



YOUNGSTOWN  
STATE UNIVERSITY

# Excellence at Work

An e-newsletter for faculty and staff scholarly achievements

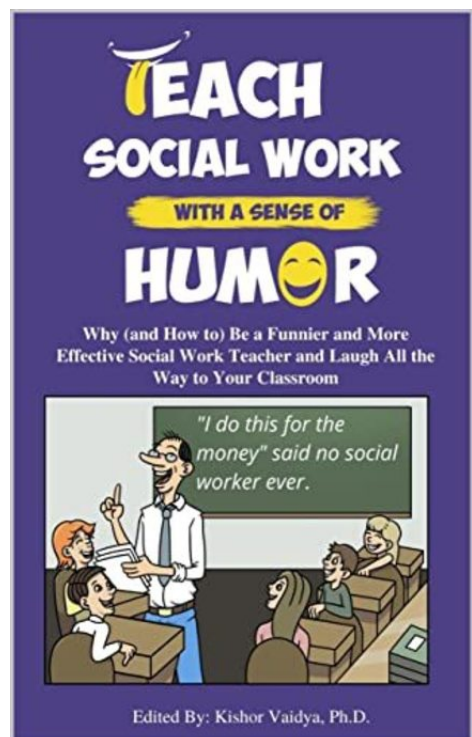
April 27, 2022

A department chair who sees the value of classroom humor, a faculty member who started a new children's literacy festival, a member of the Nursing faculty named a "Rising Star of Research" and a professor's award-winning novel that's caught the eye of a book-banner. Read these stories and more in this edition of Excellence @ Work.

## FEATURED

***"On the first day of class, I describe myself as a crazy cat lady."***

Thus begins Dana Davis' chapter in the new book, *Teach Social Work with a Sense of Humor*. Davis, chair and associate professor of Social Work, wrote the chapter titled "Fluff'em and Stuff'em" and covers topics like her Yinzer accent, "social working 'em" and not having sex with clients. Meanwhile, Davis also recently published "More than a Means to an End: Alignment of Social Service Organizations' Missions with Representative Payee Program Goals" in the *Community Mental Health Journal* with colleagues from the University of Pittsburgh.



Kudos to faculty and staff receiving **Distinguished Professor Awards** and **Distinguished Service Awards** at the Faculty and Staff Showcase. Well done!

## HONORS

**Vamsi Borra**, assistant professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering, was recently named a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics



Engineers, the world's largest technical professional society. Fewer than 10 percent of the more than 400,000 IEEE members hold senior status. Borra, who came to YSU in August 2021, is also the co-author of "Tin Whisker Growth Suppression Using NiO Sublayers Fabricated by Dip Coating" in the journal *Condensed Matter*, and "Modification of Tin (Sn) metal surfaces by surface plasmon polariton excitation" in the journal *Scripta Materialia*. Borra previously was assistant professor and coordinator of the Computer Engineering Technology program at California University of Pennsylvania.

**Laura Calcagni**, assistant professor, Centofanti School of



Nursing, was selected as a Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing "Rising Star of Research and Scholarship" by the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University. With the

## FEATURED



**Stacy Graber**, associate professor and coordinator of English Education, was the creator and leader behind the **first-ever Literary Arts Festival** for students grades K-3 at Martin Luther King and Volney Rogers elementary schools in Youngstown in March. "Each event highlighted connections that build upon and extend literacy study, in all its modes of expression, and in a festive atmosphere," Graber said. The festival at Volney Rogers included a performance by the Voices of YSU, directed by **Daniel Keown**, associate professor in the Dana School of Music. The festival was supported by the Beeghly School Partnership Fund.

## PRESENTATIONS

**Rebecca Curnalia**, Distinguished Professor of Communication, presented "Do Fake News Beliefs Affect Support for Freedom of the Press? Fake News Beliefs, Literacy, and Support for Media Censorship" at the Eastern

honor, Calcagni will present her doctoral research, "Promoting Clinical Judgment Development in Clinical Nursing Education," at Sigma's 33rd International Nursing Research Congress in August. Calcagni plans to continue her research during the Fall 2022 semester with the support of a YSU Research Professorship.

**Michael Butler**, director of Bands in the Dana School of Music, was recently elected to Marquis Who's Who in America. Butler's recent accomplishments include commissioning Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Julia Wolfe to write a new piece for wind ensemble and presenting at multiple music conferences. Outside of YSU, Butler serves as an adjudicator for the American Prize and clinics bands and orchestras nationwide.

**Victoria Kress**, professor and director of Clinical Mental Health and Addictions Counseling Programs, has received the 2022 Thomas Sweeney Award for Visionary Leadership and Advocacy from the American Counseling Association. The award is presented to a professional counselor or counselor educator in recognition of career contributions to the profession.

**Janet L. Gbur**,  
adjunct faculty,

Communication Association Annual Conference in Philadelphia.

**Ana Torres**, co-director, Maag Library, was the guest speaker as the YWCA of the Mahoning Valley celebrated



International Women's Day. Torres' address focused on the theme, "Break the Bias."

**Gregg Sturrus**, professor and chair of Physics, Astronomy, Geological and Environmental Sciences, was among the speakers at the TedX conference at YSU. Sturrus' topic was Lasers and Alzheimer's.

an independently  
organized TED event  
**TEDx** Youngstown

THE  
**CLEVELAND  
ORCHESTRA**

**Cicilia Yudha**, associate professor, Dana School of Music, was guest speaker for the Cleveland Orchestra's Pre-Concert Lecture Series and the Music In Depth Webinar for the orchestra's subscription concert series. Her presentation on Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 22 and the Prague Symphony was titled "The Genius of the Mozart."



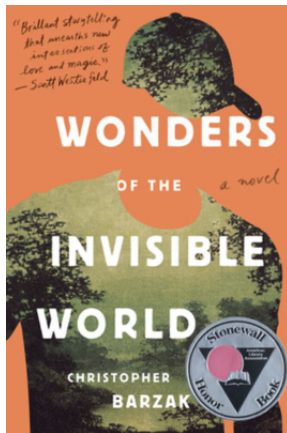
Mechanical Engineering, is serving a three-year term on the American Society for

Testing and Materials International Board of Directors. Gbur, who earned bachelor's and master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering from YSU, is a senior research associate of Materials Science and Engineering and a member of the Advanced Manufacturing and Mechanical Reliability Center at Case Western Reserve University.

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**Katherine Garlick**, associate professor, Visual & Dramatic Arts, was invited to the National Conference of the U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology in Baltimore. Garlick was selected to present her “Fostering Inclusivity in Academic Costume Spaces” as part of the conference’s juried poster session. She was also on a panel on theatrical rendering techniques and media.

## FEATURED



A novel by **Christopher Barzak**, professor of English and World Languages, recently won another award, and also was made a target of a book-banning campaign. *Wonders of the Invisible World* was selected for the **Human Rights Campaign Foundation's LGBTQ+ affirming booklist for young adults**. Meanwhile, the 2015 novel, which won a Stonewall Book Award from the American Library Association, is also on a list of 850 books that a Texas state legislator is trying to get banned. Barzak said the fact that both he and the book’s central characters are gay is the reason the book was put on the Texas list. In an article in *The Vindicator*, Barzak questioned if the legislator even read the book.

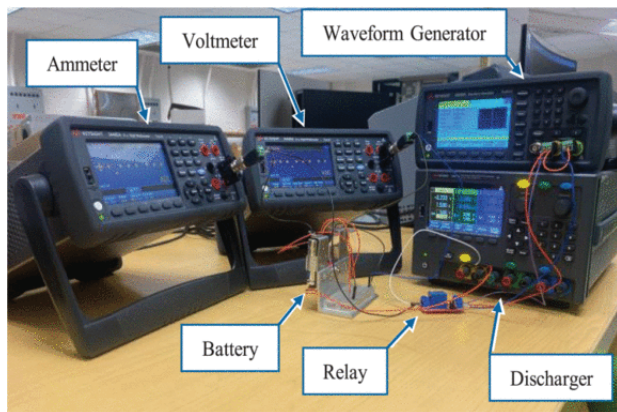
“I don’t think they read a whole lot in general,” he said.

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## PUBLICATIONS

Five faculty and one student in the Rayen School of Engineering are co-authors of “**A Novel Modal Representation of Battery Dynamics**” in *IEEE Access*. Co-authors include faculty **Kyosung Choo, Alexander H. Pesch, Vamsi Borra, Frank X. Li** and **Pedro Cortes**, as well as lead author **Khaled I.**



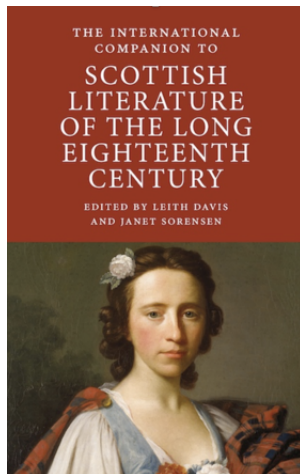


**Alsharif**, a master's degree student.

*Pictured, experimental test rig/instrumentation.*

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**Xiangjia Min**, professor of Chemical and Biological Sciences, and **Feng Yu**, associate professor of Computer Science and Information Systems, published "Identification and analysis of alternative splicing in soybean plants" in the proceedings of the 14th International Conference on Bioinformatics and Computational Biology. Co-authors included YSU students **Theoni Kasamias**, **Mykaela Wagner** and **Atinuke Ogunbayi**.



**Corey E. Andrews**, professor of English, authored the chapter, "Poems in the Scottish Register, 1650-1800" in *The International Companion to Scottish Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century*. The chapter presents a detailed account of all poetry written in Scots, a language dialect. Andrews joined YSU's English department in 2005.

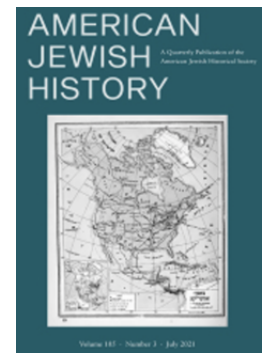
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A painting by **Dragana Crnjak**, professor of Art, is included in the **WOMEN PAINT** catalog, produced by Page Bond Gallery in Richmond, Va. The online catalogue is a survey of 24 artists. A portion of sales go to the UNICEF Children in Crossfire of Ukrainian Crisis fund.

Pictured, 'Shh...' by Dragana Crnjak, acrylic on canvas, 50x45 inches, 2021.



“In unserem Kreise: Czech-Jewish Activism and Diaspora in the USA, 1933-1994”, by **Jacob Ari Labendz**, Clayman assistant professor of Judaic and Holocaust studies and director of the YSU Center for Judaic and Holocaust Studies, has been published in *American Jewish History* journal.



**Michael Butcher**, professor of Biological Sciences, is co-author of “Does a suspensory lifestyle result in increased tensile strength? Organ level material properties of sloth limb bones” in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*. Co-authors include Angela Mossor of YSU and NEOMED.

*Pictured, a sloth femur in a 3-point jig during a bending test.*

## APPOINTED

Halberd Corp. has named **Chet Cooper**, professor of Biological Sciences, to its technical team. Halberd has been working at YSU on E. coli testing and analysis over the past several months.



**Stan Sweeney**, director of Kilcawley Center, has been elected to a three-year term on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Campus Activities.

***Excellence at Work***, published by the YSU Office of Marketing and Communications, recognizes and celebrates the scholarly work and honors of the faculty and staff of Youngstown State University. To submit items for inclusion, complete the **online form**.

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