



THE WARTBURG MAGAZINE



2025

Owen Grover

From gridiron to med school



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ON THE COVER:

Owen Grover '24 poses in the biology lab in the Science Center.

COVER PHOTO BY JULIE PAGEL DREWES '90

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If you have suggestions for *Wartburg Magazine* stories or comments about the content, contact Emily Christensen, magazine editor, at emily.christensen@wartburg.edu. Address corrections should be sent to the Alumni & Parent Engagement Office or submitted at www.wartburg.edu/alumni.

TRANSCRIPTS:
To obtain an official college transcript, contact the Registrar's Office or complete an online request form at www.wartburg.edu/registrar.

There is a \$5 fee per transcript. Requests must include maiden and all married names used, as well as birth date or Social Security number. Enclose return address and payment with the request.

NEWS BRIEFS



Hawkey to lead Wartburg's new master's programs in health, human performance


Dr. Matthew Hawkey (above left) is the inaugural director of health and human performance graduate studies at Wartburg College. An educator, sport scientist, and former faculty member at Seattle University, Hawkey brings expertise in data analytics, coaching, performance science, and program implementation to this new role.

As the director, Hawkey will oversee the college's newest online graduate programs – a Master of Science in sport science and data analytics and Master of Science in high performance. Rooted in Wartburg's tradition of undergraduate excellence in health sciences and athletic dominance, the new programs combine rigorous academics, state-of-the-art technology, and real-world practicum experiences. Designed to develop leaders in elite coaching, data-driven performance, nutrition, sports psychology, and high-level athletic achievement, they include robust practicum and capstone components and align with professional certification standards.

"These cutting-edge offerings will enhance students' understanding of contemporary issues in today's sports science field and allow them to apply their learning in relevant environments

aligned with their professional goals," said Michael Gleason, associate dean of graduate studies. "It is exciting to envision our graduate students leading in this industry."

With expert faculty and real-world engagement, the new master's programs reaffirm Wartburg as a leader in shaping tomorrow's performance professionals.

"I've seen the industry from a lot of different lenses, from being a collegiate athlete to working at the collegiate and professional levels, coaching on the sidelines, working as a strength coach and sport scientist, while concurrently being heavily immersed in the data and analytics over the last 15 years," said Hawkey, who also has served in data science roles in the National Women's Soccer League, the Women's Tennis Association, Major League Soccer, and technology providers, among others. "I'm excited to take the lessons I've learned and apply them to something new. In the U.S., there are a growing number of practitioners in this area, but there still aren't many of us. I'm excited to have a role in helping the next generation." 



Learn more about Wartburg graduate studies and HHP programs at www.wartburg.edu/graduate.

Flege named inaugural vice president for financial innovation



Kelly Flege is the college's inaugural vice president for financial innovation. She previously served as vice president and chief operating and financial officer at Cornell College where she developed new budget models, initiated a road map for technology upgrades and implementation, and redesigned processes to more efficiently meet the needs of students.

Prior to Cornell, she was the first vice president at Lincoln Savings Bank in Waterloo and served in various roles at the University of Northern Iowa. Flege also served on the school board for Waverly-Shell Rock Community Schools for 10 years, including eight as president. During that time, she oversaw the construction of the Go-Hawk Performance Enhancement Center and renovations to the football stadium complex as well as the approval for two new elementary schools in the district.

Leonard named vice president for student life, dean of students



After more than a decade serving Wartburg students, Lindsey Leonard was named the vice president for student life and dean of students. Most recently, Leonard was the associate dean of students and special assistant to the president for student success.

In this new role, she will oversee the division of Student Life, comprising essential campus functions including residential life; orientation and student engagement; vocation, mentoring, and internships; inclusive community; and the Noah Campus Health Clinic. She also will continue to lead the college's five-year student success and retention initiative.

Leonard began her career at Wartburg in 2013 as the assistant director of admissions.

Finding Her Calling

"I was a compensation analyst for a business in Denver, Colo., but I knew that I was missing out on something. Denver Public Schools needed summer reading volunteers, and it was that experience that made me realize I missed my calling."



Office Hours

Get to know Jen Dickey, visiting professor of education

Jen Dickey had successful careers in human resources and elementary-school teaching, as well as her own small business, prior to joining the Wartburg faculty in 2022.

"As the parent of a neurodivergent learner, I loved the idea of teaching the next generation of teachers about the challenges they might face in the classroom," Dickey said. "The number of children who think and learn differently is growing. I model my own classroom using techniques they can use in their classroom someday to help all kinds of learners."

This means that in addition to traditional lectures and discussions, Dickey's students might integrate movement into their learning through a gallery walk or start each class period with a look at the syllabus to incorporate time management into their work.

"I love creating new courses and finding ways to incorporate dynamic learning," she said.

"And I love that Wartburg encourages us to work with community partners because those experiences really enrich the education that our students receive." 🍷

Visual Storytelling

"I probably spent my first two years' salary as a classroom teacher on picture books. Whatever I was teaching, whether it was social studies or science or reading, I liked to use picture books as an anchor. I've even read picture books to my third-year students here, and they could get something from the life lessons and themes of the books."





Growing Executive Function

"After COVID, I started seeing gaps in my own children's development, and in talking with other parents about gaps they were seeing in emotional regulation, time management, and task initiation, I launched Lotus Cognitive Solutions to focus on executive function building in kids and adults."

Hexagonal Thinking

"This hexagonal thinking quilt is a visual reminder of the learning my students did while in Denver, Colo., for their May Term experience. We spent nearly two weeks in a culturally diverse elementary school learning how the teachers and administrators were creating a space where all students could learn and feel cared for."

Family Matters

"I love taking time out with my family to get away and unplug. We like road trips where we aren't over-scheduled and can go for a hike or just play cards at the picnic table. I often find that is also when my creative juices come flooding back, and I get great ideas for what I want to implement in the next year."

The Power of CONNECTION



Build your network

Lead a life of leadership and service!

Talk shop with students & alumni

Welcome to the team!

Find new co-workers

Find an internship!

Share your expertise

Become a mentor!

Knight Nation brings alumni and students together in a powerful new way – and it's already transforming how Wartburg supports career exploration.

The Career Connections team at Wartburg was in search of a solution.

"If you're unsure about a career path, the most valuable things you can do are to test it out for yourself and have a conversation with someone who's already in the field," said **Derek Solheim '93**, associate dean of students for careers and vocation. "On one side, we've got students with these great questions about careers. On the other side, we've got all these alumni with answers to those questions. Our problem was how to connect those two groups efficiently."

Enter Knight Nation, a dedicated online space for the Wartburg community where students, alumni, and friends of the college can connect and network without the need to exchange phone numbers or meet in person.

Whether you're seeking advice, exploring career paths, or hoping to give back by mentoring others, Knight Nation offers a supportive environment designed to strengthen professional and personal connections within and across generations of Knights. You might find your next job opportunity there — or reconnect with an old friend.

"Knight Nation is a space for connection, but it's also a database," said **Ellen Engh '08**, director of alumni and parent engagement. "Once you enter your career information and topics of expertise, we don't have to ask you for that every time you volunteer to meet with a student. That alone will increase our efficiency in forming good relationships between students and alumni."

On their profiles, alumni can list their work history and topics they feel comfortable talking about, which is helpful for those who are

working in unexpected fields for their majors.


As the Knight Nation network grows, it becomes an even better resource for Wartburg students and alumni. An inaugural mentoring program ran on the platform this winter, with 40 mentor pairs meeting for eight weeks. Video calls can be conducted directly through the Knight Nation app. (Read more about mentoring on page 8.)

"We're really pleased with the results of our first mentoring group," said **Amy Tucker '10**, associate director for career connections and student engagement. "As more alumni register, we'll be better able to pair up students with mentors in their areas of interest. If you're someone in a unique field, we could really use your expertise!"

In addition to mentoring, Knight Nation can also facilitate better networking events, mock interviews, job shadowing, and microinternships.

"The questions our students have sound so familiar because they're questions we've all asked: 'What do I want to do with my life?' 'How do I get started?'" said Nikki Kuhn, assistant director of alumni engagement and mentoring. "With Knight Nation, we can connect our students with Knights who have been in their shoes for some really powerful learning."

This initiative was made possible by a \$1 million gift from Mike and Marge McCoy, chair of the Board of Regents and his wife, to support connections between alumni and students.

"We're grateful for Mike and Marge's vision," said Jo Dorrance, associate director for internships. "They understand that our alumni and friends are some of the best resources for our students." 



Get Involved

With Knight Nation, you can spend as much time as you like connecting with our students.

Find an option that fits your schedule!

- Initial profile setup – 5-10 minutes!
 - Networking – 5-10 minutes
 - Posting a job/internship – 5-10 minutes
 - Sharing career advice – 5-15 minutes
 - Career conversation – 10 minutes
 - Resumé review – 30 minutes
 - Mock interview – 30 minutes
 - Job-shadow hosting – Half-day or full day
 - Mentoring program – 1 to 1.5 hours/week
- Look for more information this fall!*

To register for Knight Nation, go to www.wartburg.edu/knight-nation or scan the code to download the app.



Perfect PAIR

Inaugural mentorship program connects alumni with students

"You have this bubble here at college, obviously, but it's like, how do I get to that next step?"

— Natalie Thiesfeld '27

Jen Bye Christy '89 knows the value of a good mentoring relationship.

"Mentoring is something that I love to do," said Christy. "I just think it's a really great way to give back to the next generation or share your wisdom."

When the Knight Nation program was looking for its first group of mentors, she jumped at the chance and was paired with **Natalie Thiesfeld '27**, a sociology and political science major from St. Bonifacius, Minn.

"You have this bubble here at college, obviously, but it's like, how do I get to that next step? That's your career that you're chasing after this whole time," said Thiesfeld. "I really wanted to work on my resumé and also gain experience and insight from someone who's in a working profession. This is obviously an opportunity that not a lot of people get."

After being paired, Christy and Thiesfeld met virtually once a week for eight weeks, each meeting lasting about an hour. Discussion questions are provided as starting topics for each meeting.

Thiesfeld plans to go into law — she recently interned in Des Moines with the division of the Iowa Attorney General's Office that handles sexual assault — while Christy's background is in accounting and project management. That was not an obstacle to a good mentoring relationship, however.

"You may not get someone who's in your direct field, but there's still so much to gain and to learn from it," said Thiesfeld. "I would really recommend this program to anyone, especially people who don't know what they want to do yet in their career but want to connect with someone and have networking opportunities."

Once Christy and Thiesfeld determined they were both in the Des Moines area, they started making plans to meet in person.

"I lived pretty close to Drake and so I was talking to her about wanting to go see a

game and she was like, 'Have you seen one yet?' I told her I hadn't and she was like, 'Well, I already bought tickets,' and that's just really the person she is," Thiesfeld said. "We watched the game, they won, it was great!"

In addition to the social outing, Thiesfeld was invited to tour Christy's workplace, Principal Financial Group, and meet with the corporate attorneys there.

"She's just a great person to have in my corner, and I'm super grateful for it," Thiesfeld said.

"It's always nice to have a person you can check in with," said Christy. "I also find in my mentoring relationships I learn just as much from them as I hope they're learning from me."

What did Christy learn this time around?


"I look at Natalie and think, 'Did I have that much willingness to take a risk like she's doing at that age?'" noting that Thiesfeld moved on her own to Des Moines for an internship that deals with some serious subject matter.

"I'm amazed at what a lot of students today want to go out and do in the world, what they're already doing, and how articulate they are. They are ready to go out and conquer the world, and they have the skills and they're sharp. And so I feel like we're in good hands going forward."

Thiesfeld's biggest takeaway?

"Advocate for yourself," she said. "If you're in a certain role and you want to learn about another one, ask about it even if you don't have the skills. Jen was able to learn through her job and get an experience that she really wanted. Being able to do that myself is something that I would love."

And this experience has already convinced Thiesfeld of the value of mentoring.

"I hope down the line, I can become a mentor for someone else too," said Thiesfeld. "So full circle, just so cool." 



1938



LUTHER HALL


URNS 100

Luther Hall was once a ghost town.

The Wartburg campus in Waverly sat vacant in fall 1933, shuttered by the American Lutheran Church as it consolidated its colleges across the Midwest.

President August Engelbrecht, with the help of civic and church leaders, preserved the buildings and their contents — just in case the decision to move Wartburg's operations east to Clinton was less than permanent.

One year later, the campus hosted the ALC general convention. Thanks to an all-out effort by the Waverly community, attendees were so impressed by the facilities, especially Luther Hall, that the return of Wartburg was overwhelmingly approved for the 1935-36 academic year.

"Luther Hall is why we're here," said Dr. Terrance Lindell, professor of history. "It's a good, solid building that has evolved to meet the school's needs." 

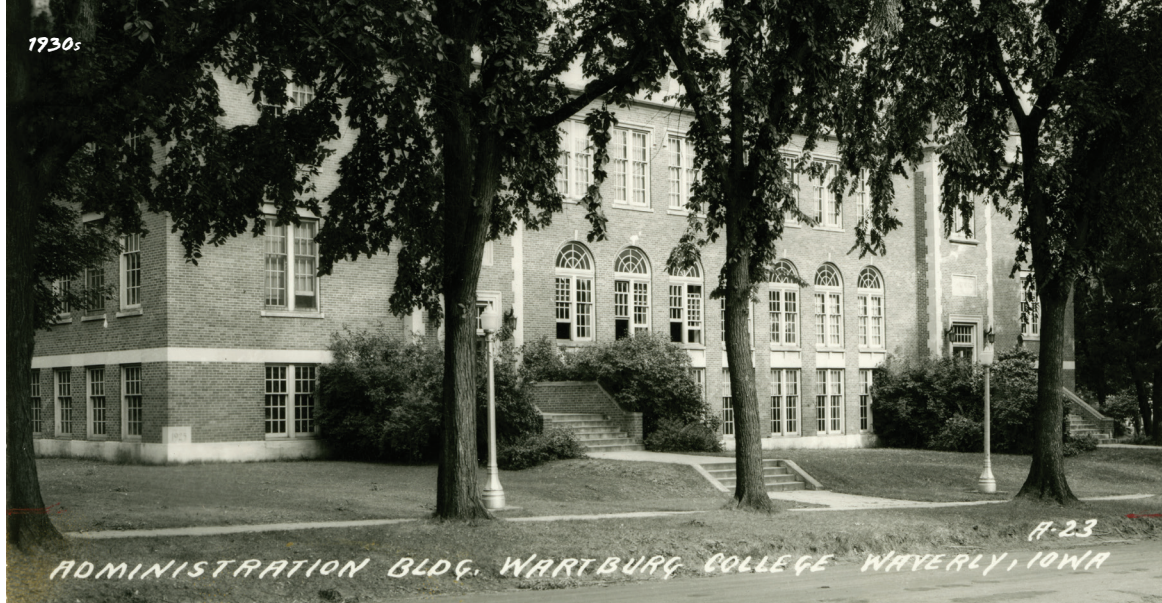


Explore
more history

FEATURE

STUDENT HELP

Luther Hall was designed by architect Mortimer B. Cleveland of Waterloo. Bids were let to Louritzen Construction, general contracting, \$75,256; E. C. Richards, plumbing, \$3,994; and Waverly Electrical Co., \$1,950. A number of students working their way through college took construction jobs on the conveniently located building.



ADMINISTRATION BLDG. WARTBURG COLLEGE WAVERLY, IOWA

1930s

Luther Hall was home to most of the academic departments, classrooms, administration, and even the library at one point.



Pro-Seminary Department—Luther Hall.



Convocation—Luther Hall.



Chemistry Laboratory in Luther Hall.



Library and Reading Room—Luther Hall.

RENOVATIONS

Over the years, Luther Hall has been renovated several times to accommodate our needs.

In the late 1980s, the third floor of Luther Hall was remodeled to move the central corridor to the campus mall side. The archways can still be seen today.



1988

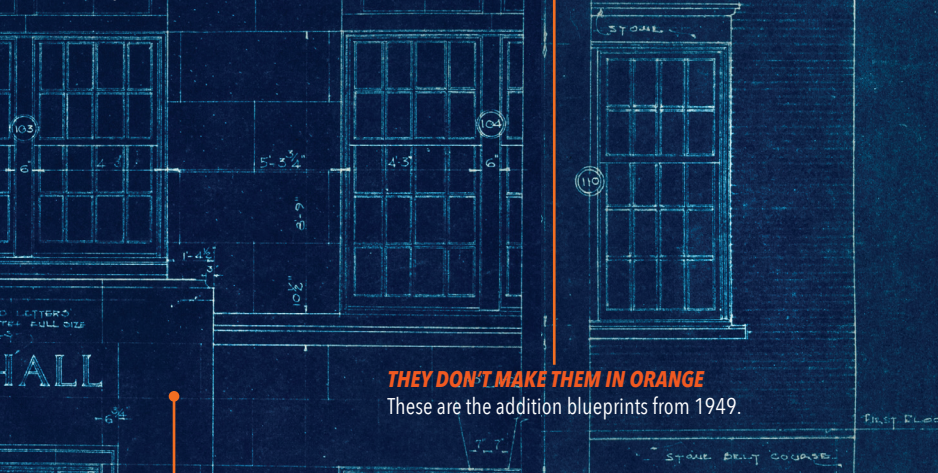


TODAY



1950s

The 1950s addition brought more space for classrooms, offices, and most notably, Neumann Auditorium.



THEY DON'T MAKE THEM IN ORANGE

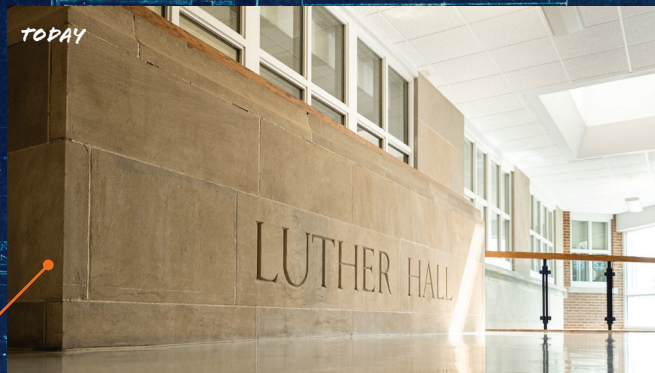
These are the addition blueprints from 1949.



1979



1988



TODAY

DID YOU KNOW?

The Luther Hall transom from the Bremer Avenue side of the building can still be seen on the second floor inside the Rada-Aleff Classroom Technology Center that was built onto the south side of Luther Hall in 1992.

PARK IN FRONT

Until the South Campus Addition of 1992, you could drive up to the front of Luther Hall from Bremer Avenue.

Happy Birthday, Luther Hall!
What will the next 100 years bring?

LUTHER HALL
1925 **URNS 100** 2025

ALUMNI

Phelps champions
community needs
through ministry

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Phelps '85

Answering THE CALL

The needs of the community have always shaped the ministry of **the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Phelps '85**.

As a young pastor at Concord Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood, Phelps tended to the needs of his biracial community by providing health resources, back-to-school support for youth, and assistance for those who had fallen on hard times. In 2022, the city saw an influx of migrants from Texas and states along the Mexico border. Thousands of men, women, and children arrived in Chicago, and Phelps welcomed hundreds into his church family through a partnership with a city-run shelter in the neighborhood. Today, he splits his time between helping new arrivals navigate immigration concerns and building racial solidarity among long-standing members of the community.

"I've always loved to help people. It all started with my mother. She was always a compassionate person and would often shelter people who didn't have a home. I am an only child, but there was always someone living in the house or stopping by to get something to eat," Phelps said. He also credits his time at Wartburg with growing his desire to help others. "When I came to Wartburg, there weren't many African Americans on campus, but there were so many people who welcomed me and cared for me."

Phelps didn't always intend to be a pastor. He graduated with a degree in computer information systems and worked for LexisNexis for 37 years. In the mid-'90s he started preaching at Concord, and in 2002 he graduated with a Master of Divinity from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He later earned a Doctor of Ministry from Northern.

Now he's the senior pastor at Concord, the church where he was baptized as a child, and chief executive officer of the Concord Community Organization, a nonprofit connected to the church. With Phelps' guidance, the church has partnered with Kennedy-King College to offer English as a second language to newcomers and conversational Spanish to longtime community members to encourage positive interactions. Bilingual church services are now common, and the church kitchen is being renovated so it can be used to host

meals highlighting different cultures and promoting community.


"The church is situated in a food desert, and we are actively fundraising to establish a community kitchen and remote classroom for Kennedy-King College Culinary School. This initiative aims to empower migrants and celebrate the diverse cultures within the community by enabling them to prepare their authentic meals," Phelps said. "Additionally, it will provide opportunities for community members to share meals together and pursue culinary sciences education, fostering pathways for employment in the food services industry."

Despite setbacks — whether city mandates, lack of resources, or changing federal policies — Phelps continues to push forward with hopes of building an infrastructure of support at the church that will outlive his time in the congregation.

"The needs of the community will always shape the work that we do. It was migrants being bused up from Texas. Today we are doing education to bring healing and wholeness to a community that feels like there are systemic forces pitting us against each other. Tomorrow it could be something else," he said. "I want to build the infrastructure that meets the needs of our community regardless of race, creed, or culture. I want to keep expanding our capacity to serve more. There isn't always a lot of money available, but we are writing grants and finding partners to do as much as we can."

Though the work is tireless, it is far from thankless.

"It's sometimes hard to see the impact you are having in the short term, but I know that I have reached people when they come back and say 'thank you' or you see them on the street and they tell you they have an apartment or they were on drugs and now they are clean," he said.

"That is what gives me the greatest joy, knowing that I have helped them begin to reach their full potential. My goal is to help as many as I can win at this thing we call life." 

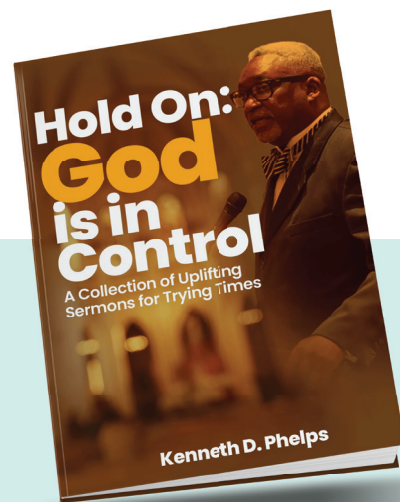
FLASHBACK

We spotted Phelps in this 1982 Wartburg Fortress photo of the Minority Awareness Organization.



"When I came to Wartburg, there weren't many African Americans on campus, but there were so many people who welcomed me and cared for me."

— The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Phelps '85



In his own words

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Phelps recently published *Hold On: God Is in Control: A Collection of Uplifting Sermons for Trying Times*.

"These sermons are ones I have been preaching through this season as I try to encourage the congregation to put their faith in God's steadfast presence. I hope these sermons can foster encouragement but also inspire hope in chaotic times," Phelps said. The book was published by IMANI Publishing, which Phelps started more than 20 years ago.



Since 2022, Myles has amassed more than 1.4 million TikTok followers.



From Wartburg to the world

With a viral TikTok presence, a love for travel, and a heart for students, Myles and Haley Finn are composing a new chapter in Croatia

A spark ignited more than a decade ago while students at Wartburg has finally caught fire for **Myles '15** and **Haley Rudd '16 Finn**. As members of the Wartburg Choir, the two got their first taste for international travel on their tour through Romania, Hungary, Germany, and Italy. Haley also spent a term studying in Ireland. Now, the Finns are uprooting their life in Indianola for a new adventure in Croatia.

"We absolutely loved the opportunity we had to live a European kind of lifestyle as much as we could in those weeks we spent abroad," Myles said.

"We started considering a move while I was getting my master's degree at Michigan State when a member of my cohort told us about her experience as an international teacher. When our daughter was born, we started considering the opportunity even more seriously."

During the 2024-25 school year, they worked with a recruiting agency and began sifting through the thousands of international opportunities available to them as a choir teacher (Myles) and guidance counselor (Haley). They weren't sure where they wanted to go, but they knew



Funko reached out to Myles to create a promotional Pop! of himself for social media.



The Finns will move 5,000+ miles from Indianola to Croatia.



they were going to be selective. In addition to their work, the Finns wanted to be sure their young children — Rory and Lyra — would have plenty of opportunities to grow and thrive wherever they landed.

Though they considered relocating to Budapest, the openings at an American international school in Croatia seemed like kismet.

“Haley and I had talked about taking our honeymoon in Croatia, but we never got around to it. The more we looked into it and the more people we talked to, the more perfect it seemed,” Myles said.

“We would both get to continue doing the work that we loved, but we would also have more time for our family in a beautiful country where we would get to explore and have that adventure we had been putting on the back burner. And we can give our children a unique and educational experience.”

The move also leaves the door open for Myles to continue growing his fan base on TikTok, where his account, *itsmrfinn*, has amassed more than 1.4 million followers. With Haley’s help, Myles became an overnight sensation — quite literally — in 2022 when his eight-part series revealing the school’s musical for the year went viral, garnering national attention from outlets like ABC News and *Good Morning America*.

Students who were unable to take part in the big reveal asked him to post the videos online so they could experience the tension after their other commitments. Myles, who had a TikTok account he rarely used, agreed to post the videos there.

After the last one went up announcing *The Addams Family* as the production of choice, Myles went home and didn’t think any more about it, until a friend called to ask if he had seen how many views his video had.

One million. In less than an hour.

The videos also caught the attention of *The Addams Family* composer Andrew

Lippa, who came to watch opening night at Indianola High School; the cast from *Come from Away*, who sent the musicians a video wishing them success on their production; and Kevin Chamberlin, who played Uncle Fester in the stage version of *The Addams Family*.

Recognizing the potential in the medium, Myles continued to post snippets from his classroom and rehearsals. In addition to the musical reveals — which are, of course, a production every year now — Myles also posts videos of choir warmups to popular songs.

When Pentatonix stopped in Des Moines, the a cappella group created a video much like one Myles had just posted of his students singing *Hey Jude* and tagged his account in their post. More recently, Funko gifted Myles and all his vocal music seniors each a customized Pop! figurine.

“These videos have provided my kids with some really cool opportunities to see a different side of musical theater and helped them understand that the world really is pretty small,” Myles said. “To be able to showcase a high school choir in this way has opened the minds of some of my kids and, hopefully, of some of the people who watch my videos as well.”

Myles said he tries to emulate the authenticity and vulnerability of Wartburg’s Dr. Lee Nelson in both his classroom and his videos. He hopes to continue those traits in his content as he moves into this next chapter of his life.

“We are still trying to figure out how we take this on the road in a way that is still going to be true to who we are and exciting for people who want to follow our journey. I’m hoping to show them what teaching internationally looks like, what Croatia looks like, and what traveling as a small family from central Iowa looks like,” Myles said. “We are excited to showcase that as much as possible to anyone who wants to follow along.”





Keri Carstens and Jenni Talbott's journey from roommates to C-suite executives

As high school students, **Keri Deppe Carstens '01** and **Jenni Donohue Talbott '01** ran the 400-meter hurdles against each other at the state track meet. As first-year Knights, they were matched as roommates on the third floor of Vollmer Hall. Fast forward more than 20 years later and the two have been in each other's weddings, taken family vacations together, and are godparents for the other's children.

"I mean it when I say that if I had a sister, I would want it to be the person I am looking at on this screen," said Carstens during a video call with Talbott. "We've been together through thick and thin. She is my person."

In between raising their kids — Carstens has three and Talbott has two — and maintaining their friendship, the women are taking charge in their respective fields with seats in the C-suite.

Talbott has been with McFarland Clinic in Ames for more than 17 years, including nearly three years as the chief operating officer. Carstens spent 14 years at DuPont Pioneer and Corteva Agriscience. Then in 2022 she joined Jord BioScience as the chief operating officer and now chief executive officer.



FLASHBACK Jenni's mom accidentally caught a glimpse of the future in this state track photo from 1997.



MORE THAN Friendship

You were both busy students. How did you find time to cultivate your friendship?

Keri: We were both driven students. I majored in biology and secondary education and ran track.

Jenni: I was in business administration and played volleyball and basketball. I added track my sophomore year so we could spend more time together.

What is one of your favorite memories from your time living together?

Keri: Where do we even start? We always decked out all of our doors. There were always challenges to overcome with athletics so there were lots of motivational speeches. Jenni broke her arm her sophomore year during basketball season, and I would help her tape it up so she could shower. There was always creative shopping on a limited budget.

Jenni: We were just each other's ongoing support system. Keri would come to my basketball games. I remember we made it to the Elite Eight, and she was up there cheering.

How did you manage to stay so close after graduation?

Keri: Regular communication was key, but it was easy because I always said if I had a sister, I would want it to be Jenni. We were there for each other through thick and thin – planning weddings, having babies, or when things just weren't going like we had hoped they would.

Jenni: Keri is the magic. She is very intentional about staying connected. It's not that she isn't always on my mind, but Keri is the one that always does something about it. She's the glue.

Keri: But even now that we are both in Ames, we still don't get to see each other as much as we want. I am so thankful and incredibly lucky for the human on the screen right now. I know I'm getting emotional, but she is my person, my sister for life. I am so thankful for whoever it was that saw fit to room us together. My life is better because of her being in it.

Who were your mentors while you were at Wartburg?

Jenni: I am so appreciative of Prof. Gloria Campbell helping me navigate internships. I started in retirement planning at Principal and then found out that health care business administration was a thing.

Keri: I was convinced I would be a vet, like most farm girls were, so I did the pre-vet track, but I realized that the kind of vet I wanted to be, helping both large and small animals, wouldn't really exist by the time I graduated. So I thought I would become a science teacher. Thank goodness for Dr. Roy Ventullo. He pushed me to look at research and research internships, and I am so thankful for that. Between my junior and senior year, I did research at Iowa State University in the toxicology lab. I didn't know then that the area of pesticide toxicology even existed, but I realized that it was an intersection of my interests where I could help people.


How did participating in athletics shape your college experience?

Keri: Marcus Newsom was also one of my favorite people on campus for showing me what a great leader and role model looks like. The value of hard work and teamwork has been foundational in my whole life, but especially in my career.

Jenni: My collegiate athletic experience was very important in shaping how I operate today and am able to put things into perspective. In volleyball, every point is someone's error; you have to accept that and move on. You will have errors, and you have to shake them off. Working together, time management, those are all things that translate into everyday life and work.

What happened after Wartburg?

Jenni: I went to the University of Iowa for a Master of Health Care Administration and Master of Business Administration. Then I worked in Chicago before coming back to Iowa and joining McFarland Clinic in Ames. It's great to be back by my hometown and work where I was seen when I was little.

Keri: I earned a Master of Science in toxicology and a Ph.D. in environmental toxicology and entomology from Iowa State. Coming from a farming background, I knew farmers needed great tools and to be safe where they work. So I started my work at Pioneer and was there for 14 years. About three years ago, I was contacted about a new role at a start-up called Jord BioScience. I felt very strongly that Jord exists to make products better, which was why I went to Wartburg – to make the world better. 





OUR *Brightest* DAYS ARE STILL AHEAD

The Campaign for Realizing Purpose & Leading Change will carry Wartburg into the future

One of my favorite parts of meeting our alumni is hearing stories about their time at Wartburg. I've heard about Outfly, music tours, service trips, convocations, national championships, cram sessions, building lifelong friendships in the residence halls, and everything in between. Everyone remembers and loves something unique about their Wartburg experience, and it's one of the things that makes this place so special.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

While many things have changed over the years at Wartburg, our mission remains the same: preparing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning. Put another way, we are still providing the same Wartburg experience to today's students — a welcoming environment that both challenges and nurtures our students as they prepare to make a difference in the world. The process might look a little different now than 10, 20, or 30 years ago, but the goal is the same.

In our strategic plan, *Our Brightest Days: Realizing Purpose, Leading Change*, we developed four themes to direct our growth:

- **Educating Mind, Body & Spirit.** We know education of the whole person is vital in today's complex world.
- **Inclusive Community.** Wartburg will be a place that is welcoming to all and where everyone will feel a genuine sense of belonging.
- **Student Success.** We must equip our graduates to be the leaders of tomorrow and create positive change.
- **Competitive Advantage.** We will continue to attract students by demonstrating the distinct value of a Wartburg education.

We've identified concrete steps we will take in these areas, which you'll read about in the pages ahead. Whether it's strengthening scholarship support, increasing opportunities for experiential learning, or making specific investments to promote student success, we need your help to welcome more students to Wartburg, empower them to succeed in completing their degrees, and prepare them for what comes next.

With your continued help — and that of the rest of the Wartburg community — we'll make sure *Our Brightest Days* are still to come.

With gratitude, *Rebecca*

President Rebecca Ehretzman

Student Success is Key

Our current technology replacement cycle is too extended to provide a modern classroom experience to our students, and our wellness facilities are beginning to show their age. As student demographics have shifted and the needs of prospective students have evolved, Wartburg has discovered opportunities to bolster academic support, counseling, and career services.

Building the Future of Education

Dr. Rachel Clark, associate professor of English, teaches the classics, up to and including Shakespeare. But she'd prefer it if her classroom spaces were a little more modern.

"We can get so much more learning done during class if we don't have to stop and fight with technology just to show a piece of media or have a student present," said Clark. "I teach many of my classes in Luther Hall, which turns 100 this year, and I can't think of a better birthday celebration than upgrading those classrooms."

The college currently updates classroom technology every 20 years — a cycle that can't keep up with modern needs:

- Many classrooms still have outdated cables and connections.
- Aging equipment causes frequent disruptions.
- Inconsistent technology causes confusion across campus.
- Wireless capabilities are severely limited.

The Classroom Technology Transformation initiative will modernize all 64 campus classrooms, creating dynamic, technology-enabled environments that will better prepare students for tomorrow's challenges. Every upgraded classroom will feature:

- State-of-the-art projectors.
- Wireless presentation capabilities.
- Advanced audio systems.
- Document cameras.
- Cameras for hybrid learning.



These upgrades will help prepare students for the digital workplace, enable innovative teaching methods, support hands-on learning experiences, and strengthen Wartburg's position as a leader in education — a lasting impact for generations of students.

Wartburg is seeking \$600,000 to modernize every classroom on campus. Thank you to the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust for a \$185,000 lead gift.

Salzwedels pledge \$1 million to scholarships, experiential learning

The Salzwedel Family Fund, founded by **Jack '82** and **Sarah Slife '82 Salzwedel**, has committed \$1 million to *Our Brightest Days*.

"Our commitment to *Our Brightest Days* is rooted in our belief that Wartburg's mission is more critical than ever," Jack Salzwedel said. "The campaign's vision aligns with the values of leadership, service, and academic excellence, and we felt compelled to step forward at a high level to help secure Wartburg's future."

The Salzwedels' gift includes \$550,000 in support of Wartburg Commitment

scholarships, with the remaining \$450,000 to benefit the Knight's Experience Fund.

"Our family has always believed in the transformative power of education. And ensuring that talented and hardworking students have access to a Wartburg education — regardless of financial barriers — is a commitment we hold deeply. We hope that our support of student scholarships will help future generations of Wartburg Knights," Sarah Salzwedel said.

The Salzwedels have had three children attend the college. Jack Salzwedel retired

as CEO of American Family Insurance in 2021 and as executive chair of the American Family board in 2023. He served on the college's Board of Regents for nearly a decade.

"We see this campaign as a way to build upon Wartburg's legacy and invest in a future where students continue to thrive and make a difference. Supporting *Our Brightest Days* is not just a gift — it's a statement of faith in what Wartburg stands for and the impact it will have for generations to come," Jack Salzwedel said.

Community wellness

Since 2008, the Ohle Wartburg-Waverly Sports & Wellness Center (known as The W) has offered transformative recreational opportunities for thousands of patrons of all ages, abilities, and interests from across campus, throughout the Cedar Valley, and around the Midwest.

"The W is something very unique that you just don't find anywhere else. I come here about every day" said Greg Stockdale, a W member.

Wartburg has partnered with the city of Waverly to deliver needed programming to the Cedar Valley while creating invaluable experiential-learning opportunities for students.

In 2023-24, The W served more than 142,000 total visitors, including 3,669 nonstudent members, and offered more than 60 community rec programs.

Most of these recreational services, attended by nearly 900 children in 2023-24, are delivered in The W and adjacent Walston-Hoover Stadium.

Other needs

Support services like counseling, advising, and career guidance are essential for student well-being and growth, said Lindsey Leonard, vice president for student life.

"It's our job to prepare students for what's next, both personally and professionally," said Leonard.

Alumni and student connections have already received a boost from a \$1 million gift

Both of those facilities are in need of upgrades to continue serving Wartburg's campus and the Waverly community. Planned improvements include:

- Resurfacing the Hoover Fieldhouse & Track.
- Updating equipment for the swimming pool, vortex pool, sauna, and hot tub in the Schuldts Natatorium.
- Resurfacing Walston-Hoover Stadium's outdoor track.
- Replacing the Zimmerman Field turf.
- Upgrading the climbing wall.
- Modernizing the weight and cardio equipment.

"It's important to maintain and refresh our facilities to ensure that we're serving the wellness needs of the campus and the community," said Sheila Kittleson, executive director of The W.

Wartburg is seeking \$5 million for upgrades and improvements across our wellness facilities.

from Mike and Marge McCoy (see page 6 for more about the impact).

And the Annual Fund supports the success of all students with flexible dollars that can be spent where the need is greatest.

Wartburg is seeking \$9.9 million in annual and deferred gifts to support the ongoing operations of the college.



Honoring coaches Willis, Newsom

A new spirit-themed entrance from The W onto Zimmerman Field, the Willis Championship Tunnel, will be named after Rick Willis, vice president for strategic recruitment. His record from his time as head football coach from 1997 to 2019 includes:



Willis

- 11 conference titles.
- 11 NCAA tournament runs, including three Elite Eight berths.
- 21 straight winning seasons with an overall 185-46 (.801) record.
- 44 All-Americans and two Gagliardi contenders.
- 8 coach of the year honors.



The new track at Walston-Hoover Stadium, the Newsom Outdoor Track, will be named after Marcus Newsom, director of track and field and cross country as well as assistant athletic director. Newsom became the track and field head coach in 1998 and has since compiled a record including:



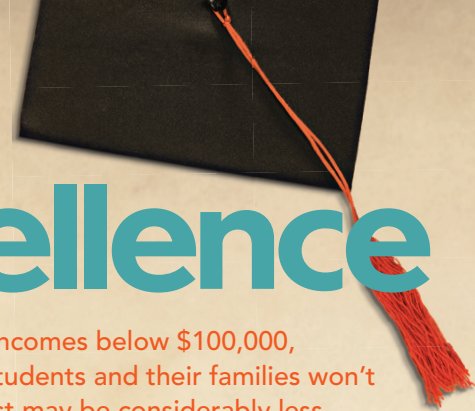
Newsom

- 61 conference championships.
- 9 national championships.
- 3 program of the year awards.
- 638 All-Americans.
- 16 coach of the year honors.



The Salzwedel family celebrates the graduation of Sam '24.

Access TO Excellence



Traditionally, nearly 40 percent of Wartburg students come from families with incomes below \$100,000, with nearly 70 percent below \$150,000. Research confirms many prospective students and their families won't consider colleges with a sticker price above \$60,000, even though their net cost may be considerably less.

Alysiah Phillips '27 is the first in her family to attend college, thanks to the Harry and Polly Slife Minority Scholarship.

"This scholarship gives me the chance to be guided by a mentor and a chance to grow with students just like me," she said.

According to **Tara Price Winter '01, '23 M.A.**, executive director of admissions, recruiting students like Phillips is vital to Wartburg's future. In recent years, the college has seen a significant drop in



Phillips

applications from students in working- and middle-income families, which are core demographics Wartburg has traditionally served.

"We knew we were missing out on families that saw our published tuition price and didn't understand that wasn't their actual cost," said Winter.

Lowering the sticker price by more than 45 percent for the 2024-25 academic year was only the first step in fixing that imbalance.

The Access to Excellence initiative is providing more support for students who demonstrate financial need.

"Our goal is for the new tuition price to put Wartburg in the mix for more families," said Winter. "But we still need to offer scholarships, grants, and other aid to make sure a Wartburg education is possible for them. We know we can't build the community we want without including students from all backgrounds."

Wartburg is seeking \$12 million in new scholarship support to allow more students to attend Wartburg. Thank you to the Salzwedel Family Foundation for a \$1 million lead gift.

Knights Experience More

Experiential learning has long been a hallmark of a Wartburg education, with many alumni considering those experiences to be the most transformative part of their Wartburg journeys. However, more students today are reluctant or unable to take these opportunities as out-of-pocket costs have risen.

Margaret Van Speybroeck '26 spent May Term in the Netherlands (pictured below) and Germany as part of a business course with Dr. Amy Pilcher.




In addition to learning about tulip farming, World War II, and the culture, Van Speybroeck was most interested in sustainable business practices. While there, the group toured AEB Amsterdam, where waste is converted into energy, and visited the Chocolatemakers factory, which is emissions-free and mostly solar-powered.

"I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to immerse myself in a new culture, grow personally and professionally, and gain a global perspective on sustainability in business," Van Speybroeck said. "I can't wait to take sustainable and ethical principles to my future career."

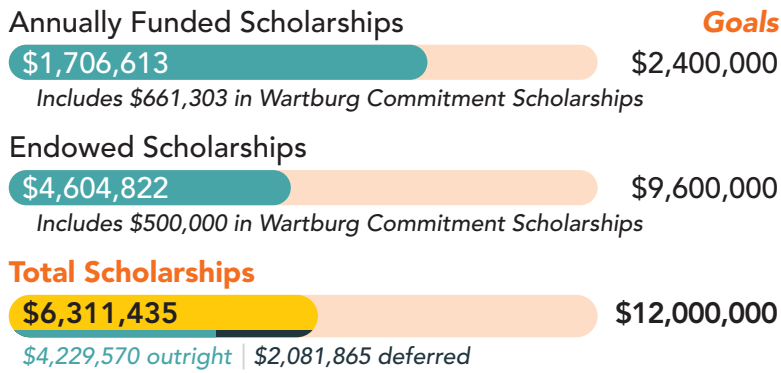
Van Speybroeck encourages current Wartburg students to take advantage of

opportunities like hers, especially now that the Knight's Experience Fund can help cover travel, lodging, and other costs associated with these experiences.

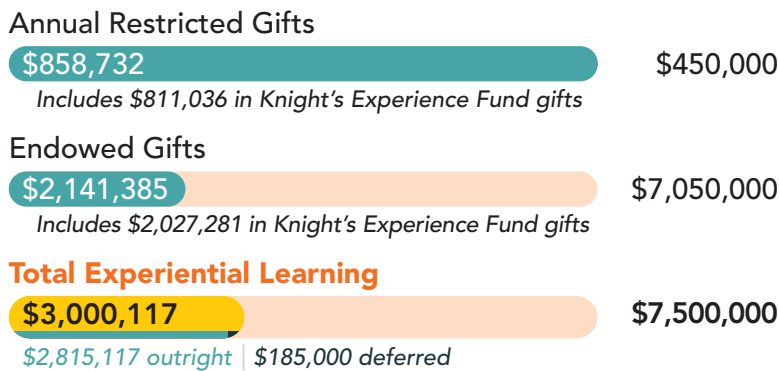
"The Knight's Experience Fund made my experience possible by helping cover the cost of being abroad, and without it, I would not have been able to go. This fund is a powerful resource Wartburg provides to its students," Van Speybroeck said. "I am extremely thankful for this experience and fund!" 

Wartburg is seeking \$7.5 million in support for the Knight's Experience Fund to support more experiential learning opportunities.

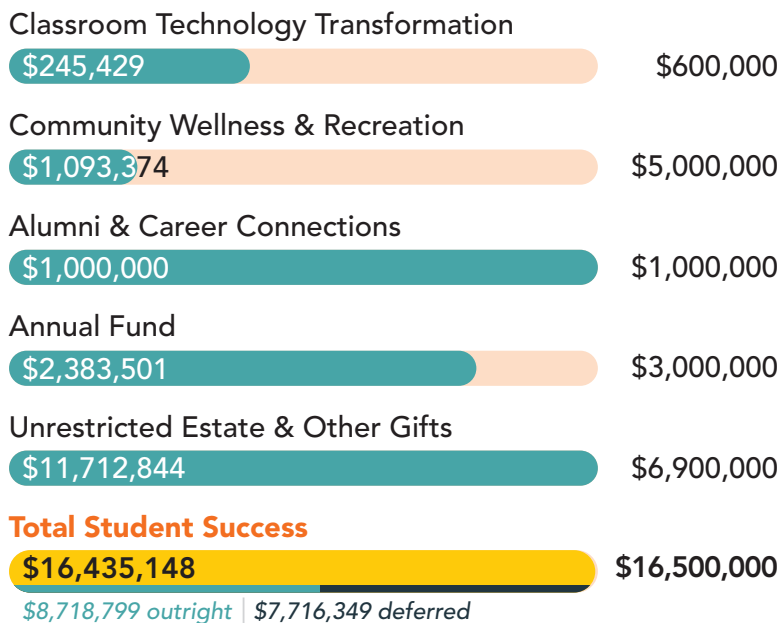
Access to Excellence



Experiential Learning



Student Success



Campaign Total \$36,000,000
\$25,746,700

\$15,763,486 outright **\$9,983,214 deferred**
out of \$24,000,000 out of \$12,000,000

Campaign Goals

Progress as of May 2025



THE CAMPAIGN FOR
**Realizing Purpose
 & Leading Change**

To learn more about the campaign
 or to make a campaign gift, go to
www.wartburg.edu/campaign.



Owen Grover

From gridiron to med school

Anyone who has paid attention to Wartburg College football over the last three years will recognize the name

Owen Grover '24.

During the 2022-23 and 2023-24 seasons, the linebacker racked up a list of accolades that culminated with being a finalist for the William V. Campbell Trophy and a recipient of the 2024 NCAA Today's Top 10 Award. But Wartburg, and life, have never been about just football for the Dyersville native. While making a name for himself on the field, Grover also was a Dance Marathon morale captain, a member of the Catholic Knights, and a volunteer at Waverly Health Center, all while maintaining a 3.99 GPA as a biology major.

Balancing those commitments at Wartburg, however, helped Grover succeed in his first year at the University of Iowa's Carver College of Medicine.

"The med school curriculum is hard; I knew it would be. Time management is so important here because we have to spend so much time outside of the classroom studying and working on projects, but with everything that was on my plate as an undergrad, I've felt extremely prepared."

In fact, Grover was so confident in his preparation for medical school he didn't hesitate when the Iowa City Regina High School football coach reached out to him last fall with an offer to serve as an assistant coach; he immediately said yes. He also plans to be on the sidelines for all the Regals games again this year.

"It was great that what I learned at Wartburg meant that I could continue to do something I really love, like being involved with football," Grover said. "Being able to coach and learn the other side of the game is a cool experience."

This summer, Grover is participating in the university's Medical Education Community Orientation program, which placed him in a health care setting in Iowa.

Though he is still open to what his future will bring, he is seriously considering the Carver College of Medicine Rural Iowa Scholars Program, which would allow him to practice in a rural community and relieve some of his student loan debt at the same time.

"I already know that I want to settle down somewhere rural where I can be part of a school like Dyersville or Wartburg. I want to be involved in the community and really get to know the people I see in the office on a personal level," he said, referencing his internship at Craig Hospital in Denver, Colo., as his motivator. "I worked with a lot of patients with paralysis and brain injuries during their recovery process. I really enjoyed spending time with each of them and building relationships during their therapy appointments. I know I want to practice medicine in a way that allows me to build those same kinds of relationships with my patients."





On the field

Chris Winter '04, Wartburg's head football coach, said Grover is the definition of what it means to be a Knight.

"Owen is a servant-leader, an outstanding student, and an elite athlete. There is a direct correlation between the success of our team and the example that has been set by Owen and the rest of our senior class in 2023," Winter said. "I am so proud of Owen, not only because he has been one of the best football players in Wartburg history, but because he has accomplished this while also being one of the brightest students and servant-leaders that Wartburg College has ever seen."

Grover continues to follow the football team's success, now from the stands, as he cheers on his former teammates and younger brother, **Conner '26**, a defensive back.



NFL legend Peyton Manning and Owen Grover at the William V. Campbell Awards in 2024 in Las Vegas.

"Our class is still really invested in the success of this team. When I go back, there are usually at least 10 of us there to cheer them on. Only now I'm more stressed than I was when I was on the field."

— **Owen Grover '24**

Role model

In addition to serving as a role model for his younger brothers, Grover also has young fans in the community who look up to him.

"Owen came to church every week and participated in things that the church does, like when we did the Easter egg hunt," said Henry Gleason, a young sports fan who attended Grover's church. "I admire Owen's athleticism and how he can make the plays when everybody thinks it's impossible."

Henry's parents, Michael and **Meg Ryan '07 Gleason**, were especially impressed when Grover took the time to sign a William V. Campbell trophy finalist photo for Henry's sports-themed bedroom.

"Owen exemplifies the Division III student-athlete in the way we can watch him dominate on the field, know how strong he is academically, and still be humble enough to engage with a young fan," Meg said. "Throughout the 2023 season, Henry would see his heroes on the field and would race to say congrats on Sundays at church or when he would see them in The W. Owen always has time to engage with Henry no matter the situation. When you're the parent of a sports-enthused child, you talk about sportsmanship a lot and watching all of Wartburg's football team give credit for the hard work they do on and off the field to their teammates and coaches is inspiring."

In the classroom

Dr. Shawn Ellerbroek, the Ralph E. Otto Endowed Professor in Chemistry, has seen many successful students in his 20 years of teaching at Wartburg. His students have been accepted into Harvard's medical school, received Davis Projects for Peace grants to implement humanitarian projects around the world, and participated in countless athletic, music, and student organizations.

"Rarely, though, have I had the privilege to teach and mentor a student who excelled in so many different arenas like Owen," Ellerbroek said. "Among others, he was the top student in every one of my classes, tirelessly donated his time to help others, and well, we all know of his football accomplishments. When I see someone develop their God-given talents with discipline, humility, and positivity of spirit like Owen, how can I not be inspired and moved? Owen is going to be a positive difference maker in whatever he tackles, including medicine."

For Grover, the support of professors like Ellerbroek had a profound impact on his Wartburg experience.

"I remember a football game we played against Monmouth in 2023. The game was supposed to start at like 7 but we had a storm delay, so it didn't start until after 10 and went until like 1 a.m. The next morning, I had a message from Dr. Ellerbroek that

said something along the lines of, 'Hey, great game and great interception last night. I went to bed after that because it was too late for this old man,'" Grover said. "It's incredible that professors like him not only care about how we are doing in their classes, but they are watching our games and care enough to reach out. That was consistent throughout all my time at Wartburg, and that was really special."

Work ethic


Before Grover was known on the football field, Hailee Bossard, a maintenance worker in The W, knew him as the "student who came in to work on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10 to 11:30 a.m." Between fall 2019 and December 2023, Grover reported to Bossard as a student facilities and event worker responsible for setting up and tearing down any number of events inside the building.

"Owen may be most well-known for his impact on the football field, but he also had a great impact on many other student-athletes, prospective students, and community members during his time at Wartburg," she said. "Whether he was vacuuming a classroom or sweeping up popcorn in the basketball arena, Owen was always eager to help with anything. He naturally evolved into a leader within the student staff as well and was the go-to person for ensuring event

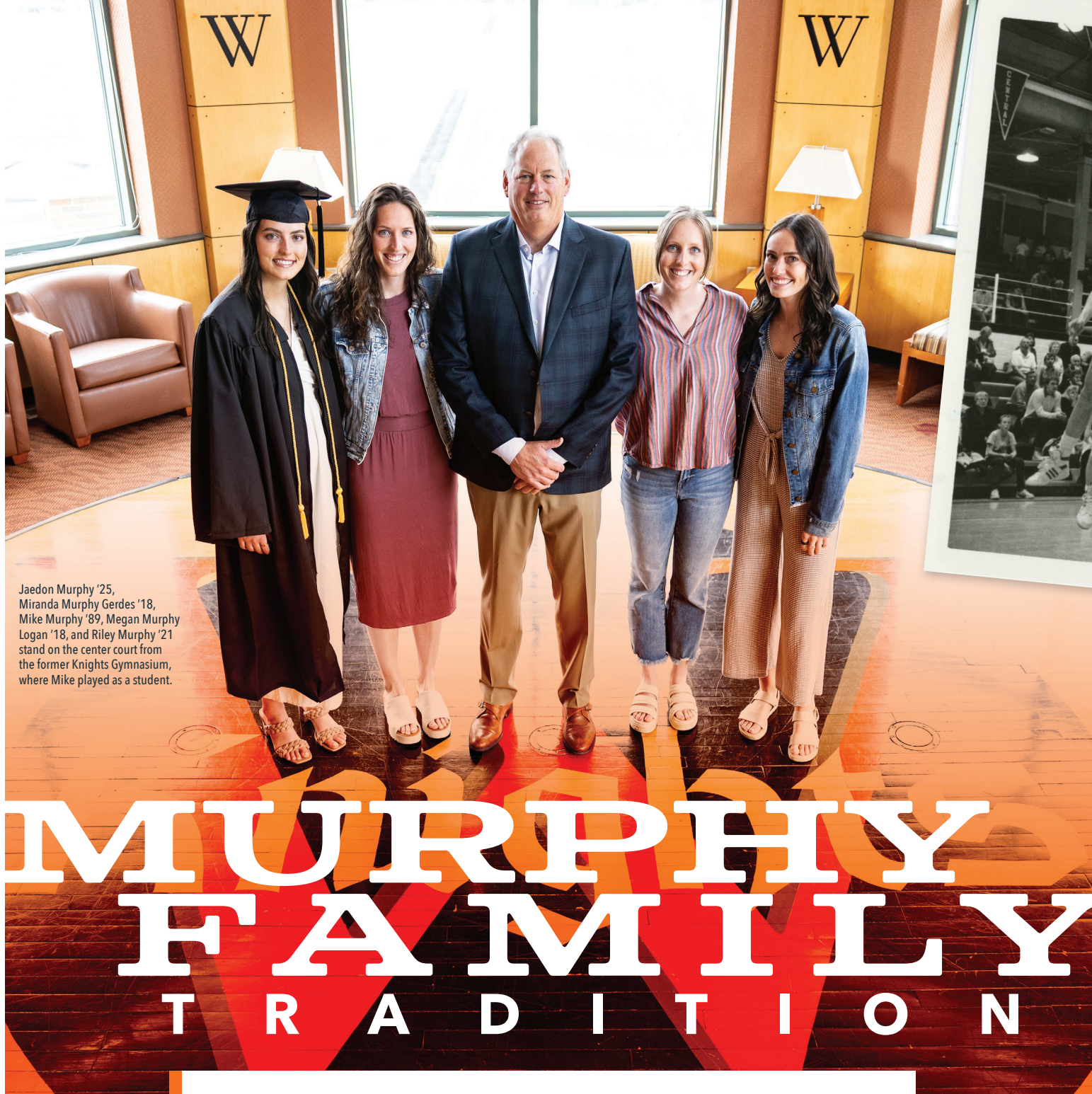
setups and tear downs went off without a hitch. He had that team player mentality."

That included prepping Walston-Hoover Stadium before the biggest game of his college career.

"It was clear he understood the value of hard work, humility, and showing up for others, even when the spotlight was on him. There may be no greater memory of this than the nationally televised 2023 NCAA football semifinal game hosted at Walston-Hoover Stadium. I had students help prepare the stadium to ensure it was looking its best for the players and fans attending, as well as everyone that would see it on TV. Who other than Owen, the starting linebacker and Gagliardi Trophy finalist, would be the one to sweep the turf?" Bossard said.

"I think that says everything you need to know about Owen. It's rare to find someone who's not only exceptional at what they do but also grounded enough to do the behind-the-scenes work that contributes to the larger picture. The willingness to give his time and effort to ensure the stadium was perfect, even when he could have easily just focused on preparing for the game, is something I won't soon forget. Watching someone like Owen grow from a student who showed up ready to work into a nationally recognized student-athlete was a very rewarding journey and an absolute privilege to have been a part of!" 





Jaedon Murphy '25, Miranda Murphy Gerdes '18, Mike Murphy '89, Megan Murphy Logan '18, and Riley Murphy '21 stand on the center court from the former Knights Gymnasium, where Mike played as a student.

MURPHY FAMILY TRADITION

One father, four daughters, and a shared legacy of basketball excellence have made the Murphy name synonymous with Wartburg pride

By the time **Jaedon Murphy '25** was ready to pick a college, the answer was nearly a foregone conclusion. Still, she went through the motions of visiting schools and testing the waters at Division I universities outside of Iowa. But in the end, the Murphy family bleeds orange and

black, and Jaedon chose to follow in her dad and sisters' footsteps at Wartburg.

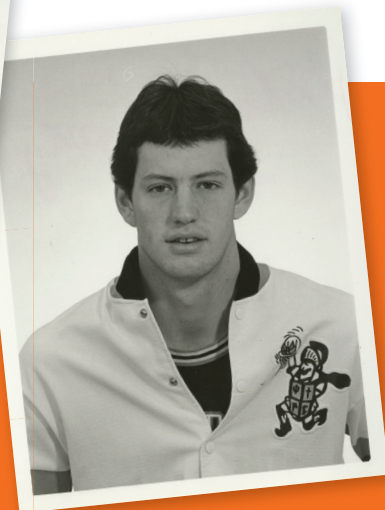
"Deep down, I always knew Wartburg was where I wanted to go. Seeing the success and experiences my sisters had, I always knew I wanted that as well," Jaedon said.



Jaedon Murphy '25



Riley Murphy '21



"I had always hoped all four of them would be able to experience Wartburg in the same way I did, and they did. I am so very proud of how hard they worked to get to that point."

— Mike Murphy '89

MURPHY FAMILY NUMBERS

#24
MIKE
MURPHY

#34
MIRANDA
MURPHY GERDES

#2
MEGAN
MURPHY LOGAN

#23
RILEY
MURPHY

#33
JAEDON
MURPHY

The Murphy family legacy started in the '80s when **Mike Murphy '89** was drawn to Wartburg by the late — and legendary — Buzz Levick. His teams secured conference championships in 1987 and 1989 and advanced to the Elite Eight in 1987. He finished his Wartburg career with 1,409 career points and was second on the career leader list for blocked shots.

His daughters, who also include twins **Miranda Murphy Gerdes '18** and **Megan Murphy Logan '18** and **Riley Murphy '21**, are just as impressive. The twins went to the NCAA Tournament twice, including a run to the Final Four in 2017-18 when Riley was playing with them.

"I greatly valued the opportunity to be on the court alongside Miranda all of those years playing, but senior year where it was the three of us was beyond special," Megan said. "Getting to be a part of watching Riley meet her friends and build her community at Wartburg that year was almost like I didn't have to close the Wartburg chapter after passing the baton to her."


Riley's teams saw postseason action two more times during her Wartburg career. Jaedon, who played one year with Riley, also made two postseason runs, including another trip to the Final Four in 2023-24. Miranda amassed 1,121 career points, while Jaedon, who stayed at Wartburg for a fifth year because of COVID-19, racked up 1,921 points and earned conference MVP honors, just like her dad.

"My dad coached me all the way through middle school and taught me so much. He would always go out on the driveway and shoot with all of us," she said. "It's cool that I get to share that honor with him. I look up to him a lot, and I hope I can continue to be as successful as he is in other areas, like his business. That is always something I strive for."

For Mike, who has watched the girls' basketball careers from the beginning, the ending is bittersweet.

"I had always hoped all four of them would be able to experience Wartburg in the same way I did, and they did. I am so very proud of how hard they worked to get to that point. It's phenomenal what they got to see and experience because of basketball at Wartburg," he said. In addition to deep postseason runs that took them across the U.S., both Miranda and Jaedon were part of USA DIII Select Teams that played in Brazil in 2017 and 2022, respectively. "It was a lot of fun to watch them together and with their friends."

Now, as the youngest Murphy adjusts to life after Wartburg and the family begins to look toward the future, they know one thing will always be true.

"Wartburg will always be in our blood, and we will continue to cheer on the Wartburg Knights every opportunity we can," Miranda said. 



Watch a video interview with the Murphys online at www.wartburg.edu/murphy-family



KNIGHTS in the News

1950s

Dr. Erv Janssen '58, Tulsa, Okla., a U.S. Navy veteran, was a 2024 inductee in the Oklahoma Military Hall of Honor for his lifetime of service in support of the mental health of active duty service members, reservists, veterans, and their families.

1970s

The Rev. Dianne Stange Prichard '71, DeWitt, co-authored the book *Raising America: Building a More Perfect Union*.

David Van Driel '72, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., earned a master's degree from Rice University, Houston, and is CEO at Van Driel Ventures/Energy and Waste Network.

Robert Atkins '76, Roscoe, Ill., is retired.

David '76 and Sherry **Burrier**, Runnells, were married Jan. 1, 2022. He has authored and published 10 children's books since retiring in 2019.

Gregory Diercks '78, Chicago, Ill., is retired.

1980s

Dawn Rodenberg Lynes '82, Garnavillo, earned the 2023 Tom Lewis Award from the Coalition for Family and Children's Services in Iowa.

Deborah Newton Mortensen '83, Alta, retired in 2022 after 39 years with the Storm Lake Community School District. She authored the children's book *Not Me*, published in 2024.

Jamie Clemente De Geer '84, Valley Park, Mo., celebrated 25 years as director of music ministry at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Manchester. She serves in various roles from worship and youth leadership to choir director.

Jan Hazlewood Plane '87, Brandon, Wis., earned the ACM-SIGCSE Broadening Participation in Computing Award. She was also awarded the May Bumby Severy Award for Teaching Excellence at Ripon College.

Stu Fritz '88, Holland, Mich., retired after 31 years as head baseball coach and associate professor of kinesiology at Hope College. He is serving part time as an athletics and philanthropy liaison.

Kevin Kelling '88, Grand Rapids, Mich., is a mortgage loan originator at Macatawa Bank.

1990s

Kathryn Buck Strong '90, Broomfield, Colo., retired from the city of Lakewood after 26 years as a teacher and education coordinator for Head Start. She now serves as an office administrator with Atonement Lutheran Church, Boulder.

David Gerleman '91, Alexandria, Va., a history instructor at George Mason University, Fairfax, is a 2024-25 Fulbright Scholar Award recipient and is teaching two courses at the University of Debrecen, Hungary.

Jeff Martin '92, Kennesaw, Ga., a journalist for the Associated Press, produced Lethal Restraint. The project is a series of stories, photos, videos, and a PBS Frontline documentary examining the deaths of more than 1,000 people after encounters with police.

Van Beach '94, Cumming, is global head of Life Actuarial Solutions with Aon.

Alexis Oberdorfer '94, West Saint Paul, Minn., is senior vice president of services for Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota.

James Cassmann '95, Mabel, Minn., is an administrative assistant at Mayo Clinic-Rochester for the General Internal Medicine International Clinic and faculty development.

Tina Cox Vogelmann '95, Lake Geneva, Wis., earned a master's degree from Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, Md., and is superintendent at Hartland Lakeside School District, Hartland.

Mark Albertsen '96, Dysart, is an elementary principal in the East Marshall Community School District.

Chad Gerbracht '96, Wellsburg, is an elementary school teacher in the Dike-New Hartford Schools.

Dr. Richard Stapleton '97, North Liberty, is an academic coordinator – counselor education and supervision field experience at Walden University, Minneapolis. He is chair of the National Board of Certified Counselors, serving through June 2025.

Dr. Jamie Kling '99, Portage, Wis., received the University of Wisconsin Department of Family Medicine and Community Health's Faculty Excellence Award. The award acknowledges initiative, enthusiasm, collaboration, and commitment.

Dan Lahey '99, Johnston, is executive vice president and chief financial and investment officer at LCS, Des Moines.

2000s

Aaron Buzza '01, Macon, Ga., was named one of the 200 Most Influential of Georgia's Creative Industries by Georgia Entertainment's Creative Economy Journal.

Elaina Meier '01, Madison, Wis., earned a doctoral degree in counseling psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Angela Neptun Hudelson '03, Peoria, Ill., earned a degree in social work from the University of Illinois and is a mental health clinician at FamilyCore.

Kelsey Padderud Baker '05, Waverly, is principal at River Hills School, Cedar Falls.

Tyler Hubbard '06, Lee's Summit, Mo., is a service manager at MD Auto Repair, Kansas City, Mo.

Joe and **Karen Connelly '06 Newcomb**, Cedar Falls, announce the birth of Isaiah on Dec. 14, 2023.

Marla Stewart '06, Gilbert, Ariz., is a human resources partner at Pacific Scientific Energetic Materials Company.

Abhishek Khanna and **Brittany Brugman '08**, Ankeny, were married June 2, 2024.

Travis Bockenstedt '09, Denver, Colo., is president and chief experience officer of Pinnacle Advanced Primary Care.

Dr. John Kuckelman '09, DuPont, Wash., is serving in the U.S. Army as an active duty cardiothoracic surgeon deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

2010s

The Rev. Bridget Whately '10, Comstock Park, Mich., earned a Master of Divinity at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and is pastor at Peace Lutheran Church, Sparta, Mich.

Ryan and **Katie Zittergruen '11 Henriksen**, Waverly, announce the birth of Elyse on March 13, 2024.

Shanna Seiler Savageau '11, Woodbury, Minn., is senior social worker – contracted case management coordinator for Anoka County.

Emily Kuennen '12, Aurora, Colo., is first assistant manager at QuikTrip.

Jordan Sarhoff '12, Hillsboro, founded Prairie Rose Wealth Management in 2024 and joined LPL Financial.

Kathryn Wendt '12, Minneapolis, was named Of Counsel at Ballard Spahr.

Drew Crawford '13, Ames, is a digital marketing director at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center.

Seth Smith '13, Cedar Falls, is a technical project manager at RTX.

Jordan Young '13, Cedar Rapids, is the dean of students and activities-athletics director in the Linn-Mar Community School District, Marion.

Kevin and **Abigail Mueller '14 Brantch**, Indianapolis, announce the birth of Audette on Feb. 20, 2024.

Jawanza Holmes '14, Waverly, is a running backs coach for Wartburg football.

Cruz Trujillo and **Emily Hogan '14**, Sioux Falls, S.D., were married on Sept. 17, 2022.

Tiffany Louk '15, Fresno, Calif., is the central valley regional business development specialist for the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, Sacramento.

Jacob Martin '15, Port Jefferson Station, N.Y., earned a doctoral degree in political science at Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, and is a senior research associate at the Postsecondary National Policy Institute, Washington, D.C.

Brooke Moeller '16, Durant, is a music therapist at St. Croix Hospice.

Mitchell '16 and Micaela Forsyth '16 Rahm, Cedar Falls, announce the birth of Maverik on Feb. 20, 2023.

Mackenzie Walsh Stern '16, Mendota Heights, Minn., is the music department coordinator at Macalester College, St. Paul.

Zach '17 and Courtney Drape, Waverly, announce the birth of Catherine on Jan. 25, 2024.

Allen and **Emily Almandinger '17 Kuehn**, Des Moines, announce the birth of Noah on July 8, 2024.

Elliott Stern '17, Mendota Heights, Minn., earned a master's degree in educational leadership from Drake University, Des Moines, and is a technical training specialist at Infinite Campus, Blaine.

Alex Astiazaran '18, DeKalb, Ill., earned a master's degree in higher education and student affairs from Northern Illinois University.

Madalynn McKelvey Baez '18, Rock Island, Ill., is an engineering and physics labs manager at North Park University.

Karl Jaeschke '18, Boston, Mass., is a law student at Boston University School of Law.

The Rev. Blake Shipman '18 and Katie Ohren, Dubuque, were married Aug. 23, 2024.

Robert Jr. and **Abigail Mokhtary '18 Skiba**, Royalton, Minn., announce the birth of Loretta on March 29, 2024.

Brian Hamilton '19, Littleton, Colo., earned a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling from the Chicago School and is a crisis counselor at WellPower, a nonprofit helping connect underserved populations to mental health services.

Colin Jacobs '19, Rochester, Minn., is a security ambassador at Mayo Clinic.

2020s

Allison Bouffard Klaassen '20, Yukon, Okla., is a graduate student in occupational therapy at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City.

Zach Brunkhorst '21, Waterloo, is a district executive with the Boy Scouts of America Winnebago Council.

Autumn Voyles '21, Kenosha, Wis., is a music therapist at Vitas Healthcare.

Dr. Londyn Witmer '21, West Lawn, Pa., earned a Doctor of Chiropractic at Palmer College of Chiropractic, Davenport, and is an associate chiropractor at Exuberance Chiropractic & Wellness Center, Lakeville, Minn.

Britt Avery '22, Clive, is owner of Bloom and Boost, Clive.

Izach and **Maecie Wright '22 Henson**, Waterloo, announce the birth of Rhyder on June 8, 2024. Maecie earned a master's degree in public health - epidemiology at the University of Iowa, Iowa City.

Emma Strong '22, Broomfield, Colo., earned a master's degree in athletic training at University of Utah, Salt Lake City, and is an academy assistant athletic trainer at Nashville Soccer Club.

Arinda Barthel '23, Saint Michael, Minn., is a hospice music therapist at Grace Hospice.

Brayden Carlson '23, Waverly, is a material view extender at John Deere, Waterloo.

Rachel Green '23, Pella, is a digital adoption and change management specialist at Vermeer Corp., Pella.

Kanan Morris '23, Central City, is a mechanical engineer at MODUS, Waterloo.

Savanna Richardson '23, Des Moines, is a technician II at Eurofins – Nutrition Analysis Center, Des Moines.

Malena Rumelhart '23, Fairbank, is a PK-6 grade general music instructor in the Wapsie Valley Community Schools.

Olivia Walsh '23, Hugo, Minn., is a housing case manager at RS EDEN, St. Paul, Minn.

Grace Benson '24, Mason City, is a graduate student in nutrition and dietetics at Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, Mo.

Marlee Boyle '24, Janesville, is a kindergarten teacher at St. Paul's Lutheran School, Waverly.

James Devine '24, Council Bluffs, is a graduate student in business at Oglethorpe University, Brookhaven, Ga.

Olivia Donlea '24, Winthrop, is a graduate student in occupational therapy at the College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minn.

Kaitlyn Hall '24, Kenosha, Wis., is an autism therapy behavior technician at Sonnenberg Consultants.

Lauryn Henderson '24, Independence, is a graduate student in communication and media at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, and a bookkeeping and marketing specialist at Roberts & Eddy P.C.

Laura Hovenga '24, Grinnell, is a graduate student in microbiology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Quentin Kelso '24, Keokuk, is an electrical engineer at Vermeer, Pella.

Robert Khoury '24, Waverly, is a researcher at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Anna Ohman '24, Winterset, is a graduate student in applied economics and economic systems at the University of Belgrade/Freie Universität Berlin.

Jordan Swiatkowski '24, Stewartville, Minn., is a mental health practitioner at Fernbrook Family Center, Rochester.

Sara Webb '24, Tipton, is a graduate student in veterinary medicine at the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Ames.



Stay Connected

Have you recently been married, had a baby, retired, changed jobs, or have other life news to share with your fellow Knights?

Share your news at www.wartburg.edu/update-our-records. Send high-resolution wedding photos to markcomm@wartburg.edu and we'll add them to our Facebook album.

KNIGHTS

In Memoriam



1940s

The Rev. Arnold Wuertz '44
Dolores Pipho Boehm '46
Lorraine Lynes Chester '47
Rosella Dirksen Beninga '48
Nadine Osincup Collins '48
Dorothy Prottegeier Meier '48
Claire Merfeld '48

Erma Baumgartner Clausing '49
Joan Matt Oelke '49
The Rev. Donald Schmidt '49

1950s

Dr. Merwin Dieckmann '50
Helen Hiittenmeyer Meade '50
The Rev. Alton Schwandt '50
Wayne Imm '51

The Rev. George Krumrey '51
Gerald Menning '51
Merlin Nomann '51
Richard Tillou '51
Dolores Ellormeier Tjarks '51
Elaine Hillmann Wilcke '51
Elaine Reinking Ehlers '52
Anne Leo Ellis '52
Eleanor Jungck Flathman '52

Verdell Hubbell Kelly '52
 The Rev. Marvin Ritterling '52
 Irene Streng Snyder '52
 Roger Swanson '52
 Ruth Wetherell Swanson '52
 Marcea Moeller Clary '53
 Arnold Fritz '53
 Oswald Goettler '53
 Dr. Duane Koenig '53
 Paul Beckman '54
 Marcella Petersen Erickson '54
 Gordon Kopitzke '54
 Leona Mortensen Reyelts '54
 Brian Stewart '54
 The Rev. Charles Farnham '55
 Janice Goeman Larsen '55
 Elaine Knoploh Wedemeier '55
 Loretta Schmitt Blain '56
 The Rev. Harold Heinzig '56
 Lois Wiese McCulloch '56
 Beverly Shreve Menk '56
 Wayne Meyer '56
 Madeleine Baudot Niemuth '56
 Alberta Brandt Pieper '56
 Ruth Clark Schaff '56
 Glenyce Schneider Scherer '56
 The Rev. Myrin Bentz '57
 Richard Larson '57
 Vivian Rudolf Rindelaub '57
 Darlene Wilke Schwarzkopf '57
 The Rev. William Thalacker '57
 Richard Brandt '58
 Lois Rueber Cordes '58
 The Rev. Norman Franzen '58
 Dr. Henry Friedrich '58
 Kathryn Fritschel Gerard '58
 Gwenda Geyer Groskurth '58
 Dean Leuthauser '58
 Dorlin Moeller '58
 James Niemann '58
 Judith Rieniets Schwake '58
 Betty Bakken Meyer Bodine '59
 Leroy Buchholz '59
 Racheal Gangestad Davis '59
 Barbara Gollnick Henkel '59
 Harold Schlesinger '59
 Robert Thrane '59
 Patricia Donahoo Tuecke '59
 Sylvester Van Hove '59
 The Rev. Loren Van Oort '59

1960s

Kay Johannsen Armstrong '61
 Judith Kreft Bunz '61
 John Goeman '61
 Richard James '61
 Paul "Bob" Moeller '61
 Ronald Neessen '61
 Dr. Darrell Schlange '61

Peter Weller '61
 Marianna Dirks Wolters '61
 Dr. James Bastian '62
 The Rev. Dean Brockmeier '62
 Myrna Zirk Fauska '62
 Paul Sly '62
 Leon Webrand '62
 The Rev. Jan Horne '63
 Joyce Wonsmos Kasper '63
 Leonard Schmidt '63
 James VanDriel '63
 Dennis Wesenberg '63
 James Carver '64
 Harold Heeren '64
 Frieda Schmitz '64
 Philip Truckenbrod '64
 The Rev. David Andreae '65
 Dennis Bigelow '65
 Patricia Tiffany Hinman '65
 Cheryl Sorensen Matthias '65
 Marilyn Azbell Reid '65
 Jan Schmidt '65
 Beverly Hinkel Shalkhauser '65
 Paul Anderson '66
 Calvin Brown '66
 Brent Harstad '66
 Fred Holzrichter '66
 Carol Wessels Bye Koeneman '66
 Mary Krohlow '66
 Lois Reyelts Trachte '66
 Jerry Bishop '67
 Thomas Havemann '67
 Kathlene Hoffman '67
 Allen Lyndrup '67
 Judith Weiss Miller '67
 Larry Ray '67
 Elizabeth Larson Skov '67
 Nona Beemer Stella '67
 Sandra Oltrogge Wiegert '67
 Ronald Fischer '68
 Lavoy Haage '68
 John Hearn '68
 Arlys Orvella Soeder '68
 Kent Cuvelier '69
 Darrel Hinrichs '69
 Marilyn Stoltz Isakson '69
 Karen Jones '69
 Deanna Lange '69
 Ralph Lohse '69
 The Rev. Harold McMillin '69
 Gary Nielsen '69
 Sheridan Skeen '69
 Jane Broughton Thompson '69
 Peter Tundel '69

1970s

The Rev. Frederick Henkelmann '70
 Norman Holzrichter '70
 Mary "Sue" Hitchins Kern '70

Dale Repass '70
 Gary "Gari" Green '71
 Kristine Karls Lambert '71
 John Pearson '71
 Gary Platt '71
 Harold Rindels '71
 John Seegers '71
 Judy Harms Spinler '71
 Cynthia Yess '71
 Charles Fischer '73
 Charles "Pete" Griffin Jr. '73
 Jack Mueller '73
 Kevin Perrinjaquet '73
 Dr. Emilie Noel Zehr '73
 Kay DeGarmo '74
 Jennifer Greenley Downing '74
 Dr. Richard Erbes '74
 The Rev. John Sieverts '74
 Jeffrey Wad '74
 Robert Cummings '75
 Bonita Karmie '75
 Marilyn Rosdail-Moller '75
 James Sinnott '75
 Linda Sturtz '75
 Michael Broghammer '78

1980s

The Rev. Charles Layton '81
 Douglas Brown '83
 Julie Whitney Florence '85
 Gina Anderson Smith '88
 Dr. Paul Samo '89

1990s

Hillary Gerber '92
 Michael Nedoba '92
 Susan SmolikHagen '93
 Erin Brown '94
 Kelley Burg Mikesch '98

2000s

Gretchen Watson '01
 Dr. Ryan Winters '03
 Wenhsiu "Yeehan" Wu '03
 Valerie Gramlich-Broderick '06
 Jeff Sandlin '06
 Abby Saathoff Doxey '09

2020s

Zoey Clark Bronsink '20
 Kaitlyn McColley '23

Friends of the College

Dr. Charles Birnstiel, who helped
 establish our German Institute
 Dr. Roger Bishop, emeritus professor
 of physical education
 Donavon Schmoll, retired library director
 Franklin Williams, retired music professor



Bridging the divide

Interfaith initiative leads to better communication among students

Wartburg may be a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but fewer than 200 of the school's 1,400 students are affiliated with the church. For Chaplain Maggie Falenscek, dean of spiritual life and the Herbert and Cora Moehlmann Chaplaincy Chair, this means pastoring to students on campus isn't as easy as leading weekly worship services.

"In my first year at Wartburg, I did a lot of deep listening and one-on-ones with students to see how well we accommodate religious diversity and the campus's base knowledge of religious differences," said Falenscek, who joined the college in 2023. "What I discovered is that we needed to do more to increase religious literacy for all students as well as provide opportunities for students to engage across differences."

While the majority of Wartburg students report practicing a Christian faith, the college also is home to students from Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions. Though individuals of all faiths have always been welcomed in the Chapel and at Spiritual Life & Campus Ministry events, Falenscek said she wants to be more intentional about the efforts.

During the 2024-25 school year, this meant inviting students to live in an interfaith suite where individuals from varying faith backgrounds could get to know each other on a deeper level. The goal was simple yet transformative: to create a campus culture where students of all backgrounds feel welcome practicing their faith — and talking about it with one another.

"The students would tell me about the amazing conversations they would have in their living room at like 11 p.m. about the things that

they value or the ways they want to continue this movement across campus," Falenscek said.

"When you are living and sharing meals with someone, you get to know them better as a human, and that is fundamental in interfaith work."

— The Rev. Maggie Falenscek

The suitemates represented varying religions — Protestant, Lutheran, Methodist, nondenominational, and agnostic but grew up Muslim — but were able to find common ground, or at least understanding, on typically polarizing topics.


"Most of our serious discussions stemmed from topics that could have very easily turned into an argument, but we were able to say, 'OK, why do you believe that,' and have the conversation with an open mind," said **Holden Willrett '27**, a biology major from Mason City. "At the end of the conversation, we could walk away still being friends and maybe even stronger friends than before because we shared respect for each other."

Those conversations also helped the residents in their day-to-day conversations with others.

"It was almost as if we had beta versions of those hard conversations with our roommates, so when we were with others, we had already

processed our initial reactions and thought about the implications from varying viewpoints," said **Jack Willrett '27**, Holden's twin and a religion major who plans to attend seminary following graduation. **Alexa Brockmueller '27**, a psychology and social work major from Sioux Falls, S.D., didn't live in the suite but was one of several students to join Falenscek and the suitemates on an interfaith immersion experience in the Twin Cities during Winter Break (pictured above). Participants joined a Ramadan Iftar dinner, observed a sabbath worship at a Jewish temple, and toured a Hindu temple.

The group also partnered with Interfaith Power & Light, an organization that engages faith communities in environmental justice work. They visited George Floyd Square (pictured below), where they learned what different religious communities are doing to work for racial justice and served in a food pantry.

"Differences can be scary sometimes, but during these experiences the similarities in our religions were stressed so often, it was easy to connect with people on a deeper level," Brockmueller said. "I didn't know their whole life, but I could understand who they are because of how they practiced their religion. It was great to see relationships and communities thrive because of interfaith connections." 





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HOMECOMING & Family Weekend



OCT. 9-12



MARCH 19



2025-26 Alumni Calendar

Here are some key dates for 2025-26 – and keep an eye on www.wartburg.edu/alumni-events for Wartburg events near you.

Aug 23 Waverly Day of Service & Outfly	Aug 30 Move-In Day Family Reception	Oct 9-12 Homecoming & Family Weekend	Nov 15 Young Alumni Award Nominations Due	Dec 1 Alumni Referral Award Deadline	Dec 5-7 Christmas with Wartburg
March 1 Alumni Citation Nominations Due	March 1 Alumni Board Applications Due	March 19 UKnight Day	April 9 RICE Day	May 21-23 Class of 1976 50-Year Reunion	May 23 Commencement

To find out about more events on campus,
visit www.wartburg.edu/calendar.

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as Wartburg College's permanent home on page 9.

