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President

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Wayne State celebrated nearly 6,300 graduates during the 2024 calendar year, including approximately 2,000 during the December commencement ceremonies in the WSU Fieldhouse.

The 2024 graduation year highlights include:

- Over 3,800 of the total graduates -- more than half of the Class of 2024 -- earned their first degree, exemplifying Wayne State's role as an engine of opportunity.
- WSU credentialed more than 1,200 health care professionals who will support the health and well-being of their communities and address workforce shortages.
- The university partnered with more than 500 employers and hosted more than 1,000 student-employer engagement events in 2024. These relationships connected students with opportunities and helped organizations meet growing demands for an educated workforce.
- The top degree-awarding programs included medicine, public health, computer and information sciences, nursing, business administration and general management, psychology, social work, organizational behavior, marketing, and logistics/supply chain management.

Wayne State [celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Tribute to the Life and Legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. last month](#) with *"Sixty Years After Selma and We're Still Marching."* **Governor Shirley Stancato** gave remarks on behalf of the Board of Governors and **Governor Anil Kumar** also attended. Pastor and social activist Rev. Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes III delivered the keynote address. Musical performers included the WSU Freedom Players and Social Justice Theatre Ensemble, and the Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences Show Choir.

Former U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow received the Warrior Strong Distinguished Service Award. The Dr. Arthur L. Johnson Community Leadership Award was presented posthumously to Dr. William F. Pickard and was accepted by his daughter, Mary. The MLK Tribute received more than 100,000 views on [WSU's YouTube Channel](#) during the first two days of posting.

With fellow University Research Corridor presidents, President Espy was a panelist during the [2025 Detroit Policy Conference](#) and discussed the role of our top-tier research universities fueling the momentum of Michigan's innovation economy. Moderated by Richard Florida, the group spotlighted collaborative work in higher ed that is strengthening the region's innovation ecosystem, helping attract and retain talent, and building a more prosperous future for all. View the [panel discussion via the official Detroit Regional Chamber YouTube Channel](#).

President Espy served as the elected Chair of the [Council of Presidents Annual Meeting & Policy Forum](#) of the Universities Research Association (URA) Jan. 29 in Washington D.C. Attended by university presidents and campus research leaders from across the US, the forum advances collaborative programs across national laboratories and URA's academic consortium. Through dialogue and knowledge exchange, URA is playing a role in ensuring that government policies are aligned with the scientific needs of member universities to advance fundamental discovery.

**Dr. Denise Taliaferro Baszile**, dean, College of Education, and **Kim Burroughs**, executive director, Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses, Division of Entrepreneurship and Economic Development, have been named as [Michigan Chronicle announced 2025 Women of Excellence honorees](#). The list celebrates 50 Black women whose resilience, brilliance, and leadership are transforming Southeast Michigan. Representing boardrooms to classrooms and courtrooms to community centers, these trailblazers define excellence by showcasing a powerful commitment to lasting change.

### **Division of Academic Affairs**

A recent partnership between the [United Nations Regional Centre of Expertise](#) (UNRCE) and [Make Food Not Waste](#) led to the eight-week "Towers Reduction Project," which reduced food waste by 20 percent on campus. The project engaged 25 volunteers, led by **Dr. Donna Kashian**, professor of environmental science and geology, and graduate fellow **Mohamed Dabaja**. UNRCE addresses critical challenges such as climate change, social inequity, and health disparities while advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. These efforts align closely with WSU's Prosperity Agenda focus on social mobility and empowering health.

The WSU Office of Inclusive Excellence celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in December with "The Road to Inclusive Excellence." The event, attended by community leaders and industry partners, celebrated OIE's significant milestones and showcased programs that embody its mission. The program featured breakout sessions, a panel discussion, and an awards ceremony, where **Jay VanDyke** (Social Work) and **Norvale Duerson** (Law School) were honored as the first-ever

recipients of the Dr. Marquita Chamblee Scholarship. Industry leaders were recognized by Impact Awards and Champion Awards for their important contributions.

### Education

The college recently celebrated 22 graduate and four undergraduate students from the first cohort who completed the Sustaining Community Knowledge and Language Practices for Educational Equity (SEED) program. [SEED Pathways for Teachers of Bi/Multilingual Students prepare education students](#) to teach, engage, and support multilingual learners and families. Wayne State has established a partnership with three local school districts (Crestwood School District, Oakland Schools, and Ypsilanti Community Schools) to offer preservice and in-service teachers training and resources. This initiative is led by **Dr. Christina DeNicolo**, associate professor of bilingual and bicultural education, and **Dr. Kathryn Roberts**, professor of reading, language, and literature.

### Engineering

Two faculty members were elected Fellows of the [Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers](#) (IEEE), a prestigious honor awarded to less than 0.1% of IEEE's voting members annually. **Dr. Ece Yaprak**, professor and chair of the Engineering Technology Division, was recognized for her contributions to engineering technology education, accreditation and workforce development. Her leadership has been instrumental in transforming academic programs and preparing future engineers. **Dr. Caisheng Wang**, professor of electrical and computer engineering and director of WSU's Electric, Connected and Autonomous Technologies for Mobility (eCAT) Center, was honored for his advancements in modeling and control of distributed alternative energy systems and battery storage management.

### Fine, Performing & Communication Arts

"I'll Be Your Mirror: Reflections of the Contemporary Queer," recently featured at the Elaine L. Jacob Gallery, was announced as one of the [top 50 exhibitions around the world by the publication \*Hyperallergic\*](#). The exhibition was curated by Patrick Burton of Mighty Real/Queer Detroit and hosted by various venues in Detroit. The Elaine L. Jacob Gallery is housed in the College for Fine, Performing and Communication Arts at Wayne State and includes works created by emerging and established contemporary artists.

### Ilitch

**Dr. Amanuel Tekleab**, professor of management, has been awarded the prestigious [Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship](#) (CADF). This award recognizes his exceptional business scholarship and dedication to advancing academia in his home continent of Africa. The CADF program

provides grants to African-born academics who reside in the U.S. or Canada and work in higher education institutions. Fellows travel to sponsoring universities to collaborate on projects proposed by host institutions. Tekleab will partner with Addis Ababa University's School of Commerce (AAU-SoC) in Ethiopia to support their academic initiatives.

### Information Sciences

The school is working closely with alumnus Ron Raven, who founded the university archives, to grow the endowed scholarship named for him. The scholarship provides opportunities to students in archival administration and public history.

### Law

The [Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy](#) is celebrating its 10th anniversary during 2025, marking a decade of impactful advocacy, policy work and investigative training. The center has been at the forefront of promoting bipartisan oversight and enhancing government accountability. To commemorate this milestone, the center launched the "10 Million by Year 10" endowment fundraising campaign. The celebration kicked off on January 14 with "How Courts Are Shaping Congress' Power to Investigate," a thought-provoking panel discussion featuring experts from the D.C.-based law firm K&L Gates. Additional events and campaigns are planned throughout the year.

### Liberal Arts & Sciences

Five faculty members from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) at were [recognized in December with the college's Teaching Awards](#) for outstanding contributions to education: **James Bour**, assistant professor of chemistry; **Fernando Charro**, associate professor of mathematics; **Lauren Duquette-Rury**, associate professor of sociology; **Adrienne Jankens**, assistant professor of English; **Pei-Chung (PC) Lee**, assistant professor of biological sciences. The recipients were selected for their innovative teaching methods, dedication to student success and ability to create engaging and inclusive learning environments.

### Social Work

The school's advising and coaching team was recognized for their hard work, dedication, innovation, and impact on student success with the Outstanding Academic Advising Team award from the [Advisor Training Academy](#) (ATA). Academic advisors received a campus-wide initiative from the Office of the Provost to improve undergraduate advising services at the university. The Members of the award-winning team are **Amelia Abdelnabi**, university counselor I; **Naelah Burks**, academic advisor II; **Vanessa Gualtieri**, Social Work writing coach; **Andre Iadipaolo**, academic services officer II; **Geoffrey Jones**, academic services officer II; **Katy Martinez-Osorio**,

academic services officer II; **Lawrence Robinson Jr.**, academic advisor II; and **Tom Romito**, university counselor I.

### **Graduate School**

Following approval at the Board of Governor's October meeting, Ph.D. programs were offered the opportunity to reduce their credit hour minimum from 90 credits to 60. Thirty-nine programs have already adjusted their credit hour requirement. As of January 15, eight more programs have submitted their proposals, which would take effect in Fall 2025.

### **Honors**

[The Detroit Fellows Tutoring Project](#) ended the Fall 2024 semester with a cohort of 19 students completing work as one-on-one literacy tutors with 91 first and second grade students in four Detroit Public Schools Community District locations. The team completed a total of 1,026 hours of tutoring. The Detroit Fellows Tutoring Project is the longest running service-learning course at WSU.

### **University Libraries**

[University Art Collection](#) and University Libraries partnered to showcase Detroit's artistic heritage through a new photography exhibition featuring 49 portraits by [Wayne State alumnus Pete Manschot](#). Manschot photographed Detroit artists, many of whom are fellow Wayne State alumni, during the 1980s for Detroit Focus Quarterly. Published from 1982 to 1998 by the non-profit arts organization Detroit Focus, the Quarterly includes interviews with artists, articles about the art scene and listings of exhibits. This collaboration is particularly meaningful as the libraries hold the digitized version of this publication in its [Digital Collections](#).

### **Faculty Affairs and Academic Personnel**

WSU ratified a three-year collective bargaining agreement in December with the newly formed Alliance of Resident Physicians, a new union representing 135 resident physicians.

### **Partnerships and Workforce**

The [Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program](#) (UROP) announced that 51 students across disciplines have been offered funding awards to complete research and work with a faculty mentor during the Winter and Spring/Summer 2025 semesters. Twenty-three WSU students were selected to present their research at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research this April in Pittsburgh.

### **Student Success, Support and Engagement**

SSSE was awarded a \$650,000 grant from the [Michigan Learning and Educational Advancement Program](#) to support ongoing efforts to address achievement gaps in gateway courses, which are critical to student success. In partnership with the Office for Teaching and Learning, SSSE will work to introduce new strategies and evidence-based teaching practices that focus on at-risk student populations.

### **Department of Athletics**

Student-athletes at Wayne State continue to excel in the classroom. A school-record 84 student-athletes recorded a perfect 4.00 term GPA with nearly 80 percent of Warrior student-athletes receiving above a 3.00 for the Fall 2024 semester. The entire student-athlete population posted a 3.4 term GPA, with a cumulative GPA for all student-athletes at 3.5. Nearly 80 percent of the 395 student-athletes in the fall term have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0, while nearly 53 percent have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5.

For the first time in program history, volleyball has an Academic All-American. Junior middle blocker **Kayla Giroux** was honored as a College Sports Communicators Second Team Academic All-American. WSU has racked up 97 Academic All-Americans, including 72 since 2000.

WSU Baseball hosted an alumni speaker series in January with presentations featuring current Major League Baseball (MLB) pitcher **Hunter Brown** of the Houston Astros and 2024 Boston Red Sox draft pick **Griffin Kilander** to share information about their professional journeys.

### **Division of Development and Alumni Affairs**

**Aimee Argel** joined WSU this month as Associate Vice President of Major and Planned Giving, solidifying the leadership of the major gift officers in the schools and colleges and unifying giving operations. Aimee's decades of experience in major gift fundraising across various sectors, including higher education, healthcare and arts and culture, will elevate efforts as the team prepares for the future public phase of the comprehensive fundraising campaign.

**Dave Ripple**, vice president, Development & Alumni Affairs, co-hosted an interdisciplinary kick-off meeting with **Dr. Ezemenari Obasi**, vice president, Research & Innovation, and over 40 researchers and members of Wayne State's fundraising team. It focused on the work of the [Center for Emerging & Infectious Diseases](#). A case for support was established, funding opportunities were articulated for prospective donors and project budgets were outlined.

The team continues to grow the Volunteer Alumni Mentor Program. During the fall semester, more than 100 students gained industry insights and career guidance from 40 companies, including Ilitch Sports and Entertainment, Detroit Public Schools Community District, 3M Company, Marathon Petroleum, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, and DTE Energy. This partnership between the Office of Alumni Relations and key academic leaders on campus promotes the objectives of the College to Career initiative, part of WSU's Prosperity Agenda. The sessions were hosted within the College of Engineering, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and College of Fine, Performing and Communications Arts.

President Espy and Provost Clabo have been actively hosting donors in the WSU Fieldhouse Suite during the winter athletics season. Guests have had the chance to connect with the university leadership to learn more about our progress on WSU initiatives, while supporting the men's and women's Warrior basketball teams.

### **Division of Entrepreneurship and Economic Development**

WSU OPEN, one of the initiatives to fuel innovation and regional competitiveness, connects our expert faculty, talented students, and equipped facilities with for-profit, non-profit and government partners to meet their needs in workforce, research & development and services. Supported by WSU OPEN, General Motors provided a recent gift that allows the College of Engineering to restart summer camp in 2025.

Wayne State is preparing for the renewal submission for the 2026 [Carnegie Community Engagement Elective Classification](#) application cycle. The submission will highlight community and career-engaged initiatives across campus, as well as institutional priorities and infrastructure. A working group led by the division is engaging faculty, deans and other university leadership to showcase the most impactful efforts. The six-year Community Engagement Classification is a key performance indicator for the outreach and engagement focus area of "Our Moment in Time." Strategic Plan.

**Ned Staebler**, vice president of Economic Development and CEO of TechTown, [delivered a keynote during the 2025 Detroit Policy Conference](#) with a compelling message: Michigan can jumpstart its economy by investing in innovation. He reinforced the importance of college degrees and knowledge jobs in a successful innovation economy, drawing links between state spending on entrepreneurship and per capita income. TechTown houses 424 businesses and organizations at its headquarters on the WSU campus and serves approximately 1,000 entrepreneurs every year across the region.

## **Division of Finance and Business Affairs**

**Alana Askew**, associate vice president of Treasury, Finance and Business Affairs, chaired the program committee for the [Treasury Institute of Higher Education's 25th Annual Treasury Symposium, titled "The Evolution of Treasury: An Era of Rapid Acceleration."](#) The committee is responsible for developing the symposium theme, reviewing session proposals submitted by supporters, and selecting a curated mix of high-quality, diverse proposals to create a comprehensive program. The Symposium is the largest conference in the nation with a focus on treasury in higher education.

## **Division of Health Affairs**

**Dr. Bernard J. Costello**, senior vice president for health affairs and distinguished professor of surgery, began his appointment at WSU on January 17.

Thanks to Wayne Health leadership, the successful negotiation of the affiliation agreement with the Detroit Medical Center was completed, gaining improved reimbursement rates, mission support funds and greater authority in service decision-making for faculty. Wayne Health, the non-profit multispecialty academic group practice for WSU School of Medicine faculty, promotes the health of our Detroit community, a pillar of our Prosperity Agenda.

### **Applebaum**

**Dr. Anjan Kowluru**, distinguished professor and VA senior research career scientist and senior fellow, College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, has been awarded a prestigious VA-Merit Review Award from the Department of Veterans Affairs. "Aberrant nuclear signaling in the islet beta cell under metabolic stress" will support research from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2028, with a funding amount of \$710,000. Dr. Kowluru was also selected as a senior fellow of the international diabetes federation. Two of his papers have been selected to be presented at the international diabetes foundation meeting.

### **Medicine**

A record 10,431 applications to enroll in Wayne State University's the M.D. program were received by the School of Medicine Admissions Committee for the July 2025 start date. Strategic enrollment management, marketing, and outreach efforts have been key in driving this growing interest. The 2024 Warrior M.D. Student Ambassadors have been instrumental in connecting with prospective students through tours, virtual events and other engagement opportunities.

**Dr. Hilary Marusak**, associate professor, School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neurosciences and Pharmacology, was selected to [receive the Rosalind Franklin](#)



[Society Special Award in Science](#). The Rosalind Franklin Society's Mission is to Recognize, Foster, and Advance the Critical Contributions of Women and Underrepresented Minorities in Science.

**Dr. Arash Javanbakht**, associate professor, School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neurosciences, was featured on a CNN special in November, where he was interviewed about his work in PTSD and post-election anxiety.

### **Nursing**

The renovation for new classroom space in the Cohn Building has been completed and opened in January. Spanning 4,231 square feet, this \$2 million project redefines collaborative learning with a 156-seat large classroom and a 32-seat small classroom. Each space is equipped with advanced technology, including 10 large display monitors to support distance learning. Designed for flexibility, the large classroom features reconfigurable seating to support breakout sessions; the small classroom provides a more intimate learning environment.

### **Division of Research & Innovation**

**Dr. Rachel Wallace**, assistant vice president for research development, and the team supported over \$39M in proposals including two large interdisciplinary grants worth \$8M and \$11M and two training grants, including applications by:

- **Dr. Taunya Phillips**, assistant vice president for technology commercialization to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to renew the statewide [Michigan Translational Research and Commercialization](#) (MTRAC) Advanced Computing Innovation Hub. If funded, this Hub will continue to serve as a catalyst for collaboration among academic institutions, industry stakeholders and governmental entities.
- **Dr. Phillip Levy**, associate vice president for translational sciences and professor, Departments of Emergency Medicine and Physiology, to the [ARPA H HEROES program](#) for “Michigan Universal Screening and Treatment Accelerator Prevention Program (MUSTANG)”, that builds on his past work and furthers mobile healthcare in our region.

**Dr. Christopher Kassotis**, assistant professor, School of Medicine, Department of Pharmacology and the Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, [received the 2024 Lou Guillette Jr. Outstanding Young Investigator Award](#) from the Healthy Environment and Endocrine Disruptor Strategies (HEEDS) organization.

### **Division of University Relations**

A report summarizing media reach and impact during FY 2024 found more than 2,000 media stories featured or mentioned Wayne State University. 1,100 stories focused primarily or

exclusively on the university, a 10% increase from the previous year and the highest number ever. These placements are worth an estimated \$10 million for WSU.

The [winter 2025 edition of Wayne State magazine](#) highlighted another year of exciting university community news. From record enrollment to the recognition from U.S. News & World Report and Third Way, to the reach of alumni around the nation and accomplishments throughout schools and colleges, Wayne State continues to fuel progress by working for our city, in our city, and with our city.

Welcome **Sunny Reddy** and **Dr. Michael Busuito**, who were officially sworn into their terms of service on the Wayne State Board of Governors last month in the McGregor Memorial Conference Center. During the ceremony, both governors delivered remarks highlighting why Wayne State is special to them and the difference the university makes in the lives of others. The campus community is grateful for **Governor-emeritus Mark Gaffney**, who completed his eight-year service to WSU, for the time, effort, and passion that he put into being a steadfast advocate and supporter of Wayne State and higher education.

