

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WSU professor Wilson Baldrige receives WSU Foundation fundraising award

Wilson Baldrige, professor and chair of Modern and Classical Languages at Wichita State University, is the recipient of the WSU Foundation Faculty/Staff Fundraising Award. The award was established to recognize WSU faculty or staff members who have played a key role in cultivating and securing a major gift for WSU. This is the second year the award has been presented.

Baldrige's longstanding friendship with John Buck and his brother, Jim, resulted in the university receiving two estate gifts from the brothers totaling \$9.5 million. The legacy gifts benefitted the areas of education, aerospace engineering, fine arts, business and the French program.

One student who will benefit from the Buck brothers gifts is Gareth Melin. He received music and French degrees from WSU and is back for degrees in physics, math and aerospace engineering. He is looking forward to study abroad experiences in France and Canada.

"The Buck fund in a very real way . . . addresses applied learning," said Baldrige, "that is to say not just foreign languages for the sake of traditional general education, but applied in the sense of languages with other areas. In this case engineering and this student will benefit greatly from the Buck Charitable Trust."

John Buck '47 was co-owner of Buck's Department Store in Wichita and a savvy investor. In the 1980s, Buck returned to WSU to learn French, something he had always wanted to do. It was during this time that Buck met Baldrige and even asked Baldrige to accompany him and Jim Buck on a trip to France. John Buck supported the Sister City diplomatic exchange program between Orléans, France, and Wichita, in addition to making donations to help bring in some of the lecturers and plays in the French department.

"Mr. Buck was a great diplomat," said Baldrige, "He felt he was the ambassador and like a diplomat representing the city of Wichita to overseas visitors."

Baldrige remembered a time when a French poet came to Wichita and Buck hosted him and others to dinner in the Petroleum Club. The table was set with American and French flags.

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Page 2

“Dr. Baldrige was key to this gift,” said Elizabeth King, WSU Foundation president and CEO, “which shows the impact our faculty have on students of all ages.”

As award recipient, Baldrige will receive \$1,000, which will be used to help advance the good work he does for the university. He plans to use the money for the exchange program.

Baldrige was presented the award, a piece of Karg art, at the WSU Foundation National Advisory Council’s business meeting on April 26 by Craig Barton. Barton is chair of the committee that selects the recipients from names submitted by WSU Foundation staff members.

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Media note: A photo can be found at www.wichita.edu/foundationphotos.

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