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President's Message

This year seems to be passing faster than previous years, even though we all know every year (excluding leap year) has the same amount of time. Regarding your EIU Annuity Association, we have had a productive year. As the President this past year, I would like to thank each of the Board members for commendably serving the EIUAA chapter in

promoting the preservation of our retirement benefits!

One of the trends EIUAA, as well as other chapters in SUAA, are experiencing is a decline in membership. This is a naturally occurring phenomenon and one you may be experiencing in other organizations in which you're a member. It is critical we find ways to reach out to prospective members, particularly the Tier 2 participants. As more of them experience retirement, EIUAA may be seen as more beneficial. With all the various methods of paying dues it is easier than ever to become a member. This year, the membership committee was able to increase participation in outreach activities, and we hope to see that effort continue to grow.

One of our scholarship recipients, Myah Wright, presented at our Fall Chapter meeting. She was very eloquent and many of the members attending remarked on her accomplishments and their enjoyment in meeting her. Her presentation reaffirmed we were giving a scholarship to a well-deserving individual and that our EIUAA scholarship program needs to increase in the number of scholarships awarded and the amount awarded.

The Board is undergoing its normal end-of-year turnover. The EIUAA Constitution established the Board to experience a third of the board members reaching the end of their term each year. Members leaving the board at the end of this year include: Steve Lane, Marita Metzke, and Dave Kidwell. They have each performed admirably on committees including the

membership and events committees. We are pleased to announce the following members will be joining the Board: Judy Gorrell, Keith Kohanzo, and Joy Russell. Even before the beginning of 2026 they are already helping the Board's efforts and assuming some of the duties associated with it. We are very grateful for their willingness and enthusiasm.

For the upcoming year, we have selected a remarkable slate of officers. We are fortunate to have Rich Wandling join the board again for a one-year seat and he will assume the duties of President. As he has served in that role in two previous terms, his experience will benefit our chapter. Meanwhile, we have John Willems waiting in the wings as President-Elect. He will have next year to learn the intricacies of the role as President and the chapter so he will be well-prepared to assume the role in 2027. Mona Davenport will be our Secretary for 2026, an office she has already been filling for the past few months and doing an exceptional job. As anyone knows who has ever held the office of secretary for an organization, it can be a thankless job. Attempting to accurately record the events of a meeting while being an active participant is difficult at best. Charles Titus will be acting as a backup if Mona is unavailable. Margaret Messer will continue to serve as our Treasurer. This is a role she knows so well as she has held it for several years. Due to the institutional knowledge she has and that we do not want to lose, we have selected a treasurer-elect. Joy Russell will spend the year learning the duties of the Treasurer so she will be prepared to assume the role in 2027. With these officers leading the Board and Chapter and our new members, we are confident we will have a successful and productive 2026!

The Board members would like to have more participation from Chapter members including suggestions for future Chapter meetings and social events. This is a great time to make those suggestions as we begin working on the calendar for 2026 and arranging presentations. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the board members regarding your suggestions or any questions you may have! A list of board members is available on our Annuitants Association website (on EIU's website).

Thank you for being a member of EIUAA and best wishes for the upcoming holiday season!

Kathy Reed
EIUAA President

xxx@eiu.edu Email reminder!

December 15, 2025 is the deadline for most annuitants eiu.edu email accounts and Office365 to be discontinued unless you have been approved to keep your account. Full details here: [Annuitant Emails - Panthertech - Eastern Illinois University](#) .

If you are changing your email address, you may contact EIUAA with a current email sent to annuitants@eiu.edu and we will forward the information to SUAA. If you prefer, you may reach out to Morgan Puckett at SUAA directly at mpuckett@suaa.org with the information and any membership questions you might have. Also don't forget to update your contact information with SURS ([Home - SURS](#)) if you haven't already done so!

2025 EIUAA Scholarship Winners!

Elijah Kubicek is a Senior English major with a Film Studies minor, graduating in May, 2026. Elijah's father, grandfather, grandmother, step-grandmother are all employed or retired from EIU! Elijah would like to work as an editor with a position at a publishing house after graduation! Congratulations, Elijah!

Myah Wright is a Senior with a double major in Accounting and Management, graduating in May, 2026. Myah's father and step-mother are both EIU employees. After graduation Myah would like to find a full-time position and sit for the CPA exam. Congratulations, Myah!



Welcome new Board Members

We are excited to announce three new Board Members: Judy Gorrell, Keith Kohanzo and Joy Russell! They will begin their terms in January.

Meet Dr. Joy Russell:

Dr. Joy L. Russell earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary and Special Education, a master's degree in Elementary Education, and Administrative Certification from Eastern Illinois University. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Indiana State University. After graduating from EIU, Dr. Russell taught for eleven years in rural and urban settings, pre-school through high school. She then worked as an Administrator for Illinois' largest

geographic special education regional delivery program and later as Director of Staff Development for eleven Illinois counties. In 1985, Dr. Russell began teaching in the Department of Special Education at EIU until accepting the position as Chair for the Department of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Middle Level Education, a position she held until her retirement in 2015. Currently Joy is staying busy with traveling, reading, volunteering and enjoying time with family and friends.

BOARD MEMBERS - 2026

Mona Davenport, Judy Gorrell, Keith Kohanzo, Gloria Leitschuh, Margaret Messer, Melanie Mills, Kathy Reed, Joy Russell, Charles Titus, Rich Wandling, John Willems

EIUAA Events Recap

EIUAA Douglas Hart Nature Center, May 2, 2025

From Gloria Leitschuh:

About 15 EIU Annuitants participated in a birdwatching activity at Douglas Hart in Mattoon. Our area birding expert, Ron Bradley led participants on a fruitful walk through Douglas Hart where a great variety of birds were spotted.

It was a great educational and social event for all.

EIUAA 3rd Annual Fall Social September 18, 2025

From Gloria Leitschuh:

On September 18, 2025, many EIU retirees enjoyed an evening of fun and friendship at the Charleston Country club. Dr. Jay Gatrell gave an inspiring speech and many participants won door prizes. HD Wilson won the putting contest!! Thank you to all who participated. We appreciate the support of the EIU foundation and Jonathan McKenzie.





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 www.mitchell-jerdan.com www.adamsfuneralchapel.com

Daniel "Dan" J. Bolin (Health & Safety Dept), 87, of Oak Grove, MO, passed away June 14, 2025. Dan is survived by Karen, his loving wife of 67 years; two children, Roger Bolin and Randy (Carol) Bolin and three grandchildren.

Mark Gregory Borzi (SPC Dept.), 66, Augusta, GA, passed away August 12, 2025. Mark is survived by his wife of 40 years, Catherine (Cate); his children Drew and Anna, two grandchildren, and his brother.

James Michael Conley, (Building Service worker), 72, of Charleston, IL, passed away Wednesday, April 9, 2025, Mattoon, IL. James is survived by his loving wife, Toni Bell; their two sons, Jordan and Kyle; previous wife Sheryl Lenhart and their two sons, Seth Michael Conley and Ian Christopher Conley; his stepson, Jake and his wife Bernetta Bell of Charleston, IL; his stepdaughter, Ashley Bell and his eight grandchildren.

Joyce Crouse (Ass't Dean CAS), 92, Charleston, IL, passed away July 21, 2025. She is survived by her children Deborah Cobb (Phil); Lisa Crouse (Dave Saxton); Susan Wolk (Mike); Kirsten Bays (Clint); and Kevin Crouse (Ginger); 13 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren; siblings.

Dr. John Edwin "Doc" Ebinger, (Botany), age 92, of Charleston, IL, passed away on Friday, October 31, 2025. Doc is survived by his three children, Wendy Satchwell, Warren Ebinger, and Kari Sue Ebinger. He also leaves behind his daughter-in-law, 10 grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

Dr. Beverly Foote (Sciences), 89, of Champaign, IL passed away October 30, 2025. She is survived by her sister Barbara, her children Carl (Tom West) Foote, Karen (David) Andsager, and Susan (Dan) Hara, five grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

Hilda "Kay" Giberson (Academic Success Ctr Staff), 84 of Charleston, IL, passed away October 16, 2025. Kay is survived by her daughter, Loretta "Lore" (Rick) Steury, two grandchildren, and her sister and brother.

Ruth M. Hawkins, (Education Dept.), 99, of Palestine, W.V., passed away peacefully on April 27, 2025. She is survived by a son and daughter-in-law, Thomas and Jan Hawkins; two grandsons; and one great-granddaughter.

Dr. Carol Marie Helwig, (Education Dept), 87, of Charleston, IL, passed away April 19, 2025, in Mattoon, IL. Survivors include her sister June Brown (Bunny), of Little Rock, AR, and many nieces and nephews.

Carl Lawrence Lorber, Jr. (Booth Library), 70, of Charleston, IL passed away May 5, 2025. He is survived by his sisters, Mary Ann (James) Nemecek and Carol (Ron) Speck of Peoria and many nieces and nephews.

John David Moore, (English Dept), 75, of Charleston, IL, passed away on July 14, 2025. John David is survived by his son, John Nicholas (Ruriko) Moore, and his brother.

William Eugene Reddish, (Food Service Supervisor), 77, of Clay City, Illinois, passed away Sunday, May 25, 2025, in Flora, IL. He is survived by his wife: Alexis Reddish of Clay City; 2 daughters: Amanda Aubrey of Mattoon and Penny McGinness of Urbana; 2 grandsons: four sisters, and a number of nieces and nephews.

Christine Sawyer, (Food Service), 92, of Lerna, Illinois passed away March 31, 2025, in Mattoon, Illinois. She is survived by her children; Harold Sawyer (Jenny), Carol Jones (Sam), Patricia Sparks (Keith) and John Sawyer (Bobbi); seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Carol Daddazio Stevens (English Dept), of Mattoon, IL passed away July 19, 2025. She is survived by her husband of 55 years, David; as well as her sister and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Legislative Committee

The four-member Legislative Committee (John Willems (Chair), Andy McNitt, Jill Nilsen, and Rich Wandling) follows legislative issues facing EIU retirees and employees.

The Legislative Committee invited Katie Anselment, EIU's Legislative Relations Director, to speak at the October 16th meeting of the EIUAA. Since this meeting occurred during the fall veto session Katie presented by zoom. Katie spoke on three main topics: 1. Community Colleges offering bachelor's degrees; 2. Funding formula for higher education; 3. Funding higher education for 2025-2026.

1. Presidents from all of the four-year public universities in Illinois except the University of Illinois met for two to four hours each week in spring 2025. SB1988 was the product of these meetings, and it would have allowed community college in Illinois to offer a specific number of bachelor's degrees subject to a comprehensive, multi-step evaluation process. Several political and procedural dynamics ultimately prevented SB1988 from being called to the House floor.
2. A new funding formula for higher education was supported by all of the four-year public universities in Illinois except the University of Illinois. It was not approved.
3. This year's state budget increased annual funding for higher education by 3%, but 2% of that is at the governor's discretion. At a press conference in Springfield on October 16th, students, educators, and labor leaders called on Governor Pritzker to release these discretionary funds

for higher education. A spokesperson for the governor said the funding will be released once there is stability in federal funding.

On October 28th the House Executive Committee heard from supporters and opponents of Amendment 2 to SB 1937, the so-called Tier 2 Pension Reform Bill. SUAA filed a witness slip in support of the bill, and the bill ultimately passed out of the Executive Committee on a partisan vote of 8-4 (8

Democrats to 4 Republicans). Legislative discussion of the bill will continue in the House once the legislature re-convenes in January of 2026.

If you are interested in being part of the Legislative Committee of the EIUAA, please let me know at jrwillems@eiu.edu. The committee would be glad to have you join the team.

Membership Committee

Although our membership has continued to hold steady for the past several months, we would really like to see it grow this next year. We would also really like to see more members attend our Chapter Meetings and Special Events. Information on these activities are available on the EIUAA website ([EIU Annuitants Association | Eastern Illinois University](#)) as they become available. **Remember that 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!

If you are not receiving emails from us (we don't send a lot of them), please reach out to me (Wendy Long) at wllongeu@gmail.com or Annuitants@eiu.edu so I can verify your email address! EIUAA emails will usually come from Annuitants@eiu.edu. I'm trying to get all addresses updated but may have missed some along the way!

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

Membership Committee

Scholarship Committee

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](#)

The scholarship committee will begin a new scholarship cycle next year. Below is the Notice that has been posted on Facebook as well as <http://eiu.academicworks.com>. Review of the applicants will begin in late January.

EIUAA Scholarship Committee

2026 EIUAA Scholarship Information

Do you have a child or grandchild who is a current student at Eastern Illinois University? The EIU Annuitant Scholarship Committee invites you to ask your student to apply for the Annuitants Association Scholarship. Following is the scholarship criteria:

1. The recipient(s) may receive the scholarship one time only.
2. The recipient(s) must be a full-time undergraduate at Eastern Illinois University and have completed at least twelve (12) semester hours at the time the award is selected.
3. The recipient(s) must be the child or grandchild of a current Eastern Illinois University employee with five or more years of service to the University OR the child or grandchild of a retired Eastern Illinois University employee with five or more years of service to the University.
4. The recipient(s) must have a minimum EIU GPA of 3.0.
5. Applicants must submit a written statement listing career goals and financial need.
6. Applicants must submit a letter of recommendation from Eastern Illinois University advisor or faculty member.
7. In the event that there are several suitable applicants, preference will be given to the recipient(s) with financial need.

To apply for the scholarship, sign onto the EIU Scholarship Search on the University web site. The link to the search can be found at <http://eiu.academicworks.com>. When completing the information requested, please make sure that the question regarding “child or grandchild of an EIU employee or annuitant” is completed correctly.

The application deadline is March 15, 2026.

Kathy Reed
EIUAA Scholarship Chair

EIUAA OFFICERS 2026

Rich Wandling	rawandling@eiu.edu	President
John Willems	jrwillems@eiu.edu	President-Elect
Kathy Reed	ksreedeiu@gmail.com	Past President
Mona Davenport	mydavenport@eiu.edu	Secretary
Margaret Messer	grammarga7@gmail.com	Treasurer

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

COMMITTEES (BEGINNING JAN. 2026)

Communications: Melanie Mills (Chair), Wendy Long

Events: Gloria Leitschuh (Chair), Melanie Mills

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

Membership: TBD (Chair), Judy Gorrell, Wendy Long

Scholarship: Kathy Reed (Chair), Margaret Messer, Melanie Mills

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). They have just rolled out an updated website: [Home - State Universities Annuitants Association](https://www.suaa.org). Morgan Puckett contacted me and asked that I remind you that when your email is updated with SUAA, your login username will change to the NEW email. The password will not change unless you request it!

By logging into [suaa.org](https://www.suaa.org), information can be found about SUAA activities and member benefits and features such as a Q & A video series, News link, Briefings, IL General Assembly links and much more!

CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	VENUE
January 15, 2026	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
February 12, 2026	Chapter Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
March 12, 2026	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
May 14, 2026	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
July 9, 2026	Chapter Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
September 10, 2026	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
October 8, 2026 (tentative)	Chapter Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
November 12, 2026	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!		

"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!**



The Academy of Lifelong Learning is back starting Fall 2025. Information on events or how to join their Facebook page can be found at the link below:

[Eastern Illinois University :: School of Extended Learning - Academy of Lifelong Learning](#)