



For Students

April 1, 2026



Numbers Adding up with New Civics Literacy Options

As Ian Ripple jokes, his latest project has nothing to do with his accounting major, but the numbers may still affect many Purdue University Fort Wayne students.

A senior, a husband, and the father of two, Ripple has been inspired to help make the **Civics Literacy Requirement** more interesting by proposing new curriculum options. Each PFW student must meet the requirements before graduation, including passing a 50-question civics knowledge test. Options include attending specific campus events, taking **one of seven courses**, and listening to four hour-long recordings on Brightspace.

Ripple would like to spice up the Brightspace recordings, which, unlike him, lack any sense of humor.

“The content I always use as an example is not very interesting,” Ripple said. “I don’t know about you, but hearing a one-hour lecture of someone talking about the filibuster is not necessarily the most interesting topic.”

Not buying that one? Ripple said another option is a lecture about redistricting. While important, neither topic is going to inspire students to consider future involvement in the governmental process.

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PFW Takes Learning to the Zoo with New Immersion Class

As an associate professor of biology at Purdue University Fort Wayne, Scott Bergeson seems to prefer teaching outside rather than inside the classroom. He excels in the field, whether leading a **disturbance biology** class at Fox Island or exploring deep into caves to study the **behavior of bats**.

Bergeson’s latest idea is slightly tamer, but still interesting. He’s collaborating this summer on a zoo immersion class with the Fort Wayne Zoo. The class will meet on site Mondays, Tuesdays, and

Thursdays during PFW's Summer 1 session beginning May 18 for six weeks from 10 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.

"The idea is that every day, students are going to meet a professional from a different field within the zoo who is going to tell them what they do," Bergeson said. "To make a zoo, there are so many hats that need to be put on to make things function in so many different places."

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Friendship Is Key to Initial PFW Lunabotics Squad

Saideep Kotasthane always has big dreams, sometimes too big for him to accomplish. That's when he asks others to join in, and, thankfully, he has many quality friends.

The Purdue University Fort Wayne senior is the leader for the school's NASA Lunabotics Challenge for 2026, meaning they will design and build an autonomous rover capable of operating in a simulated lunar environment. According to the NASA description, the rover must function with minimal human intervention, relying on embedded systems, real-time sensor data, and autonomous control algorithms.

That's a big dream, especially considering this is PFW's first attempt to participate in the prestigious program, while all the other schools have participated since 2010. Still, the PFW rookies surprised themselves by being selected as a Top 50 team by NASA after submitting their first proposals.

"I got to know about the project around the first week of September because I was on NASA's newsletter mailing list," said Kotasthane, an electrical and computer engineering major. "Then I asked my friends if they'd like to be part of this. We just wanted to do something interdisciplinary, and this seemed like the best challenge."

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Rick Wiegmann named chief of PFW's University Police Department

Purdue University Fort Wayne announced today that Rick A. Wiegmann II has been named chief of the university's police department. Wiegmann most recently served as the university's interim police chief and has held the rank of sergeant since joining the university in 2009.

"It is a pleasure to officially name Rick Wiegmann as our Chief of Police," said Ron Elsenbaumer, chancellor of Purdue Fort Wayne. "As interim chief during the past several months, Chief Wiegmann has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of our Mastodon community. His deep-rooted understanding of our campus culture and his focus on fostering trust through respectful, approachable policing make him the ideal leader to guide our university police department into the future."

Chief Wiegmann is a veteran of the Purdue Fort Wayne Police Department with more than 16 years of service to the campus community. Throughout his tenure, he has held various leadership roles focusing on all aspects of campus safety and security, while recognizing the importance of engaging with students, faculty, and staff to build trust and confidence in the department.

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Elisabeth Honn Hoegberg Appointed Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts

Purdue University Fort Wayne today announced the appointment of Elisabeth Honn Hoegberg as dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, effective July 1, 2026. The announcement was made by Carl Drummond, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs.

“We are thrilled to welcome Elisabeth Hoegberg to Purdue Fort Wayne,” said Drummond. “Her distinguished record of academic leadership, her deep commitment to the performing arts, and her passion for community engagement make her ideally suited to lead CVPA into its next chapter. We are confident that under her direction, the college will continue to thrive as a vibrant center for artistic excellence and innovation.”

Hoegberg currently serves as director of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance and as associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences for the fine and performing arts at Oakland University. In those roles, she has demonstrated exemplary academic and administrative leadership, spearheading high-impact initiatives that have elevated the arts both on campus and in the surrounding community.

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Eventful

There's always plenty to do at Purdue Fort Wayne. To find your favorites—or discover new activities—check the full [events calendar](#) often to see what's happening on campus.

APRIL

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Sat., 2–5 p.m.

Opening Reception of B.S. Interior Design and B.F.A. Thesis Exhibition

B.S. in interior design candidates from the Department of Art and Design will showcase their senior projects, highlighting fresh design ideas for residential and commercial interiors. B.F.A. degree candidates will display their thesis work as the culmination of their Thesis Seminar I and II classes...

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PFW Percussion Studio Recital

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Sat., 7:30–9 p.m.

This concert showcases the wide array of instruments incorporated in the study of percussion. Experience a display of virtuosity and refinement as students present their solo performances with expressiveness...

APRIL

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Mon., 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Calling Is Care: Alcohol Myth Debunking

Learn the truth about alcohol myths and understand how the Good Samaritan Law works. The goal is to build confidence, reduce fear around calling for help, and empower students to look out for one another...

Mastodon Moments

Seen and noted around campus. Monitor our university social feeds for more great moments of Mastodon life.



V Spehar brought their signature "Under the Desk News" approach to the Auer Performance Hall on March 23, serving as the final speaker of the 2025–26 Omnibus Speaker Series. During their presentation, "Sound It Out," Spehar shared essential tips on how to recognize, interpret, and filter out manipulated content, especially in the escalating environment of AI.

Athletics



Events Calendar



News Center



Don Life Archive



Don Life is an official university communication sent weekly on Wednesday to all currently enrolled students. Don Life Special Edition is a supplement to the regularly scheduled newsletter. It covers breaking news and time-sensitive information directly related to university operations.

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