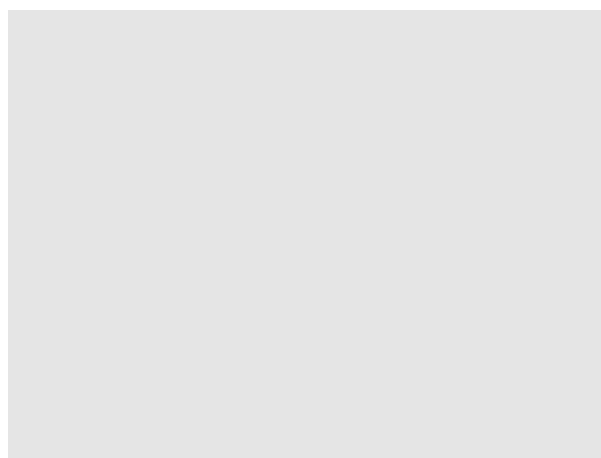


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## WKU gifted ed advocate joins Prichard Committee board

By AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com) 8 hrs ago



Julia Link Roberts

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Low-income, black and Hispanic students are underrepresented among Kentucky's advanced students, a disparity longtime gifted education advocate Julia Link Roberts wants to help close as a new board member of Kentucky's Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

"Many of the children who are scoring proficient or at grade level could be scoring at advanced levels if the expectations were high enough," said Roberts, the executive director of Western Kentucky University's Gatton Academy and its Center for Gifted Studies.

Roberts, who has been advocating for access to gifted education for more than 30 years, is one of three women recently named to the education reform group's board.

She's joined by Susan Elkington, president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, and Bonnie Lash Freeman, a retired education and training specialist who directs the National Center for Family Learning in Louisville.

"We are excited to welcome three exceptional women leaders to the Prichard Committee Board of Directors," Prichard Committee Executive Director Brigitte Blom Ramsey told the Daily News in an email. "Each of these women come with distinct interests in education but a shared vision for achieving excellence in learning for more Kentucky students."

Roberts is a graduate of the University of Missouri and earned a master's and doctorate in education from Oklahoma State University. She was the founding director of WKU's Center for Gifted Studies, an organization that provides year-round programming and resources for gifted and talented youth.

An award-winning advocate for gifted children, Roberts serves on the boards of the Kentucky Association for Gifted Education and the Association for the Gifted. She's also the president of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children and chairs the Kentucky Advisory Council for Gifted Education.

As Kentucky steps up efforts to close academic achievement gaps between student subgroups, Roberts urges the state not to leave advanced students behind. Proficiency shouldn't be the end goal for all students, she said, particularly those with the potential to perform at higher levels.

"Grade level learning or proficiency is the goal for the achievement gap, but learning at advanced levels is also something we must be looking at," Roberts said.

Closing excellence gaps, or differences in scores at the advanced level among student subgroups, is a priority for the Prichard Committee, Ramsey said.

"The Prichard Committee has a dedicated focus on closing achievement gaps and Dr. Roberts' leadership on our board will help ensure a commitment not only to closing gaps to proficiency but also closing the excellence gaps that keep so many low-income

students, students of color, and students with learning differences from achieving at the very highest levels,” Ramsey said.

“Dr. Roberts has been a pioneer in helping to ensure that more students not only have access to exceptional learning environments but also the supports they need to be successful in those environments. We are looking forward to her contributions to the work of the Prichard Committee on behalf of the students of Kentucky.”

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## Aaron Mudd

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