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Spring, 2026

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President's Message



The success of the EIU Annuity Association has much to do with our partnerships and the contributions of our members. Eastern Illinois University's Annual Retirement Reception held on May 14th is an example of an ongoing partnership. The President's Office traditionally has provided us the opportunity to be part of the event's program, to welcome the newest group of EIU retirees and congratulate them as they embark on their well-deserved retirement. Along the way we also highlight the mission and value of SUAA membership, and in recent years this task has been made easier when we're introduced by a card-carrying member of our association—EIU President Jay Gatrell. His membership also is a reminder that we're not just an association of retirees but also for current employees concerned with protecting their hard-earned pensions and benefits.

We also benefit from our ongoing partnership with the EIU Foundation. EIUAA board and chapter meetings are held at the Neal Welcome Center, with its well-equipped conference room as an excellent setting for socializing, program presenters and discussion of agenda items. The Foundation has helped in additional important ways, including financial support for the fall social at the Charleston Country Club; a budget for miscellaneous costs such as printing recruitment/informational literature; and even some storage space for our records and documents. And now we have a recently retired EIU Foundation officer as our newest board member—Jonathan McKenzie. Seeing the EIUAA in action over the years convinced Jonathan of the value of SUAA membership and then acceptance of a nomination to join our chapter's board.

A healthy association requires participation well beyond board members and officers, and we definitely are strong in this area. We see this at each of our chapter meetings, which depend on having a good turnout for our program presenters—e.g., Professor Stacy Ruholl, Director of EIU Adult Fitness (February 2026) and Katie Anselment, EIU Director of Legislative Relations (October 2025). Our chapter’s members always come through for us, helping to allay our chronic pre-meeting turnout anxieties! And then there is what happens in the chapter’s committees.

While each committee is chaired by a board member (required by our constitution), we benefit greatly from contributions of non-board chapter members. This helps not only to get work done but to broaden the range of ideas and input. Here are a few examples. First, this newsletter owes much to the behind-the-scenes reminders and design work of Wendy Long, a chapter member on the Communications & Newsletter Committee (and Wendy also manages our website!). Or consider the Legislative Committee. By its nature, it requires a range of input when making sense of what’s happening in Springfield, and chapter committee members Andy McNitt and Jill Nilsen add experienced and insightful perspectives. As another example, each year we form a special audit committee to assist the chapter’s treasurer with the formal review of our finances required by SUAA, and we add balance to this ad hoc committee by recruiting a former board member. This year our chapter representative was Marita Metzke, who stepped into a role most likely would avoid due to its subject. If you’re interested in joining one of our committees, do not hesitate to let us know. Just check out our website for a full listing of the EIUAA committees. We’ll be glad to have your help!

In closing, thank you everyone for your role in keeping the EIU Annuitants Association strong and moving forward, and we look forward to seeing you at the July 9th chapter meeting (9:00 am at the Neal Welcome Center; social time starting at 8:30 am).

Congratulations to Dr. Keith Kohanzo!

(First posted to the EIUAA Facebook page by Melanie Mills)

One of our newest board members was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Education at the recent Spring Commencement for his life of impactful service to others. Keith’s charge to the graduates of 2026 after receiving the award is inspirational and reflective of his orientation to his work and mentorship of students and colleagues over his 34 years at Eastern — definitely worth watching and linked here (at the 47 minute mark): [EIU 2026 Spring Commencement 10 AM](#)



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!

EIUAA Upcoming Special/Upcoming Events

EIUAA Fall Social – Save the date!!



**4th Annual
EIU Annuitants
retired faculty & staff**

Fall Social

**Charleston Country Club
Thursday, September 3rd 2026
4-6pm**

**RSVP by August 24th
to Gloria Leitschuh**

**Email: gleitschuh@eiu.edu
Text: 217-549-3206**

**APPETIZERS
DOOR PRIZES
CASH BAR
PUTTING CONTEST**
(putters available, or bring your own)

The flyer features a background of autumn leaves and a golf club with a ball on a green.

The EIUAA Third Annual Fall Social will be held September 3, 2026 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Charleston Country Club. Come and meet old and new friends. Appetizers will be served and there will be a cash bar.

Please RSVP by August 24 to Gloria Leitschuh. gleitschuh@eiu.edu or text 217-549-3206

Hope to see you there!!!

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) and will receive regular email communications regarding upcoming events/webinars/seminars/etc. **If you are NOT receiving emails from SUAA, please reach out to any of our Committee Members so that we can make sure we have your correct email address!** For more information on what SUAA does, click here [About Us - State Universities Annuitants Association](#) or login to suaa.org and explore!

FAREWELLS

*Following are brief notices only. To read a full obituary or leave condolences, visit Legacy.com
www.jg-tc.com www.mitchell-jerdan.com www.adamsfuneralchapel.com*

Robert Wayne Banning, (Building Service Worker), age 76, of Charleston, passed away Thursday, February 5, 2026. He is survived by his wife Karen Sue Riddle. Also surviving are sons: Rob Lee (Niki) and Kevin Wayne (Brooke); eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Elizabeth Anne Cutright, (Acquisitions Dept), age 74, of Greenup, IL passed away March 11, 2026, at Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Care Center. She is also survived by her daughter, Lori Sparks (husband-Scott Shull), a grandson and three great-grandchildren as well as her brother.

Ruth Louise McNabb Dow, (Family & Consumer Sciences), age 91, died January 8, 2026. She is survived by her children Carol Dow Allen, Bruce Dow, and Linda Dow Griffith; eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Karla Kennedy-Hagan, (Family & Consumer Sciences), age 65, of Champaign, IL passed away Jan. 29, 2026. She is survived by her Dean Hagan; children, Hannah (Will), Cole (fiancé Hannah) Hagan and Connor Hagan and two grandchildren.

Martin Jerry Hardeman, (History), age 80 of [Winchester, Virginia](#) passed away on March 1, 2026. He is survived by his wife Clare L. McCulla and numerous nieces, nephews and grand-nieces and nephews.

Alice Jane (Krummel) McKinney, (Music), age 89, of Terre Haute, IN passed away on February 9, 2026. She is survived by her husband, Robert McKinney, two sons, Lyle Dorjahn and Alan Dorjahn and one daughter, Elizabeth (Dorjahn) Ledbetter. Alice had many grandchildren and great grandchildren. She also had three step-daughters and a step-son.

J.W. Sanders, (Physical Education), age 88, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, passed away February 19, 2026, He is survived by his daughters, Lynn Cash (Skyler and Austin) and Mary Sanders (Eric Hamilton) and several grandchildren.

Thomas Edgar Scism, (Political Science), age 95, of Charleston, IL. passed away December 25, 2025. He is survived by three children, Landon Scism, Bruce (Beth) Scism, and Pamela (Mike) Zachay; five grandchildren, several great grandchildren and honorary grandchildren.

Kathy Sue Simmons, (Administrative Assistant), age 67, of Charleston, IL passed away December 10, 2025. She is survived by her siblings, Debra Simmons, Sherry Robison (Rob), Donna Shull, Karen Lowry (Sean) and Robert A. Simmons (Liz) and many nieces and nephews.

Gale Edward Walker, (Economics), age 76, of Charleston, Illinois, passed away on Saturday, February 7, 2026. He is survived by his two children, Matthew (Laura "Dally") Walker and Marilyn (Mark) Kersh; his bonus daughter, Deena Mansfield; five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Tania Ward, (Academic Advising), age 34, of Charleston, IL passed away December 12, 2025. She is survived by her husband Ly’Jerrick and two children.

Richard B. Whitaker, (College of Business), age 74, of San Marcos, TX, passed away on January 11, 2026. Richard is survived by his wife, Mary Margaret “Peggy” Parker; his daughter Kate Whitaker (Jake); his son Richard R. Whitaker (fiancée Jessica Harsono), his brother Barry B. Whitaker.

Alice Jane (Krummel) McKinney, (Music), age 89, of Terre Haute, IN passed away on February 9, 2026. She is survived by her husband, Robert McKinney, two sons, Lyle Dorjahn and Alan Dorjahn and one daughter, Elizabeth (Dorjahn) Ledbetter. Alice had many grandchildren and great grandchildren. She also had three step-daughters and a step-son.

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 contacted Katie Anselment, EIU’s Legislative Relations Director, and she has agreed to speak at the October 8th meeting of the EIUAA.

Major Legislation from Spring 2026 Session

1. SB1937

SB 1937 is the bill that SUAA currently supports to enhance the benefits of Tier II members. While SUAA believe the better solution would be eliminating Tier II, at a minimum, benefits must be increased so they offer real retirement security for Tier II members, functional human

resource solutions to colleges and universities, and comply with federal law regarding minimum benefits for non-social security covered employees. The legislation that SUAA and a broad coalition of organizations (including a statewide group of labor unions called the “We Are One Coalition”) support is SB1937. This legislation has failed to move out of the House. Although it has many legislative supporters and would likely be passed by both the House and the Senate, the Governor continues to withhold his support for the legislation. Governor Pritzker’s major complaint remains the cost of these benefit increases.

2. HB 4892

HB 4892 was legislation filed last year that provides a “deferred retirement” for certain SURS members. Essentially, for individuals who are retirement eligible, but wish to continue to work, they can take advantage of the program to have their benefits accrue for them in a tax qualified retirement account and continue to work. This option takes advantage of certain federal tax laws and can be beneficial for many individuals. This benefit is often called a “DROP” or deferred retirement option plan. This plan helps employers retain employees and offers SURS members another option when planning for retirement. Unfortunately, it was not passed this year because it is tied up in the broader tier II conversations.

3. SB 3413

SB 3413 is an initiative of SUAA that would create a new communication framework at the Illinois Department of Central Management Services (CMS), the administrator of healthcare benefits for university and college retirees. The legislation creates the “Office of the Ombudsman” at CMS. This is designed as a one-stop office so that members of the healthcare systems can get any answers related to their healthcare benefits. It is also intended as an advocacy office when dealing with the many third-party contractors that administer health insurance on behalf of CMS. This legislation was filed this year and conversations related to this legislation occurred in both in the Senate, where the bill was filed, as well as with influential members of House Leadership. SUAA will continue to work on this issue with hope of passing it in the 105th General Assembly.

4. HB 5134

HB 5134 was initially introduced to clarify how SURS shares data and conducts mailings and email with SUAA. This legislation, while largely technical, was intended to provide better information to recently retired and soon-to-retire individuals who work or worked at Illinois state colleges and state universities. SUAA had meetings with SURS, who ultimately had concerns with the underlying legislation but also were able to answer questions and ultimately provide a better pathway for SUAA to move forward. These conversations with SURS also

provided guidance that should help to make sure that future SURS board will be expanded to better represents the broad diversity in employment and experience of all SUAA members.

5. Other Legislation

Like last year a bill that would have allowed community colleges in Illinois to offer a specific number of bachelor's degrees when certain conditions are met, did not pass. In addition, although EIU and other state universities in Illinois were pushing for a change to their funding formula, similar to how the state funds K-12 schools. Illinois lawmakers, who heard fierce opposition to that plan from the University of Illinois, kept the system the same and gave higher education a 1% increase.

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

Submitted by John Willems, Chair
Legislative Committee

Scholarship Committee

Due to the generosity of the annuitants, we are able to award three scholarships this year - two \$1000 awards and one \$500 award. The recipients are:

Marissa Boyer - Junior majoring in Nursing in the traditional program. Plans include graduation in May of 2028. Parent Matt Boyer is a current EIU employee. Marissa received a \$1000 award.

Ashton Coleman - Senior majoring in Early Childhood Education. Plans include graduation in May of 2027. EIU relations include Melissa Coleman, parent and Joseph Beals, grandparent. Ashton received a \$1000 award.

Makenna McBride - Senior majoring in Spanish (Teacher Licensure). Plans include graduation in December of 2026. EIU relations include grandfather John Craft. Makenna received a \$500 award.

Submitted by Kathy Reed, Chair
Scholarship Committee

Membership Committee

Once again, our membership numbers have remained steady for several months. We would like to see more members at our Chapter Meetings and Special Events. Our Chapter Meetings are not overly long, and we usually have a guest speaker (and treats ☺). There are three Chapter Meetings per year (dates can be found in the Calendar below) and at least one Special

Event each year (see information above about the upcoming Fall Social). Information for each of these can be found on the EIUAA website, Facebook and/or email. Remember that membership is open to current EIU employees as well as Annuitants!

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](#). Also, if you would be interested in serving on this committee (or any of our committees) reach out to us!

I am still keeping an eye on the email transition situation so if you are not receiving emails from us, please reach out to annuitants@eiu.edu or me (Wendy Long) at wllongeiu@gmail.com so I can verify your email address! Just an FYI – I know everyone gets a ton of spam/junk messages, etc. We don't send a lot of messages and EIUAA emails will almost always come from annuitants@eiu.edu! (Sometimes I forget and send one from my wllong@eiu.edu account – oops 😊)

Submitted by Wendy Long, Membership Committee

EIUAA OFFICERS

Rich Wandling	rwandling@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>

BOARD MEMBERS - 2026

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

COMMITTEES

Communications: Melanie Mills (Chair), Wendy Long

Events: Gloria Leitschuh (Chair), Melanie Mills

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

Membership: Judy Gorrell, Wendy Long

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

CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	VENUE
July 9, 2026	Chapter Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
September 3, 2026*	Special Event	4th Annual Fall Social
September 10, 2026	Board Meeting	Neal Welcome Center
October 8, 2026	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!		

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 members 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.