



Dear {{first_name}},

I am pleased to announce that Concordia University Chicago's **Wind Symphony and Kapelle Choir will be embarking on their Spring tours** in less than 3 weeks! These outstanding ensembles are a crucial component of our university's identity, Standing Tall for the gospel through beautiful music.

We are also celebrating Wind Symphony conductor **Dr. Richard Fischer's 50th anniversary** with the ensemble this year. We give thanks to Christ for the many ways he has blessed CUC with his leadership and dedication.

Be sure to read the feature below to see where our music groups are performing. We will also be hosting **two Alumni Gatherings in Fort Wayne and St. Louis during the concert series**, so be sure to join us for food, drinks, and fellowship, celebrating how Christ remains at the Center of music at CUC.

Your connection to Concordia University Chicago as alumni remains invaluable to us. As we continue to share news about our alumni and the CUC community, we invite you to follow us along on our social media pages. I hope you will enjoy and share the stories below with family and friends.

Blessings,

Jeff Hynes

University Foundation President/CEO
Sr. Vice President University Advancement

Alumni *Spotlight*

**Dr. Edward
Varner EdD '17 &
Dr. Christiana
Rennie-Varner
PhD '23**



This month, we are excited to feature two doctoral alumni: Dr. Christiana Rennie-Varner PhD '23, who was Concordia-Chicago's doctoral student speaker this past December, and her husband Dr. Edward Varner EdD '17, who earned his doctorate from CUC in 2017.

Both first-generation college students, the Varners' academic journeys are marked by passion and dedication. Dr. Rennie-Varner's love for education was sparked by her enjoyment of English and her experience working with children during summer camps and Vacation Bible School. She reflects, "I have loved every minute, and I've taught everything from pre-K through graduate students. There isn't a grade I don't like!"

For Dr. Edward Varner, mentors like his high school band director inspired him to attend college and pursue music education. "There were always those special individuals that helped you understand, 'hey, maybe I *can* do this,'" says Dr. Varner. "Also, seeing the power, the impact that you can have as an educator on the trajectory of other people's lives was a large factor."

Dr. Edward Varner discovered Concordia's online doctoral program in School Leadership after completing his master's at the University of British Columbia. His enjoyment of the program inspired Dr. Rennie-Varner to consider and eventually join CUC's PhD program in Educational Leadership with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction.

Despite facing intense health challenges during her doctoral studies, Dr. Rennie-Varner emphasizes how her professors as well as the "unique atmosphere" of CUC encouraged her to persevere and reach her goal. "At Concordia, the professors were so flexible, and they really tried to facilitate hands-on, one-on-one, personal learning, even though we were online. It's just the atmosphere of Concordia, and that's really special," she says. "I know from the instructor side of it as well, how difficult it is to try and maintain that personal connection, and help students really feel like it's not a correspondence course. The idea that you can take an online platform and make it as rigorous and as exciting and as innovative and as interactive as my professors at Concordia were able to do is so unique."

Dr. Edward Varner echoed her sentiments, adding that Concordia's values are more than just slogans – they are deeply ingrained in the university's culture. He says, "In our experience, they haven't just been slogans. The people that we've interacted with at Concordia don't see you as a number. Professors genuinely have an understanding of the school's mission. There's a real willingness of professors to help you find your strengths and explore those strengths, as opposed to a rigid stay-in-the-box mentality."

The Varners are a true testament to how CUC Alumni *Stand Tall for excellence* in their fields. Integrity, passion, and perseverance during

to achieve their goals of becoming intentional and influential educators.

Doctoral Programs at CUC



SPRING MUSIC TOURS 2024

Spring 2024 Music Tours & Alumni Gatherings!

We are excited to announce this year's Spring Music Tour dates and locations! Join us for beautiful music and fellowship at a church near you.

Click on the photos below to read more:

Wind Symphony
of Concordia University Chicago
Conducted by Dr. Matthew D. Steiner

The Kapelle
of Concordia University Chicago
Conducted by Dr. Robert P. Steiner

SPRING 2024 TOUR CONCERTS

Day	Date	Time	Location
SAT	2 MARCH	10:00 AM	Houston, TX
TUE	5 MARCH	7:00 PM	Edmond, OK
SAT	9 MARCH	10:00 AM	Peoria, IL
FRI	1 MARCH	7:00 PM	Fort Wayne, IN
WED	4 MARCH	7:00 PM	Bowling Green, KY
FRI	8 MARCH	7:00 PM	Belleville, IL
SUN	3 MARCH	1:00 PM	Spring, TX
THU	7 MARCH	7:00 PM	Olathe, KS
SUN	10 MARCH	10:00 AM	Schaumburg, IL
SAT	2 MARCH	7:00 PM	Zionsville, IN
WED	6 MARCH	6:30 PM	Clarksville, TN
SAT	9 MARCH	7:00 PM	Maplewood, MO
SUN	4 MARCH	1:00 PM	Fort Worth, TX
FRI	8 MARCH	7:00 PM	Des Peres, MO
SUN	3 MARCH	10:00 AM	Seymour, IN
THU	7 MARCH	7:00 PM	Paducah, KY
SAT	10 MARCH	10:00 AM	Normal, IL

Visit CUCChicago.edu/windsymphony for complete touring and Alumni & Friends gathering information.

Visit CUCChicago.edu/kapelle for complete touring and Alumni & Friends gathering information.

During these music tours, CUC Alumni Relations will be hosting **two CUCougars Connect events!** It's only \$10 to attend, with a portion of the proceeds (25%) going towards spring music tours. *Family & friends of CUC alumni are also welcome to purchase tickets!*

Friday, March 1
4:30 - 6:00 PM
Fort Wayne, IN
Acme by Full Circle (1105 E. State Blvd)

Afterwards, head over to [Holy Cross Lutheran Church](#) for the Kapelle concert beginning at 7 PM.

Register!

Friday, March 8

4:30 - 6:00 PM

St. Louis, MO

Mike Duffy's Pub & Grill (124 W. Jefferson Ave., Kirkwood)

Afterwards, head over to [St. Paul's Des Peres](#) for the Wind Symphony concert, or cross the river to [Zion Lutheran in Belleville](#) for Kapelle. Both concerts start at 7 PM.

Register!

THE BLACK
intellectual
TRADITION
FEBRUARY 15

2-5 P.M.
KOEHNEKE COMMUNITY CENTER (OPRF ROOM)
Reading Freedom in the Classics Workshop
Join authors of *The Black Intellectual Tradition* Angel Parham and Anika Prather for an interactive workshop that dives deep into the connection between classical education and Black literature.

7 P.M.
CHAPEL OF OUR LORD
Frederick Douglass Jazz Works
Ruth Naomi Floyd Jazz Ensemble
Floyd's original jazz compositions are paired with the speeches and writings of Frederick Douglass for a powerful and inspiring performance that celebrates the life of this timeless luminary.

The Black Intellectual Tradition

Join us as we celebrate the Black Intellectual Tradition with two separate events that bring together literature, music and the visual arts!

The Black Intellectual Tradition: Reading Freedom in Classical Literature

Authors Anika Prather and Angel Parham lead an interactive

workshop that dives deep into the connection between classical education and Black literature.

2-5 p.m. | OPRF Room - KCC

The Frederick Douglass Jazz Works

The Ruth Naomi Floyd Jazz Ensemble performs her original compositions paired with the actual words from the speeches and writings of this timeless luminary.

7 p.m. | Chapel of Our Lord

Register for these free events today by clicking below!



Chase Hankins hired as Head Football Coach

On February 7th, Director of Athletics Janet Wolbert BA '96 announced the hiring of **Chase Hankins** as Concordia-Chicago's 21st Head Football Coach.

Hankins states, "I am excited about the opportunity to lead the CUC football program to new levels and contribute to the continued growth and success of our student-athletes," says Hankins. "I believe my values align perfectly with the mission of Concordia in creating a Christ-based team culture making this an incredibly unique opportunity and fit that I couldn't be happier to be a part of."

Hankins has high hopes for the future of CUC football, stating that "there is an incredible amount of talent and potential. However, potential just means you haven't done anything yet so the major immediate goal is to continue instilling a sense of belief in our guys to help them achieve their potential. Once they realize that about themselves, the success on the field, in the classroom, and in the community will quickly follow."

Hankins played collegiately as a quarterback at Hope College and Elmhurst College. He earned his bachelor's degree in Sports

Management from Elmhurst College. He then went on to receive his Masters of Business Administration from Aurora University.

[Read the full story](#)



Upcoming Events

Women's Basketball Alumni Day

Join us for an Alumni game and reception celebrating Cougar Women's Basketball Alumni!

Date: February 17, 2024

9:30 AM Alumni Game | Geiseman Gymnasium

10:30 AM Refreshments & Lunch | OPRF Room

2:00 PM CUC vs CUW

[Register](#)

Best Practices in Ministry (BPM) Conference

Are you attending BPM at Christ Church Lutheran in Phoenix, AZ? Join us for an alumni gathering on Friday, February 23rd at The Porch - Arcadia. More details at our event booth!

Dates: February 22-24, 2024

Christ Church Lutheran | Phoenix, AZ

[Facebook Event](#)



CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO

Alumni Relations

