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Rhetoric Newsletter

August 2024

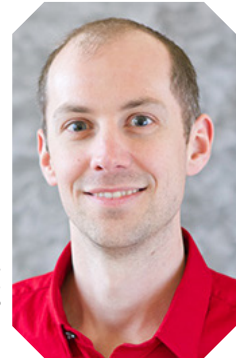


Message from the Chair, Jeff Drury

Dear friends,

The Rhetoric Department continues to play a significant role in campus culture at Wabash College through our teaching and involvement in the community.

Professors Jennifer Abbott, Chris Anderson, Daniel DeVinney, Brian Long, James Proszek, and I all taught in the department this year. In addition to core courses, we offered exciting electives in persuasion, digital rhetoric, misinformation, student activism, deliberation, sitcoms, comics and graphic novels, gender, and race. We continued to support **Dean Todd McDorman's** role as Dean of the College and **Professor Sara Drury's** leave from Wabash to work for the nonprofit organization, Unify America.



The Department graduated 15 majors this past May and look to have the same this coming year. This spring, 28 of the 225 sophomores declared a Rhetoric major, making the rising junior class the largest group of rhetoric majors in the history of the department. These students are likely attracted to the relevant course offerings noted above. We also have a strong track record in training student leaders, such as **Cole Bergman '24** and **Anthony Donahue '25**—the outgoing and incoming Wabash College student body presidents, respectively—who are both rhetoric majors.

Beyond our work in the classroom, the Department hosted exciting events on campus including the annual Moot Court competition, a President's Distinguished Speaker Series lecture by **Vanessa Otero** (CEO and Founder of Ad Fontes Media), and the Brigance Forum Lecture by **Dr. Casey Kelly** (Professor of Rhetoric and Public Culture, University of Nebraska-Lincoln). You can read more about these later in the newsletter.

The Rhetoric Department also welcomes two new visiting faculty this fall. **Professor Gabriela Tscholl**, who recently earned her PhD at the University of Illinois, will serve as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Rhetoric. **Instructor Rowdy Farmer**, PhD candidate at Arizona State University, will teach one course each semester in the Rhetoric Department alongside working with Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse. We wish Professors DeVinney, Long, and Proszek well as they start new chapters in their lives following their time at Wabash.

We know there are exciting days ahead for the Rhetoric Department and we thank you for your continued interest in and support of the work we do.

Sincerely,
Professor Jeffrey P. Meltretter Drury

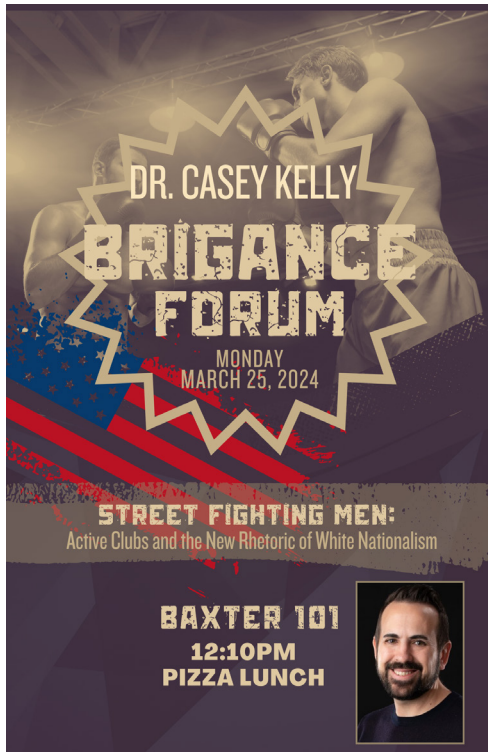
Brigance Forum Lecture

On March 25, 2024, Dr. Casey Kelly delivered this year's Brigance Forum lecture, "Street Fighting Men: Active Clubs and the New Rhetoric of White Nationalism." Dr. Kelly is the Professor of Rhetoric and Public Culture & Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

His lecture addressed the important role of boxing and mixed martial arts clubs (so-called "Active Clubs") in white nationalist recruitment across the U.S. and Europe since 2017. He examined Active Club propaganda videos and argued that rapid pacing devices, intense soundtracks, quick cuts, and the simulation of collective bodily movement aim to incite the body of white male spectators into the political project of white nationalism.

During his visit to campus, Dr. Kelly also connected with faculty and students through meals, open "office hours," and visits to three classes: **Professor Jennifer Abbott's** RHE 360 Gender and Communication, **Professor Daniel DeVinney's** RHE 370 Rhetoric and Race, and Religion **Professor Emily Smith's** REL 280 Sex and Gender in Modern American Christianity.

His talk and visits provoked insightful discussions that many of us returned to well after he left campus.



Lambda Pi Eta

Lambda Pi Eta is the undergraduate honor society of the National Communication Association. Rhetoric majors and minors are eligible for induction if they meet the rigorous academic criteria through their Rhetoric courses and overall academic performance.

In April, Wabash's Alpha Gamma Nu chapter inducted five new students: **Anthony Donahue '25, William Phillips '25, Jacob Sitzman '25, Jacob Talbert '24, and Jacob Weber '25.** They join continuing members who were inducted the previous year: **Cole Bergman '24, Jackson Grabill '24, Seth Kirkpatrick '24, and Nicholas Logan '24.**



Seth Kirkpatrick '24 and Cole Bergman '24 initiate new members Jake Talbert '24, Anthony Donahue '25, Jake Weber '25, and Jacob Sitzman '25



Newly inducted LPH members (L to R): Jake Weber '25, Jake Talbert '24, Anthony Donahue '25, and Jacob Sitzman '25
Not Pictured: Will Phillips '25

30th Moot Court Competition

The 30th Moot Court competition took place in October 2024, again co-sponsored by the Rhetoric Department and the Wabash Club of Indianapolis, with Professor Jeff Drury serving as the campus organizer.

The case was a fictional take on a dispute involving two state laws (in Texas and Florida) that forbid social media platforms from deplatforming political candidates or journalists. The problem addresses two main questions: Do social media companies have a First Amendment right to control the content they disseminate and to deplatform users such as politicians and journalists? Or do social media companies lack First Amendment protections because they are “common carriers” like phone companies that host the speech of others?

Thirty Wabash students participated in the competition and 12 advanced to the semi-finals round. The finalists were **Andrew Dever '25**, **William Grennon '24**, **Seth Kirkpatrick '24**, and **Gabriel Pirtle '25**. Kirkpatrick won his second Top Advocate award in back-to-back years while Dever was awarded the Floyd Artful Advocacy Prize.

The event would not be possible without the support of **Professor Scott Himsel '85**, **Jon Pactor '71**, **Matt Griffith '89**, **Julia Phipps**, **Amber King**, **Brandon Rash**, and case writer **Jane Ann Himsel**. **Isaac Morrison '26** also helped as a student assistant for the event.

You can read more about the competition on the College's [website](#) and watch the competition on [YouTube](#). Stay tuned for information about the 31st Moot Court competition in October 2024.

Introducing Professor Tscholl



Professor Gabriela Tscholl received her PhD from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her scholarship focuses on the multimedia rhetoric of the gun control debate, with an emphasis on youth-centered movements. A central question she asks is, “How can anti-gun violence activists break through the polarization and gridlock inherent in the gun debate in order to induce action from the public and politicians?” Her dissertation examined how March For Our Lives (MFOL) and Change

The Ref (CTR), anti-gun violence groups that emerged following the 2018 Parkland, Florida shooting, use art and performance-based strategies to move beyond rhetorical and policy gridlock to reframe the issue of gun violence. She argues that the practices and methods of the activists function as a form of encounter where the public is invited to participate in the discursive space, rather than simply address them with well-trodden arguments. She brings these ideas into the classroom to encourage students to expand their understanding of the diverse ways in which public issues can be translated to audiences. She is excited about joining the Wabash faculty and getting the chance to teach Public Speaking and Persuasion to Wabash students.



Finals round judges and finalists.
Back Row (L to R): Seth Kirkpatrick '24, Gabriel Pirtle '25,
William Grennon '24, and Andrew Dever '25.
Front Row (L to R): Hon. Darren Chadd '92, Hon. Dana
Kenworthy, Hon. Damon Leichthy '94,
and Professor Matt Carlson



Seth Kirkpatrick '24 speaks during the finals round

Vanessa Otero Campus Visit

In September 2023, Vanessa Otero, Founder and CEO of [Ad Fontes Media](#) and creator of the [Media Bias Chart](#), visited campus. Her time on campus was co-sponsored by the Rhetoric Department and the President's Distinguished Speaker's Series.

On September 19, she delivered a public lecture, "Navigating the News Landscape with the Media Bias Chart," that addressed themes of media literacy, journalistic trust, and reliability and bias.

The following day, Otero met with members of the library staff and *The Bachelor* staff and attended two classes—RHE 270: Misinformation in a Social Media Age with **Professor Jeff Drury** and PSC 141: Introduction to International Relations with **Professor Huei-Jyun Ye**—to discuss strategies for engaging media. One student in Professor Drury's class noted that "her perspective was beneficial to understanding the misinformation and bias in the news."

Overall, Otero's visit helped the campus have important conversations about understanding news in today's complex information environment. You can read about her meeting with *The Bachelor* staff [here](#) and see the photo album of her visit [here](#).



Otero delivers her public lecture in Salter Hall of the Fine Arts Center



Otero meets with Professor Drury's RHE 270 class

Rhetoric Student Awards

Three Rhetoric majors each won several prestigious awards this year at Awards Chapel.

The Rhetoric faculty awarded **Cole Bergman '24** the Joseph O'Rourke, Jr. Prize in Rhetoric for his senior project, "Justifying Book Bans: An Analysis of an Indiana Legal Hearing." Cole double-majored in English and also won the Walter L. Fertig Prize in English. In addition, Cole earned the James E. Bingham Award, awarded by the Political Science department. Finally, Cole was named a George Lewes Mackintosh Fellow by the Dean and Division Chairs. The financial support will aid him as he attends law school next year.

Liam Thompson '24 received two impressive awards that both honor his exceptional work as both a student and football quarterback. He earned the Pete Vaughan Outstanding Athlete Award as well as the Wabash Club of Indianapolis Scholar-Athlete Award.

Seth Kirkpatrick '24 won the Junior Peck Medal for being the most outstanding pre-law senior student.

Student Presentations

We are always pleased when Rhetoric majors deliver presentations outside of the classroom. Several students found opportunities to share their speaking skills and insights this past year.

To help kick off the school year, Rhetoric major **Cole Bergman '24** and Psychology major (and speech tutor) **Luis Rivera '25** described "[The Wabash Community](#)" in a joint chapel talk on August 23, 2023.

Later in the fall on November 9, 2023, Rhetoric majors **Cooper Sullivan '24** and **Liam Thompson '24** joined three more speakers during the [2023 Monon Bell Chapel](#) to hype up the campus before the big game against DePauw University.

On January 26, 2024, several Rhetoric majors presented their work at the [Celebration of Student Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work](#). **Jacob Weber '25** and **Noah Kent '25** co-delivered "How Jason Aldean uses Race as a Rhetorical Function: An Analysis of Try That in a Small Town." Their presentation emerged from individual papers they wrote in RHE 350 Contemporary Rhetorical Theory and Criticism. They combined their analyses for the presentation.

Jacob Weber '25 and **Cole Bergman '24** also co-presented at the Celebration of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Work. They shared scholarship they produced with fellow students **Christian Zimmerman '25** and **Benjamin Sampsell '24** through WDPD: "From Theoretical to Tangible: The Political Turn in Environmental Policy Deliberation."

On April 18, Rhetoric major **Evan Zambrano '26** co-presented with Scholar-In-Residence **Aiala Levy** a talk entitled, "[Escuchando: Centering Latine Voices in Wabash History](#)," about oral histories with Wabash alumni as part of the Division III Social Sciences Colloquium series.



Cole Bergman '24 receives the Joseph O'Rourke, Jr. Prize



Jacob Weber '25 and Noah Kent '25 present at the Celebration of Student Research

WDPD Update

As we reflect on the past year, Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse (WDPD) is thrilled to share our accomplishments, which have significantly contributed to fostering civic engagement and enriching community discourse. Our efforts have created vital spaces for dialogue, reflection, and action. This enables participants to engage with pressing societal issues. We would like to share some of our highlights from this past year.



The project team responsible for working with mental health and substance abuse professionals from across the state as part of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Region 4 Summit.

In September, we commemorated Constitution Day with a focused deliberation on the landmark Supreme Court case *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* (2022). This case raised critical questions about the First Amendment rights of public employees, especially in educational settings. Designed by Senior Democracy Fellow **Jake Weber '25**, the deliberation brought together students, faculty, and community members to engage in meaningful discussions surrounding the balance between individual rights and institutional responsibilities. Participants explored the implications of the ruling, delving into topics such as religious expression, public accountability, and the role of schools in fostering a sense of belonging while providing educational opportunities. This deliberation not only enhanced understanding of constitutional principles but also encouraged participants to consider how these principles apply to their own lives and communities.

We embarked on a meaningful partnership with the Wabash Pastoral Leadership Program and **Pastor William Smith** of the Second Missionary Baptist Church in Kokomo, IN. The church recently acquired The Douglas School building. This significant historical site served as an all-Black school during a pivotal time in our nation's history. The project, led by **Professor Brian Long** and Senior Democracy Fellow **Cole Bergman '24**, focused on how the church can transform this space to better serve the community while preserving its rich legacy. We invited all local residents to share their visions for the building's future, emphasizing the importance of collective memory and community service. Through a series of community deliberations and conversations with church leadership, the church is moving forward with a renovation plan that takes into account the broader community. This initiative highlighted the vital role of historical spaces in fostering community identity and engagement, inspiring discussions about how such spaces can serve contemporary needs while honoring their past.

In a bid to create informal yet impactful learning experiences, our

innovative Pints with Professors series, led by **Cory Taylor '24**, facilitated relaxed discussions between students and faculty in the inviting environment of Wally's. This series provided a unique platform for participants to delve into diverse and cutting-edge topics, stimulating intellectual curiosity and fostering stronger relationships within our campus community. Notable sessions included discussions on the definitions of antiquity and classical texts led by **Professor Matthew Gorey**, which prompted reflections on how historical texts inform contemporary society. **Professor Noe Pliego Campos** engaged participants on the essential topic of health activism, emphasizing the impact of the anti-AIDS movement in the United States and Mexico. Furthermore, **Professors Colin McKinney** and **James Proszek** explored the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence, encouraging critical reflections on technology's impact on society. This series not only deepened the student-faculty connection but also enriched the academic environment by bridging formal education with informal learning experiences.

WDPD continued its commitment to fostering open dialogue through ongoing discussions on mental health. Recognizing the significance of these issues on college campuses and within local K-12 schools, we organized workshops and forums that brought together K-12 students, educators, and community leaders to discuss mental health challenges within the school system. On campus, we worked with the incoming freshmen and Wabash athletes to discuss the unique challenges these groups face in the transition to college for the former and the impacts of injury in the latter. These are important conversations that help students understand all of what Wabash has to offer while creating a network of support through campus services, support from one another, and faculty and staff.

The free speech events this year highlighted the need for respectful dialogue and understanding, addressing the complexities surrounding free expression in diverse settings. Topics this year were broad ranging from the banning of plays in Venezuela to the legal ramifications of making a bad weather forecast during an emergency. Participants discussed the challenges and responsibilities associated with free speech, particularly in light of social media's role in shaping public discourse. By addressing these critical topics, we aimed to create a culture of openness and support at Wabash, empowering individuals to speak out and seek help when needed.

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Dr. Rebecca Rice from UNLV joins the Free Speech Project team after her event on emergency management and free speech.

WDPD Update continued

Throughout the year, WDPD actively engaged with various community partners to expand our reach and impact. Collaborations with local organizations and educational institutions enriched our programming and provided valuable resources for participants. These partnerships allowed us to amplify voices within the community, fostering a more robust environment where differing perspectives can be shared and explored. By working together, we can cultivate a stronger democratic culture that values dialogue, collaboration, and active citizenship.

As we reflect on these accomplishments, we remain dedicated to the core of democracy: the right to free expression. Our initiatives have fostered engagement, built community connections, and encouraged critical discussions on vital societal issues. Looking ahead, we are excited to welcome our incoming class, develop new programming, and continue empowering our Democracy Fellows through community and campus events. We envision even more opportunities for meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and community service in the coming year.

We are incredibly grateful for the continued support of our friends and partners, whose engagement has made this program successful. Together, we are making a difference in our community and beyond, fostering a culture of informed civic engagement that resonates with our shared values. Thank you for being a part of our journey. We look forward to your continued support and participation.



Cole Bergman '24 working with a group of citizens deciding how resources and coordination should be utilized.

Introducing Professor Farmer



Professor Rowdy Dale Farmer is currently completing his PhD in human communication at Arizona State University. The primary goal of both his teaching and scholarship is to help citizens improve how we do democracy. His scholarship focuses on public decision-making, democratic community-building, civic engagement, and civil dialogue. Much of his work so

far is centered on improving the quality of civic participation by the average citizen, specifically focusing on how citizens can create and sustain healthy democratic communities amid high political polarization and partisan animosity. In his dissertation, he is testing a training program designed to empower citizens to engage in casual political conversations more fruitfully following a growth mindset dialogue model. He also researches the barriers to effective policy implementation by assessing constraints on critical public organizations like K-12 schools and foster care centers. He is also passionate about translating his scholarship into practical change by working with local communities and organizations to improve the skills and social processes they need to work through their challenges. After spending his entire educational career at large public research institutions, he is eager to join the smaller community of scholars at Wabash College and collaborate with students in the Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse initiative.

National Coalition on Dialogue and Deliberation

by Jake Weber '25



Attending the National Coalition on Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) conference was an enlightening and enriching experience that exceeded expectations in many ways. Held in Atlanta, Georgia last fall, the conference brought together professionals, researchers, and enthusiasts from all walks of rhetorical studies and practices.

It also brought together almost 20 undergraduate students from across the country who are involved in dialogue and deliberation on our campuses. **Jake Talbert '24** and I made valuable connections with students from Indiana University, Emory University, Colorado State University, and others.

Firstly, the variety and depth of the presentations were impressive. Sessions ranged from panel discussions with eminent experts to small group collaboration and discussion. Each session offered unique insights and perspectives on current ideas, challenges, and innovations within respective domains. For instance, one research team from Kansas State University shared a presentation on a topic similar to what WDPD researched in 2023. Because I was part of WDPD's research on the same topic, I was familiar with their findings and procedures.

Attending that presentation was one of the highlights for me. After asking questions of the researchers and offering other factors to consider, a member of the Kansas State University team noticed I was wearing a Wabash polo shirt. This sparked her to share that she knew about Wabash and the good work that WDPD has been doing. I hadn't fully recognized the national acclaim of Wabash College, and specifically WDPD, until that moment.

Networking opportunities were also abundant and valuable. I had the chance to engage with undergraduate peers, academic leaders, and professionals who shared similar interests and expertise, exchanging ideas and learning from each other. These interactions not only broadened our professional networks but also provided practical insights and advice that we can apply to our work at WDPD.

We found ourselves inspired by the dedication, knowledge, and creativity of fellow attendees, which encouraged us to think more innovatively about our own contributions at WDPD. The conference allowed us to talk with similar initiatives to WDPD about ways to improve our work product and share tips for success with others.

In conclusion, NCDD was a valuable experience that not only expanded our knowledge but also deepened our commitment to WDPD. We left the conference feeling inspired, motivated, and better equipped to tackle challenges and contribute meaningfully to ongoing discussions and advancements in my field. We were happy to apply what we learned to WDPD and eagerly anticipate the next opportunity to engage with the community at future conferences. We thank WDPD Director **Chris Anderson** for making this amazing opportunity possible.



Jake Talbert '24 talking about his experiences in WDPD to the entire convention crowd during a NCDD plenary session

Faculty Updates



This past academic year, Professor Jennifer Abbott enjoyed putting into practice much of the research she conducted during her Spring 2023 sabbatical. In particular, in Fall 2023 she taught a significantly revised version of RHE 350 Contemporary Rhetorical Theory and Criticism. She thinks the students benefitted from changes she made, though she also learned where she needs to continue to make alterations. She also taught a revised version of RHE

101 Public Speaking in both fall and spring. This version explores themes of power and equity alongside civic engagement and public speaking. It proved particularly engaging for the student populations she taught. Her fall section included students who participated in the Wabash Liberal Arts Immersion Program (WLAIP), and her spring section included First Plus Scholars. The latter are students who qualified for the WLAIP but could not participate, so the college now offers them a support program during the academic year.

Professor Abbott's previous sabbatical also resulted in opportunities this year to share and to continue the work she did. She was pleased to publish a scholarly article she co-authored with previous Wabash Visiting Assistant Professors **Jordin Clark** and **James Proszek** in *Basic Communication Course Annual*. The article is titled "[Promoting Critical Deliberation: Bridging Civic Engagement and Social Justice in the Basic Course.](#)" In it, they argue that public speaking instructors should continue to encourage civic engagement but with social justice concerns in mind, and they provide a sample assignment that does so.

Also with Jordin and James, Professor Abbott helped to organize and participate in a panel discussion about designing the public speaking course for our annual national conference (National Communication Association). Their panel won the Top Panel Award in the Basic Course Division.



Jennifer, Michael, and Zoe in Lisbon, Portugal

Finally, she started in earnest on revising the public speaking textbook she co-authored in 2016 with **Todd McDorman**, **David Timmerman**, and **Jill Lamberton**, *Public Speaking and Democratic Participation: Speech, Deliberation, and Analysis in the Civic Realm*. She earned a grant to revise the textbook as a second edition and publish it online as an open educational resource (so students will no longer have to pay to use it in class). As long as they meet their deadlines, the final, revised version will be published in June 2025.

Once again this past year, much of Professor Abbott's attention focused on gender studies. She chaired the Gender Studies Steering Committee (which consists of faculty who offer gender-related courses), and taught two Rhetoric courses that were cross-listed with Gender Studies. RHE 360 Gender and Communication explored how rhetorical critics can use gender studies theories in their analyses, and RHE 262 Rhetoric of Sitcoms investigated how television sitcoms reflect and shape viewers' perceptions of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Both were challenging and fun to teach.

Professor Abbott ended the academic year with a couple of very meaningful events. In March, Dean McDorman asked if she would become the next Division II Chair. German professor Brian Tucker will continue for two more years, and then she will take over. Having been Division Chair before—but only for one year and shared with **Michael Abbott**—she knows how much work it takes. But she also knows the responsibility it includes. She was honored to be asked. In April, she won the McLain-McTurnan-Arnold Excellence in Teaching Award. It came as a big surprise when Dean McDorman called her name during the annual Awards Chapel! Being recognized as a teacher was very meaningful and encouraging. Professor Abbott discusses the award and her teaching in this *Wabash on My Mind* [podcast](#).

This past summer, Michael and Jennifer welcomed their third grandchild, Annie Sue Abbott, in May. She joins her sister Vivian (2 years old) and her half-sister Ginny (6 years old). Michael, Zoe, and Jennifer also travelled to Lisbon, Portugal for a two-week family vacation. It was all they had hoped: a beautiful, interesting, and very historic city with lots to explore and do, and many cuisines to try.



Receiving the McLain-McTurnan-Arnold Excellence in Teaching Award

Faculty Updates



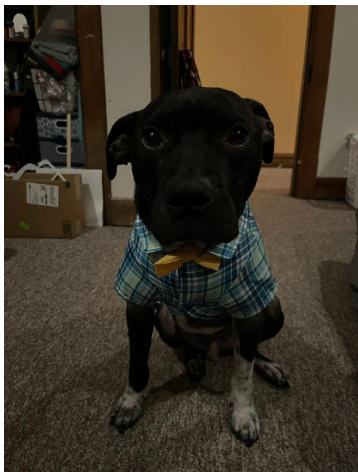
As Professor Chris Anderson reflects on the past year, he is struck by how much has unfolded in his professional and personal life. This was a year filled with amazing opportunities. The department and his colleagues have been an endless well of support and he is grateful to be at Wabash College with them.

One of the highlights of his year was attending the National Communication Conference in National Harbor. This event brought together scholars and practitioners from across the

country to engage in meaningful discussions about the future of communication. Professor Anderson had the privilege of presenting his research on the role of local news in democracy. It was exciting to share insights on how local journalism impacts civic engagement and community awareness. The feedback he received was incredibly valuable, and it sparked some exciting ideas for future projects. Networking with fellow attendees also provided fresh perspectives on emerging contexts in communication, reminding him of the vital role communication plays in shaping democratic processes.

In addition to this conference, Professor Anderson and colleagues published an article in [Communication Research](#). The piece focuses on the intriguing role that accents play in how individuals follow medical advice. They explored how perceptions of authority and trust can be influenced by non-standard English accents, shedding light on an often-overlooked aspect of health communication. The publication process was challenging, taking over a year, and seeing his work in print was gratifying. He is excited about how this research can contribute to discussions around health literacy and effective communication strategies.

On the personal front, he and his wife welcomed a new furry member into their family—Bastian, affectionately known as Bash. This decision was inspired by the recommendation of **Richard Ballentine '25**, who met Bash during his volunteer work at the Animal



The newest member of the family in his finest first day of school attire: Bastian (Bash)

Welfare League here in Crawfordsville. Bash has quickly become a beloved part of the Anderson household, bringing a sense of joy and sometimes frustration that is hard to quantify. His playful energy has grown as he has healed from a terrible case of mange after being neglected outside for the first year and a half of his life. He has also prompted the Andersons to get outside more and explore, even if the older dog Myah is less enthusiastic about his presence. It has been heartwarming to witness him come out of his shell as he heals and becomes more secure in his new home. Professor Anderson cannot help but smile at how Bash curls up next to him, content and secure in his new forever home.

In a rather adventurous turn of events, Professor Anderson and his wife also took a trip to tour the Old Joliet Prison. This historic site, made famous by its appearances in *The Blues Brothers*, *Prison Break*, and numerous other media appearances, offered a unique glimpse into the past. Walking through the worn halls and decaying cells, the tour was an interesting way to experience a place with dark history. The tour was both fascinating and haunting, as they learned about the prison's history, including its role in the community as well as its use in movies and television. The experience stirred up a deeper appreciation for storytelling in media and its connection to real-life events, something that resonates with his work in communication.

As the year draws to a close, Professor Anderson reflects on the interconnectedness of these experiences. From academic pursuits to personal milestones, each moment has contributed to his growth in unexpected ways. He is grateful for the opportunities to share his research, expand his professional network, and embark on new adventures with his wife Mellissa and their dogs Myah, and Bash.

Looking ahead, he is eager to continue exploring the intersections of communication, democracy, and community. There is a mountain of work still to be done and the Fall will be an exciting time. Professor Anderson is inspired to take on both the challenges and joys of the coming year knowing that each experience is an opportunity for learning and connection.



Mellissa, Saffron, Chris, and John enjoying Lake Michigan in Chicago after touring Old Joliet Prison

Faculty Updates



Professor Jeff Drury continued his role as Rhetoric Department Chair this past academic year and was promoted to Professor on July 1.

In Fall 2023, he was excited to teach two new half-credit courses: RHE 270: Misinformation in a Social Media Age and RHE 270: The Rhetoric of Student Activism. The misinformation course, in particular, was an opportunity to connect his

teaching to a current research interest. Students indicated that the course was helpful for their own navigation of digital environments. Professor Drury coordinated with the class a campus visit from Vanessa Otera, founder of Ad Fontes Media which helped the campus conversation about media literacy and bias. See p. 4 of the newsletter for more details about her visit.

Beyond these new special topics courses, Professor Drury taught a variety of recurring courses, including RHE 140: Argumentation and Debate, RHE 201: Reasoning and Advocacy, RHE 497: Senior Seminar, and FRC 101: Enduring Questions. For RHE 140, the Indiana Court of Appeals once again returned to campus to conduct a live oral argument, enabling students in the course to debate an appellate case and then observe the actual lawyers argue it.

Beyond teaching, Professor Drury was active in the life of the campus community. He continued his role as Faculty Parliamentarian, organized the annual Moot Court competition, participated in numerous admissions activities, and attended academic, social, and athletic events on campus.

In his leisure time, Professor Drury again enjoyed travels, mostly with his wife and fellow Rhetoric Professor Sara Drury. He took trips to both U.S. coasts to visit family as well as some trips to visit friends. He had the opportunity to see his first show on Broadway—*Merrily We Roll Along*—as well as his Wisconsin Badgers play in the 2023 NCAA women’s volleyball tournament. Overall, it was a fulfilling year!



The Professors Drury at the UW Fieldhouse



The Professors Drury attend *Merrily We Roll Along*

Faculty Updates



Professor Sara Drury is excited to return to Wabash College for the 2024-2025 academic year. During the last two years, Professor Drury served as the Chief of Deliberation Operations for [Unify America](#), a non-partisan, non-profit organization focused on replacing political fighting with deliberative problem solving. Unify America hosts online experiences to bridge differences and solve local problems. The Unify Challenge is an intercollegiate event where students are paired

into one-on-one conversations across differences, and has reached more than 13,000 college and university students from 205 colleges around the United States.

Most of Professor Drury's focus at Unify America was as the lead for their deliberations, which included developing, testing, and launching online deliberations in a "citizens' assembly" format. A citizens' assembly brings together a randomly selected, demographically representative group to discuss an intractable local issue. In 2023, Unify America held their first 12-week pilot online deliberation, partnering with a community on the western slope of Colorado. The pilot was a great success. After a process of evaluating potential actions, proposing and adopting improvements to the actions, and ultimately voting on what should be adopted and at what funding level, the assembly recommended 5 actions (with more than 2/3 of delegates voting in favor). These solutions are currently being implemented, with short term progress already creating change in 2024, which you can read about more in [this report](#). During her time with the organization, Unify America grew to be an important leader in deliberative democracy in the United States. In April 2024, the team was invited to present their work in a series of meetings with national



Professor Drury speaks at a Unify America event in Colorado

leaders and organizations, hosted by the Federation for Innovation in Democracy (FIDE) in Washington, D.C.

In the summer of 2024, Professor Drury became the project team lead for "Better Discourse: A Guide for Bridging Campus Divides in Challenging Times." Organized by the national non-profit Campus Compact, the team of scholars and practitioners created a rapid response [back-to-campus guide](#) to assist institutions of higher education in promoting evidence-based practices for productive discourse, including guidelines for asset mapping, approaches to campus activities, and resources.

Professor S. Drury has stayed active in research on deliberation and political communication. This past year she published an essay focusing on how citizens' assemblies create compelling guidance for politics in *Western Journal of Communication*, and an essay in *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* focusing on how to bring together deliberation and traditional campaign events to promote norms of democracy. She also received the 2023 Daniel Rohrer American Forensic Association Research Award for her essay, co-authored with **Dale A. Herbeck**, "The First Kennedy-Nixon Debate: The McKeesport Junto of 1947," published in *Argumentation and Advocacy*. In June 2024, she traveled to Australia to present research on deliberation in the sciences at the International Communication Association Convention; this work is part of a multi-institutional National Science Foundation project on which Drury and Wabash Chemistry Professor **Laura Wysocki** are co-Project Investigators and **WDPD Director Chris Anderson** is a contributing team member. The team has just published [an essay](#) in *Journal of Chemical Education*.

This past spring, Professor S. Drury returned to her role, with junior Rhetoric major **Sean Bledsoe '26**, to serve as the voice of Wabash College volleyball's online broadcast. They received compliments from Wabash and opposing teams' fans for their efforts. Across the board, Professor S. Drury is thrilled to be back at Wabash to support students on the field, court, mat, track, and stage; in the pool; and, most importantly, in the classroom.



Professor Drury and Sean Bledsoe '26 calling volleyball for the Wabash College Video Network

Faculty Updates



Professor McDorman continues to remain away from the classroom as he serves as Dean of the College.

The year included continued work on accreditation and assessment reporting, a variety of faculty hires and reviews, and efforts to improve the experiences of students, faculty, and staff at Wabash. Dean McDorman was particularly fond of this year's Dean's Senior

Breakfast address, which involved comparing the Wabash of today to that of 1921 and the Commencement Address given that year by honorary degree recipient **Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis**, who had just become the first commissioner of major league baseball. Landis, who grew up in Logansport, Indiana, accepted the invitation to speak at Wabash because his brother was a Wabash graduate and trustee of the College.

There wasn't much time for scholarship this past year but Professor McDorman did assist **Professor Abbott** in the development of a second edition of *Public Speaking and Democratic Participation*. However, it is only fair to note that Professor Abbott has carried that project! He is also writing a review of Keith O'Brien's new biography *Charlie Hustle: The Rise and Fall of Pete Rose and the Last Glory Days of Baseball*, and thinking about how it and the new HBO Max four-part documentary *Charlie Hustle & The Matter of Pete Rose* might make for a new presentation at the Baseball Hall of Fame.

It has been a busy summer which has included various college projects, Wabash 101 events for incoming students, and again participating in the summer high school program Playbook for Life: Navigating Careers in the World of Sports. Professor McDorman introduced the two cohorts of high school students to Wabash and the liberal arts, and led a session on image repair in sports. It was particularly gratifying that the program included sessions led by rhetoric majors and minors **Kyle Grand '11**, **Joe Johnson '11**, **Steve Campbell '92**, **Hunter Seidler '22**, and **Clark Tinder '20**, all working in sports-related areas. It was equally uplifting to read all the alumni updates submitted for this year's newsletter.

The summer also has featured attending three Reds games and a return to Navarre Beach, Florida at the end of July, where Carter caught a foul ball at a Pensacola Blue Wahoos game. Lily had a successful second year at the Raabe College of Pharmacy at Ohio Northern University and Carter is heading into high school while continuing to play tennis.

If you find yourself on campus, drop by Center Hall 115 or send an email saying hello to mcdormat@wabash.edu.



The McDormans at Disney's Hollywood Studios in November 2023

Faculty Updates



Professor Daniel DeVinney is leaving Wabash College after one year as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Rhetoric to begin a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of Communication at Florida Atlantic University. While at Wabash, Dr. DeVinney taught public speaking, persuasion, and a 300-level elective course entitled “Rhetoric and Race in the United States.” This summer, he and his wife, Kelsey, welcomed the birth of their twins, Forrest and Juniper. Dr. DeVinney is excited to begin this next chapter of his life.



Professor Brian A. Long has accepted a tenure-track communication studies faculty position at Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville, Tennessee, beginning Fall 2024. Brian is thankful for his experience teaching Wabash men as a faculty member in the Department of Rhetoric, as well as working closely with the Democracy Fellows of Wabash Democracy & Public Discourse. He is excited for his new position and the new adventures that await him!



After three wonderful years as a visiting faculty member in the Rhetoric Department, Professor James Proszek is moving to Wake Forest University in Winston Salem, North Carolina. He will serve as an Assistant Teaching Professor and Director of the WakeSpeaks program, a co-curricular civic engagement-focused center on campus. During his time at Wabash, Dr. Proszek taught public speaking and rhetoric courses such as Digital Rhetoric, Classical Rhetoric, and Rhetoric of Comics and Graphic Novels, co-authored an article and book chapter about deliberation with his department colleagues, and engaged in dozens of campus and community deliberations through the Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse program. Dr. Proszek would like to thank the Rhetoric faculty and staff, his students, and the WDPD Democracy Fellows for their wonderful guidance and support during his time at Wabash.

Alumni Updates

Richard Ice '83 The third edition of our book, *Rhetoric in Civic Life*, was published this year. My understanding and foundation for this scholarly work comes from my time at Wabash, studying with Joe O'Rourke, Lee McGaan, and Vic Powell. I am continuing in my eighth year as provost and 33rd year at College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University.

Henry Sabetti '84 I am in my 13th year as Rector of Shrewsbury Parish Episcopal Church on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Looks as though my Senior Rhetoric Project on Homiletics was fortuitous, thanks to Professor Joe O'Rourke. Also I am in my 10th season as Cross Country coach at Kent County High School. Lisa and I love our life here and are beginning to plan for retirement.

Charles A. Montgomery '86 I'm thrilled to share that come October, I will return to my acting roots! A Hulu-produced, horror, short film will be released on the streamer with yours truly as the titular character: MR. CROCKET. I portray a deranged Mr. Rogers type. The film is a part of Hulu's "Bite Size Halloween" series.

Michael D. Cummings '86 In June 2022 I celebrated 33 years of marriage with Theresa. I also retired from Procter & Gamble after 24 years of service, then, accepted an offer from Amazon as a Site Employee Health and Safety Manager.

Pete Logan '98 I currently reside in Westfield, IN (just north of Grand Park for all you sports parents) and I'm currently working as the Chief Operating Officer for Arbor Homes in Indianapolis.

D. Phil Kesler '01 My oldest son, Nicholas '27 is attending Wabash and my middle son, Riley is applying to attend Wabash in the fall of 2025.

Nicholas Bourff '04 I work at the Schiller Law Office in Carmel, Indiana, as the managing attorney of our litigation department. We focus exclusively on personal injury and workers compensation claims.

Matt Dodaro '05 Since my last update, life has been quite eventful. After spending two enriching years living in Italy as an apprentice winemaker, my wife and I moved back to Indianapolis in September 2022. Shortly after our return, we welcomed our first child - Cecilia Mae - in October 2022 and are now eagerly anticipating the arrival of our second child, expected in July 2024. Professionally, I just hit my 2 year anniversary as a Director with Databricks, a leading Data & AI startup out of San Francisco.

Matthew Hudson '10 My wife Dany and I had our first child Brody in March of 2023. I'm excited to be joining the Wabash Athletics Hall of Fame in September of 2024.

Brian David '12 I just wrapped up my 13th year teaching English in Orange County, CA, and was recently recognized as a Teacher of the Year from my district. My wife Ally and I welcomed our second child, Oliver, last summer.

Donovan Bisbee '12 I moved to Portland, Oregon. I am working as Doctoral Lecturer and Director of Oral Communication Courses at Baruch College. I'm expecting a second kiddo in September.

Matt Page '13 got married to Kara Scannell on December 18th, 2021. I started a new job at Harrison Street Real Estate Capital in December of 2022. That same month we welcomed our first daughter, Lily Marie Page, and have since had our second daughter, Wyatt Grace Page. We live in the south suburbs of Chicago and I am active in the Wabash Club of Chicago board.

Jeremy Wentzel '14 serves as a Director at KPMG, facilitating large scale transformations in the energy and utilities sector. He attributes his skills of adaptability and relatability in client service to what he learned in the Rhetoric department at Wabash with regard to speech fundamentals, managing/researching deliberations, and having a critical ear toward rhetoric.

Ross Sponsler '16 is teaching HS PE and coaching HS basketball in Raleigh, NC. My son Jackson was born in 2022 and I got engaged in 2023.

Jordan Smith '17 After working a little less than two years at OneCause, I was promoted to Account Executive. I have been enjoying the role since January of 2022. I have also relaunched my podcast The Runnin Gamer after a year off. I currently reside on the East side of Indianapolis, Indiana, in the Irvington area.

Alumni Updates

Connor Rice '17 2021 and 2022 have been an exciting two years for our family. We welcomed our first baby girl, Nora, in September 2021. She has been an absolute blessing. Earlier this year, I became the Director of Training and Enablement for Genesys, a large global tech company.

Adam Burtner '17 In May I started a new role as Senior Director of Government Relations at Elevance Health (formerly Anthem Inc.), leading the company's Indiana state and local government affairs and public policy efforts, based at Elevance HQ in Indianapolis. Most previously, I was Vice President of Government Affairs for the Indy Chamber.

Kyle McAtee '19 I'm currently working in supply chain with Target distribution. I recently moved into a project management role with the company. I'm getting married this fall to the love of my life and building a house as well.

Brenton Strahla '21 Since graduation in May 2021, I've entered the world of software sales as an Engineer at UKG! The cool part is that I use my rhetoric degree every day. I partner with our sales team, build out demo flows and present to clients in the SMB space. From sign posts to Aristotle's Artistic Proofs, my degree acts as a guiding beacon for the sales process. I've also been able to continue my rhetoric, and Wabash, education by undergoing presales training. What used to be the primary texts of Quintilian has turned into training books on demo composition and TED talks on audience attention during famous speeches like MLK's "I Have a Dream." In other news, I'm well on my way to a professional fútbol career (or the hospital) after joining a community soccer league. Swimming did not prepare me for that much running.

Morgan Seagrave '25 After graduating from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, I will be attending law school at IU McKinney.

Abraham "Abe" Wade '22 I finished my Master's program in December 2023 where I received my MBA and MSBM (Master's of Sport Business Management), and started my first full-time job in November at UCF Athletics where I am the Assistant Director of Business & Finance.

These Rhetoric Alumni will be joining the Wabash Athletics Hall of Fame this Homecoming:

Wes Chamblee '12
Matthew Hudson '10

Join us September 13 for the Athletics Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony



William Norwood Brigance
Professor of Speech
1922-1960

Rhetoric Department

Professor Jennifer Abbott
Professor Chris Anderson
(WDPD Director)
Professor Jeff Drury
(Chair)
Professor Sara Drury
Professor Rowdy Farmer
Professor Todd McDorman
(Dean of the College)
Professor Gabriela Tscholl

Thank you to the alumni, families, and friends and for celebrating Wabash on our 2024 Day of Giving on April 24.

In another record-breaking effort,
Wabash raised more than \$1.719 million from 3,646 alumni, parents, faculty, staff, students, and friends from 8,039 gifts.
Best yet, together we raised more than \$2,035 per Wabash student!
A special thanks to those of you who supported the WDPD affinity challenge.

Number of gifts: 84
Number of unique donors: 70
Amount raised: \$10,028.24

Wabash.

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