrators plan to continue monitoring it until it's no longer needed.

Ryan Collins, BS '13, Cleveland, OH, has been promoted to associate director of admissions at Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, Ohio.

Rachel O'Neill, BBA '13, Cleveland, OH, sales engineer at Segment Inc., was recognized among the "20 in Their Twenties" class of 2021 by *Crain's Cleveland Business*. O'Neill, who majored in both entrepreneurship and marketing at Kent State, has worked for the company for seven years.

Segment offers a data insights platform that cleanses, categorizes and contextualizes insights from customer financial transaction data.

The company's co-founder, **Rob Heiser, BBA '02**, met O'Neill when he was an advisor at Kent State and a faculty member recommended her as "a superstar." She has been a competition judge and event volunteer for LaunchNET at Kent State.

In June 2021, O'Neill, an active member of the Junior League, also founded the Live & Give Collective, whose mission is to raise awareness and funding for charitable organizations by hosting social experiences that give back to local communities.



Jeewaka Costa, BS '14, and his wife, **Pradeepa Costa, BSE '13**, Stow, OH, opened the ManiKitchen Tea Shop 2Health 4Life last September in Akron's Kenmore neighborhood. The tiny shop, which does not serve tea, sells 120 varieties of its own brand of loose tea, along with custom-made glass teacups and teapots with the

Emily (Cain) Peterson, BS '13, Rollinsford, NH, showed her paintings at the Exeter Arts & Music Fest in May. She majored in fashion merchandising at Kent State and studied abroad in England, where she met her husband. After their marriage, she was a stay-at-home-mom to two young children. A self-taught artist who began painting in high school, Peterson began painting again in earnest during lockdown—using peeled dried paint, gold foil and modeling plaster to give the abstract artworks 3D texture.

She started an Instagram account to share her paintings. When people began purchasing them, she officially launched Transatlantic Chic Studios. She hopes to have an in-home studio someday and a place where people can view and purchase art and vintage goods from Europe. View her artwork at www.transatlanticchicstudios.com and on Instagram at [transatlantic_chic_studios](https://www.instagram.com/transatlantic_chic_studios).

Victor Searcy Jr., BA '13, Cleveland, OH, owner of Sauce the City restaurant in Ohio City, was part of a 3News special documentary called "Save Our Sauce: Celebrating Northeast Ohio's restaurants," which aired in March 2021 and raised money for the Ohio Restaurant Relief Fund.

Searcy started his sauce business while attending Kent State, according to a story on WKYC Studios. He called it "Vic Fries" and traveled to fairs and carnivals selling French fries with his mouth-watering sauces. He worked as a nursing home administrator until he decided to gamble on himself and build a destination foodie restaurant in what was once the Ohio City Galley.

When COVID-19 shut down restaurants, Searcy changed his strategy to focus on takeout and delivery and he transformed Sauce the City into a super-fast casual restaurant. He also started the "Feed the Nurses Challenge"—which asks users on social media to tag a local restaurant and

ManiKitchen logo, as well as spoon tea infusers and other tea accessories. (The ManiKitchen name is a riff on Pradeepa Costa's nickname, Manik. She also has a master's in public administration from The University of Akron.) They bought the property in 2016.

The couple, both of whom grew up drinking tea in Sri Lanka, opened their shop just months after Jeewaka Costa, who has a bachelor's degree in aviation management, was laid off from his aircraft maintenance job last spring amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Costa, who used to commute to Indiana from the family's home in Stow and long wanted to do something entrepreneurial, works with a friend of his father who has experience in the tea industry to produce the tea offsite. For years, his family had combined ancient Sri Lankan herbal medicine with infused Ceylon teas made famous by the British Empire. (Ceylon, now called Sri Lanka, gained independence from British rule in 1948.)

Jeewaka Costa hopes to land another job in airline maintenance, but he plans to keep the tea shop and employ someone to oversee it. ManiKitchen's teas are for sale online at www.manikitchen.com.

challenge them to provide lunch for their local healthcare workers battling COVID-19 on the front lines or have other businesses pick up the tab. #FEEDTHENURSES

Corey Conners, BS '14, Palm Beach Gardens, FL, competed in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics. The Canadian native placed 13th in men's golf, which featured a field of 60 competitors. Conners shot par or better in all four rounds and closed strong with a 65 in the final round to finish at -13 for the tournament.

Hattie Tracy, MPA '14, Medina, OH, was named president and CEO of Coleman Health Services (previously known as Coleman Professional Services), effective August 7, 2021. She previously was the senior vice president of clinical operations for Coleman and was chosen by the Coleman Health Services Board from more than 100 applicants in a national search.

Tracy has nearly 20 years of behavioral health and human services experience, with more than 10 years in executive team roles. In addition to her Master of Public Policy and Administration degree from Kent State, she has a Master of Social Work from The Ohio University and is a licensed social worker in the state of Ohio.

Coleman Health Services was founded in Kent, Ohio, in 1978 and offers comprehensive behavioral health, residential, employment and supportive services. In 2021, with Tracy leading the effort, it earned the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic designation from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It is one of 11 such designees in the state, which will allow Coleman to provide fully integrated health services across six Ohio counties.

Joe Chenevey, XAS '15, BTAS '16, Akron, OH, has been promoted to director of technology at Innis Maggiore, a full-service positioning ad agency based in Canton, Ohio. Chenevey, who joined Innis Maggiore in 2015, was a senior web developer at the agency and has built marketing websites and other digital assets for clients.

Anthony Milia, BBA '16, Twinsburg, OH, owner of Milia Marketing LLC, was recognized as one of the "20 in Their Twenties" class of 2021 by *Crain's Cleveland Business*. Milia founded his digital marketing firm five years ago and it has since grown significantly to have a client base that includes Fortune 500 companies. He was the first person from his immediate family to attend and graduate from college.

Jeannette Reyes, BS '16, Washington, DC, broadcast journalist, is an anchor for FOX 5 Morning and Good Day DC. Reyes previously worked at the ABC-owned station in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Prior to that, she worked as a general assignment reporter for the ABC affiliate in Washington, DC, where she covered Pope Francis' visit to the nation's capital, among other highlights. She is a member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalists.

Danniel Thomas-Dodd, BS '16, MA '18, Kent, OH, competed in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics for Team Jamaica. She finished 13th in women's shot put with a throw of 18.37 meters (60 feet, 3.23 inches), just 0.2 meters short of advancing to the finals. The Westmoreland, Jamaica, native improved upon her performances at the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Summer Olympics by 13 spots.

Reggie Jagers III, BS '17, Solon, OH, competed in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics. He took 19th in the men's discus throw. The Cleveland native flung the discus 61.47 meters (201 feet, 8 inches) on his final attempt of the preliminary round.

Ryan P. McNaughton, MA '17, Niles, OH, was named president of the Syracuse University National Alumni Association, effective July 1, 2021. He will also hold a seat on the Board of Trustees during his term. He was previously chosen as president of the Northeast Ohio Syracuse University Alumni Club in 2010.

At Kent State, he earned a master's in public relations and served as the associate director of advancement at Kent State Ashtabula, the associate director of advancement for the Division of Student Affairs, and a career counselor and testing coordinator. He also has a master's in counselor education from Westminster College (2011) and a bachelor's in broadcast journalism from Syracuse University (1996).

With more than a dozen years in broadcasting, he serves as vice president of government affairs for the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber.

Joseph Oteng, MED '17, Columbus, OH, a second-year law student at the Moritz College of Law at The Ohio State University, started producing content on Instagram about social justice issues and anti-racism in response to the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Through infographics and short videos, he explained concepts such as racial battle fatigue, white savior complex and authentic allyship.

With more than 13,000 Instagram followers, he creates a new set of infographics and a video at least once a month and posts content almost every day. Organizations hire him to teach social justice workshops at schools, law firms, fraternities and sororities. He gives between six and 12 lectures a month.

Oteng's "Social Justice: 101" workshop is available free on his website, www.youthful-lifeshots.com. The series includes short videos, infographics, resources and interactive worksheets.

Brenna Parker, BS '17, Washington, DC, has joined the Biden-Harris administration in the White House to lead digital direction and strategy for Vice President Kamala Harris.

Sarah Schlosser, BFA '17, Uniontown, OH, currently an MFA candidate in book studies at the University of Iowa's Center for the Book, was awarded a Fulbright Study/Research grant for 2021-22. The grant will support her research in book arts to study natural dyes in India for eight

months. She will document traditional dyeing practices for textiles and handmade paper and learn techniques by working alongside experts in the craft. To better support her research and learn from the people she'll be working with, she also earned a 2021 US Department of State Critical Language Scholarship for a summer virtual intensive language and cultural program in Hindi.

Abdul Seidu, BA '17, Cleveland, OH, wrote and directed a short film, *Sing Canary, Sing!*, which finished shooting in Columbus, Ohio, in June. The main character, Devon, wants to break out of the cage he grew up in and fly into new surroundings with more opportunities, but he doesn't know how to do it. Does he continue to wrestle, something he hates and only does to please his dad? Or does he follow his heart and chase after his dreams of being a writer?

Seidu played "Micah" in a feature film, *Poser*, directed by Ori Segev and Noah Dixon, that had its world premiere at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival in New York City and is getting great reviews. The film brings the Columbus indie and underground art and music scene into focus through the lens of a young woman who fakes her past to fit in.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Seidu is a first-generation Ghanaian American. He graduated with a bachelor's in theatre studies from Kent State, where he also competed in track and field. He earned an MFA in drama in the Case Western Reserve University/Cleveland Play House graduate acting program. His sophomore film *Crshd* (2019), written and directed by Emily Cohn, also premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival.

John Cornthwait, MS '18, Roanoke, VA, was promoted to partner and vice president of products at Firefli, a full-service digital products and services company based in Roanoke. The firm recently was named one of the "2021 Best Places to Work in Virginia." It works with regional and global clients across industries to develop holistic digital strategies, helping them navigate website design, content marketing, search engine optimization, digital advertising and more.

Chase Johnson, BA '18, Barberton, OH, was the Mid-American Conference Golfer of the Year as a sophomore at Kent State and was named to the MAC First Team three times. Since graduating with a degree in organizational communications, he has continued on his path to the PGA Tour. As a Korn Ferry Tour rookie in 2020, he finished runner-up at the TPC Colorado Championship at Heron Lakes.

He was profiled as a success story for First Tee-Greater Akron, whose mission is to impact the lives of kids in the Akron area by providing educational programs that build character and instill life-enhancing values through the game of golf. Johnson attended the First Tee from age 5 through high school, and he credits the program as key to the opportunities he's had to play collegiate golf, get to the Korn Ferry Tour and prepare for the PGA Tour.

Dominic D. Wells, PhD '18, Sandusky, OH, published *From Collective Bargaining to Collective Begging: How Public Employees Win and Lose the Right to Bargain* (Temple University Press, February 2021). He takes a mixed-methods approach and uses more than five decades of state-level data to analyze the expansion and restriction of rights. In his conclusion, he suggests the path forward for public sector labor unions and what policies are needed to improve employee labor relations. Wells is an assistant professor of political science and director of the Fire Administration program at Bowling Green State University.

Jess L. Callaway, MLIS '19, Decatur, GA, clinical research librarian at The Shepherd Center in Atlanta, was awarded the 2021 President's Award from the Medical Library Association. She has also accepted a 2021-22 Vot-ER Civic Health Fellowship, a 10-month leadership development program that aims to support, teach and train a learning community of Vot-ER users across the country.

Vot-ER is a voter registration effort that's part of a larger movement pushing medical professionals to consider the "civic health" of their patients and tackle the social conditions that make patients sick—like hunger, drug addiction and homelessness. It's taken on new urgency as the pandemic has curbed traditional in-person voter registration efforts and people caught COVID-19 while waiting in long lines to vote in 2020—illustrating the link between public policy failures and death.

Julian Edelman, BIS '19, Boston, MA, former quarterback for Kent State and three-time Super Bowl winner with the New England Patriots, retired in April 2021. When he retired, he was ranked second in postseason receiving yards and receptions and held Super Bowl records for punt returns and first-half receptions in a single game, with seven. He was the receiving yards leader during his victories in all three Super Bowls and was named Most Valuable Player in the last of those victories in 2018.

Samory Uiki Fraga, BA '19, Kent, OH, competed in the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics for the Brazil team. He leaped 7.88 meters (25 feet, 10.24 inches) on his first attempt in the men's long jump. The Porto Alegre, Brazil, native placed 16th.

Jeff Franks, MPA '19, CER6 '19, Canton, OH, is executive director of Bridge Point Community Services, a faith-based community improvement organization that is launching learning centers at three sites in public school districts (Canton, Osnaburg and Sandy Valley) to give elementary and middle school public school students access to homework assistance, technology and computers. They are taking referrals from teachers and will do background checks on volunteers who help with schoolwork.

Kripani Patel, MPH '19, Mashpee, MA, was named board member of the Mashpee Board of Health. Patel, who earned a master's degree in public health with a social and behavioral science concentration from Kent State, highlighted her

public health education in seeking the position at age 26. She is a full-time substitute teacher at Mashpee Middle-High School and teaches a medical terminology course.



"Enchantress" by Ray Rodriguez

Ray Rodriguez, BFA '19, Parma, OH, presented the *Wanderer* exhibition from May 29 through June 26 at the Negative Space Gallery at Cleveland's Asian Town Center. He started the series during the pandemic and, according to an article in *Cleveland Scene*, describes it as "a representation of the world I started building while I couldn't fully participate in ours." He says he finds inspiration "in mythology, in the subconscious and in dreams."

A native of Puerto Rico, Rodriguez studied drawing and painting for two years at the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico in Ponce. He moved to the United States and finished his studies at Kent State, where he won a Vincent J. Stark Scholarship.

Ray Spangler, AAB '19, Nashville, TN, was promoted to vice president at Barge Design Solutions Inc. in April 2021. He joined Barge in January 2021 as the firm's chief technology officer after 25 years with Verizon Wireless. Barge is an engineering and architecture firm with diverse in-house multidisciplinary practice areas. The employee-owned company is 400+ people strong and serves clients nationwide from multiple US locations. Spangler is a member of the Greater Nashville Technology Council.

Omid Tavakoli, MFA '19, Cleveland, OH, is a conceptual artist and curator whose work revolves around themes related to identity, gender, media, land use, protest and pop culture. His mother was African American, and his father was born and raised in Iran, so both the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter protests inspired his artwork.

His most recent series have explored cultural identity and focused on his African American and Iranian roots, given contemporary cultural contexts in both America and Iran from a feminist perspective.

Tavakoli has exhibited throughout the United States and has received numerous juried awards. He recently received The Satellite Fund Emergency Relief Grant, Neighborhood Connections Grant and Collinwood Rising Grant to reopen, design and maintain the Waterloo Sculpture Garden in Northeast Ohio.

In April 2021, he was profiled in Ideastream's Equity in Art series, which aims to amplify the work of artists of color living and working in Northeast Ohio.

2020s

Max Hoover, attended Kent State 2018–2020, Warren, OH, owner of Cockeye Creamery in Warren, Ohio, served his Kent State-inspired "Black Squirrel" ice cream until Sept. 19, 2021, to raise money for Kent State University at Trumbull's Care Closet. Hoover, who uses his background in biology and integrated science to experiment with innovative flavors, combined espresso ice cream, caramel streak and cinnamon streusel to pay homage to Kent State's unofficial mascot, the black squirrel.

Hoover donated 15% of Black Squirrel proceeds to the Care Closet, which opened in the fall. It was created by 2020-2021 Undergraduate Student Government to provide food, personal items and clothing to students in need.



Earlier in the summer, Hoover ran a similar campaign with the limited run "Black Squirrel" flavor. He donated 15% of those proceeds to benefit The Campus Kitchen at the Kent Campus, which provides nutritious food and meals each week for students and Portage County community members struggling with food insecurity. In just a week, he sold more than 20 gallons.

"Giving back to the community is important to my family and me," says Hoover, whose parents also attended Kent State in the early '90s. (**Erik Hoover** and **Stacey Hoover, BS '93**, started Cockeye BBQ in 2015 and later expanded to Cockeye Creamery, which their son owns and operates.) View a video at <https://www.kent.edu/alumni/news/max-hoover>.

Antonio Williams, BIS '20, Chicago, IL, is one of four US-born basketball players on the Tallinna Kalev/TLU roster in the Korvpalli Meistriliiga league—the highest tier level and most important professional basketball league in Estonia. (Tallin, Estonia's largest city, is located 55 miles south of Helsinki, Finland, across the Gulf of Finland.) Williams is a starting point guard and has led the team in scoring, averaging 17.8 points per game as of late April.

During his 2019-2020 senior year at Kent State, Williams led the Golden Flashes in scoring (14.7 points per game) and assists. The team finished 20-12 and had a chance to make it to the NCAA tournament, but the season was cut short by COVID-19. They were sent home midway through the Mid-American Conference tournament because of the virus.

Nadim Boukhdhir, MArch '21, Tunis, Tunisia, wrote about his experience as a Fulbright Scholar at Kent State, which was shared on the Office of Global Education website and on the College of Architecture and Engineering's Twitter account. He was awarded a fellowship from Kent State to travel to Finland to continue research into innovative learning approaches and educational strategies.

Sara Haidet, BA '21, Louisville, OH, was hired as media coordinator at Innis Maggiore, a full-service positioning ad agency based in Canton, Ohio. Her responsibilities include researching and organizing media plans as well as managing media budgets. She majored in communication studies at Kent State University at Stark and was a project management intern at the agency before being hired full time.

Grace Irvin-Dillard, BA '21, BBA '21, Bedford, OH, launched a body care company as part of an Entrepreneurial Experience class in 2019. Since founding the company, Touched by Grace Body Care, Irvin-Dillard has recorded more than 4,600 sales. According to a July 30, 2021 article in *Cleveland.com*, she reached "six figures" in sales in 2020 alone. In addition to degrees in entrepreneurship and Pan-African studies from Kent State, she also received a diploma in natural skin care formulation from the School of Natural Skincare. For more information see <https://tbgbodycare.com>.

Lauren Sasala, BS '21, Sylvania, OH, was born and raised in Northwest Ohio but says she feels most at home in the mountains. She graduated from Kent State with a bachelor's in journalism and recreation management and now is a missionary guide for Creatio, a youth evangelization program. It aims to guide young adults to experience beauty and goodness and to encounter the presence of God in creation through missions, outdoor adventures and care for creation. See <https://creatio.org>.

2021 Alumni Awards

Eight remarkable alumni were honored on Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021, during a Welcome Home Reception at the Kent State University Hotel and Conference Center. The Alumni Awards are the highest honors presented to Kent State University graduates for outstanding contributions to their chosen profession and the university.

"The nominations we received were truly impressive and represented the diversity and success of our graduates," says **Barbara Smith, BS '84**, president, Kent State Alumni Association National Board of Directors. "These eight award recipients epitomize the Golden Flash spirit, and each one has made a profound impact at Kent State and in their communities."

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Beverly Laubert, BA '84, Lewis Center, OH



Beverly Laubert has dedicated her career to improving the lives of others, both in her community and across the nation. She has been at the Ohio Department of Aging for 31 years and has led its Office of the State

Long-Term Care Ombudsman for 27 years. As an advocate for older adults and those with disabilities, she influences public policy to improve their access to quality care. In 2020, she was selected to serve on a 25-member nationwide Coronavirus Commission for Safety and Quality in nursing homes. She was responsible for recommending best practices in infection control and care delivery and for identifying opportunities to improve infection control policies. She and her husband established the Delaware County Student Assistance Scholarship in 2017 to support students from the Columbus area as they pursue degrees at Kent State.

"I believe that each of us has a responsibility to make an impact, whether through our vocation, volunteer endeavors or other contributions."

DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN AWARD

James Luther Raper, BSN '79, PhD, DSN, CRNP, Birmingham, AL



In addition to serving as a professor, senior scholar and senior scientist at the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB), James Raper directs the UAB 1917 HIV Outpatient, Dental and Research Clinic, which treats more

than 3,600 patients annually and provides compassionate and comprehensive healthcare for those living with HIV and AIDS. The clinic's first non-physician director, Raper serves as a mentor, advisor and educator to the many graduate students who work there. During his career, he has secured more than \$75 million in grant funding, which supported research and medical advancements that have touched communities across the globe. Recently, he committed to a principal gift, creating endowed funds in Kent State's College of Nursing to support a professorship as well as a research and innovation fund.

"In providing direct patient care as a nurse practitioner and participating in HIV health services and outcomes research as senior scientist, I have participated in many scientific advances and their application to improve and extend the lives of people living with HIV."

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Retired Col. David H. Carstens, BA '88, Bucharest, Romania



Retired Col. David H. Carstens gained his first military experiences in the Kent State ROTC program and went on to command US Army units at echelons up to brigade. As a highly accomplished military intelligence officer and counterintelligence special agent with 32 years of experience, he has served in locations around the world through peacetime, contingency and wartime operations. He was awarded the German Army Cross of Honor in Silver for



strengthening US and German security partnerships. He currently serves as chief of the military coordination office for the US Embassy in Bucharest, Romania. He also is a member of the board of trustees for the American International School of Bucharest, where he helps develop policy and infrastructure improvements.

"Good deeds are contagious; when we pay it forward, we motivate others to do the same."

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Richard E. Breedon, BS '77 PhD, Davis, CA



Richard E. Breedon is a physicist with a focus in experimental high energy particles and is the author or co-author of more than 1,200 scientific papers. His work in experimental physics began in the Kent State mass

spectrometry lab, where he designed and built a readout system to collect data from the analog mass spectrometer. He analyzed the data using a minicomputer he programmed and maintained. He found a mentor in Professor Wilbur Franklin, a liquid crystal transport theorist. Breedon has conducted research and experiments at Fermilab in Illinois, KEK in Tsukuba, Japan, and CERN in Geneva, Switzerland, where he was a founding member of the CMS experiment that led to the discovery of the Higgs boson particle in 2012. He also teaches at the University of California, Davis, and Yale-NUS College in Singapore.

"I was inspired by the respect and confidence that Professor Franklin had in me as a mere undergraduate student and appreciated the invitation to his discussions and unique research endeavors."

KENT STATE ADVOCACY AWARD

Michael John Gallagher II, BA '19, Lake Zurich, IL (Deceased)



On Dec. 10, 2020, Kent State University and communities around the world lost a vibrant, creative and kind individual when Michael John Gallagher II died in a car accident two days after celebrating his 24th birthday. He graduated

magna cum laude with a degree in communications in 2019 and joined the Peace Corps, teaching English to children in Benin, West Africa, before he was evacuated due to the pandemic. In June 2020, he was accepted into the American University in Paris to pursue a master's degree in global communications. Before his tragic death, his travels had taken him to countries in Asia, Europe and Africa, and he left a lasting impact on the people he met. His family has established the Michael John Gallagher II Memorial Scholarship in his honor.

"In his short and remarkable life, Michael built camaraderie and community across four continents. He represented Kent State with enthusiasm and integrity during his many travels."

KENT STATE ADVOCACY AWARD

Robert E. Ross, BBA '70, Lake Forest, IL



Robert E. Ross, who worked in the financial services industry before retiring in 2014, has served on the Kent State University Foundation Board since 2003. He leads the Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement Committee, and his dedication to the

university is exemplified through the many connections he has fostered with alumni and donors over the years, while strengthening their ties to Kent State. His work helps lessen the financial burden on students and empowers donors who support them. He also has supported several university funds, including the Last Dollar Scholarship and the Kent State Emergency Grant Fund.

"The confidence and connections I gained at Kent State helped me immensely. That's why I think it's so important to give back to places and organizations that strike a chord with you."

OUTSTANDING NEW PROFESSIONAL AWARD

Gordon Stumpo, MA '16, New York, NY



While working for Naeem Khan, a designer and fashion house, Gordon Stumpo created many stunning outfits worn by high-profile celebrities such as Mariah Carey, Katy Perry, Taylor Swift and Oprah. He now works

in New York for Proper Cloth, the country's largest custom shirtmaker. As the company's first in-house technical designer and patternmaker, he manages the digital pattern department and is creating the first pattern archive. He helped launch new product categories, including custom chino pants, sweatshirts, T-shirts and highly rated face masks. He also mentors fashion students from schools across the country, including Kent State.

"I believe that if you learn the minimum, you do the minimum, so I have a tremendous drive to advance my experiences and expertise."

GOLDEN FLASH AWARD

Tiarra Monae' Reddick, BS '21, MPH '22, Willowick, OH



For Tiarra Reddick, the journey to earning a college degree was filled with challenges. Despite once being placed on academic probation, the fashion merchandising and marketing alumna worked diligently to achieve academic

success. She also excelled in extracurricular and on- and off-campus activities. She is passionate about helping others and inspiring students to be authentic and confident in themselves, an important lesson she learned during her time at Kent State.among college students.

"I came to Kent State to get a good education. I wasn't going to let anything get in the way of graduating, so I worked hard to get to where I am today."

NICHOLAS “NICK” MOORE

BFA '90

October 29, 1960–October 8, 2021



Nick Moore with son, Jake, and daughter, Heather.

Nick Moore worked as a designer at Kent State for 31 years, through the administrations of six university presidents. Most recently, he was the creative director of the Department of University Communications and Marketing.

He served in various design positions at Kent State University from 1990–2021. As graphic designer and design production manager in the Office of Alumni Relations (1992–2002), he developed the university’s first full-color, glossy alumni magazine, *Kent State Alumni*, along with hundreds of other alumni communications. Moving to University Communications and Marketing as a designer, he was art director of *Kent State Magazine* (2002–2008) and created strategic communications and designs for nearly every college, division and department of the university.

Nick passionately loved Kent State and was a champion of the university’s noble mission. He worked with his team to continuously develop, evolve and maintain the Kent State brand. His designs shaped university communications for three decades, and his influence can still be seen throughout the eight-campus system and in the Kent community. He also was an adjunct professor at the School of Visual Communication Design in 2007.

His coworkers greatly loved Nick for his outstanding talent and his caring heart. And he enjoyed working with and mentoring student designers, who benefited from his wealth of experience.

The Nick Moore Memorial Scholarship for Kent State students in the School of Visual Communication Design (VCD) in the College of Communication and Information (CCI) was established in his memory.

This scholarship honors Nick by supporting student designers as they grow in knowledge and skill—preparing them to make their own unique mark on the world.

To donate, visit [HTTPS://FLASHES.GIVETOKENT.ORG/CAMPAIGN/NICK-MOORE-MEMORIAL-FUND/C377302](https://FLASHES.GIVETOKENT.ORG/CAMPAIGN/NICK-MOORE-MEMORIAL-FUND/C377302).

in MEMORY

1940s

Hubert A. Howes, BBA '49, March 14, 2021

1950s

Cecile Q. Acker, BS '51, November 6, 2020

Ellis A. Lewin, attended '52-'53, March 12, 2021

Donald R. Haley, BBA '56, November 17, 2020

1960s

Joseph E. Fattlar, MED '61, October 2, 2019

Donald E. Butch, MM '63, March 30, 2021

Bernard M. Hovan, BSE '63, MED '68, December 10, 2020

James M. Schuerger, MED '64, PhD '67, January 7, 2021

Francis W. Sisunik, BBA '64, February 1, 2021

Robert E. Dray Sr., MED '65, April 19, 2020

Donna E. Kern, BS '65, MED '82, May 2, 2020

*Richard “Dick” Worthing, BS '65, July 1, 2020

Gary D. Fair, BS '67, July 4, 2021

David Mark Lopatich, BArc '67, December 10, 2020

Peter Stilton, born Peter M. Slusarski, BFA '67, December 11, 2020

David Robert Francisco, BS '68, June 11, 2021

Charles Kuntzman, BBA '68, August 30, 2019

Paul Zimmer, BA '68, March 1, 2020

James S. Eden Jr., BBA '69, May 12, 2020

Frances P. Hackett, MED '69, February 17, 2021

1970s

Dolores Breedlove, BS '70, MED '74, April 18, 2021

Jean (Schneider) Kreyche, BA '70, February 23, 2021

Helen Marie Cusick, BA '71, PhD '00, October 16, 2019

William E. Hoerger, BS '72, May 30, 2021

Mary Beth Mulhauser, BM '72, MED '83, December 18, 2020

Max “Mickey” Savickas, BBA '72, January 27, 2021

Carol Rudlosky, BS '73, February 16, 2021

Barbara Kay Barnes, BA '74, June 30, 2020

Pasqualina “Pat” Crisci, PhD '74, January 1, 2021

Robert Jamison, BA '74, September 3, 2020

Jeffrey Maurice Smith Sr., BS '76, MED '87, PhD '00, June 3, 2021

Christine E. Barton, MED '77, May 18, 2021

Paul A. D'Alessandro, MLS '77, May 26, 2021

Cheryl (Swinehart) Dariushnia, BSN '77, October 30, 2020

Roger Di Paolo, BA '77, June 18, 2021

Judith R. Montgomery, MLS '77, May 26, 2021

1980s

Kenneth L. Fincher, BS '80, December 8, 2020

Robin L. Gladys, BS '83, July 9, 2021

Janice L. Forbes, MA '84, December 2, 2020

*Elizabeth Howard, BA '87, April 10, 2021

Joseph L. Rutledge, MED '87, December 11, 2019

*John H. Granny, BBA '88, PP '92, July 18, 2020

1990s

*Nicholas “Nick” Moore, BFA '90, October 8, 2021

Laura A. Buckeye, BSE '91, January 29, 2021

Leonard Visconti, BS '92, June 5, 2020

Terrence “Terry” J. Wayne, BBA '92, November 1, 2020

2000s

Brian James Barnes, MA '17, May 1, 2021

Destiny L. Johnson, BA '18, February 6, 2021

faculty/staff

William A. Fisher, Professor Emeritus of Journalism, 1950–1984, January 15, 2021

Associate director of the School of Journalism and director of the news bureau, he helped found the Kent State chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, in 1953. He also was advisor to *The Daily Kent Stater*, 1954–1966.

Tom S. Cooperrider, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Biology, 1958–1993, July 14, 2021

He was founder and curator emeritus of the Tom S. and Miwako K. Cooperrider Herbarium at Kent State University. A floristic field botanist, his collections and those of his students provided many of the specimens used by his wife (who died in 2018) to build the Kent State University Herbarium. After retirement, Dr. Cooperrider continued his research and published books on the Ohio flora in 1995 and 2001; he later published a compilation of botanical essays, a memoir of WWII and a book of poetry. Memorial donations may be made to the Tom S. and Miwako K. Cooperrider Herbarium Endowment Fund.

Glenn W. “Jack” Jackson, EdD, Professor Emeritus of Technology, 1968–1991, April 11, 2021

Thomas R. Hensley, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, 1969–2004; April 7, 2021

An expert in constitutional law, he worked extensively on the legal aspects of the May 4, 1970, shootings and published four books and numerous articles on the topic. He and Dr. Jerry Lewis co-founded the May 4 course, which focused on a range of issues surrounding May 4 and continues to this day. Known as “Dr. Tom” by his students, he was the recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award, President’s Medal and Ohio Teacher of the Year. The Dr. Tom Hensley Endowed Scholarship was established in his honor. *Note: Because of recent COVID-19 developments, the public celebration of his life to be held at the Kent Campus has been moved to spring 2022.*

Richard “Dick” Worthing, BS '65, PhD, Dean Emeritus of the College of Fine and Professional Arts, 1971–2004, July 1, 2020

He taught music theory, analysis and orchestration and served as coordinator of Kent/Blossom Music Festival. In 1979 he became assistant dean of the College of Fine and Professional Arts. He received the President’s Medal in 2004. The Richard D. Worthing Scholarship at Kent/Blossom Music was established in his honor. A public celebration of life was held on Oct. 16, 2021 at the Glauser School of Music on the Kent Campus.

Elizabeth Howard, BA '87, PhD, instructor in the Honors College Freshman Honors Colloquium, 2001–2021, April 10, 2021

An award-winning professor, Dr. Howard also taught advanced classes in Honors and advised many Honors theses. The Elizabeth Howard Honors Scholarship was established in her honor.

John H. Granny, BBA '88, PP '92, director of business affairs for Kent State Geauga and the Twinsburg Academic Center, July 18, 2020

He served in various roles at several campuses at Kent State University from 1990–2020. The Kent State Geauga Campus in Burton has dedicated a memorial patio in his honor.

Nicholas “Nick” Moore, BFA '90, creative director, University Communications and Marketing, October 8, 2021

He served in various design positions at Kent State University from 1990–2021. Among those roles were art director of *Kent State Magazine* for University Communications and Marketing from 2002–2008, and graphic designer and design production manager of *Kent State Alumni* for the Office of Alumni Relations from 1992–2002. He also was an adjunct professor at the School of Visual Communication Design in 2007.



LEFT: Trevor Daniel holds the poster of his poem. RIGHT TOP: Isaiah Hunt shows Trevor Daniel the poster of his poem, designed by Jessica Miller, a senior in Kent State's School of Visual Communication and Design. RIGHT BOTTOM: Students get down to business at one of the sessions in the eight-week summer poetry workshop held at Skeels-Mathews Community Center, Ravenna, Ohio.

Passing on a Passion for Poetry

Eighth-grader Trevor Daniel wasn't expecting much out of the eight-week poetry writing workshop his mom signed him and his siblings up for this summer at Skeels-Mathews Community Center in Ravenna, Ohio. When it came to writing poems each week, "I just did them because I had to," he says. "Some poems I did were good and some I did were bad."

But he wasn't surprised when one of his poems was selected to appear on a poster designed by a Kent State student from the School of Visual Communication Design—the workshop teacher had repeatedly told him he was a good poet. "And that was clearly one of my good poems," Trevor says. "What inspired it was my mind. I just think about things when I'm writing; if I'm enjoying it, I just get really down deep into it."

What did surprise him is that all the students in the class, ages 4 to 14, enjoyed writing poems: "Even my



brothers and sisters because they don't seem like the type of kids who would enjoy doing that."

The teacher who helped unleash this creativity is Isaiah Hunt, one of the graduate teaching artists at Kent State's Wick Poetry Center. And he credits the welcoming atmosphere at the center. "The tremendous support from the Skeels-Mathews staff has made this journey possible," Hunt says. "Each workshop session, I always felt at home and a part of the community."

His summer residency was made possible by Sandy Halem, enrichment coordinator for Family & Community Services Inc., a large social service agency that operates more than 70 programs in northeastern Ohio, including at Skeels-Mathews Community Center. She facilitated the partnership with the Wick Poetry Center and helped raise money from the community to fund the residency.

"I consider Kent State to be the mother ship for bringing great programs to many of our services in Portage County," Halem says. "Isaiah helped these students understand what poetry was and—most importantly—that they could be poets. As the weeks progressed, they began to see poems not as a foreign language but as an opportunity to experience different words and to express feelings in a way that was not usually expected from them in their schools. And when they stood to read their poems to the class, Isaiah would coach them: 'Say it loud and proud!'"

"I knew Isaiah had won them over one day when he wasn't there. Since he had just taught how an ode in poetry can honor and illuminate feelings about someone, the students in the class wrote a poem together called 'Ode to Isaiah,' and they each expressed their feelings about how he was opening up their minds and hearts creatively."

A collection of the students' poems is published in a chapbook compiled and designed by the Wick Poetry Center. Students in the poetry workshop not only learned to write poems but also gained in self-esteem, says Sharon Sanders, who has been running the summer youth program at Skeels-Mathews for 20 years.

"Isaiah Hunt is a role model for our African American young males," she says. "When they are surrounded by so many negative influences on a daily basis, they need to know that this doesn't have to be their story. They can achieve anything if they can believe in themselves and work hard to achieve their goals. It is important for our children to learn good writing skills and how to express themselves through creative writing and poetry, while building pride in themselves and in their community."

Trevor understands that this experience may change him and his trajectory. "My mom told me it would," he says. "Because once I get to high school or when I go on to a good college, I can show them this and get into good places. And I don't just have to do poetry—but I will still keep doing it." ✨

I Want To Be

I want to be a Sun
bright, shiny, and round
I come for the day and
leave for the night.
I want to be the window
you look out every day.
I want to be the
basketball that you
use to win the game
I want to be the glasses
you wear so you can see
your future is clear.
I want to be the cup of water
to give you a fresh new taste.
I want to be the cake
that you reward yourself
after you win.
I want to be your
#1 fan when you win or lose.
I want to be a spring
to spring you on
when you are at
your lowest.

—By Trevor Daniel, 8th grade
Skeels-Mathews Community Center
Summer Camp, Ravenna, OH

Design by Jessica Miller ©2021

TRAVEL
ING /
STAN
ZAS

Created by the Wick Poetry Center
Traveling Stanzas™ is a project of the College of Arts and
Sciences' Wick Poetry Center at Kent State University in
collaboration with School of Visual Communication
Design students and alumni.

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Poem by Trevor Daniel, 8th grade,
Skeels-Mathews Community Center
Summer Camp, Ravenna, OH

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