

2026 Proposed Commencement Speakers

HHS—Charles Baldwin

Charles E. Baldwin, Ed.D. MS MSW LSW professional career covers over 40 years working in social service systems, in Criminal Justice, Substance Abuse, Mental Health and Child Welfare in the Youngstown area. Chuck retired from The Village Network, Inc. as the Northeast Regional Director covering Cuyahoga, Montgomery, Richland, Wayne, Summit, Mahoning, and Trumbull counties. He holds a Doctor of Education Degree from Ashland University and Masters Degrees in both Criminal Justice and Social Work and a BS in Criminal Justice, all of which he earned from YSU. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Community Corrections Association, Mahoning-Youngstown Community Action Board, the Trumbull County Drug and Mental Health Board, and ATLC Board. Chuck is a Part-Time faculty at Youngstown State University in the Social Work Department. He and his wife, Joyce Clark Baldwin, have two children, Judge Carla J. Baldwin and our son-in-law, Brandon and Eric C. Baldwin and our wonderful daughter-in-law, Stephanie owners of Excellence Expected Home Health, LLC. He is very proud of his four amazing grandchildren, Logan Joy, Reese Marie, Tristan Eric, and Jackson Charles.

Matthew Bowen, Superintendent, Campbell City Schools YSU Alumni 1999 Education

Matthew Bowen is an accomplished education leader with over two decades of experience. He began his career as a special education teacher in the Struthers City School District in August 1999 and quickly rose through the ranks to become an Elementary/Middle Assistant Principal in August 2006. In July 2008, Mr. Bowen transitioned to an Elementary School Principal assignment with additional district curriculum responsibilities at West Branch Local Schools, where he remained until August 2013 when he was named Superintendent of the Campbell City School District.

Throughout his career, Mr. Bowen has focused on the whole school community, serving on various statewide and national committees, both volunteer and appointed: the Ohio Department of Education Related Service Personnel Workgroup, the State of Ohio Whole Child Advisory Group, the Ohio Attendance Task Force Committee, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators Legislative Committee, The Ohio State University Extension Advisory Committee, Youngstown State University Professional Education Council, the Mahoning County School Employees Insurance Consortium Board, and the Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools (CORAS) Legislative Committee. Additionally, Mr. Bowen was recommended by the Ohio Department of Education to the U.S. Department of Education to serve on the 2023 Midwest Regional Advisory Committee, where he provided summary recommendations for Priority 2: Early Childhood Education (access, alignment, program requirements) and Priority 3: Student Well-being and Mental Health (including impact on attendance).

Mr. Bowen has been invited to present as a speaker at multiple state and national conferences, including the State of Ohio SuccessBound Conferences, the Ohio School Boards Association Capital Conference, the Ohio School Health Training Academy Conference, the Association for

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Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) National Conference, and the Appalachian STEM Collaborative.

Mr. Bowen is always at the forefront of the latest methodologies to move the region and the state of Ohio forward. He has worked diligently to ensure teachers receive the professional development necessary to meet the evolving needs of students and families. His leadership emphasizes serving all students, recognizing individual abilities, and cultivating a collaborative culture and climate where every stakeholder can thrive.

In recent years, Mr. Bowen has cultivated transformative projects that have become models for communities across the state and nation — public-private collaborations focused on strengthening the regional economy through innovation, education, health, and wellness. From these efforts emerged the **Community Literacy Workforce and Cultural Center (CLWCC)** and the **Northeast Ohio IMPACT Academy**, one of Ohio's few seventh-through-twelfth-grade state-recognized STEM-designated schools. The CLWCC's year-round programs empower students to replace risk behaviors with wellness activities, engage in STEM instruction, and connect with external organizations and early college opportunities through partnerships such as Stark State College.

Through his positive relationships, Mr. Bowen has grown new opportunities and is excited for the opening of the **Campbell Health and Community Development Center (CHCDC)** and the **Mahoning Valley Wellness and Rehabilitation Center (MVWRC)**. These facilities are supported by secured assets through competitive grants and growing programs with higher education partners that expand health services and training opportunities for students in Campbell through the district's own STEM-designated Northeast Ohio IMPACT Academy. With these expanding programs, new opportunities are continuously carved out for students as part of a comprehensive strategic plan that thrives on dedicated partnerships, staff, students, and families embracing accelerated curriculum and real-world placements. With **Youngstown State University** joining the Campbell City Schools campus, Mr. Bowen is confident and proud of the district's growth as a small but strong model for change and hope throughout the state.

New partnerships are also being cemented with **Nationwide Children's Hospital** for the purpose of grant oversight and guidance related to the **highest single award from the Governor's Office — \$10.2 million dollars** — and with the **Appalachia Children's Coalition**, which has secured program funding for the new **Director of Whole Child Supports** position. This position encourages student involvement and engagement with aligned services that address their academic, social, and emotional needs, reinforcing Campbell's commitment to supporting the whole child.

Beyond his commitment to the schools, Mr. Bowen has also willingly worked alongside **City officials** when called upon, including efforts in **strategic planning to encourage new businesses to choose Campbell**. This commitment is evident not only in his work to expand health and higher education partnerships on campus but also in his continued advocacy for business investment throughout the community. From **Dunkin' Donuts** to the **Public Library** and many others, Mr. Bowen's efforts reflect his deep love for Campbell, its students, families, and future.

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Through advancing partnerships with local businesses and organizations, Mr. Bowen has also alleviated the potential risk of the CLWCC becoming a tax burden on the community by securing local, state, and federal funding to initiate construction and developing a shared-services model that ensures sustainability.

Mr. Bowen has been an active member of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA) for many years. In August 2018, he received the **BASA Exceptional Leadership Award**, and in 2021, he was recognized as the **Northeast Ohio Outstanding Superintendent** by the **Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA)**.

Mr. Bowen's shared leadership approach empowers regional stakeholders to take ownership of their areas of responsibility while providing collaborative guidance and direction. He remains accessible to leadership teams and fellow superintendents alike, demonstrating a commitment to shared success. He is most proud of the many accomplishments of the students he has served — achievements made possible by the outstanding leadership of teachers, support staff, principals, board members, parents, and community partners.

Mr. Bowen regularly attends community, regional, and statewide events, understanding that building strong relationships is essential to creating a formula for economic development that promotes lifelong student success.

STEM - Clarence Howell

- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/clarencehowell/>
- BE in Industrial and Systems Engineering, 2009; MSE in Industrial and Systems Engineering, 2020
- Entrepreneur and franchise owner, Marco's Pizza; featured in [Minority Business Entrepreneur magazine](#) January, 2026; The MBE magazine story illustrates how he used his engineering experience to approach his franchise differently, focusing on people over costs. He applies engineering principles to his business – structured training, kitchen metrics, problem solving. Could offer inspiring words about purpose, facing challenges and making a positive impact.
- President, Grace Works Corporation October 2022-Present
- Principal Consultant, A.C.C. Business Solutions July 2020-Present
- Worked for Vallourec – North America for 13 years. Last position was Manager, North American Sales & Operations Planning from 2019-2023.
- Co-Leader of the Houston Alumni Chapter; President Johnson has met during event
- 4-year Indoor Track and Outdoor Track student athlete while attending YSU

WCBA - Amir Hussain

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- BSBA in Marketing Management, 1989
- Senior Defense, Intelligence and Security Cooperation Consultant at Sigmatech in Washington D.C.
- Distinguished military career and consultant positions including: supporting Secretary of the Air Force International Affairs currently; and previously consulting for the Department of Defense; and Intelligence for the US Army
- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/amir-hussain-52abb23/details/experience/>
- Former Washington D.C. Alumni Chapter leader

HHS—Matt Kresic

Mr. Kresic brings more than 33 years of experience in the nonprofit child welfare and behavioral health sectors, serving in roles that span from direct service to executive leadership. Cadence Care Network—where he has worked since 1993—provides Treatment Foster Care, Comprehensive Mental Health Services, and Care Coordination to more than 5,000 children across Ohio each year. Over the course of his tenure, he has held positions including Director of Operations, Independent Living Program Coordinator, and Case Manager. Guided by a growth mindset and a commitment to creative problem-solving, Mr. Kresic has overseen significant organizational expansion. Under his leadership, Cadence Care Network has grown from 28 employees serving a small cluster of northeastern Ohio counties to nearly 390 employees operating across multiple regions, including Columbus and Toledo. This growth has broadened the organization’s capacity to fulfill its mission of helping children and families achieve their most successful lives.

Mr. Kresic earned his bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Youngstown State University and a master’s degree in Public Administration, with a focus on nonprofit management, from Kent State University. He has also contributed to the academic community for the past decade as an adjunct professor in the Bitonte College of Health and Human Services at Youngstown State University.

Deeply rooted in community service, Mr. Kresic serves on several local boards, including the Fairhaven Foundation and the Trumbull County Family and Children First Council, and provides guidance to various child-serving agencies. At the state level, he is a board member of the Ohio Children’s Alliance and the OhioRISE Advisory Board, and he was recently appointed by Governor DeWine to the Children and Youth Advisory Council at the Ohio Department of Children and Youth.

A dedicated advocate for children and families, Mr. Kresic frequently offers testimony before key legislative committees, including the Ohio Health and Human Services Finance

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Subcommittee and the Ohio Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee. His advocacy reflects his longstanding commitment—as both a social worker and organizational leader—to elevating the voices of vulnerable children and families across Ohio.

Bill Lawson, Executive Director, Mahoning Valley Historical Society YSU Alumni 1986 Arts and Sciences

Bill Lawson is the Director of the Mahoning Valley Historical Society in Youngstown, Ohio, serving in that position since 1991. He has been employed by MVHS in a variety of capacities since 1987. Lawson holds B. A. and M. A. Degrees in History from Youngstown State University. He served as a Trustee of the Ohio Museums Association from 1993 to 1995. He served on the Board of Trustees of the Ohio Association of Historical Societies and Museums from 1997 to 2005, and was President of this Association from 2002-2003. Lawson is a graduate of the Leadership Mahoning Valley community leadership program. His community service also includes the Board of Trustees for First Night Youngstown, and annual alcohol-free, family oriented New Year's Eve event in downtown, the Board of Trustees of Wick Neighbors, Inc., a non-profit development corporation spearheading new development initiatives in the Wick Avenue cultural district and Smoky Hollow neighborhood, working as a volunteer youth minister at his parish, St. Patrick Church of Youngstown, and involvement in the Alliance for Congregational Transformation Influencing Our Neighborhoods (ACTION), a faith-based community organizing initiative. He has two children and lives in Youngstown.

Mayor Derrick McDowell, non degree YSU alumni

As Youngstown's 52nd Mayor, Derrick McDowell is dedicated to serving at the pleasure of the people who deserve real transformative change. At the forefront of his agenda is raising the standard around City services and residents' quality of life. A cornerstone of Mayor McDowell's vision is the work of "Reclaiming Our Identity" as we rebuild our industry.

A proud, native son of the Southside of the City of Youngstown, his genuine love and care for his hometown has passionately marked his public service. Mayor McDowell has advocated on the local stage all through his entrepreneurial journey. Most often he is known for his work as the Founder of The Youngstown Flea. He has additionally served as the former "Community Engagement and Inclusion Coordinator" for Wean Park and the Youngstown Foundation Amphitheatre. He is the Founder of Hola Fest Youngstown (Hispanic Heritage Cultural Celebration), and previously held a position at AT&T in corporate leadership for 12 years of his professional career.

Mayor McDowell's leadership marks a transformational opportunity to champion Youngstown's resurgence through bold, decisive action, innovative solutions, and an unwavering commitment to each of our 33 neighborhoods.

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George McKelvey

YSU Alumni 1976 , Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Former Youngstown Mayor

George M. McKelvey is an American politician. A Democrat, he served two terms as Mayor of Youngstown, Ohio, from 1998 to 2005. Prior to serving as mayor, he served two terms as the Treasurer of Mahoning County. He has also been a teacher, school administrator and city council member in Youngstown.

In 2004, he broke ranks with his Democratic party to endorse Republican President George W. Bush for a second term.

In March 2008, McKelvey was named a U.S. Observer with the International Fund for Ireland.

Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini

Youngstown, Ohio, in the mid-20th century, was a place of grit, hard work, and the kind of dreams that were born from sweat and perseverance. Born Raymond Michael Mancini on March 4, 1961, in this tough steel town, Ray was a product of his environment. But what made him stand out was not just his tenacity but also the heart and soul he carried into every ring and every room.

As the son of Lenny “Boom Boom” Mancini, a top contender from the 1940s, Ray’s initial connection with boxing was deeply personal. His early years in the ring were marked by a hunger to not only prove himself but also to fulfill a legacy his father couldn’t because of World War II injuries.

Starting as an amateur, Mancini’s raw talent was evident. His aggressive style, formidable left hook, and undying spirit soon caught the attention of trainers and scouts. In 1979, with an amateur record of an impressive 43 wins against only 7 losses, he decided to turn professional. He quickly climbed the ranks, demonstrating a ferocity in the ring that matched his desire to prove himself. By 1982, Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini had his sights on the WBA Lightweight title. When he faced Arturo Frias for the title, the bout lasted less than a round, with Mancini capturing the championship.

In the annals of pugilistic history, few names resonate with the raw, emotive power of Ray “Boom Boom” Mancini. Yet, beyond the punishing jabs and the whirlwind flurries that defined his tenure in the ring, Mancini has embarked on a less heralded but equally compelling journey through the labyrinthine world of film. Transitioning from the physicality of boxing to the nuanced craft of acting and producing, Mancini has deftly navigated this new arena with the same fervor and resilience that crowned him a champion.

Being from the steel-laden heart of Youngstown, Ohio, Mancini’s narrative was always more complex than the typical boxer’s tale. His foray into the film industry might seem an unexpected pivot, yet those who have followed his career closely know it as a natural extension of a man

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perennially in search of growth. Mancini's acting debut, a foray that might have been dismissed as a novelty, was anything but. Instead, it marked the beginning of a serious and dedicated pursuit of the cinematic arts.

Mancini's roles, though varied, often draw on the wellsprings of his own life — tales of struggle, redemption, and the indomitable human spirit. It's as if each character he portrays carries a piece of the ring with them, a testament to Mancini's own battles and triumphs. But it is perhaps behind the camera where Mancini's vision and creativity find their fullest expression. As a producer, he has shown a keen eye for stories that resonate on a deeply personal level, often exploring themes of resilience and the quest for meaning in the face of adversity.

Robert Marino, Supt., Trumble County Educational Service Center YSU Alumni 1990 Education

The Trumbull County Educational Service Center governing board on Monday named Robert Marino as the new superintendent of the center effective Aug. 1.

Marino, who has served since 2010 as the assistant superintendent / director of curriculum and instruction of the center, will replace Michael Hanshaw, who is retiring July 31.

"I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to serve as the next superintendent of the Trumbull County Educational Service Center. It is a privilege to work alongside such dedicated educators, administrators and community partners," Marino said.

Marino said he looks forward to building on the strong foundation already in place and "continuing to move Trumbull County forward, together, and continue success for our students, schools and communities."

The governing board approved a five-year, 260-day contract for Marino at \$139,500.

Marino holds bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in education and administration.

Marino worked as a teacher for Warren city and Niles city schools, was a principal in Niles for nine years and curriculum director before coming to the TCESC in 2010.

Hanshaw, who has 40 years in education, including the past 15 as superintendent of the TCESC, said the time has come for him to retire.

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Shelley Murray, Executive Director, Youngstown Area Goodwill Industries YSU Alumni 1996 Education

I am deeply honored:’ Shelley Murray becomes new Youngstown Area Goodwill Industries’ CEO By Staff report Mahoning Matters September 12, 2024 1:12 PM Youngstown Area Goodwill Industries, Inc. announced Shelley Murray as the company’s new chief executive officer. She’s been working in an interim capacity since Jan. 1, but officially became the CEO this week. Youngstown Area Goodwill Industries, Inc. announced Shelley Murray as the company’s new chief executive officer. “I am deeply honored to continue serving this incredible organization,” Murray said. “Over the past year as interim, I have witnessed firsthand the dedication and talent of our team, the resilience of the individuals we serve, and the support of our community.” TOP VIDEOS Former CEO Annie Phillips announced her resignation on Wednesday. Murray served as **Goodwill’s interim CEO since Jan. 1. “I would like to express my appreciation to Annie Phillips for her leadership and dedication. Together, we will carry forward Goodwill’s legacy of empowering lives and creating opportunities for those who need it most. I am excited for the journey ahead and look forward to furthering our mission in even greater ways,”** said Murray. Prior to Goodwill, Murray spent more than 20 years in education, most recently at Valley Christian Schools. She served as principal, vice principal and head of schools during her tenure. Board president Hasheen Wilson said so far as interim CEO, Murray has “demonstrated remarkable leadership.” “Shelley has demonstrated a deep commitment to our values,” said Wilson. “She has increased the visibility of Goodwill in our community and has significantly enhanced the spirit of collaboration within our organization. Under Shelley’s leadership, we’ve also seen increases in revenue and efficiencies, further strengthening our ability to serve those in need. We are grateful for Annie’s leadership and the contributions she has made during her tenure. Her dedication has been instrumental in advancing our mission and serving our community.” Goodwill has been serving Eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania for 130 years and is celebrating its anniversary this month. The nonprofit’s mission programs strive to expand employment and training opportunities for individuals in the community, including those with disabilities or other barriers. Sales through the organization’s 10 retail stores directly support its mission and help to divert millions of pounds of goods from area landfills.

STEM – Adam Pence

- BE in Civil Engineering, 2009
- Shannon Tirone recommended as a potential commencement speaker after meeting in Columbus in September 2025.
- Prior to YSU he completed a four year commitment in the US Navy as an Aviation Electronics Technician, specializing on F/A-18 aircraft. After two years working as a Staff Engineer for a firm near Pittsburgh, he began working at Ascent Resources; the largest natural gas producer in the state of Ohio.

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Tim Saxton, retired Superintendent, Boardman Local Schools

Sitting in his office Monday afternoon, Tim Saxton talked about his time with the Boardman Schools first as a student, then as high school principal, the director of operations, and finally the superintendent.

July 31 will be Saxton's last day as Superintendent of the Boardman Schools but he's not retiring. As Saxton likes to say, he's ready for the next chapter.

"Boardman's meant a lot to me. You can tell right now in my voice, it's not going to be easy to walk out of here but I'm looking forward to the next challenge," Saxton said.

Construction of a new football stadium was one of Saxton's accomplishments as superintendent, and he's leaving with a balanced budget thanks to the passage of a levy six years ago.

"I'm probably most proud to take a look at the people that are here that I had a chance to hire or maybe had something to do with them coming to Boardman. Just fantastic people. I'll tell you that's what I'm most proud of — the people who are here," he said.

One thing Saxton wished he had accomplished was replacing the nearly 100-year-old Center Intermediate School.

"I wished we could have found a way to get the center done or at least have broken ground before I left but it will be. I'll put that on Mr. Neifer's to-do list," he said.

Mr. Neifer is the former East Palestine Superintendent who's replacing Saxton.

When asked why he resigned, Saxton said he's 58 — with a lot of energy — and being a superintendent is time-consuming. For example, he just returned from a two-week beach vacation.

"It was the first time I've gone on vacation and I really wasn't doing school work. People weren't calling, I wasn't solving problems, I wasn't emailing, I wasn't on the phone. It was kind of nice."

However, Saxton is not retiring just yet. He's just giving up his position as superintendent at Boardman. In fact, he's already received two offers from companies involved with education to come work for them.

**Scott Schulick, President, Mahoning Valley Historical Society
YSU Alumni 1994 Business Administration
Senior Vice President/Investments, Stifel**

Schulick Family Scholarship Enhances Long-Time Relationship With YSU

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The Youngstown State University Department of Intercollegiate Athletics is pleased to announce the creation of the Schulick Family Scholarship to enhance the YSU Athletics Scholarship Endowment Fund.

The Schulick Family Scholarship was established in the summer of 2015 by Scott R. Schulick to recognize an outstanding student-athlete and leader. The scholarship honors the Schulick Family which includes his sister Jill Schulick Hecker and brother-in-law Brian Hecker, both YSU graduates; and his parents, Robert & Joanne Schulick, all of whom are avid Penguin sports fans and tailgaters.

Scott Schulick graduated from YSU with a BSBA in Accounting in 1994 and an MBA in Finance in 1996. While on campus, he was a student leader serving as President of YSU Student Government and as a Student Trustee on the YSU Board of Trustees. Later on during his career in Youngstown as a financial advisor, he was named as a Distinguished Alumnus of the Williamson College of Business. He was a member of the YSU Board of Trustees from 2004-13, where he also served as Chairman. Additionally, he served as a trustee of the YSU Foundation, the YSU Alumni Society and is the current President of YSU The Penguin Club.

This scholarship will be awarded annually to a YSU football student-athlete who is a recognized leader among his peers and contributes positively in the community. Preference will be given to Penguins who hail from the Mahoning Valley.

Schulick, a long-time YSU football and athletics fan, said a scholarship endowment is just another way to show his support for the Penguins' program.

"Youngstown State University has been an important part of my life and provided me with the education to succeed in business and serve the community," Schulick said. "Attending YSU athletic events has been a tradition with family and friends for many years, and as President of the YSU Penguin Club this year, it is a great honor to be able to give back to the University through the establishment of a scholarship for a student-athlete."

The first recipient of the scholarship endowment is freshman offensive lineman Gavin Wiggins. Wiggins, a native of Philadelphia, Pa., joined the YSU program this fall.

Paul McFadden, President of the YSU Foundation, said that Schulick, and his family, have always been Youngstown State fans and all have supported the Penguins for many years.

"Scott Schulick and his family have always been there to support Youngstown State University," McFadden said. "Scott is the current president of the YSU Penguin Club and has been a long-time Board of Trustee member. They have always been involved in the area community and we are privileged to have them endow a scholarship for a deserving football student-athlete."

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HHS---Nancy Wagner, DNP, RN

Nancy Wagner is Professor Emerita and the former Director of the Youngstown State University (YSU) Centofanti School of Nursing. Early in her career, she worked as a pediatric clinical nurse specialist at Cincinnati Children's Medical Center. Subsequently, she began her career at YSU as a nurse educator, teaching for 29 years (1995-2023) at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and advising and mentoring hundreds of students. Currently, she is teaching part time at YSU in the master's (MSN) nurse education program. She earned her BSN from the University of Cincinnati, an MSN from Indiana University and a Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) from the Case Western Reserve University Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing.

Under Nancy's leadership as Director from 2013-2023, the Centofanti School of Nursing developed a new doctorate in Nursing Practice for anesthesiology students, established the annual White Coat Ceremony for entry-level sophomores, earned multiple accreditations by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, created the Masternick Nursing Simulation Lab and was awarded a total of \$382,000 in grant funding to expand the graduate education programs. She guided the renaming of the Department of Nursing to the YSU Centofanti School of Nursing, which included a \$1 million pledge from the Centofanti Charitable Foundation. In addition, Nancy was instrumental in orchestrating efforts to provide more than 5000 COVID-19 vaccinations to those affiliated with the YSU community during the pandemic.

Nancy's research/scholarship areas of focus include the impact of scenario simulation upon critical thinking, social support for pregnant and parenting women, and the student's lived experiences in study abroad experiences in Mexico and Israel. She has advised nursing anesthesiology students as they completed their DNP projects. She was instrumental in creating the "Evening of Research" with Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society for Nursing for undergraduate and graduate students and community members to disseminate their research.

In 2021, Wagner was named the inaugural President James P. Tressel Endowed Chair in Leadership at Youngstown State University. Previously, she received the YSU Distinguished Professor Award, the Watson Award for Excellence in Academic Leadership, and the Award for Excellence from the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University. She has leadership roles at the Youngstown Area Jewish Federation in the areas of elderly care and social services where she was recently awarded the Esther Marks Memorial Volunteer Award for years of service and leadership. She is a member of ANA-Ohio, Sigma Theta Tau, and the Transcultural Nursing Society.

Nancy is currently President of the Case Western Reserve Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing Alumni Association. In her leadership role, she works with the school's alumni to provide support to current students including mentorship and resources for international travel and advocacy experiences.

Nancy is also the Co-Chair of the Hadassah Nurses Resource Committee, volunteering for the growth and excellence of the Henrietta Szold School of Nursing in Jerusalem while collaborating with nursing leaders in both the United States and in Israel.

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In addition to her role as Co-Chair of the Hadassah Nurses Resource Committee, she previously educated hundreds of high school students using the Hadassah “Check It Out” self-breast exam program and accompanied YSU nursing students to Israel to meet and share educational experiences with students and faculty at the Hadassah Henrietta Szold School of Nursing. More recently, she collaborated with Hadassah National Nurses Council members to create the Hadassah White Coat ceremony for the master’s students in Israel.

Nancy cherishes her relationships with family and friends. She and her husband, Barry Wagner, are the proud parents of two married sons and two granddaughters. Upon her retirement in 2023, she and her husband, Barry, created the Nancy and Barry Wagner Nursing Student Success Scholarship at the YSU Foundation to provide monetary support to nursing students at all levels.

WCBA – Jerry Wiant

- BSBA in Accounting, 1989
- Managing Director, Head of Financial Institutions Investment & Corporate Banking at Truist Securities in New York City
- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jerrywiant/>
- WCBA Alumni Award recipient in 2025
- Participated in dinner with WCBA Student Investment Fund in 2023 and 2025
- [Bloomberg article](#) on current position

HHS--Alicia Williamson, DSW-C, MSW, LSW,

Alicia Williamson is a Doctoral Candidate in Social Work at the University of Kentucky, where she will earn her Doctor of Social Work degree in May 2026. She earned both her Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work degrees from Youngstown State University. Williamson is a seasoned leader with 28 years of experience advancing justice, equity, and survivor-centered systems.

She serves as Senior Director of Survivor Services at the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, where she oversees statewide housing, legal, relocation, and supportive service programs that strengthen safety and stability for survivors and their families across Ohio.

Williamson’s career began in the Mahoning Valley, where she worked in legal aid supporting individuals and families experiencing poverty, with a focus on family law matters. She later served as Director of Someplace Safe in Trumbull County, leading local efforts to strengthen community-based services for survivors of domestic violence. Her leadership journey reflects a deep commitment to building strong, trauma-responsive systems at both the local and statewide levels.

In addition to her executive leadership, Williamson serves as Adjunct Faculty at Youngstown State University, where she mentors and prepares future social work professionals. She is recognized for her ability to connect practice, policy, and people-centered leadership in ways that create sustainable impact.

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Williamson has received a Distinction of Honor from Congresswoman Emilia Sykes in recognition of her leadership and contributions to improving outcomes for survivors of domestic violence. She has presented at statewide and national conferences and is widely regarded as a collaborative leader who brings clarity, compassion, and strategic vision to complex systems.

Lou Zona

YSU Alumni 1970, former faculty member

At the Butler Institute of American Art, every painting has a story — and so does the man who guided the museum for 43 years.

After more than four decades leading one of the Valley’s most treasured institutions, Dr. Lou Zona is preparing to step away from the museum he helped transform.

On Thursday, he took First News inside the Butler to revisit the pieces and memories that shaped his 43-year tenure.

“It’s home. I’ve been absent only a handful of days in my 43 years of doing this. I just can’t imagine missing a day’s work if I don’t have to, because I love it,” Zona said.

Zona has led the Butler since 1981. When the museum opened in 1919, it had a modest 13-piece collection. Today, it boasts more than 22,000 works.

Under Zona’s leadership, the museum expanded five times and became a national destination for American art.

“It’s been a joy. I love teaching. I love explaining the art collection here at the Butler Institute,” Zona said.

One of his favorite works, “Snap the Whip,” is a painting with a nearly identical counterpart at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but Zona says the Butler’s version has something the Met’s doesn’t.

“No sky in the Met’s painting. So, we think ours is a little better than the Metropolitan Museum of New York,” Zona said.

One painting includes a familiar face — Zona himself. It’s an oil on canvas depicting well-known Youngstown figures of the 1970s.

“The artist asked us to put lights right under our chin to create this kind of spooky quality. It seems to have worked, especially with me. It looks like someone punched me in the face,” Zona said.

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Art has always been a constant for Zona, ever since sharing a bedroom with his brother, who grew up to be a graphic artist. Even after more than four decades, he says letting go won't be easy.

“Impossible. Impossible. This is why I'm clinging to the next number of weeks, so I can still be a part of it all. But I can hopefully be a good resource for new people coming in, because I know this collection upside down,” Zona said.

Zona will continue serving the institute as director emeritus.

BCLASSE - Dr. Amy Laurel Fluker

Dr. Amy Laurel Fluker is an associate professor of history in the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences at Youngstown State University, where she exemplifies excellence in teaching, scholarship, and meaningful community engagement. She holds a B.A. in U.S. History from Westminster College (Missouri), and both an M.A. and a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Mississippi, bringing deep expertise in nineteenth-century U.S. history and the American Civil War to her classroom and research.

Dr. Fluker's courses cover foundational and thematic topics such as U.S. History to 1877, the American Civil War, Women's History, and the History of Ohio and the Midwest. Through her teaching, she equips students with strong skills in critical thinking, archival research, and digital humanities — preparing them for careers in museums, archives, libraries, and beyond.

A highly honored faculty member, Dr. Fluker has received multiple awards for her excellence in both teaching and scholarship at YSU, and she has been a National Endowment for the Humanities Visiting Research Scholar. She also holds the Robert W. Reeder Memorial Endowed Professorship in History, a distinction that reflects her leadership in regional and national historical scholarship.

Central to Dr. Fluker's work is a strong commitment to experiential learning, creating meaningful opportunities for students to engage history through research, public scholarship, and community partnership. She organizes and directs LAHSS-Con, the Valerie Waksmunski-Starr Memorial Conference on the Liberal Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, a peer-reviewed interdisciplinary conference where students present original research at the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor.

She also leads the Oakwood Cemetery Digitization Project, preserving and digitizing historic records for public access, and played a key role in organizing YSU's America250 community history initiative in 2026. Committed to public service and partnership, Dr. Fluker's work embodies YSU's mission of learning, discovery, and community engagement.

The following candidate was added to the list following majority approval of the senate:

Ted Schmidt – BSBA in Accounting, 1987

2026 Proposed Commencement Speakers (cont.)

Ted Schmidt is a highly respected regional business leader and a Youngstown State University alumnus (1987) with a BSBA degree in Accounting. As PNC's Regional President, he brings substantial professional experience and credibility, and just as importantly, he has maintained an ongoing and visible connection to the Williamson College of Business Administration through consistent engagement with our students, programs, and employer-facing initiatives. He is a fixture at events that connect WCBA and the business community, including Meet the Employers Day and the Professional Development Summit, and he has been a constant and strong advocate for WCBA students. His engagement reflects a genuine investment in helping students build professional confidence, form meaningful employer connections, and prepare for successful careers. WCBA has also formally recognized him through its alumni awards, and he has served in a prominent student-facing role as keynote speaker and chapter honoree for YSU's Beta Gamma Sigma induction. Ted's engagement in our community includes past service on the board of the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber and current service as President of the Board of Trustees for the Butler Institute of American Art. His sustained partnership with WCBA, regional leadership, and commitment to student opportunity make him an excellent candidate to be approved as a YSU commencement speaker.