



# HONORING A FILMMAKING LEGEND

Creating the [Julia Reichert](#) Endowed Director  
of the Tom Hanks Center for  
Motion Pictures

## HONORING A FILMMAKING LEGEND

*"A trailblazing filmmaker, Julia Reichert dedicated her life to documenting socially and historically significant stories that gave voice to so many, particularly the working class and women. We know that Julia's talent, humanity, and commitment to mission-centric storytelling will continue to inspire current and future creators worldwide."*

**— Barack and Michelle Obama**



## HONORING A FILMMAKING LEGEND

Academy Award-winning filmmaker and Professor Emeritus Julia Reichert dedicated decades of her career to Wright State University's prestigious motion pictures program. Known as the "godmother of American independent documentaries," her work as a filmmaker, professor, and mentor has been foundational to the success of the program. She has been a tremendous ally to her students, a powerful force in southern Ohio's filmmaking community, and an icon in the world of documentary film.

Wright State has committed to launching a major gift campaign that will both honor and further Julia's legacy as an educator and filmmaker. From her pioneering feminist documentary *Growing Up Female* to her recent Oscar-winning film *American Factory*, Julia advocated for the rights of marginalized communities through storytelling for more than 50 years. This passion and commitment to social justice infused her work in the classroom, inspiring her students to create award-winning narrative and documentary films that follow in her footsteps.

Student films made during Julia's tenure have screened, placed, and won honors at major competitions including Sundance, the Student Emmys, and the Student Academy Awards. Distinguished alumni from the program include Hannah Beachler, who made history in 2019 as the first African American to win an Academy Award in the Best Production Design category for her work on the blockbuster film *Black Panther*.

Documentarian Brent Huffman won a MacArthur documentary film grant for *Saving Mes Aynak* and most recently produced *Finding Yingying*, which was shortlisted for the 2021 Oscars. Producer Karri O'Reilly co-produced *Wildcat*, which premiered at the 2024 Telluride Film Festival. Written and directed by Ethan Hawke, the film was purchased by Oscilloscope for national distribution. Writer/director Nicole Riegel's film *Dandelion*, starring KiKi Lane, was selected to premiere at the 2024 SXSW Film Festival and is her second film to be acquired by IFC for distribution. Screenwriter/showrunner Sherman Payne is helming a new series, *The Emperor of Ocean Park*, for MGM+. Co-produced by John Wells Productions and Warner Brothers, the show is based on Stephen L. Carter's bestselling novel.

Just this small cross-section of Wright State student and alumni projects underscores how successfully our filmmakers carry their training and education forward into the professional world.

To honor and continue Julia's long legacy of excellence as a documentarian and educator, we are embarking on a fundraising initiative to create the **JULIA REICHERT ENDOWED DIRECTOR OF THE TOM HANKS CENTER FOR MOTION PICTURES**.

## HONORING A FILMMAKING LEGEND

### THE JULIA REICHERT ENDOWED DIRECTOR OF THE TOM HANKS CENTER FOR MOTION PICTURES

An endowed position is the highest academic award that the university can bestow on a faculty member. Holders of these positions are the most creative researchers, the greatest minds, and the most engaged teachers. These stellar faculty members help to attract and graduate the best and brightest students. In addition to other duties, this position will oversee the Julia Reichert Professional Development Program to ensure that all motion pictures students receive the best possible foundation for future success. Professional development was a cornerstone of Julia's tenure, and the endowed director of the Tom Hanks Center for Motion Pictures will be dedicated to meeting the professional development needs of our students.

#### FUNDRAISING GOAL: \$2.5 MILLION

The Julia Reichert Endowed Director will focus on three priorities:

- Professional development
- Visiting artist series
- Providing our students with the most up-to-date equipment and technology

*...the world lost an incredible force of good, the godmother of the modern documentary, Julia Reichert, whose groundbreaking work inspired countless filmmakers that followed – including me, at 17 years old, in 1971, which I drove my parents' car to Ann Arbor to watch her first film, Growing Up Female...*

—Academy Award-winning documentarian Michael Moore



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### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Julia not only shared her extensive knowledge in the classroom, but she also shared her network and created opportunities outside the classroom. This enabled Wright State students to further their skills, contacts, and understanding of the professional world. Initiatives launched during Julia's tenure included: traveling as a class to film festivals (most notably a long-time collaboration with the Cleveland International and Citizen Jane film festivals, along with sponsored student trips to international festivals in London and Portugal); attending sound mixes and color timing sessions in New York; and bringing in professionals to teach master classes on campus.

As the film industry seeks to expand opportunities for underrepresented communities, this endowment supports the program's commitment to recruiting and retaining a student population that is reflective of the diverse voices that have historically often been missing from cinema and television.

#### INITIATIVES PROPOSED UNDER THIS PROGRAM INCLUDE:

- Student Bridge Scholarships with a focus on those transferring from a community college
- Internship Subsidy Fund to supplement students who land internships in high-cost cities like Los Angeles, New York City, and Atlanta, where they work as crew on professional feature films in the region
- Emergency Fund for students in jeopardy of leaving the program due to reduced ability to work during production
- Travel Fund for students attending film festivals
- Showcase Fund to help students attend professional events such as film festivals, conferences, and screenings where they can showcase their work and network with industry professionals
- Film Festival Entry Fund to provide students with a stipend that can be applied toward festival entry fees

Many of these are line items that students at larger, far more expensive universities have access to as a matter of course. By providing them to our students we eliminate some of the barriers to entry that might prevent students from pursuing careers in the motion pictures industry.

**FUNDRAISING GOAL: \$1.5 MILLION**

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### VISITING ARTIST SERIES

A visiting artist provides a platform for innovative ideas that inspire and educate. In addition to enabling students to have direct and meaningful contact with established and emerging professionals in the field, a visiting artist raises the bar for research, the creative process, the cross-fertilization among disciplines, and the national reputation of Wright State's programs.

Previous and recent guests have included directors Desiree Akhavan (*Appropriate Behavior*), Hanelle Culpepper (*Star Trek: Picard*, *Kung Fu*), Todd Haynes (*Carol*, *Far from Heaven*, *I'm Not There*), Liza Johnson (*The Diplomat*, *The Last of Us*), and So Yong Kim (*In Between Days*); cinematographer/director Michael Spiller (*Blackish*, *Modern Family*); EP/writer Brig Muñoz-Liebowitz (*Gordita Chronicles*, *One Day at a Time*); writer/director Lily Mariye (*The Walking Dead*, *MacGyver*); cinematographers Polly Morgan (*Where the Crawdads Sing*, *The Woman King*), Lawrence Sher (*Joker*, *The Hangover*), and Terry Stacey (*The Walking Dead*, *The Witcher*). Being able to offer a stipend to guests ensures that we can continue to book industry professionals of this caliber consistently.

This initiative will fund classes ranging from day-long seminars, to weekend master classes, to semester-long intensives with top professionals from the motion picture industry. This will allow students to learn from people working in film and television that they might not otherwise have access to at a midsize, Midwestern university. As an equity and inclusion initiative, the visiting artist series will also ensure that students are learning from instructors with a diverse range of voices, experiences, and backgrounds.

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**FUNDRAISING GOAL: \$500,000**

*"All of us who were fortunate to know Julia are better because of it. She fought for what she believed in, a world that is more equitable and fair. She was uniquely Julia, and her legacy speaks for itself."*

—Lois Vossen, Executive Producer of PBS' Independent Lens





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### EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE/ UPGRADE/REPAIRS

It is critical that we provide our students with up-to-date training on the equipment and technology they will experience upon graduation. With technology evolving at such a rapid pace, the university is unable to provide the depth or breadth of support to give our students the most competitive edge possible. From software updates that require new licensure to regular hardware maintenance and repair, the day-to-day requirements often mean that upgrades or new equipment purchases—large or small—are deferred for several years.

GIFTS TO THIS FUND WILL HELP US TO RECRUIT, RETAIN, AND PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE JOB MARKET WITH STATE-OF-THE-ART EQUIPMENT, SUCH AS:

- Camera lenses
- Wireless microphone systems
- Updated lighting technology
- Additional grip and rigging equipment
- Updated software to support post-production

Professional film production in Ohio is booming, and our students have had the opportunity to crew on professional films like *Bones and All*, *Turtles*

*All the Way Down*, and *Dark Waters* before they graduate. Wright State students bring a work ethic that has consistently impressed department heads, and we must be able to train them on equipment that allows them to confidently walk onto set and handle entry-level gear requirements.

**FUNDRAISING GOAL: \$500,000**

*“The enormity of Julia’s contribution to film history and the Ohio film community is matched only by how deeply everyone she impacted is grieving her loss. Julia was my teacher, mentor, and friend for over 30 years. She laid a strong foundation for our close-knit MoPix alum community, and we will forever be grateful.”*

—Nichol Simmons '99,  
Sundance Film Festival winner and motion pictures  
program adjunct faculty member

## HONORING A FILMMAKING LEGEND

Barbara Ehrenreich, the author of *Nickel and Dimed*, wrote, “(Julia Reichert) wasn’t rich, and she wasn’t arrogant or egotistical,” about the working poor in America. “The daughter of a butcher and a house cleaner turned registered nurse, she dressed and spoke plainly, usually beaming with enthusiasm, and never abandoned her Midwestern roots.”

In many ways, Wright State’s students mirror the people Julia would often champion in her work. They are hard-working individuals from modest backgrounds. Many of our students are the first in their families to attend college. By keeping tuition lower than the national average, Wright State can offer its students an affordable education. However, many students can’t bear the cost of a college education without scholarship support and financial aid. Like Julia, they have a strong work ethic and a passion for telling stories that otherwise might be overlooked. Your support of Wright State’s motion pictures program will help produce the next generation of filmmakers who will continue Julia’s long legacy of making films that matter.

Julia often asked her students, “What is the story only you can tell?” as a call to action to make personal films that are fueled by passion, introspection, and a desire to better understand the world around them. By honoring her legacy, this endowment will ensure that Wright State motion pictures students will be supported as they strive to answer her call.

The success of this fundraising campaign will not only strengthen the academic foundations Julia spent decades building, but it will also allow us to launch bold, innovative initiatives that will provide even more meaningful support and training for tomorrow’s storytellers. These new, forward-focused opportunities will be a catalyst to raise the visibility, reputation, and viability of Wright State’s motion pictures program and to ensure that our graduates continue to be the best in the industry.

*“We need filmmakers, radio, people, whatever - activists in the Midwest. We need people who are interested in examining and changing the world. We need to put down roots so we can be a voice where there is no voice... in this case, it was Dayton, Ohio, and I’m very proud of that.”*

—Julia Reichert to WYSO



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## NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

### Julia Reichert Endowed Director of the Tom Hanks Center for Motion Pictures

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	\$500,000
Student Bridge Scholarships.....	\$100,000
Internship Subsidy Fund.....	\$100,000
Emergency Fund.....	\$100,000
Travel Fund.....	\$100,000
Showcase Fund.....	\$100,000
Film Festival Entry Fund.....	\$100,000
VISITING ARTIST SERIES.....	\$200,000
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE/UPGRADE/REPAIRS.....	\$200,000

### Tom Hanks Center

Classroom.....	\$15,000
Makeup Room.....	\$15,000
Classroom.....	\$15,000
Student Production Office.....	\$15,000
Green Room.....	\$25,000
Recording Booth.....	\$25,000
Finishing Studio.....	\$25,000
Ingest Suite.....	\$25,000
Screening Room.....	\$25,000
Editing Lab.....	\$50,000
Sound Stage.....	\$50,000

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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Equipment Room.....\$15,000





Tom Hanks   
Center for Motion Pictures



*"She was a champion of women and loved film. She took us rag-tag kids  
and helped shape us all into filmmakers and storytellers."*

—Hannah Beachler '05,  
Academy Award-winning production designer,  
*Black Panther*, *Creed*, and Beyoncé's visual album *Lemonade*