

TOWER NEWS



Withrow Alumni • Box 8186 • Cincinnati, OH 45208 • 513-363-9085

Fall 2023

Great strides for Withrow

by Christy McTigue Backley '66

Once again, we are pleased to let you know about the good things that are happening at our alma mater. After an hour talking with Principal Jerron Gray, WAI board president Dave Blocksom and I came away with information on a plethora of programs and events to share with you.

Diverse student body brings additional challenges

First, an update on the composition of the student body: Of the total 1,350 students at Withrow, approximately one-third are on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and one-third are English Language Learners (ELL). Many of these students participate in special programs, which include four multi-disability units, three autism units, and two STRIDES units, which provide support and

services to students who have behavioral and mental health needs. Withrow also has three school psychologists on staff.

State report card

It comes as no surprise that COVID hurt the school's scores on the state report card. While an overall score of 1.5 for the 2022-2023 school year may not sound impressive, it is a sizeable increase from a score of 1 the previous year. (The goal is 2.) Graduation rate rose to 79.75 percent from a low of 68.4 the previous year. Attendance rate and graduation rate are directly related; both are improving, largely due to a dedicated 12th grade team that makes sure students meet graduation requirements.

One area of focus will be junior high math scores. Withrow Alumni Inc. has awarded grant

monies that are designated for this purpose. Teachers Brenda Ball and Dr. Mary Webb—recipient of the 2023 Lawrence Hawkins District Teacher of the Year award—will spearhead the program, which will bring in University of Cincinnati students to tutor.

Academic focus

All Cincinnati Public high schools have a particular academic focus. Withrow's is business. After successfully completing the 7th-10th-grade Prep Academy, 11th and 12th-graders enter the Senior Institute. In addition to a range of College Prep, College Credit Plus, and Advanced Placement classes to choose from, they may enter Withrow's High School of Business career pathway.

continued on page 6

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President's Message

by Dave Blocksom '68

Updated website

I am excited to announce that the alumni now have a new, updated website. We can maintain this website ourselves so we don't have to pay an outside vendor to support the site. It's similar to our old website, just with some updating. Please check it out at withrowalumni.org and let me know if you'd like to see any other changes.

Sports

As I write this, we have only two regular season football games left this fall. The Tigers have a record of 7-1 with just a close loss (14-10) to Division I St. Xavier. This was the first time we've played St. X since 2001. I am anticipating reporting great news concerning the state playoffs in the spring edition of *Tower News*. Speaking of great news concerning state playoffs, I'm sure that most of you have heard that Withrow's rugby team won the state championship in May. I don't have all the statistics, but I imagine that this is the first rugby Ohio state championship for an urban high school. Coach Nathan Myers has done an

incredible job over the past 8 years building this program into a state champion. Coach Myers is also a full-time high school history teacher at Withrow.

Support for teachers

As I reported in the spring edition of TN, the alumni continue to financially support mental health efforts at Withrow. We strongly believe that we need to be as concerned about the mental health of our teachers as we do our students. In that vein we paid for a mental health mindfulness course for our teachers and staff this past summer. The participation rate was not as strong as we had hoped for, but it was difficult to find a time that worked for everyone. It was decided to hold the eight weekly one-hour sessions during the summer when the teachers had a little more free time. The program was put on by the University of Cincinnati Medical College Center for Integrative Studies Mindfulness Program. This program has been used at Kilgour elementary and P&G as well as several law firms. Feedback

from those teachers who did participate was very positive. We continue to fund weekly mental health treatments for students who do not have health insurance for mental health treatments.

We continue to provide four small college scholarships for deserving graduates. Two scholarships are from the Class of 1966 Leadership fund and two are Cook scholarships.

Support for students

Our Alumni Board of Trustees has voted to provide funding for junior high math improvement. Our 7th and 8th grade math proficiency scores are nowhere near where they need to be. We are providing funding to bring in college student math tutors from the University of Cincinnati (Bearcat Buddies) and possibly from Miami University. We will

provide additional incentives such as math related field trips and small awards.

New board member duties

After five years as Chair of the Withrow Athletic Hall of Fame committee, I am ready to pass the torch to a younger leader. Alumni Board of Trustees member Da'Mon George '88 has agreed to step up and take on this role. I am working with him this year as we go through this transition. Thus, we are running a little bit behind schedule in voting for new Hall of Fame members. We will probably move the induction ceremony from winter to the spring. We will present the new inductees in our spring *Tower News*.

Thank you, and remember those RMDs

In closing, I want to thank our donors who make all of this possible for our students and staff. Your dollars really are transformative. Just a reminder to those of you who are 73 or older and are required to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your taxable retirement account: You can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to Withrow Alumni Inc (WAI) in lieu of your RMD and you won't have to pay income taxes on the distribution. You can do this even if you take the federal standard deduction and don't itemize on your tax return. Of course, all other donations to WAI are tax deductible. If you have any questions about donations, you can reach me at withrowalum@gmail.com. Thank you for your support.

SPECIAL TIGERS

You become a Special Tiger when you make a one-time gift of \$1,000 or more. This donation significantly impacts our ability to support academic and extra-curricular programs and conserve our campus and facility.

David Bruns '48
Terry Colangelo '68
Charlotte McFall Damron '66
Rich Eby '59
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Russ Hensley '68
Fred and Michele Howard '61
Carl Jones '71

Clifford Jones '71
Joyce Rosley '59
Nancy Nunn Shepardson '63
Slutz Family
Betty Sump '31,
Margaret Sump '38 and
Eleanor Sump '44
Charles Woodward '61

Revived National Honor Society needs funds

by Melissa Tucker, Withrow counselor

After several years of inactivity, the National Honor Society has been revived at Withrow.

The National Honor Society (NHS) is the nation's premier organization established to recognize outstanding high school students. More than just an honor roll, NHS serves to honor those students who have demonstrated excellence in areas of scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship. These characteristics have been associated with membership in the organization since its beginning in 1929.

Congratulations to the following students: Olajumoke Olanrewaju (2024), Harsh Minhas (2025), Aris Boudjema (2025), Fatima Sagna (2025), Kangan Bawan (2024), Queen Johnson (2024), Nikita Minhas (2024), and Oliver Tiani Vessiah (2025). Each of the new members brings a wealth of service to their communities, their schools, and their peers as they are involved in other extracurricular activities both inside and outside of school. Academically accomplished, all our new members are on track to graduate with academic honors.

Unfortunately, our chapter does not yet have a budget. We will make fundraising a priority this year, but advisor Melissa Tucker would like to order official National Honor Society polos for the members. She is asking alumni to make tax deductible donations to the chapter. To help with this endeavor, please make checks payable to Withrow University High School, write NHS on the memo line, and mail them to WHUHS, c/o Melissa Tucker, 2488 Madison Road, Cincinnati, OH 45208.

Mental Health Days help students understand wellness

A group of organizations planned a Student Mental Health Day to introduce Withrow seniors to the concepts of mental health wellness and to provide activities and strategies they can use independently.

Sponsored by Bi3 (the Bethesda Foundation), the day's events began with an introduction from keynote speaker LeMarqué Ward of Dream Builders,

University of Cincinnati. This organization works to help people seek their fullest potential and encourages them to dream big.

Students rotated from session to session throughout the day. Additional activities included wellness wheel, an art activity, lifesavers, mindfulness/gratitude, yoga, and wrap up complete with swag bag.

Participating organizations were ArtsWave, Art Equals, MindPeace, Poppy's Therapeutic Services, Project Yoga, along with Withrow's three staff school psychologists.

Throughout the 2023-24 school year, the program will be repeated for all grade levels.

2023 Academic Leaders

Jaylen Green, Valedictorian

Jaylen Green is the son of Kenneth Green and the late Caroline Kipkew. Before coming to Withrow, Jaylen attended TCP World Academy and Kilgour Elementary. A member of Withrow's Academic Quiz Team and a student ambassador, Jaylen fully availed himself of Withrow's college prep courses, taking Advanced Placement courses in Physics, Psychology, Human Geography, and English Language and Composition, as well as two College Credit Plus courses: English and Algebra- Trigonometry. This spring, Jaylen received the University of Cincinnati's prestigious Marian Spencer Scholarship, a full four-year ride. He was recently nominated to join Cum Laude, a high school academic honor society modeled on the college-level Phi Beta Kappa. Jaylen attends UC's Information Technology Program.

Yabrena Prisca Assoum, Salutatorian

Yabrena Prisca Assoum, the daughter of Ben and Larissa Ojabare, was born in the Togolese Republic and came to America as an eighth-grader in 2018. Although she knew only a few phrases in English, she became a proficient speaker and writer in her new language and went on to excel in some of Withrow's most demanding courses: Advanced Placement Physics and Psychology and College Credit Plus Algebra-Trigonometry, and English. Yabrena was recently nominated for membership in the Cum Laude Society. A recipient of UC's First Generation Scholarship, Yabrena is enrolled in UC's pre-med program.

The Addams Family

November 17- 18, 2023

continued from front page

Courses offered in this program include accounting, business foundations, computer science, economics, marketing principles, marketing applications, foundations of finance, financial services operations, and entrepreneurship. All teachers in this program have business experience.

The value of partnerships

Partnerships are an especially valuable part of the business program. Students in the College Credit Plus accounting course offered through the Lindner College of Business at UC sit in on (and participate in) classes on campus. Those who maintain a 3.0 in the accounting class, and an overall C average in all college level courses they take at Withrow, are automatically granted admission to the college.

Four Withrow students piloted a program at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. After interviewing with human resources, they were "hired" to work in the finance department every Wednesday. Feedback from their supervisor has been positive.

Another partner is Miami University. The TEACH program for aspiring educators, piloted

at Aiken and then expanded to Withrow and Oyler, makes scholarships available to students who focus on urban education. Other Miami programs related to the business school are in the works.

Procter & Gamble is working with 8th-graders on presentation and leadership skills. Students were placed on teams. They were given a product for which they had to develop a marketing plan. Then each team presented to a group of P&G employees. The winning team members each received a gift card.

Not all the partnerships and resources are academic. Deron Hunter and Derrick Rogers of the Urban League provide a violence prevention program called HOCC (hope, opportunity, choices, consequences), a 10-week project for 10th-graders. Upon completion, participants are eligible for paid summer employment through the Hamilton County Youth Employment Program.

Courtesy of Chamber Music Cincinnati, a Julliard string quartet presented a master program. In April, 2024, violinist Randall Goosby will perform at Corinthian Baptist Church, Memorial Hall, and Withrow—where he will give a master class.

(Yes, our stings program, under the direction of John Beasely, continues to grow and improve.) On the athletic front, Withrow's rugby team, coached by history teacher Nathan Myers, won the state championship. The team was honored at the state capitol by Withrow alumnus and state representative Cecil Thomas.

Athletics and activities

The tennis operation will expand to include an indoor facility (maybe with pickleball courts) with a plan to build a 7th-and-8th-grade girls' team.

The football team had a winning season, culminating with Homecoming, complete with pep rally, parade, and dance. Two Tigers have already committed to local universities: Chris Henry, Jr, to Ohio State and Terhyon Nichols to the University of Kentucky.

The Fine Arts program continues to thrive with a production of *The Addams Family* presented November 17 and 18.

As always, the Withrow staff and students are a dedicated team focused on keeping the Tiger name a proud one.

Don't Lighten Up, Tigers; Don't Lighten Up

by Chuck Knight '02

As regular season football is coming to an end, our Tigers are performing in dominating fashion. This past Friday (October 6), our Tigers defeated the Aiken Falcons with a score of 46-6 at home. This marks the fourth consecutive win for the Tigers after falling to the St. Xavier Bombers 14-10 on September 8th.

During the four-game winning streak, the Tigers outscored their opponents 154-13! The Tigers' offense has been explosive all season, averaging 34.6 points per contest. Defensively, the Tigers have pitched three shutouts this season versus Walnut Hills, Taft, and Woodward. The Tigers also have allowed less than 7 points in three games versus Lima, Trotwood-Madison, and Aiken.

The Tigers go on the road for the last two regular season games: Hughes, October 13th and Western Hills October 20th. The Tigers hope to finish with a 9-1 regular season as they go into the playoffs. As far as the team's playoff aspirations, Coach Kali Jones says, "Withrow controls Withrow".

The OHSAA (Ohio High School Athletic Association)

expanded the high school football playoff format in the 2022 season. The number of teams was expanded to 16 teams per region, in which the higher seeded teams will host playoffs. Our Tigers are in Division II Region 8, Tiger Nation is hoping that Angus King Stadium can host two playoff games this year! According to <https://www.joeeditel.com/hsfoot/>, our Tigers are ranked number 2 in the region. They are also ranked number 8 in the state! It seems that Coach Jones and his staff are taking Withrow to higher heights. Keep up the good work coaches!

The Tigers are getting it done off the field as well. There are three seniors who have already pledged commitments to colleges for next fall: offensive tackle Blake Scriber has committed to Morgan State, cornerback Terhyon Nichols has committed to the University of Kentucky, and

sophomore Chris Henry Jr. has committed to Ohio State University. Henry Jr. won't be on campus in Columbus until Fall of 2026. Coach Jones also informed us that there are other players who are fielding offers from colleges on all different levels. Keep up the good work young men, you are making us proud!

Editor's note: Chuck wrote this article before the season ended. For end-of-season details, visit OHSAA.org.

WITHROW FOOTBALL

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
2022 Season Record: 8-4

- Back to back Playoff Wins - school record
- Jr. High team back to back City Championships
- 1 Player voted 1st All-Southwest District Team
- 1 Player voted 2nd All-Southwest District Team
- 1 Player voted All State Team
- Head Coach of the Year for CMAC Conference Red
- Co-Offensive Player of the Year CMAC Conference Red
- Co-Defensive Player of the Year CMAC Conference Red
- Kickin' & Puntin' of the Year CMAC Conference Red

CLASS OF 2023 COMMITS
End of March 2023

2 D1
4 D2
7 uncommitted

PROGRAM

- 83 High School Players
- 46 Jr. High Players
- 13 Coaches
- 1 Director of Operations
- 1 Academic Advisor
- 1 Athletic Trainer
- 2 Student Managers

\$12.1 MILLION
in college scholarship offers

SEASON NUTRITION

- 1308 PB&J sandwiches
- 302 Thursday Team bonding meals
- 824 Variety Program meals
- 180 Jr. High Program meals
- 223 Saturday breakfast sandwiches
- 560s Cinnamon
- 4200s Bananas
- 170s Apples
- 360 Granola bars
- 450 String cheese
- 260 Packages of baby carrots
- 130 Jars of jam

DEVELOPMENT

- 1237 Hours in the Weight Room
- 120 Hours in Season practice
- 26 Hours of Saturday yoga
- 25 Specialized Position trainings
- 56 Hours Off Season indoor training

SKILLS CAMPS FINANCED BY THE PROGRAM

56 P&J COLLEGE VISITS

73 COLLEGE RECRUITER VISITS

PROGRAM CONTACT

- Withrow@tigerfootball@gmail.com
- 614.863.8300
- Withrow Tiger Football
- Withrow Tiger Football

DONATION INFORMATION: Friends of the Program Will

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