



Developments

This issue profiles individuals who have chosen to share their resources with Western Illinois University. The desire of these individuals to share their success with the University touches the lives of students on both of Western's campuses.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE: WIU Legacies; Wife Surprises Retired Broadcasting Professor with Endowed Scholarship



WIU Graduates' Planned Gift Establishes Three Scholarships at WIU

Tom '74 and Alice Berntson '74 met in a Western Illinois University German class in 1972. The then-juniors were enrolled in the same class due to a requirement in Tom's major (chemistry) and Alice's desire to learn another language (she had already taken Spanish and French courses). Less than two years later, the couple graduated from Western and soon left for Europe, where they traveled for two months. They returned to go to graduate school, Tom at Iowa State, and Alice at WIU. Within a few years both had earned master's degrees at Iowa State.

And now, they want to help Western students who are taking courses in the same classrooms they sat in more than 40 years ago. The Berntsons established three scholarships to help students who could not otherwise complete their education at Western.

The Berntsons have named the WIU Foundation as a beneficiary of a planned gift valued at 20 percent of their estate. With that sizeable sum, they will establish the Tom J. Berntson Scholarship for Chemistry Endowment, the Alice Robison Berntson Scholarship for Psychology Endowment and the Tom J. and Alice R. Berntson Scholarship for Foreign Languages Endowment.

Tom began his academic career at WIU as a pre-med major, with the help of a state of Illinois scholarship, but was inspired by several chemistry professors, especially Norbert Goeckner, to change his major to chemistry. Now, he wants to provide opportunities for others to be able to pursue their passion in science.

"WIU allowed us to grow academically and socially. As time went on, we realized how important WIU was to our success in life. We have a lot of fond memories of fun with friends and being at Lake Argyle," said Tom.

Tom's scholarship will provide at least two scholarships to juniors or seniors majoring in chemistry.

Alice found psychology fascinating after following in her sister's footsteps by taking a psychology class in high school, so she decided to continue studying the field at the college level. She ultimately graduated with a bachelor's in psychology from WIU and later obtained her master's degree in industrial relations at Iowa State University.

Alice attributes her desire to provide scholarships for future generations to her parents.

"When I was growing up, my parents talked a lot about supporting their alma mater schools. Education was supremely important to them," Alice added. "So now, decades later, Tom and I have been fortunate to have had successful careers. Combined with a measure of frugality, and no children, what are we going to do with all this money we've accumulated?"



Alice and Tom Berntson

Together, they mapped out a list of 13 non-profits they wanted to support, and WIU was included, high on that list. Why so high on that list?

"We are Leathernecks, need I say more?" she said.

Thanks to the Berntsons, this scholarship will be awarded to a minimum of two junior or senior psychology majors.

The third scholarship, in foreign languages, brings this story full circle.

"If it wasn't for foreign languages, we would have never met," said Tom.

It will fund a minimum of two scholarships to juniors or seniors at Western majoring in foreign languages. The Berntsons established this scholarship to benefit other WIU students who share their passion of traveling the world and their interest in foreign languages. ♦



WIU Legacies

When one walks down the halls of Sherman Hall, sits in the seats at Western Hall or passes by what once stood as Morgan Gymnasium, it's easy to recall the names of those who helped build this great University. Hanson, Grote, Beu, Henninger ... they left their mark on WIU decades ago. Now in its third century of existence, Western has many others who have left their mark. The names Brattain, Wehrly and Engnell can be added to the list of distinguished contributors who positively impacted the WIU community.

Bill Brattain, commonly referred to as "Dr. B," advised thousands of students during his tenure as director of the Office of Student Activities and the University Union, a position he held for more than 24 years. One of those students was Brian O'Connell, president of Live Nation Country Touring. O'Connell said that Dr. B was the only reason he stayed in college as he was fairly disinterested in anything that involved the "going to school" part.

"Once he sat me down and explained to me that without that part you didn't get to have the fun part, well, obviously, it worked. He was not judgmental, nor dismissive," O'Connell remembered. "Our relationship was really that of an accomplished professional treating an idiot 18-year-old with respect, and through that he taught me how to know the difference between patronizing someone and respecting them ... teaching involves patience, seeing potential involves skill, what Dr. B possessed was 'the patience of Job' and the skill of a marksman, truly a rare combination."

Dr. B also loved being in the entertainment business. While he was never over the top about his connections, according to O'Connell, everyone knew that there was

this guy in Macomb, IL, who ran a good shop. He attracted entertainers, and the WIU community benefited from his work.

When asked if WIU is better off thanks to the work of Dr. B, O'Connell replied, "I would put it this way, if WIU decided to create a Mt. Rushmore of sorts, Dr. B would be on it."

Brattain passed away in December 2015 at the age of 77. Family and friends remembered Dr. B by contributing to



Bill Brattain

the William "Dr. B" and Jacquie Brattain Transfer Scholarship, a fund that was established by the Brattains in 2011 to provide scholarships for transfer students from McDonough, Hancock or Schuyler counties.

On the academic side, Jim Wehrly is a name known by most Western agriculture graduates. Professionally, Wehrly was an agricultural finance professor who started teaching at WIU in 1969. He continued to do so until he retired in 1992.

"Jim was a good friend and stellar role model," said Julie Murphy '94 MS '95, retired director of donor relations. "He was a passionate and caring professor; he most certainly lived simply and was quite generous throughout his lifetime. His wicked sense of humor stayed with him as his body failed. His mind was razor sharp until the end, and he always wanted news of his beloved Western Illinois University."

Having worked in higher education, Wehrly knew the importance of a college education.

"Both Wehrlys (including his wife, Beatrice Wehrly) started saving for scholarships early in their careers at \$25 a month, grew their savings and went on to donate these savings to establish (a total of five) scholarships and become two of the University's largest donors," recalled Murphy. "The scholarships, intended to assist students



Beatrice and Jim Wehrly

financially and allow them to concentrate on their academics, have already helped countless students and will continue to do so into perpetuity."

Jim and Bea were both longtime WIU faculty members, and Bea was noted as a pioneer in cross-cultural counseling and women in counseling. They created the Bea and Jim Wehrly Scholarship, the Wehrly Book Scholarship, the Bea Wehrly Study Abroad Scholarship, the Educators for Tomorrow Scholarship and the Jim Wehrly Agriculture Finance Scholarship at WIU. Their legacy will live on through these many scholarships, helping WIU students obtain a college degree for generations to come.



Bruce Engnell

Another familiar face in the School of Agriculture was Bruce A. Engnell, who served agriculture students for nearly 45 years. Engnell came to WIU in 1967 to manage the swine teaching herd, the boar station and coach the Intercollegiate Livestock Judging Team. He also served as the manager of the entire University Farm operation. He retired in 2011. A former student of his, Monte Lowderman '90, knew Engnell in a number of ways.

Lowderman remembers Engnell as a “grandfather” to the students, and as a man who was both humble and soft spoken. He said that Engnell had a special way about him that made his students not only want to do good for themselves, but also make him proud.

“Bruce left a lifelong stamp on the agriculture program at WIU, a legacy built by respect, honor and character and always doing the right thing. Bruce was WIU agriculture. He was well-respected and known throughout the country in the livestock and swine industries,” Lowderman added.

Engnell served as a judge for many county, regional, state, national and international shows, where people also knew him as the livestock judging team coach from Western Illinois University.

Engnell passed away in November 2015. His legacy will forever be remembered at WIU at the University’s Livestock Center, where a memorial tree and carved stone now stand. These items were dedicated in his memory in April. At that time, alumni of the WIU Livestock Judging Team and the School of Agriculture gathered together to remember this special mentor of theirs. His

legacy lives on due to the creation of the Bruce A. Engnell Ag Scholarship, thanks to the generosity of many former students and staff.

“It’s impossible to think of Dr. B, Jim Wehrly or Bruce Engnell and not think of Western Illinois University in the same thought. Each left a different mark on this institution, but each will have a lasting impact. WIU is better off thanks to the work of these three pioneers in their respected fields,” stated Brad Bainter ’79 MS ’83, vice president for Advancement and Public Services. ♦



Wife Surprises Retired Broadcasting Professor with an Endowed Scholarship

A nice watch ... an engraved clock ... a plaque noting one’s years of work ... all of these items are typical gifts one receives when he or she retires. But, for long-time WIU broadcasting and journalism Professor Sam Edsall, his retirement gift was a bit more unique.

Edsall’s wife, Anne, surprised him at his retirement reception with the announcement that she had fully endowed a scholarship in his name.

“I just wanted to give some recognition to his 27 years of hard work here at Western and have some type of lasting recognition to honor him,” said Anne.

It was a process to keep this secret from Sam as Anne worked with Julie Baker ’05 and the College of Fine Arts and Communication to establish the Samuel H. Edsall Endowed Scholarship.

Sam recalled Baker’s speech during the retirement reception, “She started saying all these wonderful platitudes, which you kind of expect at a retirement reception. Then she dropped the bomb saying that a scholarship—a fully endowed scholarship—was created in my name. And I’m standing there with the dean and my mouth just dropped to the floor. I had no idea this was coming.”

Beginning Fall 2016, the annual scholarship will be awarded to a senior pursuing a bachelor’s degree in broadcasting, who specializes in television. Broadcasting student Emily Manley, from Highland, IL, will receive the first award.

“She is maximizing her experience, and that’s the kind of person I’m really interested in awarding—someone that doesn’t just come to get a degree; they come to get an experience, as much experience as possible,” said Sam.

The award amount will vary, based on the annual interest earnings, with a minimum award of \$1,000. The Edsalls believe the monetary award will not be the only benefit of receiving this scholarship.

“I think some recognition goes a long way. When you realize that your hard work is noticed, recognized and rewarded, then that would help you continue on,” Sam said.

Having worked in the department for almost three decades, Sam knows there are a number of incentives to bring incoming freshmen into the program, but this scholarship will help those students already in the broadcasting department, a demographic where more scholarship money is needed.

“The nice thing about Western is that it’s a place where you can get a really good education without the king’s ransom. And that’s important to me. Perhaps even your parents didn’t have the chance to go to college, but at this state institution, you have a chance to earn a degree, to learn things that you won’t get from high school, to better yourself, to learn what it means to be a responsible citizen ... to have integrity, to take care of yourself,” stated Sam.

Anne, a retired counselor, said education is very important to them both and they want to give to organizations they value, such as their church, animal groups and education, specifically WIU.

“It is very satisfying to me to see that the impact that Sam has had on his students’ lives at Western won’t end with his retirement. He will continue to impact students in perpetuity because of Anne’s wonderful idea and generosity,” said Brad Bainter ’79 MS ’83, vice president for Advancement and Public Services.

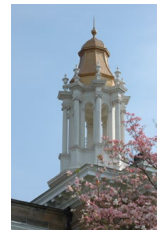
The humble professor, who doesn’t like to toot his own horn, according to his wife, is really proud of how this scholarship will help students for years to come.

Sam plans to return to campus each spring for the department banquet, where he will present the award to the scholarship recipient, allowing them to put a face with a name when receiving the Edsall scholarship. ♦



Anne and Sam Edsall

Kohler-Esters CSP Scholarship Established at WIU



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Kellie Kohler-Esters MS '93 has spent more than a decade raising funds for Western Illinois University as a member of the WIU Foundation team. But the tables have turned for this fundraiser who is now establishing a scholarship for future College Student Personnel (CSP) graduate students.

"I have worked in development most of my professional career, and I have worked with hundreds of donors who have paid it forward by giving back to help others. Fortunately, I am in a position to be able to put my money where my mouth is and do the same thing I have asked so many before me to do, and that is to help pave the way for others," stated Esters.

Esters came from a family of seven children, and her older siblings all went into the military because they did not think a college education was something their parents could afford. Knowing she was not military material, she looked into attending college and learned she was eligible for financial assistance, student loans and scholarships.

"Without these needed resources, I would have never been able to attend college. Someone made my path to obtaining a college education a little easier, and I want to do the same for future promising students who might think a college education is not possible," said Esters.

The Kellie Kohler-Esters College Student Personnel Scholarship will be awarded annually to a CSP graduate student pursuing the student affairs tract. Esters, who completed her degree in 1993, was part of a nationally recognized CSP program at Western Illinois University as a graduate student. Now, she wants this scholarship to help CSP students who are pursuing a degree focused on areas other than residence life since most of those students receive assistance to cover their room and meal plan, along with a monthly stipend.



Kellie Esters

"Kellie has spent numerous years working to raise funds for WIU scholarships to help students. She knows first-hand how important scholarship support is. I am grateful she is creating her own scholarship to assist CSP students," said Brad Bainter '79 MS '83, vice president for advancement and public services.

With the dramatic decrease in state funding, the need for scholarship support is more crucial than ever before, Esters said. Funding a scholarship endowment is one way to provide critical financial support for outstanding students—to help make their Western education a reality. ♦

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