



Dr. Kimberly Andrews Espy

President

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: JUNE 26, 2024

Wayne State commencement ceremonies

It was an honor to celebrate and award 2,949 undergraduate and graduate degrees at Wayne State's commencement ceremonies on May 1, 2 and 3 at our Fieldhouse. This event is the culmination of our students' journeys, the moment they have anticipated since setting foot on our campus. It's a highlight of my year to celebrate with them! I thank everyone across our university who helped create a wonderful experience for our graduates. The Law School also held its commencement ceremonies on May 13 at the Detroit Opera House, followed by the School of Medicine at the Fox Theatre on June 6. Congratulations to all our graduates, and I look forward to seeing the important mark they make on our world.

Jr. Insiders brings future Warriors to campus

If you were on campus on April 25, you may have noticed that our staff looked a bit more youthful. It was our annual Jr. Insiders Day, during which Wayne State faculty and staff brought their children to campus to watch their parents in action and get a firsthand glimpse at what our university offers. Kids enjoyed a variety of science demonstrations, hands-on activities and tours throughout the day. It's great to have this chance to give children early exposure to our university, and I'm sure many of these Jr. Insiders will go on to become Wayne State Warriors.

STUDENT IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Communication students recognized at BEA convention in Vegas

The Department of Communication took home multiple awards during April's Broadcast Education Association's (BEA) annual convention in Las Vegas. "Chronologies," a project blending 3D models, AI images and personal narratives in a virtual reality gallery, earned accolades at the BEA Festival of Media Arts. Assistant Professor Paul Echeverria and students from COM 1610 received Best of Competition in the Faculty Interactive Media and Emerging Technologies Competition for the same project. Communication student Rayan Elzein secured second place in the Student Scriptwriting Competition with "Some Things Never Change," and other students showcased their work, contributing to Wayne State's placement within the Top 100 of BEA's annual school rankings. I'm extremely proud of our students' creativity and innovation, and their work in highlighting the excellence of our film and media program.



M.S.W. graduates launch Latino/a student organization before crossing the graduation stage

Recent masters of social work (M.S.W.) graduates Alondra Barajas and Jesus Cruz-Navarro established Unidad de Guerrero/a(s), a Latino/a-focused social work student organization that aims to create a legacy within the School of Social Work. Recognizing the need for representation in their field, they founded the organization to provide a dedicated space for discussion and empowerment. Inspired by Latino/a rap music and female pioneers in the field, they named the group Unidad de Guerrero/a(s), which means “Unity of Warriors.” Cruz-Navarro, who was also the student speaker at our May commencement ceremonies, emphasized the importance of cultural identity and perseverance. With guidance from faculty liaison Judith Wineman and support from Acting Dean Debra Patterson, the organization has flourished, fostering connections and support among Latino/a/x social work students. Barajas and Cruz-Navarro, co-presidents, will transition to advisory roles, ensuring the organization's continuity in supporting future students and promoting unity, empowerment and self-care within the community. What a tremendous example of our students' compassion and dedication to their peers, as well as the Wayne State community's commitment to supporting underserved students to realize their goals and bold future.

Student Athletes excel

Our student-athletes and athletics department concluded a very successful spring season, both in competition and in the community. Our men's and women's tennis teams went to nationals, and both finished tied for 5th quarterfinalists in the Nation. Women's tennis junior Anais Ruysen was voted CSC Academic All-American of the Year, selected from approximately 800 eligible athletes to receive the honor. In total during the 2023-24 season, WSU had 253 Academic All-GLIAC student-athletes, one shy of our all-time high, and the spring season saw Warrior student-athletes earn four of the 12 GLIAC Commissioner's Awards. Our student-athletes also continue to serve the community; we are proud to finish 16th nationally for - volunteer hours out of all NCAA D2 schools, which placed us second in the Midwest in the Helper Helper standings.

FACULTY IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

CBHJ data drives Wayne County's groundbreaking Narcan vending machine program

Data from Wayne State's Center for Behavioral Health and Justice (CBHJ) has helped drive Wayne County's pioneering Narcan vending machine program in its mission to combat overdoses. With counterparts from Ohio and Texas and support from the Pew Foundation and Marron/Blue Meridian, this initiative aims to assess, expand and evaluate state-level crisis



response efforts. The CBHJ will receive a \$250,000 planning grant from Marron/Blue Meridian, with the potential for a multiyear grant to further develop crisis response across the state.

Health Worker Academy receives MDHHS grant to support expansion of Neighborhood Wellness Center initiative

The Health Worker Academy, led by the College of Education's Nate McCaughtry, Ph.D., recently collaborated with the Michigan Department for Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to integrate community health worker-led programs into 22 neighborhood wellness centers, supported by a \$1.4M grant. The initiative aims to enhance services, including consultations, screenings, education, referrals and follow-ups, targeting social determinants of health to improve living conditions and prevent chronic diseases, particularly in Detroit, from May 1 to Sept. 30, 2024. The effort will build on MDHHS's COVID testing sites to establish comprehensive wellness centers that address various health needs, focusing on social determinants like living conditions and access to health care. This team project is another great example of our faculty and students' commitment to our community that empowers the health of our urban neighborhoods.

NSF CAREER grant supports Wayne State fluorescent protein study, student lab opportunities

Alice Walker, Ph.D., assistant professor of chemistry at Wayne State University, received a Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) award from the National Science Foundation. This \$690,816 grant will support her research on the computational design of new fluorescent protein (FP) sensors. Walker explained that fluorescent proteins are effective sensors due to their ability to glow in response to stimuli. Her research uses computational techniques to simulate these responses, aiming to understand and create new FP sensors. These sensors are crucial in studying human health and disease, as they can track cellular processes and drug efficacy in living organisms. The grant also aims to enhance research opportunities for Wayne State students by offering an undergraduate research course, accommodating commuter students who cannot commit to traditional lab hours. NSF CAREER awards not only support outstanding faculty, but also are a marker of institutional research excellence.

Dr. Cyntera McNeill to lead interprofessional Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program project supported by \$5M Health Resources and Services Administration grant

WSU received a five-year, \$5 million grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration to launch the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program, titled Applied Gerontology Research and Education to Eliminate Disparities (AGREED). Led by Cyntera McNeill, DNP, APRN, AGPCNP-C, FAANP, the project involves collaboration among six Wayne



State schools and eight community health care organizations. AGREED aims to address disparities in elderly care, particularly in Wayne County, by integrating geriatrics with primary care and other specialties. The program will improve geriatric care, train direct care workers and support staff, and enhance the geriatric curriculum for students in nursing, medicine, pharmacy, and social work. Key initiatives include creating a geriatric specialist certification, developing the Remember My Elder mobile app, and establishing a geriatric workforce pipeline. The project is supported by leaders across various disciplines at Wayne State, including Pragnesh Patel, Faith Hopp, Candice Garwood, Diane Adamo, Aline Saad, Nate McCaughy, Jeanne Barcelona, and Dongxiao Zhu.

Department of Defense advances fine-tune augmented reality exposure therapy for PTSD

A team from Wayne State University, led by Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences Arash Javanbakht, M.D., received a \$1.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Defense to enhance exposure therapy for PTSD using augmented reality (AR). Javanbakht, who directs the Stress, Trauma, and Anxiety Research Clinic (STARC), invented this AR technology, which overlays virtual objects onto real-world environments. This technology allows therapists to present a variety of feared scenarios to patients, aiding in safety learning in realistic settings. A patient's AR headset connects to the therapist's computer, providing a 3D map of the patient's surroundings. The project aims to tailor the technology specifically for veterans with PTSD through feedback from expert therapists and veterans, followed by clinical trials. This AR method can place patients in immersive environments like parties or public places, helping them practice social interactions and confront trauma-related avoidances.

Functional Fluidics named one of Michigan 50 Companies to Watch

Functional Fluidics, a startup founded by Patrick Hines, M.D., Ph.D., an associate professor in the School of Medicine, has earned the prestigious Michigan 50 Companies to Watch Award for its pioneering work in treating red blood cell diseases. Recognized for its exceptional entrepreneurial leadership and significant impact, the company specializes in biomarkers crucial for sickle cell disease, and its testing assays differentiate between healthy and crisis state, aiding physicians in developing tailored therapies. The company recently expanded into Nigeria, reflecting its global reach. Hines, motivated by his clinical work and research, launched the company in 2014 with support from Wayne State's Board of Governors, and its success is a prime example of how our institution partners with local innovators and entrepreneurs to invigorate our region's economy and contribute to health empowerment. The 2024 Michigan 50 Companies to Watch collectively project significant revenue growth and job creation, highlighting the impact of innovative ventures like Functional Fluidics.



Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute researchers honored by Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health

Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute researchers Ann Stacks, Ph.D., and Carla C. Barron, Ph.D., were recently honored by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH). Ann received the 2024 Betty Tableman Award for her contributions to Michigan's Early Childhood Courts, focusing on infant mental health and the need for early intervention to reduce foster care placements. Carla earned the 2024 Selma Fraiberg Award for her work on reflective supervision and consultation, which aims to stabilize the infant mental health field amidst pandemic challenges. Congratulations to these extraordinary researchers, who are both sterling examples of our faculty's dedication to the health and well-being of Michigan and its residents.

School of Social Work faculty and students recognized

Several members of our School of Social Work community were recently recognized for their leadership and dedication to the field. I congratulate the following students and faculty members:

- Bryan Victor, associate professor, received the WSU Trailblazer Award.
- Fay Keys, associate professor and education technology coordinator, and Norma Love-Schropshire, assistant professor and B.S.W. program director, were selected for the inaugural WSU Online Course Quality Fellowship.
- Ph.D. student Laura Sutherland was accepted into the AWARD Summer Training Institute at the University of California, San Francisco.
- Advisor Geoffrey Jones received the Outstanding Contributor Award from the WSU Academic Staff Professional Development Committee.

Thank you for your commitment to the field of social work and for showing the world the caliber of work being done at Wayne State!

INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Center for World University rankings spotlight excellence of the WSU experience

WSU has been ranked in the top 1.6% of universities worldwide, placing 327th out of nearly 21,000 institutions (102nd overall in the U.S.) in the 2024 Global 2000 list by the Center for World University Rankings (CWUR). This achievement stands as strong empirical evidence of our faculty's expert leadership and significant academic and research contributions. The CWUR's



rankings are distinguished by their reliance on objective indicators rather than impression surveys, using 62 million data points to evaluate nearly 21,000 universities. The ranking criteria include education, employability, faculty achievements, and research metrics such as output, quality publications, influence, and citations. With these diverse criteria considered, the rankings substantiate the exceptional, world-class quality of a WSU education as well as the notable success of our alumni.

Partnership with the Great Lakes Water Authority

I'm proud to highlight Wayne State's partnership with the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) to establish the Workforce Development and Pipe Management Program (PMP), which will address challenges in recruiting and training water pipeline managers. With a contract exceeding \$480,000, the program aims to tackle employee shortages and technological advancements in the water sector. Civil and Environmental Engineering Professor Chris Eamon, Ph.D., is leading this initiative to enhance workforce proficiency and pipeline maintenance efficiency. GLWA's extensive pipeline network in Southeast Michigan underscores the program's necessity. The PMP focuses on workforce development, applied research on pipe maintenance, program expansion and establishing a large-diameter pipe facility. Wayne State's College of Engineering, under Dean Ali Abolmaali, aims to address national infrastructure challenges through technological advancements, giving our students opportunities to gain hand-on experiences that will prepare them for their future careers.

WSU experts discuss recent avian influenza H5N1 developments and potential implications

Recent cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A(H5N1) in Texas and Michigan, marking the first avian-to-bovine-to-human transmission in the U.S., have heightened public health concerns. Experts at Wayne State's Center for Emerging and Infectious Diseases (CEID), including Paul Kilgore in the Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, have been vital in emphasizing the need for robust surveillance systems to track the virus's adaptation. Infectious disease specialists Marcus Zervos and Teena Chopra have also highlighted the necessity of increased vigilance, especially in agricultural states such as Michigan, stressing collaboration between public health officials, veterinary experts and the agricultural community. Matthew Seeger, a distinguished professor in the College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts as well as a renowned risk communication expert, has underscored the importance of transparent communication to maintain public trust and ensure precautions. The CEID's comprehensive public health strategy, including genomic analysis and transdisciplinary teaming, is crucial for responding to the evolving influenza threat and leading efforts to combat avian influenza and other infectious diseases.



Anthropology's Malcolm X house project honored with Governor's Awards for Historic Preservation

The WSU Department of Anthropology was recently honored with the Governor's Awards for Historic Preservation, acknowledging it as one of Michigan's standout projects. Since 2021, in partnership with Project We Hope Dream & Believe (PWHADAB), the department has worked to restore the former home of civil rights leader Malcolm X, once owned by his brother Wilfred in Inkster. This historic site holds significance as the location where Malcolm adopted the name 'X', marking his public emergence. Professor Tareq Ramadan secured a grant for the restoration, aiming to transform the home into a museum honoring the civil rights icon's contributions. Recognized at the May 2 award ceremony by the State Historic Preservation Office, Ramadan, department chairperson Krysta Ryzewski, and PWHADAB's Aaron Sims accepted the award. Ramadan emphasized the collaborative effort with the community, enhancing WSU's tradition of experiential learning and preparing students for careers in heritage conservation and anthropology. I applaud this team's efforts and greatly appreciate the project's role in preserving Michigan's history and its educational value for students .

Employee Recognition Ceremony celebrates milestones, retirees and more

It was my honor to attend Wayne State's annual Employee Recognition Ceremony on April 26 and celebrate the dedication and achievements of our faculty and staff. Led by Associate Vice President of Human Resources Carolyn Hafner, the event honored retirees, Value Award recipients and employees who have reached significant service milestones – including some who have been with our institution as long as 50 years. A total of 540 awardees were recognized with special gifts and traditional acknowledgments. The ceremony reminded us all of the crucial role employees play in the university's success and the importance of recognition in boosting morale and productivity. The event featured a live band performance and underscored our appreciation for Wayne State's dedicated workforce and their contributions to its mission and community.