



# Patrick F. Leahy

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August 20, 2015

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Dear Members of the Wilkes Community:

I am writing to share with you exciting plans for the Sordoni Art Gallery that fit our ambition of becoming one of the finest small universities in the country. These plans were initiated by Andrew J. Sordoni, Jr., whose family established the gallery at Wilkes in 1973. When I first came to Wilkes, Mr. Sordoni encouraged me to consider new ways to revitalize the gallery to better serve its mission to help educate Wilkes students as well as serve the surrounding community.

To do this, I created a Presidential Task Force that included Andrew J. Sordoni, Jr. and key members of the administration. In addition, we enlisted the support of an art expert to provide consultation on this matter. After a year of careful review and many discussions, we presented our idea to the Board of Trustees and gained their full and enthusiastic support. We also consulted with the arts faculty, Faculty Affairs Council, and other campus constituents. Earlier this week, we shared our thoughts with donors to the Sordoni Art Gallery, and they resoundingly supported this vision.

We have created a three-part revitalization plan for the Sordoni Art Gallery. The first part is to create a permanent, dedicated endowment, projected to be upwards of \$2 million, that will be used to bring to our campus and community high-quality art exhibits from nationally and internationally known artists. To create this endowment and fund the annual schedule of exhibitions, Wilkes will de-accession selected pieces of the collection. The sale of art will be combined with the existing endowment to create funds needed for a substantial permanent and dedicated endowment, improve the academic experience for our students, faculty and staff, and enrich the arts experience for our community.

There are more than 1,500 pieces in the collection, and it has been determined that approximately 65 works comprise the majority of the monetary value. The respected auction house Sotheby's will assist in the de-accessioning process. The sale of the collection is estimated to yield around \$1.3 million. It should be noted that no works by Wilkes art faculty will be sold.

Hiring a bona fide academic gallery director to run the gallery and enhance University arts programming is part two of the plan. This faculty leader will curate traveling shows, develop academic programming, integrate the gallery into the campus arts community, and help identify new funding sources to accelerate the eminence of the gallery. In addition, the director will ensure that catalogues will be produced for shows to raise the gallery's profile.

The third part calls for the Sordoni Art Gallery to be relocated to a premiere location on campus that will better serve both students and members of the Wilkes-Barre community. In Fall 2016, its new location will be 141 Main St. at the intersection of South Main and our Gateway, a major thoroughfare on campus. This building will house both the gallery and the Communication Studies department and is adjacent to the Sidhu School of Business, further advancing this area as our newest academic corridor. The gallery will be larger than the current one and will be outfitted for high-end art exhibits and include versatile spaces for both teaching and entertaining. With entrances on South Main Street and the Gateway and on-site parking, this new location will make the gallery more accessible, more visible and more functional as an academic resource.

This plan has been applauded by the Sordoni family for its vision and commitment to the arts. In fact, at the recent meeting of art donors, Mr. Sordoni said, “This is extraordinary stewardship from my experience in the arts. We are going to serve the students, the community and posterity.” Mr. Sordoni has pledged significant additional financial support to fund these plans.

We will continue to talk with faculty and campus community as well as with donors who contributed art to the gallery’s collection before proceeding with these plans. Next week when we meet for convocation, I will share more details about this plan and will look forward to answering your questions about it.

In the meantime, please feel free to contact me directly at [patrick.leahy@wilkes.edu](mailto:patrick.leahy@wilkes.edu) with questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Patrick F. Leahy  
President