



League Letter

Volume LX, Number 4, February 2026 www.univleague.wisc.edu Editor: Gisell Sirianni Asst. Editor: Roma Lenehan

UNIVERSITY LEAGUE SPRING LUNCHEON AND LECTURE

“The Bones of Bascom Hall”

Betsy Draine and Michael Hinden

Wednesday, March 18th, 2026, 11:00 a.m.

Maple Bluff Country Club

Betsy Draine and Michael Hinden are not just spouses, they are also acclaimed co-authors and professors emeriti of English at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where they taught literature and drama and inspired generations of students before retiring to focus on their writing. Together, they have built a distinguished literary career that blends deep scholarly insight with engaging storytelling.

Their fiction work is best known through the **Nora Barnes and Toby Sandler mystery series**, a collection of internationally set cozy mysteries that skillfully weave art, history, and culture into compelling whodunits.

Betsy and Michael will speak about their latest novel in the Barnes-Sandler mystery series, *“The Bones of Bascom Hall.”* Based in part on the bombing of Sterling Hall in August 1970, the story begins with a discovery by the UW Police of human remains in the attic of Bascom Hall. Visiting Professor Nora Barnes, an amateur detective, links the bones to the bombing. She is struck by a passing car while riding her bicycle and later narrowly escapes disaster in the art library’s motorized book stacks. At the same time, her adventurous husband, Toby Sandler, pursues a separate mystery involving long-lost architectural plans designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.



SPRING LUNCHEON – See menu options on page 2

When: Wednesday, March 18th,
2026

Social Hour: 11:00 a.m.

Lunch: 11:30 a.m.

Speaker: 12:00 p.m.

Where: Maple Bluff
Country Club
500 Kensington Dr.
Madison, WI 53704

***Cost:** \$35 per person

***Reservation Deadline:**

March 9th

***Reservation form and menu
options on page 11**

Michael taught modern drama in the UW English Department and literature and the arts in Integrated Liberal Studies. He chaired the ILS (Integrated Liberal Studies) Program at the time of its rejuvenation in the 1980s and served as Associate Dean of International Studies (1991–2003). He is the author of *Long Day's Journey into Night: Native Eloquence* (1990) and many scholarly articles.

Betsy was chair of Women's Studies (1989–1992) and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (1992–1999). She taught courses in modern British fiction and wrote a book called *Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing* (1983). This book is a critical study analyzing the structural development of Lessing's work from early realism to later experimental, visionary, and science fiction modes.



Bascom Hall's attic provides the setting for Draine and Linden's latest mystery.

In 2006, shortly before they retired, they wrote a memoir together, *A Castle in the Backyard: The Dream of a House in France*. Since then, they've embarked on a different challenge: writing a series of mystery novels, featuring amateur sleuths Nora Barnes and Toby Sandler. The fifth book in that series, *The Bones of Bascom Hall*, was published in November 2024.

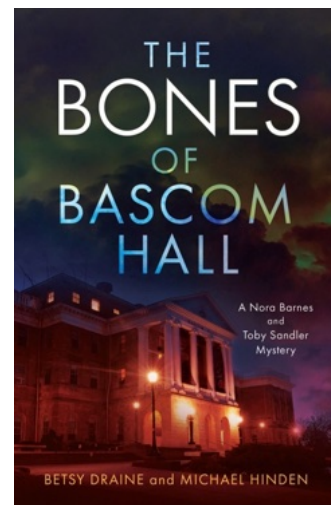
Their writing is celebrated for its rich sense of place, literary depth, and thoughtful blending of academic knowledge with accessible storytelling, making their work appealing to mystery lovers and readers of literary fiction.

Pulitzer-Prize-winning author David Maraniss, a Madison native, praised *The Bones of Bascom Hall* as an "enthraling story" that captures the University of Wisconsin–Madison in both the 1960s and today. He noted the book's "joyous verisimilitude" and described it as a sophisticated, intriguing mystery.

About the Nora Barnes and Toby Sandler mystery series

The Nora Barnes (art historian) and Toby Sandler (antiques dealer) mystery series, follows an art historian and an antiques dealer who solve crimes in picturesque, often arts-focused locations. The series is known for its engaging blend of suspense, humor, and intellectual curiosity, appealing to readers who love cozy mysteries with depth and a sense of place. The series includes:

- *Murder in Lascaux* (2011)
- *The Body in Bodega Bay* (2014)
- *Death on a Starry Night* (2016)
- *The Dead of Achill Island* (2019)
- *The Bones of Bascom Hall* (2024)



With each book, Nora and Toby uncover secrets that span decades, exploring the hidden stories behind art, architecture, and history—always with a mix of courage, wit, and resourcefulness.

After their talk, Betsy and Michael will be selling copies of *The Bones of Bascom Hill* for \$20. If you already own a copy, please bring it along and they will be happy to sign it as well.

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

Looking outside it's hard to believe we've passed the darkest part of Winter and are moving toward Spring. We all know there is always a seasonal change to look forward to. I hope everyone had a safe and pleasant holiday season and 2026 will be a good year for you and yours.

The League finished off the year on a high note with a wonderful Candlelight Concert and Dinner with great company and an equally great musical performance.

Remember to mark your calendars and plan to attend the March 18th Spring Luncheon and the May 6th Quasiquicentennial Celebration and Annual Meeting. I look forward to seeing you there.

You should have received your Stay-at-Home Scholarship Benefit letter and reply card. Let's celebrate our 125th anniversary year with record giving toward our scholarship goals. Please strongly consider this important annual drive. If you haven't received your letter and card, please let me know.

Our committees are in the planning process and our Interest Groups are providing all of us with many opportunities for learning new things and spending time with friends, old and new. I hope everyone is taking advantage of these special opportunities.

In closing, thanks so much for your support and staying involved with the outstanding work our League does in fulfilling our mission. Our success is certainly in our members.

John Shanda
President 2025-2026

UPDATE - HOW TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO ONE OF UNIVERSITY LEAGUE'S NAMED ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

As the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association (UW Foundation) continues to update the way it manages all of its endowments, University League members have been asked to do the following when making a donation to one of the University League Endowed Scholarships.

Make your check/donation payable to University of Wisconsin Foundation or WFAA (Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association.)

Mail the check to:

University of Wisconsin Foundation
US Bank Lockbox
Box 78807
Milwaukee, WI 53278-8807

Designate on the check or enclosed letter to which University League Endowed Scholarship your donation should be applied. You can also find a donation information form here:

https://www.supportuw.org/wp-content/uploads/uwf_printable_form.pdf

Questions? Contact Scholarship Chair Peggy Wiederholt or Endowed Scholarship Liaison Sally Lorenz.

**THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE 125TH ANNIVERSARY SCHOLARSHIP
BENEFIT FOR UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN STUDENTS
SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIPS, SERVICE, EDUCATION AND FRIENDSHIP**

The University League is proud of its longstanding mission to raise funds for student scholarships while fostering volunteer service, educational enrichment, and meaningful social engagement among its members. Participation in University League Interest Groups remains one of the organization's most valued benefits, offering members the opportunity to connect through 19 diverse and engaging options.



Our members value the many opportunities for connection and engagement offered through social events and participation in our Interest Groups. Contributing to the Scholarship Benefit is the most meaningful way to support the organization and advance its mission.

As we celebrate our 125th Anniversary—125 years of proud support for the University of Wisconsin–Madison—our heartfelt hope is that every member will join us in supporting this year's Scholarship Benefit.

Together, we can honor our remarkable legacy and continue making a meaningful difference for generations of students to come!

While we set a goal of raising at least \$25,000, we hope to exceed that amount due to the generosity of our membership. Investing in scholarships is investing in a better, brighter and stronger future! Donations of any size are most appreciated, and 100% of your scholarship donation goes to deserving UW-Madison students.

If you have already donated, THANK YOU!

If not, there is still time! DONATE TODAY!

On Wisconsin!

If you have misplaced your Benefit donation card or if you have any questions, please contact:

- Louise Thompson (louisesylvesterthompson@hotmail.com) or
- Peggy Wiederholt (peggywiederholt@sbcglobal.net).

SPOTLIGHT ON LAW SCHOOL STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

About Law School

The University of Wisconsin Law School, located in the heart of campus on the historic, picturesque Bascom Hill, is proud of their “Law-in-Action” teaching tradition. As described on their website (www.law.wisc.edu), this means that in addition to teaching the basics of legal rules, students learn why those rules evolved to address social concerns and how those rules operate in the real world.

An emphasis on skills-based learning provides law students with opportunities to interact with real clients in areas such as criminal law, health-care advocacy, business law, and entrepreneurship. Simulation-based training in oral communication, negotiation, practice-focused writing, and client counseling prepares students for professional practice. Consequently, they graduate as practice-ready professionals.

Students may pursue externships that allow them to gain experience working in state and federal government branches or nonprofit organizations or corporate councils’ offices. They also have opportunities to provide legal services to underrepresented community members through the Pro Bono Program. The Law School proudly proclaims, “Our students graduate ready to advocate, innovate, and lead.”

Making a Difference

Have you ever wondered whether University League scholarship funds truly make an impact on law students? Perhaps you have asked whether the scholarship award is too small to make a meaningful difference. Wonder no more. The University of Wisconsin Law School has designated our annual University League scholarship donations as the “University League Book Scholarship.”

With the estimated 2025–2026 academic-year cost for required course materials and educational supplies at University of Wisconsin–Madison Law School totaling \$2,450, our scholarship contributions make a significant difference. By helping cover these essential expenses, the scholarship eases financial concerns and supports stronger academic performance and achievement.

As we turn the spotlight on the 2025-2026 UW Law School University League Book Scholarship recipients, we begin by sharing excerpts from a letter of thanks to our membership from Rebecca L. Scheller, J.D., Chief Administrative Officer and Associate Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid.



Letter from Rebecca L. Scheller, J.D. to The University League:

Greetings from the University of Wisconsin Law School! I write to thank you for your support of UW Law students and to share information about the 2025-2026 academic year recipients of the University League Book Scholarship (student profiles follow this article) ...

With your support, the law school recently matriculated one of the most numerically exceptional classes in its 137-year history. The 2025 entering class includes 224 students hailing from 31 states and 6 countries. The class has earned degrees at 108 different undergraduate institutions, bringing together a wide variety of academic backgrounds, with examples including criminal justice, economics, biochemistry, classics, marketing, and environmental engineering.

As our institution and students navigate the changing financial landscape in higher education, our ability to offer robust scholarship support to incoming students is more important than ever. Scholarships play a key role in allowing our students to focus on their studies and their professional development, manage their costs, and maximize their post-graduate opportunities. On behalf of everyone at UW Law, I thank you for your support.

2025-2026 UNIVERSITY LEAGUE BOOK SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Emily Smith. “...*this award is a saving grace for me.*”

Emily is from Rice Lake, Wisconsin. She spent the summer after her first law school year as a Judicial Law Clerk at Barron County in northwestern Wisconsin. Her goal has always been to start her own law practice in rural northern Wisconsin. When asked what this University League Book Scholarship has meant to her, Emily said that the award has made it possible for her to afford her books without taking out additional loans. She wrote, “This award means a lot to me because it will help cover my book costs for this semester and even some of next. That is a major expense each year, so this award is really a saving grace for me.”



Lizzie Wright... “*this award allows me to have an impact on the school and community positively, without financial stress.*”

Lizzie is a second-year law student from Terra Haute, Indiana. This past summer she served as a judicial intern with the Wisconsin Supreme Court. She intends to pursue a career in transactional law and is especially interested in intellectual property, international law, and housing/eviction work. Outside of school she participates in pro bono clinics offered by the UW and the community. She states, “This generous award means so much to me because it allows me to maintain a busy schedule and have an impact on the school and community positively, without financial stress.”



MEET YOUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Richard Leffler

Richard “Rich” Leffler is a distinguished historian and longtime contributor to the study of the American Constitution. He earned his B.A. in History from Brooklyn College of the City University of New York and his M.A. and Ph.D. in American History from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

From 1981 to 2009, he served as Deputy Director of the Center for the Study of the American Constitution at the University of Wisconsin, where he co-edited *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, 1787–1791*, a 22-volume landmark work published between 1976 and 2011.



Joan and Rich Leffler

He has also co-edited *Documentary Editing: The Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing* (2009–2011), *William Pierce on the Constitutional Convention* (forthcoming), *Creating the Constitution* (1999), and *Federalists and Antifederalists* (1989; 2nd edition, 1998).

Rich has conducted numerous seminars on the origins of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights for Wisconsin's judicial education program and for federal district judges under the Federal Judicial Center, as well as lecturing at several U.S. Circuit Court conferences. He has written and spoken extensively on constitutional history and is currently working on a biography of Alexander Hamilton. He has also served as editor and president of the Association for Documentary Editing.

Beyond his scholarship, Rich has been an active member of the University of Wisconsin community. He served for many years as secretary and then president of the University Club and currently sits on the boards of the Friends of the UW–Madison Libraries, the Madison Opera, and the University League, where he serves as program chair.

Rich's late wife, Joan, was a devoted member of the University League from 2017 until her passing in January 2023, serving as Secretary, Program Chair, President (two terms), and Treasurer. Joan's passion for the League introduced Rich to its mission, and he continues to support the organization in her memory, embracing the values and good works she championed.

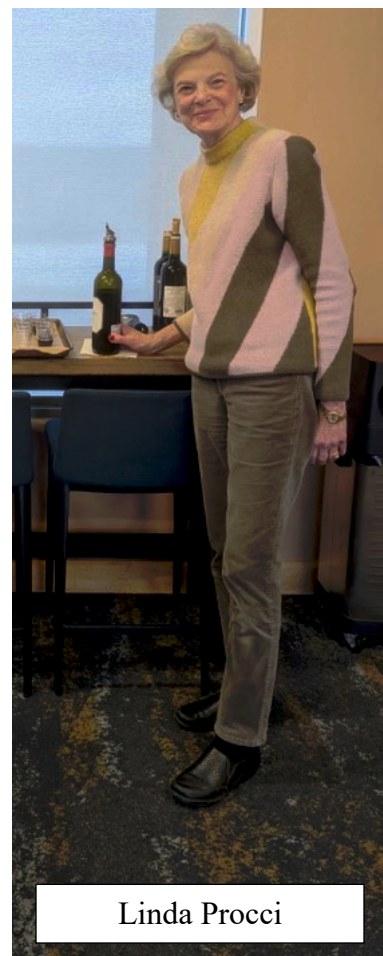
INTEREST GROUP UPDATES

WINE DIVAS AND DIVOS

The Wine Divas and Divos kicked off the year with their first wine tasting of 2026, held on January 22nd. The event was graciously hosted by Linda Procci and Rhonda Heise, offering attendees a beautiful view of frozen Lake Mendota as they explored a selection of distinguished wines and an amazing charcuterie board.

In a nod to the famous Paris Wine Tasting of 1976 - an event dramatized in the 2008 movie "Bottle Shock" - the hosts staged their own "Judgment of Paris." The tasting featured a match-up between a California Chardonnay and a French White Burgundy, as well as a California Cabernet Sauvignon and a French Bordeaux. Participants were divided in their preferences, with California winning the white wine contest and France the red wine contest.

If you enjoy discovering new wines and connecting with fellow enthusiasts, consider joining the Wine Divas and Divos. For more information, please contact Elaine Rosenblatt at elainer49@gmail.com or call 608-213-4958.



Linda Procci

CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT INTEREST GROUP

The Climate & Environment Interest Group started in 2023. It is a growing community of individuals committed to taking meaningful environmental action. Currently, the group hosts about ten members at each meeting. Meetings are held at 1:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of every month at the Middleton Senior Center during the fall and spring, and shift to Zoom for the January and February sessions.

The group's mission is to inspire, encourage, and equip members to engage with environmental issues through a variety of activities, including presentations, discussions of current events, sharing articles, ideas, and eco-friendly products, as well as organized outings.

Past meeting topics have included:

- Sustainability in Europe Today
- Eco-Tips for Individuals
- Electric Cars
- Children's Environmental Books
- Experiences from Attending an International Climate Conference

Through these activities, the Environmental Interest Group fosters education, engagement, and practical action, empowering its members to make a positive impact on the environment.



**Conservation Voters Lobby Day
at the State Capitol**



**Tour of Holy Wisdom Monastery
and Prairies**



Solar Panel Tilt Event



Earth Day Fair

ARMCHAIR TRAVELERS: Where Will We Go This Year?

The Armchair Travelers group invites members to explore the world from the comfort of home. Below are some of this year's virtual journeys:

- Croatia and Fairy Tale Castles
- German Christmas Markets
- Southwest Turkey
- Cornwall England
- Vietnam and Laos
- Cramping-Style African Safari



Join us as we travel the globe through stories, photos, and engaging discussions—no passport required!

DINNER & BALLET: An Evening of Food, Friendship, and the Arts

An informal "dinner & ballet" group officially launched as an official University League Interest Group in fall 2025. It has quickly become a delightful way to combine good company, good food, and beautiful performances.

The group meets year-round on the second Monday of each month at Capitol Lakes, 333 West Main Street. We begin with dinner at 5:00 p.m. in the Capitol Lakes Seasons Restaurant. Dinner reservations are required, and payment is by credit card only. The restaurant provides a lovely setting, with consistently good food and drink—perfect for relaxed conversation and socializing.

At 7:00 p.m., we transition to the ballet video presentation. Those who wish to attend *only* the ballet portion are very welcome and do not need a dinner reservation.

Attendance so far this year has ranged from 4 to 13 participants, making for an intimate, friendly group where it is easy to get to know one another. Whether you come for dinner, ballet, or both, the evening offers a wonderful mix of culture and connection. If you enjoy the performing arts—or are simply looking for a pleasant evening out with fellow League members - we invite you to join us. Come experience the venue, the conversation, and the entertainment for yourself. We'd love to see you there!



On the left: Betty Zeps, Katie Mulligan, Sheila Reed, Kay Jarvis-Sladky
On the right: Cindy May, Betsy Haimson, Elia Basurto-Colson, Kevin Colson

GENEALOGY: Preserving Family Histories Since 1982

The University League Genealogy Group was founded in 1982–1983 under the leadership of Betty Montoye. It has remained a vibrant and engaging part of the League ever since. Over the years, the group has grown into a welcoming community of approximately twenty members who share a passion for uncovering and preserving family histories.



Today, the group meets via Zoom, allowing members to connect from the comfort of their homes while continuing to explore genealogical research, share discoveries, and exchange tips and resources. Under the guidance of current leaders Louise Thompson and Mary Jo Willis, members participate in presentations, discussions, and collaborative projects that deepen their understanding of ancestry and historical research. The Genealogy Group offers both a social and educational experience, fostering curiosity, collaboration, and a love of history while helping members preserve the stories that define their families and communities.

BRIDGE

Bridge has been a cherished University League Interest Group for many years, bringing members together through friendly competition and lasting camaraderie. In 1977–78, three separate groups met at different times, reflecting the game's popularity within the League. One membership list from that era included 24 players—remarkably, two of whom are still alive and continuing to enjoy the game today.

Four years ago, all Bridge participants were invited to join a combined group, strengthening connections across generations of players. The group now includes 18 members, including one gentleman, who meet weekly at Oakwood Retirement Center.



From left to right: Gennie Bostian, Katherine Masden, Sally Patti, Judy Stang

New players are always welcome, and the group would be delighted to have others join in the fun!



University League Spring Luncheon
Wednesday, March 18th, 2026: 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Maple Bluff Country Club

Program: Authors Betsy Draine and Michael Hinden
The Bones of Bascom Hall

Reservation deadline: March 9th, 2026 (No refunds after this date)

Member: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Additional member: _____ Phone: _____

Guest(s) name(s): _____ Phone: _____

_____ Reservations @ \$35 each (includes lunch and program) \$ _____

General scholarship (IHO/IMO name): _____ \$ _____

For donations “In Honor of” or “In Memory of,” please circle IHO or IMO above and provide contact information below. General scholarship only please.

_____ **TOTAL ENCLOSED** \$ _____

Menu (list any dietary restrictions below):

_____ Seasonal Salad—with chicken First Name(s): _____

_____ Seasonal Salad—without chicken First Name(s): _____

Water, coffee and/or tea; fresh rolls and whipped butter; assorted cookies.

Dietary restrictions _____

Need a ride? _____ Can you offer a ride? _____

Make checks payable to: **The University League, Inc.**

(Note: Your check will be cashed a few days following the event.)

Mail to: Betty Zeps, Cardinal View, 3820 Tribeca Dr. #212, Middleton, WI 53562

***Reservation form and payment must be in hand by March 9th, 2026.**

Questions? Call Rich Leffler at (608) 345-7782



The University League, Inc.
Post Office Box 5064
Madison, WI 53705-0064

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Quasquicentennial Trivia.....

* In 1993, membership was opened to women community-wide, with no University of Wisconsin–Madison affiliation required.

* “Pay-in-May” for collecting annual dues began in 1995.

* In 2000 men were first allowed to join the League.

Our Quasquicentennial will be celebrated in May, 2026