

# FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2022



## DONOR SUPPORT BOOSTS WVU DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

RECENT GIFTS EXPAND SCHOLARSHIPS, PROGRAMS TO BENEFIT UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS

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## NEWSLETTER

Winter 2022

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# COVID-19 SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVE PROVIDES \$748K TO STUDENTS

As the COVID-19 pandemic persists, alumni and friends are providing financial support to help students facing financial challenges proceed with their education and achieve their dreams.

Through the fall 2021 semester, a total of \$748,062 in scholarship support has been awarded to 730 WVU students in need via “We Are Stronger Together,” a special fundraising initiative launched by the WVU Foundation. Contributions to the ongoing effort assist WVU students affected by the pandemic with tuition, room and board, and other educational expenses.

Many WVU students and their families are struggling to afford higher education costs amid the enduring economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without scholarship aid, these students may be forced to suspend attending classes, enroll elsewhere or drop out altogether.

“Receiving the ‘We Are Stronger Together’ scholarship meant the world to me,” WVU sophomore Josephine Moore said. “It relieved some of the stress I was facing during the pandemic while planning how I would be paying for my education. It prevented me from going into more student loan debt.”

Moore is majoring in exercise physiology and minoring in addiction studies. She plans to go to graduate school to become a physician assistant, so she can help tackle the opioid epidemic in West Virginia.

Donations to the “We Are Stronger Together” scholarship initiative can be made by contacting Jena Prokopchuk, WVU Foundation executive director of leadership annual giving, at 304-282-5929 or [jprokopchuk@wvuf.org](mailto:jprokopchuk@wvuf.org)

# Scholarship, program gifts to WVU expand opportunities for diverse students

Generous support from the WVU community is expanding opportunities for success among students in underrepresented groups.

T.V. and Vijaya Ramakrishna contributed more than \$400,000 to create a namesake scholarship that supports underrepresented students enrolled in any WVU undergraduate program. Their gift bolsters efforts to expand scholarships for minority students as WVU works to cultivate a more inclusive environment for students, faculty and staff across its campuses.

“Scholarship support opens doors for students to pursue their academic goals,” WVU Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Meshea L. Poore, Esq., said. “Our students often face multiple obstacles. Resources such as the Ramakrishna Scholarship can make sure funding is not one of those obstacles. I appreciate the Ramakrishna family’s generous investment in our students, our Mountaineer family, and their futures.”

West Virginia has always held a special place in the Ramakrishnas’ hearts. T.V. Ramakrishna grew up in difficult circumstances in India and had no hopes of obtaining an education until a teacher encouraged him to pursue his dreams. He eventually moved to the United States, earned a Ph.D. in civil engineering, and built a life for himself and his family in the Mountain State.

A \$17,500 grant from the Enterprise Holdings Foundation will support RISE WVU, an Office of Student Success program that helps Black, Latinx and other diverse students. Program initiatives includes success coaching and mentoring, a first-year seminar course, a student-led organization, regular events, and a living-learning community that creates a safe space for minority students.

The contribution is a piece of the ROAD Forward commitment to allocate \$35 million to more than 70 global Enterprise operating teams to drive local impact as part of its broader commitment to donate \$55 million over five years to organizations that advance social and racial equity in the communities where it operates.

WVU also announced the inaugural recipients of the Horace and Geraldine Belmeir Scholarship – junior Morgan Montgomery, sophomore Cierra Jones and freshmen Sona Magassouba and Drew Roby.

Established by Black alumni leaders, the Belmeir Scholarship honors a legacy of excellence cultivated by the late couple during their tenure at WVU from the 1970s into the 2000s. The Belmeirs worked together via complementary administrative roles to recruit, retain and support a generation of Black students, becoming surrogate parents to many.



Left to right: Morgan Montgomery, Cierra Jones, Sona Magassouba, Drew Roby



Suzanne Walker Rogers Weber

## \$1M scholarship gift aids education majors

Future teachers training at WVU will benefit from a \$1 million scholarship gift made in memory of a dedicated educator and devoted WVU alumna. The Suzanne Walker Rogers Weber Endowed Education Scholarship will be awarded to first-generation undergraduate students from West Virginia. Recipients must be pursuing a degree in education and demonstrate financial need.

“We are always grateful for the support of donors who understand the unique challenges faced by future educators,” Tracy Morris, dean of WVU’s College of Education and Human Services, said. “This endowment will make a difference in the academic careers of future teachers for years to come, and we look forward to seeing its impact on our students.”

Sisters Elizabeth Rogers Bald and Jennifer Rogers Denham established the scholarship to pay tribute to their mother, who passed away Sept. 1, 2016,

at the age of 76. She died of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a progressive neurodegenerative disease often referred to as Lou Gehrig’s disease or simply ALS.

Walker Rogers Weber was a South Charleston native who earned her bachelor’s degree in education from WVU in 1962. She was a first-generation college graduate, along with her two brothers, who cherished her time at WVU and the lasting friendships she made as a member and one-time president of Pi Beta Phi sorority.

She also appreciated how WVU prepared her for a fulfilling career educating children. Walker Rogers Weber confidently juggled a classroom of 30 first graders in Columbus, Ohio, following graduation and went on to teach preschool, run a nursery school and oversee Head Start programs for a Cleveland-area school district.

“Teaching young people was her passion,” Bald said. “By establishing this scholarship, we hope this supports and inspires the next generation of teachers, while honoring our mother and all that she accomplished in her lifetime.”

# Lane Innovation Hub to transform entrepreneurial and research opportunities

At nearly 9,500 square feet, the Lane Innovation Hub — established in honor of Ray Lane and his wife, Stephanie — will transform entrepreneurial opportunities for students in the Benjamin M. Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources and the people of West Virginia.

The Lane Innovation Hub offers a complete suite of services and facilities where users can fabricate and build electronic, mechanical and combined devices needed to support their particular activity.

The Lane family has a strong commitment to entrepreneurship and hopes to inspire an entrepreneurial spirit among students and provide them with opportunities to make their dreams a reality.

The center established by the Lanes will allow students and researchers alike to work with expert staff members who provide fabrication, design assistance, training, equipment and maintenance to produce a working prototype.

“Technology innovation in the maker environment has been profound — transforming how engineers learn and work,” the Lanes said. “The Lane Innovation Hub offers vast new opportunities for WVU students and future West Virginia entrepreneurs statewide.”

Housing an extensive list of state-of-the-art equipment, the Lane Innovation Hub will support competitive grant and contract funding to advance high-profile research endeavors at WVU, as well as entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial activities that will stimulate economic diversity in the state.

“The Lane Innovation Hub will be able to dramatically increase accessibility to advanced fabrication technology and expertise for not only our students and faculty, but also to entrepreneurs and businesses across West Virginia,” said Dustin Spayde, director of the Lane Innovation Hub.

The space, located in the Engineering Sciences Building on the Evansdale area of WVU’s Morgantown campus, is comprised of three main workshops dedicated to advanced manufacturing, rapid prototyping and electronic prototyping, with an additional lab area for metal additive manufacturing.

The Lane Innovation Hub has already proved to be a critical asset to the West Virginia community, producing thousands of swabs for COVID-19 testing and personal protective equipment for health care workers throughout the ongoing pandemic.

Dignitaries cut the ribbon on the Lane Innovation Hub.





**A \$1.5 million renovation project upgraded the patient reception and waiting area for the WVU School of Dentistry's Urgent Care Clinic.**

## Ongoing School of Dentistry renovations boost education, patient care

Transformative renovations within the School of Dentistry are radically modernizing facilities to enhance patient care and oral health care education for the next generation of West Virginia dentists and dental hygienists.

A \$1.5 million project completed recently updated WVU Dental treatment and reception areas with support from alumni and friends. The work was funded through Transforming Oral Health: The Campaign for Facilities, a \$15 million fundraising effort to support multiphase facility upgrades for School of Dentistry units.

Beginning in January 2021, construction was completed in three phases. Phase 1 involved the creation of offices for Diagnostic Sciences and financial staff from Clinical Affairs. It also placed oral medicine, oral and maxillofacial pathology and forensic odontology experts in close proximity to the student clinic, Urgent Care clinic, Endodontics clinic and an Oral Medicine treatment area. Phase 2 updated the Urgent Care and Radiology clinics, and the patient reception and waiting area followed in Phase 3.

Prior to the renovation work, the patient reception

and waiting area had largely remained unchanged since it was built in 1957. The space now features a modernized look, updated equipment, an enhanced and expanded reception function, ample patient seating and physical doorways that better identify the clinic within the Health Sciences Center.

“Thanks, in part, to the generosity of our donors, the Urgent Care clinic area is significantly improved,” student Hunter Palmer, president of the class of 2023, said. “With more comfortable patient chairs, working monitors at each unit, and X-ray equipment in the actual operatories, we are able to provide care more conveniently and use the visual aids to provide important oral healthcare education to our patients. This, together with the updated imaging rooms and brighter lighting, makes the space feel inviting and professional.”

The School of Dentistry is working to determine the next phase of renovation work in collaboration with WVU Facilities Management and the SmithGroup, an international architectural design company. The SmithGroup is conducting a comprehensive review of existing spaces and working to develop a renovation plan that reintegrates the School's postdoctoral clinics, Faculty Practice and Dr. W. Robert Biddington Center for Dental Innovation back into the core Health Sciences Center.

School of Dentistry Dean Stephen Pachuta said the changes will ultimately enhance student education to benefit dental patients statewide. More than 80% of West Virginia's practicing dentists graduated from the WVU School of Dentistry.

# Gift from alumnus aids international travel for Davis College students

As a certified professional forester, alumnus Eugene Arthur Walters benefited personally and professionally from traveling abroad, and he hopes to help students experience the same.

Walters and his wife, Amy, recently established a gift in their estate plan to support international travel for future students in the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design. This planned gift is in addition to an international travel scholarship established by the Walters in 2017.

Originally from Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania, Eugene Walters graduated from WVU with a bachelor's and a master's degree in forestry in 1980 and 1984, respectively.

After graduating with his master's degree, he spent 13 years as a forester with the Mead Corporation before becoming a regional manager for Wesco Forest Products. Walters also worked for Rolling Ridge Woods and North American Veneer before opening his own business, Pioneer Forest Products, in 2017. His jobs allowed him to travel to India, China, Japan, Vietnam and Europe.

"Everything that I have I credit to my education at West Virginia University," he said. "I just hope, by our scholarship and by this planned gift, there will be another young person that will be able to further their education."



**Eugene Arthur Walters and his wife, Amy, recently established a gift in their estate plan to support international travel for future students in the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design.**

## Irvin Stewart Society New Members

The Irvin Stewart Society honors those who have included gift provisions in their wills, created income-producing gifts, provided for testamentary donations of retirement assets, donated life insurance, and transferred their real estate remainder interest to benefit WVU and its affiliated organizations.

Kimberly A. Dettori, DDS '89, '94, Stuart, FL  
Richard A. Evans '69, Beverly, WV  
William (Bill) F. Fleming '85, Key Largo, FL  
The Hon. Kathy Sturgis Gravell '77, Odessa, DE  
Robert L. Gravell, Odessa, DE  
Linda Jackowitz '86, Morgantown, WV  
Michael J. Leo, Wheeling, WV  
Donna L. Mazzei '63, '66, Summersville, WV

Alexis C. Pugh '73, Winter Park, FL  
Linda Troeller '71, Lakewood, NJ  
Eugene Arthur Walters '80, '84, Cutler, OH  
Donna Weems '88, Morgantown, WV  
Jon Weems '88, Morgantown, WV  
Diane B. Wilson '71, Rome, GA  
John S. Wilson, PhD '66, '68, '75, Rome, GA  
+ 1 Anonymous Member



A listing of all members can be found at [www.wvuf.org](http://www.wvuf.org), select Donor Recognition and Irvin Stewart Society.



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### **2020-2021 Donor Impact Report**

Generous donors like you stepped up to make fiscal year 2020-'21 our best ever. In lieu of our traditional annual report, we have created an all-digital Donor Impact Report. Explore the report at [www.wvuf.org/2020-2021-donor-impact-report](https://www.wvuf.org/2020-2021-donor-impact-report) to see videos, graphics, stories and more to highlight the impressive impact of your contributions to WVU.