

# Contents

- 2 My Summer Research Experience
- 3 Public Health Internship
- 4 Moot Court
- 5 Lambda Pi Eta  
OSCLG Conference
- 6 WDPD Update
- 7 Faculty Updates  
Professor J. Abbott  
Professor J. Drury  
Professor S. Drury  
Professor C. Geraths  
Professor T. McDorman
- 12 O'Rourke Prize in Speech  
Brigance Forum  
Baldwin Oratorical Contest  
Contacting Prof. Joe O'Rourke
- 13 Day of Giving  
Alumni News Request

# Rhetoric Newsletter

August 2020



## Message from the Chair, Sara Drury

Greetings, alumni and friends of the Wabash College Rhetoric Department!

It has been an eventful year at Wabash College. As you may have heard, Wabash College made the decision in early March to move our instruction to virtual settings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our department, faculty, and students completed the semester through a variety of virtual measures—Zoom meetings of classes, new innovative digital presentations and activities, and using our College Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas, to encourage the sort of critical thinking and deep reflection that is present in Wabash courses. While the result looked different than a typical semester, our Wabash community rose to the occasion and we had a strong finish under challenging circumstances.

The Rhetoric Department is looking forward to welcoming students back to campus this fall, and as [President Feller recently shared in his message to the Wabash community](#), we are ready “to meet the challenges ahead by working together as One Wabash.” We in the Rhetoric Department are thankful for our campus and broader Wabash community.



Despite the many changes happening due to the pandemic, I think it is important to celebrate the accomplishments and strengths of the Rhetoric Department during this academic year. We continue to thrive as a department, with increasing numbers of majors and minors. In fact, the class of 2021 is on pace to be the largest group of senior majors that the department has ever had—and the class of 2022 is close to the same number. Rhetoric also continues to contribute to a number of interdisciplinary minors on campus, including the Business Minor, Gender Studies Minor, and Film & Digital Media Minor. We offered a number of electives this academic year, including Persuasion, Rhetoric of Religion, Contemporary U.S. Public Address, Rhetoric of U.S. Social Movements, and Media and the Body. Numerous students partnered with faculty on research projects and internships. Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse continues to thrive on campus and serve communities around the Midwest by facilitating public forums to address community problems.

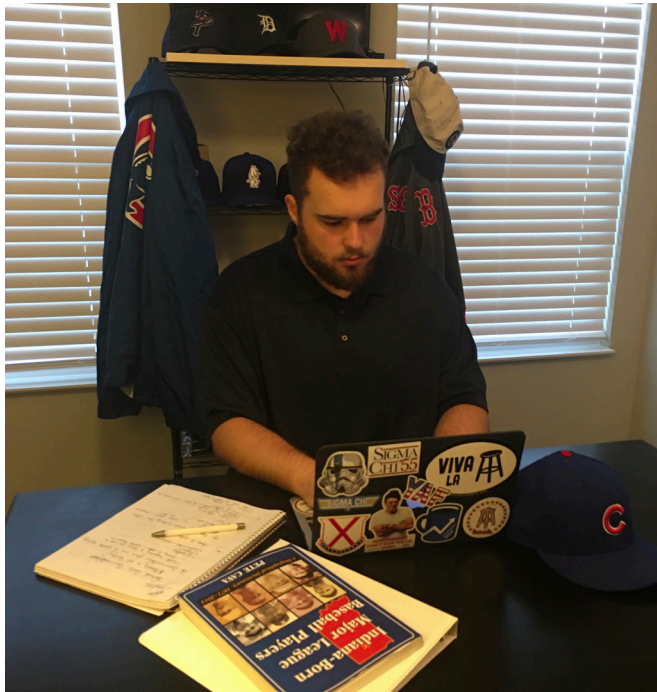
For the coming academic year, we are thrilled to have **Professor Cory Geraths** continue as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Rhetoric. We welcome **Professor Aaron Dicker** as Visiting Instructor of Rhetoric this fall. They join **Professor Todd McDorman**, **Professor Jennifer Abbott**, **Professor Jeff Drury**, and myself. We also have exciting news for **Professor Todd McDorman**, who has been selected to serve as the **Acting Dean of the College** for the 2020-2021 academic year. For more faculty updates, see page 7. We would very much like to hear from our alumni, and include your updates in our annual newsletter. Please email these updates to **Ms. Julia Phipps**, the Fine Arts Center Academic Administrative Coordinator, at [phippsj@wabash.edu](mailto:phippsj@wabash.edu).

From all of us on the second floor of the Fine Arts Center, we wish you well.

Dr. Sara Drury  
Chair and Associate Professor, Rhetoric Department

# My Summer Research Experience

By Hunter Seidler '22



This summer, I've had the privilege of working with **Professor Todd McDorman** to research Indiana's baseball history. Over the first couple of weeks, I updated Professor McDorman's collection of Pete Rose research by locating 48 news articles covering the exploits of Pete Rose and his recent attempts to achieve reinstatement in major league baseball (MLB). In addition, I compiled a comprehensive list of 380 professional baseball players, past and present, from Indiana. This project will help Professor McDorman when he next teaches his "Baseball" freshman tutorial. After completing this list, I selected a player from my list who did not possess a biography on the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) website: Craig Counsell. Counsell spent 16 seasons in the majors, but many in the Midwest may know him better as the current manager of the Milwaukee Brewers. After contacting a few members of the Brewers' front office, I secured a 30-minute interview with Counsell; it is exceptionally rare for a person without media credentials—much less a college student—to get access to such a high-level sports personality, so I was very grateful for the opportunity.

It seems quite remarkable in this day and age that a current MLB manager and two-time World Series champ would be humble, yet Counsell is. I witnessed his unpretentious personality firsthand when speaking with him; he quips that he's an overachiever and, throughout the call, tended to shrug off any accolades sportswriters had given him, devoting credit for his success to his coaches and teammates. When looking into Counsell's life outside of his playing years, I discovered the man is somewhat of a local hero to the residents of Milwaukee. He still lives in his childhood town of Whitefish Bay, WI, and contributes to the community in numerous ways, whether it's the list of non-profits he donates to

or his funding of a local Little League park which now bears his name. The Brewers manager has a commitment to his community that Wabash men, and even Cubs fans, can admire.

Researching Counsell's career and personal life provided unique insights while also presenting some challenges. Since Counsell's career spanned from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, I found researching him feasible utilizing only online resources. At times, however, articles would provide conflicting information and statistics, requiring me to cross-reference every piece of information I considered including in the biography. One such instance was the media coverage of his infamous 0-for-45 hitless streak in 2011. Many articles at the time of the streak reported the drought was one shy of the 0-for-46 record held by Bill Bergen of the 1909 Brooklyn Dodgers; however, later articles and developments from SABR historians highlighted the Bergen record was actually 0-for-45, meaning Counsell tied Bergen, along with the 1973 Cardinals' Dave Campbell. The three-way record was then broken a month after Counsell tied it, so needless to say, I had some cross-referencing to do when selecting information to ensure I painted a full picture of what transpired. Over time, this became habitual behavior whenever I encountered new information, and I think it will improve my research ability beyond this internship.

After probing the Internet for articles and statistics, I worked on writing the biography for the entirety of June and into July. After some feedback from Professor McDorman and undertaking minor revisions, I presented the biography to SABR's editors. As of this writing, it is undergoing review for publication to the SABR website as part of their Biography Project.

I thoroughly enjoyed this internship for a few reasons. First, the process of compiling scholarly articles, amassing extensive lists, and publishing a biography improved my ability as both a researcher and a writer. Second, gaining membership to the Society for American Baseball Research afforded me access to an immeasurable amount of information about one of my favorite sports and allowed me to deeply explore the history of the game I grew up watching. Third, while Wabash offers many opportunities to improve performance as an interviewee, this internship improved my skills as an interviewer. The Craig Counsell interview forced me to step out of my comfort zone, as it was the first time I had conducted an interview and I felt a fair amount of pressure to make sure it went smoothly.

I'd like to sincerely thank Professor McDorman and the Wabash College Rhetoric Department for making this experience possible. While this was a summer without sports for many, I got to appreciate a game I love from a new perspective while honing professional skills. This internship was truly a game-changer.

# Public Health Internship

By Simon Hacker '21

This summer, my team and I were tasked with planning Wabash College's COVID-19 public health campaign. I was both nervous and excited to be hired for such an important project. I hope to begin my final year at Wabash in the fall, so it is extremely important to me that we maintain as much of the college experience as we can in the safest way possible. To complete this task, my team divided our eight-week schedule into two four-week blocks. For the first month, we focused exclusively on researching public health campaign strategies and tactics. We spent the last four weeks crafting the specific messages of the campaign and producing promotional materials.

The research portion of this internship was crucial to the overall success of the campaign. In the beginning, **Professor Jeff Drury** provided **Jacob Obst '22** and me with scholarly articles and academic journal entries centered around successful public health campaign strategies and persuasive tactics. These pieces showed us the importance of peer to peer social networks, reactance to persuasion, and the Health Belief Model. Later, Jacob and I selected specific types of persuasion, fear and humor respectively, and conducted our own independent research. Near the end of the first four weeks, our team produced a memo for the Healthy Campus Task Force, a group on campus focusing on Wabash's response to COVID-19, that summarized our findings and provided general suggestions for the College's COVID response going forward.

The second half of the project was both challenging and rewarding. Determining which components of our research to implement in the campaign was difficult because of our unique environment and the unprecedented nature of the pandemic. This pushed the team to think critically and attack the project one piece at a time. We held multiple hour-long Zoom conferences and were constantly communicating through text to brainstorm ideas. In the fifth week, our team was invited to a Healthy Campus Task Force meeting where we were able to explain the key components of our memo and receive both feedback on our work and suggestions going forward. In the last week and a half, we solidified the key messages of the campaign and produced our promotional material. Specifically, I wrote and directed short promotional videos while Jacob created posters and other print media.

I have thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity. Fighting COVID-19 alongside high ranking members of the College's administration is an experience unique to Wabash and is not one I take for granted. I hope to spend life after graduation working to make a positive impact in my community. This internship has reinforced that hope and has given me the professional skills and experience to make it happen. I would like to thank the Rhetoric Department for selecting me for this opportunity and Professor Drury specifically for providing steady leadership and helpful insight throughout the project.

By Jacob Obst '22

For the summer, I got the opportunity to be a part of the Public Health Internship for the College. I honestly didn't know much about what I was going to be doing, but I was excited for the new challenges. Our team consisted of **Professor Jeff Drury**, **Simon Hacker '21**, and me. I am supposed to be a junior in the fall and I want everything to get back to normal, safely. To do this, our team started with research on COVID-19 and public health campaigns. We learned about the general guidelines surrounding the pandemic and safe habits that were attributed with lower risks. The research on public health campaigns gave us further information to start planning our campaign off of what has been successful in the past. This research and planning stage took up the first month of our time. The second half of our time was spent bringing the plan to life. I was tasked with designing posters for our campaign.

I have experience in design and used this to help create different posters with slogans that we came up with. I also created a Wally logo with a mask. This internship has opened my eyes to what can be achieved through hard work. Our team has dedicated the time and put in the work to give Wabash a strong campaign to maintain the safety and future of the college. I have learned a lot from collaborating with Simon and Professor Drury. It gives me hope for the path I chose in Rhetoric and Wabash.



**Simon Hacker '21** delivers his RHE 350 paper at the 2019 Celebration of Student Research, Scholarship, and Creative Works Event Program.



# Moot Court

Last October, **Professor Jeff Drury** coordinated the Wabash College Moot Court competition, a partnership between the Rhetoric Department and the Indianapolis Association of Wabash Men, in which teams of two argue a mock appellate case.

For the first time in the competition's 26-year history, the 2019 case addressed issues related to the 2nd Amendment. A variation of *New York State Rifle & Pistol Ass'n et al. v. City of New York*, the case addressed the extent of an individual's right to keep and bear arms into public spaces. In 2008, the US Supreme Court ruled for the first time that the 2nd Amendment extended beyond military service to a case involving the right to possess a handgun in one's home for purposes of self-defense. Since then federal courts across the nation have been trying to determine the scope of this Amendment's rights.

The competition featured a strong field of thirty competitors in the preliminary rounds on Saturday, October 19. Our finalists were **Caleb Dickey '21, Bryce McCullough '23, Cooper Smith '23, and Jake Vermeulen '21**. Smith was named Top Advocate, meaning that a first year student won the competition for the second consecutive year but only the third time in program history.

It was another exciting competition, with the alumni organizing committee and the alumni and faculty who serve as judges providing a significant learning experience for the students. You can read more about the competition on the College's [website](#).



2019 Moot Court Participants



2019 Finalists and Judges

(from left to right) **Judge Edward W. Najam Jr.**, Indiana Court of Appeals; **Dr. Joyce Burnette**, Professor of Economics and Chair of Division III; **Jake Vermeulen '21**; **Caleb Dickey '21**; **Bryce McCullough '23**; **Cooper Smith '23**; **Justice Geoffrey G. Slaughter**, Indiana Supreme Court; **Mr. Gregory A. Castanias '87**, Jones Day



## Lambda Pi Eta

### Undergraduate Communication Honor Society

2019-2020 marked an exciting year for Wabash's Alpha Gamma Nu chapter of Lambda Pi Eta (LPH). This excitement was primarily manifested in the March initiation of ten new members to the National Communication Association's honor society. In order to be eligible for this honor, students must have completed the Wabash equivalent of 60 semester credit-hours, have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0, completed the equivalent of 12 semester credit-hours in Rhetoric, earned a minimum GPA of 3.25 within Rhetoric courses, and currently be enrolled as a student in good standing. Alongside the five Rhetoric faculty and Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse Program Associate **Hayley Blonsley**, nine students were admitted to the chapter in a lunchtime ceremony held in Trippett Hall. The students initiated were **Simon Hacker '21**, **Andrew Jumonville '21**, **Benjamin Manahan '21**, **Matthew Mosak '20**, **Tyler Ramsey '21**, **Christian Redmond '20**, **David Riggs '20**, **Brenton Strahla '21**, and **Marcus Torres '20**. Following the initiation ceremony and lunch, elections for a new LPH student advisory board were held (including competitive races!). The Rhetoric Department is excited to welcome these ten outstanding students to the LPH fold, and we eagerly look forward to their work in the coming year.



2020 Lambda Pi Eta members, from top left:  
(row 1) **David Riggs '20**, **Brenton Strahla '21**, **Simon Hacker '21**, **Christian Redmond '20**,  
(row 2) **Andrew Jumonville '21**, **Marcus Torres '20**,  
**Benjamin Manahan '21**, and **Tyler Ramsey '21**;  
(not pictured) **Matthew Mosak '20**

## Faculty and Students Travelled to OSCLG Conference



**Jesus Rodriguez '20** and **Atanacio Hernandez '20** present at the OSCLG Conference

In October 2019, **Jennifer Abbott** and **Cory Geraths** led a small group of interdisciplinary Wabash faculty and two students to Cincinnati, Ohio for the 42nd annual conference for the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender (OSCLG). The conference theme, "Interrogating Intersectional Masculinities," lent itself well to their experiences teaching and learning at Wabash College. The group consisted

of faculty Abbott, Geraths, **Crystal Benedicks** (English), and **Cara Healey** (Modern Languages), as well as Seniors **Jesus Rodriguez '20** (Rhetoric) and **Atanacio Hernandez '20** (Hispanic Studies), all of whom are affiliated with Wabash's Gender Studies program. Together, they organized a panel, "Interrogating Masculinities with Men," in which each participant shared specific strategies to engage young men in examining masculinities, especially amidst ongoing conversations concerning such topics as #metoo and toxic masculinity. Jesus and Atanacio offered teaching practices they had found particularly effective as students in their Gender Studies and other coursework. The panel generated a lively discussion with audience members about communication, gender, and pedagogy. It was the students' first time attending an academic conference, thanks to the generous funding of Wabash's Celebration Committee. The excursion was, too, very fruitful beyond the panel presentation itself. The group casually met with members of the Greater Cincinnati Association of Wabash Men, and the whole trip allowed the students and faculty to bond as they travelled, ate, and attended other panels together. They even made time to visit the famous Jungle Jim's International Market in Fairfield, Ohio on their way back to Crawfordsville. At the market, Jesus and Atanacio discovered beloved foods from their childhood, including sugar cane and P.A.N. corn flour. And, to top things off, the faculty and students conversed, joked, and survived the complexities of navigating downtown Cincinnati in a van!



**Atanacio Hernandez '20** and **Jesus Rodriguez '20** enjoy some shopping on the way home from the OSCLG Conference



## WDPD Update

Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse welcomed its first group of Direct Admit, first year students to the program. The WDPD Direct Admit program is an incredible opportunity for first year students to participate in professional development and public leadership seminars. In 2019-2020, sixteen freshman students took part in the program. The fall semester included guest speaker visits from **Tom Fisher '91**, **Garrard McClendon '88**, and **Elliot Vice '08**. Additionally, students participated in an immersive learning opportunity over the fall break, traveling around Montgomery and Marion counties to learn about leadership and the public good from different industries. Locally, students spent time with the Montgomery County Youth Service Bureau, the Montgomery County Health Department, local chef and entrepreneur **Hannah Thompson**, and WDPD Director **Sara Drury**. In Indianapolis, students visited The Patachou Foundation, Indiana Legislative Services Agency (hosted by **George T. Angelone '73**, **Ross Hotten '92**, and **Steve Wenning '84**), the office of the Indiana Governor (hosted by **Andrew Forrester '11** and **Michael Nossett '11**), Ascend Indiana (hosted by **Ben Johnson '18** and **Nick Fishe '19**), Eli Lilly (hosted by **Jim Koers '95** and **Patrick Bryant '16**), and People for Urban Progress. We're grateful for all the alumni who made the Direct Admit immersion program such a great success.



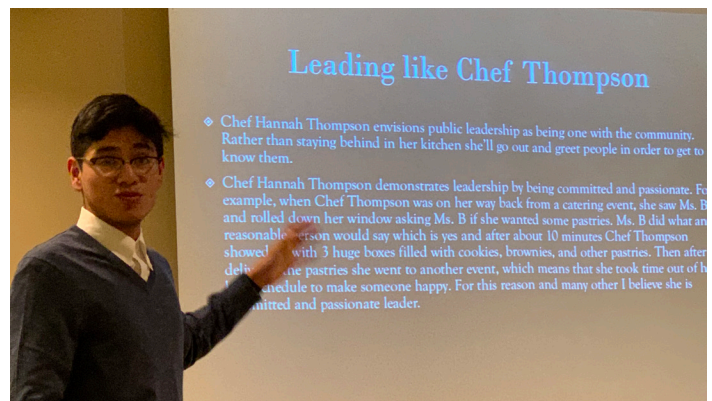
**Garrard McClendon '88** shares his perspective on civic engagement with the WDPD Direct Admits in fall 2019.

Throughout fall and early spring, WDPD partnered with the Montgomery County Health Department to assist with their Community Health Needs Assessment. WDPD also facilitated a workshop for the Indiana State Bar Association's Leadership Development Academy focusing on ethics and civility in law. The late spring brought a shift to virtual engagement, and WDPD Democracy Fellows continued to facilitate classes and communities via digital platforms.



Senior Democracy Fellow **Artie Equihua '20** leads a Chemistry 111 class in a deliberation about how communities should respond to environmental contaminants.

In addition to the freshmen Direct Admit students, WDPD's seventeen Democracy Fellows continued to host public forums on campus and in the community. We hosted our largest Constitution Day to date, engaging 169 students in six courses over three days. This event is a continued partnership with the Political Science Department and **Professor Shamira Gelbman**. WDPD continued and expanded our annual on-campus Mental Health outreach into a two-part event, reaching a total of 300 students. In addition to continued partnerships with the Biology and Chemistry departments, WDPD undertook new projects with the International Students Association, the Dean of Students' office, and the Environmental Concerns Committee.



Freshman **Jeremy Soto '23** presents on the WDPD Direct Admit immersion learning experience, sharing how Chef Hannah Thompson taught him how to bring public leadership into her role as a restaurant owner.

## Faculty Updates



Prof. Abbott enjoyed not holding any ongoing, major administrative posts this past year, which allowed her to refocus on her teaching and research. She and **Prof. Geraths** organized a panel presentation for an OSLC conference in Cincinnati on how to engage young men in studying and discussing masculinities [see related newsletter entry on p. 5], and they returned to the research article they are

co-authoring about TV show *Modern Family*'s depiction of masculinities.

Prof. Abbott and Prof. Geraths co-taught Senior Seminar in the fall and, because of the unusually small number of students this year (nine), they experimented with a new course model. Students produced both a rhetorical criticism paper and conducted a related act of civic engagement. As a result, seniors published op-eds (one in the *Bachelor* [see [Anguiano on p. 3](#)], one in the *Terre Haute Tribune Star*) and blog posts (see [here](#) and [here](#)); created a temporary art gallery in 1832 Brew; taught Chicago high school students about media literacy; and produced podcasts and videos. These projects helped students develop their study of rhetoric by strategically producing it, and it helped them consider the role of rhetoric in democratic practices. In the spring, Prof. Abbott taught Introduction to Gender Studies (GEN 101) to thirty

students across all class years. It was an incredibly rewarding experience, especially when Rhetoric minor **Reggie Steele '12** visited class before his drag show on-campus as Silky Nutmeg Ganache.

Prof. Abbott also held a couple of temporary administrative positions in the fall. She was asked to join the Dean of Students Office Review Ad Hoc Committee, which evaluated the mission, scope, and efficiency of that office. She also chaired the ad hoc committee to draft student learning outcomes for the Literature/Fine Arts distribution requirement as part of the college's accreditation.

On a more personal note, Prof. Abbott very much enjoyed travelling with her husband's (**Prof. Michael Abbott's '85**) Theater immersion course to London over spring break. She and their daughter, Zoe, tagged along with the students, Michael, and **Associate Theater Professor Heidi Winters Vogel** for many wonderful adventures. This summer, Prof. Abbott has taken advantage of quarantining at home by resting, walking the family's dog, Maggie, and cleaning out the basement—an activity that brings her a surprising amount of joy.



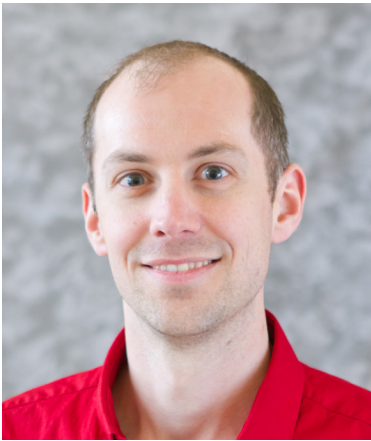
Prof. Abbott, her family, and Prof. Vogel (to her right) enjoy dinner with Prof. Michael Abbott's London immersion course at Wagamama



Silky Nutmeg Ganache (a.k.a. **Reggie Steele '12**) poses with Prof. Abbott's Daughter, Zoe, after her drag show at Wabash College



## Faculty Updates



Professor Jeff Drury had an exciting year of teaching, research, and service. In the fall, he taught RHE 201: Reasoning and Advocacy using his own textbook, [Argumentation in Everyday Life](#), for the first time. It was an exciting experience that allowed him to incorporate more hands-on activities during class time. He also taught a Freshman Tutorial for the first time in his eight years at Wabash. The

course, entitled “Young, Scrappy, & Hungry,” was a liberal arts exploration of *Hamilton: An American Musical*. It approached the musical from a variety of perspectives, including rhetoric, politics, race, gender, and history. The Dean of the College’s office also provided funding for the class to attend a performance of *Hamilton* in Chicago in early September (see the photo).

This class related directly to the research project that Professor Drury has pursued this year: an edited book entitled *Rhetoric, Politics, and Hamilton: An American Musical*. This book includes ten chapters from communication scholars analyzing different dimensions of political rhetoric in the musical. It is under contract with Peter Lang Publishing and should be available in print in early 2021.

Professor Drury also organized the 2019 Moot Court competition while Professor McDorman served as Dean of the College in the fall. This was a great opportunity to connect with students and contribute to this signature academic event of the College. You can read more about the 2019 competition earlier in this newsletter.

The spring semester offered some unique challenges with COVID-19 requiring classes to be taught virtually. This was particularly tricky with RHE 140: Argumentation and Debate, because it required students to gather synchronously to debate each other but the students rose to the challenge and everything went smoothly. This experience pushed Professor Drury as an educator and helped him to reconsider many assumptions about teaching. He looks forward to being more adaptable in the future.

This summer, Professor Drury has supervised two student interns, **Simon Hacker '21** and **Jacob Obst '22**, who are working on a public campaign targeting Wabash students to promote healthy behaviors on campus. Both of them are rhetoric majors, using their training to benefit the College. You can read about their work elsewhere in the newsletter.

On a personal note, Professor Drury continued to enjoy travels (pre-COVID) with his wife, Sara. They visited family in Boston and Wabash alumni in Nantucket last June, Bryce Canyon and Zion National Parks in Utah last August, family in Phoenix last November and in Buffalo last December, and friends in New York City for New Year’s.



Prof. Drury and his Freshman Tutorial class at *Hamilton: An American Musical* in Chicago



## Faculty Updates



Professor Sara Drury finished her ninth year at Wabash College, and her second as Department Chair. She continues to serve as the Director of Wabash Democracy and Public Discourse. In the 2019-2020 academic year, Professor Drury was named part of the inaugural class of Indiana Humanities Action Fellows. This honor awarded an 18-month fellowship to eight Hoosiers focused on public humanities

work. While COVID-19 has eliminated some of the scheduled face-to-face cohort gatherings, Professor Drury has enjoyed connecting and learning from humanities “pracademics” around the state. Professor Drury also published two pieces about presidential debates (one historical focusing on the 1960 Great Debate’s legacy and one focusing on *ad hominem* in the 2016 presidential debate), and collaborated with **Associate Professor of Chemistry Laura Wysocki** to publish “Encouraging Bridges: Connecting Science Students to Public Problem Solving through Science Communication,” an analysis of the positive learning impacts of students participating in deliberations on scientific wicked problems at Wabash. This spring, [the National Science Foundation awarded Professors Wysocki and Drury a \\$599,297 award](#) for their interdisciplinary liberal arts pedagogy research that focuses on using deliberation in chemistry classrooms.

Although you might expect that the transition to virtual classes this spring was a challenge for the small group interaction and facilitation in Professor Drury’s Deliberation & Democracy course, students in the course continued to arrive—with enthusiasm—for virtual sessions held at 8am. They also produced excellent deliberation design projects; some of the stand-out examples included dialogues and deliberations on health needs, anti-racism, and education. This coming fall, Professor Drury looks forward to teaching her quadrennially offered course on rhetoric and political campaigns.



Dr. Sara Drury (pictured second row, top right) with Indiana Humanities staff and other early career Action Fellows in November, 2019.

## Faculty Updates



**Professor Cory Geraths** is thrilled to have finished his third year at Wabash College and is, too, excited to be continuing his position in the Rhetoric Department for the 2020-2021 academic year. It has been a busy, but fruitful, year. Alongside his colleague, **Professor Abbott**, Professor Geraths co-taught Senior Seminar for the first time. His work with Professor Abbott continued into the realm

of research, as they co-organized a panel presentation for the OSCLG (Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender) conference in Cincinnati (refer to the specific newsletter entry on this conference). Professor Geraths also developed a new topics class and saw multiple pieces of scholarship through to publication.

In addition to teaching Classical Rhetoric and Public Speaking, Professor Geraths also had the opportunity this year to develop, alongside Professor Abbott, a new structure for the Senior Seminar class. The course was split into two halves—one focusing on the research, writing, and revision of a rhetorical criticism paper and the second on translating this criticism into a piece of productive and purposeful civic engagement related to the topic. Students excelled in this civic work and produced, among other examples, a podcast on social media communication, op-eds in the *Terre Haute Tribune Star* and Wabash's *The Bachelor*, as well as a temporary gallery exhibition on Wabash's history in the foyer of the 1832 Brew. In the spring term, Professor Geraths taught a new topics course titled, "Media and the Body." Cross-listed with the Film & Digital Media and Gender Studies minors, this seminar-style course tackled the relationship between rhetoric and sensation, popular culture depictions of bodies (e.g., representations of fatness, of athletic bodies, etc.), and the import of technologies on the body (e.g., virtual reality, music devices, etc.). While half of this course was taught virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor Geraths did work with—and learned from—his students about the bodily rhetorics of the pandemic during added course discussions on the coronavirus.

Professor Geraths also continued his scholarship over the past year. With Professor Abbott, he is working to revise an essay on resistance to hegemonic masculinity in the ABC sitcom, *Modern Family*. He also published two pieces. The first, released in *Communication Teacher*, is a pedagogical review of a major speech assignment created for Professor Geraths' Public Speaking courses. Centered on the classical

concept of *ekphrasis* ("description," "speaking out"), the speech invites students to vividly, yet clearly, describe artifacts of civic significance to their communities. Professor Geraths also published a book chapter in Eric C. Miller and Jonathan J. Edwards' 2020 edited collection, *Rhetoric of the Protestant Sermon in America: Pulpit Discourse at the Turn of the Millennium*. His chapter analyzes a 2015 sermon delivered by GLBTQ+ San Diego minister, Brandan Robertson, in Washington D.C.'s National Cathedral in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision affirming marriage equality nationwide. Currently, Professor Geraths is hard at work on new pieces of scholarship focused on *ekphrasis*, pop music, and GLBTQ+ Mormons; the ancient Greek concept of *agnōstos* ("unknown", "unknowable") and depictions of virtual reality in *Black Mirror*; and the feminist (re)composition of Mary Magdalene's reception in contemporary art.

Beyond his teaching and research, Professor Geraths enjoyed a productive year of stepping outside his comfort zone. In the fall, he audited **Professor Heidi Winters Vogel's** Theater course on improv. There, he learned, practiced, and performed forms of comedic improvisation and playback theater. This experience inspired him to audition for Professor Winters Vogel's spring production of *Anonym(ous)*. Professor Geraths was cast as part of the show's "Movement Chorus." Rehearsing and performing in both the improv course and *Anon* have been true highlights of Professor Geraths' time at Wabash; he learned much about acting—and life—from both Professor Winters Vogel and his fellow actors. Meanwhile, Professor Geraths continues to try new recipes and bakes and to learn (very, very slowly) Swedish.



## Faculty Updates



With his spring 2019 sabbatical concluded, **Professor McDorman** served as Acting Dean of the College in Fall 2019, joining Speech Department legend Vic Powell as department members to serve as Dean of the College. It was a busy and challenging fall as Dean McDorman chaired the Academic Policy Committee, worked to complete Wabash's new ROTC agreement, and addressed

a myriad of administrative tasks. Highlights included reviewing the excellent work of four Wabash faculty undergoing their second-year review and five successful tenure reviews. Dean McDorman's most unique experience was representing Wabash at the Global Liberal Arts Alliance leadership summit in Tokyo. It was an amazing experience that provided the opportunity to meet presidents and deans from several GLCA colleges and administrators from around the globe. And while there he had a chance encounter with emeritus Wabash trustee and speech major **Mitsuya Goto '55**. Wabash truly is everywhere you go!

In Spring 2020, Prof. McDorman taught Public Speaking and, for the first time in many years, Contemporary Rhetorical Theory and Criticism. Prof. McDorman was fortunate to have strong and dedicated students and enjoyed the classes despite the disruption caused by COVID-19. Both class experiences were uplifting and while the move to virtual courses was challenging it also provided new experiences with technological tools that will prove useful in future classes.

In Spring 2020 Prof. McDorman also wrote Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) biographies for pitching brothers [Tom Underwood](#) and [Pat Underwood](#). SABR's Biography Project seeks to compose biographies on every major league player. Prof. McDorman undertook the project to engage in a different type of research and writing and as a pilot for a future assignment in his "Baseball" Freshman Tutorial. Like Prof. McDorman, the Underwood brothers grew up in Kokomo, IN. They hold a unique distinction as well: Pat made his major league debut by pitching against his older brother Tom. In a fairytale experience, Pat won the game 1-0. Prof. McDorman also made some additional progress on his Pete Rose project, but seemingly just as he was gaining some momentum on the next chapter, the pandemic struck.

In April, after **Scott Feller** was named President of Wabash, Prof. McDorman agreed to return to the role of Acting Dean of the College. Since May, Dean McDorman has been helping Wabash prepare for the anticipated return of students by working on reconfigured class spaces and class assignments, working with departments and faculty on teaching approaches, and participating in administrative decision making for resuming regular operations and developing safety precautions during the public health crisis. It should be an interesting year.

At home, the McDorman's plans were disrupted like so many others with their family vacation cancelled and none of the usual trips—no visit to Cooperstown to the Baseball Hall of Fame, no family outings to Kings Island, and—for the first time in almost 30 years—no Cincinnati Reds games. Still the McDorman family has much to be thankful for and celebrate including Todd and Kelly celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary and, on the same day, their daughter Lily turning 16. Carter, now 10, is doing great too and continues to be a big fan of *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*.



Dean McDorman with **Mitsuya Goto '55** in Tokyo in November 2019.



Lily, Carter, and Todd McDorman at Kings Island in October 2019.

## Joseph O'Rourke, Jr. Prize in Speech



This prize is given annually to the top senior project in Rhetoric, as determined by the faculty. In 2020, the faculty awarded **Jack Wagner '20** the Joseph O'Rourke, Jr. Prize in Speech. Jack's senior project included a rhetorical analysis of how frames are employed by Fox News and CNN in their news coverage. Jack looked at news stories on the border wall, the impeachment inquiry, and tax policy. His analysis demonstrated the significant differences in rhetorical frames between the two networks, with wide-ranging consequences for the viewing public. The faculty saw Jack's project as an example of engaged, contemporary rhetorical analysis.

## Brigance Forum Lecture and Baldwin Oratorical Contest

With the COVID-19 pandemic shifting our engagement to a virtual setting, the 2020 Brigance Forum and the Baldwin Oratorical Contest were postponed until the 2020-2021 academic year. We look forward to these events.

In March 2021, Dr. Dave Tell of the University of Kansas will visit as the 2021 Brigance Forum lecturer. Dr. Tell will speak on research relating to his award-winning book, *Remembering Emmett Till* (University of Chicago Press, 2019).



In 2019, Professor of Speech Emeritus Joe O'Rourke relocated to Iowa to be near family. Joe would love to hear from speech alumni and can be reached at:

Joe O'Rourke  
Wesley Acres  
3520 Grand Ave  
Room 236 - John Stoddard Health Center  
Des Moines, Iowa 50312





**William Norwood Brigance**  
Professor of Speech  
1922-1960

Thank you to our alumni who responded to the 2020 Wabash Day of Giving. This year we truly were #WabashTogether. On 5.12.2020, Wabash College broke records, received more than 6,000 gifts, and raised more than \$1.2 million in 24 hours!

A special thanks to those of you who supported the WDPD Affinity challenge, which raised more than 3.5 times last year's total!

**WDPD Affinity Challenge**  
**Number of gifts: 156**  
**Number of unique donors: 115**  
**Amount raised: \$16,679.36**

Thank you to all who so generously supported the College through the Day of Giving.

## **ALUMNI: YOU'RE WANTED!**

We will continue to include updates from our Rhetoric and Speech alumni in future Rhetoric Department newsletters.

It's a wonderful opportunity for our current students to see where a Rhetoric major and minor can take you!

Please send updates to [phippsj@wabash.edu](mailto:phippsj@wabash.edu), subject line "Rhetoric/Speech Alumni Update."

## **Rhetoric Department**

Professor Jennifer Abbott  
Professor Aaron Dicker  
Professor Jeff Drury  
Professor Sara Drury, Chair  
Professor Cory Geraths  
Professor Todd McDorman

# **Wabash.**

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