



# WIU Chapter - SUAA Newsletter

Serving the interest of the annuitants and survivors of Western Illinois University

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August 2023

## 2023 SUAA Fall Luncheon

Noon • Tuesday, Oct. 10

Wesley United Methodist Church  
1212 W. Calhoun St. • Macomb

### Menu

Baked Potato Bar with condiments

Green salad

Hot rolls/butter

Pumpkin pie with whipped cream

Coffee, tea, and water

Cost is \$15 per person

**WIU President Guiyou Huang is scheduled to speak.**

Please use the cutoff form below to send  
your reservation(s) and check(s) by the **Oct. 2 deadline.**

## 2023 SUAA Fall Luncheon Reservation Form

I/we plan to attend the Oct. 10 Fall Luncheon at noon.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check(s) payable to: WIU SUAA**

**Please RSVP by Monday, Oct 2 to:**

Judi Dallinger

800 Briarwood Dr.

Macomb, IL 61455

Email: J-Dallinger@wiu.edu

## Message from the President

Deckle McLean

Welcome to another year with your gradually shrinking WIU SUAA chapter. We had a chapter membership of 522 in April 2022, 502 in January 2023, and 496 in May 2023. But in July 2007 our membership was 723, and in July 2013 726.

As a result, you will hear a lot about membership this year, starting with this newsletter. Probably we all can do something about this. One easy way to recruit is to just talk up SUAA when doing so fits gracefully into conversations. The three groups of people from which we most need to recruit are: new WIU retirees; current employees about to retire; and current employees thinking ahead to retirement. Current faculty, administration, and staff have a place in the chapter. Membership presents a challenge statewide for the SUAA.

Also on the agenda for the coming year will be assisting the university when possible in its efforts to increase enrollment and retention; keeping watch on statewide pension developments even though Illinois is doing well presently in managing and funding its pension plans; keeping up contacts with WIU administrative offices, including those of the president, provost, and foundation officials; and, tracking any changes or difficulties that arise regarding the state's healthcare plans for state employees and retirees.

The board looks forward to seeing you at fall, winter, and spring events.

Thank you for your support.

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## SUAA Foundation

Judy Brown

Do you want to protect your insurance benefits and retirement benefits?

Do you want to be eligible to apply for scholarships or offer your children and grandchildren the opportunity to apply for scholarships annually?

(SUAA Foundation, continued)

Do you, as a current employee, want to apply for assistance in attending conferences/workshops that will improve your skills in your current position?

Do you want to know about the Survivor Assistance Program?

Do you want to be eligible for emergency financial assistance if an event occurs in which you need funds to cope with a crisis situation?

Retirees – do you want to keep up your affiliation with WIU?

If you can answer YES to any of the above questions, then you need to seek out the SUAA Foundation and the organization that addresses all of the above questions?

The WIU Foundation offers six \$1,000 scholarships and two \$1,000 professional development awards annually. The Foundation also supports the Emergency Assistance Program and the Survivor Assistance Program.

Here are some additional discounted membership benefits for SUAA Members: ASPCA Pet Insurance, Office Depot & Office Max, Singlecare (Prescription Discounts), TNT FunJet Vacation, HotelEngine, LifeLock, CruisesOnly.

More information about SUAA and the Foundation can be accessed by clicking the following link:  
[www.SUAA.org](http://www.SUAA.org)

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## Legislative Update

Nick Pano

Governor Pritzker on June 7 signed into law the Illinois FY 2024 state budget. On paper, at least, the budget appears to be balanced with anticipated revenues of \$50.6 billion and projected expenditures of \$50.4 billion. Given the Democratic supermajorities in both houses of the Illinois General Assembly, it is not surprising that this budget reflects the spending priorities proposed by the governor in his February budget message.

## (Legislative Update, continued)

These areas include: higher and K-12 public education, human services, community and economic development, and infrastructure upgrades.

In respect to higher education, Pritzker has proposed a seven (7) percent increase for the state's public universities and community colleges. The FY24 budget increases the appropriation for the needs-based Monetary Assistance Program (MAP) to a record \$701 million and that for the merit-based AIM-HIGH program to \$50 million. Both these programs provide financial assistance to enable greater numbers of Illinois high school graduates to continue their education. Additional funds have also been allocated for the Minority Teacher Scholarship Program and the Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois initiative.

The State of Illinois will again this year provide its share of the required annual payment to all the public employee pension systems. And, as was the case last year, the state will pay an additional \$200 million into the pension funds. Although the Pritzker administration has made the effort over the past several years to meet the state's current pension obligations, Illinois still has one of the highest unfunded public pension liabilities (c. \$140 billion) in the United States. And a recent S&P Ratings report warns that the state must soon begin to confront its pension indebtedness problem or risk it becoming intractable.

The budget provides continuing funding for our health benefits. And, as most of you probably know, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled in 2014 that state retiree health care benefits are covered by the State of Illinois Constitution pension protection clause and "cannot either be impaired or diminished."

Although WIU will be receiving a 7 percent increase in its state appropriated funding, FY24 will nonetheless be a difficult one for Western. The added funds will apparently be insufficient to offset the impact of inflation and the anticipated decline in revenues from non-appropriated sources owing to the expected drop in enrollment and other factors, including possible

costs to the university arising from the recently concluded faculty collective bargaining agreement.

Two new members joined the WIU Board of Trustees at its March 2023 meeting. Kirk Dillard is a well-known WIU alumnus with a wealth of experience in both the public and private sectors. He served as a student member of the former Board of Governors during his undergraduate years at Western. Also joining the Board at this critical period for WIU is Derek Wise, a retired high-ranking Illinois State Police official.

Western's representation in Springfield will also be changing with the appointment of Zach Messersmith as the university's Director of Governmental Relations. He brings a wealth of experience to this position both as an Illinois State Senate staff member and more recently as the Director of Government Relations for the Illinois Association of School Boards. Messersmith will be WIU's lobbyist in Springfield and serve as an advisor on legislative issues to Western's president and Board of Trustees.

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## Membership

Linda Farr

SUAA member numbers are dropping. We need to recruit new members and regain those who have dropped their membership. SUAA offers so much valuable information to its members and the cost is very reasonable for the benefits received. Please encourage retirees and current employees that are not members to join, they won't be sorry they did.

If you know someone who is interested, please have them reach out to [ls-farr@wiu.edu](mailto:ls-farr@wiu.edu), I will be glad to speak with them. A downloadable membership form is available on WIU's website at [wiu.edu/suaa](http://wiu.edu/suaa), scroll down and click on "Membership."

If you are an SUAA member and plan to retire soon, please contact SURS, you can have your dues withdrawn from your retirement check.

## SUAA Member Information Changes

If you have a change in your home address, email or telephone number(s), please contact the WIU Alumni Office with this information so that you continue to Receive newsletters and other updates from your WIU SUAA Board.

Contact the Alumni Office at:

Phone: 309-298-1914

Email: [A-Association@wiu.edu](mailto:A-Association@wiu.edu)

You can also complete the online form at: [wiu.edu/alumni](http://wiu.edu/alumni) and click on "Update Us" in the left column.

## WIU SUAA Benefits

A main purpose of the WIU chapter of the State University Annuitants Association (SUAA) is to promote the individual and collective interests and welfare of **annuitants and prospective annuitants**.

The mission statement, in part, of SUAA on its website at [suaa.org](http://suaa.org) is: "... (SUAA) provides the framework for a unified message dedicated to preserving and protecting a strong public pension system, healthcare benefits, higher education, and the general well-being of its membership."

See more about SUAA at [suaa.org](http://suaa.org) and at [wiu.edu/SUAA](http://wiu.edu/SUAA).

State Universities Annuitants Association  
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