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WAYNE

STATE COLLEGE

Magazine for Alumni and Friends • SUMMER 2026



**A LEGACY OF
LEADERSHIP,
A LIFETIME
OF IMPACT**

*Honoring Don
and Diane
Soukup '71 for
their unwavering
commitment of
time, talent, and
treasure to WSC*

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The Wayne State Magazine is a publication mailed to alumni and friends of Wayne State College. The Alumni Magazine is funded by the Wayne State Foundation. Comments and letters can be mailed to: Wayne State Foundation, Wayne State College, 1111 Main St., Wayne, NE 68787.

All cities noted in the magazine are in Nebraska unless listed otherwise.

President's Message

DR. MARYSZ RAMES



Dr. Marysz Rames President of Wayne State College

"As we close another great academic year at Wayne State and look forward to the next, the College stands poised to continue to inspire, strengthen, and serve our students and communities. But we cannot do it without you. Your support drives scholarships for the next generation of Wildcats. Your support ensures that our living and learning facilities meet high expectations. And your support provides the College with confidence that we can count on our distinguished body of alumni and friends to rally to the causes we advance to guarantee a high-quality education at a manageable cost. Thank you, and as always, Go Cats!"

Opening Messages

WSC FOUNDATION



Dr. Bob Machovsky Chief Executive Officer Wayne State Foundation

As you enjoy this issue of the Alumni Magazine, I hope you take pride in the stories that showcase the strength, generosity, and spirit of the Wayne State community, from a record-breaking Giving Day raising more than \$156,000 to the inspiring impact of alumni like Don and Diane Soukup. This spring, we celebrated the Class of 2026 and welcomed them into our global network of more than 30,000 Wildcat alumni, while also highlighting meaningful connections through reunions, the launch of our specialty license plate, the new Alumni and Friends Board, and hands-on student experiences in the School of Arts and Humanities. Traditions like Phonathon continue to strengthen bonds between students and alumni, and the Ron Holt Civic Engagement Awards remind us of the powerful spirit of service that defines Wayne State. Thank you for the many ways you help shape our future.



Dr. Matt Blomenkamp, New Vice President of the Wayne State Foundation Board of Trustees

A Wayne native and 2002 MSE and 2009 Ed.S. graduate, Dr. Blomenkamp has stepped into the role of vice president of the Wayne State Foundation Board of Trustees. Blomenkamp has a long history in Wayne, with parents and grandparents serving at the high school and the college during a 50-year span. During his long tenure as a public school administrator, previously as a high school principal, and now as an assistant superintendent who oversees finances, human resources, and construction management, his many experiences working with community members, businesses, faculty, and students will be an asset to the Foundation. Matt's passion and devotion to student success align with the core values and beliefs of Wayne State College, making him a good fit to serve as a board officer.

"The College has always been a cornerstone to the Wayne community, and my experience growing up in Wayne and my graduate work at Wayne State helped shape both my personal and professional life. I see my involvement with the College as a natural progression and an opportunity to give back to an institution that has given so much to me and so many others. Serving on the Executive Committee has allowed me to strengthen my Wildcat connections while helping serve the Foundation in this leadership role to drive the success and momentum this institution deserves."

- Dr. Matt Blomenkamp, Vice President of the Wayne State Foundation Board of Trustees





1. Jefferson Ruiz (left) and Kassydi Anderson sign the Class of 2030 alumni poster during New Student Registration activities.

2. Kai Smith gets a surprise from his mom on Senior Day for men's basketball.

3. Sydney Escritt (center) and her family at the Ron Holt Civic Engagement Awards dinner.

4. Braxton Dalton gets a hug and his diploma from WSC President Marysz Rames.

5. Breanna Ruwe poses for family photos following the graduate commencement ceremony.

6. Senior Day for women's basketball players (left to right) Lily Fitzgerald, Meg Rietz, Katelyn Diegnau, Tenleigh Smith, Rachel Dahlen, and Kylah vanDonkersgoed.

7. Maddie Scobee (left) and Reagan Dreibelbis relax before the first indoor softball game on Ron Holt Field. (WSC beat Chadron 15-2!)

8. Paige Lingle was one of 1,159 WSC students who participated in 2025-26 service-learning projects.

9. Willy the Wildcat makes friends with Hannah Winburn during New Student Registration this summer.



Congrats!

CATS OF 2026

Wayne State College held commencement ceremonies for graduate students Friday, May 8, in Rice Arena and for undergraduate students Saturday, May 9, in the college's historic Willow Bowl amphitheater.

A total of 637 degrees were conferred by Wayne State President Marysz Rames. Those students receiving their degrees included 482 undergraduates and 155 graduate students. Graduates included students from nine countries: Aruba, Australia, Canada, Curacao, Japan, Malawi, Morocco, South Africa, and The Netherlands.

Graduate students earned their degrees from the college's Master of Science in Education, Master of Science in Organizational Management, Master of Interdisciplinary Studies, Master of Business Administration, Master's in Counseling, and Education Specialist programs.

The graduate ceremony featured an invocation by master's candidate Avriana Ault of Hickman, Neb.; Carter "Cap" Peterson, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State College System, brought greetings from the board; and master's candidate Sarah M. Castaños of Omaha, Neb., delivered graduation remarks.

The undergraduate ceremony featured an invocation by bachelor's candidate Kaitlin Meiergerd of Austin, Minn.; Carter "Cap" Peterson, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State College System, delivered greetings from the board; Faith King of Clearwater, Neb., delivered a commencement address; Don and Diane Soukup, 1971 graduates of Wayne State, received the Alumni Achievement Award; and Dr. Eric Colvard, professor of history, received the State Nebraska Bank & Trust Teaching Excellence Award.

Graduate Invocation Speaker Avriana Ault

Avriana Ault of Hickman, Neb., delivered the invocation for the graduate ceremony. She graduated with a master's degree in Business Administration. She is the daughter of Tamara and Jason Ault of Hickman.

Ault earned her bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Wayne State in December 2024. During her time as an undergraduate at WSC, she was involved in Delta Sigma Pi business honor society, American Red Cross Blood Club, Dean's List, softball club, intramurals, and National Honor Society.

After graduation, Ault plans to attend nursing school to build a career helping others through healthcare. She said she hopes to combine her passion for nursing with her background in business to open her own practice or healthcare-related business, allowing her to make a meaningful impact while also leading and managing her own organization.

She is engaged to Carter Ossian, a 2023 graduate of Wayne State, with whom she has a son, Merrick.

Graduate Speaker Sarah Castaños

Sarah M. Castaños of Omaha, Neb., delivered the graduate commencement address. She graduated with a PK-12 School Administration master's degree.

Her prior education includes a bachelor's degree from University of Nebraska-Lincoln, an ELL Endorsement from Concordia University, and a master's degree from University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Castaños enjoys gardening, baking, fundraising, writing, reading, and spending time with family and friends.

She said she plans to continue to serve and grow as the Program Director/Principal for Heartland Family Service Therapeutic School.

She is the daughter of Barb and John Dagerman of Omaha, Neb. She is married to Mark Castaños, with whom she has two children: Raeya (16) and Omi Castaños (13).

Sarah Castaños and Avriana Ault



Kaitlin Meiergerd and Faith King

Baccalaureate Invocation Speaker Kaitlin Isabelle Meiergerd

Kaitlin Meiergerd of Austin, Minn., delivered the invocation at the baccalaureate ceremony. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Mass Communication, with a concentration in Agricultural Communication and Leadership and a minor in Business Administration. She is the daughter of Alan and Michelle Meiergerd of Austin, Minn.

Meiergerd was a Neihardt Scholar, Honors student, and recipient of the Dale L. Riehart Annual Broadcasting Scholarship. Her activities included service as a Resident Assistant, student worker and phonathon manager for the Wayne State Foundation, Theta Phi Alpha sorority, PR in ACTION Club, and Honors Club.

Meiergerd has accepted a full-time position with Frontier Cooperative in Lincoln, Neb., as a marketing and communications specialist.

Baccalaureate Speaker Faith King

Faith King of Clearwater, Neb., delivered the undergraduate commencement address. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. She is the daughter of Brian and Chantel King of Clearwater.

King was a member of the college's Rural Law Opportunities Program; achieved High Honors in the Major; and was inducted into Alpha Phi Sigma Honor Criminal Justice Society, Pi Gamma Mu social and behavioral sciences honor society, and Phi Kappa Phi honor society.

King served as president of Legal Minds, secretary of Wayne State Honors Club, historian for Philomathean President's Honor Society, Pi Gamma Mu vice president, Phi Kappa Phi vice president, as a member of the Criminal Justice Association, and a volunteer for the Hugh O'Brien Youth Leadership Seminar.

King plans on attending the University of Nebraska - Lincoln College of Law to obtain her Juris Doctorate degree.

King's father, Brian, graduated with a bachelor's degree and an MBA from Wayne State.



Career Scholars Graduates Include First Grand Island Cohort

Wayne State College celebrated the first class of graduating seniors from its Grand Island cohort in the Career Scholars Program on April 21 at the Double V Restaurant in Grand Island. The event marked the culmination of a four-year journey through Wayne State's unique cooperative education program.

The evening's festivities included 11 seniors and their families along with remarks from Dr. Marysz Rames, president of Wayne State; Dr. Paul Turman, chancellor of the Nebraska State College System; Dr. Katie Machovsky, executive director of cooperative education and industry liaison at Wayne State; and a keynote address from Roger Steele, mayor of Grand Island and an alumnus of Wayne State.

"We're extremely proud of our first group of graduates from our Grand Island cohort," said Machovsky. "The Career Scholars senior graduation dinner highlights the workforce partnerships between employers, students, community, and Wayne State College. We extend our sincerest gratitude to the Grand Island co-op employers for their commitment and dedication in providing meaningful learning experiences for our Career Scholars."

The Career Scholars Program was created in 2020 to address workforce needs. The scholarship program offers an accelerated, hands-on learning experience for students in business, education, computer science, computer information systems, criminal justice, electronic media, journalism, or industrial technology. Students in the program spend their first three years at Wayne State, then complete their senior year living and working full time with a partner employer in Norfolk or Grand Island.

Brody Sliva of Grand Island, Neb.,

was awarded the Career Scholars John Dewey Award, which is awarded to a student who embodies the philosophy of John Dewey's principle of learning by doing and displaying a passion for education, academics, learning, and employer engagement. Recipients also demonstrate a strong work ethic, innovative thinking, grit, tenacity, and dedication to the real-world application of their academic pursuits.

Graduating seniors were also presented with the President's Challenge Coin, which marks the completion of four years in the program and recognizes the graduates' individual tenacity and achievements.

Image Back row (L to R): Brody Sliva, Dayle Wettlaufer, Griffin Anderson, Logan Foster, Nathaniel Fuchs, and Macie Ebmeier. Front row (L to R): Jamie Dozler, Gracie Miller, Maddy Price, Gracie Benz, and Malori Swenson.

Norfolk Career Scholars Celebrates Third Class of Grads

Wayne State College celebrated the third class of graduating seniors from its Career Scholars Program's Norfolk cohort on April 23 at The Stables Event Center in Norfolk.

The evening's festivities included 70 seniors and their families along with remarks from Dr. Marysz Rames, president of Wayne State; Dr. Katie Machovsky, executive director of cooperative education and industry liaison at Wayne State; and a keynote address from Austen Hagood, president and CEO of the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce.

"The Career Scholars senior graduation dinner highlights the workforce partnerships between employers, students, community, and Wayne State College," said Machovsky. "We extend our sincerest gratitude to the Norfolk co-op employers for their commitment and dedication in providing meaningful learning experiences for our Career Scholars."

Several of the seniors were recognized with awards highlighting their work in the program.

Ellie Mahony of Lincoln, Neb., received the Career Scholars Peer Award, which recognizes a student nominated by their peers for their demonstrated leadership, unwavering selfless support of others, and impact on the future of the program. Recipients embody the values of being in the Career Scholars Program and serve as exemplary role models, leaving footprints for others to follow while making significant contributions to academics and the broader community.

Jalyssa Hastreiter of Humphrey, Neb., received the Growing Together Powered by Aksarben Award, which recognizes a student who emulates the program's initiative to live and thrive in Northeast Nebraska.

Braxton Dalton of Raymond, Neb., was awarded the Career Scholars John Dewey Award, which is awarded to a student who embodies the philosophy of John Dewey's principle of learning by doing and displaying a passion for education, academics, learning, and employer engagement. Recipients also demonstrate a strong work ethic, innovative thinking, grit, tenacity, and dedication to the real-world application of their academic pursuits.

Benjamin Gathje of Omaha, Neb., received the Career Scholars Legacy Award. It honors a student who has not only demonstrated outstanding leadership, but who has also left a lasting legacy through their actions and contributions to the program, institution, and community.

Dr. Janet Lebeda, director of strategic initiatives and special projects at Wayne State, was also recognized for her contributions to the Career Scholars Program while serving as its interim director.



A capacity crowd attended the Career Scholars graduation ceremony for the Norfolk cohort.



Individual award winners at the Norfolk cohort graduation were (l-r) Braxton Dalton, Ellie Mahony, Jalyssa Hastreiter, and Benjamin Gathje.



Parents and friends helped celebrate the third graduating class for the Career Scholars Norfolk cohort.

Graduating seniors were also presented with the President's Challenge Coin, which marks the completion of four years in the program and recognizes the graduates' individual tenacity and achievements.



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Dr. Eric Colvard Receives State Nebraska Bank & Trust's Teaching Excellence Award

Wayne State College is proud to announce that Dr. Eric Colvard, professor of history, was presented the State Nebraska Bank & Trust Teaching Excellence Award at the college's May 9 baccalaureate commencement ceremony. Colvard has taught at Wayne State since 2013.

Matthew Ley, chief executive officer and trust officer of State Nebraska Bank & Trust in Wayne, presented the award during the undergraduate ceremony. This prestigious honor recognizes rigorous standards that require a superior level of effective teaching.

David Ley, the bank's chairman of the board, established the award in 1998 as a way of recognizing and strengthening outstanding teaching at Wayne State College.

State Nebraska Bank & Trust has served the Wayne community for more than 130 years and supports the college in many ways, including numerous scholarships, capital investments, employment of students, and service on the Wayne State Foundation Board of Trustees.

"Teaching at Wayne State College is an incredibly rewarding experience, and I am honored to receive this recognition," said Colvard. "I would like to thank State Nebraska Bank & Trust, my students, my colleagues, who have also been outstanding teaching mentors for me, and the WSC administration and support staff of all stripes who do the every-day hard work necessary to keep our college dynamic and thriving."

Colvard teaches courses in world history with a focus on the British



Matthew Ley (left), CEO and trust officer for State Nebraska Bank & Trust in Wayne, and Dr. Eric Colvard, professor of history at Wayne State.

Empire and South Asia. He serves on the Faculty Senate and is co-director of the WSC Anthropology Museum, as well as WSC Fulbright Advisor.

Colvard is a Fulbright Scholar and member of the Alcohol and Drugs History Society.

Colvard's interests include colonial South Asia, the British Empire, and globalization. His current research focus is the connection between the global temperance movement and Indian nationalism.

Colvard earned his bachelor's degree in Nursing from the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, his master of arts degree in History from Texas Tech University, and his Ph.D. in History from the University of Iowa.

Ostermeyer Named Nebraska's 2026 High School Principal of the Year

Wayne State College graduate Johnnie Ostermeyer was named the 2026 High School Principal of the Year by the Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals (NSASSP). Ostermeyer is the principal at Crofton High School in Nebraska. This award is presented annually to a high school principal who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in their school, region, and state.

Ostermeyer has served in education since 2003. He began his career teaching math at Woodbury Central School District in Iowa and later at South Sioux City Community Schools in Nebraska. In 2013, he transitioned into administration as the assistant principal and activities director at Pierce High School. In 2015, he became the secondary principal at Crofton High School, where he continues to lead with distinction.

Ostermeyer has been a member of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA), the Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals (NSASSP), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) for 12 years. Additionally, Ostermeyer has served as the NSASSP Region III president.

Ostermeyer earned his bachelor's degree in Mathematics Education from Wayne State College in 2002, his master's degree in School Administration 7-12 from Wayne State College in 2009, and his Specialist in Education degree from Wayne State College in 2023.



WSC Alumni Bring Home Teaching Awards

Wayne State College alumna Codi (Anderson) Hrouda

has received the 2026 Golden Apple Award for her dedication and commitment to students and education. Hrouda, a fifth grade teacher at Dakota City Elementary School, received the award from the South Sioux City Area Chamber of Commerce during the Chamber's annual banquet Jan. 16.

Hrouda, a native of Hubbard, has taught at Dakota City Elementary School since 2014. Prior to Dakota City, she taught at Centennial Elementary School in Columbus for 13 years.

Hrouda credits her mom (Cindy Morgan-Anderson) and Rae Brown, a former fourth grade teacher at Thurston Elementary School, with influencing her to become a teacher.

"Throughout my teaching career, I have aspired to be like both my mom and Rae Brown," added Hrouda. "I have incorporated all their teaching traits into my own teaching style, and I am forever grateful and blessed that they both influenced my life as a teacher."

Hrouda earned her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Wayne State in 2000, and her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Wayne State in 2006.

"With a combination of professionalism, warmth, and a caring personality, it's easy to see why Codi's students love her so much," said Dr. Marysz Rames, president of Wayne State. "Her passion and dedication for teaching impacts her students every day, and she truly deserves the Golden Apple Award."

Hrouda and her husband, Brad, have three daughters – Olivia, Abbie, and Ellesyn. Olivia teaches social studies at Emerson-Hubbard Community Schools, while Abbie and Ellesyn are both pursuing

degrees in Family and Consumer Sciences at Wayne State. Abbie is a junior with a concentration in Interior Design, while Ellesyn is a freshman in Foods and Nutrition.

"Wayne State College is more than just an alma mater to me; it is the foundation of my life's greatest blessings," said Hrouda. "My undergraduate and graduate degrees provided an exceptional education that launched my teaching career, but the campus gave me even more: lifelong friends and the man who became my husband. Watching two of my daughters now walk those same paths at Wayne State, receiving a top-tier education and creating their own lasting memories, fills me with immense pride. Wayne State truly feels like home for our family."

The Golden Apple Award, established in 1992, is presented annually to an educator who has made a significant and lasting impact on students, schools, and the community. The recipient is selected for demonstrating excellence in teaching, leadership, and dedication to student success.



Jim Crilly Named High School Principal of the Year



Wayne State College graduate Jim Crilly has been named the 2026 High School Principal of the Year by the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA). Crilly is the principal at Madison High School.

Crilly, who earned his master's degree in School Administration (PK-12) from Wayne State in 2009, began working in education in 1995 when he was hired as a history teacher at Ewing Public Schools. He became principal at Ewing in 1998. In 2001, Crilly was hired as a lead teacher/assistant principal at Madison Public Schools, and he was promoted to high school principal in 2011.

"The award was definitely a surprise, just because that rural association is pretty big," said Crilly, who retired in June. "To be honored by your peers, as always, makes you feel good, like you accomplished something over your career."

"You don't get awards like that unless you have great co-workers and staff and students," continued Crilly. "A lot of it is a reflection of the good things that happen at Madison."

According to its website, NRCSA represents more than 88,000 students in school systems across Nebraska. It has 222 member schools, Educational Service Units, and State colleges in 90 counties and 24 legislative districts across Nebraska.

2026 Ron Holt *Civic Engagement Award* HONOREES

Wayne State College senior Sydney Escritt of Hebron, Neb., received the Ron Holt Civic Engagement Award for the 2025-26 academic year, and Wayne businessman Carter “Cap” Peterson, a 1972 Wayne State graduate, received the Alumnus Civic Engagement Award during the annual Ron Holt Civic Engagement Awards banquet held April 16.

Lisa Nelson, director of the Service-Learning Program at Wayne State for more than a decade, received the inaugural Service-Learning Lifetime Achievement Award. Nelson retired from Wayne State in June.

Established in 2014, the Ron Holt Civic Engagement Award recognizes a graduating Wayne State senior who serves as an exemplary role model and contributes significantly to the service ethos of the campus and community. The award honors the work of Dr. Ronald Holt, a 1989 Wayne State alumnus and current Wayne State Foundation Trustee, known for his advocacy in LGBTQ+ wellness and civil rights.

The Civic Engagement Alumni Award honors a Wayne State alumnus community member who is civic-minded and exemplifies outstanding service on campus and in the community.

“At the Wayne State Foundation, we are honored to recognize this year’s recipients, whose excellence in service, leadership,

and academic achievement truly reflects the best of Wayne State College,” said Dr. Bob Machovsky, CEO of the Wayne State Foundation. “Their dedication to strengthening our campus and community sets a powerful example for others to follow. We are equally grateful for the vision and continued support of Dr. Ron Holt, whose commitment to civic engagement and advocacy has helped elevate this event and inspire a culture of service that reaches far beyond our campus.”

Student awards include a \$1,000 gift, a trophy, medallion, and recognition at graduation.

Students must participate in a Service-Learning Program project in order to apply for the Civic Engagement Award. Each semester, hundreds of Wayne State students make a difference in the community by participating in service-learning projects, contributing nearly \$250,000 each year to the region in community service.

For these services, Wayne State was recognized as a member of the national President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for five consecutive years. In 2014, Wayne State was one of only three higher education institutions in Nebraska to receive the Honor Roll with Distinction in the General Community Service category.

Wayne State’s Service-Learning Program celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2024.

About Dr. Ron Holt

Dr. Holt has a long-standing history of service to Wayne State, beginning in 2000 through volunteer speaking engagements each homecoming. His work has since expanded nationally and internationally, focusing on LGBTQ+ healthcare, mental health, and suicide risk reduction. In collaboration with Dr. William Huggett, a 1986 Wayne State graduate, he has also published resources dedicated to health and wellness within the LGBTQ+ community.

Dr. Holt’s contributions have been recognized through numerous honors, including the WSC Alumni Service Award, President’s Diversity Award, Alumni Achievement Award, and the School of Natural and Social Sciences Outstanding Alumni Award.

Currently, Dr. Holt serves as a student health psychiatrist at San Francisco State University and an adjunct associate professor at Kansas City University.



Dr. Ron Holt, Lisa Nelson, Carter “Cap” Peterson, Sydney Escritt, and WSC President Marysz Rames

About Sydney Escritt

Sydney Escritt is the daughter of Bill and Lindsey Escritt of Hebron, Neb., and she is a 2022 graduate of Thayer Central Community Schools. Escritt majored in Chemistry Health Sciences, with minors in Public and Global Health and Biology at Wayne State, and she was actively involved in the English as a Second Language Program.

Escritt also served as a representative on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, vice president of Phi Kappa Phi, treasurer of the Health Science Club, and chair of intellect for the Philomathean President’s Honorary Society. In addition to her campus leadership, she was a member of the Wildcat cross country and track teams.

Escritt’s academic and athletic excellence have earned her recognition as a Neihardt Scholar, a dean’s list honoree, a Myles Brand All-Academic recipient, a Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference All-Academic Team of Excellence member, and an Edward Jones Presidential Scholar Distinction Award recipient.

Escritt plans to attend medical school at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. She intends to continue combining her interests in research, medicine, and service to improve patient care and community health.

About Carter “Cap” Peterson

Carter “Cap” Peterson serves as a Wayne State College Trustee, sits on the Foundation’s Executive Board, and is a member of the Nebraska State College System Board of Trustees. He is also president of Northeast Nebraska Insurance Agency and was honored as the 2005 National Professional Insurance Agent of the Year.

Peterson, along with his family and friends, established the Nana Peterson Endowed Scholarship at Wayne State. This scholarship honors the memory of his late wife, Nana Peterson, and celebrates her deep love for the Wayne community and Wayne State.

In September 2025, Peterson and his family received the inaugural Family of the Year Award from Wayne State and the Wayne State Foundation. Peterson recently received the Citizen of the Year Award from Wayne America.

About Lisa Nelson

Lisa Nelson worked at Wayne State for 21 years before retiring in June. In addition to serving as director of Wayne State’s Service-Learning Program, Nelson also served as co-advisor of Wayne State’s Nebraska Delta chapter of Pi Gamma Mu, an honor society that recognizes excellence in the social and behavioral sciences. Nelson received Pi Gamma Mu’s Outstanding Alumni Award at the Pi Gamma Mu Centennial International Convention in 2024. Nelson was initiated into Pi Gamma Mu as an undergraduate student at Wayne State.

Nelson was also the Honors advisor and long-standing co-advisor for the Phi Kappa Phi honor society, which honors excellence in all academic disciplines.

Nelson earned her bachelor’s degree in Psychology and her master’s degree in Social Sciences Education from Wayne State College.



MOLTEN METAL, LASTING

The School of Arts and Humanities Brings Learning to Life Through General Fund Support

At Wayne State College, learning doesn't just happen in the classroom—it comes alive through hands-on experiences that shape students' creativity and confidence. One powerful example is the annual metal pour, an event made possible in part by support from the School of Arts and Humanities General Fund.

Each year, students in the Studio Art program take part in this immersive experience, transforming their ideas into tangible works of art. Using techniques rooted in tradition and innovation, students design molds and cast their own aluminum sculptures—an opportunity few undergraduate programs can offer.

"This is one of the ways you can mold metal," said Sarah Lemmon, studio art faculty member. "Each student brings something different—some are casting meaningful objects, while others are experimenting with new forms. It's creative, it's technical, and it's exciting."

During the event, preparation and teamwork are essential. Students carefully construct molds and work alongside faculty to safely

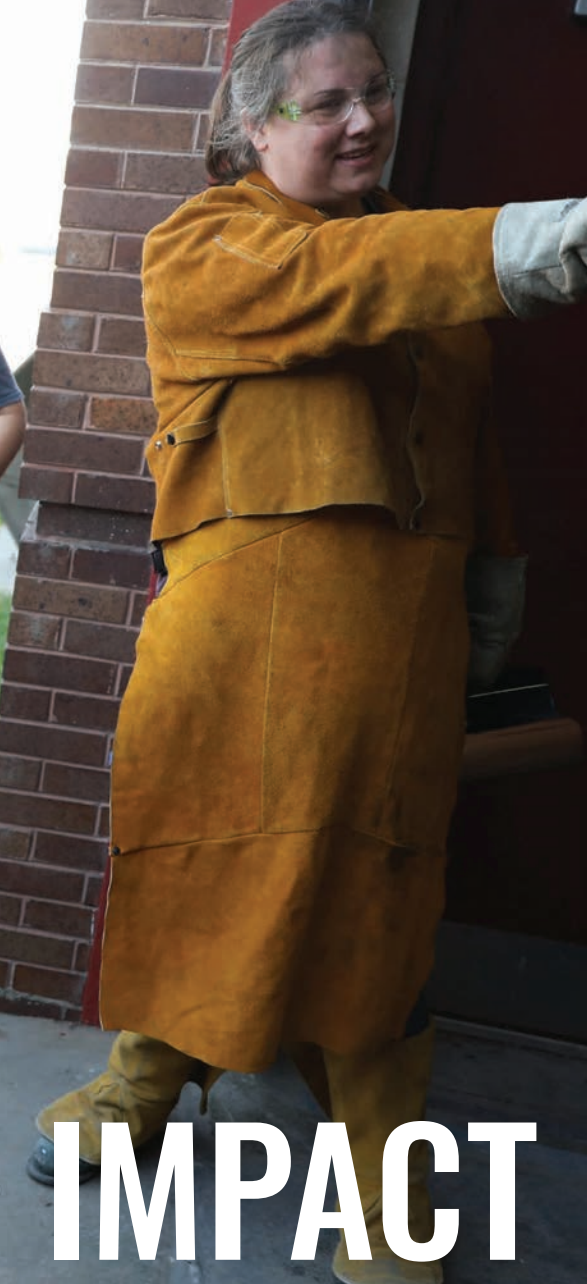
operate the furnace, which heats aluminum to more than 1,300 degrees. From managing the molten metal to pouring it into molds, every step requires precision, collaboration, and trust.

The experience reflects the core of Wayne State's Studio Art program, where students build skills in painting, printmaking, sculpture, and ceramics while exploring art history and developing their own artistic voice. Opportunities like the metal pour elevate that learning, giving students real-world, hands-on application of their craft.

Events like these are made possible through the School of Arts and Humanities General Fund, which supports innovative learning experiences for students and faculty.

For students, the impact is immediate. What begins as an idea becomes a finished sculpture—something physical, personal, and enduring.

For alumni and donors, supporting the general fund means investing in experiences that define a Wayne State education—hands-on, collaborative, and deeply meaningful.



IMPACT



Support to the School of Arts and Humanities General Fund allows us to provide opportunities that go beyond traditional classroom learning. Experiences like the annual metal pour are transformative—they give students the chance to create something lasting while developing skills they will carry with them long after graduation.”

**- Dr. David Bohnert,
Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities**

Sarah Lemmon, professor of art at Wayne State, speaks with a group of visiting high school students about the aluminum pour being performed by Wayne State students.

The Arts are alive and well at Wayne State College!

Both departments in the Arts hold national accreditation, which positions them among the most competitive programs in the nation. The pictures below represent a sampling of the tremendously active departments of Art and Design and Music at WSC.

DEPARTMENT OF ART & DESIGN

Arts Walk takes place on campus during Homecoming week each fall and allows WSC students to showcase their artistic skills. The photo in back is of students working on sidewalk chalk murals.

Seniors in Art and Design programs are given opportunities to showcase their work. The photo above represents a graphic design student showing her portfolio of work.

Students work with adjunct professor Leroy von Glan to fire pottery in the kiln.

Professors Francine Fox, Beatriz Rodriguez, and Josh Piersanti guide students on their path in developing their creative skills in the Studio Arts Building.

The WSC Music Academy offers private lesson instruction to students of all ages. Under the guidance of Department of Music faculty, WSC students serve as the instructors for children and adults from the community interested in advancing their skills on an instrument or voice.



The WSC Concert Choir was selected by a panel of judges for a featured performance spot at the convention of the Nebraska Music Educators in the fall of 2025. The choir was previously selected in 2022 and again in 2025, during their next year of eligibility. This is an enormous accomplishment and demonstrates the high level of student musicians at WSC.

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC



Did you know that the history of the WSC Music Camp dates back to the 1940s? This summer residential camp allows students from the region to perform together, as well as learn new skills such as songwriting, ukulele, music technology and more. This year's camp took place June 22-25 in the newly renovated Peterson Fine Arts building.





ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT

Don and Diane (Massman) Soukup, proud 1971 graduates of Wayne State College, were awarded the Alumni Achievement Award from the Wayne State Foundation. The Soukups exemplify the values of hard work, perseverance, and lifelong achievement fostered at WSC. Both worked their way through college — Don returning to complete his degree and Diane graduating in less than three years — setting the tone for their future success.

They built distinguished careers in the insurance industry, advancing from claims adjusters to leadership, sales, and business ownership, while simultaneously serving in the U.S. Army Reserves — Don retiring as a Sergeant Major and Diane as a Master Sergeant. Their entrepreneurial spirit also led to the creation of a highly successful real estate enterprise, growing from a single property to a portfolio of 46 properties across California and Nevada.

For nearly four decades, the Soukups have demonstrated extraordinary commitment to Wayne State through scholarships and service. Their support has grown from five to 11 annual scholarships, expanding opportunities for students, and their leadership includes long-standing involvement with the Wayne State Foundation.

Their journey—from humble beginnings to remarkable professional success—reflects not only business excellence, but also a deep dedication to service, family, and giving back. Wayne State is proud to count the Soukups among our distinguished body of alumni.

Their support has gone far beyond financial contributions. Through their leadership, service, advocacy, and consistent presence on campus, they have remained deeply connected to Wayne State and have made a lasting impact on generations of students and the people who care so much about this special place.”

- Dr. Bob Machovsky, Chief Executive Officer, Wayne State Foundation



Black & Gold Performing Arts Series



Alumni Activities

Served as Trustees and Executive Board members of the Wayne State Foundation for more than 30 years.

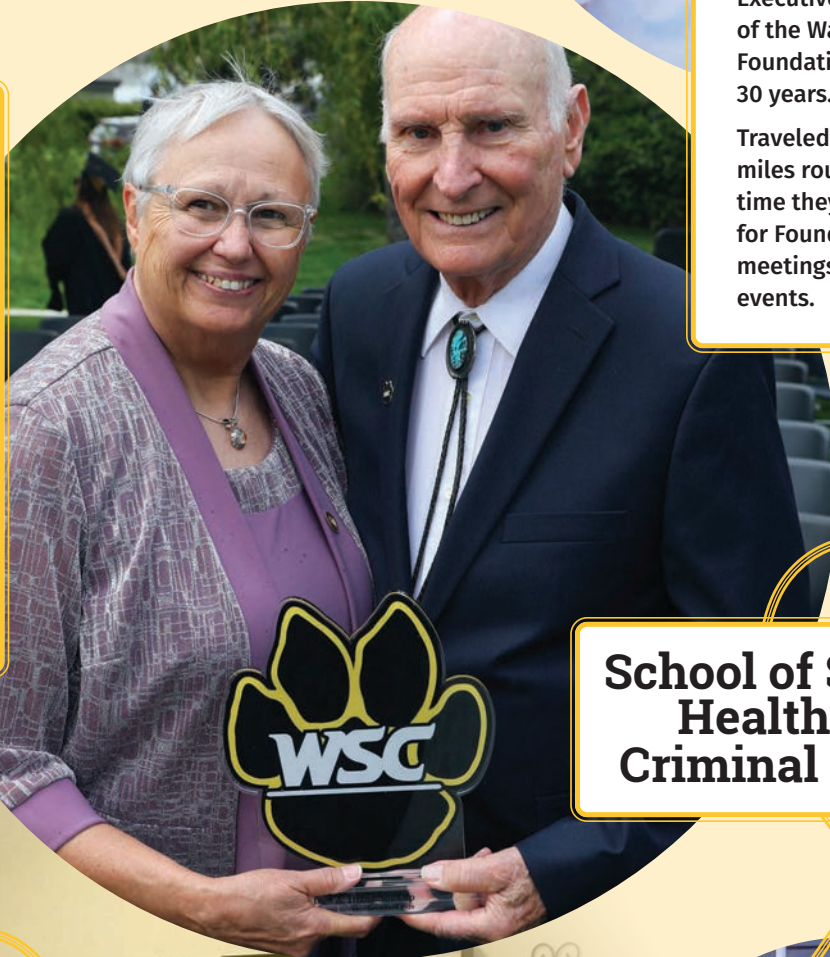
Traveled a combined 2,566 miles round-trip each time they visited Wayne for Foundation board meetings and college events.



AREAS OF IMPACT:

Facilities Contributions

- Benthack Hall Renovation
- U.S. Conn Library Renovation
- Center for Applied Technology
- Willow Bowl Restoration
- Planetarium Improvements
- Track and Football Stadium Renovation
- Studio Arts Building Renovation
- Heritage Plaza



School of Science, Health, and Criminal Justice

Scholarships

Provided more than 70 scholarships to Wayne State College students.



NEWS BRIEFS



Dr. Jason Pierce Named New VPAA at Wayne State

Wayne State College is pleased to announce the hiring of Dr. Jason Pierce as the new vice president for academic affairs. Pierce began his duties on May 1.

Pierce comes to Wayne State from Young Harris College in Young Harris, Ga., where he served as provost and executive vice president. Pierce has overseen academic affairs, enrollment management, student development, information technology, library services, dual enrollment, disability services, policy and compliance, accreditation/IE/IR, communications and marketing, and human resources.

Prior to Young Harris College, Pierce was the vice president of academic affairs at Tusculum College/University in Greenville, Tenn., in 2017 and 2018. He also served as the assistant, associate, and interim vice president for academic affairs at Mars Hill College/University in Mars Hill, N.C., from 2010-2016.

"I am excited to welcome Dr. Jason Pierce to Wayne State College," said Dr. Marysz Rames, president of Wayne State. "Dr. Pierce's extensive leadership experience combined with his commitment to building on the successes of our academic programs gives me confidence that we have hired a passionate leader who will work with our faculty, staff, and students to continue to raise the bar for academics at Wayne State."

"I must say that I am so appreciative of Dr. John Miller, interim vice president for academic affairs, and the tireless work he has done to ensure we sustained momentum under his watch," added Rames. "I look forward to working with Dr. Pierce as we continue to advance our work focused on programs and initiatives that support our mission."

Pierce earned his bachelor of arts degree (with highest distinction) in English from the University of Maine, his master of letters degree (MLitt) in Scottish Literature from the University of Saint Andrews, his master of arts degree in English from the University of Maine, and his Ph.D. in English from the University of South Carolina.

Wayne State Earns Silver Military Friendly Status

Wayne State College has earned the Silver status in the 2026-27 Military Friendly Schools® designation, recognizing its commitment to supporting veterans, active-duty service members, and military families. The College was also recognized as a Military Spouse Friendly School®, reflecting its support for spouses pursuing education and career advancement.

Institutions earning the Military Friendly Schools® designation are evaluated using a combination of public data sources and responses to a proprietary survey. More than 3,200 companies participated in this year's evaluation.

Methodology, criteria, and weightings are developed by Military Friendly, in consultation with its Advisory Council of independent leaders in the military community. Final ratings are based on an institution's performance in such areas as student recruitment,

retention, academic progress, graduation rates, career placement, and support services for military-connected students.



At Wayne State College, military-connected students are supported through flexible policies, dedicated resources, and financial assistance designed to reduce barriers to degree completion. Service members and veterans may receive academic credit for prior military training and experience, helping them save time and money while progressing toward their degree.

The College also offers priority registration for students using VA benefits, ensuring access to required courses and a smooth path to graduation. In the event of active-duty deployment, Wayne State provides flexible options, including course withdrawals, incompletes, and tuition adjustments, allowing students to continue their education with minimal disruption.

Financial support options include Military Tuition Assistance, G.I. Bill benefits, and participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program, along with scholarships specifically for military members, veterans, and their families. Together, these services reflect Wayne State's commitment to helping military-connected students succeed from enrollment through graduation and beyond.

Wayne State Launches Master's Program in Higher Education and Student Affairs

Wayne State has launched a Master of Science in Education (MSE) degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs, which will open for professionals wishing to advance their career in Fall 2026. The new program was approved by the Nebraska State College System Board of Trustees at its Jan. 15 meeting in Lincoln.

The new fully online master's program prepares graduate students to serve as ethical, inclusive, and student-centered leaders and professionals across a range of postsecondary settings. Rooted in evidence-based practice and student development theory, the program integrates coursework, applied learning, and reflective practice to develop professionals capable of advancing student learning, engagement, and success. Students explore critical issues in higher education – including student support services, organizational leadership, and conflict resolution. Graduates are equipped to embark on fulfilling careers across many leadership and service roles within higher education and student affairs.

This proposal restructures the MSE in Counseling focus area Student Affairs and College Counseling into a separate MSE degree program, Higher Education and Student Affairs. This restructuring allows the Higher Education and Student Affairs degree to be reduced from 60 credit hours to 30 credit hours, as it will not require the significant number of credits required for the nationally accredited Counseling

degree program. The new 30-credit-hour MSE in Higher Education and Student Affairs will prepare professionals to advise, guide, and support students across postsecondary settings that do not require a counseling license or certification.

Program Admission Requirements

In addition to the admission and registration procedures that apply to all degree seeking graduate students, each applicant must complete a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution with a minimum grade point average (GPA) of a 2.75.

Students will be required to complete a thesis, internship, comprehensive examination, or project as the Final Scholarly Artifact requirement. Courses in the program include topics such as Introduction to Educational Research and Design, Leadership in Intercultural Communication, Career Development and Life Planning, Human Development Across the Lifespan, Introduction to Student Services, and Student Affairs and College Counseling.

Questions? Contact Dr. Christian Legler, associate dean of the School of Education and Behavioral Sciences, at chlegle1@wsc.edu or 402-375-7379.

WSC's Mattie Kucera Named Student Trustee

Governor Jim Pillen has appointed Wayne State College junior Mattie Kucera as a student trustee for the Nebraska State College System.

Kucera, who is from Raymond, Neb., joins Daniella Kosiso Akwanamnye of Chadron State College and Lucas Hrabik of Peru State College as the state college student trustees for the 2026-27 academic year.

“As a student trustee, I work to represent my campus at the highest level, bringing forward student perspectives, contributing to thoughtful decision-making, and advocating for policies and initiatives that ensure students feel supported, heard, and empowered to succeed.”

Kucera is majoring in Elementary Education and Special Education K-6 at Wayne State. She serves on the Student Senate and is co-chair of its Public Relations and Technology Committee. She is also a member of the Wildcat Academy of Leadership and Knowledge.

She is the daughter of Michael and Kris Kucera of Raymond, Neb.

“The Board of Trustees values the insight and perspective our student leaders bring to the table,” said Bob Engles, chair of the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges. “It is my honor, as chair, to welcome our new student trustees, and I look forward to their contributions in strengthening our colleges and the student experience.”



BE BOLD, BE GOLD:

Record-Breaking Giving Day Raises More Than \$156,000

Wayne State College celebrated its sixth annual Giving Day this year with record-breaking success, raising more than \$156,000 from generous alumni, friends, faculty, staff, and supporters. This total marks the most successful Giving Day in the College's history and demonstrates the strong commitment of the Wildcat community to supporting students and advancing the mission of Wayne State College.

Donors from across the country came together to make gifts of all sizes, collectively creating a powerful impact that will support student scholarships, academic programs, campus initiatives, and student-athlete scholarships.

"The outpouring of support from our alumni and friends is truly inspiring. Their generosity not only helped us surpass our Giving Day goal, but also made this the most successful Giving Day in Wayne State College history," said Hannah Lindsay, director of Alumni Relations and Annual Campaigns at Wayne State College.

Throughout the day, alumni and supporters were inspired by stories of impact, real-time fundraising milestones, and enthusiastic participation across social media and campus channels, all of which contributed to the record-breaking outcome.

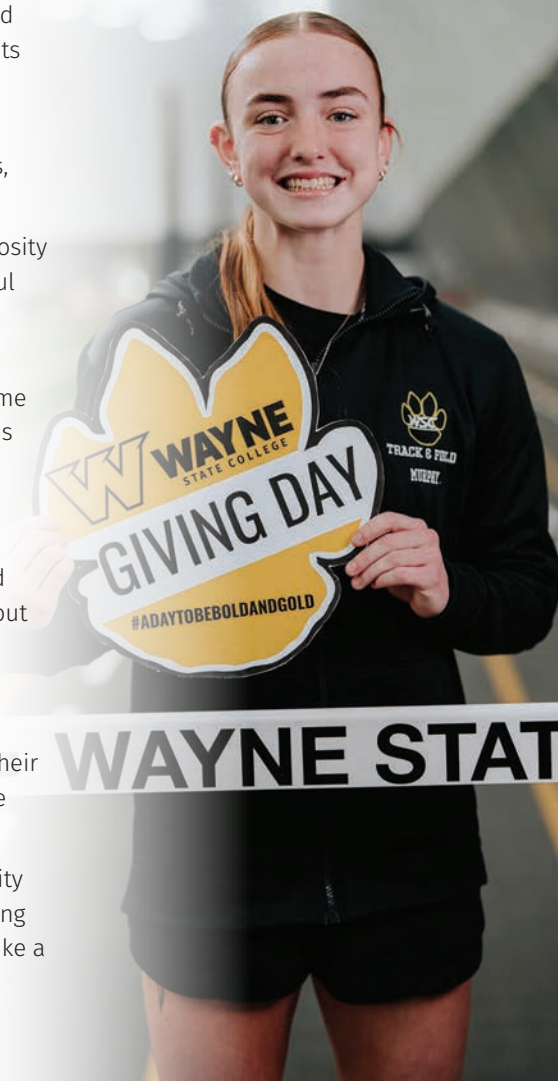
Challenge Gifts Multiply Impact

A major factor in the success of Giving Day was the generosity of donors who provided challenge gifts, motivating others to give and help unlock additional funding throughout the day. These leadership gifts created momentum and encouraged participation by matching or challenging additional donations at key moments.

Wayne State College gratefully recognizes below the individuals, organizations, and anonymous donors whose challenge gifts helped elevate Giving Day to new heights. Their leadership and generosity inspired hundreds of donors and significantly increased the impact of every gift made.

The success of Giving Day highlights the strength of the Wayne State College community and its shared belief in the power of philanthropy. The College looks forward to building on this momentum to continue supporting students and enhancing programs that make a meaningful difference on campus and beyond.

For more information about Giving Day results or how to support Wayne State College, visit www.wsc.edu/giving-day.



Steve Rames and President Marysz Rames, \$500, Student Emergency Fund

Dr. Ron Holt, \$2,000, Men's Track and Field / Cross Country

Lisa Albers, \$500, School of Arts and Humanities

Marie Mohr, \$10,000, Baseball

The Lemar Family, \$11,500, Baseball

Sandra Kirsch-Dorcey, \$1,000, School of Business and Technology

Byron Schafersman, \$5,000, Athletic Excellence

Jim and Elizabeth Erwin, \$2,500, Volleyball

Cap Peterson, \$1,500, Multiple Areas

Shane and Abbie Baack, \$2,500, Multiple Areas

Matt Ley and Sandy Brown, \$500, General Fund

Roger Sahs, \$250, School of Business and Technology

Bob Ensz, \$500, The General Fund

Mike Green, \$1,750, Multiple Areas

Kevin Peterson, \$2,000, Baseball and Volleyball

Bill and Betty Reeg, \$300, School of Arts and Humanities

Bob Machovsky and Katie Machovsky, \$500, General Fund

Mike and Kayla Varley, \$2,200, General Fund

Bill Melena, \$1,000, Baseball

George Burcum and Susan Boust, \$2,500, Baseball

Wayne State Alumni and Friends Board Formed to Strengthen Alumni Engagement and Collaboration

The Wayne State College Foundation is pleased to announce the formation of the Alumni and Friends Board, a new collaborative group dedicated to strengthening alumni engagement and supporting the mission of the Wayne State Foundation.

The Alumni and Friends group brings together a dedicated team of alumni and supporters who are committed to fostering meaningful connections among graduates, friends, and the College community. Working closely with the Wayne State Foundation, the group will assist with alumni-centered events, reunions, volunteer opportunities, and broader engagement initiatives that celebrate Wayne State pride and service.

The members of the Alumni and Friends Board:

Tracy Allgood '90

Jeff Carstens '82

Mary Carstens '78 and '82

Vicki Engelen '76

Adam Smith '21

Together, these members will serve as ambassadors for Wayne State, helping to create opportunities for alumni and friends to stay connected, give back, and remain actively involved with the College.

"Their collaboration, experience, and enthusiasm will help strengthen relationships and enhance events and volunteer efforts that support Wayne State students and programs," said Hannah Lindsay, director of Alumni Relations and Annual Campaigns.

The Alumni and Friends Board will begin working with the Wayne State Foundation immediately, with plans to support upcoming events and reunions and to expand alumni involvement in the months ahead.

For more information about alumni engagement or opportunities to get involved, please **contact us!**

THE WAYNE STATE FOUNDATION

wscfoundation@wsc.edu | 402-375-7370

Or follow us on social media:

Facebook: WSC Wildcats Alumni and Friends

Instagram: @wscalumni

LinkedIn: Wayne State College Foundation

The formation of the Alumni and Friends group represents an important step forward in our commitment to meaningful alumni and community engagement."

*- Hannah Lindsay,
Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Campaigns*

We want to hear your opinion!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WSCMagazine>

Scan the code or visit the link above to share what you'd like to see more of in the WSC Alumni Magazine!

As a thank-you for your participation in the survey, the Foundation will send you a small gift to show our appreciation for your time and feedback.



2026 Phonathon Recap

The 2026 Phonathon Campaign was a strong success over seven weeks of calling, generating 749 pledges totaling more than \$84,000 in donor support. The effort was powered by a dedicated team of 34 callers and five managers who worked diligently to connect with alumni and friends. Their collective efforts helped advance fundraising goals and strengthen relationships with supporters.



WSC Alumni & Friends Tour April 28 - May 6, 2027

The cost of \$5,299 includes round-trip airfare from Omaha, land arrangements, and arrival and departure transfers in Scotland and England. A trip schedule and more details will be announced at a later date. Find updates at www.wsc.edu/alumni-events.

For more information, please contact:

HANNAH LINDSAY

Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Campaigns
halind01@wsc.edu | 402-375-7370

ENGLAND, SCOTLAND & WALES



www.wsc.edu/alumni-events

Music Alumni Day

About 65 Wayne State College music alumni and former music faculty members took a trip down memory lane during Wayne State's Music Alumni Day held March 21, an event that celebrated music, memories, and friendship.

Participants spent the day rehearsing with the college's band and choir, reconnecting with former classmates and colleagues, and rekindling their shared passion for music. The event provided a unique opportunity for attendees to revisit their musical roots and engage with the current students and the campus community.

Left to Right: Wayne State College recently welcomed several alumni to campus for Music Alumni Day. In the left photo, Katie (Hansen) Warner '12 and Esther (Darnell) Daugherty '80 perform with the concert band. Katrina (Lombard) Ingabritson '25 (center photo) gets a hug. Debra Johnson and Connie Webber (right photo), a former WSC music faculty member, pose for a photo.

This event is a great way to stay engaged with our alumni and former faculty members. It highlights the lasting impact of Wayne State's music programs and the strong relationships built here."

- Dr. David Bohnert,
Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities



A Crescendo of Generosity:

Rollie Lentz '56 Establishes Athletic Scholarships at Wayne State College

After more than 50 years of dedicated support, Wayne State College alumnus Rollie (Roland E.) Lentz has established new athletic scholarships, marking a meaningful continuation—and culmination—of his lifelong commitment to Wayne State and its students.

The Roland E. Lentz Annual Athletic Scholarship and the Roland E. Lentz Athletic Endowed Scholarship will provide financial assistance to student-athletes who demonstrate need and maintain good academic standing.

Lentz chose to establish both an annual and an endowed scholarship to make an impact now while also supporting future generations.

The annual scholarship provides immediate support for student-athletes, while the endowed scholarship is designed to grow over time and provide lasting support in perpetuity. His decision to support athletics came after careful thought.

“I wanted to help students today, but also make sure there’s something in place for the future. I ultimately chose to support athletics because of the opportunity to help it continue to grow and expand opportunities for students.”

Lentz, a 1956 graduate of Wayne State College, grew up in Coleridge, Nebraska, and earned his Master of Arts degree in 1957. As a student, he was involved in Lambda Delta Lambda and Kappa Mu Epsilon. He went on to serve as an instructor and math professor at Mankato State University from 1962 to 1999 before returning to the Wayne area in retirement.

A dedicated supporter of Wayne State, Lentz has been a Cat Club member since 2005 and is a familiar face at Wildcat home sporting events. His philanthropy spans decades, including more than 30 years of support for math scholarships and significant contributions to the turf, track, and soccer projects.

“Scholarships are important. The people that need help get it,” Lentz said.

Dr. Bob Machovsky, CEO of the Wayne State Foundation, said the scholarships represent a defining moment in Lentz’s legacy of generosity.

“Rollie’s support of Wayne State has been unwavering for decades,” Machovsky said. “This gift is a powerful reflection of his lifelong commitment to our students. It builds on a legacy of generosity that will continue to create opportunities for student-athletes for years to come.”

Lentz also shared simple advice for student-athletes:

“Study hard. Go to class. Don’t skip class—that’s the most important thing.”

Alumni Track Reunion

Wayne State College Athletics and the Wayne State Foundation welcomed approximately 60 track and field and cross country alumni back to campus March 27-28 as part of a special reunion held during the annual Wildcat Outdoor Classic track meet.

The event brought together former student athletes from multiple decades, creating an opportunity to reconnect, celebrate shared experiences, and witness the continued growth of the college’s track and field and cross country programs.

Left to Right: WSC Track & Field Alums from multiple past years teams got together during the Wildcat Classic to reconnect with each other. Middle image, back row: Braxton Adams, Brady Metz, Kole Heller; front row: Brandon Marker and Blake Perez. On the far right, Sarah Cotton, Kelsey Larsen, Kylie Pachta, Taylor Thorp, and Maya Couch pose for a photo from the press box.



Interested in Making a Gift to Wayne State?

Your generosity can make a lasting difference for Wayne State College students. Gifts to the Wayne State Foundation help create opportunities, support scholarships and programs, and strengthen the Wayne State experience for generations to come.

To learn more or make a gift, visit www.wsc.edu/foundation, or contact us! 402-375-7510 • wscfoundation@wsc.edu



WILDCAT NEWS

WSC BASEBALL

29-23 record, 21-16 NSIC (5th place)

Nate Cunningham

NSIC Player of the Year

All-NSIC First Team

NSIC Outstanding Senior of the Year

NCBWA All-Central Region First Team

D2CCA All-Central Region First Team

NSIC Spring All-Academic Team of Excellence

Nate Cunningham

Clement Febus

Max Heard

Brooks Kneifl

Gabe Monosmith

Carson Obrecht

Korey Cozad

Cam Madsen

Ethan Nguyen

NSIC Spring All-Academic Team

Braden Cannon

Kyler Hanson

Noah Strizek

Grant Renken

Casey Prychak

NSIC Myles Brand All-Academic With Distinction Award

(3.75 GPA or higher)

Nate Cunningham

Gabe Monosmith

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team

Nate Cunningham

Clement Febus

Max Heard

Brooks Kneifl

Gabe Monosmith

Braden Cannon

All-NSIC Second Team

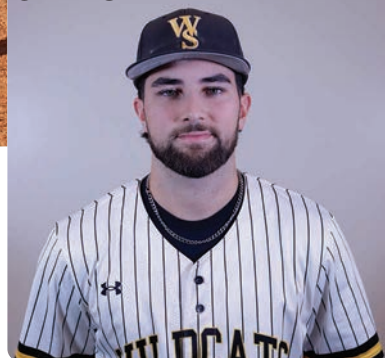
D2CCA All-Central Region Second Team



CUNNINGHAM



CANNON



WSC SOFTBALL

No hitters

Kennadi Borngrebe April 7 vs. Augustana 9-0

Taylor Coleman April 24 vs. UMary 14-0

All-NSIC

Kennadi Borngrebe (First Team)

Taylor Coleman (First Team)

Emilee Marth (First Team)

Leah Chance (Second Team)

Maddie Scobee (Second Team)

NSIC Spring All-Academic Team of Excellence

Kennadi Borngrebe

Masyn Bunnell

Leah Chance

Taylor Coleman

Jordyn Klein

Jordyn Rochholz

Marli Stones

NSIC Spring All-Academic Team

Taylor Fritz

Emilee Marth

Lillie Timm

Haylee Weber

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team

Kennadi Borngrebe

Leah Chance

Taylor Coleman

Jordyn Klein

Jordyn Rochholz

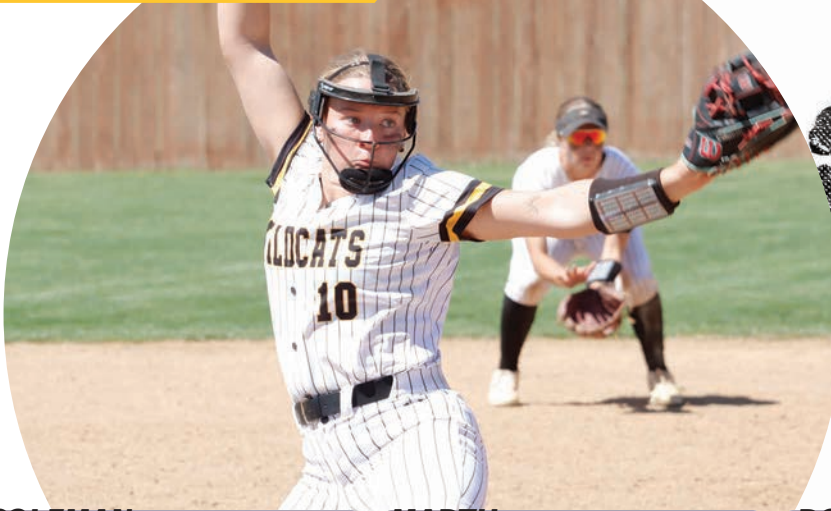
42-14 record, 21-9 NSIC (3rd place)

Second-most wins in program history
and third 40-win season ever

Kennadi Borngrebe

D2CCA All-Central Region Second Team

Taylor Coleman



COLEMAN



MARTH



BORNGREBE



WSC WOMEN'S TRACK AND FIELD

NSIC Women's Indoor Track and Field Championships (7th place / 42.33 points)

All-NSIC

Kailee Kellum (Tie-2nd – High Jump)
Olivia Schwarzrock (3rd place – Weight Throw)

NSIC Women's Outdoor Track and Field Championships (6th place / 48.5 points)

NSIC Champion

Jalecia Williams (Shot Put)

All-NSIC

Taylor Arp (2nd place – Hammer Throw)
Olivia Schwarzrock (2nd place – Shot Put)
McKinley Grover (3rd place – Discus)

USTFCCCA All-Central Region – McKinley Grover (Discus)

NCAA National Qualifier

McKinley Grover – Discus (5th place – ALL-AMERICAN)

NSIC All-Academic Team of Excellence (3.60 GPA or above)

Taylor Arp
Maelee Beacom
Meghan Cunningham
Sydney Escritt
Zoey Holmes
Madi McKie
Reagan Murphy
Kalli Reese
Olivia Schwarzrock
Torrance Tso
Sara Yamagami

Jalecia Williams

NSIC Champion (Shot Put)

NSIC All-Academic Team

Jerika Bakenhus
Allie Czapla
Alyssa Folds
Lindsey Kneift
Elizabeth Mayer
Jayrn Warejcka

Myles Brand All-Academic With Distinction Award (3.75 GPA or higher for seniors)
Olivia Schwarzrock

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team

Taylor Arp
Reagan Murphy
Olivia Schwarzrock
Torrance Tso

WSC MEN'S TRACK AND FIELD

NSIC Indoor Track/Field Championships (8th place / 37 points)

All-NSIC

Jaxson Ninete (2nd – Weight Throw)
Cain Brown (3rd – High Jump)

NCAA Indoor National Qualifier

Cain Brown (5th place high jump) All-American

NSIC Outdoor Track/Field Championships (5th place / 65.5 points)

NSIC Men's Assistant Coach of the Year

Carly Fehringer

NSIC Champion

Jaxson Ninete (Hammer Throw)

All-NSIC

Samuel Zazueta (2nd – Hammer Throw)
Cain Brown (3rd – High Jump)
J'Dyn Bullion (3rd – Discus)
Mitchell Hupp (3rd – 100 Meter Dash)
Bryce Larsen (3rd – Triple Jump)

USTFCCCA All-Central Region – Samuel Zazueta – Hammer Throw

NCAA National Outdoor Qualifiers –

Cain Brown – High Jump 15th place (USTFCCCA All-American 2nd Team)
J'Dyn Bullion – Discus 13th place (USTFCCCA All-American 2nd Team)
Jaxson Ninete – Hammer Throw 20th place
Samuel Zazueta – Hammer Throw 21st place

NSIC All-Academic Team of Excellence (3.60 GPA and above)

William Keller
Jaxson Ninete
Alex Leuenberger
Matthew Logue
Jake Peitz

Cain Brown



NSIC Spring All-Academic Team (3.20-3.59 GPA)

Mujeeb Adewuyi
Elliott Nottlemann
Akron Jostand
Alex Altman
Brady Franzen
Mitchell Rudie
Nathan Decker
Daylin Mallory
Ty Dingman

Myles Brand All-Academic With Distinction Award (3.75 GPA or higher for seniors)

Alex Leuenberger

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team

William Keller
Alex Leuenberger
Matthew Logue
Jaxson Ninete
Jake Peitz

WSC WOMEN'S GOLF

NSIC Women's Golf Champions: First-ever team title, shot 926 (311-312-303)

Qualified for the NCAA Division II Central Regional for a second straight season

NSIC Individual Champion

Gaia Stancikova

NSIC All-Tournament Team (Top 5 overall)

Saffire Sayre, Erica Lee

All-NSIC

Gaia Stancikova (First Team)
Hailey Kenkel (Second Team)
Erica Lee (Second Team)

NSIC Elite 18 Award (Top scholar athlete at NSIC Championship)

Saffire Sayre – 4.00 GPA

NSIC Spring All-Academic Team of Excellence

Saffire Sayre
Meg Thompson
Hailey Kenkel
Olivia Ottman
Kylie Powers
Camryn Johnson
Gaia Stancikova

NSIC Spring All-Academic Team

Erica Lee

NSIC Myles Brand All-Academic With Distinction (3.75 GPA or higher)

Olivia Ottman
Saffire Sayre

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team

Saffire Sayre
Gaia Stancikova
Camryn Johnson
Hailey Kenkel



SUPPORT THE CATS!
JOIN CAT CLUB
www.wscwildcats.com

WSC BEACH VOLLEYBALL

12-8 (fifth-straight winning season)

2-4 record at AVCA Small College Beach Championship

Best pairs record – Channatee Robles and Chloe Hanel 15-3

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team

Anna Borner
Reese Johnson

Molly Romano & Ella Myler



CLASS NOTES

1959 J.R. McQuistan (J. Roger McQuistan) of Emerson, Neb., Class of 1959, recently celebrated his 90th birthday. He majored in Business Education and lettered in track during his college years. After graduation he served as the Wayne district manager for Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance before spending more than 40 years in pastoral ministry. He is now retired in Southern California.



1971 Ray O'Connor was selected for the Grand Island Regional Medical Center Foundation 2026 Board of Directors, a dedicated group of community leaders committed to advancing the hospital's mission of "delivering exceptional care and improving the health of our community." O'Connor is CEO of O'Connor Enterprises, which owns and manages NET lease commercial properties in Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota. O'Connor received his Bachelor of Arts in Education degree from Wayne State College and his master's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He has served as a board member of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, Grand Island Community Foundation, Citizens Review Committee, and the Grand Island Economic Development Corporation. He currently serves as a trustee for the Diocese of Grand Island and is a member of the Grand Island Diocese Finance Council and the Central Community College Foundation.

1977 Pat Dougherty and 1977 Michael Tillwick MSE '86 both Wayne State College alumni who later met through their children—recently returned to campus for a meaningful visit from Omaha. Joined by family, they revisited familiar places like Bowen Hall and the athletic facilities with help from welcoming staff. What began as a rainy day became a special trip filled with shared memories and renewed appreciation for their alma mater. (Photo in next column)



1989 Dr. Jodi (Benton) Kupper was appointed by the Nebraska State College System Board of Trustees to serve as Chadron State College's 13th President on October 13, 2025. Her inauguration will be held in October.



1990 Bryan Sedlacek has joined the Centris Federal Credit Union full-service mortgage team. Sedlacek brings 25 years of lending experience to his role as a mortgage loan originator and is known for exceptional customer care, attention to detail and trustworthiness. Sedlacek is a graduate of Wayne State College with a degree in finance.



1998 Brian Kruse is the new executive director at Forest Lawn Funeral Home, Cemetery and Mausoleum. He returns to the funeral services industry, where he was a funeral director for more than a decade and actively involved in the community. Kruse has been the Douglas County election commissioner

for 10 years. "As executive director at Forest Lawn, I am able to continue my commitment of service to families and build the strong community connections that Forest Lawn has been known for throughout its history," Kruse said. Kruse holds a bachelor's degree in history from Wayne State College.

2000 Terri Sampson, Wisner-Pilger's junior high science teacher, recently received the Outstanding Nebraska Teacher Award. She was selected as an award recipient by Touchdowns for Teachers, a program created by Nebraska Athletics in partnership with Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) that recognizes outstanding teachers who support their students and improve their communities. Sampson has been at Wisner-Pilger since 2013 and will be retiring at the end of the school year to conclude her 27-year teaching career. "I was a scientist in North Carolina and moved back to Nebraska, got my teaching degree from Wayne State and started teaching in my hometown of Wakefield," she said.



2000 Connie Lade MSE '09 and '25 is stepping into a new role at Battle Creek High School as the school counselor after 25 years of dedicated service as a music educator. A 1989 graduate of Battle Creek High School, Lade began her college education at Northeast Community College, earning an Associate of Arts in Music Education. She then attended Wayne State College, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Music Education. She also completed Master's Degrees in Curriculum and Instruction and School Counseling from WSC.

2003 Dr. Cameron Sidak joined the team of family medicine providers at Memorial Community Health, Inc. at Memorial Health Clinic. Dr. Sidak is a board-certified family medicine physician. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree magna cum laude from Wayne State College and received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). He also completed

the Advanced Rural Training Residency Program at UNMC in Omaha. He lives near Central City with his wife, Trish, and their eight children. In his free time, he enjoys working on DIY projects, being active in his church, and spending time with his family.



2008 Troy Mach MSE has been selected by the Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals as the 2026 Middle School Principal of

the Year. This award is presented annually to a middle school principal who has demonstrated outstanding leadership at the school, region, and state levels. The award honors principals who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of collaboration, leadership, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and personalization. Mach earned his Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, followed by a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Wayne State College and a Master's Degree in PK12 Administration from Concordia University. Mach has served in education since 1996. He began his career as an elementary teacher at Winnebago Public School before moving into junior high and middle school teaching roles at Humphrey Public School and Clarkson Public School. In 2015, he transitioned into administration as the principal of Alliance Middle School, where he has continued to lead with distinction. He has been a member of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators for 11 years and has served in the Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals (NSASSP) for 10 years. Additionally, Mach has served as the NSASSP Region V Secretary/Treasurer for multiple years.



2009 Dustin Nielsen MSE, '24 has been named the new superintendent of Emerson-Hubbard Community Schools starting next school year, after 10 years of

service as a principal in the district. He completed his Education Specialist Degree from Wayne State College in May 2024 where he also earned his masters in P-12 School Administration in May 2009. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in K-12 Art Education from Dana College in May 2004. Prior to

arriving at Emerson-Hubbard Community Schools, he served for four years as athletic/activities director at Boone Central Schools in Albion, Neb., and eight years at Yutan Public Schools in Yutan, Neb., serving as an art teacher and athletic director. Nielsen, his wife, Janelle, and their three sons (Drayden 15, Ty 12, and Wyatt 9) are proud to call Emerson their home for the past 10 years, as he values the strong relationships built inside and outside the school walls.

2010 Krista Sipes is currently the 7-12 music instructor and special education director at Central Valley Schools. She also serves as the district assessment coordinator and plays an instrumental role with curriculum and CIP/MTSS. That will change for the 2026-27 school year when she becomes the Central Valley Elementary principal at the Scotia site. Sipes first taught at Lincoln Northeast High School and later at St. Paul. She earned her undergraduate degree from Wayne State College in K-12 music education with endorsements in instrumental and vocal music, as well as 7-12 theater. Sipes currently lives in St. Libory with her husband, Jason; daughters Reagan and Charlie; dog, Callie; and cat, George.

2013 Brent Bauer MSE, who is currently the assistant principal and athletic director at Alliance, will be Hershey's grades seven to 12 assistant principal and athletic director in 2026-27. In this role in Alliance, he has led student programs, organized major events and built "a positive culture focused on student growth and involvement," according to a press release from Hershey Superintendent Jane Davis. Prior to his time in Alliance, Bauer spent eight years at Ogallala High School as a teacher, coach, and assistant activities director. He also has extensive experience in Wisner-Pilger Public Schools, where he taught and coached for nearly a decade. Bauer holds a Master of Education in Pre-K-12 School Administration from Wayne State College and is certified in school administration and K-12 physical education from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated a strong commitment to student success, both in the classroom and through activities, the release said. He has coached multiple successful athletic programs and developed character-building initiatives that support student leadership and growth. "We are excited to welcome Brent Bauer to Hershey Public Schools," Davis said. "His experience, energy, and passion for students make him a great fit for our school and community. We look forward to the positive impact he will have on our students and staff." Bauer will officially begin his role in July.

2015 Zach Kunz, Class of 2015, met his future wife, Rachel King, Class of 2016, at Wayne State College. They were married in 2016 and returned to Wayne in 2019 after Rachel graduated from UNL Law School to accept a position with the WSC Criminal Justice Department. The Kunz couple recently welcomed their son, Avon Zachary. Grandmother is WSC Class of 1983 alumna Elizabeth (Yax) King.



2016 Nathan Bacon MSE, currently an assistant principal at Bellevue East, will officially take over as the Bellevue East High School principal for the 2026-27 school year on July 1. Bacon has been with the district since 2012 and served as a special education teacher and an instructional coach. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a master's degree from Wayne State College.

2019 Brandon Hein recently accepted a position with Meta/Facebook as an Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) Lead in Lebanon, Ind., where he will oversee safety operations for one of the largest data center developments in the United States. Hein describes the role as a significant career milestone and credits his education and mentorship at Wayne State College as instrumental to his success.

2020 Emily "Lucy" Geweke, along with Ty Spickelmeier, are taking the world of American Quarter Horses by storm. The couple recently moved to the Valley County area after their growing business, Spickelmeier Performance Horses (SPH), took off in Okemah, Okla. The business has grown steadily through social media, reaching more than 60,000 followers across platforms and expanding its reach well beyond traditional word-of-mouth connections. The operation is now being operated out of Bob and Jean Stowell's impressive state-of-the-art horse training facility in rural Ord.

CLASS NOTES



2020 Conner Lowery has been named the new head coach of the Discoverers girls basketball program by Columbus High School. Coach Lowery began

her coaching career as an assistant girls' basketball coach at Palmer Public Schools, where she also coached track and field. She joined Columbus Public School in 2022 after accepting a teaching position at Centennial Elementary, while also serving as an assistant basketball coach for the Discoverers. Lowery is a graduate of Wayne State College, where she earned a degree in K-12 Health and Physical Education.

2020 John & 2021 Michaela (Derickson)

Rokes met while playing sand volleyball at Wayne State College. They were married April 18.



2021 Dr. Tyler Lutt has joined the team at Hilltop Dental in Auburn and is helping lead the practice as it prepares for a major expansion. Lutt grew up on a farm near Wayne and was selected for the College's Rural Health Opportunities Program. He went on to earn his doctor of dentistry degree at the University of Nebraska Medical Center's College of Dentistry. Lutt began practicing in Auburn on June 2. He currently lives near Plattsmouth while his fiancée finishes her pediatric nurse practitioner program in Omaha. Outside the clinic, Lutt spends much of his time renovating his fiancée's home — with help from YouTube tutorials — and enjoying outdoor hobbies such as hunting and fishing, which he says are abundant opportunities in southeast Nebraska.



2021 Brett Fiala from Wisner (formerly Howells) has been living and working in Wisner for three years. Fiala started with Pinnacle's Verdigre Branch on February 16. He makes all kinds of loans: consumer, Ag, business, and home.



2021 LaTausha

LaPointe is an enrolled member of the Winnebago Tribe who has proudly served the Ponca Tribe for four years, including one year of dedicated work

in the Behavioral Health Department. She earned her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Social Sciences from Wayne State College in 2024. In her current role as a provider, LaPointe supports tribal members by helping them obtain vital documents such as birth certificates, identification cards, and driver's licenses, secure and maintain employment, and access funding and resources from outside agencies. She is committed to empowering individuals and strengthening connections to essential services within the community.

2022 Alex & 2021 Jordyn (Bullock) Lindsay

will be joining Loomis High School this fall after spending the past four years in St. Paul. Loomis High School has tapped Alex Lindsay to become head football coach. After graduation, Lindsay took his first job at St. Paul. He teaches skilled tech and has been an assistant coach for the St. Paul football team. Lindsay joins Loomis as an industrial tech teacher while taking on his first head coaching job with the Wolves.



2022 Alyssa (Micke) Bausch MBA is married to Jon Bausch and serves as school business manager at Ponca Public Schools. The couple has two children.



2022 Alex Thramer is one of the new teachers and coaches at O'Neill Public Schools this year. He is teaching algebra I and geometry and is the assistant football and track coach as well as the junior high girls basketball coach. Originally from Ewing, Thramer earned his degree from Wayne State College. For the past three years he has taught high school business courses at Pierce High School and coached junior high football, high school boys' basketball and high school track. Alex is married to Tessa, and they had their baby boy, Becks, in June.

2022 Kathryn Beberniss Ed.S. will join Bayard Public Schools as the 7-12 principal and activities director beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. Beberniss brings 24 years of experience in education to Bayard. Throughout her career, she has served in a variety of roles including classroom teacher, instructional coach, 504 and SAT coordinator, assessment director, and curriculum director. She holds a Bachelor of Science and master's degree from Colorado Christian University, a K-12 Administration degree from the University of Phoenix, and an Education Specialist degree from Wayne State College. Beberniss and her family—her husband, Alan, son AJ, and daughters Korryn and Kirstyn—will be relocating to Bayard this summer. Her two younger children will attend Bayard High School, while her oldest daughter will be starting college.



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2022 Gina Jespersen MSE

has been named elementary school principal by Hemingford Public Schools beginning with the 2026-2027

academic year. Jespersen steps into this role with a wealth of educational and leadership experience. She holds a Master of Science in School Administration from Wayne State College, a Master of Arts in PK-12 Reading from the University of Nebraska-Kearney, and a Bachelor of Science in Education (Elementary Education) from Black Hills State University. Jespersen holds educator certifications in Elementary Education K-8 and Principal PK-8. She is a graduate of the Leadership Nebraska Class XV (2024). Jespersen has additional leadership experience as Co-Chair of the Miss Rodeo America Pageant Coronation. Jespersen was named Miss Rodeo Nebraska in 2014. In that role, she traveled the country as an ambassador promoting the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, the State of Nebraska, and western industries. She was a four-year letter winner and Western Team captain as a Division I athlete on the equestrian team at South Dakota State University.

2023 Nathan Hiemer has built his career in communications and network infrastructure. He currently works as a communications data systems technician at Blue Origin in Florida, where he supports installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting of communications and data systems used in ground and launch operations. His role involves working with structured cabling, fiber-optic infrastructure, network equipment, and system validation in mission-critical environments. Hiemer says the hands-on technical experience and strong IT foundation he gained at WSC have been essential in preparing him for the complexity and precision required in the aerospace industry.



2023 Brittnei Chancellor MSE

has been selected as the principal of Bluffs Middle School for the 2026-2027 school year. Chancellor has served as assistant principal

at BMS for the past three years and previously

taught middle school reading for 10 years at Mitchell Public Schools. She holds a bachelor's degree in education from Chadron State College, a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction, and a Master's in School Administration from Wayne State College.

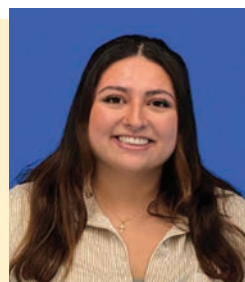


2023 Judith Stanton MBA

has been named the new executive director of economic development for Pierce County, serving Pierce, Plainview,

Osmond, and Hadar, according to Pierce County Economic Development. Stanton brings experience in economic development, grant administration, and strategic leadership to the role. She is the owner and CEO of Grant Administration & Consulting LLC, providing professional grant writing, grant award monitoring, and compliance services to public and private organizations. Stanton holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Wayne State College. She, and husband, Scott, live in Laurel, and are invested in the success of rural communities in Northeast Nebraska.

2023 Will Fehring was welcomed this spring by Antelope Memorial Hospital to its medical staff. He will offer coverage primarily at the Neligh AMH Family Practice Clinic. A native of Bloomfield, Fehring is the son of Jeff and Kelli Fehring. He graduated from Bloomfield High School in 2019. He attended Wayne State College, graduating in May 2023 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology. He earned his Physician Assistant degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center, graduating in December 2025. He became board-certified in January 2026.



2025 Alondra Castillo

, a Columbus native, is bringing her passion for community and people-focused programming to her new role as parks and recreation coordinator

for the city of Columbus. A recent graduate of Wayne State College and Columbus High School alumna, Castillo officially joined the city after earning her degree in Mass Communications.

2025 Brady Stech & 2026 Emily Kleinschmit

, along with their families, are happy to announce their engagement and upcoming wedding. Kleinschmit is a 2026 graduate of Wayne State College, where she earned a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Economics and Finance. She is an executive assistant at Tanner Lancaster - State Farm in Norfolk, Neb. Stech is a 2025 graduate of Wayne State College, where he earned a degree in Business Management. He is an operations specialist at Retirement Plan Consultants in Norfolk, Neb. The wedding ceremony was held on June 6 in Osmond. They live in Norfolk.



2026 Mia (Skinner) Aschoff and Robert Aschoff

are happy to announce their engagement and wedding. Skinner is a 2026 graduate of Wayne State College, where she earned a degree in elementary education. This coming fall, Mia will work at St. Mary's School as a first-grade teacher. The wedding ceremony was held May 23 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Osmond.



SUBMIT A CLASS NOTE!

Visit www.wsc.edu/alumni to submit photos and news about weddings, babies, or other special events, or to notify us of changes in your name or address.

IN MEMORY OF:

All towns are in Nebraska unless otherwise noted.

Marlyce G. (Johnson) Bauermeister '53, 93, Spencer, Iowa; March 24, 2025

Dr. Marvin D. Stone '53, 94, Kearney; Dec. 23, 2025

Eldon H. Lorenzen '53, 96, Lyons; May 6, 2026

Kay L. (Jenkins) Buckles '55, 92, Ericson; March 7, 2026

Dr. Susan (Reeh) Menking '55, 91, Santa Fe, NM; Mar. 31, 2026 (former Wayne State Foundation trustee)

Phyllis D. (Johnson) Beam, '56, Omaha; Jan. 5, 2026

Raymond L. Anderson '56, 91, Sheldon, Iowa; Dec. 6, 2025

Catherine (Meuret) Straka '56, 89, Kearney; April 8, 2026

Shirley A. (Schoenefeld) Stoltenberg '59, 85, Atkinson; March 18, 2026

Norma Jean (Foreshoe) Linscott '60, 88, West Point; Feb. 27, 2026

Faye (Lyman) Brandstetter '63, 84, Red Oak, Iowa; Aug. 3, 2025

Lowell G. Kimble '64, 83, Norfolk; March 15, 2026

Dr. David A. Kathka '64, 83, Loveland, Colo.; May 7, 2026

Kenneth R. Headlee '66, 81, Lyons; April 2, 2026

Douglas K. Zwemke '67, 83, Los Gatos, Calif.; Jan. 20, 2026

Joyce Mitchell '67, 85, Wayne; Dec. 20, 2025

Dr. Jane L. (Nelson) O'Leary '67, 80, Wayne; Feb. 13, 2026 (former Wayne State faculty member)

Owen F. Donohoe '68, 80, Shawnee, Kan.; Feb. 8, 2026

Robert E. "Bob" Kobza '69, 80, Columbus; Feb. 19, 2026

Randall D. Carlson '70, 78, New Braunfels, Texas; June 6, 2025

Rev. Daniel C. Praeuner '70, 77, Ranchester, Wyo.; Jan. 7, 2026

Robert "Bob" Limbach '70, 78, Blair; Feb. 27, 2026

Doreen (Diamon) Steffen '70, 78, Nebraska City; May 14, 2026

Donald "Don" Wood '70, 78, Pierce; March 30, 2026

Beverly (Kubik) Evans '75, 71, Aurelia, Iowa; May 7, 2026

Karen I. Gray '70, 77, Norfolk; April 20, 2026

David R. Bartlett '72, 83, Bellevue; April 1, 2026

Frederick "Fred" Gleason '73, 75, Kearney; Dec. 9, 2025

Merle R. Rise '73, 79, Cheyenne, Wyo.; Jan. 5, 2026

Gary A. McElderry '74, 74, Gladstone, Mo.; April 14, 2026

Manjit K. Johar MSE '75, 89, Chesterfield, Mo.; Dec. 26, 2025 (former Wayne State employee)

Ward Barelman '76, 71, Wayne; Dec. 13, 2025

Dr. Donna Dee (Potter) Nelson '78, 94, Lincoln; Jan. 14, 2026

Larry J. Peterson '82, 67, Carroll; Dec. 7, 2025

Laura A. (Sharp) Rosinski '82, 67, Coleridge; April 16, 2026

JoAnn M. Koepke '84, 77, Norfolk; Nov. 24, 2025

Joseph S. Wellman '85, 61, Papillion; Jan. 6, 2025

James "Jim" Deavers '86, 68, Grand Island; Feb. 4, 2026

Rev. Sharon (Fredrickson) Stevens '86, 81, Wausa; March 5, 2026

Larry A. Bockelman '93 MSE, 75, Aurora; March 11, 2026

Kevin H. Praeuner '95, 67, Norfolk; Feb. 17, 2026

FRIENDS WE WILL MISS:

Thomas F. Winscot, 83, Plattsmouth; April 14, 2025

Larry Peed, 82, Page; Oct. 14, 2025

John "Jack" Hintz, 82, Dixon; April 29, 2026 – 25 years at WSC as groundskeeper

Marian G. Simpson, 91, Woodland Park, Colo.; Oct. 4, 2025 – longtime faculty member and track coach

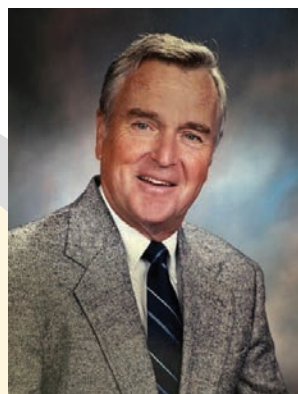
Helen (Bearinger) Wilson Wantz, 104, Orchard; May 20, 2026

Richard "Dick" Thompson, 92, Lincoln; Feb. 5, 2026

Lydaisy Janke, 87, Winside; April 28, 2026

James "Jim" Blowers, 64, Milford; Mar. 14, 2026

Wayne State College is sad to announce the passing of Dr. James "Jim" Paige, a longtime professor of mathematics at Wayne State. He was 87.



Paige passed away Dec. 23, 2025, at Ava's House hospice home in Sioux Falls, S.D. A Celebration of Life was held Friday, Jan. 2, at the First Presbyterian Church in Wayne. Memorials should be directed to TeamMates Mentoring or the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame. Paige devoted his life to education, athletics, service, and family. He began his career in Palmer, Neb., as a high school mathematics teacher and coach for

football, basketball, and track. He later taught and coached in Cozad, Neb., while continuing his own education.

In 1968, Paige joined Wayne State College as a professor of mathematics, a position he held for 36 years until his retirement in 2004. From 1975 to 2004, he also served as the faculty representative for Wayne State's Athletic Department, playing a vital role in Wildcat athletics. Even after retirement, Paige remained actively involved, serving as a track official for numerous Wayne State home track and field events.

Paige's influence extended far beyond the college campus. He spent more than 50 years officiating Nebraska high school athletic events in football, basketball, track, and cross country. Known as quiet, unassuming, and hard-working, Paige was widely respected for his fairness, professionalism, and deep respect for athletes and coaches.

Paige will be remembered for his integrity, humility, dedication to education and athletics, his love of the outdoors, and the lasting impact he made on countless students, officials, athletes, and colleagues across Nebraska and beyond. He was inducted into the Nebraska High School Sports Hall of Fame in 2016 and the Wayne State Athletic Hall of Fame in 2012.

Paige earned his bachelor's degree in Math Education from Hastings College, his master's degree in mathematics from the University of Illinois, and his Ph.D. in Mathematics from the University of Michigan.

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