



# THE AUAR NEWSLETTER

The Association of The University of Akron Retirees

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## President's Message

### The Challenge of Change

Wishing everyone a year of growth, success, and satisfaction in the coming year. Each new year gives us an opportunity to review our past and contemplate the future. In that way we can review our earlier life experiences and use them to look to the future. This clearly involves the dynamic of change: how we have changed over the years, how the cultural surround has changed, how the significant others in our lives have changed, and how our university has changed over the years.

When I have returned to my alma mater Bard College for reunions (hard to believe this year will be my 60<sup>th</sup>), long-serving President Leon Botstein reminds alumni that the college we attended is not the same college that exists today. And I might argue that is what we would want to happen, nostalgia aside. In the same way, our university has undergone and is undergoing significant change. Many of us have developed and supported programs for many years, and it is difficult to see them change over time. There are many forces affecting higher education today. Changing demographics, lack of state funding for higher education at appropriate levels, changing needs and wants of students of all ages are some of the issues. In spite of this challenge of change, AUAR wants to support the evolving university.

President Nemer came in December to speak at our holiday lunch. In a note to me he wrote "It was my pleasure to meet with the retirees group on Wednesday and provide a University update. It's certainly energizing to know that dedicated UA retirees have a deep concern about this great University." AUAR has an important role by providing institutional memory and speaking up for what we believe are important issues. A challenge for the coming Spring will be how to support the University in these changing times. There are still many opportunities on campus--lectures, concerts, plays, sporting events, and performances. There continue to be opportunities for study with the 60-Plus Program and continuing access to the library, recreation center, IT, and discounts at the bookstore.

I want to thank everyone for allowing me to be President for the last two years, and I need to express my sincere thanks to those who have served on the Executive Committee. Richard Steiner will be the next President. Let's all give him our support. This is another example of change.



Regards to all, Harvey

**Harvey Sterns**  
**President 2024 – 2025**

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# Fall Semester Senate Report

**During the Spring Semester 2024, the activities of the Faculty Senate included the following:**

- Welcomed President Nemer and learned about the search process.
- Approved a resolution from the Accessibility Committee to encourage faculty to include the Office of Accessibility's syllabus statement on all syllabi.
- Ratified the summer action of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to approve a list of proposals brought by the Curriculum Review Committee.
- Approved further lists of courses and programs brought by the Curriculum Review Committee.
- Met informally with President and Provost regarding strategic planning.
- Discussed a proposal to add some flexibility to the General Education curriculum. More action is expected the spring.
- Tabled action on a revision to the method of reporting interim grades in 100 and 200 level courses.
- Discussed the impact of retrenchment scenarios.
- Ratified the Faculty Senate Executive Committee's approval of summer degree candidates and approved fall degree candidates.

*For more details, please visit the Faculty Senate web page at [uakron.edu](http://uakron.edu)*

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## Thank You from the Campus Cupboard

*On behalf of the Campus Cupboard and the students we serve, we thank the AUAR Retirees for the generous donations to the Campus Cupboard in November. ZipAssist appreciates your support in helping to meet our students' needs. Items donated include 118 food items, 1 sanitary product, 40 hygiene items, and 1 miscellaneous item for a total of 160 items.*

**Student Testimonial:** *Access to the Campus Cupboard has been LIFE CHANGING for many people including myself at The University of Akron. It has been a great fallback for me as I often struggle to afford to live, especially in times of unemployment. It is very difficult to find a job that pays enough to afford to live on your own and the Campus Cupboard has been the only way I can eat. Thank you to everyone who has made this possible. -D.F.*

*For more information about ZipAssist services and programs, please visit [www.uakron.edu/zipassist](http://www.uakron.edu/zipassist)*

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## Membership Update!

Following your name on the mailing label, you will see a code designating your membership status. **L** stands for life members, **P** stands for paid members and **C** stands for complimentary members, available for new retirees. Following P or C is a number representing the year in June in which your membership expires.

So, if you see a number 24, that means that your membership expired on June 30, 2024, and this is the last newsletter that you will receive unless you renew.

Renewing is easy. You can use the form on the back of this newsletter or go to [uakron.edu/auar](http://uakron.edu/auar) and click on RENEW. All major credit cards are accepted.

Currently we have 145 paid members. Don't miss out. **RENEW TODAY!**

*- Mel Vye, Membership Chair*

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## UA Press Discount Offer for AUAR Members

In appreciation of the many AUAR supporters of The University of Akron Press, we would like to offer another benefit to add to membership in AUAR. This offer is a standard **30%** off the price of any book we publish using the discount code of AUAR30 when ordering from us on our website. There is no time limit on this discount.

Over the years we have provided many programs for your meetings and want to recognize and support a strong retirees group by making this offer.

*- Julia Gammon, Marketing Manager  
The University of Akron Press*

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## Alert!

The email [@1870.uakron.edu](mailto:@1870.uakron.edu) is being discontinued on July 1, 2025. Any retiree who has this email should inform AUAR of his or her new email. Please send your new email address to [mvye@uakron.edu](mailto:mvye@uakron.edu)



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# September Luncheon Speaker

## Dr. Gregory Wilson

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### President Sterns introduces Dr. Wilson



On September 18 (Harvey Sterns' birthday) Dr. Gregory Wilson, a Distinguished Professor of History at The University of Akron, discussed his work with graduate students to create new entries for the digital history project, Green Book Cleveland. The "Green Book," published by Victor H. Green and his wife Alma, was produced between 1936 and 1966 to help Black motorists find courteous service and avoid harassment or the embarrassment of rejection in their travels.

Victor Hugo Green (November 4, 1892 – October 16, 1960) was an American postal worker and travel writer from the Harlem area of New York City. In the 1930s, he began compiling information on stores, motels, and gas stations in the New York area that welcomed Black travelers. His guide became so popular that he soon expanded its coverage to other U.S. cities and added information on hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

After retiring from the postal service, Green continued to update issues of the "Green Book," which was originally entitled "The Negro Motorist Green Book." In addition, he established a Vacation Reservation Service, which served as a travel agency for booking reservations at Black-owned establishments. He normally published 15,000 copies per year of the "Green Book" and later included international destinations in Mexico and Bermuda.

You may recall the 2018 movie, "The Green Book," starring Viggo Mortenson and Mahershala Ali. The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. The movie received Oscars for Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor (Ali), and Best Screen Play in 2019.

The University of Akron Project, which added to the digital site, provided locations and preserved stories of Black leisure and entertainment in Northeast Ohio. Dr. Wilson and his students added over forty entries for Akron. An example is the Mathews Hotel. The hotel, owed and operated by George Mathews, was a regular stop for Black entertainers such as Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie when they performed at local music clubs such as The High Hat, Green Tuttle, and Cosmopolitan.



**Gift Presentation**

With the city of Akron celebrating its bicentennial, the Green Book Project adds an important element to the history of the Akron area.

Dr. Wilson joined The University of Akron faculty in 2001 after earning his PhD from The Ohio State University. He has authored four books and numerous articles and reviews. He specializes in recent U.S. and Ohio history with interests in political, environmental, labor, and oral history. In 2024, Dr. Wilson was the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement in Research & Creative Activity Award from the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences.



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## Campus Cupboard Donations

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At the October luncheon meeting, AUAR members donated a load of goods to the UA Campus Cupboard, which helps periodically to meet students' daily living needs. Kody Meade, who works at the Cupboard, assisted Tom Vukovich and Rita Klein to unload donations. Should you wish to donate, go to [www.uakron.edu/cupboard](http://www.uakron.edu/cupboard)

**Tom Vukovich, Rita Klein and Kody Meade**

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# October Luncheon

## Once a Teacher, Always a Teacher

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### Dick Steiner speaks on Teaching and Touring in Portugal



One positive aspect of being a retired educator is having the flexibility to accept interesting teaching opportunities that “come out of the blue.” Dr. Richard (Dick) Steiner, Professor Emeritus, Department of Statistics at The University of Akron and his wife, Carolyn, recently had such an experience. Dick shared their story with us at the October AUAR luncheon.

A woman friend from their church, who had taught at the Greater Lisbon Christian Academy located in a suburb north of Lisbon, Portugal, approached Dick one Sunday and asked, “How would you like to teach eighth and ninth grade math and Algebra I and II in Portugal?” The school’s math teacher had an accident with his motorcycle and needed time off to recuperate. Just two weeks later, Dick and Carolyn arrived in Portugal to begin their new adventure.

Dick used the period before their flight to brush up on his knowledge of algebra, having been away from that subject since his own days in high school. During his power-point presentation, Dick showed us photos of the school, the students and his colleagues, his apartment, and many of the places they visited while on this assignment.

The school had only 33 students in grades one through twelve. Dick enjoyed small classes of three to six students. What a luxury! Carolyn helped out in the school’s office and aided the elementary school teachers as needed.

Life in their small but comfortable apartment was enjoyable. Most people spoke English and the use of “Google Translator” was helpful when buying groceries in the nearby market. Learning about local foods and traditions such as salted Arctic cod fish, which was sold from open baskets with no cover or wrapping, was just one of their discoveries. There was a modern mall not far away with two levels of shops and a huge “Jumbotron” television screen in the main lobby. Carolyn appreciated having the feel of Summit Mall so close by!

In addition to enjoying life in and around Lisbon and teaching, the Steiners took advantage of opportunities to travel around the country.

Portugal gained its independence from the Moors in 1139. What followed was a succession of rulers, many of whom supported exploration of the new world. One notable Portuguese explorer was Vasco de Gama, who discovered the sea route to India, bringing much wealth to Portugal via the spice trade.



**An umbrella for Dr. Steiner**

### Dick showed photos of many of the places the visited including the following.

1. Travesa de Santa Maria – A Catholic church dating to the eleven hundreds and said to be founded by the Knights Templar.
2. Pena Castle – A former monastery converted to a castle by King Ferdinand II in the 19th century.
3. Caves and caverns of Mira de Aires.
4. Monastery of Jeronimus – Built by money from the spice trade. The tomb of Vasco de Gama is located here.
5. Obidos – A walled city built around 1148 with beautiful narrow streets and quaint houses and gift shops.
6. The Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon – It houses one of the world’s most important private art collections, including works from ancient Egypt to the early 20th century.
7. The Oceanarium, also in Lisbon – It contains sea creatures, plants, birds, and mammals totaling about 16,000 individual organisms of 450 species.
8. Natural beauty was everywhere as evidenced by Dick’s many photos with views from the Peniche Peninsula, jutting out into the Atlantic Ocean and Cabo de Roca, the western most point in Europe with its craggy cliffs and high bluffs also on the Atlantic Ocean coastline.

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9. One of the most bizarre places visited was the Church of St. Francis and Chapel of Bones in Evora. The walls and sides of the chapel are made up of human bones and skulls exhumed from the graves of the monks who lived there.
10. We also learned about cork production from cork oak trees. The trees can replace their bark in nine years and be ready for harvest again. About 62% of the world's cork production comes from Portugal. Think about that the next time you open a bottle of wine!

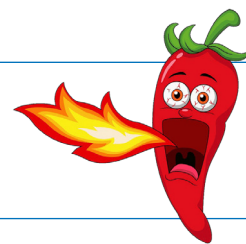
Dick summed up their adventure by saying, "We met some wonderful people and were treated to some of the sights and culture of this beautiful country. Living and working in Portugal for those three months was an experience we will never forget."

Dick Steiner earned his BS degree in biology and general science from Grove City College. His first teaching job was at Porterville Christian School in western Pennsylvania where he taught all of the secondary level science courses. Later he pursued graduate studies at Clarion University of Pennsylvania and The University of Michigan, where he earned his Master's and PhD degrees in Biostatistics. Dick joined the University of Akron in 1983 and retired from the Department of Statistics in 2018. Dick and Carolyn live in Fairlawn and have two sons, Ben and David, who live in the Akron area.

We look forward to hearing about their second tour of duty in Portugal. Dick is considering an offer to teach history courses at the same school in 2025.



## November Soup and Chili Supper



**Dining and socializing**

Soup, and Martha Vye's Butternut Squash and Apple Soup. These main dishes were complimented by several types of salads. The homemade chicken salad provided by the Hajjafars was especially good and did not last long on the buffet.

A few days after the November general election, AUAR members and guests gathered on November 7 at the Goodyear Metro Park Lodge for the annual fall feast of hot soups and various types of chili served out of crockpots.

The group enjoyed Kathy DuBose's Traditional Chili, Mary Verstraete's White Chili, and Tom Vukovich's Spicy Chili as well as three soups, including Sharon Gandee's Red Lentil Soup, Rita Klein's Italian



**Sharon Gandee stirs her soup**



**Mary Verstraete, Erika and Fred May, Kathy DuBose**

As always, it was fun to see all of the "white elephant" bingo prizes that were won. The "Zippy" bobbleheads were among those most prized.

Soon it will be time to reserve the Goodyear Metro Park Lodge for next year. So mark your calendar now for **November 6, 2025!**



**Tom V. calls the bingo numbers.**

*George and I met in his office in the Engineering Research Center on Wolf Ledges on a cold December day. He greeted me warmly and we began our conversation.*

**Martha:** You introduced yourself as a new at-large member at an AUAR Board meeting earlier this year, and as you spoke, I thought to myself that you would be an interesting person to interview for our conversation piece. Thank you very much for agreeing to share your story with us. Let's begin with your coming to the U.S.

**George:** I emigrated to the U.S. with my parents and younger brother from Athens, Greece, to Chicago at the age of 16, just prior to the start of my high school senior year. That was the realization of my desire to come to the U.S. for my University studies. I had decided early in high school that it was here that I could obtain the best engineering education. I was admitted to the College of Engineering of the University of Illinois at Chicago, a commuter campus. Living at home during my studies was the only option, since I was the only English-speaking member in the family. By the time I received my B.S. degree in Engineering Mechanics and my M.S. in Engineering Mechanics and Materials from UIC, my family had learned enough English to carry on without my help.

**Martha:** How is it that you went to the military?



George: During the first term of my master's program, during the Vietnam conflict, I was entered into the Selective Service Board lottery and, due to my birth date and drawing a low number, I was drafted by the U.S. Army. As I had a teaching assistantship,

my Department Head intervened and convinced the draft board to give me an extension. During this extension, my family and I became U.S. citizens, which meant that, if selected, I could serve in the Armed Forces as an officer. I applied to both the Air Force and the Navy for officer training and both selected me. I decided to enter the Air Force's Officer Training School and was commissioned as

a Second Lieutenant upon graduation. Nineteen assignments and 30 years later I retired at the rank of Colonel.

**Martha:** You stated that you had a dream to come to the US and pursue a PhD and become either a university professor or work in a research laboratory as an engineer scientist. You achieved your dreams.

**George:** I earned my master's degree just prior to my entering the Air Force. Near the end of my first four-year tour working as an aerospace engineer at Wright-Patterson AFB, I was selected by the Air Force for PhD education. As it happened, as I was approaching the end of my four-year service commitment to the Air Force, I had applied to Northwestern University for PhD studies and had been accepted and was awarded a fellowship. I "negotiated" with the Air Force, and when my pursuing a PhD at Northwestern was approved, I withdrew my request for separation from active duty and, in the fall of 1975, I went to Evanston, IL, and earned my PhD in the spring of 1978 in Structural Mechanics.

**Martha:** After getting your PhD, what came next?

**George:** Upon graduation, officers selected by the Air Force for PhD education fill positions that require a PhD – Special Category Assignments. First, I was selected as a member of the faculty at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. Next, I joined the Graduate Faculty of the Air Force Institute of Technology in Dayton, OH. That was followed by a Program Manager position at the Air Force Office of Scientific Research in Washington, DC. I was then asked to lead the Flight Vehicles Division at the headquarters of the AF Systems Command at Andrews AFB in Maryland. While there, I was promoted to Colonel. In 1992 the Air Force combined the Logistics Command and the Systems Command to form the Air Force Materiel Command, with its HQs in Dayton, OH. I moved with my job (and my wife and children) from MD to Ohio. One year later, I was asked to return to AFOSR as the Deputy Director and Commander. Two years later, in 1995, I was selected for the positions of Associate Dean and Associate Dean for Research of the Graduate School of Engineering of the Air Force Institute of Technology in Dayton

(and was reunited with my family). Two years later, I was asked to serve as AFIT's Vice Commandant (Senior VP, one year) and, for the next two years as the Commandant (President), leading up to my retirement from the Air Force on July 1, 2001.

**Martha: You took the deanship at UA in early 2003. Was it a good fit?**



**George:** Yes, at the time a faculty member had been serving as Interim Dean of the College of Engineering along with carrying out his normal faculty duties. Both he and the University were eager to hire a dean. Prior to my applying for this position, I had reviewed

all information available and I was well impressed. The College had an excellent reputation, the faculty were distinguished and well respected – both locally and internationally--and the graduates were securing excellent offers for employment. It was a good match and I don't regret a single day of my tenure as dean. We built a good team with common vision and goals and worked together as a coherent team to realize them.

**Martha: While you were dean, the College of Engineering celebrated its 100th anniversary (1914-2014). Part of the celebration was the production of a book *Engineering Powerful Futures*, which documents the history of the College in a most impressive way.**

**George:** As we had done many times before, we organized an excellent team with representation from all College components and together brought the book to fruition. I believe everyone was happy with the product. I served as dean for twelve and a half years and during that time we increased graduate and undergraduate enrollment resulting in more faculty being hired, as well as more research activity and funding resulting in more physical facilities. In fact, the Engineering Research Center (ERC) came about as a result of a number of partnerships with Industry and the U.S. Department of Defense, with the goal of using the talents and knowledge of our faculty and students to address their needs. This program and Aerospace Systems Engineering in Mechanical Engineering came about during my tenure. The money for the ERC building

came from the Department of Defense, the Timken Company plus a number of other companies, the State of Ohio, and donations from many alumni and other supporters.

**Martha: You stepped down from the deanship in 2015 and then?**

**George:** From that date until I retired in 2020, I taught, as a tenured professor, civil and mechanical engineering courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

**Martha: Tell us about your interests beyond your career pursuits.**

**George:** I enjoy hiking, jogging, and traveling. I love organized university sports; I was on the Soccer Varsity Team as an undergraduate at UIC. Because I focused on my work throughout my career, I had little time for outside pursuits. I've done a lot of traveling, mainly for work. To get the Corrosion Engineering program in place, I traveled to universities offering graduate programs in Corrosion Engineering in England, Germany, and Australia, for help in designing our program. Since my stepping down as Dean, I have returned several times to Greece. I serve on the Boards of Global Ties Akron and AUAR; I was also asked by the UA President to represent UA on the MAGNET Board (Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network) and ended up serving there for 16 years.

**Martha: Would you share with us a bit about your family.**

**George:** Yes, I had two children with my first wife Mary, a boy and a girl. We lost our son to a rare form of cancer in 2020 at age 47. My daughter, son-in-law, and two grandchildren live in Columbus. My second wife Gina and I visit them as often as we can. Gina, who is also a native of Athens, Greece, spent twenty years in France. She was a professor of Language Policies and Intercultural Education at Le Mans University in France until 2021 when she retired. We met at UA when she was here as a Visiting Professor.

**Martha: I have enjoyed talking with you, George, and learning about both your careers. The world of engineering has been greatly enhanced by your efforts. Thank you for sharing your journey with us and for serving on the AUAR Board.**



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# November Luncheon

## The 2024 Election:

### Implications for Ohio and the Nation

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#### Dr. Strachan makes a point



The November AUAR luncheon was held just two weeks after the November 5th election. The guest speaker was Dr. J. Cherie Strachan, Professor of political science and Director of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron. Her comments, analysis, and statistics were based upon early available data gathered soon after the results were available.

The Republican Party retained control of the U.S. House of Representatives with a slim 226/212 majority and remained in control of the Senate. However, the new administration may create openings in the legislative branch by selecting new cabinet members from their ranks. The process is ongoing.

Dr. Strachan reminded the audience of the work of the Bliss Institute at the University. Initially, the Institute's mission was to develop students and prepare them to work in the political party campaigns or issues in the field of "the mechanics of democracy." However, as the new director, she considered the incivility and violence facing democracy and is now emphasizing preparing students for citizenship. Applied politics, she noted, must also promote public spiritedness and focus on deliberation, civility, and civic skills.

She then moved on to discuss the polls where Americans are asked to provide their opinions on candidates, platforms and issues in the coming election. Why were the pollsters so wrong? According to Dr. Strachan, the "race for the White House" was always "too close to call." What was wrong was that the polls underestimated and over estimated certain types of voters.

National polls rely on statistics to teach social scientists how to understand the mechanics of polling. The issue is that the best that can be expected, even if you have a perfect sample, would be 95% correct with a 5% chance of being wrong. This margin of error rate then leaves the eventual results in question.

In addition, getting a random sample today has become much more difficult because of the wide use of cell phones and the ability of potential voters to be assessed by pollsters. People simply ignore calls on their cell phones when the caller is unknown or when they see that they will be asked to give their public opinion. Young people, in particular, do not answer their phones. It is very easy to simply hit "delete." Other methods of gathering a true random sample now take large amounts of cash and are very time consuming.

Sending snail mail to houses to request their willingness to take part in completing a questionnaire adds extra layers of communication and is costly. Some pollsters end up violating the principles of statistics and weight results backwards. They select a number of people who fit a certain demographic, such as educated women or white men from Ohio. This introduces "noise" and violates the principles of mathematics in determining expected election results from a sample of voters.



**Speaker Strachan and  
Diane Vukovich**

We also need to consider the question, "Why were the pollsters underestimating Trump voters?" According to Dr. Strachan, Trump supporters, especially during this presidential election, were low propensity voters, i.e., people who are eligible to vote but historically have chosen not to. Trump's team had largely abandoned traditional efforts to broaden his message to target these voters, especially young men of all races. Instead, they used "tough talk" and online notices of events aimed at getting the attention of this group of low-propensity voters, i.e., those of a lower socio-economic status, making minimum wages, less educated beyond high school and having "blue-collar" jobs. MAGA and low propensity voters distrust elites, pollsters, and academics and are therefore not likely to agree to participate in a survey. On the other hand, the more educated voters read

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newspapers and are more likely to respond to pollsters, answer questionnaires, and feel that it is a civic duty to do so. They also have more time to participate and are more trusting of the process. Also, anger will motivate people to participate in polls. This explained the Iowa polls. Here a gender gap showed that Harris would take Iowa by a slim margin. Educated, suburban women were motivated and angry and wanted to tell you who they are voting for and why. The Supreme Court Dobbs decision was a big motivator.

The other question is "Why did Trump overperform?" He increased his 2020 vote totals by about a million votes. He increased his support by the low propensity voters who could not absorb the current increases in the cost of living and remembered what they paid in 2016.

The "diploma divide" and income inequality are what political scientists say were the major influences in this election. This over performance by voters who remember the economy President Obama left Trump and who now cannot afford things today was an international phenomenon. Every democratic nation (with the exception of France) that held elections over the last four years had the incumbent government overturned.

Meanwhile, Harris underperformed. She did not hit the Biden numbers. One in six Democrat voters stayed home and did not vote. Dr. Strachan surmised that if Biden would have dropped out of the race earlier and there was an open primary with candidates emerging who could distinguish themselves from Biden and project a different view of the economy, those Democrats who stayed home would have come out and voted.

Trump also had "coat tails." Those low propensity voters who came to the polls to vote for Trump simply voted a straight Republican ticket. Thus, in Ohio, Bernie Moreno defeated the incumbent Senator Sherrod Brown. Issue 1, revising the method to redistrict political boundaries, was also defeated, strengthening the Republican hold on Ohio government.

Dr. Strachan answered several questions from the audience dealing with campaign strategy, political advertisements, and the issues surrounding voting for a woman for President of the United States.

Dr Strachan received her PhD from SUNY Albany in 2000, her M.A. at The University of Akron, and her undergraduate degree from Murray State University in 1992.

Her political science research combines her interests in political participation, voluntary civic and political organizations, and political communication. Her recent work explores the #MeToo movement and women's political ambitions, as well as the effects of partisan polarization, rudeness, and civility on political engagement. She is co-author of the textbook "Why Don't Women Rule the World?" and co- editor of the American Political Science Association published resource "Strategies for Navigating Graduate School and Beyond." In September, Dr. Strachan was elected to the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association. As a member of the Council, she will play a critical role in supporting the mission of the Association, which is to promote scholarship, research, teaching, and public understanding of politics and government.

### Former UA Dean Honored

*"At their September meeting, The University of Akron Board of Trustees approved the naming of the Dr. Cynthia Flynn Capers, Cameos of Caring Student Lounge within Mary Gladwin Hall." A nice honor for a great Dean...*

**- Tom Vukovich**

### Scholarship Recipients for 2024

*The students whose names appear below have been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship from AUAR for this academic year. They are all seniors, have financial need, and have excellent grade point averages.*

**Abigail Armstrong** is from Newark, OH and is pursuing a BS in Biomedical Science with minors in Bioethics and Chemistry, from the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences.

**Christina Chalgren**, from Cuyahoga Falls, OH is pursuing a BSN in Nursing from the College of Health and Human Sciences.

**Eric Hartman**, from Cleveland, OH is studying Aerospace Systems Engineering in the College of Engineering and Polymer Science.

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# December Luncheon Speaker

## R. J. Nemer

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### AUAR President Harvey Sterns with UA President R.J. Nemer



Mr. R. J. Nemer, the 19th President of The University of Akron, addressed a large gathering of UA retirees and guests at the December 18 luncheon meeting. Mr. Nemer was introduced by Dr. Harvey Sterns, the current President of AUAR. Before beginning his formal introduction, President Sterns asked audience members to stand according to the number of years of service to the University. He wanted to demonstrate to President Nemer the make-up of AUAR and the interest that retirees continue to have in the University's well-being.

Mr. Nemer was named the President of The University of Akron on May 15, 2024, after serving two years as Dean of the College of Business. Before joining the University, he had been a successful entrepreneur. He founded a professional sports agency that became the world's largest independently held sports agency of its kind. Mr. Nemer is a two-time graduate of the University with a B.S. in Business Administration (1991) and a Juris Doctorate from the School of Law.

After a warm welcome, Mr. Nemer reviewed his background and career in more detail. He relayed that he was drawn to sports management through family friends, Eddie Elias and Rainy Stitzlein. Both are UA alumni who are credited with founding the Professional Bowlers Tour (PBA), which was an outgrowth of Eddie's sports management agency that represented professional athletes. Having access to sports venues and well-known athletes appealed to young R. J. With the encouragement of Elias and Stitzlein, he decided to enroll at The University of Akron and pursue a degree from the College of Business.

Mr. Nemer recognized one of the AUAR scholarship recipients Eric Hartman, who was the Association's guest at the December luncheon. He then reflected on being a UA student and now presiding over his first graduation ceremony as President in early December. He attended a few graduations as College Dean but was struck by now being offered various presidential "jewelry," producing a surreal experience. Mr. Nemer chose the medallion that President Bill Muse wore at his graduation ceremony in 1991.

So how does a UA business major, lawyer, and successful sports management agent get to be a university president? After selling his company to IMG, the world's largest sports management company (once located in Cleveland), he was ready for something different. R.J. had a friend who also had similar experiences in sports management and was now working at Miami University in Ohio. This friend thought R. J. would be a "good fit" at The University of Akron and suggested he apply for the position of dean of the College of Business. The University had recently added two new degree programs, one in Sports Business and the other in Sports Analytics. With R. J.'s background, his connections to UA and these new degree offerings, he thought that he should at least get an interview for that job or perhaps be offered a part-time teaching position. The Dean's Search Committee, however, overlooked his lack of experience in academia and hired him as dean in 2022. With the departure of Dr. Gary Miller as UA President, the University Board of Trustees looked "in house" for his replacement, and Dean R. J. Nemer was offered the job.

After accepting the position, Mr. Nemer initiated a "listening tour" to help him become better acquainted with the entire institution. He also set up "Open Forums" in the library for faculty, staff, and students to meet with him and get to know each other.

R. J. enjoys meeting students and assisting them in getting real life experiences while pursuing their formal education. Recently he attended a conference in Morocco, and with donor support, took three students along. Their experiences were invaluable.

One of R.J.'s goals is to widen experiential opportunities for students across all degree programs at UA. This is what led to the partnering with the Cleveland Browns organization. Professional sports teams and their leagues offer positions in exercise physiology, cyber-security, law, sports psychology, business, and engineering. For example, UA students and faculty in engineering are working with the NFL to improve player equipment. The NFL is also interested in partnering with the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics to develop programs in the area of "civil discourse." The goal is to create programs and opportunities for both students and faculty that are unique to The University of Akron. To address the University enrollment situation, a new consulting firm has been hired to help roll out a new "brand."

President Nemer provided us with an update on the Polsky Project. The plans that had been proposed by the previous administration have been "re-imagined." The University will now consolidate various University functions and use the vast space in the building for offices. There still will be event and retail space. Also, the popular e-sports program will be relocated to the Polsky Building. After several questions and comments from the audience, the meeting was adjourned.

**Dr. Kenneth Aupperle** passed away on October 1, 2024, at 77. He received his undergraduate degree at Western Michigan, his MBA from Kansas State, and his PhD from the University of Georgia. Ken was a professor of Business Administration at Kent State and joined the UA Faculty in 1986, retiring in 2015. Ken loved being active and enjoyed nature, weightlifting, running, and hiking. He loved reading and was an avid movie buff. Ken was preceded in death by two wives and is survived by four children and five grandchildren.

**Barbara Banks** died at 89 on November 25, 2024. She was assistant to the Dean of Nursing and was on the UA Faculty for almost ten years. Barbara was also employed as a sales associate at Macy's and loved fashion. She served as a eucharistic minister at her church and frequently attended AUAR meetings and events. Barb loved to travel and went on many trips with her good friend Phyllis Fitzgerald. She was predeceased by her husband and two daughters and is survived by her son-in-law and grandson.

**Anna Maria Barnum** was 81 when she died on December 26, 2024. She earned her undergraduate degree at Middlebury College and her graduate degree in English at the University of Vermont. Anna Maria joined the UA faculty in 1970 as a teacher of technical writing in the Community and Technical College. After earning her law degree, she taught legal writing at the UA School of Law and also practiced law for many years. While teaching technical writing in Beijing, China, she met the love of her life, Bas, who would be her life partner in an international relationship for 22 years. They travelled the world together. Anna Maria enjoyed participating in theatre events, leading a poetry group, and volunteering for the ACLU and the Akron Blind Center. She loved music and played the ukelele. Anna Maria participated in both the Akron and Kent Universalist churches and supported justice-involved organizations. She is survived by two daughters and a grandson.

**Bruce Bowers** passed away at 81 on November 7, 2024. He was a leading benefactor for the UA Adult Focus Initiative, which assists students returning to college after significant stop-out periods. His support assisted the Adult Focus and the computer lab; he established a scholarship for non-traditional students and set up an emergency book loan program for adult learners. Bruce earned a degree in marketing at 33, after more than 12 years of taking evening classes. He founded several businesses and went on to become CEO of TRC Industries in Stow. An active alumnus, Bruce served the university as a member of the UA Foundation Board of Directors for nine years, president of the National Alumni Board of the Alumni Association, and a supporter of Zip Athletics. He received the Alumni Honor Award and the College of Business Dr. Frank L. Simonetti Distinguished Business Alumni Award. Bruce is survived by his wife Carol, three children, and 7 grandchildren.

**Dr. Irvin Brandel III** died at 79 on October 8, 2024. He earned his bachelor's degree at Bowling Green, his MA from Michigan State, and his PhD from UA. He joined the university in 1969 as an academic adviser and then went on to work in the Counseling Center and teach courses in psychology. He retired in 2016 as Director Emeritus of the University Counseling and Testing Center. As a counseling psychologist, he supported thousands of students and clients in his private practice. Irv loved to read and write and was a lifelong fan of the Cleveland Indians/Guardians, attending many games. He was also the official scorekeeper for the Akron Racers pro softball team. Irv is survived by his partner of 26 years, Linda Lauffenburger, his three daughters, and five grandchildren.

**Robert Ebner** passed away on October 6, 2024, at 91. He joined UA in 1989 and retired in 1996 as a Physical Facilities Storekeeper. He served for eight years in the Air Force and was active in his church. Bob enjoyed fishing, Euchre Club, and going out to breakfast with his buddies. He was predeceased by Rita, his wife of 40 years, and his son John. Bob is survived by many nieces and nephews.

**Earl Ertman** died at 92 on January 3, 2025. After serving in the Navy and Air Force, he earned his B.A. from the University of Southern Mississippi and completed graduate studies at Case Western Reserve University. Earl joined the UA faculty in 1986 and retired as professor emeritus in 1998. Earl taught every art history class the department offered along with drawing, 2-Dimensional Design and watercolor painting. His focus eventually changed to ancient art, and he traveled to Egypt more than 20 times to take part in excavations. Earl served as associate director of the team that uncovered the first tomb (KV-63) discovered in the Valley of the Kings since that of King Tutankhamun (KV-62) in 1922. Earl served as Director of the School of Art for more than 10 years and authored more than 50 articles on Egyptian and ancient art. He loved visiting flea markets and going on digs. He is survived by his wife Judie, two sons, two stepchildren, six grandchildren, and five great grandkids.

**Gerry Faust** passed away at 89 on November 11, 2024. After graduating from The University of Dayton he coached football at Cincinnati Moeller High School. Gerry then coached at the college level at Notre Dame and then at the University of Akron from 1985 to 1994. From 1994 until 2000 he served as Assistant Vice President of Development. A man of faith, Gerry was a role model for many young people whom he coached, mentored, and inspired. He instilled the importance of character, hard work, and integrity. Gerry is survived by his wife of 60 years, Marlene, a daughter, two sons, and seven grandchildren.

**Rosemary Gambaccini** passed away at 88 on November 30, 2024. She started at UA in 1990 as a Word Processing Specialist and from 1995 to 2000 served as an administrative assistant in the Department of Psychology. Rosemary was a 55-year member of her church in Tallmadge and later joined another church in Hudson. She was a member of her church sewing group and made hundreds of items for

charity. Rosemary loved to travel, garden, cook and bake. Preceded in death by her husband of 56 years, she is survived by two daughters, three sons, thirteen grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

**Dr. Don Gerlach** passed away at 91 on January 15, 2024. He earned his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Don was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and his time at the University of London was a major turning point in his life. He served in the U.S. Army for two years including a tour in Korea. Don began his teaching career as an instructor in history at his alma mater and then came to UA in 1961 as an assistant professor. He was subsequently promoted to associate professor, professor, and retired in 1994 as professor emeritus. Don published many booklets and articles as well as three books. The Syracuse Press awarded him a prize and the UA Alumni Association named him Outstanding Researcher in 1988. He was active in UAs governing bodies, serving on University Council, then first chairman of the University Senate, followed by Senate parliamentarian for eight years. Don was an active member of AUAR. He was a founding member of his church and held many positions there. He retired to his Nebraska birthplace and lived on his ancestral farm. Don loved to read and travel.

**Dr. Richard Gross** died in January 2025 at 86. He earned his BSME at the University of Pittsburgh and his MSME and PhD from Carnegie Mellon. He joined the UA faculty in 1967 and taught mechanical engineering for 35 years. He was rehired as a visiting associate professor and worked another four years. Dick started the UA Racing Program and served as its faculty adviser for more than 25 years. He was an active member of the Society of Mechanical Engineers, and three of his five children became engineers! He was the first recipient of the School of Engineering's Outstanding Teacher Award and went on to receive it more than once. Dick liked to stay active; he played tennis and enjoyed running. He loved baseball and served as president of the West Akron Baseball and Softball League, built their pitching machines, and coached his kids' teams. He was a devoted member of his church and served on its landscaping crew after retiring. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Alice, five children, and eight grandchildren.

**Barbara Jones** was 97 when she passed away on October 7, 2024. She graduated from UA in 1949 and was a member of Alpha Gamma Delta sorority, WITAN, and her church. Barb retired from UA in 1988 after almost 20 years of service. She was predeceased by her husband Ted, two daughters and a son and is survived by three grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

**Dr. Joseph Kennedy** passed away at 96 on July 21, 2024. He spent his youth in Budapest, Hungary, during World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. His father was killed by the Nazis and his mother was imprisoned by the Communists. At 19, he fled to Austria as an illegal immigrant. Upon earning his doctorate in biochemistry at the University of Vienna he gained citizenship. Joseph then completed postgraduate work at the Sorbonne in France. In 1954 he immigrated to Canada to take another postdoc position in Montreal where he met his wife, Ingrid. His first employment in the U.S. was in 1957 and after working at Exxon, he became a member of the UA faculty in 1970. He helped develop the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering. Joe retired as a Distinguished Professor of Polymer Science and Chemistry in 2021 and was an adjunct professor until 2023. He is particularly noted for having invented a polymer coating for a drug-treated stent that is highly compatible with human tissue and has saved at least six million lives. Joseph received two honorary doctorates and many other awards.

**Dr. Virginia Fitch-Mallo** died on November 9, 2024, at the age of 76. A member of the UA faculty from 1981 to 2007, she was a professor of Social Work and director of the School of Social Work. She endowed a scholarship in her parents' names to help students in the School of Social Work and in Family Sciences who are in financial need. Virginia was preceded in death by her husband Dr. George Mallo and is survived by two stepsons and a grandson.

**A. Samuel Oddi**, Professor of Law at the UA School of Law, passed away on September 11, 2024. He earned his B.S. in electrical engineering at Carnegie Mellon University, his J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh, and an LL.M. from George Washington University. Before joining the UA faculty in 2000, he taught at Northern Illinois University and was a visiting professor at several other institutions. Sam specialized in intellectual property law, patent law, and jurisprudence. His career also included roles as a patent attorney at Westinghouse Electric and Rockwell International and as a senior legal officer at the World Intellectual Property Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. He is survived by his wife Lorys.

**Dr. Suzette Speight** passed away on August 29, 2024. She received her PhD from Ohio State University in 1990. She was a lecturer at OSU before beginning her 17-year career at Loyola University in Chicago where she was an assistant professor. She joined the UA faculty in 2008 and retired in 2022. Suzette was a Fellow of the Society for Counseling Psychology of the American Psychological Association and a member of the Association of Black Psychologists. In 2023 she received a lifetime achievement award in Training and Education. She was a supervisor and clinician at the Minority Behavior Health group in Akron, using her skills to work alongside community members to promote thriving and well-being.

— Memorials written by Diane Lazzerini

Editorial note:

Please alert us to any member of our university family whom we have overlooked.





The Association of The University of Akron Retirees  
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Akron, OH 44325-2603  
330-972-4284

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**AUAR Membership, Department of Development, Attention AUAR  
The University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-2603**

If you haven't renewed your AUAR membership for the **2024-2025** year, it is time to do so. Don't forget our Scholarship fund where we provide some funding to a worthy student. Please either complete the items listed below, and mail your check to the address above or go online to [uakron.edu/auar](http://uakron.edu/auar) and pay by credit card.

If you have an e-mail address, please submit it.

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Dues are \$15 per year (or \$15 per year for multiple years) or \$150 for life. Dues and gifts can be placed on one **check made payable to The University of Akron**. If you prefer, you may renew online at [www.uakron.edu/auar](http://www.uakron.edu/auar).

The AUAR Newsletter is a biannual publication of The University of Akron Retirees (AUAR), c/o the Department of Development, The University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-2603.

AUAR members receive our newsletter automatically. The Board meets on the 4th Thursday in person or on Zoom according to personal preferences.

If you have questions about the organization or to keep abreast of events and issues pertinent to all UA retirees, visit our website at [www.uakron.edu/auar](http://www.uakron.edu/auar). The newsletter editor, Martha Vye, can be reached at [vye@uakron.edu](mailto:vye@uakron.edu) or 330-644-7490.

If you are interested in entertainment within the Akron area, check into our web site and view the events listed under the Special Events Menu. Just Log on to [www.uakron.edu/auar](http://www.uakron.edu/auar) and click on the Menu "Special Events" or type [www.uakron.edu/auar/special-events.dot](http://www.uakron.edu/auar/special-events.dot)

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## Spring 2025 Speaker Schedule

- Feb. 19** - **Mel Vye**, Professor Emeritus  
Engineering and Science Technology, UA,  
"Svalbard: The Most Northerly Inhabited  
Place on Earth"
- Mar. 19** - **Dr. David Licate**,  
Chair, Department of Criminal Justice Studies,  
"Not your Grandparents Criminal Justice:  
Trends and Technology in Scholarship and  
Practice"
- Apr. 16** - **Dr. Doug Hausknecht**,  
Associate Professor Emeritus,  
Marketing Department, UA,  
"Walt Disney, Magic Lanterns and 40 Years of  
Collecting"

### On-Campus Parking

If you are unsure about your parking status, call Uakron Park @ 330-972-7313 or email [info@uakronpark.com](mailto:info@uakronpark.com)



Seated: Richard Milford, Rita Klein, Diane Vukovich, Robert Gandee  
Standing: Dan Sheffer, John Heminger, Melvin Vye, Ali Hajjafar, Tom Nichols,  
Richard Steiner, Mary Verstraete, Connie Heldenfels, Martha Vye, Carl Lieberman

## Board Meetings 2025

Jan. 23 – Feb. 27 – Mar. 27 – Apr. 24 – May 22 – Jun. 26

### Our Motto

People say interns and new hires are the promise of the future.  
Let's not forget that retirees are promises kept.