

# WSU PROFESSOR, STUDENTS CONTINUE RESEARCH ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY



By Emily Mullins

**Don Blakeslee**, professor of anthropology, recently presented archaeological evidence that shows a thriving ancestral Wichita Indian town of more than 20,000 residents near Arkansas City, Kansas.

The site, known as Etzanao, is located near the confluence of the Arkansas and Walnut rivers. It rivals the Cahokia site in western Illinois as one of the largest Native American settlements in North America.

“By joining the historical written record to the archaeology, we ended up rewriting both fields,” said Blakeslee. “Rather than a cluster of 30 little villages, there was a single town of 20,000 people.”

Research of the town has completely revised the understanding of protohistoric settlements, established 1400 to 1700 AD, in the southern plains. Previous scholars often dismissed the Spanish population estimates as exaggerations, but with the evidence of the archaeological finds they can no longer be discounted.

“One implication is that Old World epidemic diseases had not yet reached

this region, but probably did so by around 1650, because there were far fewer Wichitas when the French arrived in 1718,” said Blakeslee.

Blakeslee reported archaeology that coincides with eyewitness accounts from five soldiers of Spanish explorer and founder of New Mexico, Juan de Oñate, who were interviewed in Mexico City in 1602.

Scattered surface finds match the description of the town as extending about five miles, and the description of the landscape and route of the Spanish army also line up. Over the years, researchers and local landowners have found multitudinous pottery shards, arrowheads and other hand-hewn flint tools. The biggest piece of confirmation came with the discovery of the site of a battle fought there in 1601. Metal detectors were used to uncover small iron shot from in front of the ravine where natives took shelter and well beyond it where shots eventually fell.

Blakeslee began work at the site in 2015 when he invited leaders of the Wichita tribe to visit and spent a week there researching. He’s been able to involve

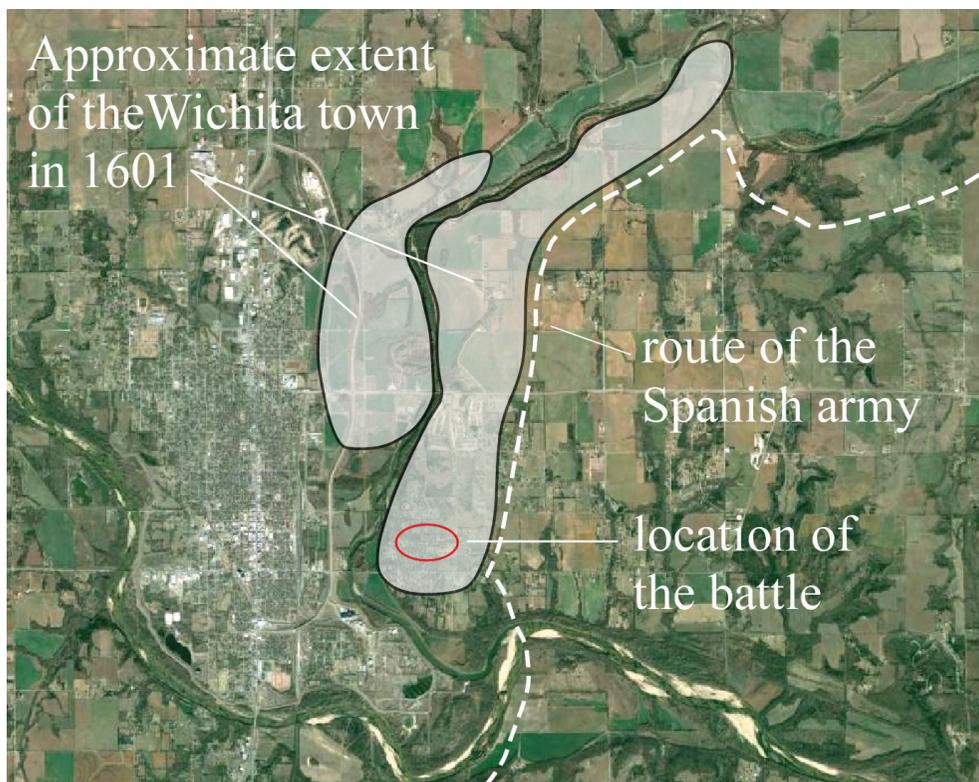
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WSU students with the research as well and has taken them to the site each summer since.

In June, **Mitchell Young**, a senior majoring in anthropology, discovered a rusty horseshoe nail of Spanish origin at the site. Blakeslee hypothesized that it was probably traded between one of Juan de Oñate's troops and an Etzanoan.

"Work at Etzanoa will continue for the rest of my career and beyond," said Blakeslee. "It will be an important part of WSU's future."

*Cheryl Miller contributed to this article.*



*This map overlay outlines the likely area of Etzanoa. It also shows the route Spaniards are believed to have taken into the Wichita town and of a battle fought there in 1601.*

*Mitchell Young, a senior in anthropology, found this Spanish horseshoe nail at the Etzanoa site.*



## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: DON BLAKESLEE

Long known as one of the leading archaeologists working in the Great Plains, **Don Blakeslee**, professor of anthropology, has broad research interests ranging from the time of the earliest settlement of the Americas to the historic period. Presently he is working on the archaeology of the ancestral Wichita people in Kansas between 1400 and 1700 AD, research that includes Etzanoa, one of the largest archaeological sites in the United States.

He became interested in archaeology as a young man.

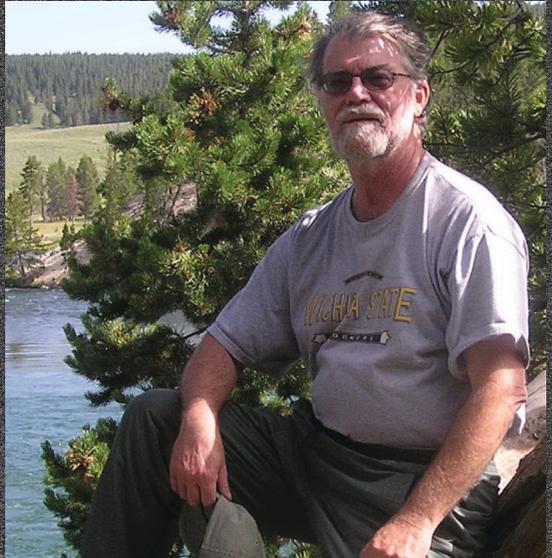
“My first real interest came through a summer job doing archaeology in Wyoming and Montana,” Blakeslee said. “Twelve weeks of camping in tents, digging in caves and on mesa tops.”

He said the most fascinating aspect of the discovery of the Etzanoa site is that it has completely changed the view archaeologists hold of the people of the Great Plains at the beginning of the historic period.

“Previously, we were thinking in terms of clusters of villages of a few hundred people each,” Blakeslee said. “Now we have a town of at least 20,000 people—which was just one town in Quivira—which controlled an area larger than the Republic of Ireland.”

Blakeslee came to Wichita State in 1976. He earned his bachelor of arts and master of arts in anthropology from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and his doctorate in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is married to Joy. They have four children, three grandchildren (with another on the way), two dogs and two cats.

Blakeslee was interviewed on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" about Etzanoa. You may listen to the interview or read the transcript at <http://n.pr/2qeBmys>.



DON BLAKESLEE

# YOUNGMEYER RANCH PERMANENTLY PROTECTED WITH CONSERVATION EASEMENT

By Cheryl Miller



The Youngmeyer Ranch in Elk County is preserved forever.

Through a voluntary agreement between the Earl W. Jr. and Terri Youngmeyer Family Foundation and the Kansas Land Trust, the 4,676-acre tallgrass prairie property is permanently protected from development and will remain an ecological research site for Wichita State University.

“We are deeply indebted to the Youngmeyers and Kansas Land Trust,” said **Bill Bischoff**, professor of geology and former dean of Fairmount College, at the official dedication. “We will share all knowledge we gain for the preservation and betterment of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem.”

The agreement, known as a conservation easement, was finalized in December 2016. The dedication of the easement was celebrated on June 6 at the Youngmeyer Ranch. Representatives of Wichita State University, the WSU Foundation, local ranchers, and conservation and energy professionals attended.

To create a conservation easement, a landowner and a recognized conservation organization enter into a voluntary agreement that allows the landowner to retain ownership but with limitations on the amount and types of development of the property. The easement is held by the conservation organization and the terms of the agreement are enforced in perpetuity,

even if land ownership changes.

The Youngmeyer Ranch conservation easement held with the Kansas Land Trust allows the property to remain a working ranch. The prairie may not be plowed under, although it may be grazed by livestock. The ranch may not be subdivided.

**Daniel Offidani**, trustee for the Youngmeyer Family Foundation, was instrumental in creating the conservation agreement. He said the Youngmeyers would be pleased with the easement.

“Earl and Teri did not have any children,” Offidani said at the dedication. “They didn’t have any close family that survived them. This ranch was their child and like most parents it meant everything to them.”

The greatest benefit to Wichita State is through research and educational capacities. Faculty and students have endless opportunity to study how Kansans can improve the sustainability of ranching and the enhancement of wildlife found in biologically rich areas like the Youngmeyer Ranch. This will benefit ranchers and their generations to come, said **Greg Houseman**, associate professor of biological sciences.

“Our research will address concerns in our region,” said Houseman. “Many think KSU and to a lesser extent KU are the only ones doing this type of research, but we are working to change that view.”

## THE LAND AROUND YOUNGMAYER RANCH

According to **Bill Bischoff**, professor of geology and former dean, the rocks on Youngmeyer Ranch were formed during the Permian period, which occurred 240–280 million years ago. This area of Kansas was a warm, shallow sea, similar to that now found in the Bahamas. Life forms included fusulinids, brachiopods, crinoids, trilobites, and bryozoans, an abundant organism preserved in these rocks. For reference, the Appalachians were completed at the beginning of the Permian, a time of glaciation. At the end of the period, the largest mass extinction in geologic history took place.

Siberian traps, produced by an era of extreme volcanic activity, caused the mass extinction. Enormous flood basalts released large amounts of carbon dioxide and sulfuric acid into the atmosphere. These chemical compounds acidified the oceans and lowered their pH levels. In such a hostile environment, life forms could not secrete calcium carbonate, which is essential for forming exoskeletons.

The Youngmeyer land is still being shaped by geologic forces today.



*Bill Hendry, biological sciences, Kristi Oberg, WSU Foundation, and Dexter Mardis, field station manager, listen to remarks at the Youngmeyer dedication.*

## LIFE ON THE RANCH

The Youngmeyer Ranch provides rich opportunity for ecological studies by scientists. To date, surveys show the following numbers on the ranch:

**490+**  
plant species

**57**  
bird species

**11**  
mammal species

**10** + **1** + **6** + **7** + **19** = **42**  
frogs    salamander    turtles    lizards    snakes    **species of amphibians and reptiles**

# GRANTS

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**George Bousfield**, Lawrence M. Jones Distinguished Professor, biological sciences, was awarded a five-year renewal of a grant with the National Institute on Aging, one of the National Institutes of Health. In September his proposal, “The Aging Pituitary/Gonadal Axis,” was funded \$1,801,381 for the first year of a five-year award that will potentially yield \$8,628,697. Bousfield began receiving support for this research in 2009. The purpose of the project is to determine the effects of an age-related change in follicle-stimulating hormone glycosylation on fertility, osteoporosis and obesity. In young women, most FSH is missing one of its four carbohydrates and is more active. As women age, more of the FSH is fully glycosylated—the process by which sugars are chemically attached to proteins to form glycoproteins—and has less biological activity. The loss in FSH activity causes the body to secrete more of the less active FSH forms. This action, however, is believed to contribute to bone loss and increased obesity. Bousfield’s study aims to shed light on the mechanisms involved in these processes.

**Rocío Del Aguila** and **José Enrique Navarro**, both assistant professors of Spanish, procured a \$10,000 Kansas Humanities Council grant for the “Cocin(ando) Wichita” interdisciplinary project about tradition, immigration, storytelling and empowerment through recipes. The purpose of the project is to honor the cooking traditions of Hispanic immigrants in Wichita. It also acknowledges the immense value of people who have kept their cooking traditions in the places where they immigrate and how that has shaped their culture and their communities.

**Carolyn Speer**, manager of instructional and design technology, serves as the humanities consultant.

**Katie Mitchell-Koch**, assistant professor of chemistry, has received two grants totaling nearly \$545,000 from the National Science Foundation. One of the research

projects—\$368,000 for “Unraveling Connections Among Biomolecular Structure, Interfacial Solvent Dynamics and Conformational Dynamics”—focuses on the movement of solvent molecules around enzymes. Working with Virginia Tech professor **Vinh Nguyen**, Mitchell-Koch will gain knowledge in the fundamental insight into biomolecular function and the link between solvation environment and enzyme catalysis. That could result in lower energy costs and more efficient production of fine chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Mitchell-Koch was also one of 30 researchers in the United States to receive funding from the NSF’s Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research. She was awarded \$176,284 for her research at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with collaborator **Kami Hull**, a professor in the UIUC School of Chemical Sciences. Their work focuses on characterization of chemical syntheses carried out by rhodium and iridium catalysts. The catalytic reactions are used to create complex molecular architectures, like those in drug candidates and pharmaceuticals.

A collaborative study between Wichita State University, the University of Kansas Medical Center and a Kansas State University-led team of psychological sciences researchers has received a five-year, \$10.6 million Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence grant. Of this grant, WSU received a sub-award for its collaboration with KSU, totaling \$1,781,344.

**Rui Ni**, associate professor of psychology and project leader for two projects, plans to use \$1,008,870 of this funding to further his research on the neuronal plasticity among older adults, to develop training procedures to improve their visual cognitive functions, and to look for transferred learning effects on driving performance. The remaining \$772,474 will go toward a state-of-the-art 3D high-fidelity driving simulator that will use advanced technology, such as eye tracking, to study driving behavior.

## FACULTY & STAFF

**Andi Bannister**, professor of criminal justice, has been named the interim director of the School of Community Affairs. Bannister serves concurrently as director of the federally-funded Regional Community Policing Institute at Wichita State. She has been awarded more than \$8 million in federal grants over the past 10 years. She has conducted research in Europe and Asia, provided training on computer crime and community policing to the Royal Thai Police, and provided training and technical assistance to a wide range of police agencies, notably in Kansas and Nebraska. Bannister is an academic fellow with the Washington, DC-based Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and has studied terrorism issues in Israel with police, military and intelligence organizations as part of that fellowship.

**George Bousfield**, Lawrence M. Jones Distinguished Professor, biological sciences, was an invited speaker at the International Conference on Gonadotropins and their Receptors – Gonadotropin Releasing Hormone Congress in Modena, Italy. The title of his talk was “Update on glycosylation in FSH-FSHR interaction and signaling.”

**Rocío Del Aguila**, assistant professor of Spanish and Spanish graduate coordinator, was named the 2017 recipient of the Drum Major Award, given annually at the Martin Luther King Unity Walk held at Wichita State University. In addition to teaching courses on Spanish, Hispanic culture and Latin American literature, she also co-advises the WSU chapter of Sigma Delta Pi, the Hispanic honor society, and provides outreach to the Hispanic community at high schools and service-learning projects.

**Marché Fleming-Randle**, formerly assistant to the president for diversity and senior assistant dean, has been promoted to vice president for diversity and community engagement.

**Jeffrey Jarman** has been named director of the Elliott School of Communication. His primary research interests are analyses of political deliberations within the public sphere, including the influence of

political debates and fact-checking on the public. He teaches courses in strategic communication, political communication and research methods. Jarman is also the director of Wichita State’s competitive debate program. Since 1999, he has authored the annual overview of the new high school debate topic used by thousands of high school debaters around the nation.

**José Enrique Navarro**, assistant professor of Spanish, is the 2017 recipient of the Benson Latin American Collection-South Central Modern Language Association Faculty Research Grant. He conducted archival research on book trade in Argentina in the 20th century at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at The University of Texas at Austin.

**Arwiphawee Srithongrung**, associate professor of public administration, was invited by Columbia University to present her paper “The Thai Economy After the 2014 Regime Change: A Fiscal and Monetary Assessment” at the Thai Update 2017. It was the third annual conference organized by Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University, for academic experts to exchange updated knowledge regarding politics, economics and laws in Southeast Asian regions.

**Mark Schneegurt**, professor of biological sciences, was contacted by the Hartman Institute to have excerpts published from one of his historical works in a source book used for rabbinic training. The excerpts also will appear in a smaller publication that will be distributed for free to 20,000 synagogues in North America. His work is a translation he made from the Hebrew of inserts to Psalm 122 that are known only from the Ethiopian Jewish community and connected with the Sigd holiday.

**NICKOLAS SOLOMEY**, professor of physics, was selected to be a NASA Faculty Fellow at Marshall Space Flight Center over the summer. He explored development for a solar neutrino spacecraft that would be positioned close to the sun.



## STUDENT

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**Emmy Engasser** and **Rachel Stone**, graduate students in biological sciences, were featured guests on the public radio show Science Friday. They shared their research on beetles—more specifically, dung and carrion beetles—during their segment on Sept. 15. You may listen online here: <http://bit.ly/2zh1nAx>. It was recorded live at Wichita's Orpheum Theater. Science Friday is broadcast weekly to 1.8 million listeners over 374 public radio stations.

The Sunflower, WSU's student newspaper, placed second in the Best of Show competition at the National College Media Convention in Dallas. It competed with the student newspapers of much larger schools, such as the University of Illinois and the University of Minnesota. **Chance Swaim**, graduate student, creative writing, is the editor-in-chief. **Amy DeVault**, instructor, Elliott School of Communication, advises The Sunflower staff.

## RETIREMENTS

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**Christopher K. Brooks**

professor emeritus, English

**Gail Burkett**

Fairmount lecturer, French

**Almer J. Mandt**

associate professor emeritus, philosophy

**David E. Soles**

professor emeritus, philosophy

**Deborah H. Soles**

professor emerita, philosophy

## NEW HIRES

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**Samantha Gregus**

assistant professor, psychology

**Stacey Mann**

clinical educator, School of Social Work

**Rannfried Thelle**

assistant professor, women's studies and religion

**Maryam Zahabi**

assistant professor, psychology

**DON "DOC" DISTLER**, 89, died June 28. An associate professor of biological sciences for more than 50 years, he spent a good portion of his professional and personal life establishing, studying and maintaining the Wichita State University Biological Field Station: Ninnescah Reserve. Memorials may be made in Doc's name to the charity or organization of the donor's choice.



PAUL MAGELLI

**DANIEL MERRIAM**, 90, died April 26. He was professor emeritus and previous chair of the department of geology. Most recently he was historian for the department of geology at the University of Kansas and the Kansas Geological Survey, as well as the historian and archivist for the International Association for Mathematical Geosciences. Memorials may be made to the Daniel F. Merriam Scholarship Fund at the University of Kansas or the University of Syracuse, or to the Daniel F. Merriam Fellowship at Wichita State University.



DANIEL MERRIAM

**GEORGE PLATT**, 86, died June 2. An associate professor emeritus of public affairs, Platt came to Wichita State University in 1969. During his career, he held positions as associate professor of political science, associate professor of public affairs, and associate vice president of planning and institutional research. He also served as the centennial coordinator for Wichita State.



GEORGE PLATT

# DEAN'S MESSAGE



RON MATSON

Dear alumni, faculty, staff and friends,

The past five months of 2017 have brought some real successes to Fairmount College. We entered into a successful full-on blitz to increase Wichita State and Fairmount College enrollments. Research and teaching are the core elements of academic life, and there have been noteworthy successes in this arena as well. The implications of Fairmount College faculty retiring and leaving employment in nearly record numbers over the past year has produced a rare opportunity for hiring. Fifteen faculty positions were released to more than half the Fairmount College departments that are now recruiting new people. This is a welcome event after nearly three years of almost no recruiting. New faculty and staff positions are like fresh air into departments and invigorate the college culture in ways few things can.

The hard work of many people across the university and Fairmount College has paid dividends on enrollment growth at WSU. Hundreds of administrators, faculty, staff, and students committed to a Strategic Enrollment Management plan during academic year 2016-17. The results have been remarkable; WSU's enrollment grew by more than 4 percent, which is equivalent to more than 600 students. WSU's growth led all the universities in Kansas and allowed us to engage new populations of students seeking credentials and skills to enhance their lives.

Fairmount College led the way in these innovative initiatives, and is also playing a critical role in instruction and creative curricular initiatives. Fairmount College enrollments were essentially flat for the fall of 2017, but we are grateful to have moved a slightly downward trend from the past two years to a stable enrollment pattern. While many arts and science colleges across the nation are losing students and credit hours, we are holding our own in arts and science enrollments. I consider this a great "win" of our college and faculty.

Research is part of the life blood of WSU, and Fairmount College faculty and staff are clearly some of the leaders in this activity. Already in academic years 2017 and 2018, faculty and staff in Fairmount College have

garnered more than \$13 million in research funding. Thanks to large grants in biology (George Bousfield's \$8.6 million) and psychology (Rui Ni's \$1.7 million), the college is off to a banner year in research. All this research activity is complimented by continuing excellence in teaching the nearly 4,100 degree-bound students in Fairmount College. Many faculty and staff are teaching more classes and students with fewer resources, and I commend them.

The significance of 15 recently-released faculty positions in Fairmount College cannot be overstated. Needless to say, as dean I have become more popular of late due to the potential influx of new talent into our departments. I am hoping we find exactly the people we are looking for in critical areas that will continue to feed our growth and success. Students in our college and classes challenge the status quo and require that our faculty grow and develop in ways that parallel the changes in our student population. Thirty percent of our students report being a member of racial and ethnic minorities, and 20 percent are 30 years of age or older.

In closing, I am announcing my retirement from Wichita State University and my current position as dean of Fairmount College, effective June 30, 2018. I will leave WSU with a full heart—full of gratitude for the opportunities and a sense of accomplishment both as a professor and administrator. I also write this with a grateful heart—grateful to you, our dedicated alumni and friends who bring resources to the college that facilitate our success, and grateful to our faculty and staff who do the remarkable work with students, who, after all, are the reason we are engaged.

Sincerely,

Ron Matson, Dean



**FAIRMOUNT COLLEGE IS ON FACEBOOK.**

Search for "Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Wichita State University."

You'll find events, photos and articles about our faculty, staff, students and departments.

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The Fairmount College newsletter is published two times a year. For information, contact Cheryl K. Miller, writer and coordinating editor, (316) 978-6659 or cheryl.miller@wichita.edu.