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# President's Message



As I close out my term as President of the EIU Chapter of SUAA, I want to thank all those who have served, and continue to serve, on the board. The active participation of board members has made serving as President a pleasure. I sincerely look forward to continuing to serve alongside these colleagues in my capacity as Past President and Secretary for the coming year. If you know of anyone (including yourself!) who would like to join one of our standing committees (Membership, Communications/Newsletter, Legislative, Events, Nominating) please contact a board member.

Rich Wandling (Past President), Kathy Reed (President-Elect), and I recently attended the SUAA Fall Delegates Meeting at which the SUAA Legislative Committee presented the proposed Legislative Platform for 2025. SUAA is intent on continuing to fight for annuitants' Tier I benefits, but also is making a concerted effort to support legislation that will bring Tier II annuitants' benefits more in line with those of Tier I. As Tier II members begin to retire it is especially important that they meet the "Safe Harbor" provision of Social Security, meaning that their benefits are at least equal to what they would receive under Social Security. We need to expand our membership among Tier II annuitants (including those still employed, no matter how far from retirement) so that SUAA can best represent their interests in the Illinois legislature. Please help us spread the word to all SURS participants that their membership translates into our voices being heard in Springfield. To join or renew membership go to [suaa.org](http://suaa.org) (join the EIU Chapter), or download a membership application at [eiu.edu](http://eiu.edu) (look for Annuitants Association in the alphabetical directory).

EIU's Annuitants' Association had a great year with well-attended chapter meetings and special events. Most recently, Katie Anselement, EIU's legislative liaison, filled us in on all that is percolating in Springfield. And it's a lot. She's at the forefront in budget and policy discussions that will impact higher education broadly, and EIU particularly. We thank her for all her efforts on our behalf. We should have our 2025 meeting schedule available soon. Please watch for it in your inbox!

## Welcome new Board Members

This December brings to an end the terms of three Board Members: Freddie Hall, Wendy Long and Rich Wandling. We are excited to announce three new Board Members: Melanie Mills, Charles Titus and John Willems! They will begin their terms in January.

### Melanie Mills

Melanie Bailey Mills joined the Speech Communication Department (now Communication Studies) in 1985, retiring in 2014. While at EIU, she received 10 Faculty Excellence Awards for achievements and contributions in the areas of teaching, research, and service, along with being named EIU's Distinguished Faculty for 2013. Her time post-retirement time is spent with her husband, Tim (also an annuitant), and their family, hiking, reading, traveling, Girl Scouts, Rotary, ArtsCAN and other community service. She enjoys keeping up with former students and colleagues across campus, many of whom are actively involved in the Annuitants Association, and is looking forward to working on the board.



### Charlie Titus

I am an EIU graduate and was employed at Eastern for forty years, following service in the US Army. I worked both in administration (in the Alumni Office and with the EIU Foundation) and in teaching (in the History Department). I retired in 2012 and reside in Charleston. Following retirement, I have tried to keep busy by doing a little traveling and by doing some writing (my book *Exploring the Land of Lincoln: The Essential Guide to Illinois Historical Sites* was published by the U of I Press in 2021) and by attempting to keep grass instead of weeds growing in our lawn. I am looking forward to serving on the EIU AA Board.

## John Willems

My name is John Willems. I earned a BS in Mathematics, a MA in Mathematics, and a PhD in Decision Sciences all from Indiana University. I was hired as a faculty member in the School of Business at EIU in August 1993 and retired 29 years later in July 2022. As a faculty member in the Business Analytics and Information Systems area at EIU I taught classes in operation management, supply chain, information systems, statistics, and management science.



Administratively I served as an Assistant Chair and the MBA Coordinator. I retired as the Chair of the School of Business, having served in that capacity for seven years. I led the School of Business through two successful AACSB reaffirmation of accreditation cycles. I served as the Chair of several of the major university committees at EIU including the CGS, the UPC and the IEC. My research interests lie in the areas of ERP, supply chain management, and information technology. Lauri DeRuiter and I will celebrate 18 years of marriage in December 2024. I am the proud stepfather of two delightful daughters, Danielle and Taylor Gadus. In retirement I am enjoying travel, serving in the Charleston Rotary Club golfing, and attending many EIU athletic events.

### **BOARD MEMBERS - 2025**

Lisa Dallas, Cathy Engelkes, Steve Lane, Gloria Leitschuh, Amy Lynch,  
Margaret Messer, Marita Metzke, Melanie Mills, Kathy Reed, Nora  
Pat Small, Charles Titus, John Willems

## **EIUAA Events Recap**

### **EIUAA Tour of Whiteside Garden, June 21, 2024**

From Gloria Leitschuh:

Eighteen annuitants, friends, and family enjoyed an early summer tour of the Whiteside gardens east of Charleston. The beautiful home and gardens were originally donated to Eastern Illinois University by Dr Whiteside, A former botany professor at EIU. It is now owned and cared for by Douglas Hart Nature Center in collaboration with EIU. The tour was led by our host, Kennedy Mullen, A Douglas Hart employee. She was an excellent speaker and shared information about various plant species as well as the necessary care of the plants. One of the tour highlights was being introduced to the various lily species which Dr Whiteside developed. Everyone enjoyed the tour and fellowship!



## EIUAA Fall Social September 12, 2024

From Gloria Leitschuh:

About 35 Annuitants enjoyed food, fun and fellowship at the Charleston Country club on September 12. Jean Smitley won the putting contest and many members won EIU memorabilia. We would like to thank the Charleston country club, the EIU foundation, and the EIU president's office for their support. A similar event will be planned for fall of 2025!

## Upcoming EIUAA Events

### Save the date:

Our next scheduled event will be Friday May 2, 2025 at the Douglas Hart Nature Center in Mattoon from 830 to 1030 AM. More information will be forthcoming.

## FAREWELLS

*Following are brief notices only. To read a full obituary or leave condolences, visit [Legacy.com](https://www.legacy.com)  
[www.jg-tc.com](https://www.jg-tc.com) [www.mitchell-jerdan.com](https://www.mitchell-jerdan.com) [www.adamsfuneralchapel.com](https://www.adamsfuneralchapel.com)*

**Dr. David Jorns**, (Retired EIU President), 80, of Oakland, IL died October 22, 2024. David is survived by Audrey Parkes Jorns, his beloved wife of 31 years; his two adult children from his first marriage to Linda Jean Wylder, Amalia Wylder Jorns, of Concord, Massachusetts, and Benjamin Alexander Jorns of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and their spouses, Jefferson Clarke and Jenna Jorns; his four grandchildren, Cecilia and Elise Clarke and Calvin and Cassandra Jorns; and his younger brother, Steven D. Jorns of Dallas, Texas. Full obituary here: [Obituary information for David Lee Jorns](#)

**Jonathan Paul Blitz**, (Chemistry Professor), 65, of Crown Point, Indiana, died on September 24, 2024. Jon is survived by Erin, his wife of 40 years; sons, Ian (Emily) and Thorin (Natalie Weill); daughter, Jordy Novak (Andrew); and grandson and brother.

**Ruth Ann Bush**, (Telecommunications Office), 87, of Mattoon, IL died October 22, 2024. She is survived by one daughter Rhonda Sharp of Neoga, IL, two grandsons and two great grandchildren.

**Gerald Francis Carr**, (Foreign Languages), 93 of Benicia, California died Oct. 22, 2024. He is survived by his wife Irmengard; son Chris (Karen); sons Justin, Ethan, and Greg (Mary); brother Vincent (Eleanor).

**Marjorie Checkley**, (Booth Library), 93, of Charleston, IL died July 11, 2024. Survivors include her daughters: Kimberly (George) Wilkins and Jill (Kevin) Bence; one grandson and two granddaughters. Margie was preceded in death by her husband John.

**Jerry Cutright**, 86, of Charleston, IL died August 11, 2024. Jerry was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, Lorene. Jerry is survived by his three children, Lorrie (Ed) Eden, Jerry Cutright II, and Brian (Shiela) Cutright; five granddaughters; five great-grandchildren; and one sister Peggy Daniell.

**Marilyn Dudley**, (Business Education Professor), 81, of Savoy, IL died Aug. 2, 2024. Marilyn was preceded in death by her husband, Dean Dudley. She is survived by her son, John Albin Wilkins; daughter-in-law, Jenny; two grandchildren, her brother, and several nieces and nephews.

**Celia Evans**, (Early Childhood Education), 83, of Tulsa, OK died June 20, 2024. She is survived by daughters, Anne and Sarah; sons-in-law, Kevin Locarro and Damon Clinkscapes; and three grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband of 58 year, Charles.

**Martha "Joan" Gossett**, (University Union), 87, of Maryville, IL died June 22, 2024. She is survived by her son, Jeff (Terri); two daughters: Debby (Mark) Esarey and Denise (Stephen) Gallitin; 15 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; three brothers and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

**Douglas D. "Radar" Hicks**, (Building Service Worker) , 72, of Charleston, IL died July 29, 2024. Douglas is survived by his loving wife, Karen Bussart; his sister, Deb Coughlon; his brother, Dan Hicks; and his dear friends whom he considered brothers, Rod and Toby Franklin.

**Dr. William E. (Bill) Hill**, (Ed. Admin Adjunct Professor), 87, died June 16, 2024. He is survived by daughters: Elizabeth Butler (Rob), Wendy Griesemer (Mike), Sarah



McGee (Mark), and Valerie McClellan (Robert); six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

**Bill Hollada**, (Communications), 95, of Mattoon Oct. 11, 2024. He is survived by his wife Roberta and daughter Gayla DeRosa of Ballwin, Missouri.

**Rosalee Noble**, (Placement Office), 82, of Charleston, IL died May 30, 2024. Rosalee is survived by her loving husband of 64 years, Terry Noble; her son, Richard Noble (Connie); five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

**John (JT) North**, (Secondary Education), 91, of Palm Harbor, died July 20, 2024. JT is survived by his sons Steve (Edna) and Mike (Angie) and his four grandchildren and two great granddaughters.

**Sherri Ann Parison**, (Cook) 64, of Martinsville, IL October 2, 2024. Survivors include her husband of 36 years, Peter Parison of; son Troy Parison; stepsons, Peter Parison, Jr. and Thomas Parison of Woodstock, IL; four grandchildren, and one brother.

**Jumuna B. Vittal**, (Sociology Professor), 96, of West Orange, NJ died August 29, 2024. She is survived by many nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews. She was predeceased by her husband, Magery Vittal.

**Betty Joan Yaw**, (Student Publications Office Manager), 92, of Dennison, IL died July 24, 2024. She is survived by her grandson, brother and several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband Bobby.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Legislative Committee

With Katie Anselment, EIU's Legislative Relations Director, on the agenda for the October 3rd EIUAA chapter meeting, Legislative Committee member Jill Nilsen arranged an opportunity for informal discussion with Katie afterwards. We hoped to get her thoughts on effective legislative support strategies, and the discussion was just what we had in mind. We left with a better understanding of how to approach legislators in the current policy and political environment. On a related note, State Senator Chapin Rose (SD 51) has expressed interest in meeting with us, most likely in early December. Among other issues of concern to university retirees and employees, Senator Rose has been a strong advocate for making health insurance options available to retirees enrolled in TRAIL. And it must be noted that calling for the availability of health insurance options for TRAIL participants is one of the elements of SUAA's recently updated Legislative Platform (approved at SUAA's Fall 2024 House of Delegates

Meeting). Finally, we would love to add members to our chapter's Legislative Committee; so please let us know if you're interested in helping with our efforts. If you are interested in being part of our chapter's Legislative Committee, please let us know at [rich.a.wandling@gmail.com](mailto:rich.a.wandling@gmail.com). We will be glad to have you join the team.

Richard Wandling, Chair  
Legislative Committee

### Scholarship Committee

2024-2025 EIU Annuitants Association Scholarships Awarded

Caroline Lucas and Maggie Smith are this year's recipients of our annual scholarship. Caroline is a Biological Science major with a Spanish minor. Maggie is a Communication Disorders major with a psychology minor. Their strong academic records and aspirations for their future academic endeavors and careers made them outstanding choices. Congratulations to them both! As you may remember, recipients must be related to an EIU employee. We wish to recognize Leona Lucas, Caroline's grandmother, and LeAnn Akins, Maggie's mother, for their work at EIU, and for bringing these talented young women into the EIU fold!

This year we were able to award two scholarships, as our endowment has grown enough that we had \$2000 available to disperse. Thanks in part to your membership dues, the EIU Annuitants Association can contribute annually to the scholarship fund. If you wish to contribute directly, please visit the EIU Annuitants Association webpage at [Eastern Illinois University :: EIU Annuitants Association - EIUAA Scholarship](#)

Nora Pat Small, Chair  
EIUAA Scholarship Committee

### Membership Committee

Our membership has continued to hold steady for the past several months, but we would really like to see it grow this next year. **Membership is open to current EIU employees as well as Annuitants** and we will continue to spread the word and encourage current EIU employees, as well as annuitants, to join! Our membership is our greatest asset. Increasing and sustaining membership in EIUAA/SUAA is essential to the success of our organization. If you know anyone that would like to join but might have questions about the organization, please feel free to have them contact any of our Board members. We'll be happy to talk to them!! Membership applications are available online at [EIU Annuitants Association - Join Us!](#) Also, if

you would be interested in serving on this committee (or any of our committees) reach out to us!

Thanks for maintaining your membership! EIUAA and SUAA will continue to advocate on your behalf to maintain your retirement and health care benefits.

**Wendy Long, Chair**  
**Membership Committee**



The Academy of Lifelong Learning is proud to be a hub for curiosity, education, and connection, offering a wide range of programs that invite learners from all walks of life to explore new interests and develop lasting connections. This year, we've seen a notable increase in registrations as our community continues to grow. Our programs are designed to be accessible, engaging, and diverse, providing something for everyone—whether you're looking to delve deeper into a topic you're passionate about or explore a completely new interest.

Looking ahead to Spring 2025, we're excited to continue offering a variety of sessions that cater to our lifelong learners, ensuring that all feel welcome and inspired. Here are some highlights you can look forward to:

- **Ballroom Dancing:** A fun and social way to stay active and learn a timeless skill.
- **The Underground Railroad in Missouri and Illinois:** A deep dive into an important piece of American history.
- **Mental Health First Aid:** Practical training for recognizing and addressing mental health challenges.
- **Mixed Media Collages:** An opportunity to explore your creative side with hands-on projects.



- **Understanding and Coping with Climate Change Feelings:** A discussion-based session to navigate emotions related to environmental change.
- **Genealogy: Meeting Your Ancestors:** Discover your family’s past in a supportive, engaging environment.
- **Quiet Reading Book Club:** A new addition designed for those who enjoy reading in a serene, shared space.

At the Academy, we are committed to creating an inclusive atmosphere that encourages learning, curiosity, and community for all ages. Our sessions are meant to inspire exploration, spark conversations, and provide meaningful engagement for our participants.

Kind Regards,

Daniel Douglas  
 Program Coordinator  
 Academy of Lifelong Learning

### **EIUAA OFFICERS 2025**

Kathy Reed	<a href="mailto:ksreed@eiu.edu">ksreed@eiu.edu</a>	President
TBD		President-Elect
Nora Pat Small	<a href="mailto:npsmall@eiu.edu">npsmall@eiu.edu</a>	Past President
Nora Pat Small	<a href="mailto:npsmall@eiu.edu">npsmall@eiu.edu</a>	Secretary
Margaret Messer	<a href="mailto:grammarga7@gmail.com">grammarga7@gmail.com</a>	Treasurer

**Web Page:** <https://www.eiu.edu/annuitants>

### **COMMITTEES (BEGINNING JAN. 2025)**

**Communications:** Melanie Mills (Chair), Wendy Long

**Events:** Gloria Leitschuh (Chair), Kathy Reed, Freddie Hall

**Legislative:** John Willems (Chair), Rich Wandling, Bailey Young, Jill Nilsen, Andy McNitt

**Membership:** Steve Lane, (Chair), Wendy Long

**Scholarship:** Kathy Reed (Chair), Nora Pat Small, Nancy Dole, Tami Babbs, Margaret Messer

*"Like" us on Facebook*



**Group name: Eastern Illinois University Annuitants Association**

The EIU Annuitants Association Facebook group is an additional way of keeping in touch with our members and sharing key association and university-related updates, news and events with everyone. All you need to do is find us on Facebook; you can readily access us at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/961164987992076> **This is a private group, so please make sure to answer the two questions presented when you request to join!**

## **Academic Regalia Closet Initiative(ongoing)**

In partnership with the EIU Foundation and the Office of the President, the EIU Annuitants Association is pleased to continue with the academic regalia closet initiative. The goal of this initiative is to ensure that any faculty or staff member wishing to walk in graduation ceremonies have access to regalia. Being part of a graduation ceremony is an important way to show support for EIU students on their special day. So, if you have a gently used academic cap-and-gown set stored away and not being used, please consider donating it to the new regalia closet. Donations will be accepted at the Neal Welcome Center, 860 West Lincoln Avenue, Charleston IL 61920 (217-581-3313). **If you wish to borrow your own regalia back in order to participate in the Commencement ceremonies, you certainly may do that!** Lastly, if you need a donation confirmation receipt, the EIU Foundation can provide one. Thank you for supporting this initiative.

## **SUAA News**

As a member of the Eastern Illinois University Annuitants Association (EIUAA), you also become a member of the State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA). By logging into [suaa.org](http://suaa.org), information can be found regarding Legislative activities, healthcare, and Ancillary benefits to name a few. The Homepage has a Q & A video from the executive director, Bryon Soady addressing the topics above as well as others.

# CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	VENUE
January 23, 2025	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
February 27, 2025	Chapter Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
March 27, 2025	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
<b>May 2, 2025*</b>	<b>Special Event</b>	<b>Douglas Hart Nature Center</b>
May 22, 2025	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
July 10, 2025	Chapter Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
September 5, 2024	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
September 11, 2025	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
October 9, 2025	Chapter Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
November 13, 2025	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
<i>Note: Chapter meetings at the Neal Welcome Center begin with an 8:30 a.m. social time and come to order at 9 a.m.. Watch your email or Facebook for any updates!</i>		
* Details for Special Events can be found either elsewhere in this Newsletter, on the EIUAA website, email communications or on the EIUAA Facebook Page!		