



THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION OF THE UNITED STATES

# 2024 Annual Report



*“We know who we are but not what we may be.”*

SHAKESPEARE, HAMLET, ACT IV, SCENE V



# Annual Report 2024

## Table of Contents

|                                                      |       |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Mission                                              | 2     |
| Chairman's Letter                                    | 3-5   |
| Branches                                             | 6-7   |
| Annual Conference                                    | 8-11  |
| Shakespeare and Palladio in the Veneto               | 12-13 |
| Happy Hour Series                                    | 14    |
| Evelyn Wrench Speaker Series                         | 15    |
| Middle School Debate                                 | 16    |
| Luard Morse Scholarships                             | 17    |
| Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center (ARNIC)            | 18    |
| English in Action (EiA)                              | 19    |
| National Shakespeare Competition                     | 20-21 |
| National Shakespeare Writing Competition             | 22-23 |
| Teachers Learning Abroad (TLab)                      | 24    |
| Travel and Learn Abroad (TLab for Lifelong Learners) | 25    |
| International Public Speaking Competition (IPSC)     | 26    |
| Secondary School Exchange Scholarship (SSE)          | 27    |
| Donors                                               | 28-32 |
| Financial Report                                     | 34-35 |
| Board & Staff                                        | 36    |



**E**xpands minds  
**S**trengthens friendships  
**U**nlocks opportunities

*Through the use of the English language*

## ESU Mission

Founded in 1920, the **English-Speaking Union of the United States** is a national membership organization with more than 2,800 members organized in 58 Branches across the country. ESU members and volunteers are the pillars of our educational and cultural programs as they work in their local communities to carry the ESU mission forward.

The English-Speaking Union employs English as a shared language to foster global understanding and goodwill by providing educational and cultural programs for students, educators, English language learners, new immigrants and members.

# Chairman's Letter

It is with great pride that I present to you the 2023–2024 Annual Report of the English-Speaking Union of the United States. This has been a year marked by achievements across all of our programs and the continued growth of our mission. From coast to coast, the ESU has advanced its goal of fostering global understanding and educational opportunity, and I could not be more proud of what we have accomplished together.

In every corner of our union, from bustling cities to quiet communities, the ESU continued to build bridges and expand opportunities that empower students, teachers, English language learners and our members through the English language. Whether it was in classrooms, lecture halls, or at celebratory gatherings, our mission thrived because of the dedication and generosity of our members, volunteers and donors.

We celebrated several milestones this year. In October 2023, the ESU Kansas City Branch hosted a particularly memorable Annual General Conference—blending Midwestern hospitality with a forward-looking dialogue on the future of our organization. It was a time to reconnect in person, share ideas, and strengthen the bonds that make our organization so resilient. Under the theme of “Blueprint for Growth: Unity of Purpose,” the conference focused on the importance of forging partnerships with like-minded organizations to spur growth, harnessing technology to reach new constituents and strengthening our programs for life-long learners.

On March 22, 2024, the ESU was welcomed by British Ambassador Dame Karen Pierce DCMG and her husband, Sir Charles Roxburgh KCB, who graciously hosted a reception at their official residence in Washington, D.C., in celebration of the ESU Luard Morse Scholarship. Set in the historic Lutyens Building, the event brought together current and past scholars, ESU members, and distinguished guests for an inspiring evening that raised awareness of this exceptional program, energized the alumni community, inspired renewed engagement, and generated crucial support to sustain and expand the scholarships. The event underscored our ongoing commitment to education and transatlantic friendship and the Scholarship’s vital role in offering outstanding students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities the opportunity to study at British universities—an experience that continues to shape lives and futures.

On April 15, 2024, the ESU National Shakespeare Competition made a triumphant return to its cherished long-time home—the iconic Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater at Lincoln Center in New York City. This year’s competition welcomed forty-four talented semi-finalists from across the country, each of whom had earned their place through hard-fought victories at the school and Branch level. The ESU proudly welcomed back many longtime participating Branches and celebrated the expansion of the competition to West Virginia and Michigan, further extending the reach of this transformative program. Over the course of the weekend, participants enjoyed a rich array of educational and cultural activities, including an acting workshop, visits to New York landmarks, and the chance to connect with peers who share their passion for the Bard. And during the finals, the young performers captivated the audience with their mastery of Shakespeare’s words, competing for the coveted grand prize – a place at the British American Drama Academy Midsummer Conservatory Program in Oxford, England.

Thanks to the generous support of the Achelis & Bodman Foundation, the ESU expanded the reach of its Shakespeare programs to include students with a passion for the written word through the continuation of the ESU Shakespeare Writing Program. This initiative featured two national competitions: the “I Am Shakespeare” Sonnet Competition, which challenged students to craft a contemporary sonnet while honoring Shakespeare’s traditional structure, and “The Actor Speaks” Essay Competition, which invited students to reflect on their personal journey of preparing and performing a Shakespearean monologue and sonnet. Designed to keep students engaged with Shakespeare throughout the academic year, the writing competitions open the door to even more learners—whether they take the stage or wield the pen.

Rounding out a year of meaningful milestones, the ESU celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Andrew Romy New Immigrant Center (ARNIC) on June 20, 2024, with a joyful gathering honoring both the program’s enduring legacy and the graduating class of 2024. The event brought together students, alumni, supporters, and friends to reflect on a decade of impact—empowering thousands of new immigrants to build confidence in their English, integrate into American society, and pursue personal and professional success. A highlight of the celebration was the heartfelt recognition of the many whose time, talent, and compassion have shaped ARNIC into a true community of learning and support.

Special acknowledgements were given to the ESU Denver Branch for its enthusiastic participation in the English in Action Across America online tutoring program, and to Flushing Bank for its generous support of both the annual Career Days and the new professional mentoring program. The ESU also proudly honored two ARNIC alumni, Héctor Arguinzones and Niurka Meléndez-Vasquez, who have gone on to establish a community-based organization dedicated to assisting new immigrants as they navigate their own American journeys. The anniversary served as both a tribute to the program’s founder, Dr. Andrew Romy, and a powerful reminder of the ESU’s mission in action.

In addition to the year’s special moments, the ESU’s core programs continued to thrive, touching lives across the country and around the world.

At the Andrew Romy New Immigrant Center, 396 immigrants were welcomed into a vibrant community of learning and support—and 100% of the graduates reported improved English skills, a testament to the program’s effectiveness and impact. The English in Action conversation program saw its dedicated volunteers contribute an extraordinary 38,000 hours in one-on-one sessions with English language learners, offering the invaluable gifts of fluency and confidence.

Thanks to the generosity of our Branches and members, the Teachers Learning Abroad (TLab) program sent more than forty educators to study in the UK, enriching their teaching practice through immersive professional development at Oxford, Edinburgh and Shakespeare’s Globe in London



The ESU's lectures and public speaking programs continued to educate, engage, and inspire audiences of all ages. The Evelyn Wrench Speaker Series welcomed two distinguished lecturers, historian Dr. Andrew Lownie and historical biographer Flora Fraser, who traveled to ESU Branches across the country, delivering lively and thought-provoking presentations that sparked meaningful dialogue and renewed connections.

The ever-popular virtual Happy Hour Lecture Series offered thirteen engaging talks throughout the year, drawing an impressive average of 154 attendees per session, and providing members nationwide with access to stimulating content from the comfort of home.

In the realm of youth engagement, the Secondary School Exchange continued its proud tradition of transatlantic learning, with eleven students crossing the pond to study in the UK and the US, building lifelong connections and broadening their horizons. The Middle School Public Debate Program flourished—2,000 students from the New York area participated in nearly 1,900 rounds of debate, guided and supported by an incredible team of over 400 volunteers. And on the international stage, ESU-US proudly sponsored a participant in the International Public Speaking Competition organized by our sister organization, the ESU of the Commonwealth, a meaningful expression of our enduring commitment not only to global understanding, but also to “oracy,” the vital skill of clear, confident communication in today’s world.

I look back on this remarkable year with immense pride in all that we have accomplished together. These achievements would not have been possible without the dedication and generosity of our entire ESU family. To our members and volunteers, thank you for giving so generously of your time, talents and spirit. To the participants in our programs, your perseverance and passion inspire us every day. To our donors, your steadfast support fuels our mission and expands our reach. And to our extraordinary staff, led by President and Executive Director Karen Karpowich, thank you for your hard work and unwavering commitment.

As you read through this report, I invite you to celebrate the successes, reflect on the lives touched, and find inspiration in the work still ahead. Stay engaged, share in our vision—and if you are not yet a member of the ESU, I warmly invite you to join us in expanding minds, strengthening friendships and unlocking opportunities through the English language.

With gratitude and pride,



*Dr. E. Quinn Peeper*

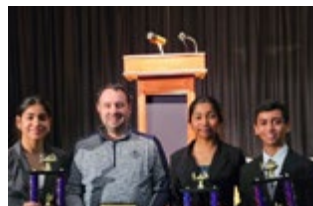
Chairman, The English-Speaking Union of the United States

# The English-Speaking Union of the United States Branches

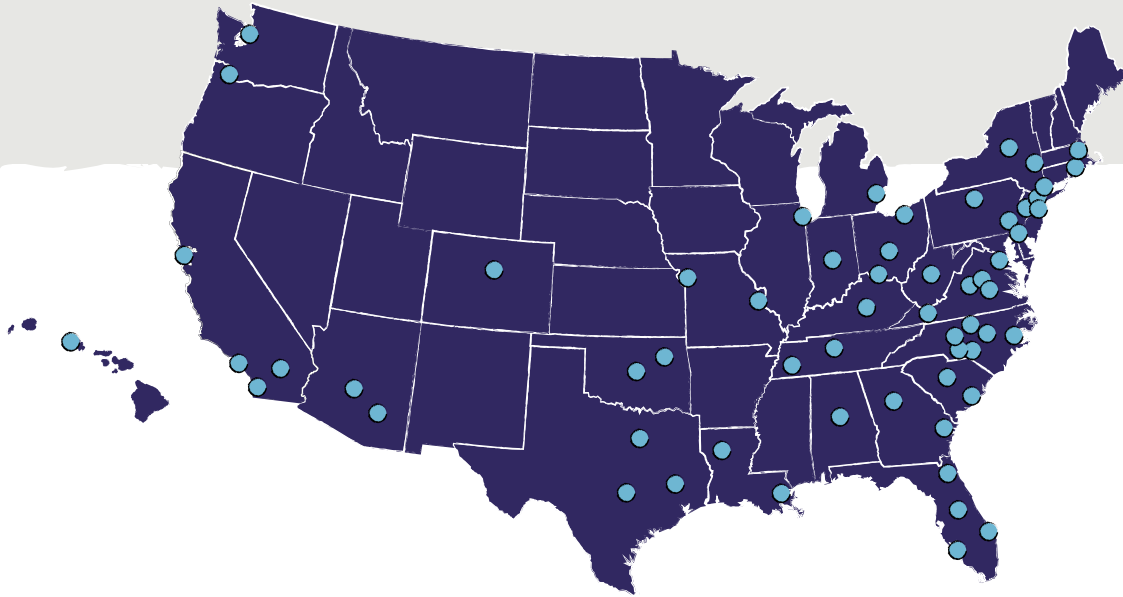
Headquartered in New York City and incorporated in the State of Delaware, **the English-Speaking Union of the United States** is an independent national membership organization with 2,839 members organized in 58 Branches across the country. Committed ESU members and volunteers are the pillars of our educational and cultural programs as they enthusiastically work in their local communities to carry the ESU mission forward.

The ESU Branches operate as limited liability companies (LLCs) formed in the State of Delaware, with the English-Speaking Union of the United States as the sole member. This legal structure ensures the non-profit 501(c)(3) standing of all Branches and allows for Branch management by a local Board of Directors or direct management by the National Board of Directors to deliver the ESU's charitable programs.

The English-Speaking Union of the United States shares fellowship with more than 50 independent ESUs around the world, including the English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth in London.







### **Alabama**

Birmingham

### **Arizona**

Phoenix

Tucson

### **California**

Desert (Palm Springs)

Los Angeles

San Diego

San Francisco

### **Colorado**

Denver

### **Connecticut**

Greenwich

### **Delaware**

Delaware

### **District of Columbia**

Washington, D.C.

### **Florida**

Central Florida

Jacksonville

Naples

Palm Beach

### **Georgia**

Atlanta

Savannah

### **Hawaii**

Hawaii

### **Illinois**

Chicago

### **Indiana**

Indianapolis

### **Kentucky**

Louisville

### **Louisiana**

New Orleans

Shreveport

### **Massachusetts**

Boston

### **Michigan**

Michigan

### **Missouri**

Kansas City

St. Louis

### **New Jersey**

Monmouth County

Princeton

### **New York**

Albany

New York City

Syracuse

### **North Carolina**

Charlotte

Colonial

Greensboro

Research Triangle

Salisbury

Sandhills

### **Ohio**

Cincinnati

Cleveland

Columbus

### **Oklahoma**

Oklahoma City

Tulsa

### **Oregon**

Portland

### **Pennsylvania**

Central Pennsylvania

Philadelphia

### **Rhode Island**

Rhode Island

### **South Carolina**

Charleston

### **Tennessee**

Memphis

Nashville

### **Texas**

Austin

Dallas

Houston

### **Virginia**

Charlottesville

Lexington

Richmond

Southwest Virginia

### **Washington**

Seattle

### **West Virginia**

West Virginia

# 2023 Annual Conference

## Kansas City, Missouri

OCTOBER 20<sup>TH</sup>-22<sup>ND</sup>, 2023

The **ESU 2023 General Conference**, themed "Blueprint for Growth: Unity of Purpose" took place in Kansas City, MO, from October 20 to 22, 2023.

Our gracious host, the Kansas City Branch, deserves all the credit for the success of the event. Special thanks go to Branch President Ben Martin, former ESU National Board Member and former Kansas City Branch President Jeffrey Schnabel, and the volunteers for their hard work to make this conference such a memorable and enriching experience for all participants.

Our shared agenda reflected the importance of seeking partnerships with like-minded organizations to foster growth, to use technology to reach new constituents, to strengthen programs for life-long learners and to emphasize mission-driven programs that improve communication skills as a tool for mutual understanding and personal success.

During the 2023 Annual Conference we had three very busy days to delve into these issues and have fun.

The plenary session on Saturday morning, October 21, was led by our friend and advisor, Rev. Renee LiaBraaten, who for the past couple of years has been helping us to chart a path toward growth by strengthening our membership, reaching new constituents and making our programs even more impactful. The ESU will achieve "unity of purpose" only when we collaborate to create new ideas, share best practices and address the challenges we face.





The interactive and highly informative session featured panel discussions with ESU Branches, National Board and Staff members on raising our organization's profile, aligning our programs with the evolving dynamics of society, encouraging volunteerism, and forging new partnerships. The conversations revolved around adapting our offerings to address contemporary needs and challenges in order to ensure that the ESU remains a vital resource in an ever-changing world.

A series of breakout sessions, organized with the help of Renee LiaBraaten and Jeff Schnabel, allowed us to engage in in-depth discussions and share innovative practices that work.

During the Annual General Meeting on Sunday, October 22, the ESU Board and leadership presented a series of reports on our activities and programs in the past year. Susan Ferris, Chair of the Nominating Committee, introduced a slate of five excellent new Board Members who were unanimously elected. Another five Board Members were re-elected for a new two-year term.

ESU treasurer Noel Sloan reported on the ESU 2023-2024 budget and most recent audit and responded to questions. President and Executive Director Karen Karpowich and Education Program Directors Rona Weitz and Alice Uhl shared exciting news about the ESU's educational, scholarship and cultural-exchange programs for students, teachers, English-language learners and ESU members.

During the luncheon that followed the annual general meeting, Jane Easton, Director-General of the ESU of the Commonwealth – Dartmouth House, brought greetings from our friends across the Atlantic. We were also treated to a lively presentation by Maryfrances Wagner, Missouri Poet Laureate (2021-2023), who read some of her poems and spoke about her artistic journey and her work to encourage young creators in their endeavors.

But the Annual General Conference wasn't just hard work. We saw old friends, made new ones and enjoyed the exciting cultural and social program offered by our hosts.

Kansas City, Missouri, or "KC" as the locals affectionately call it, provided the perfect setting for a wonderful experience. Known for its thriving jazz and food scene, this city offered us a unique fusion of history, culture and fun.

After a lively meet-and-greet over mimosas and nibbles during the conference registration in the early afternoon on Friday, October 20, we all were treated to a visit to the World War I Museum. The lecture and guided tour served as a poignant reminder of the historical context in which the English-Speaking Union was founded.

During the welcoming dinner that same night we recognized a number of individuals for their leadership within their Branches with the 2023 ESU Membership Recognition Awards.

The Membership Recognition Awards grew out of a grassroots initiative to develop a culture of appreciation and recognition at the ESU. A committee was formed to accept nominations and identify the honorees. Thank you to the members of the committee: Dr. Karen Blair-Brand, Paul Boghosian, Judith Francis, David Grissett, Barbara Hughes, Susan Philips, William Kennedy, Charles Maddrey, Kate Nitzken and Dr. Julia C. Van de Water, for their diligent work.

The National Excellence in Leadership Award for extraordinary leadership and long-term service was bestowed on Kate Nitzken, President of the Kentucky Branch since 2009.

The 2023 ESU Lifetime Achievement Award recognized Manning Pattillo for his 47-year-long commitment to the ESU and the Atlanta Branch.

During the evening, several individuals were recognized by their Branches for outstanding services and support to the ESU mission including Bonnie Resinski from Central Pennsylvania and Sally Bold Frick from the Sandhill's Branch.





The third individual to be acknowledged was Paul Whitty, former President of ESU Kentucky – a well-deserved tribute to his unwavering support and dedication to the Kentucky Branch’s scholarship and education initiatives. It was with heavy hearts that we received the news of Mr. Whitty’s passing shortly after the conference. His profound impact and legacy within the ESU community will be remembered with deep appreciation and fondness, and his spirit will continue to inspire our work.

A guided visit to the Hallmark Visitors Center on Saturday afternoon, facilitated by ESU Board member and Hallmark Executive Vice President and General Counsel Jon Sichel, was a heartwarming experience. Surrounded by the creativity and artistry that Hallmark is renowned for, we couldn’t help but be inspired and uplifted. The displays and exhibits, centered on the themes of love, compassion, and celebration, gave us a sense of warmth and optimism.

Another conference highlight was the traditional ESU National Patron Reception on Saturday, October 21. This annual event honors the ESU National Patrons, our most generous and loyal members.

The event was held at the Pierpont’s restaurant in the historic Kansas City Union Station, an iconic landmark with rich history and major architectural significance. Keynote speaker Timothy Riley, Director and Chief Curator of America’s National Churchill Museum in Fulton, MO, talked about Sir Winston Churchill’s ability to deploy the power of the English language as a political and diplomatic weapon at home and abroad.

Patron Members received two special gifts that evening. The first, from America’s Churchill Museum, was a piece of the Berlin Wall, a tangible reminder of the triumph of democracy and freedom over tyranny and repression.

The second gift was more lighthearted – a signed copy of *Classical Shindig: Amateur Artistry from the Simple to the Sublime*, a book written by our Chairman, Dr. Quinn Peeper, and his husband, Mr. Michael Harold, to share their love of bringing people together for festivities and enjoyment. The book, a three-year-long project, was a labor of love for both of the authors and is filled with stories, recipes and photos that showcase the abundance of Michael and Quinn’s nineteenth century New Orleans home.

Two more guided tours wrapped up the conference program – a walking tour of the Country Club Plaza, a picturesque shopping and entertainment district, known for its Spanish-inspired architecture complete with beautiful fountains, sculptures, and romantic lighting; and the Kansas City Gangster Tour of historic sites, speakeasies and locations associated with infamous mob activities from the city’s intriguing past. Those who were able to spend an additional day in KC enjoyed guided tours to the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum and the renowned Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

For more information please visit:

[esuus.org/news-events/english-speaking-union-annual-conference-2023](https://esuus.org/news-events/english-speaking-union-annual-conference-2023)



# Shakespeare and Palladio in the Veneto



September 21<sup>st</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024

In September 2024, the English-Speaking Union proudly hosted the **National Patron Tour, “Shakespeare and Palladio in the Veneto”** —an extraordinary journey through one of Italy’s most captivating regions. Expertly curated by our esteemed host, Count Stefano Aluffi-Pentini, and his dedicated team, the tour brought together ESU patrons for a remarkable exploration of culture, history and fellowship.

This exclusive adventure offered rare access to the Veneto’s architectural and artistic treasures, including opulent Palladian villas, serene gardens, ancient libraries and awe-inspiring cathedrals. Set against the region’s breathtaking backdrop, the tour celebrated the enduring legacies of Shakespeare and Andrea Palladio, offering our members an unforgettable experience immersed in the rich cultural heritage of northern Italy.

Our journey through the Veneto region was truly unforgettable, filled with exclusive behind-the-scenes moments and intimate encounters that brought the area’s architectural and literary wonders to life in a whole new way. Dr. Catherine Loomis, our esteemed Shakespeare scholar, led us on a fascinating exploration of the profound connections





between the Bard's masterpieces and the rich landscapes and stories of the region. Her unique perspective offered us a fresh and captivating way to appreciate both Shakespearean literature and the vibrant Italian culture.

Whether you were mesmerized by the stunning Renaissance architecture, inspired by the rich literary history, or simply enchanted by the allure of Italian culture, our travelers were left feeling enlightened and deeply connected to the experience. It was a journey that touched our hearts and minds, leaving us with memories that will last a lifetime.

It was a privilege to share this unforgettable week of discovery, learning, and joy in such a storied corner of the world. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who joined us in celebrating the intersection of language, literature and culture in the heart of the Veneto.

For more information visit:

[esuus.org/event/esu-2024-patron-trip-a-private-view-of-italy](https://esuus.org/event/esu-2024-patron-trip-a-private-view-of-italy)



SINCE 2020

# Happy Hour Series

13

LECTURES

154

AVERAGE ATTENDEES  
PER LECTURE

**The Happy Hour Program** brings guest speakers from locations all over the world, live and free of charge using the Zoom format.

And to make it a real happy hour, a few of the speakers suggest signature cocktails to match the theme for the attendees to create and enjoy at home during their presentations. Many speakers also offer exciting participation opportunities with fun give-away books and products at the end of each program.

All Happy Hour events are recorded and available for download to members and anyone interested to watch on-demand.

Seasons 7 and 8 of the ESU Happy Hour Series included 13 exciting installments. The wide-ranging topics of the lectures reflected the diverse interests of our membership. From history to literature, Shakespeare, and a special presentation by ESU Chairman Dr. Quinn Peeper, these lively virtual gatherings entertained, educated and inspired.

Watch Season 8 of the ESU Happy Hour Series here:

[esuus.org/what-we-do/happy-hour-virtual-speaker-series/happy-hour-recordings-season-8](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/happy-hour-virtual-speaker-series/happy-hour-recordings-season-8)

## Seasons 7 & 8 Happy Hour Series Lectures

- The Kennedys in England with Dr. Barbara Perry
- Classical Shindig with ESU Chairman Dr. Quinn Peeper and Michael Harold
- What I Know About Shakespeare and Why It Matters with Jeff Watkins
- Ending the Regency Marriage: Annulments, Divorces, and Desertion with James F. Nagle
- The Dark Secret Behind Charles Dickens' Christmas Tales with Andrew Halls
- What Hemingway Left in Sloppy Joe's Bar with Dr. Sandra Spanier
- The Great Siege of Malta and the Fate of Empires with Dr. Wayne Bowen
- Discovering Faulkner's American South in 1990s Pakistan with Dr. Saima Sherazi
- Shakespeare: How Leaders Rise, Rule and Fall with Eliot A. Cohen
- Winston Churchill and the United States of America with Timothy Riley
- The Remarkable Tommy Lascelles with Terry Mulchahey
- Packing Their Bags: The Kindertransport to Britain with Holly Mandelkern
- An Ancient and Global History of the Book with James Raven





SINCE 1920

# Evelyn Wrench Speaker Series

**The Evelyn Wrench Speaker Series**, named for ESU founder Sir Evelyn Wrench, brings speakers to ESU Branches throughout the United States over the course of one to two weeks. As part of the program, many renowned historians, politicians and authors have presented their work to ESU members and the general public. Lectures cover a wide range of topics, including but not limited to: current events; history; language and literature; art and architecture; and travel.

In the fall of 2023, we had the immense privilege to welcome two outstanding, well-renowned speakers to ESU Branches across the country.

As a matter of fact, our first speaker, Dr. Andrew Lownie, participated in the ESU Exchange Scholar Program in 1980. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and former visiting fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge, he has run his own literary agency since 1988. He had a wealth of knowledge to share with our Branch Members, with topics as varied as: *The Duke and Duchess of Windsor in Exile*; *Literary Edinburgh*; and *Guy Burgess, the Cold War, and the Cambridge Spy Ring*.

Rounding out our fall Wrench Speaker Series was Flora Fraser, a historical biographer based in London who specializes in archival research on eighteenth century women in Europe and America. She is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and, in 2019, was awarded a honorary Doctorate of Letters by Kings College, London. A prolific writer of many topics, she regaled our delighted Members with her lecture on her namesake, *Flora Macdonald: Jacobite Rebel, American Revolutionary War Loyalist*.

For more information visit:

[esuus.org/what-we-do/visiting-speaker-lecture-series](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/visiting-speaker-lecture-series)



Dr. Andrew Lownie



Flora Fraser





SINCE 2011

# Middle School Debate

2,000

STUDENTS

1,900

DEBATE ROUNDS

36,750

MINUTES OF DEBATE

400

VOLUNTEERS

In partnership with Claremont McKenna College and launched with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the **ESU Middle School Debate Program** teaches students in grades 5–8 fundamentals of critical thinking and language arts skills through public speaking and civil discourse. The program reaches students at one of the most sensitive times of their development. It enhances their academic performance in language, math and science classes and builds discipline, collaboration and tolerance of different viewpoints as students must prep both sides of a topic. It appeals to both boys and girls, which are almost evenly represented in the ESU leagues.

The program provides students with opportunities to hone their public speaking skills while competing in weekend debate tournaments at participating league schools generously donating their facilities. For the 2023-24 season, students in the ESU's New York Debate League, Garden State Debate League and Jersey Shore Debate Leagues competed in a total of 14 tournaments. The students work hard and look forward to the all-day tournaments. They provide a unique chance to travel to other schools, bond with each other and interact with and learn from their peers.

The ESU is fortunate to work closely with a dedicated team of coaches/teachers and volunteer judges to support and grow the leagues. Nationwide ESU Branches Mentorship is an important part of the ESU Middle School Public Debate program with some of the former middle school debate program alum serving as judges and mentoring, and more established schools and debate programs welcoming and nurturing new. Passionate alum continued to grow and hone their own debate skills as part of the ESU East Coast High School Public Debate Program in 4 tournaments hosted by high schools in New York and New Jersey.

For more information visit:

[esuus.org/what-we-do/middle-school-debate-public-speaking](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/middle-school-debate-public-speaking)

“ Debate is unusual for giving students a chance to push themselves to their absolute intellectual limits, and to find their own voices in a world that is usually telling them what to do.”

- Evan Streams, Dalton School Debate Coach, ESU NYDL



SINCE 1969

# Luard Morse Scholarship

**The ESU Luard Morse Scholarship** is a merit-based scholarship that provides students up to \$25,000 in scholarship towards a semester of study at a British University during their junior year. The scholarship is available only to American students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the United States. The ESU Luard Morse Scholarship is open to students in all disciplines and has been awarded to students majoring in economics, philosophy, finance, mathematics, liberal arts and the sciences. Since the inaugural 1969-1970 academic year, 89 exceptional students have been awarded scholarships to study at 18 universities including Oxford, Cambridge and the London School of Economics.

The 2023-24 ESU Luard Morse Scholar was Ms. Michayla George, a Business Major at Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee who studied at Queen Mary University of London, Fall Semester 2023. Not only did Michayla have the opportunity to meet students from around the world, but soon after her return other ESU Luard Morse Scholarship Alum at a Reunion Celebration hosted in March 2024 by the British Ambassador Dame Karen Pierce DCMG and Sir Charles Roxburgh KCB in the historic Lutyens Building, the Ambassador's residence in Washington D.C. The event celebrated the achievements of the ESU Luard Morse Scholarship alumni studies in the UK but also highlighted the program's transformative impact on their life trajectories.

For more information visit:

[esuus.org/luard-morse-scholarship-college-juniors](https://esuus.org/luard-morse-scholarship-college-juniors)



Scholarship Finalists in New York City



Luard Morse Scholar Michayla George  
near London Eye



(left) Scholarship Alum with British  
Ambassador Dame Karen Pierce DCMG  
& ESU Chairman Dr. E. Quinn Peeper



SINCE 2013

# Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center (ARNIC)

396

IMMIGRANTS

100%

OF PROGRAM GRADUATES REPORT  
IMPROVED ENGLISH SKILLS

92%

DEVELOPED PROFESSIONAL-LEVEL  
ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

100%

FEEL MORE AT HOME  
IN THE UNITED STATES

**The Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center (ARNIC)** is a free program that facilitates the full integration of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees into U.S. life. The program provides immigrants with the tools and resources to overcome barriers and build successful lives in the U.S. The center offers English classes, career services and opportunities for civic and cultural learning. The program is grounded in a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Each year we serve 300+ new immigrants. More than 3,000 immigrants from 60+ countries have benefited from our services since the center opened its doors.

This was an exciting year of innovation and growth. Our robust workforce development program continued to equip immigrants with the skills and resources to prepare for jobs in the changing U.S. economy and to overcome barriers to success.

The workforce development program includes three distinct services: a one-to-one professional mentoring program, individual career advising and job-readiness English classes. Participants in the mentoring program experienced a 25% decrease in unemployment. By the end of the program, 88% reported that they felt more confident about how to find a job in the U.S.

The ESU national headquarters offers a vibrant and welcoming space for new immigrants to study and learn together and to make connections across cultures. Our hybrid program combines the accessibility of online activities with the benefits of in-person learning.

For more information visit: [esu-arnic.org](https://esu-arnic.org)

“ This program has offered incredible resources and connections essential for understanding our career paths here. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to expand my knowledge, mindset, and confidence.”

- Dayra, Student from Colombia

“ I came [to ARNIC] to learn English but gained more than I expected. You do an incredible job of investing in people!”

- Kseniia, Student from Ukraine





SINCE 1976

# English in Action (EiA)

**English in Action (EiA)** helps newcomers to the U.S. improve their English language skills and build confidence. Students and volunteers meet weekly for one-to-one conversation practice. At the heart of the program is a commitment to cross-cultural exchange. Students gain insight into life in the U.S. Volunteers learn about different cultures and support immigrants, refugees and other newcomers building new lives in this country. The program offers a safe and inclusive space to acquire the language skills to navigate everyday life, access basic services and communicate effectively in professional settings. A hallmark of the program is its comprehensive tutor training using best practices in cross-cultural learning and leadership development.

English in Action continues to grow and expand into new areas. Both online and in-person volunteer opportunities are available. The hybrid model provides more flexibility and options for our students while attracting new volunteers.

**English in Action Across America** opens the program to ESU Branch members across the U.S. who are interested in volunteering. ESU members across the country can now participate in this meaningful and exciting program online.

For more information visit: [esu-arnic.org](https://esu-arnic.org)

**“ These are my first truly meaningful relationships with Americans in everyday life. ”**

- Dmitry, Student from Russia



**38,000**

HOURS OF CONVERSATION  
PER YEAR

**87%**

OF STUDENTS FEEL CONFIDENT USING  
ENGLISH IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES

**89%**

OF VOLUNTEERS FEEL ENGAGED AND  
HAVE A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

**89%**

OF VOLUNTEERS LEARN  
ABOUT OTHER CULTURES



SINCE 1983

# National Shakespeare Competition



425,000+

STUDENTS SINCE INCEPTION

15,000+

STUDENTS ON AVERAGE PER YEAR

1,000+

TEACHERS ON AVERAGE PER YEAR

50

BRANCHES ON AVERAGE PER YEAR



From left to right: 3rd Place Winner Evelyn Hall, 1st Place Winner Malachi White, 2nd Place Winner Willow Peyton

**The ESU National Shakespeare Competition (NSC)** is a dynamic, performance-based educational program that invites high school students to explore the beauty and complexity of Shakespeare's language through reading, critical analysis, and live performance. With the support of ESU Branches across the country, the competition unfolds in three stages – school, Branch, and national – providing students with an extraordinary opportunity to develop communication skills, build self-confidence, and cultivate a lifelong appreciation for the power of the spoken word. Since its inception in 1983, more than 425,000 students have brought Shakespeare's timeless works to life through this transformative experience.

2024 marked a year of resurgence and expansion for the National Shakespeare Competition. Continuing its recovery from the challenges of the pandemic, the competition returned to its live format at the iconic Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater at Lincoln Center – only the second in-person national event since 2020. The ESU proudly welcomed back many longtime participating Branches and celebrated the addition of two new Branches: West Virginia and Michigan. A particularly exciting milestone was the establishment of a new partnership with Interlochen Arts Academy, the nation's premier boarding school for the arts, which now serves as the home of the Michigan Branch of the National Shakespeare Competition. These renewed and new partnerships underscore the competition's enduring relevance and growing national reach.

## The 2024 National Shakespeare Competition

On April 15, 2024, the English-Speaking Union held its 41st National Shakespeare Competition at Lincoln Center's Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater in New York City. Forty-four semi-finalists traveled from across the country to participate, accompanied by parents, branch coordinators, and supporters.

**Malachi White** of the ESU New Orleans Branch claimed first place with compelling performances of *Sonnet 17* and a powerful monologue from *Othello*. Malachi is a student of Gary Mendoza at Covington High School. As the top winner, he attended the British American Drama Academy's summer program in London. Mr. Mendoza received the \$1,000 ESU Teacher Recognition Award.

Second place went to **Willow Peyton** of the newly-established ESU West Virginia Branch, who delivered standout performances as Portia in *Julius Caesar* and in *Sonnet 55*. Her award allowed her to attend the American Shakespeare Center Theatre Camp in Staunton, Virginia.



Finally, **Evelyn Hall** of the ESU San Francisco Branch placed third with her interpretation of the Jailer's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Sonnet 71*, earning a \$1,000 cash prize.

Nearly 6,000 people from around the world voted in the 2024 People's Choice Award, generously sponsored by the ESU Cleveland Branch. The following winners emerged:

- **First Place** (\$1,000): Pierre Madlangbayan, ESU Kansas City Branch, with 502 votes
- **Second Place** (\$500): Bee Wipper, ESU Savannah Branch
- **Third Place** (\$250): Bradyn Prisand, ESU Los Angeles Branch

As always, our distinguished panel of judges featured leaders from across the theater world, including:

- Ian Belknap – Director, writer, and former Artistic Director of The Acting Company
- James Elliott – Actor and director with over three decades of experience
- Melinda Hall – Creator of the Annual Shakespeare's Birthday Sonnet Slam
- Dana Ivey – Five-time Tony nominee and acclaimed Broadway and film actor
- Dr. Catherine Loomis – Shakespeare scholar and author
- John Way – Actor and ESU National Shakespeare alumnus
- Mary Way – Former Executive Director of Southwest Shakespeare Company
- Dathan B. Williams – Director, playwright, educator, and former Artistic Director of the Harlem Shakespeare Festival

In addition to the thrill of competition, semi-finalists were treated to a weekend of enriching cultural and educational experiences in New York City. The program offered students a unique opportunity to deepen their understanding of theater and performance while exploring New York City. Highlights included a masterclass with Broadway veteran Erin Dilly, held at ESU National Headquarters; a sightseeing tour aboard a classic double-decker bus; and a performance of *Kimberly Akimbo* on Broadway. Yet, for many participants, the most meaningful takeaway was connecting with peers from across the country who share their passion for Shakespeare.

The ESU National Shakespeare Competition has been recognized by the Globe Center, the Children's Theatre Foundation of America, and the American Academy of Achievement.

For more information visit:

[esuus.org/what-we-do/shakespeare-competition](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/shakespeare-competition)





# National Shakespeare Writing Program



“ I met my match in matters of the heart.

Please hear my song, desperately sincere

None but you could draw out this work of art

Indulge me a little while you are here.

But if you will offer me no closure

Farewell, I will be the sole composer.

- *My Crutch* by Ngozi Ihesiaba,  
The Bronx High School of Science,  
New York

With generous support from The Achelis & Bodman Foundation, the **ESU National Shakespeare Writing Program** gives high school students the opportunity to explore and express their connection to Shakespeare through both creative and analytical writing. Designed to complement the excitement of the performance competition, the writing program keeps Shakespeare alive in classrooms throughout the school year.

Since its launch, the program has challenged students to:

- Craft original Shakespeare-inspired sonnets rooted in personal experience
- Reflect on the actor's process of bringing text to life
- Analyze Shakespeare's works through a modern lens

In 2024, the Writing Program held two competitions that showcased the originality, insight, and talent of students nationwide:

## The I Am Shakespeare Sonnet Competition

Launched in January 2024, this high-rigor contest asked students to write contemporary sonnets using the traditional Shakespearean structure—14 lines, volta, and rhymed couplet—while drawing inspiration from their own lives. Over 100 submissions were received from 35 ESU Branches across the country.

## The Actor Speaks Essay Competition

Open to participants in the National Shakespeare Competition, this essay contest invited students to reflect on their personal journey of bringing a monologue and sonnet to the stage. In 500–700 words, they described their educational process – from selection and textual analysis to experimentation and rehearsal. The competition launched after the 2024 National Finals to give students the chance to reflect on their full experience, from classroom to Lincoln Center.

Top winners of both the I Am Shakespeare and The Actor Speaks competitions earned cash awards. Runners-up received Shakespeare sonnet collections and gifts from Shakespeare & Company Booksellers in New York City.

Feedback from both students and educators confirms that the National Shakespeare Writing Program deepens students' understanding of Shakespeare, improves writing skills, and encourages further exploration of classical literature and drama.

## 2024 National Shakespeare Writing Competition Results

### I AM Shakespeare Sonnet Contest Winners

- 1st Place - Bhairav Lekkala, Princeton Branch, "Return"
- 2nd Place - Chloe Stevens, NYC Branch, "The Irony of Revenge"
- 3rd Place - Ngozi Ihesiaba, NYC Branch, "My Crutch"

### The Actor Speaks Essay Contest Winners

- 1st Place - Katherine Shaw, Boston Branch
- 2nd Place - Luiza Padovese Goncalves, Miami Branch
- 3rd Place - Charles Gottschalk, New Orleans Branch

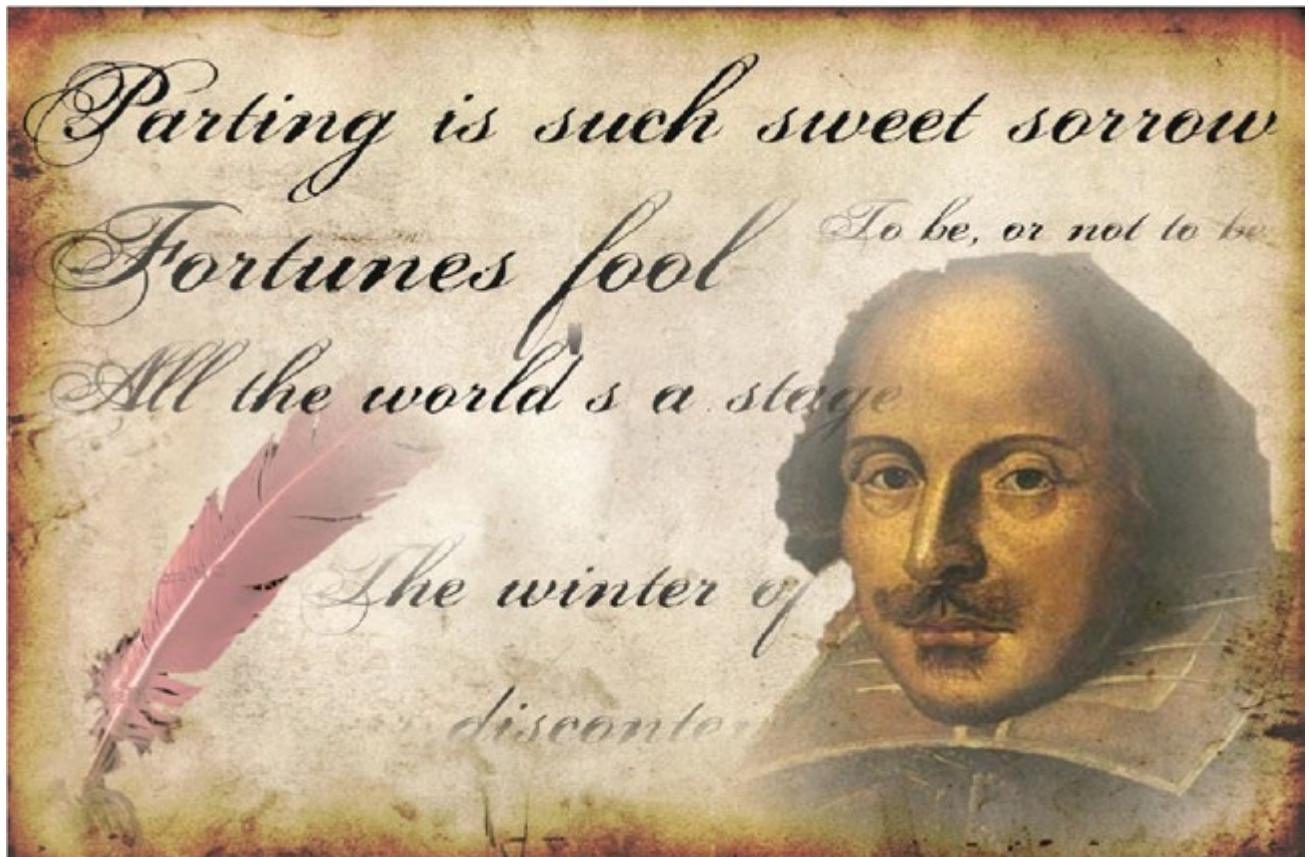
For more information visit:

[esuus.org/what-we-do/esu-national-shakespeare-writing-program](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/esu-national-shakespeare-writing-program)

“ In a fearful sea, one lone  
droplet shifts  
As a transformation begins its  
course

From vicious doubt, the essence  
of change lifts,  
Driven forth by an unknowable  
force”

- Return by Bhairav Lekkala,  
Livingston HS, New Jersey



SINCE 1957

# Teachers Learning Abroad (TLab)



The ESU is so committed to the transformative power of professional development for educators, that it offers scholarships to teachers to study abroad. Each summer through the generosity and dedication of ESU Branches nationwide, **TLab Scholarships** are awarded to local middle and high school teachers for summer study in the United Kingdom for 2–6 weeks to expand their educational and cultural horizons. Teachers have the opportunity to become students again and live at University of Oxford and the University of Edinburgh where they can study English literature, history, creative writing, theater and international politics. Or they can be up on their feet learning how to “Teach Shakespeare Through Performance” at Shakespeare’s Globe in London. Not only do they earn valuable continuing professional development credits, they return reinvigorated and inspired to share their knowledge with their students, colleagues, and ESU Branches. Many of the teachers go on to become actively involved in their ESU Branches and facilitate the ESU National Shakespeare Competition at schools across the country.

For more information visit:

[esuus.org/what-we-do/teachers-learning-abroad](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/teachers-learning-abroad)

2,800

PARTICIPANTS SINCE INCEPTION

39+

TEACHERS ANNUALLY

\$240,000

IN SCHOLARSHIPS

“ The impact of the Globe’s TSTP program on my work in my classroom continues on. Along with how it has transformed my teaching of Shakespeare, its also transferred over to new ways to work with texts of all kinds including contemporary, utilizing some of the exercises to place the text to action. It was an intense and extremely meaningful experience. I wish I could go every summer! ”

- Liza Miller, ESU New York City Branch TLab Scholar





SINCE 2017

## Travel and Learn Abroad (TLab for Lifelong Learners)



The **TLab for Lifelong Learners Program** opens up to friends and members of the ESU, the international, educational and cultural opportunities previously only available to our middle and high school teachers.

For the first time since Covid, the ESU offered the 1-week “Page to Stage” program in Stratford-upon-Avon for a week of discoveries and insights provided by Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Participants enjoyed lectures by renowned scholars, behind-the-scenes tours, Q & A with actors of the Royal Shakespeare Company, access to archives not open to the public and performances at the world-renowned Royal Shakespeare Company and Globe theatres – all in the company of intellectually curious, worldly and adventurous fellow travelers staying at the charming and historic White Swan Hotel.

The ESU also offered “The Oxford Experience” 1-week programs in a wide range of humanities courses throughout July and August at Christ Church College, one of Oxford’s most impressive and beautiful colleges. The mornings were spent in small classes taught by experienced tutors. Afternoons were free to explore Oxford with privileged access to many areas of the college closed to the general public, walking tours and excursions and invitations to receptions, to dine at “High Table” and a final gala dinner.

For more information visit:

[esuus.org/what-we-do/teachers-learning-abroad](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/teachers-learning-abroad)



SINCE 1928

# Secondary School Exchange Scholarship



**The ESU Secondary School Exchange Scholarship (SSE)** is a merit-based scholarship that provides tuition, room and board for US and UK students to spend a semester or year (Gap Year) abroad between high school and college. Since its inception in 1928, the ESU of the United States and ESU of the Commonwealth have worked closely together to provide the scholarship opportunity for thousands of students to expand their horizons academically and culturally by studying at secondary schools in the US and UK. The oldest of all our educational programs, the SSE is at the heart of the ESU mission to use the English language to foster global understanding and goodwill through cultural and educational exchanges. Through this experience, students gain maturity, independence and global perspectives that benefit them in college and in their future careers.

Eleven students were able to “cross the pond” to live and study during the 2023/2024 academic year in the United States and United Kingdom. In London, US students gathered at Dartmouth House for Thanksgiving Dinner with Luard Morse Scholar Michayla George, ESU members and Alumni.

For more information visit:

[esuus.org/what-we-do/secondary-school-exchange](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/secondary-school-exchange)





SINCE 1980

# International Public Speaking Competition (IPSC)

**The International Public Speaking Competition (IPSC)** brings the best young speakers aged 16–20 from all over the world together for a week of public speaking workshops, competition and cultural exchange in London hosted by the ESU of the Commonwealth. Each year, over 40,000 students from 50 countries participate. In Spring 2024, the ESU US was proud to have Carina Bruno, a Communications Major from Lancaster, Pennsylvania college sophomore from Pennsylvania represent the United States from May 12–17, 2024.

The majority of the public speaking workshops occurred at Dartmouth House, the ESU's International Headquarters in Mayfair with the Finals taking place at The Royal Institution. The National/ Regional theme was: "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." The theme for the prepared speech heats of the International Competition was "A great leader can change the world in an instant."

The collegial and collaborative format of the ESU IPSC and public speaking workshops emphasizes research, organization and presentation skills. Participation in the competition promotes confidence, critical thinking and cultural understanding. It expands participants' horizons and gives them the unique opportunity to build international friendships. The ESU is grateful for the dedication of the ESU IPSC judges, teachers and ESU of the Commonwealth.

For more information visit: [esuus.org/what-we-do/international-public-speaking-competition](https://esuus.org/what-we-do/international-public-speaking-competition)



Carina Bruno





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| Mr. and Mrs. Philip Woollam *                        | Ms. Debbie Hill                                       | Mr. and Mrs. Allan<br>Somerville Brown               |
| <b>Supporter</b><br><b>\$100 - \$299</b>             | Mr. Paul Hoffman                                      | Dr. Robert A. Stauffer                               |
| Dr. Mary E. Alexander                                | Ms. Julie Kaufman                                     | ESU Syracuse                                         |
| ESU Atlanta                                          | Ms. Katherine Koltai                                  | Mr. Eugene Tariq Thomas                              |
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| Ms. Alice M. Boyne *                                 | Ms. Julie Larsen                                      | Mr. John M. Trask                                    |
|                                                      | Ms. Laura Levine                                      | Tully Central School District                        |
|                                                      | Mrs. Maryellen Liotta                                 |                                                      |
|                                                      | John J. Louizos Esq. and                              |                                                      |

Ms. Alice Uhl  
Ms. Sarah Elliston Weiner  
Western Albemarle High School  
Mr. Seth W. Whitaker  
Mr. and Mrs. Dana Yanaway  
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Mr. Oliver Soden  
Mr. and Mrs. and  
Mrs. Peter Sopronyi  
Miss Kate Steele  
Mr. Daryl L. Thompson  
Ms. Denise Washington  
Mr. Jonathan Weinberger



# 2024 Financial Report

## Revenues

|                                           |                    |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Contributions                             | \$800,867          |
| Investment Income Allocated to Operations | \$801,257          |
| Membership                                | \$266,058          |
| Earned Revenue                            | \$138,207          |
| Speakers and Conferences                  | \$451,413          |
| Special Events (net of event expenses)    | \$171,355          |
| Other Revenue                             | \$168,441          |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>                      | <b>\$2,797,598</b> |

## Expenses

### Program Services

|                                             |                    |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Immigrant and Education Programs            | \$1,713,516        |
| Membership and Branch Services              | \$343,139          |
| Branch Events, Meetings, and Communications | \$526,837          |
| Speakers & Conferences                      | \$109,139          |
| <b>Total Program Expenses</b>               | <b>\$2,692,631</b> |

### Supporting Services

|                               |                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Management and General        | \$751,575          |
| Fundraising                   | \$150,330          |
| <b>Total Service Expenses</b> | <b>\$901,905</b>   |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>         | <b>\$3,594,536</b> |

## Non-operating Items

|                                  |                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Investment Return - National     | \$2,279,293        |
| Investment Return - Branches     | \$1,492,296        |
| Other                            | -\$3,163           |
| <b>Total Non-operating Items</b> | <b>\$3,768,426</b> |

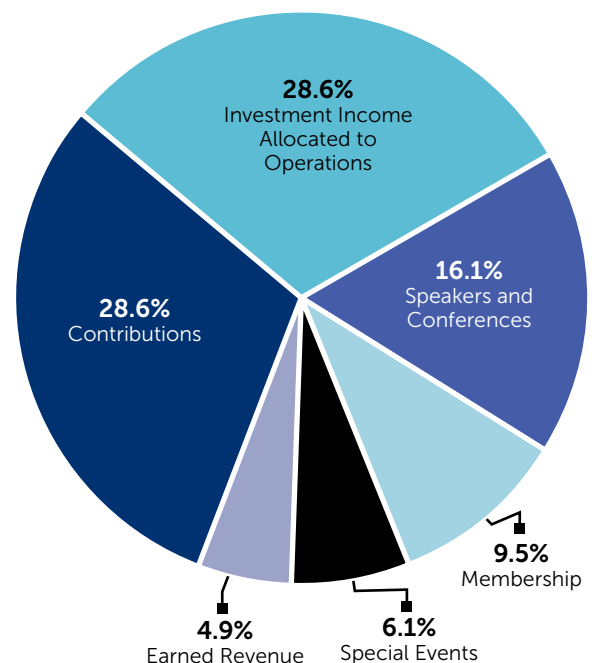
## Net Assets

|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Beginning of year as of 7/1/23 | \$25,483,934       |
| End of year as of 6/30/24      | \$28,455,421       |
| <b>Change in Net Assets</b>    | <b>\$2,971,487</b> |

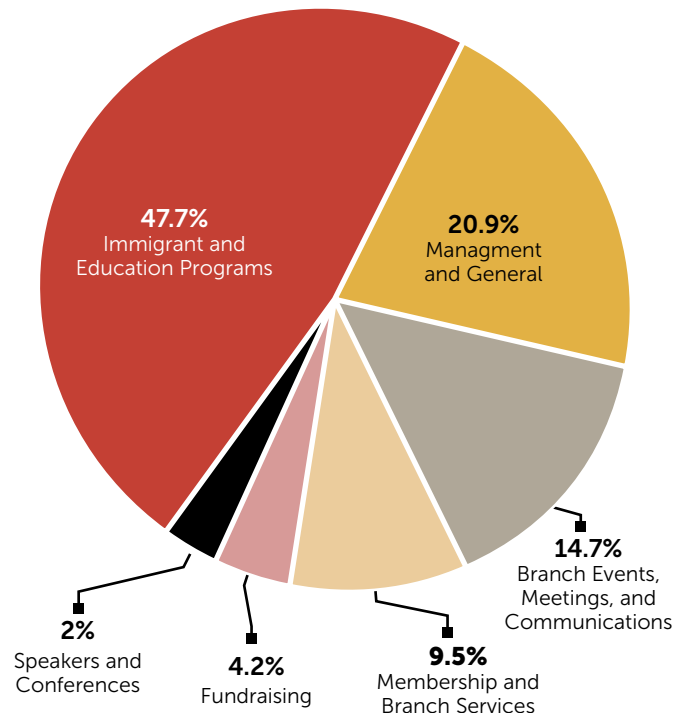
## Condensed Statement of Activities July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

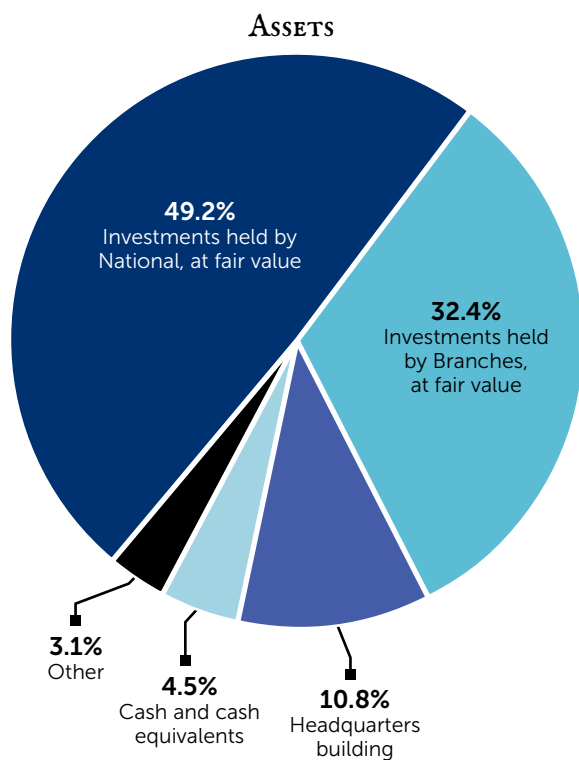
This fiscal year 2024 financial presentation is the audited financial report of the consolidated ESU, including all 65 branches and national operations.

### TOTAL REVENUE



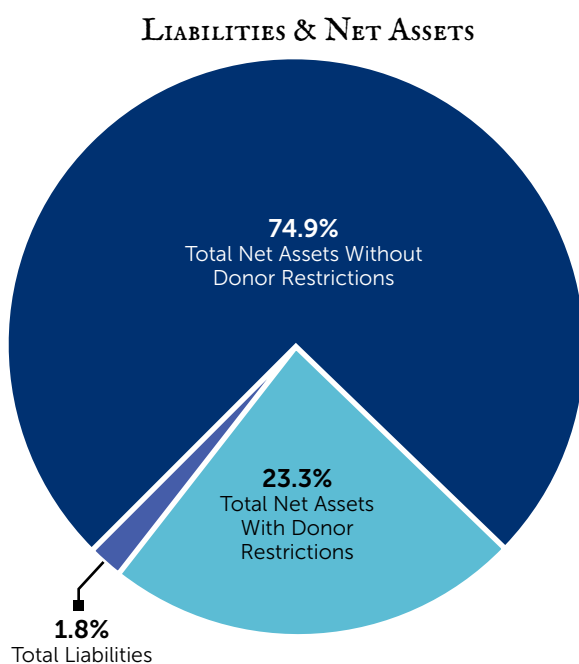
### TOTAL EXPENSES





| Assets as of 6/30/2024                             |                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents                          | \$1,287,538         |
| Investments held by National, at fair market value | \$14,183,699        |
| Investments held by Branches, at fair market value | \$9,349,864         |
| Headquarters building                              | \$3,115,748         |
| Other*                                             | \$895,602           |
| <b>Total Assets</b>                                | <b>\$28,832,451</b> |

\* includes: certificates of deposit, accounts receivable, prepaid expenses and other assets, and office equipment (net of accumulated depreciation)



| Liabilities and Net Assets                |                     |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Liabilities</b>                        |                     |
| Accounts payable and accrued expenses     | \$377,030           |
| Capital lease payable                     | \$0                 |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>                  | <b>\$377,030</b>    |
| <b>Net Assets</b>                         |                     |
| Without Donor Restriction                 |                     |
| Investments in HQ building & equipment    | \$3,144,570         |
| Board designated                          | \$11,012,866        |
| Undesignated                              | \$7,053,294         |
| <b>Total Net Assets w/o restriction</b>   | <b>\$21,210,730</b> |
| With Donor Restriction                    |                     |
| Time and purpose restricted               | \$4,320,701         |
| Perpetual in nature                       | \$2,923,990         |
| <b>Total Net Assets w/ restriction</b>    | <b>\$7,244,691</b>  |
| <b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b> | <b>\$28,832,451</b> |

# Staff and Board

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## Annual Report 2024

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