

Forester

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SUMMER 2025



Making a
Christ-Centered
University Education
Affordable

Concordia
University
Chicago

Summer 2025

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MISSION Steadfast in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, Concordia University Chicago promotes academic rigor in its liberal arts and professional programs; grounds students in objective truth, integrity, and excellence; and practices faithfulness to the Confessional teachings of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, as it forms students for vocations in church, family, and the world.

VISION Concordia University Chicago is a Christ-centered Lutheran university where truth, freedom, and vocation form students for lives of influence and service for the common good.

CORE VALUES We at Concordia University Chicago embrace these Core Values as essential to living together in a vibrant and influential Christian academic community and as productive citizens of the Church and world.

- **CHRISTIAN FAITH.** The Christian faith is an integral part of our community.
- **THE INDIVIDUAL.** As a member of God's creation, each person is unique and is blessed with inherent worth.
- **EXCELLENCE.** We strive for excellence in who we are and what we do.
- **INTEGRITY.** Our community demonstrates the accord between our beliefs and practices.
- **SERVICE.** Recognizing and addressing the needs of others is a response to God's love for us, and a reflection of God's love for them.

President's Column

This issue of *The Forester* spotlights the Prepared to Serve Church Professional Guarantee and what it means for the students in our six church work programs. We at Concordia-Chicago are thankful to God for the faithful donors who make Prepared to Serve possible.

This column, however, will focus elsewhere. Our Mission Statement says that Concordia-Chicago “forms students for vocations in church, family, and the world,” not only in the church. It is therefore important to ask how we keep Christ at the center as we form students for vocations outside the church. How, in other words, do we keep our education faithful in the many classes that are not directly related to the faith?

There are two main answers to this. The first is to ensure that we have the right people, faithful people, teaching across the full range of subjects in our curriculum. The second is to ensure

that our people understand how the truths of Christianity inform what they teach and how they teach it.

Hiring the Right People

Academia can be challenging waters for Christians to navigate. Across the country, faithful scholars are looking for Christ-centered institutions like ours. They seek the opportunity to align their teaching and research with what they believe, and to do so openly and with the support of their colleagues. Concordia-Chicago is finding ever greater success in drawing such Christian brothers and sisters to this special place. I personally interview each finalist for a full-time faculty position so I can ensure that the mission fit is strong.

Applying the Church's Teachings

Once we have hired faithful people, we train them. Our Mission & Identity program helps to develop our faculty members' understanding of the intersection of the faith with their own fields of expertise.

Many truths of Scripture hold great importance in secular disciplines.

Scripture teaches us, for instance, that each of us is a unity of body and eternal soul, created by God in His image. Scripture also teaches that we have fallen from the original perfection in which God made us, and we tend naturally toward rebellion against God and His purposes. Moreover, Scripture teaches that our final destination is not in this life, but the next. These three teachings—creation, fall, and eternal life—are foundational for proper understandings of many secular disciplines. Two examples will help:

- In political science, these doctrines thoroughly undermine Utopian political schemes that are based on the belief that the right socio-economic structure will lead to an earthly paradise. In truth, political possibilities are constrained by human nature as understood through the doctrines of creation, fall, and eternal life.
- In nursing, our understanding of the patient is affected by the truth that each patient is more than a mere body of cells and experiences. Rather, each of us is a unity of body and eternal soul, lovingly created by God. The worth of each patient is therefore as endless as God's love.

Examples like these can be found all across the higher education curriculum. One only has to understand Christian teachings and how to apply them. In short, a Concordia-Chicago education relies upon reason and evidence in the search for natural truth, with reason founded upon the revealed truth of God in His Word. We stand tall for truth by keeping Christ at the center throughout the University, not only in our church work programs.



Russell Dawn, DPhil, JD
President



“ A CONCORDIA-CHICAGO EDUCATION RELIES UPON REASON AND EVIDENCE IN THE SEARCH FOR NATURAL TRUTH, WITH REASON FOUNDED UPON THE REVEALED TRUTH OF GOD IN HIS WORD.”

University Events

Summer & Fall 2025

JUNE

28 Patriotic Pops Concert

JULY

19-23 LCMS Youth Gathering (New Orleans, LA)

AUGUST

1 Summer Visit Day

17-20 Apologetics Boot Camp

25 Opening Service of the 162nd Academic Year

25- Ferguson Gallery -

9/26 Alumni and Student Art Show

SEPTEMBER

14 Community Sing

26 University Band Concert

29 Lectureship in Christianity, Humanities and Public Life

OCTOBER

3 Cougar Classic Golf Outing
(White Pines Golf Course, Bensenville, IL)

3-5 Homecoming Weekend

4 Athletic Hall of Fame Induction

11-13 Careers for Christ

13 Undergraduate Visit Day

13- Ferguson Gallery -

11/14 Classical Spaces, Current Views

18 Maroon & Gold
(Eaglewood Resort & Spa, Itasca, IL)

19-21 Lectures in Church Music

31 Wind Symphony Home Concert

NOVEMBER

2 Kapelle Home Concert

15 Undergraduate Visit Day

16 Chamber Orchestra Concert

DECEMBER

5 University Band Christmas Concert

6-7 Service of Lessons and Carols

Visit CUChicago.edu/events for the most current schedule and full event details.



Lectureship in Christianity, Humanities and Public Life

Sept. 29, 4-5 p.m. Christopher Center 200

Renowned iconographer Aidan Hart will give the fall lecture in this biannual series. Dr. and Mrs. C. Ross Betts, generous patrons of the Lectureship, commissioned Hart to paint an icon of early Christian martyr St. Lawrence, which will be presented to the University at the event.



Careers for Christ Weekend

Oct. 11-13

High school students interested in learning about LCMS professional church work careers—join us for this fun, FREE event! Meet and get to know church work program faculty and current students, tour CUC's beautiful 40-acre campus and more. Check out CUChicago.edu/c4c for registration info.

CUC News



"Doc" Fischer has been the Concordia-Chicago Director of Bands since 1974.

Dr. Richard Fischer to Retire After 51 Years of Musical Excellence

AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS "DOC" FISCHER BY GENERATIONS OF STUDENTS AND COLLEAGUES, DR. RICHARD FISCHER HAS BEEN A GUIDING FORCE IN MUSIC EDUCATION AT CUC, CONDUCTING THE WIND SYMPHONY AND UNIVERSITY BAND WITH UNWAVERING PASSION.

Dr. Richard Fischer, the Fred and Jane Wittlinger Endowed Chair for Music Performance, announced that he will retire on Dec. 31, 2025, after more than 51 years as the University's Director of Bands.

Affectionately known as "Doc" Fischer by generations of students and colleagues, he has been a guiding force in music education at CUC, conducting the Wind Symphony and University Band with unwavering passion. Through his leadership, countless students have formed a lifelong connection to music.

Under his direction, the Wind Symphony has earned a national and international reputation for excellence, performing across the United States and in Canada, Europe, Asia and South Africa. Their celebrated appearances at venues such as Carnegie Hall and participation in esteemed conferences, including the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) and the Illinois Music Educators Conference (ILMEA), have solidified the ensemble's status as one of the finest in its class. Fischer's commitment to commissioning and premiering new wind band compositions has further enriched the field of music education.

The University invites the Concordia-Chicago community to celebrate Dr. Fischer's remarkable career throughout this calendar year. Stay tuned to University social media and [CUChicago.edu/events](https://cuchicago.edu/events) for announcements about upcoming concerts honoring his legacy.

Early Childhood Education Center Earns Prestigious NAEYC Accreditation

Concordia University Chicago's Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) has earned reaccreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)—the world's largest organization working on behalf of young children.

NAEYC accreditation is a rigorous and transformative quality-improvement system that uses a set of 10 research-based standards to collaborate with early education programs to recognize and drive quality improvement in high-quality early learning environments. More than 6,000 programs are currently accredited by NAEYC—less than 10 percent of all child care centers, preschools and kindergartens nationally achieve this recognition.

The ECEC is a laboratory school, with full-day and part-day programs for children from birth through age 6. The ECEC offers Christ-centered, developmentally appropriate practices, low student-to-staff ratios, and programs designed to nurture the development of the whole child.

"We appreciate the support we receive from the College of Education and the University and we will continue to provide the highest quality of care and education for the students and parents we serve," says Cathy Gruenwald BA '88, MA '98, director of the ECEC. "The ECEC has earned this accreditation for over 25 years because we value children and their development, and are committed to doing what it takes to be the best we can be."



**Early Childhood
Education Center**

“ WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT WE RECEIVE FROM THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE HIGHEST QUALITY OF CARE AND EDUCATION FOR THE STUDENTS AND PARENTS WE SERVE.”

—Cathy Gruenwald,
director of ECEC



Members of the Cougars men's basketball team teach a class to ECEC students — just one of the many examples of University support provided to the prestigious on-campus childhood center.

Prayer Books Provided for All Faculty and Staff

All faculty and staff at Concordia University Chicago recently received a customized prayer book for use in their professional and personal lives. The publication serves as a blessing to employees as they prepare CUC students to live and serve in the church and world. Based on the University's nine principles on truth (invite, establish, encourage), freedom (facilitate, prepare, listen) and vocation (embrace, call, understand), the prayer book includes a litany, collects, situational prayers, homilies, psalms and canticles.

Rev. Dr. Chad Kendall, associate vice president for church relations and mission, led the ambitious project, which was developed by a committee comprising faculty from all four of the University's colleges.

"This project was only able to be completed because of the dedication of the committee members from beginning to end," said Kendall in a message to campus. "It is our hope that this will enrich your lives as we all gaze upon the cross of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for the life of the world."

Concordia-Chicago Climbs in Social Mobility Rankings from U.S. News & World Report

In the 2025 U.S. News & World Report rankings, Concordia University Chicago was recognized as a Best Regional University – Midwest, and as the #20 Top Performer on Social Mobility among regional universities in the Midwest.

“Year after year, Concordia University Chicago continues its dedication to preparing students to become servant leaders who stand firm in their faith and values,” said Dr. Jamie Kowalczyk, vice president for strategy and innovation. “As our University serves an increasing number of first-generation students, it is crucial that we provide an education that is accessible to those from a wide range of economic and cultural backgrounds.”

As one of the Top Performers on Social Mobility, Concordia-Chicago has a notably high graduation rate for students who receive federal Pell grants, which are awarded to undergraduates who display exceptional financial need. Studies show that economically disadvantaged students are less likely to finish college. This ranking, up 23 positions from last year, shows CUC has been able to help students improve their lives through an affordable education.

The publication evaluated universities based on many factors, including graduation rate, financial resources, student-faculty ratio and peer assessment.

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FAITH AND VALUES”**

—Dr. Jamie Kowalczyk,
VP for strategy and innovation



A long-standing tradition since 1951, the Concordia Invitational Tournament (CIT) will regroup to consider returning in the 2026-27 season.

Universities Seek Continuation of Concordia Invitational Tournament

While the 2025 CIT was thought to be the last, Concordia University Chicago and Concordia University, Nebraska agreed on a collaboration seeking a continuation of the historic and celebrated tournament. One of the longest-running collegiate basketball tournaments in the nation, CIT dates back to 1951, when the first tournament was held in St. Louis, MO. The two universities are original members of CIT.

“While we plan to take a one-year break to prepare for the future of CIT, by God’s grace we look forward to bringing the event back for the 2026-2027 academic year,” said Concordia University, Nebraska President Bernard Bull. “We

don’t have all of the details worked out, but we are intrigued by the idea of rotating CIT between Chicago, Seward and possibly a third location that has a large population of Concordia Nebraska and Concordia Chicago alumni.”

“CIT is not just a long-standing tradition, it’s a perennial favorite for players and fans alike,” added Concordia University Chicago President Russell Dawn. “Dr. Bull and I are of the same mind on this: CIT is great for students, and therefore great for our universities. I’m excited to see how the next phase unfolds.”

Concordia-Chicago and Concordia Nebraska will announce further details regarding potential future Concordia Invitational Tournaments as details are finalized. The presidents and athletic administrators from both universities will work together closely to map out the future of the event.

ALTHOUGH HE FORMALLY RETIRED IN DECEMBER 2020, DR. WENTE CONTINUES TO PLAY ORGAN IN CHAPEL, AND PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CENTER FOR CHURCH MUSIC AT CUC.

Professor Emeritus Named Organist Laureate

Dr. Steven Wente BA '75, MCM '76, distinguished professor emeritus of music, was granted the title of Concordia University Chicago Organist Laureate at the Lectures in Church Music conference banquet in October. Dr. Jamie Kowalczyk, vice president for strategy and innovation; Deaconess Kristin Wassilak BA '86, MA '96, dean of the College of Theology, Arts & Humanities; and Wente's colleagues in the music department presented him with the honor, along with a facsimile edition of Johann Sebastian Bach's Orgelbüchlein (Little Organ Book).

Dr. Steven Wente was recently granted the title of Concordia University Chicago Organist Laureate to honor his more than 40 years of dedication to the University's music program.



"I was surprised, humbled and honored by the gracious words and thoughts expressed by both the president and by my dear colleagues on the faculty, with whom I have worked so closely for so many years," said Wente.

After graduation from Concordia, River Forest, Wente taught in Lutheran schools until he was called back to his alma mater in 1984 to teach music and serve as organist to the chapel. He was chair of the music department for 21 years. Having formally retired in December 2020, Wente continues to play organ in Chapel, and plays a major role in the advancement of the Center for Church Music at CUC. He currently also serves as cantor (music director) at First Saint Paul's Lutheran Church in Chicago.

College of HST Launches Seminar Series, Mechanical Engineering Degree Pathway

This spring, the College of Health, Science & Technology (HST) introduced the monthly HST Social and Seminar Series, an exciting new initiative sponsored by the Dr. Marv and Judy Bartell Endowment to Enhance the Natural Sciences.

The seminar series highlights the innovative work of HST faculty, celebrating their accomplishments both within and beyond the classroom. Topics this semester included, "Peer Teaching Observations & Reciprocal Mentorship," by Dr. Jenna Mahay; "Exploring the Possibilities of Open Educational Resources," by Dr. Heather Deter; and "Using VR in the Classroom," by Dr. Ann O'Brien and Dr. Sue Walsh.

"We are deeply grateful to Dr. Marv Bartell BS '61, distinguished professor emeritus of natural science and geography, and his wife, Judy, for their generous support of this endeavor," said Dr. Walsh, dean of HST.

The college also announced a new 3+2 mechanical engineering program, which offers students enrolled in the BS pre-engineering major a unique opportunity to advance their studies in mechanical engineering. In the first three years, students establish a strong foundation at Concordia-Chicago before transitioning to Valparaiso University for the final two years. Upon completion, students will earn both a Bachelor of Arts in pre-engineering from CUC and a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from Valparaiso University. †

Loving the Neighbor Near You: Hispanic Student Outreach at CUC

By: [Rev. Simeon Raddatz BA '13](#), University Chaplain

"But [the lawyer], wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:29)

The lawyer in Luke, chapter 10, wanted to lower the bar. If that word "neighbor" could be more narrowly defined to include only certain people, then maybe he could meet the Law's demands!

Jesus, however, does not allow a lowering of the bar. In His well-known Parable of the Good Samaritan, He teaches that your neighbor is anyone near you, including even those very different from you. As the parable unfolds, Jesus demonstrates the kind of perfect love God calls us to show every neighbor.

Of course, we cannot inherit eternal life by perfectly fulfilling the Law's demands, as the lawyer supposed. We have all sinned and fall short. We can only inherit eternal life by receiving it through faith in Christ, who has fulfilled the Law and has laid down His perfect life to atone for our sins.

Nevertheless, Jesus still teaches us to aim high! As those who trust in Him and enjoy in Him the certainty of our salvation, we can begin, by God's grace, to walk according to God's Law without fear. To us Jesus says, "Go and do likewise," and we follow in His steps.

What does it mean to love your neighbor at Concordia-Chicago? It means a lot of things. Our neighbors include those in the community around us and those who visit our campus. They include the faculty and staff who teach and work on campus. And, of course, they include our students.

Of the undergraduate students attending CUC full-time, 39% of them are Hispanic or Latino. This might be surprising to you if you attended Concordia a decade or more ago. What a change in the student population! But this is a large portion of the students whom God has brought to our university, and they are our neighbors. How do we love these students as ourselves and show them the love of Christ?



With the help of a grant from generous members of St. Paul's Lutheran, Fort Wayne, and two Chicago-area pastors, we are endeavoring to do just that. Rev. Ted Fischer BA '15, pastor of Messiah Lutheran, Chicago, and Rev. Jesus Morales, pastor of Christ Our Savior Lutheran, Winfield and vacancy pastor of Good Shepherd Our Redeemer, Berwyn, have joined me in the University's efforts to love and bless CUC's Hispanic and Latino students. Through a visible presence on campus, visits to classrooms, interaction and collaboration with the Latino Student Union, and occasional bilingual chapel services in Spanish and English, we hope to build relationships with these students and, most importantly, to serve as the Spirit's instruments to draw them closer to Christ and His Word. We hope that you will join us in praying for the Lord to guide and bless our efforts to love our Hispanic and Latino neighbors in Christ's name. To Him be all glory! †

Church Relations: Moving To the Center

By: *Rev. Dr. Chad Kendall*, Associate Vice President for Church Relations and Mission

My wife and I were looking at the daffodils coming out of the ground the other day as we anticipate spring's renewal. As we were admiring the humble and quiet transition of the seasons, I commented on how the daffodils were coming out of the ground and spreading. We were at the top of a slight hill, and we noticed how the tendency of the daffodils was to spread downhill as opposed to going uphill. I started thinking about gravity and how water runs to low spots. The daffodils in this hill seemed to be following suit. They were trying to go where the water may be more plentiful. My mind began to churn and consider the movement downward and the tendency for everything to run toward the low spot and to the core of earth. Then, to no surprise of my wife, I began to think about our university and the integral connection between the mission and identity of the university and church relations.

The formation and cultivation of the mission and identity of our university defines and shapes the core of the university. Faculty and staff grow and develop. Policies follow that explicate who we are. Our curriculum is developed and reflects our mission and identity. Students, then, learn and grow in concert with the identity and ethos of the university. The formation of faculty and staff is internal, but it has implications for the external life of the university and her relation to our congregations and the greater civitas.

Church relations is an office within our university that moves from our internal identity and takes it out to our church body. Whereas the internal work of mission and identity is formation, this external care and service to the synod is one of nurture, attentiveness and service. From a church relations perspective, I go to congregations to talk about how we are preparing students to live a life that is informed by our three pillars—truth, freedom and vocation. We recognize the church's need for church workers. Part of my work in visiting congregations is to seek prospective students who may be considering a vocation in church work and provide a path to our university where formation and growth takes place.

I see a bit of symbolism in those daffodils slowly spreading downhill. They are traveling to the source of the water which brings life. We seek to draw students to the core of a Concordia University Chicago education so that they are prepared well. They receive an education that is robust and fruitful, as well as learning a life of virtue with Christ at the center. Done well, the preparation of our students will be a blessing to the church and society. In all things, church relations at CUC focuses on building relationships with our congregations and schools around the synod and connecting with partners interested in supporting our university. May our love for Christ bloom as He equips us in truth and righteousness. ✝

“CHURCH RELATIONS
IS AN OFFICE
WITHIN OUR
UNIVERSITY THAT
MOVES FROM OUR
INTERNAL IDENTITY
AND TAKES IT
OUT TO OUR
CHURCH BODY.”

— *Rev. Dr. Chad Kendall*

Cougars Gearing Up for the LCMS Youth Gathering

Concordia University Chicago students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends have spent many months preparing for the triennial LCMS Youth Gathering this summer in New Orleans, and excitement is high among those planning to attend. Read on for a behind-the-scenes look at a few of the many ways the CUC community is contributing to the event.



As a five-star sponsor, Concordia-Chicago had the opportunity to create a video that will play in front of nearly 20,000 high school students, youth leaders and volunteers in the Caesars Superdome. The making of the video was an event unto itself: On a sunny spring day in April, three CUC students plus the Charlie T. mascot ventured out with the University's video production staff, visiting famous Chicago landmarks and showcasing the River Forest campus on camera. Our students' Christ-centered spirit shone brightly on the streets of Chicago, and Charlie T. shared his trademark enthusiasm with tourists and locals alike. Deep-dish pizza, "The Bean" sculpture, Wrigley Field and President Dawn all make an appearance in the video—to see just how, you'll have to wait for the official premiere at the Gathering!



“ I REMEMBER COMING BACK FROM THE GATHERING FEELING LIKE I WAS SET ON FIRE; REALLY ALIVE FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT AND EXCITED TO GO TO CONCORDIA-CHICAGO.”

—Mackenzie Jean-Marcoux BA '24

Jean-Marcoux was a vital part of the LCMS Youth Gathering in 2022 when she was a student at CUC.

The Concordia-Chicago alumni presence will be strong during the July 19-23 event. Mackenzie Jean-Marcoux BA '24, director of Christian education at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Valparaiso, IN, is just one of dozens of CUC alumni bringing their own group of students to the Gathering for the first time. “I’m excited to take some of our high schoolers out of Indiana, to a place they haven’t been before,” she says.

When Jean-Marcoux attended as a high schooler herself, she felt inspired to be around so many people her age who shared her beliefs. “I remember coming back from the Gathering feeling like I was set on fire; really alive for the Holy Spirit and excited to go to Concordia-Chicago,” she says.

Now that she’s a DCE, she is looking forward to her students experiencing the same thing. “God will use this experience differently for each one of them, and it will really hit them right where they need it,” Jean-Marcoux says.



OUR STUDENTS’ CHRIST-CENTERED SPIRIT SHONE BRIGHTLY ON THE STREETS OF CHICAGO DURING THE FILMING OF THE LCMS YOUTH GATHERING VIDEO.



ALUMNI AND FRIENDS! If you’re heading to New Orleans this July, stop by the CUC booth in the exhibit hall (look for the giant inflatable Charlie T. Cougar!), and attend the **All-Illinois District Event** (July 20) and the **CUC Alumni Social** (July 21) at the Superdome.

Part of the sponsorship also allowed CUC to design the official participant T-shirt for the event. Every attendee will receive a maroon T-shirt with a Stand Tall design made with the Gathering theme of “Endure” in mind. †



A photograph of a computer lab where several students are working on robotics kits. In the foreground, a young man in a light blue t-shirt is focused on assembling a small robot. To his right, a young man in a grey t-shirt with a Deadpool graphic is looking at a computer monitor. In the background, other students are visible, including one in a white t-shirt with a 'FIGHT' graphic. The lab is filled with computer workstations and various electronic components.

Computer Science Students Inspire the Next Generation

By: **Anna Seifert**, Communications Associate

The Trusheim Hall basement computer lab is filled with chatter on a recent spring afternoon. Bachelor's and master's students, as well as a few who seem much younger, are working together on robotics kits and at computer workstations. In this friendly atmosphere, Concordia-Chicago computer science students are standing tall for service as they volunteer to teach STEM skills to middle- and high-schoolers every Friday after school.

A young student tests out his robot in Trusheim Hall.

The Friday mentoring clinics, as well as the week-long summer robotics camp hosted at CUC, are made possible through a grant from the Oak Park and River Forest Townships. Dr. Victor Govindaswamy, professor of computer science, reaches out to the community by teaching STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), while also allowing his own students to grow their skills. In addition to their mentoring roles, CUC students assist in organizing workshops, developing curriculum materials and fostering a supportive learning environment for local youth.

"One of my biggest motivations is to teach my students about service and the importance of giving forward to the next generation. I strongly believe that education isn't just about acquiring knowledge—it's about using that knowledge to uplift others," Govindaswamy says. "By mentoring younger students, my students not only reinforce their own learning but also develop leadership, empathy and a sense of responsibility to contribute to their communities."

Some days the children work on robotics, while other days they might work on coding or 3-D printing projects. The mentors plan lessons in advance, and are there to help the students with any questions they may have.

Middle- and high-school students from the surrounding communities learn STEM skills under the mentorship of CUC students.



"This allows the kids to practice their communication skills, learn, and have mentors to both inspire and help them reach their goals," says Kristina Sajic, the student leader of the clinic for the last two years. "Moreover, it provides an opportunity for new CUC computer science majors to meet upperclassmen and make friendships that they may not have met through class periods. Our club is key to both inspiring the innovators of tomorrow and creating community within the computer science department."

Sajic, who graduated this May with her BS in computer science, is grateful that her efforts have paid off when she sees the students engaged in learning. "I love seeing the kids enjoy themselves while learning and growing," she says. "It was music to my ears hearing them say, 'Why are we doing a get-

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—Dr. Victor Govindaswamy

“COMING TO THE CLINIC IS SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO AFTER A STRESSFUL WEEK. WHEN YOU’RE ‘TECHY,’ PEOPLE MAKE THE ASSUMPTION THAT YOU HAVE NO SOCIAL SKILLS; THAT YOU’RE ALWAYS JUST CODING IN FRONT OF YOUR COMPUTER. BUT WITH US, WE’RE VERY SOCIABLE AND WE ENJOY WORKING WITH EACH OTHER.”

—Smita Krishnan, computer science student

to-know-you week? I know everyone here!’ the year after they struggled to remember each other’s names.”

Smita Krishnan is a master’s student who has just completed her first year in Concordia-Chicago’s computer science program. “It’s been really fun watching the kids figure things out. We celebrate their achievements with them,” she says. “Coming to the clinic is something to look forward to after a stressful week. When you’re ‘techy,’ people make the assumption that you have no social skills; that you’re always just coding in front of your computer. But with us, we’re very sociable and we enjoy working with each other.” Krishnan is particularly looking forward to her first summer on campus so she can volunteer at the weeklong robotics camp.

“Kids really love the summer camp, and so do the parents—every time it ends, they ask me if I can do an extra week!” says Govindaswamy.

He has spent the past decade strengthening the computer science program and giving his students opportunities to practice their skills while having fun outside the classroom.

“When I was in school, you would just come for class, take your exams and that was it. I wanted to change it up. We are like family here.”

In nine of the last 10 years, CUC teams have secured first place in the Chicago area in the IEEEExtreme 24-Hour Programming Competition. In this annual Institute of Electrical and Electronics

Engineers (IEEE) contest, thousands of teams around the world stay up all day and night to solve a set of programming problems. Concordia computer science students also regularly present at Associated Colleges of the Chicago Area (ACCA) symposiums—dozens of posters of past student presentations line the basement hallway of Trusheim Hall.

In the future, Govindaswamy would like to expand the mentoring clinic into an intergenerational program through Oak Park Township Senior Services. “In my free time I was teaching elderly people who wanted help with technology—how to use a smartphone, how to use Windows and so on. They want to learn too! I hope to bridge generations through STEM education,” he says. †

The weeklong robotics camp, sponsored by the Oak Park River Forest Townships and the computer science department, is a summer highlight for local community kids as well as CUC computer science students.





College of Education Stands Tall on Campus and in the Community

*Katie Pece, director
of the offices of Field
Experience and Synodical
Placement, believes that
being present on campus
is essential in supporting
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THE KEY TO A
SUCCESSFUL
STUDENT TEACHING
EXPERIENCE—ONE
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TO EMPLOYMENT
AS A TEACHER
DOWN THE LINE—IS
MAKING PERSONAL
CONNECTIONS.

By: [Anna Seifert](#), Communications Associate

As one of the oldest educator preparation institutions in the nation, Concordia-Chicago's College of Education continues to be inspired by the University's rich history as it seeks opportunities to grow. Dedicated faculty and staff, including the Center for Christian Education and the Office of Field Experience, are putting the college's name and mission on the map through every new school partnership, community relationship and student teaching placement.

In her two years since coming to CUC, Katie Pece MA '07, director of the offices of Field Experience and Synodical Placement, has been hard at work building new partnerships with public and faith-based schools.

She develops and implements field experience opportunities for education students, which includes both required observation hours and the student teaching internship. Pece knows that the key to a successful student teaching experience—one that may lead to employment as a teacher down the line—is making personal connections.

"Recently, one of our students had developed a good relationship with a teacher in the school where she was observing. Then, that teacher specifically requested her as a student teacher," she says. "That's an example of our partnerships coming full circle. It's mutually beneficial."



Above Top Enthusiastic team members Dr. Anne Thies, Emily Kober BA '09, and Katie Pece from the Center for Christian Education, the Foundation, and the Office of Field Experience promote CUC to prospective LTE students at a recent event.

Above Bottom A mid-morning Rise & Shine donut event is just one of the ways Dr. Anne Thies engages the campus community and builds awareness for the Center for Christian Education and its mission in the community.

“ I FEEL GRATEFUL THAT GOD IS USING MY GIFTS IN THIS WAY, TO BE HIS HANDS AND FEET HERE ON CAMPUS.”

—Dr. Anne Thies, director of the Center for Christian Education

Pece served for many years as a Lutheran second-grade teacher, so she knows what makes a strong partnership from both the university's and the local school's perspective. "Second grade is very different from higher ed—but I certainly understand the teacher-in-classroom side of things," she says. "I'm thankful for the variety of experiences I've had that enhance my ability to do this position."

According to the Illinois State Board of Education, teacher vacancies remain a serious challenge for school districts across the state. In addition to helping CUC students gain experience and employment, Pece says, "we're also trying to help our partner schools gain employees, given the teaching shortage we have today."

Being present on campus is essential in supporting CUC education students. "Our undergraduates, with as much technology as they have today, overwhelmingly want to meet in person. They want to stop by the office and ask face-to-face questions," Pece says. She carries that attitude into working with partner schools as well, attending their fundraisers and open houses. The schools see that someone is investing in them, and the University strengthens its connections.

And it's not just education majors who participate in these community relationships. When the men's volleyball team was looking for a service project to do over spring break, Pece happened to know of a school that needed its locker room repainted. "It was a great team-building experience for them, and a wonderful gift for that school," Pece says. "Service is one of our core values, and our students really cling to that. They want to do good."

Pece often collaborates with Dr. Anne Thies, director of the University's Center for Christian Education (CCE), to bring the work of their two offices together to serve students, teachers and schools.

The CCE was formally launched in August 2024, with a mission "to serve as a catalyst for the exploration, cultivation, and expansion of educational initiatives imbued with faith-based principles founded in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod." Thies, an associate professor of education at CUC since 2016, works to fulfill the Center's vision to drive innovation, set new standards, and expand the limits of faith-based education aligned with the University's mission, vision and values.

Offering professional development opportunities is one way the CCE lives



Educators attend the Connections Conference in Fort Wayne, IN — a conference sponsored by the Indiana, Michigan and Ohio districts in partnership with the Lutheran Education Association.



Katie Pece proudly poses with a newly graduated educator.

out its mission. Thies says, “We work with current students, alumni, teachers and administrators, and we do outreach to Lutheran schools, CLEF schools, as well as all schools that we work with through the University, both private and public.”

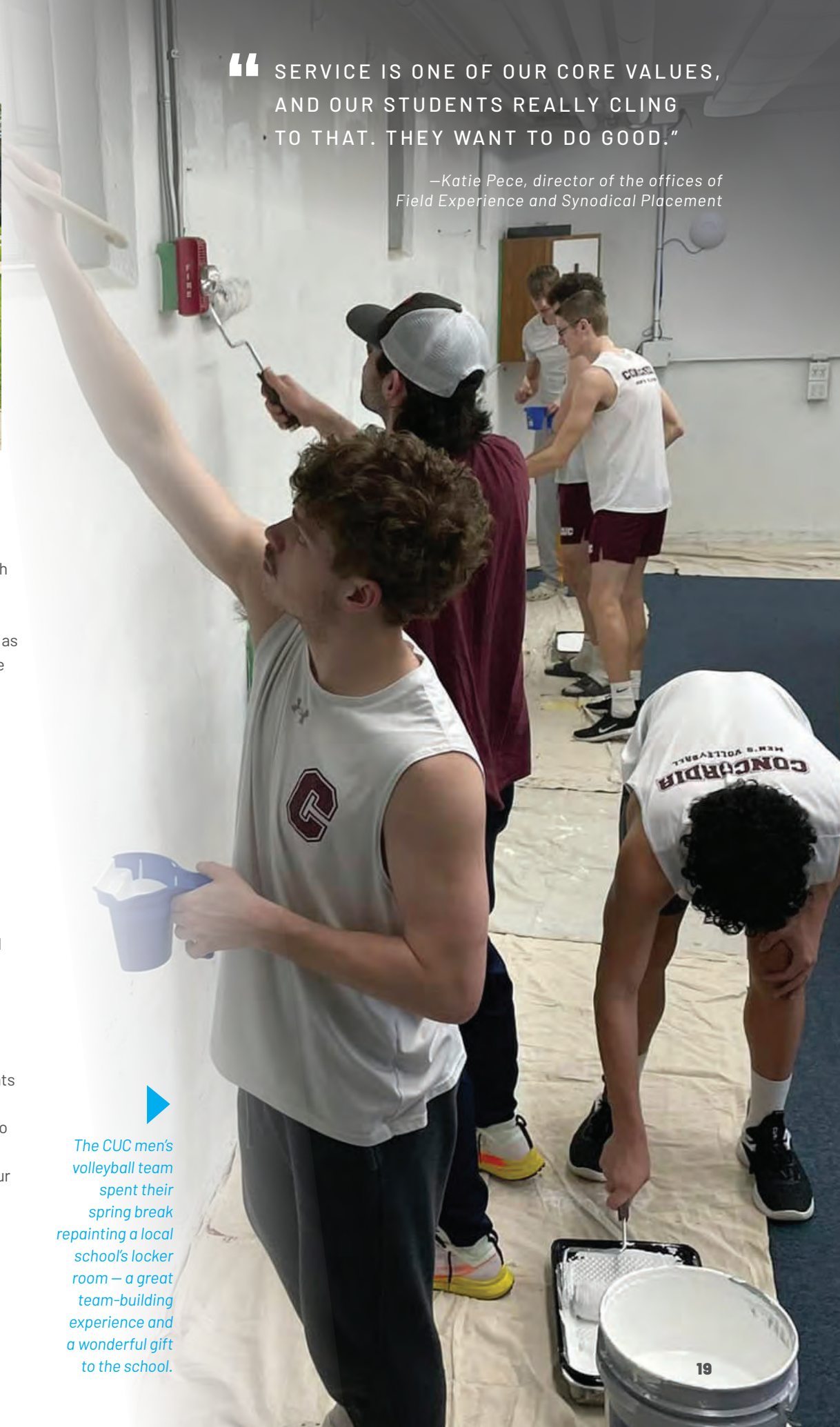
The Center also hosted a book drive this year, through which they collected 891 books for two Lutheran schools that were in need of additional resources for their children. The CCE joined forces with CUC’s Klinck Memorial Library and received donations large and small from many different sources—students, faculty, staff, other libraries, “and we received financial donations so we could purchase new books. All the glory to God, we were able to provide a greater number of resources than expected for our Lutheran schools,” says Thies.

The CCE is looking forward to more events like this in the coming academic year. “We’re always looking for opportunities to continue to serve Concordia University Chicago, the College of Education and our administrators and teachers nationwide by providing professional development, books and whatever they might need,” says Thies. “I feel grateful that God is using my gifts in this way, to be His hands and feet here on campus.” ✝

“SERVICE IS ONE OF OUR CORE VALUES, AND OUR STUDENTS REALLY CLING TO THAT. THEY WANT TO DO GOOD.”

—Katie Pece, director of the offices of Field Experience and Synodical Placement

▶ *The CUC men’s volleyball team spent their spring break repainting a local school’s locker room – a great team-building experience and a wonderful gift to the school.*



Standing Tall for Our Mission



Since 1864, Concordia University Chicago has stood as a faithful partner in preparing men and women to serve in the Church. Across generations, this institution has remained steadfast in its mission, even as the needs of the Church and the challenges of the world have changed. Today, the need for well-formed, faithful church workers in our Lutheran schools, congregations and missions is as urgent as ever.

As the apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 4:11-12, *"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."* This passage beautifully affirms

the importance of preparing and supporting church workers as instruments in building up the Church.

Many of you know that young people who feel called to serve may wrestle with the practical realities of pursuing a church work vocation—especially when considering the cost of a university education alongside future ministry wages. In response, and by God's provision, we have launched a new initiative: Prepared to Serve: Church Professional Guarantee.

This effort reflects our deep commitment to placing Christ at the Center of all we do. Beginning in Fall 2025, students enrolled full-time in one of our church work programs will pay no more than \$5,000 annually in tuition and mandatory fees. Through the generosity of God's people—alumni, friends, congregations and donors—this commitment is already bearing fruit.

We give thanks to God for those who have already stood tall in support of this effort during Lutheran Schools Week and our recent CUCelebrates day of giving. But there is still much work to do. Your support can make this vision a sustainable reality for generations to come.

When you give to the Prepared to Serve initiative—whether through immediate gifts or long-term pledges—you ensure that our future pastors, teachers, DCEs, deaconesses, musicians and other church workers can serve without the burden of unmanageable debt. You allow them to focus instead on faithful formation, rigorous study and joyful preparation for a lifetime of service in the Church and the world.

As you read through this issue of the Forester, I invite you to prayerfully consider how you might Stand Tall for the future of the Church. Your gift is not only an investment in Concordia—it is a response to the Gospel itself, as we join together in forming church workers to serve well and proclaim Christ crucified.

To God alone be the glory.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Hynes".

Jeff Hynes

Foundation President and CEO

Sr. Vice President for University Advancement



To consult with a CUC Foundation philanthropic advisor, **call toll free at 866-448-3867** or email foundation@CUChicago.edu. Meet the entire Foundation team at CUChicago.edu/Support.

Save the date Saturday, October 18, 2025 for
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO's
signature fundraising gala

Maroon & Gold

Join the entire Concordia-Chicago community at Eaglewood Resort for a notable evening to recognize outstanding individuals who stand tall for the University and their vocation.

The 2025 Distinguished Awardees include:

Mr. Jonathan Schultz BA '90 - Distinguished Alumni, Undergraduate

Mrs. Kaye Dumas Wolff - One Heart Award

Rev. Stephen Starke BA '77 - Spiritus Christi

6:00 p.m. Reception, 7:00 p.m. Dinner and Award Ceremony

Tickets available online now at CUChicago.edu/alumni/maroon-gold

Early-birds save \$50 per ticket if purchased before August 1.



Save the date Saturday, October 4, 2025

CONCORDIA



ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME



Tickets available August 1, 2025.

Share a gift to Cougar Athletics online.

CUCougars.com/HallofFame or call 888-258-6773 for information.



MARK YOUR
CALENDAR

Maroon & Gold

RETURNS OCTOBER 18!

By: [Emily Kober BA '09](#), Senior
Director of Alumni Relations

Join us for an unforgettable evening of celebration, connection and purpose at Maroon & Gold, Concordia University Chicago's signature fundraising gala, on Saturday, October 18. Hosted at the elegant Eaglewood Resort and Spa in Itasca, IL, this special night will unite alumni, donors and friends in support of Prepared to Serve: Church Professional Guarantee.

Launching in Fall 2025, this program ensures that eligible full-time students enrolled in church professional programs will pay no more than \$5,000 annually in tuition and mandatory fees—making CUC's tuition one of the most affordable among the Concordia University System.

Your presence and support at Maroon & Gold will help make this promise a reality.

This year's gala shines a spotlight on three extraordinary individuals who live out CUC's mission of service, faith and leadership:

- **Mr. Jonathan Schultz BA '90**, recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award
- **Mrs. Kaye Dumas Wolff**, honored with the One Heart Award
- **Rev. Stephen Starke BA '77**, recipient of the Spiritus Christi Award

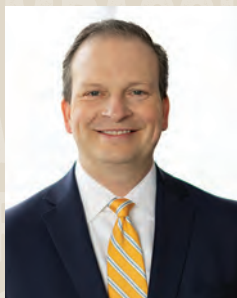
These honorees reflect the heart of Concordia: faithful service, professional excellence and a deep commitment to our mission. Their stories will inspire you—and remind us all why we gather in celebration and support.

Since its founding in 2017, Maroon & Gold has been more than a gala—it's a tradition of honoring our past, celebrating our present and investing in the future of our students. Whether you've attended every year, or this will be your first, we'd love for you to join us. Come reconnect with old friends, make new ones and be inspired by what we're accomplishing together.

Reserve your spot now at CUChicago.edu/maroon-gold. **Take advantage of our early-bird pricing—save \$50 per ticket when you register before August 1!**

Let's come together to celebrate the impact of CUC and ensure that tomorrow's church professionals are *Prepared to Serve*—equipped, inspired and ready to lead.

2025 Awardees



Mr. Jonathan Schultz BA '90

Distinguished Alumni, Undergraduate Award

Jonathan D. Schultz was unanimously elected as the ninth president & CEO of Concordia Publishing House by their Board of Directors. With a tenure at CPH starting in 1998, Schultz's roles included vice president and corporate counsel.

He coordinated legal activities, directed human resources and oversaw the contracts/rights/permissions departments.

Prior to his CPH role, Schultz and his wife served as volunteer missionaries in Guatemala for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. As a graduate of Concordia University Chicago and Loyola University School of Law, Schultz is deeply committed to education—especially Lutheran education. He held leadership positions on the Boards of Christ Community Lutheran School in St. Louis, MO, a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon School, as well as the Lutheran High School Association of St. Louis. Currently, he serves as chair of the board of the Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis, a \$100-million foundation dedicated to improving care in the region. Beyond his local impact, Schultz generously contributes to various nonprofits and is very supportive of Concordia-Chicago.



Mrs. Kaye Dumas Wolff

One Heart Award

Mrs. Kaye Dumas Wolff is a retired information and technology professional. She has dedicated much of her tremendous volunteer service during her lifetime to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) ministries and initiatives that serve minority groups.

She has worked closely with LCMS Black Ministry and other ethnic ministries. She is a founding member of Concordia Seminary's Multiethnic Symposium committee, served on the Seminary's Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT) advisory committee, served as chairman of the LCMS Black Ministry Church Planting Task Force, and on an LCMS convention resolution task force.

Wolff has authored articles for the *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* and Bible studies for Lutheran Women in Mission (LWML) groups. She contributed articles to *Lutheran Mission Matters* and has written Lenten devotions for *Lutheran Hour Ministries*, where she was a MissionU witnessing facilitator for 14 years. She was instrumental in making the LCMS docu-movie, *The First Rosa*, about the pioneer Lutheran educator and missionary Rosa Young, where she served as the unit production manager. In 2020, Wolff presented at the Theological Convocation on Race Relations at the Seminary. She also has been a guest on KFUO's radio show "The Coffee Hour" periodically over the last six years. Active in the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) most of her life, Wolff served in local, district and national roles within the organization. During her term as LWML vice president of special focus ministries she started the Deaf Ministry Outreach Program.



Rev. Stephen P. Starke BA '77

Spiritus Christi Award

Rev. Stephen Starke graduated from Concordia University Chicago in 1977 where he majored in art and minored in music. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne (CTSFW) in 1983, and has served

congregations in Illinois, Connecticut and Michigan. Since writing his first hymn during seminary, he has written more

than 250 hymns inspired by music and the Scriptures. He is regularly commissioned to write hymns for special occasions and often conducts workshops, including at the annual Lectures in Church Music conference held on CUC's campus.

In 2023 he received the Faithful Servant Award from the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians at their national conference in recognition of his service as pastor, hymnwriter and editor for Lutheran Service Book. It is through the medium of hymns that Pastor Starke desires to preserve and pass on the truths of the Gospel for generations to come. ✝

*join
us!*



MAROON & GOLD 2025 GALA

Saturday, October 18, 2025

Eaglewood Resort and Spa, Itasca, IL

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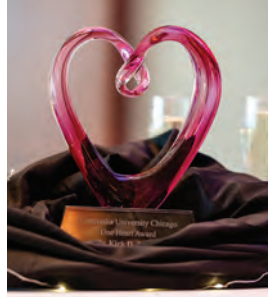
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Thank You



Far Left Mrs. Katrina (Fricke) Jurica
BME '14, 2024 G.O.L.D. Awardee

Bottom Left Dr. Richard Fischer,
2024 Spiritus Christi Awardee

Bottom Right (Top Photo) Dr. Kara
Bratton PhD '20, 2024 Distinguished
Alumni, Graduate Awardee

Bottom Right (Bottom Photo)
Dr. Kirk Farney, 2024 One
Heart Award Awardee

Celebrating M&G 2024 AWARDEES



A young man and woman are shown in profile, facing right, with their hands clasped in prayer. The man is in the foreground, wearing a maroon hoodie with a yellow logo that reads "CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY" and "Lutheran". The woman is behind him, also in prayer. The background is a solid dark red color.

**PREPARED
TO SERVE:**

**CHURCH
PROFESSIONAL
GUARANTEE
HELPS STUDENTS
PURSUE
GOD'S CALL**

This spring, Concordia University Chicago launched the **Prepared to Serve: Church Professional Guarantee**, exemplifying the University's commitment to equipping undergraduate students through its church professional degree programs. **Beginning fall 2025**, new, full-time students pursuing a church professional degree will pay **a maximum of \$5,000 in tuition and mandatory fees** each academic year. This amount includes all CUC institutional scholarships, Illinois MAP grants and federal Pell grants.



Rev. Dr. James Lee, associate professor of theology, teaches future church professionals as they prepare for their vocations at CUC.

The University is committed to providing one of the most affordable pathways for undergraduate students pursuing church work vocations within the Concordia University System. Doing so is integral to preparing graduates to stand tall for a life of service in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

The guaranteed tuition rate is available to all incoming, full-time church work students who enroll in one of the following programs:

- Classical Lutheran Educator
- Diaconess
- Director of Christian Education
- Director of Parish Music
- Lutheran Teacher Education
- Pre-Seminary

"As a testament to Concordia-Chicago's commitment to supporting church professionals, I am pleased to introduce the Prepared to Serve: Church Professional Guarantee," says Dr. Russell Dawn, president of Concordia University Chicago. "What's more, this guarantee is not the only way that CUC demonstrates the importance

THIS UNIVERSITY-WIDE COMMITMENT ALSO SUPPORTS *THE SET APART TO SERVE* INITIATIVE OF THE LCMS, WHICH ENCOURAGES YOUNG PEOPLE TO CONSIDER CHURCH VOCATIONS AS HONORABLE, SACRED AND JOYFUL WAYS TO SERVE GOD AND HIS PEOPLE.

of making a truly Christ-centered university education affordable. In fact, every single one of our undergraduate students receives financial aid. We have also strengthened our commitment to students who are the first generation in their families to attend college; this year, we doubled the annual financial award that these students receive.”

This University-wide commitment also supports the Set Apart to Serve initiative of the LCMS, which encourages young people to consider church vocations

as honorable, sacred and joyful ways to serve God and His people.

Prepared to Serve is open to LCMS freshmen or transfer students pursuing a church professional major starting in the Fall 2025 semester or later. Students must meet CUC admission requirements and complete a FAFSA. To further reduce costs, students may apply external scholarships from LCMS districts, congregations, and other private entities toward their educational expenses, up to the total cost of attendance.

The tuition guarantee is renewable for up to four years with satisfactory academic progress. Housing, food and other non-mandatory University fees are not covered under this program. International students are not eligible for Prepared to Serve.

CUC’s dedication to making a Christ-centered education achievable for future church professionals is made possible due to the support of generous donors. To learn how you can support the Prepared to Serve: Church Professional Guarantee, contact the CUC Foundation at Foundation@CUChicago.edu or call 866-448-3867.

To learn more about the tuition guarantee for church professional programs, visit CUChicago.edu/prepared-to-serve. †

AT A GLANCE: CHURCH PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

The **CLASSICAL LUTHERAN EDUCATOR** program integrates confessional Lutheran theology with classical liberal studies, classical pedagogy, and field experiences and internships in classical schools. Graduates will be equipped to teach in classical Christian and home schools, consortiums and other settings that do not require state licensure.

Students in CUC’s **DEACONESS** program become fully certified in the LCMS after four years of college plus a one-year paid internship. Through rigorous coursework and field experience, the program prepares students for compassionate service in congregations, agencies or mission fields.

A **DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (DCE)** serves within a congregation as part of a ministry team with pastors and other staff members. Depending on a student’s unique talents and interests, they might work in the areas of parish education, children’s and youth ministry, small group ministry, young adult ministry, family ministry or music ministry.

A **DIRECTOR OF PARISH MUSIC (DPM)** leads the church’s song. Whether directing the congregational singing, conducting choral or instrumental ensembles, or planning worship services with the pastor, the DPM certificate—based in the liberal arts music major—prepares the candidate for a variety of music ministry possibilities in the church.

CUC’s **LUTHERAN TEACHER EDUCATION (LTE)** program equips students with the education and licensure necessary to become a teacher in any of the 1,800+ Lutheran schools in the U.S. The LTE program is combined with the student’s choice of programs in the College of Education: early childhood, elementary, middle grades, secondary, special education, and PK-12 art, music, physical education or Spanish.

CUC’s **PRE-SEMINARY** program guides students in the process of discernment, while also preparing them for further studies. Upon receiving their degree, students will be recognized as having completed a program of study that competently prepares them to attend the seminary of their choice.



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Contact Foundation@CUChicago.edu

Paying It Forward



As the Athletic Alumni Liaison, Malachi Allgood's goal is to reestablish and strengthen the connection between CUC student-athletes and alumni.

By: *Jim Egan BA '82*

One of the major goals of Concordia-Chicago Athletics over the last several years has been to reestablish and strengthen the connection between CUC student-athletes and alumni. Of course, this connection was not dormant. Some of Concordia-Chicago's teams made it a point to host alumni games each year consistently, and events such as the annual Athletic Hall of Fame induction were regularly well attended. Special teams and achievements had been honored, such as the 1992-93 men's basketball team (conference and CIT championships) and the 2012 football team (undefeated regular season, first NCAA III playoff team).

Early this year, now that the entire department was made aware and in sync with the plan, events were ready to move forward. The next step came through the help of a CUC coach/alum, Malachi Allgood BA '18. A former cross-country and track & field runner, Allgood assumed the duties of cross-country coach in 2022, and was quick to volunteer for the newly created position of Athletic Alumni Liaison.

When the department discussed ways of connecting student-athletes with alumni, the planning began in earnest. In the beginning, they held a few small degree-related get-togethers, the first one being for College of Education students.

After reviewing the initial events, the planning for 2024-25 began with a few modifications in mind. The first change saw the shifting of focus. "When we held the first panel for this year, I reached out to our alumni athletes from the classes of 2013 to 2023—recent alumni who were not as far removed from their experience here," said Allgood. Rather than relying on a specific degree connection, Allgood opted for a wider approach that would be very casual in nature. "I encouraged them to meet our student-athletes, share their experiences...the primary focus was allowing student-athletes to have older mentors and to give our recent graduates a way to contribute their expertise and knowledge, and share their experiences with people who are in very similar positions to where they were."

The alums were given a set of primer questions to prepare for the evening,

continued on page 32

WITH THE ENTIRE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT NOW AWARE AND IN SYNC WITH THE PLAN, EVENTS ARE BEING PLANNED TO STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CUC STUDENT-ATHLETES AND ALUMNI.





Dance Team Makes History at CIT



By: *Kayla McCloud BA '21, Director of Athletic Communications*

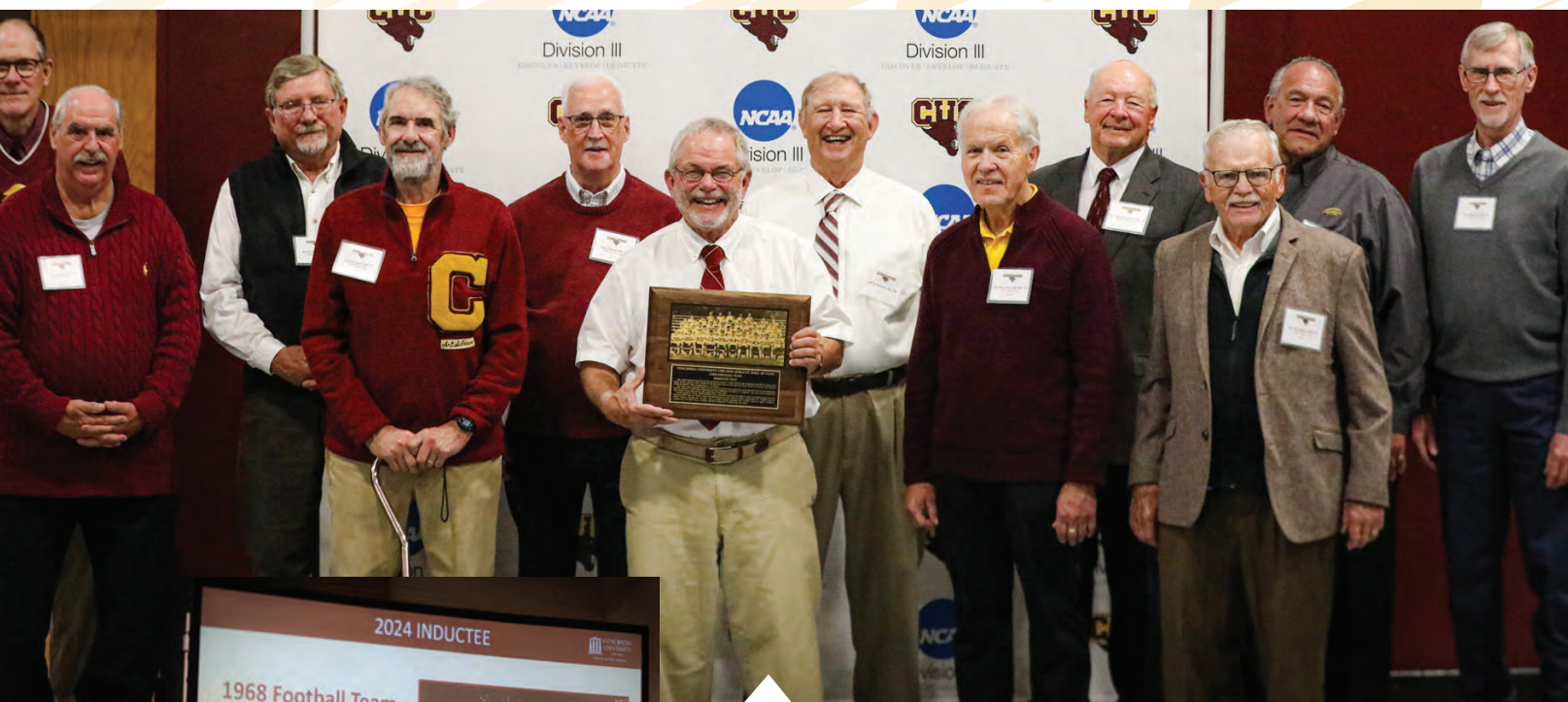
The Concordia University Chicago dance team took the floor at the 72nd Annual Concordia Invitational Tournament, where they made program history after taking first place for the first time ever. The team picked up a score of 57.7, which was seven points more than their score at CIT in 2024, where they placed fourth.

"It was thrilling," Coach Dirvelys Allen BA '07 noted. "We talk about intense attack, and I was just beaming with how much power we were executing on the floor. This was just our first one and they were just so strong."

The Cougars picked up their highest marks in performance impression with a collective 25.4, while their uniformity score followed right behind at 25.2. With strong formations and great use of the floor, the Cougars elevated their score across three officials to earn their first-place victory.

At the previous CIT, Coach Allen noted that "this team is determined to make CUC history, and we are focused on doing just that." With this first-place finish, the Cougars wrote their name in CUC history and spoke their destiny into existence. †





The Athletic Hall of Fame ceremony during Homecoming each year is just one way CUC honors its past athletes. The current athletic administration hopes to piggy-back on future Hall of Fame ceremonies and take advantage of alumni athletes on campus to host more alumni-athlete panels for current students.

ranging from their personal undergraduate experiences to what their adjustment period after college was like to how they are using their degrees today.

The February event met with a great response, beginning with the attendance. Fifteen alums met with 35 student-athletes for two-and-a-half hours. Most of CUC's current teams were represented, although a few of the winter and spring teams had competition or practice conflicts. However, according to Allgood, the student-athletes that were in attendance made the most of their

opportunities to learn from those that had gone before them. "There was a good transcendence between the sports, and I know of at least one athlete that made it a point to talk to every alum that was there."

The event provided an additional benefit for the Cougar athletes: students got real-world business exposure. They had to go into a room where they didn't know anybody, introduce themselves and start up a conversation. Learning how to develop connections with people is a skill that can serve them well when they go out into the world.

The Athletics Department is looking to add more alumni-athlete panels in the future. Beginning next year, they are hopeful this event becomes a regular fixture on the CUC athletics calendar, at least once per semester. They eagerly anticipate the chance to coordinate with University events that bring many alumni to campus, such as Homecoming Weekend and the Athletic Hall of Fame Induction ceremony. Interested alumni may direct their questions to Allgood (**Malachi. Allgood@CUChicago.edu**) or Director of Alumni Relations Emily Kober (**Alumni@CUChicago.edu**). †



ATTENTION CUC ATHLETE ALUMNI!

*Interested in participating in an alumni-current CUC athlete panel? Contact **Malachi. Allgood@CUChicago.edu** or **Alumni@CUChicago.edu** for more information.*

Spring Tour from a Student's Perspective



Each spring and fall, the Wind Symphony and Kapelle take their talents out into the world, performing at congregations and schools across the country. While audiences get to witness those expressive, moving performances, what they don't see are the exhausting yet fun behind-the-scenes aspects of touring—where friends make memories that last a lifetime. Junior **Anna Kuschel**, oboist in the Wind Symphony, kept a log of the spring tour to share with *The Forester*.



WIND SYMPHONY HITS THE ROAD: SPRING TOUR FROM A



Thursday, February 27

We loaded the bus following the Wind Symphony rehearsal, and luckily it was a gorgeous day. As soon as rehearsal was over, we all broke into our crews—each member of the Wind Symphony is assigned a crew so that we all have a clear job and way to help. The crews are: band staff, Doc's stuff, luggage, instruments, music stands, PR, truck and transport. Packing the truck did not take long at all, as we all knew what we needed to get done. Then commenced a night of packing our personal belongings, and scrambling to get to bed at a decent time before our early wake-up call.

Friday, February 28

We met outside in the fire lane bright and early, way before the sun was up, at 5:15 a.m. Luggage crew put all of our suitcases and duffels on the bus and we all claimed seats and hit the road. The first stretch of the drive was a quiet one as most everyone fell asleep, or tried to. After stopping for lunch, we arrived at Valley Lutheran High School in Saginaw, MI, where we played an interactive mini concert for the students. A couple of high school students joined us for two of our pieces, "Amparito Roca" and "Jitterbug." It was great to share our music with them, and for them to share their talents with us as well. Following that concert, we packed everything back up into the truck, and traveled just a few minutes to Peace Lutheran Church. We had a successful first concert of the tour. Afterward, we packed up again and headed to the hotel in order to get as much sleep as possible.

Saturday, March 1

On Saturday morning we got on the bus for a two-and-a-half-hour drive to Traverse City, MI. We had an afternoon concert at 4 p.m. because there was a church service in the evening. Following the concert, it was a mad dash to get everything cleaned up and put away, as the concert ended around 6 p.m. and church was at 7 p.m., and we had to eat in between. We had the most gracious hosts in Traverse City—they prepared us a meal of prime rib, baked potatoes, salad, fruit, desserts, and the list goes on and on. We ate off real plates and silverware rather than plastic—it was very classy! We all enjoyed the meal greatly and left very happy. It was wonderful to worship with the congregation at Trinity, especially considering many of them had come to our concert as well. Following the service, we headed to the hotel for a nice quiet evening.



“ONE OF MY FAVORITE PARTS OF THE TOUR IS INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WHO COME TO THE CONCERTS. IT IS SO NICE TO BUILD THESE RELATIONSHIPS, AND TO CONNECT WITH THE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO SUPPORT US.”



STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



Wind Symphony tours always make me so proud to be part of this ensemble. This group and Dr. Fischer were the reason I decided to attend CUC in the first place, and the countless amazing experiences I have had while playing oboe in Wind Symphony are wonderful memories that I will cherish forever. We have so many strong leaders in Wind Symphony, and tours really allow people to grow and develop new skills alongside their friends.

~ Anna Kuschel

Sunday, March 2

Sunday morning we headed to St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. At every stop, members of local church choirs joined us for two of our pieces, "Meridian" and "The Son of God Goes Forth to War." Because of this, we had to rehearse with the choir at every location. While St. Matthew's did not have their own church choir, local congregations came together and combined in order to form a choir to help perform with us. It was amazing to hear all of these talented voices, and to collaborate with so many new people. Every choir we played with was absolutely wonderful, and really added to the piece. Because Sunday was another afternoon concert, we were back to the hotel nice and early, which meant we had time for a Wind Symphony pool party at the hotel pool! It was fun to spend time with friends and just relax after a long few days.

Monday, March 3

Monday morning we headed to Lutheran High School North in Macomb, MI, which is in the Detroit area. We had visited this high school a few years ago on tour, and so it was great to be back. We performed a handful of pieces for the high school music students, who were very engaged and enthusiastic about our performance. They asked many questions about our instruments and the music, and seemed to have a nice time. Following the concert, we put everything back on the truck and drove about 20 minutes down the road to Grace Lutheran Fellowship Church. Following setup and sound check, we were met with another wonderful tour meal. Some members of the congregation own a barbecue restaurant in town and catered food for us. It was delicious! We all enjoyed amazing barbecue as well as homemade cupcakes. We played another wonderful concert that was met by a receptive audience. One of my favorite parts of the tour is interacting with people who come to the concerts. It is so nice to build these relationships, and to connect with the people who came to support us.

Tuesday, March 4

Tuesday was our last day on tour, and we had a lot of ground to cover. We woke up in the Detroit area, embarked on a lengthy bus ride to our lunch stop, and then spent another few hours on the bus before we made it to Immanuel Lutheran in Valparaiso, IN. It was kind of cool to be back at this church, because we played at it on my first tour freshman year. We set up and had a sound check like usual, and then had a delightful dinner prepared by the church. The concert was wonderful and was a great way to end our time on the road. Afterward, we quickly packed up, as everyone was dying to get back to CUC to begin the "break" part of spring break. We arrived around 11 p.m., and had everything put away and unloaded just after midnight. We were all very motivated to get everything cleaned up quickly because of how tired we were, so it went very fast. †

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YOUR DONATION CONTRIBUTES TO AN
EXCEPTIONAL MUSIC EXPERIENCE FOR CUC'S
CURRENT AND FUTURE MUSIC STUDENTS.



Energizing the Student Experience On Campus

By: [Anna Seifert](#),
Communications Associate



Concordia-Chicago's Office of Campus Engagement (OCE) knows how to stay busy—they oversee all student clubs, student events, intramural sports, Jump Start orientation, Welcome Weekend and homecoming activities, to name a few. With a small but dedicated team, the OCE brings boundless energy to enhance the CUC experience for students.

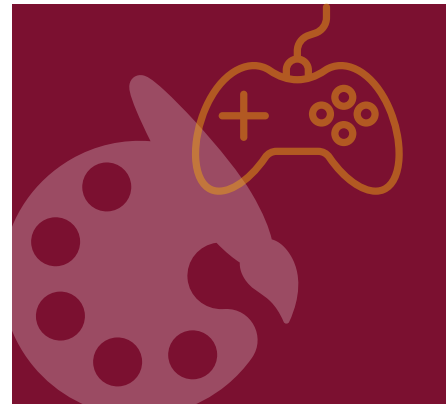
Their mission is to support students in exploring their vocations, developing leadership skills, fostering meaningful relationships and participating in memorable campus experiences. In order to provide that, a university needs enthusiastic people who have a heart for working with students. OCE director Samantha Seggerson MBA '22 and assistant director Amy Sparks are just those people, who spend their time getting to know student leaders and working with them to provide activities that serve students' needs.

“ I TRY TO PASS ON TO STUDENTS THE ENERGY
AND THE MOTIVATION TO GET INVOLVED.
ONCE YOU CAN PASS THAT TO SOMEBODY
ELSE, IT SPREADS LIKE WILDFIRE.”

—[Samantha Seggerson](#), OCE director

“We love to encourage all our students to explore their interests,” says Sparks. Any student can start their own club, as long as it isn't too similar to a club that already exists on campus, and is aligned with the university's mission.

“Once the University went through the rebrand (in 2023), seeing ‘Stand Tall’ and ‘Christ at the Center’ everywhere really helped students



coming into CUC understand our values,” says Seggerson. “More of them now recognize what Concordia-Chicago stands for; they know what our mission and values are.”

Walking through the Triangle in 2025, the CUC campus feels abuzz with energy. The first couple years coming out of the pandemic, however, participation was not quite as high as it had once been.

Some of that improves with time, but a conscious, wholehearted effort is needed to get students fully engaged with campus life. “I try to pass on to students the energy and the motivation to get involved. Once you can pass that to somebody else, it spreads like wildfire,” says Seggerson. “All of our student club presidents have that passion—they make you love doing the thing that they love to do.”

Soliciting feedback from participants is one of the main ways the OCE determines which activities to bring back every semester, and which could use improvement. “I am constantly trying to get feedback,” says Seggerson. “If one event didn’t work, what can we do differently? Or, what do we not have on our calendar that we should?”

Given the University’s large population of commuter students, student clubs aim to be flexible by hosting morning, afternoon or evening events, as well as rotating days of the week. The OCE also maintains an online calendar, where clubs can post their events and make sure they are not competing with other student activities.

Learning to stick to a budget is important for clubs that receive funding from the University or the Student Government Association. “The students are very innovative,” says Sparks. “As advisors, it is cool to hear them say, ‘This is how much money we

Some of CUC’s current Student Groups & Clubs include:

- Art Club*
- Black Student Union*
- Campus Activities Board*
- Campus Golfers Association*
- Gaming Club*
- History and Politics Club*
- Latino Student Union*
- Pickleball Club*
- Poetry Club*
- Pollinator Club*
- Sip ‘n’ Stitch*
- Swing Dance Club*
- Ultimate Frisbee*
- Women in Engineering*
- WCGR TV & Radio*

“ **HAVING AN
INSTAGRAM
ACCOUNT HAS
HELPED US A LOT—
ATTENDANCE AT
OUR MAJOR EVENTS
HAS DEFINITELY
INCREASED SINCE
HAVING IT.**”

—*Samantha Seggerson,
OCE director*

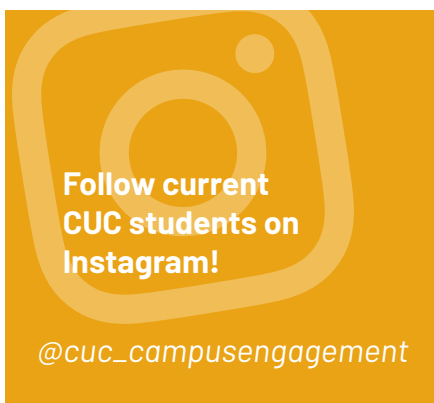
have,’ and watch them take that and be creative and collaborative. They are using what they learn in the classroom and applying it in the real world.”

When a club’s budget is particularly tight, Sparks says, “it’s a really good opportunity for them to practice their fundraising skills. Once their plan is approved by our office, the Dean of Students and the Foundation, they can go out there and develop those assertive skills that you need to raise money, working with other University departments and handling money. It’s great for them to try out while they are in college, and they can put it on their resumes.”

The OCE staff has also gotten creative while being frugal. For example, every fall the OCE used to host a student trip to a haunted house in the nearby suburbs. “We spent a lot of money for them to go off campus,” Seggerson says. “So this past year, I thought, ‘Let’s invest in something here.’” Students and staff joined in to turn the Campus Engagement offices into a haunted house. “Everyone had fun doing each other’s makeup and making the sets. And we didn’t have to rent out a space or book anything!”

Sparks adds, “The haunted house was so fun because it was student-led and student-run. The students were the actors. It was almost like putting on a play.”

Sustaining campus engagement, with events students look forward to, that they can attend with the friends they’ve made, creates a sense of belonging at Concordia University Chicago. The OCE staff uses flyers, emails and social media to keep up the excitement and reach as wide of an audience as possible. “Having an Instagram account has helped us a lot—attendance at our major events has definitely increased since having it,” says Seggerson. You can follow them [@cuc_campusengagement](#) to see what CUC students are up to as the fall semester draws nearer. †



Above Left Held at the beginning of each fall and spring semester, Involvement Fair offers students the opportunity to showcase their clubs to prospective members.

Below Crafting afternoons are just one of the many student activities offered to resident and commuter students as a way to build campus engagement.

Faculty Fulbright Scholar Promotes International Business Skill Development in Slovenia

By: [Martina Reese](#)

After four rewarding months as a Fulbright U.S. Scholar, Dr. Elisabeth Dellegrazie returned in January to the Concordia-Chicago campus. Beginning in October 2024, Dellegrazie was a visiting faculty member in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Maribor in the Republic of Slovenia.

Dellegrazie PhD '22 is discipline chair for global business and marketing and associate professor of marketing and leadership within the University's College of Business. Her Fulbright experience was funded in part by a generous grant from the Dr. Martin L. Koehneke Endowment Fund.

Dellegrazie's Fulbright Scholar teaching-research project, titled "Active Learning in Teams and the Link to Transversal Skill Development," applied team-interaction pedagogical methods in a marketing business course. "Transversal skills are foundational to the development of global competence," Dellegrazie explains. "Business schools must go beyond providing theoretical and technical business expertise and prepare students to work collaboratively in a diverse, globalized environment."

Slovenia, roughly the size of New Jersey, is nestled between Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. Maribor, Slovenia's second-largest city, provided a beautiful locale for Dellegrazie to encounter Slovenia's rich history and natural beauty. "Slovenia offers alpine terrain, coastline, an incredible cave system, hot springs, hundreds of castles and an incredible coffee culture," Dellegrazie explains.

In pursuit of global education development, Dellegrazie has created international programs, taught and traveled across multiple countries—China, Germany, France, Singapore, El Salvador, Argentina and Croatia—during her time on the CUC faculty. "Global competence enhances formal education," she explains. "Exposing yourself to a new country, culture and language allows for the development of skills such as humility, reflection and gratitude."

The Fulbright U.S. Scholars Program grants more than 400 awards per year in 135 countries, allowing U.S. citizens to teach, conduct research and carry out professional projects around the world. Selection for the prestigious grant was, for Dellegrazie, an aspirational career goal. "Being an academic and cultural ambassador for the United States was a huge honor," she notes.

Dellegrazie hopes that her time at the University of Maribor will leave a lasting impact on its business marketing program, as well as Concordia-Chicago's own. "Post-pandemic, we are seeing an increase in employers and academics who regard students as deficient in teamwork and other interpersonal transversal skills," she says. "Teamwork skills are essential to communicate and lead across cultures."

Dellegrazie reports that her international travel-study experiences have enhanced her effectiveness within the CUC faculty. "My experiences beyond the borders of the U.S. have enhanced my capacity for empathy, patience and care for our diverse student population as they navigate their educational journey." ✦

“ EXPOSING YOURSELF TO A NEW COUNTRY, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ALLOWS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS SUCH AS HUMILITY, REFLECTION AND GRATITUDE. ”

—Dr. Elisabeth Dellegrazie

Area Teens Explore Health Care Vocations at CUC's **ENVISION** Summer Camp

ENVISION PROVIDES
YOUTH WITH
AN INTENSIVE
INTRODUCTION
TO PROFESSIONS
IN NURSING,
PARAMEDICINE AND
EMERGENCY MEDICAL
SERVICES RESPONSE.

By: [Martina Reese](#)

A heavy haze fills the large room on the second floor of the Christopher Center. Uniformed firefighters and paramedics monitor movement across taut stretches of yellow emergency tape. Warning lights throb weakly in the dense atmosphere—is it smoke? toxic gas? fog? Teams of emergency responders, many wearing field identification vests, methodically traverse the area. When casualties are located, their condition is efficiently assessed and triaged.

On an otherwise fine June morning, a mass casualty event appears to have struck the Concordia-Chicago campus. Except it's a simulation, and the emergency responders are teens being guided through a crisis response exercise by firefighters and nurses.

Welcome to day three of a five-day summer camp known as ENVISION, or Exploring Nursing Vocation through Innovative Simulation and Intentional Ongoing



Nurturing. Initiated by CUC's nursing faculty in cooperation with the River Forest Fire Department, ENVISION provides youth with an intensive introduction to professions in nursing, paramedicine and emergency medical services response.

For its pilot launch in the summer of 2024, 20 junior high students between the ages of 11 and 15 showed up bright and early each day for a close encounter with the high-energy simulation scenarios that routinely confront nurses and first responders. On the day before the mass casualty simulation, real-life police, firefighters and nurses facilitated a crash scene first-responder activity in the Christopher Center parking lot, using an actual vehicle from a crash. ►

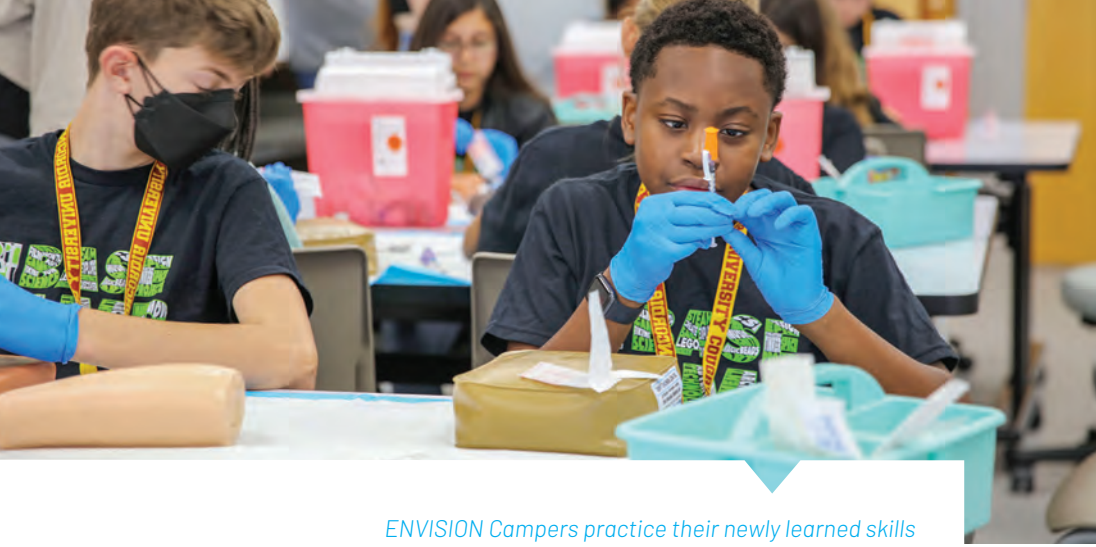


Right Under the guidance of nursing professionals and fire department emergency medical personnel, ENVISION campers role-play as first responders during a simulated mass casualty event in CUC's Christopher Center.

Above ENVISION campers witnessed demonstrations, then applied that training to direct, hands-on engagement.







ENVISION Campers practice their newly learned skills in administering medications by injection.

Concordia-Chicago Division of Nursing director Kristen Bayer and associate director Laurie Zack originally conceived the innovative ENVISION program to promote interdisciplinary skill- and knowledge-sharing between health care and emergency response professionals, University students and young learners. In addition to its obvious educational value to the University's current nursing students, Bayer and Zack sensed an opportunity to spark curiosity about health care careers among local youth.

Bayer and Zack wrote and submitted an application to the Illinois Board of Higher Education and were awarded a Nursing Schools Improvement grant, which was used to obtain the lifelike manikins and simulation equipment necessary to bring the camp to life. With funding secured, Concordia-Chicago's program leaders collaborated with their practice partners at the River Forest Fire Department, deputy chief Dave Bohanek and lieutenant Quinten Boyd, to develop the comprehensive camp curriculum. The CUC nursing simulation center coordinator, Anthony Zack, was

brought into the planning team to integrate the University's state-of-the-art simulation labs into the camp programming.

"The camp design follows the 'lifecycle' of a potential patient, from an emergency in the field through transport and triage to the hospital, and then finally the care of the patient within the hospital," explains associate director of nursing Laurie Zack.

Camp attendees witnessed demonstrations, then applied that training to direct, hands-on engagement with numerous, practical intervention techniques. Students practiced cardiopulmonary resuscitation on adult and infant-size manikins, worked to master stop-the-bleed techniques, and listened closely as experts explained how responders are deployed in field emergencies and emergency extrication situations. Under the vigilant oversight of emergency response and health care professionals, the campers applied tabletop triage and role-played through the dramatic, fog-shrouded simulated mass casualty disaster response scenario.

Additional skills they learned included intraosseous access (injection into bone marrow), needle decompression of the chest, intubation and medication administration—injection and intravenous. The curriculum included exercises in monitoring vital signs, moulage (mock injuries), suturing, and cast and splint construction. As a bonus highlight, participants were given the opportunity to use a laparoscopic surgery trainer. The week-long camp culminated in a medical-themed escape room.

"The ENVISION camp was a fairly monumental endeavor for five people to take on, coordinate and implement within a few months' time," Bayer explains. "Many of the professionals volunteered their time outside of regular work hours. Nevertheless, our collaborative team, with its amazing enthusiasm and willingness to contribute, made this camp experience everything that we could have hoped for."

Confirming Bayer's and Zack's supposition that there was an unmet need for such a program, the pilot camp's 20-student capacity was sold out within two days after enrollment opened. Post-camp feedback, overwhelmingly positive, indicated that the camp experience had surpassed expectations. While the summer camp attendees showed their engagement by focused, enthusiastic participation in the adventure, the campers' parents also praised the program.

"It was so nice to have a camp where the kids learned so much, but also had a great time and looked forward to going each morning," a parent observed. "The real-life situations and role plays were unbelievable," another parent reported. "This camp really took it to another level with the number of experts in the field that the kids were able to engage with on a daily basis."

"This camp was amazing! The things my daughter has learned this week are unreal," a third parent responded, and another wrote, "Thank you for

“THE CAMP DESIGN FOLLOWS THE ‘LIFECYCLE’ OF A POTENTIAL PATIENT, FROM AN EMERGENCY IN THE FIELD THROUGH TRANSPORT AND TRIAGE TO THE HOSPITAL, AND THEN FINALLY THE CARE OF THE PATIENT WITHIN THE HOSPITAL.”

—Laurie Zack, associate director of nursing

CONFIRMING THE CUC NURSING STAFF'S
SUPPOSITION THAT THERE WAS AN UNMET
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20-STUDENT CAPACITY WAS SOLD OUT WITHIN
TWO DAYS AFTER ENROLLMENT OPENED.

all the energy and thought you have put into creating this week-long experience. You have totally captured my daughter's imagination and interest.”

Starting in 1982, Concordia-Chicago offered a joint Bachelor of Nursing degree in cooperation with external partners West Suburban College of Nursing, Resurrection University and Oak Point University. CUC's fully in-institution nursing program launched its first sophomore student cohort in the fall of 2023. From that initial group of 26 students, the 2023 enrollment expanded with the addition of 36 freshmen. By 2024, the incoming nursing cohort had jumped to 54 students. The program, less than three years old, is thriving, and nursing is now the highest enrollment undergraduate major at Concordia University Chicago.

“Our faculty and staff are dedicated to ensuring a student-centric experience that builds not only nursing knowledge and skill but equips graduates who are empowered, resilient and ready to tackle the health care challenges of the future,” Bayer explains. “We are committed to providing a high-quality nursing education that produces practice-ready nursing graduates.”

Officially designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), CUC is surrounded by neighboring communities that have significant populations of Hispanic/Latino and Black high school students. Students attending under-resourced high schools in those communities often have limited access to the high-quality facilities and advanced classes that prepare a student to excel in academically demanding health care majors. Concordia-Chicago's Division of Nursing is committed to addressing the shortage of health care professionals from underrepresented populations or who are conversant in Spanish and familiar with Hispanic/Latino culture.

“The success of our inaugural camp in 2024 suggests that this project could have a significant impact upon the surrounding community's junior high and high school students,” Bayer explains. “We hope to contribute to the pool of future nursing professionals serving our neighboring communities.”

“With ENVISION's success and expansion as a summer nursing camp education program, we hope to build pipelines for students to envision their trajectory to college and to a nursing career,” notes



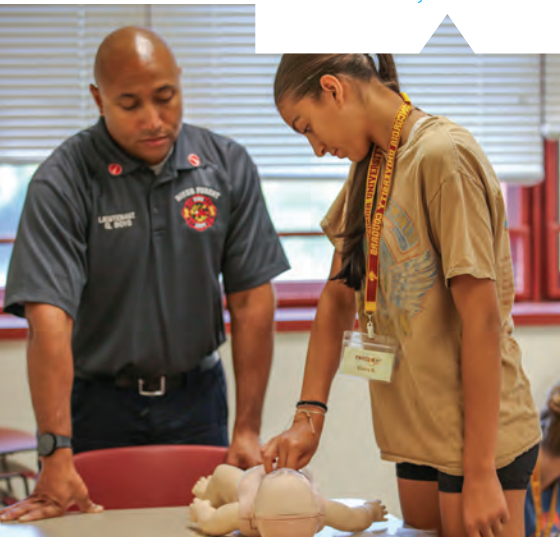
Current CUC nursing students shared their skills with ENVISION campers.

Laurie Zack. “The ENVISION summer program is designed to offer hands-on, simulated activities that will challenge and engage prospective junior high and high school students wishing to explore a vocational calling to nursing.”

“We also want to expose these students to Concordia's beautiful campus and nursing facilities,” Zack adds. “We know that students often choose to attend the college they first visited, so we want to show them our warm and welcoming community.”

ENVISION will launch its first camp for high school students this July with a mission to attract students from North Lawndale College Prep as well as neighboring high schools including Walther Christian Academy, Oak Park River Forest High School and Sterling Morton High School. †

The five-day summer camp engaged youth in simulations of common scenarios in nursing, paramedicine and emergency medicine.



Standing Tall for CUC at the State Capitol

By: [Anna Seifert](#), Communications Associate

From tutoring fellow students to leading Spiritual Life activities, Gabrielle Mintrup BA '25 made the most of her time at Concordia University Chicago. Her dedication to academics, leadership and service earned her one of Illinois' highest student honors—the Lincoln Academy's 2024 Student Laureate Award.

Recognized for her excellence both inside and outside the classroom, Mintrup traveled to Springfield, IL, in October to receive the prestigious award, joining an elite group of student leaders from across the state. The experience, she says, was both inspiring and an honor.

"I got to meet the Student Laureates from the other universities and learn about the amazing things they are doing," she says. "I was also honored to have the chance to talk with some of Illinois' strongest leaders and learn about the powerful impacts they have had on the state. It was motivating to hear

from them and be charged with the task of becoming the next generation of leaders."

At the 50th annual Lincoln Academy Student Laureate program, Mintrup received the Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award certificate signed by the Honorable Ron Spears, academy chancellor, and Gov. J.B. Pritzker, president of the Lincoln Academy; a Lincoln medallion; a challenge coin; and a \$1,000 educational stipend.

"I am so thankful for the gifts and opportunities that God has given me that led to me being honored with this award," she says.

Mintrup, originally from Roselle, IL, graduated in May with a dual degree in accounting and criminal justice. During her four years at Concordia-Chicago, she worked as a tutor for fellow students in the University's academic support center, led activities such as Prayer & Praise, and studied abroad in Cambridge, England at Westfield House.

"I am so grateful for what I learned from these experiences and the impacts I was able to have," she adds. As she embarks on her career, Mintrup plans to work as a forensic and litigation consultant and pursue her CPA.

"What I have enjoyed most about my CUC experience is the incredible friends that I made and the time we spent together," she says. "I feel so blessed to have them in my life, and I know the memories that we have made at CUC are just the beginning of lifelong friendships." †



◀ Gabrielle Mintrup BA '25, CUC's 2024 Lincoln Laureate award winner.

The Lincoln Academy's 2024 Student Laureate Award recipients.

Summer 2025

Class Notes



1950s

Duke Otto BS '56 celebrated his 90th birthday in March. Head men's basketball coach Rashaan Surles and members of the CUC basketball team visited Mr. Otto to celebrate and talk basketball.

1970s

Roger Kruel BA '79, MA '87 was awarded the Sower Award at Walther Christian Academy's Bronco Benefit (Melrose Park, IL). He serves on the CUC Foundation Board. Roger is pictured with his son, **Sam Kruel BA '10**.



1980s

Dr. Mary Scott BA '80 was selected by the Lutheran Education Association's (LEA) Board of Directors to receive LEA's top honor, the Christus Magister award. Since 1965, this most prestigious LEA award has been presented to Lutheran educators who have made significant contributions to Lutheran education. Dr. Scott is the executive director and chief executive officer at Orange Lutheran High School in Orange, CA.



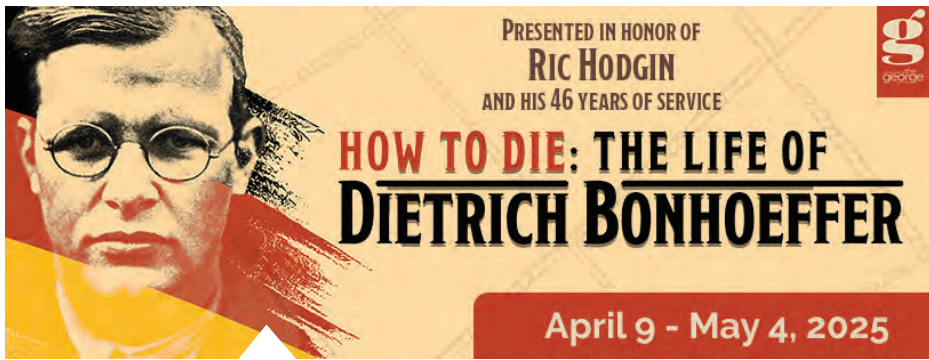
In spring of 2024, **Peter Meyer BA '88** was named Educator of the Year by The Lutheran School Partnership of Northeast Indiana. Peter currently is teaching 5th and 6th grades at Bethlehem Lutheran in Ossian, IN. He has served 27 years in Lutheran Education. Peter and his wife **Sandy (Tieman) BA '87** live in Fort Wayne, IN. Sandy works as a social worker. They have three adult children.



Mary Wert BA '88 was selected to receive Lutheran Education Association's 2025 Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Teacher Award. Ms. Wert, a 36-year veteran of Lutheran education, teaches 4th grade at Immanuel Lutheran School in Batavia, IL. Mary has also served in several other positions at Immanuel as well as at other Lutheran schools in Illinois.

1990s

Carrie Sovola BA '95 was consecrated deaconess by the Lutheran Diaconal Association in Valparaiso, IN on April 2, 2022.



2000s

Andrew J. Pederson BA '01 wrote a play about Dietrich Bonhoeffer entitled *How to Die: The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. It premiered in April at A.D. Players at The George Theatre in Houston, TX. Pederson is the director of education and theatre for young audiences at A.D. Players, the largest Christian theater in the world. The play was commissioned as part of the Metzler New Works Series.

Matthew Frick BA '07 and his wife, Anna, welcomed their son Owen Matthew on Sept. 1, 2023. Matthew is the director of Christian community at St. John Lutheran Church and School in Indianapolis.



Emily Kober BA '09 and her husband, Philip, welcomed their son Jesse Myles on June 8, 2024. Jesse was baptized at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, IL on July 21, 2024. Emily serves as the senior director of alumni relations at CUC.

2010s



Christine Elliott Rivers BA '01 recently released her debut book *Above All Things: The Tale of the King*, the first in Kloria Publishing's The Commandments series, a collection of fairytales inspired by the Ten Commandments and designed for

readers in grades two through four. She currently teaches elementary and high school classes at Faith Lutheran School in Plano, Texas.

Jesse Smith BA '06 was named Michigan High School Football Coaches Association Division 8 Regional 2024 Coach of the



Year. Jesse is the head football coach and student and family support specialist at Glen Lake Community Schools in Maple City, MI.

Dr. Caroline Pate-Hefty MA '07 was named the new superintendent for Manheim Township in Lancaster, PA. The position is effective beginning July 1, 2025.



As of August 1, 2024, **Naomi Vogt BA '08** is working for Anchor Lutheran School in Anchorage, Alaska as a grade 1 teacher.

Dr. Renita Craig MA '09 joined the academic team of the Gary Community

School Corporation as the director of curriculum and assessment.

The Unit 4 Board of Education has approved the appointment of **Dr. Montia Gardner MA '09** as the new principal of Central High School in Champaign, IL, effective July 1, 2025.



Township High School Dist. 214 board members recently approved **Angela Hawkins MA '11** as the next principal of Wheeling High School,

effective July 1. Hawkins has been a member of the Wheeling High School community since 2006.



Kristin Cummings TC '11 was a finalist for the 2025 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership. Cummings is the principal at Prospect School

in Clarendon Hills, IL. The Golden Apple Foundation is the leading Illinois nonprofit committed to preparing, honoring and retaining great educators who advance educational opportunities for students.

Andrew Montgomery BA '12 accepted the call to be principal of St. Paul Lutheran Church and School in Ft. Worth, TX. **Jenny Montgomery (Look) BA '12** received her dual certification in children's and youth ministry in 2023.



Emily Feltes MA '13 won a 2025 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership. Feltes is the principal at North-Grand High School in Chicago, IL. The Golden

Apple Award for Excellence in Leadership honors exemplary performance in school leadership by a principal or head of school who has had a significant and sustained positive impact on the school, created a culture of inclusivity and delivered dramatic student growth.

Moises Figueroa BA '14, MBA '22 completed his Doctorate in Healthcare Administration (DHA).

Jessica (Nauman) Wentz MA '15 received the national Milken Educator Award for 2024-25 on January 17, 2025. She teaches first grade at Lincoln Grade School in Washington, IL and is the first-ever Milken Awardee at her

school. Often referred to as the "Oscar of Teaching," this award recognizes outstanding educators across the country who make a profound impact on their students, colleagues and communities.

"This is because of every single person I've ever worked with," Wentz said. "There's no job I'd rather have. I'm so honored and blown away. It's because of kids like you, that make not only me, but all the teachers at Lincoln love what we do and make it worth coming to school every day."

Adam Friedrich BME '16 recently graduated from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music with a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in



wind studies. He currently serves as the associate director of bands at California State University Long Beach. Adam is the son of **Keith and Christen (Helmkamp) Friedrich '85**.



Leah Martin BA '17 joyfully married Jeremy Rushton at Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fremont, CA on July 6, 2024. The Rushtons now happily reside in Half Moon Bay, CA.



Elvira Concepcion Soriano MA '17, EdD '25 was a finalist for the 2025 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching. Soriano works at William Howard

Taft High School in Chicago, IL.

Jennifer Legris MA '17 was recently named the head dean of Carl Sandburg High School in Orland Park, IL, effective July 1.



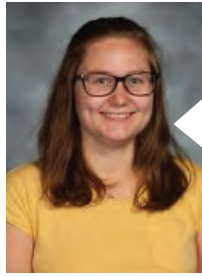
Elizabeth Dribin-Khoshaba MA '18 won a 2025 Golden Apple Award for Excellence

in Teaching. Elizabeth works for Niles West High School in Skokie, IL.



Jorge Palacios BS '19 was married on Aug. 28, 2024 to Angelica Palacios in Chicago, IL. Jorge currently works for JP Morgan Chase & Co. and serves on the Alumni Association Board.

2020s



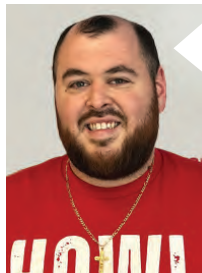
Amanda Wilson BA '20 was selected to receive Lutheran Education Association's 2025 Outstanding New Lutheran Early Childhood Teacher Award. She is in her third year of teaching at Zion Lutheran School in Bensenville, IL, where she teaches first, second and third grade.

Pierre Ngo MA '21 was named head strength and conditioning coach for the Chicago Bears. He is entering his 13th year in the NFL, having coached with the Chicago Bears, Denver Broncos and New York Jets.



Photo courtesy of the Chicago Bears

Mikala Perino BS '22 and **Bryce Bilodeau BA '21** are engaged and plan to get married at Concordia-Chicago in June 2025. Mikala currently teaches and is interim principal at St. Paul Lutheran School in Aurora, IL. Bryce works in Rolling Meadows as the parks and recreation athletic supervisor for the park district.



Jordan Oliva MA '23 was a finalist for the 2025 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching. Oliva works for Thornton Fractional South High School in Lansing, IL.

About Class Notes

Information listed reflects details received as of **April 25, 2025**.

The University welcomes news in the lives of our alumni. To ensure accuracy, information should be provided by the featured individual, rather than another party. Photos are welcome, whether prints or electronic files, however we do not return prints. Submission of a Class Note or image does not guarantee publication. The University reserves the right to edit submissions for style, length and content. †

Submit a Class Note! For submission consideration, please send information and optional photo to Alumni@CUChicago.edu.

Campus Snapshot



“ I’M VERY BLESSED TO
HAVE THE COOLEST
JOB ON CAMPUS.”

—Charlie T.

Condolences

FACULTY & STAFF

Marguerite Bloch - November 10, 2024
Jean Harrison Bojes - February 19, 2025
Charles Dietz - July 8, 2024
Charles Henricks - April 28, 2024
Julie Hinz - October 31, 2024
E. Charles Hopper - December 29, 2024
William Kammrath - December 23, 2024
Verner Klotz - December 26, 2024
Carl Moser - May 31, 2024
Diane Moses - March 11, 2025

ALUMNI

Arnold Affeldt MA '69 - March 25, 2024
Mohammed Al Hijoj MBA '24 - December 3, 2023
John Alberda '70 - January 31, 2024
April (Strohschein) Alliston BA '68 - April 17, 2024
Rosemary (Link) Andermann BA '84 - June 16, 2024
Loralie (Rosales) Arzadon BS '97 - March 20, 2024
Betty (Hamilton) Auernhamer BA '75 - December 31, 2024
Andrew Bilich BS '60 - October 21, 2024
Marnell (Schmeling) Bode BS '61 - July 9, 2024
Jean (Harrison) Bojes BME '84 - February 19, 2025
John Brandt BA '59 - November 27, 2024
Marvin J. Brandt BA '52 - April 13, 2025
Lois (Fisher) Brockhoff BS '54 - August 26, 2023
Marlin Brutlag BS '56 - August 28, 2024
Richard Bultemeyer BS '60 - July 22, 2024
Priscilla (Fruendt) Bunn BA '58 - May 19, 2024
Charles Dietz BS '63 - July 8, 2024
Lawrence Eichert MA '62 - May 28, 2024
Dorothy (Dreyer) Einspahr '46 - July 13, 2022
Arlene (Peters) Eisenbraun BS '54 - February 21, 2024
Mary (Weber) Eschels BA '73 - February 24, 2020
Joseph A. Falbo, Jr. BA '95 - March 1, 2025
Eugene Falkenstern BS '61 - July 21, 2024
Linda (Ferroli) Stein BA '72 - July 23, 2023
Martha (Etzler) Finke BS '61 - October 11, 2023
Norman Finke BS '61 - July 27, 2024
Olin Fischer '63 - June 11, 2023
Karl Frick BA '75 - January 5, 2025
Vijayasekaran George MA '74 - February 19, 2025



BUT THANKS BE TO
GOD, WHO GIVES US THE
VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST."

—1 Corinthians 15:57

David Giese BS '57 - June 23, 2022
Ellen Gossage MA '94 - January 25, 2025
Marilyn (Masch) Gotsch BA '75 - September 23, 2024
Joan (Vertz) Gresens MA '78 - December 8, 2024
David Groll BS '61 - July 29, 2024
Joyce (Blocker) Gunderlach BA '70 - December 30, 2024
Richard Hakala BA '66 - April 13, 2020
Joyce (Doty) Haynes BA '73 - November 27, 2024
Roger Heimgartner BA '70 - October 4, 2024
A. Jack Hein BA '60 - October 28, 2024
Charles Henrickson BA '74 - April 28, 2024
Suzanne (Bender) Hintz BA '63 - December 21, 2024
Julie Hinz BA '93 - October 31, 2024
Kimberly Hogan BA '90 - November 14, 2024
E. Charles Hopper MA '84 - December 29, 2024
Robert House BS '54 - March 8, 2024
Karen (Teenan) Iny BA '91 - June 2, 2024
Robert Jacke BS '61 - April 28, 2024
Sarah (Dolley) Jenkins BA '95 - July 12, 2024
Allen Johnson BA '69 - July 27, 2024
Darrel Just BA '69 - October 6, 2024
William Kammrath BA '64 - December 23, 2024
Clarmarie Keenan MA '97 - July 30, 2024
Henrietta (Schmidt) Kieschnick BS '58 - July 15, 2024
Melvin Kieschnick BS '50 - December 26, 2024
Harold Kinas BS '48 - March 24, 2024
Nancy (Freeman) Kirk BA '68 - April 15, 2024
Verner Klotz BA '67 - December 26, 2024
Vernon Koch BA '61 - September 9, 2024



Robert Koopmann BA '69 - March 17, 2024
 Donna (Hasse) Kruse BA '60 - April 6, 2023
 Judith (Toennes) Kurth BA '66 - January 25, 2025
 Romaine Marquardt BA '74 - April 14, 2023
 Ruth (Beltz) Mayer BS '63 - January 16, 2024
 Eunice (Gerken) Mc Pherson BA '65 - October 7, 2024
 Elaine (Paske) McOlash BS '59 - June 21, 2024
 Lawrence Meinzen BS '49 - February 21, 2023
 Linda (Kramer) Meyer BA '90, MA '04 - May 25, 2024
 Robert Meyerhoff BS '61 - May 2, 2023
 Mark Miessler BA '86 - February 5, 2024
 Patrick Miller BA '96 - June 4, 2022
 Robert Mitchell - December 11, 2021
 Betty (Meissner) Morse BS '64 - July 29, 2024
 Carl Moser MA '66 - May 31, 2024
 Thomas Muelleman MA '76 - June 23, 2024
 Erich Mueller BS '62 - January 2, 2025
 Rabel Newkirk BA '50 - April 10, 2024
 Marlys Odean CQ - April 20, 2024
 Carol (Roth) Olson BA '65 - May 28, 2022
 Joann (Post) Ophardt BA '66 - May 30, 2024
 James Pagels '64 - March 7, 2025
 Sharon (Brown) Pierce BA '62 - August 12, 2024
 Lois Pohlmann BA '66 - March 18, 2024
 Richard Polzin BS '51 - September 14, 2023
 Elvira Preuss BS '44 - December 5, 2024
 Lois (Kruckenberg) Rearick BA '66 - September 26, 2024
 Ray Richert BA '53 - July 16, 2024

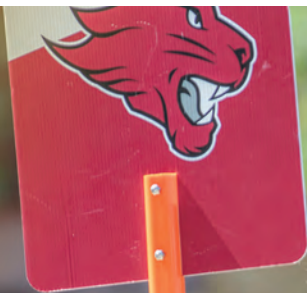
Asia Roberts MA '22 - May 28, 2024
 Alfred Schleef BS '51 - June 13, 2023
 Joyce (Jung) Schmidtke HS '48 - April 7, 2024
 Jack Schultz BA '80 - May 12, 2024
 Ralph Schultz BS '54 - September 24, 2024
 Donald Schultz BS '54 - February 24, 2025
 Mildred (Neuhaus) Schwich BA '48 - April 24, 2025
 Carol (Granger) Siemon BS '57 - December 8, 2023
 Ann Sieving-Erickson '64 - May 31, 2022
 Burge Smith BS '58 - January 9, 2025
 Gail (Tostrud) Stream BA '65 - January 28, 2025
 Fern Suckow BS '53 - July 16, 2024
 David Swanson BA '71 - July 5, 2024
 Richard Sweney BA '84 - February 11, 2025
 Donald Taebel '53 - February 1, 2024
 Bruce Tagge MCM '71 - March 8, 2025
 Daniel Tews BA '69 - March 2, 2024
 Mary Trimarco BA '91 - June 19, 2024
 Gay Von Lutzow MA '73 - December 24, 2022
 Shirley (Eggerding) Wallace BS '57 - June 8, 2024
 Diane (Wichmann) Wallis BA '70 - June 25, 2023
 Ruby (Schroeder) Wegener BS '63 - June 8, 2024
 Richard Wegner BA '69 - April 1, 2024
 John Werner BA '70 - March 8, 2024
 Carolyn (Zuehlsdorf) Wille BA '65 - April 10, 2025
 Beth (Steil) Zobel BA '73 - March 23, 2025
 Larry Zuberbier BS '62 - September 13, 2023
 Carol (Muche) Zuberbier BS '62 - February 2, 2025 †

Condolence listings reflect names known as of April 24, 2025.



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