



Northern Illinois
University

THE NIU ANNUITANT

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May 2024

Message from the President

The greatest joy of being NIUAA's president is the opportunity to work with such a kind, wise, and committed group of past and current NIU employees who care about NIU, our community, and our retirement benefits. Your board works tirelessly to stay in touch with SUAA, our state organization, and NIU is very proud to have Steve Cunningham, a member of our organization, as President of SUAA. Andy Small, NIUAA's Past President, is co-chair of the SUAA membership committee, and Clair Williams serves on the SUAA Financial Committee. Jim Lockard continues to do an outstanding job of keeping us informed regarding our pensions, insurance, and other political issues. We have a local voice in the work of the NIU Benefits Committee and Parking Committee. We have an outstanding scholarship program that allows us to contribute funding to support an NIU student each year in pursuing their education. (Learn about our award recipient in this newsletter). And the list goes on! We are a vibrant and exciting chapter, and we are glad you are a part of NIUAA through your membership support and dues.

To that end, I have two urgent messages for you to hear and get involved in!

On a positive note, our NIUAA chapter has the largest membership in the state, with 1463 members! Yes! That includes more than the University of Illinois, etc. But our overall membership numbers continue to decline. Some folks simply do not renew and others who retire still don't think NIUAA is fighting for them. We need to do a better job of extending the benefits of NIUAA to current NIU employees, who are welcome to serve on the board, attend functions, and advocate for their future retirement benefits. I ask that you keep this in mind and promote NIUAA to your colleagues that you know, retirees, and current members. Let's keep our place as #1 in the state and involve people in our NIUAA chapter.

Message #2 is a special invitation to you to attend our NIUAA Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 26, 2024, at Barsema Visitors Center at 11:30 AM. Last year over 60 members

attended this successful event. A buffet luncheon will once again be held for you to enjoy. Bring a new member with you. Come see your colleagues and catch up on the latest information. Please see the special invitation included in this newsletter. Also, please note that we are taking a free will donation to help cover the cost of the luncheon, so we do not end the year in the red. Give what you can. And if you can't, that's fine. Come support NIUAA anyway. Do make your reservations soon so we know how many to include in the lunch count. If you cannot make it in person, contact Chris Doe at cdoe@niu.edu and she will send you the link so you can join via Zoom. I look forward to seeing you there!!!!

Thanks for the honor of serving.

*Toni Tollerud,
NIUAA President*

We're Number 1!

Thanks to all of our dedicated members in the NIUAA, our chapter is now the number one chapter in the state of Illinois! Of the 53 chapters in the State University Annuitants Association, NIUAA has more members than any other. But our work is not done. We must continue to be vigilant. We must continue to show leadership in our state. If you know of a current employee or retiree who would like more information, or you want to see how SUAA can continue to expand your benefits, please visit <https://www.suaa.org/>.

Helping to protect our benefits.

*Andy Small,
Co-Chair, SUAA Membership Committee*

A Note from the Vice President

Greetings! My name is Terry Borg and I have been recently selected to serve as the Vice President of the Annuitants Association. In my 20+ years at NIU, I worked in the College of Education and NIU Outreach, as well as served in many shared governance roles. It would not surprise me that we have met at some point. In this new role I will assist the President as needed and continue as your representative on the University Benefits Committee. I look forward to serving the organization in this new role and thank you for your support.

Terry Borg

New Officers Step In!

In the Fall of 2023, our Treasurer, Cynthia Nelson, had a serious infection that put her into the hospital for several weeks. To take some responsibility off her so she could heal, we did a rotation of the officers and board members who agreed to exchange places. Paul Stoddard volunteered to become the temporary Treasurer for the remainder of the fiscal year; Terry Borg stepped up as Vice President; and Cynthia Nelson moved to Board member. Official elections for these positions will take place at the June 26th annual membership meeting. I want to thank all these wonderful members for doing what was necessary to keep NIUAA going strong!!

Toni Tollerud



Polar Vortex Cruise

SUAA President's Report

It has been a very busy time for SUAA as 2024 had gotten underway, including a productive transition with our new Executive Director, Bryan Soady. Bryan is actively engaging with the State Legislature and governmental agencies in Springfield, while simultaneously getting to know our different chapters and SUAA leadership across the state.

First, congratulations to NIU for advancing to be the largest SUAA chapter in the state. NIU has always been close to the UIUC membership number but has now taken the lead, and NIU has always led the state in percentage of SUAA membership in proportion to the number of employees. Statewide, I want to acknowledge and express appreciation on behalf of SUAA for Andy Small's work and leadership as Co-Chair of our Membership Committee. Membership and participation are essential to the strength of the SUAA organization and our ability to fulfill our mission of defending and advocating for the retirement benefits of all higher education personnel (over 250,000 SURS participants).

The SUAA Finance Committee, originally proposed by and with the active participation of Clair Williams, has also been diligently reviewing SUAA finances and opportunities for cost savings in coordination with Bryan and SUAA Treasurer, Larry Kloc. The Finance Committee is especially productive as part of our Executive Director transition process. The work of our Membership and Finance Committees is closely related and both will help inform a SUAA strategic planning process anticipated later this year.

On a very positive note, SUAA recently enthusiastically endorsed Governor Pritzker's proposed FY25 State budget, which clearly reflects the full scope of funding requirements for SURS and the State pension systems, proposes adjusting the funding target for the resolution of unfunded liabilities from 90% to a 100% funding ratio, and simultaneously provides solid funding for Illinois's system of higher education. With these multiple objectives, the FY25 legislative budget process offers a great opportunity for SUAA to work in partnership with the leadership of Illinois higher education in advocating for Governor Pritzker's FY25 budget.

Several issues related to the Aetna MAPD continue to be reported and fielded by SUAA's State Office in Springfield, including concerns about new costs associated with the Silver Sneakers wellness program, that we are working on addressing.

Meanwhile, we are starting the planning process for SUAA's Annual Meeting in Springfield scheduled for June 20. We will be assembling a Nominating Committee to recruit candidates for upcoming Board position turnovers. As I approach the conclusion of my two-year term as SUAA President, it has been a very eventful year, and I will always appreciate the endorsement and support of NIUAA.

Steven Cunningham
SUAA President

In Memoriam

Richard Baker	Kathleen Hendricks	Robert Kuller	Morley Russell
Judith Carson	Sheila Hooghkirk	Philip Melnick	Mary Schaeffer
Donna Dunn	Mary Howard	Arlene Neher	Phyllis Wear
Janice Friedlund	Mary King	Edward Rudnicki	

Annual Meeting

NIU Annuitants Association

June 26, 2024

11:30am - 2:00pm

Sandwich Buffet Luncheon

12:30pm - Guest Speaker Bryan Soady,
Executive Director, SUAA

Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center
Northern Illinois University
231 N Annie Glidden Rd, DeKalb

RSVP by June 17, 2024

AnnuitantsAssoc@niu.edu or 815-753-1508

**If you are unable to attend in person, please
email RSVP for the Zoom link.**

Free Will Offering Accepted

Amazon Cruise



Trips and Travel Schedule

Organized by Steven Johnson, Culture and Travel Committee Chair
Director, LA&S External Programming (retired)

Travel Report

The Culture and Travel Committee has sponsored two trips so far this year. In January, we went on our annual 21-day "Polar Vortex Escape" cruise to the Caribbean. Our cruise was warm and sunny. Our group of NIU annuitants and spouses consisted of John & Linda Dersch, Steven Johnson, Professor Frank & Linda Kulesa, Michael & Robin Rothamer, Judy & Professor Larry Sill, and John & Marlene Steimel.

During February and March, we went on a 28-day cruise to Manaus, Brazil, which included the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago as well as several stops on the Amazon River. We had a great time and didn't miss any of the cold weather or snow here in DeKalb while we were gone. Our group of NIUAA members, retirees, and spouses was comprised of Linda & John Dersch, Christine & Jeff Henderson, Kathy & Bob Higgerson, Steven Johnson, Mitra Mohabbat, & George Tarbay.

2024 Schedule

June 9 - 7:	Ultimate Alaska cruise
July 22 - 26:	Stratford Festival of Canada
August 4 - 11:	Rocky Mountaineer, Canadian Rockies by Rail
October 23 - November 7:	Flavors of India (plus Nepal)
December 17 - January 3:	Holiday cruise to Hawaii

2025 Schedule

January:	Polar Vortex Escape cruise
March 7-25:	Mekong River Cruise
July:	Stratford Festival of Canada
August:	Duoro River cruise
September 29 - November 20:	Tales of the South Pacific
December:	Christmas Markets of Germany

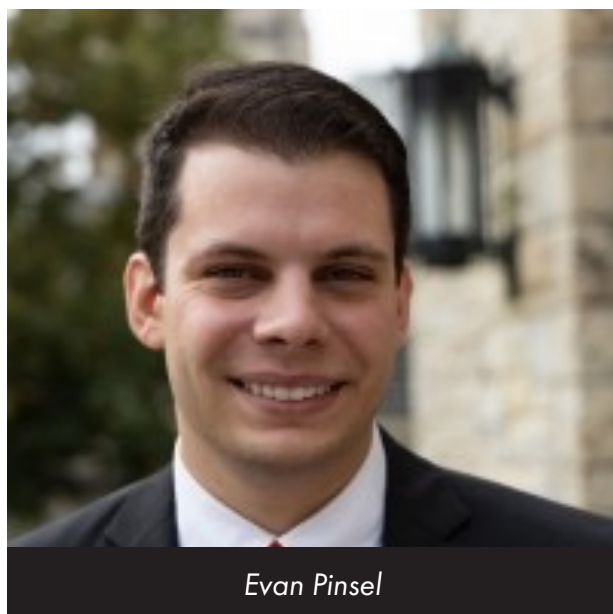
Meet This Year's NIUAA Scholarship Winner

For the 2023-2024 academic year, the Association's scholarship was awarded to Evan Pinsel, a student in the College of Law. In his biography Evan wrote, "When it comes to the field of law, I have a deep-rooted interest that stems all the way back from my childhood. My father is a lawyer, and his career always fascinated me, so much so that I oftentimes found myself asking him about cases he was involved in. Later, I joined and became a twice-serving president of the Mock Trial Association at Ball State University."

Evan is an example of the type of students we assist in obtaining their education. The generosity of NIUAA members makes this possible. In establishing an endowment, we have set in place funding for scholarships far into the future. With your continued support we can increase the amount awarded to make getting an NIU degree more affordable for students.

A donation form can be found at this link:

https://www.niu.edu/annuitants/_pdf/annuitant-association-scholarship-donate-form.pdf



Evan Pinsel

SUAA Foundation Now Accepting Scholarship and Professional Development Grant Application

It is time to submit applications for the SUAA Foundation Scholarship and Professional Development programs. The review process of applications for both programs will begin on June 1, 2024. Information regarding the two programs is listed below.

SUAA Foundation Scholarships Award Year 2024-2025

The SUAA Foundation offers up to eight scholarships of up to \$1,000 per scholarship annually. The scholarships are awarded for use in accredited degree-seeking programs, eligible technical/trade programs, and eligible certificate programs. The applicant must be a SUAA member in good standing or the spouse/partner, child, or grandchild of a SUAA member in good standing.

SUAA Foundation Professional Development Grants Award Year 2024-2025

The SUAA Foundation offers 2 grants of up to \$1,000 per grant for professional development activities. Professional development activities must be related to improving or enhancing the SUAA member's ability to perform in their current position at their institution. The grant may be used for conference registration fees, travel expenses to conferences, or tuition, fees, or books for educational expenses. The applicant must be a SUAA member in good standing who is currently employed at an Illinois institution of higher education. Applications are accepted throughout the year and grants are awarded throughout the year until two grants have been awarded. If any funds are remaining, additional grants may be awarded.

Detailed information regarding the application process and the applications can be found on the SUAA website in the SUAA Foundation section and at the following link:

<https://suaa.memberclicks.net/foundation-scholarship-program>. Application materials are at the bottom page of that link. If you have additional questions please contact Alice Medenwald at aamedenw@niu.edu.

*Alice Medenwald
Chair, SUAA Foundation Scholarship and Professional
Development Committee*

University Benefits Committee

The University Benefits Committee (UBC) met monthly to discuss benefits-related topics for current employees and annuitants. Major discussion items/announcements in Spring 2024 included the following:

- As of February 1, 2024, retiring staff will lose access to their employee Outlook email account (and network access/O365) on the day of termination. They will have access to MyNIU-HR for 60 days following termination. Retiring faculty will have Outlook access for 180 days following termination and can renew for another 365 days, with annual extensions.
- Multiple direct deposit account options for active employees' compensation are now available.
- State of Illinois Paid Leave for All legislation provides NIU employees, except for student employees and independent contractors, an additional 40 hours off per year. The time can be used for vacation, sick leave, etc., and does not carry over to the next year, i.e., use it or lose it.
- The minimum wage on campus this year has gone up to \$14/hour, with an increase scheduled for 2025 to \$15/hour. Mileage reimbursements, per diems, and hotel limits have increased.
- Benefits Choice FY25 for current employees and non-Medicare annuitants will occur from May 1-31, 2024.

Should you have any questions, new benefit ideas, and/or concerns, please contact the Annuitant Representative, Terry Borg (tborg2@niu.edu).



Amazon Cruise



Where in the Worl is Steve? Amazon Cruise



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Please Note: Voting members of the NIUAA Board include all officers and those listed as Directors.