

## Alumni Can Play a Role in CALS Recruitment

The **largest incoming undergraduate class in history of 4,169** is the result of a concerted effort by CALS staff and faculty to provide more connections with prospective students. Through virtual and in-person meetings, the College increased efforts to reach seeking college-age students about the value of a CALS major and attending the UW–Madison. To build on this growth, there are ways alumni can join the effort.



- **In-person and virtual visits to the CALS campus happen year-round.** The general UW–Madison campus tour doesn't cover the west side of campus, so encouraging students interested in agricultural and life sciences to sign-up for a CALS session helps them see more of the classrooms and campus they'll experience. Check out the website, [VisitBucky.wisc.edu](http://VisitBucky.wisc.edu), for a list of sessions. Talk with local teachers and administrators to encourage them to attend the sessions or invite CALS recruitment staff to visit with your school.
- **CALS attends the state and national conferences of 4-H and FFA to recruit prospective students.** The College also sponsored and attended the Wisconsin Association of Agricultural Educators conference. Share your CALS experience with your school's agriculture educator, 4-H club, or talk with your local FFA.
- **CALS hosted the state regional conference of the Health Occupation Student Association (HOSA)** which brought 500 prospective high school students to Union South for faculty-led sessions and campus tours. Life Sciences majors now comprise 70% of CALS students. If you know of someone interested in a health-focused major, talk about the research-based, hands-on learning they'll receive in CALS.
- **The Wisconsin Rural Scholars program**, partially funded by USDA, brought rising high school seniors and their teachers to campus for a summer pre-college experience. This four-day residential program highlighted CALS academic programs, cutting-edge research, and the undergraduate student experience. Help grow this program through a donation to the University of Wisconsin Foundation for WI Rural Scholars.

CALS enrollment has momentum. Alumni can keep it growing. If you know of prospective student, send their name and contact info to [ambassadors@cals.wisc.edu](mailto:ambassadors@cals.wisc.edu). Staff will contact the student to let them know a CALS alum shared they were interested in the college search process.

### NEW LEGACY MEMBERS

Daniel Butterbrodt, BS '87  
Terry Kippley, BS '86  
Jennifer Loeb, BS '01, MS '13  
Wynnie Zuchowski, BS '92

### IN MEMORIAM

Kimberly Gonzales, FISC '90

### CONTACT US

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Madison, WI 53705-5177  
P: 608.438.1994 E: [admin@walsaa.org](mailto:admin@walsaa.org)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Building for the Next 50 Years of WALSAA



*Jane Hillstrom, WALSAA President*

A few years ago, WALSAA celebrated 50 years of organizational growth. It's a big responsibility to carry WALSAA for the next 50 years. Priorities of the college have changed, students have changed — 70% of students in CALS are enrolled in life sciences vs. 30% in agriculture, a switch from when I was in school — and the way we connect with alumni has changed.

Your WALSAA board is enthusiastic about listening to your ideas to strengthen WALSAA. My partners on the executive team include Brian Koch (vice-president — meat and animal science), John Brunnquell (treasurer — agronomy B.S., poultry science M.S.) and June Roush (past president — agricultural economics). We are extremely appreciative of June's work over the past year in leading WALSAA. She handled details that set us up for more challenges. I'm excited to work with this team of alumni with a passion for the college.

How do we ensure a stable financial future for WALSAA? How do we build the Life Sciences connection? With 50,000 living CALS alumni, how do we engage alumni? How can we further engage students?

We've built a strong board and committee structure to address these questions. You'll hear more about these initiatives in future newsletters.

Let's begin with the first question. It's our end-of-year annual campaign and you'll find information on how to make a

difference in this newsletter. Think about how CALS impacted your life and how you might change another.

During my high school senior year, my sister — who worked at UW Financial Aid — called home to tell me a Financial Aid counselor reviewed my file. My status was poverty level which meant I would receive loans and grants to attend the UW. Alumni who provided scholarships, my work-study job, and financial aid allowed me to graduate from the UW. Somewhere in CALS, there's a student like me. That's why I give back to WALSAA and CALS.

Students at CALS apply for the FASFA, the federal financial aid form, at a 7% greater rate than the rest of the university. More than 31% of CALS students are eligible for a PEL grant, the federal program for undergraduate students based on exceptional financial need. Overall, the university rate is 26.5%. This means many CALS students are first generation students of low economic status.

Student life may be different now, but the need still exists. Please join me in giving back this holiday season by donating to WALSAA's annual campaign.

## CONSIDER WALSAA IN YOUR LEGACY

### Ways to Give

Dr. David R. Selner received his B.S., M.S. and PhD in dairy science from UW–Madison. His accomplishments are extensive. While a student, he was one of the proud founders of the Badger Dairy Club and a member of the dairy judging team. Dr. Selner had a successful career in genetics, speaking globally in 27 countries. He also served as the official World Dairy Expo dairy cattle show announcer for over 25 years. Dr. Selner loved to educate and work with dairy youth. When Dr. Selner passed in 2024, he made sure that work continued by including a legacy gift to WALSAA.

Your end-of-year gift to WALSAA will be used to support students, CALS, and provide networking opportunities for alumni.

There are numerous ways to give to WALSAA.

- Checks through mail or electronic funds — donate at [WALSAA.org](https://walsaa.org) or mail to WALSAA, PO Box 5177, Madison, WI 53705-5177
- Wire transfer
- Securities and Stocks
- Bequests and Wills
- Donor-Advised Fund
- IRA
- Real estate and more

Contact Jane Hillstrom or Pierce Dopp at [admin@walsaa.org](mailto:admin@walsaa.org) or 608.438.1994 for more details. WALSAA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization registered in the US under EIN: 23-7346450.

# PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## WALSAA Is Built on Connection



*June Roush, WALSAA Past President*

As my year as president of WALSAA concludes, I am reflecting on what this year has meant to our organization and to me personally. WALSAA is built on connection — linking students and alumni, honoring our past while cultivating our future. Over this past year, I watched those connections deepen and strengthen, and I am grateful for the shared commitment that makes our mission possible.

We also celebrated the breadth of the educational impact of CALS, including the health-related life sciences. One CALS biochemistry alumna shared how her academic foundation opened doors to a dynamic and impactful medical career. Her story reminded us that a CALS education prepares students to contribute meaningfully to fields that improve lives, strengthen communities, and advance human well-being.

This year, WALSAA also joined with CALS and WFAA leadership to reflect on shared priorities ahead — including increasing enrollment, student well-being, the development of the CALS Student Center, and the Wisconsin Rural Scholars Program. These conversations affirmed the important role WALSAA continues to play in fostering student support, learning experiences, and lifelong alumni engagement.

And of course, our flagship WALSAA Football Fire-Up brought our mission to life in a very real and joyful way. More than \$12,000 was raised to support scholarships, awards, and student activities, directly benefiting CALS students.

The day of Fire-Up, strong storms rolled into the early morning, and we found ourselves anxiously watching the radar. Fortunately, the skies cleared within an hour of our original start time. After the event, I was talking with Ayana Blair from WFAA, who shared that she had dreamed she was swimming

around the parking lot during Fire-Up. We burst out laughing, realizing we had carried the same blend of stress and optimism into the day.

Once the weather passed, the event came to life with good food, great company, and outstanding music from The Jimmys, whose energy and MC abilities helped set the tone for an unforgettable gathering.

As I transition into the role of past president, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation:

- To our WALSAA Board of Directors — thank you for your time and wisdom.
- To the CALS and WFAA teams — thank you for your partnership and shared commitment to student success.
- To our donors and members — thank you for believing in the work we do.
- And to our students — thank you for reminding us why WALSAA exists.

I am delighted to welcome Jane Hillstrom as the next president of WALSAA. Her dedication, leadership, and deep commitment to CALS students will serve this organization well. I look forward to supporting her in the year ahead.

Let's continue to stay engaged and let's continue to share the story of CALS — proudly, generously, and together.

On, Wisconsin!

June Meixelsperger Roush

## WALSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2025-2026

**Jane Hillstrom '80 - 2028**  
President  
Dodgeville, Wis.

**Brian Koch '90 - 2027**  
Vice-President  
Waupun, Wis.

**June Roush '87 - 2026**  
Past President  
Middleton, Wis.

**John Brunnquell '85 - 2028**  
Treasurer  
Port Washington, Wis.

**Curt Lauderdale**  
CALS Rep/Ex-Officio  
Madison, Wis.

**CALS Ambassadors Student Rep**  
Megan Reimann

**CALS Student Reps**  
Amanda Bender  
Derek Gehin

**Derviş Gürsoy '19 - 2028**  
Madison, Wis.

**Julie McKiernan '87 - 2027**  
Dane, Wis.

**Paul Mitchell '92 - 2026**  
Madison, Wis.

**Michael Murphy '87 - 2026**  
DeWitt, Iowa

**Cyndi Pitzner '90 - 2028**  
Jefferson, Wis.

**Tracy Propst '91 - 2027**  
Beaver Dam, Wis.

**Lindsey Sarbacker '21 - 2026**  
Appleton, Wis.

**Lizzy Schultz '13 - 2027**  
Madison, Wis.

**Brooke Trustem '20 - 2027**  
Evansville, Wis.

**Wynn Timer Zuchowski '92 - 2028**  
Wales, Wis.

**Rachel Zwiag FISC '08 - 2027**  
Ixonia, Wis.



# CALS MESSAGE



## Growing the Future



Farmers are constantly seeking innovations to improve their operations, and UW–Madison's Agricultural Research Stations help meet that demand. Across the state, CALS researchers are focusing on the problems and opportunities farmers face today in weed management, cattle nutrition, nitrogen-fixing corn, and so much more, generating new ideas for a fertile future. UW–Madison, CALS, and the stations are working together to grow Wisconsin.

[news.wisc.edu/growing-the-future](https://news.wisc.edu/growing-the-future)

## A College Try at CALS

This past June, the CALS end of campus was abuzz with the excited participants in the inaugural Wisconsin Rural Scholars Program. The new program welcomed rural high school students and introduced them to CALS academic programs and research on campus. Students got a firsthand look at college life at UW and a chance to think about what higher education could mean for them.

Learn more about Wisconsin Rural Scholars at [grow.cals.wisc.edu](https://grow.cals.wisc.edu)



## Introducing the new Dairy and Food Animal Management major

We're building on our 159-year dairy science legacy and training the next generation of students to have impactful careers in animal agriculture. The new Dairy and Food Animal Management (DFAM) major provides students with training in dairy and meat science, and business and management concepts to ensure they are ready to tackle today's challenges and embrace tomorrow's opportunities.

Learn more about DFAM at [cals.wisc.edu/dfam](https://cals.wisc.edu/dfam)



**Advocate for  
UW–Madison**

We need alumni like you to speak up about issues that affect our students and faculty. Find out how you can support the UW.

[uwalumni.com/advocate](https://uwalumni.com/advocate) ✨ ✨

# WALSAA WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

## Gehin, Gürsoy, Pitzner and Zuchowski Join the WALSAA Board of Directors



### Derek Gehin

Derek Gehin of Baraboo, Wis., is pursuing degrees in agronomy and agricultural business management. Gehin is presently Noble Ruler of the Alpha Gamma Rho (AGR) fraternity. He is treasurer of the Badger Dairy Club and through this club has worked at World Dairy Expo for two years, the last as grounds chair. A member of the Badger Crops Club, he has competed in local, state, and national crops

judging competitions and in 2024 was third high individual and member of the winning team at SESAS. He is a member of the Collegiate Farm Bureau, leads a campus bible study group, and spearheads volunteer opportunities at Second Harvest Food Bank. Gehin has his own successful lawn care and landscaping business in Baraboo, has worked part-time on a dairy farm, and last summer was a sales/agronomy intern for Helena Agri-Enterprises.

### Derviş Gürsoy

Derviş Gürsoy is the founder and CEO of Spraycision, an agricultural-technology company focused on precision spraying systems that reduce chemical and water use. Originally from a farming family in Turkey and an engineering graduate of UW–Madison, he combines global agricultural roots with entrepreneurial drive for building practical, grower-focused technology. Derviş believes strong alumni networks are essential and brings a people-centered approach to WALSAA, aiming to bridge the industry and the next generation of leaders.



### Cyndi Pitzner

Cyndi Pitzner graduated from UW–Madison with a bachelor's degree in agricultural journalism. She worked in publishing for many years before beginning her work as a consultant providing accounting and bookkeeping services, as well as working for a law firm in estate planning and real estate. She is a partner with her son in Pitzner Farms, LLC in Jefferson, Wis. where

they crop farm and provide custom farm work. Cyndi chaired the fundraising committee for Wisconsin Farm Technology days when it was held in Jefferson County. She has three sons that are all involved with family businesses and also has one grandson.

### Wynnne Zuchowski

Wynnne Zuchowski is the Global Marketing Director at GENEX where she is responsible for developing, executing, and managing the marketing strategies across four global regions. Zuchowski has nearly 30 years of experience developing and bringing customer-focused and company growth strategies to life. She has global experience in industries ranging from agtech and animal health to dental, distribution, manufacturing, and pharma, and with companies of all sizes, from start-ups to Fortune 100. Prior to that, she was part of the leadership team MouthWatch and developed and launched a new company and SaaS offering in the dental space. At Henry Schein, she oversaw the business solutions division and led the development and commercialization of an industry-changing membership program called Thrive. She has extensive marketing agency experience rooted in animal health and agriculture, working with clients like Zoetis, Arm & Hammer Animal Nutrition, and Wisconsin Equine Clinic & Hospital. After majoring in animal science at the UW–Madison with a minor in business, she likes to say she has become a Swiss army knife as a visionary and results-driven transformational leader with a down-to-earth approach. She has a proven track record of scaling businesses through strategic market insights, operational alignment, and data-driven decision-making while building and leading teams that drive exponential growth and innovation. Wynnne and her husband, Luke, reside in Wales, Wis. and have two children – a son, Nick, and a daughter, Elena.





# WALSAA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## From Cows to Crew: Bill & Jean Ehrke's Passion for Education, Badger Sports & Community

Bill and Jean Ehrke have a long history of giving back starting with their time on campus. Their passion for education, sports, and leadership development inspired their dedication and commitment.

It began when Bill grew up near Fort Atkinson where he and his brothers milked cows, cleaned the barn, and made it on the school bus at 7 a.m. In high school, he was encouraged by his county extension agent and agriculture teacher — both Wisconsin grads — to attend the UW. His teacher helped him apply for a scholarship, and Bill was awarded \$100/semester, which covered his tuition as he pursued a degree in dairy science.

As a student, Bill decided to join the Badger football team. "At that time, anyone could walk on. I foolishly thought I was good enough and big enough to play football. I cracked my ribs. As a student, if you weren't in a sport, you had to take physical education. We were doing an endurance run for class when Norm Sonju, the UW crew coach, saw me and asked me to join the team. I rowed for four years."

There weren't any D1 scholarships, so Bill rowed for the love of the sport. Competitions took place on the East or West Coast or in Florida. The team rode trains to the Intercollegiate Rowing Regatta (IRA) to row against schools like Navy and Yale.

"In 1957 at the IRA, we rowed on Onondaga Lake in Syracuse, New York. It was 105 degrees and the air smelled like rotten eggs due to a nearby solvay plant. We persevered. I rowed in the 3-seat winning the 2-mile race."

Classes and clubs kept Bill connected to his agricultural roots. He joined the Saddle & Sirloin Club and participated in the Little International where he won the Dairy Fitting & Showing Contest. He was on the dairy judging team and judged at the International Show in Chicago and Waterloo Dairy Show. He was the first out of his family's ten children to attend a 4-year college, graduating in 1959.

After college, Bill served in the Marine Core Reserve. When he returned, he worked for Dane County Dairy Improvement as manager while Jean finished her degree in home economics education at the UW.

After obtaining her master's degree in clothing and textiles from the UW, Jean taught for 30 years at Fort Atkinson High School. She belonged to the county and local homemakers organizations and the American Association of University Women.



***Bill and Jean's family dress in Badger Red for their Christmas card. The tradition - excluding wedding and anniversary photos - has continued for 30 years.***

Bill and Jean have given back to their college, their state, and their community in so many ways. In their free time — while raising their children Cheryl and Scott — Bill and Jean inspired others with their love of education. As president and scholarship chairman of the Fort Atkinson UW Alumni Association, Bill helped raise funds for student scholarships.

"As scholarship chair, it gave me insight into the scholarships needed for rural students. That's why we give to WALSAA."

Numerous times, the Ehrkes have donated to WALSAA's silent auction at Fire-Up.

Bill and Jean's passion for the Badgers spans generations. They've been Badger football season ticket holders for 58 years, for a while holding 10 season tickets. Bill has only missed seven home games. Bill, his daughter, and granddaughter attend every home game.

"This will be the 30<sup>th</sup> year that our Christmas card has a picture of everyone in Badger Red. It started when our first grandchildren, Cierra and Clayton, were born in 1995. Initially, Jean sewed all the grandchildren matching red outfits. This year, our great grandson will join the tradition."

Bill and Jean's love of the UW and history of philanthropy touches WALSAA student scholarship recipients, Badger athletes, fellow dairy and beef producers, and families and youth in their community. It keeps them young at heart and often in Badger Red clothing, a model we can all follow.



***The 2-mile race at the Intercollegiate Regatta, Bill is in the third seat from the front of the winning boat.***



Creating Connections for 50 Years

# Our College, Our Connection

## Annual Giving Opportunities

Support WALSAA through annual giving and planned gifts as this 501(c)(3) non-profit embarks on its remarkable journey to provide support to the University of Wisconsin–Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS). Over the years, WALSAA has connected students, faculty, and alumni of CALS and impacted students and student organizations through:

- Award scholarships to sophomores that excel in academics, leadership, and community service
- Recognize outstanding seniors that made an impact on and off campus during their collegiate career
- Support an outstanding advisor that supports and directs students during their time on campus
- Enhance student organizations and encourages their success with student impact grants
- Keep alumni connected to the campus, fellow alumni, and college faculty and staff



[WWW.WALSAA.ORG](http://WWW.WALSAA.ORG)

## Annual Giving Levels

☐ **VARSITY** \$1,500 or greater

☐ **BADGER** \$750-\$1499

☐ **BABCOCK HALL** \$500-\$749

☐ **HENRY MALL** \$250-\$499

☐ **RED** \$125-\$249

☐ **WHITE** Less than \$125

☐ **SILENT AUCTION CONTRIBUTION** Value: \_\_\_\_\_ Item Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sponsor a silent auction item of your choosing. We will auction off your item during a WALSAA event to raise money towards future scholarships.



Please fill out the information above and send with payment to: WALSAA, PO Box 5177, Madison, WI 53705-5177. For any questions, please contact 608-438-1994 or email [admin@walsaa.org](mailto:admin@walsaa.org) with questions. WALSAA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization registered in the US under EIN: 23-7346450.

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of how to be recognized: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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[www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org)

## What's New @CALS

### Fall 2025 Enrollment

This semester, CALS welcomed the **largest incoming class in college history** with 843 first-year and 84 transfer undergraduate students.

**Our total undergraduate class has 4,169 students, up 9.9% from last year**, with over 55% as Wisconsin residents. CALS is proud to have 5,030 undergrad and graduate students this year.

[cals.wisc.edu](http://cals.wisc.edu)



Applications for 2026 Outstanding Sophomore and Senior Impact Awards are now available at: [wisc.academicworks.com/](http://wisc.academicworks.com/). Application deadline is February 1, 2026, for both sophomores and seniors.

## Share Your Email With WALSAA



Have you not yet received the digital version of the WALSAA Connection e-newsletter? Scan the QR code and share your email with us to opt-in to the e-newsletter.