

W WAYNE STATE COLLEGE

Magazine for Alumni and Friends • Summer 2025

SPRING COMMENCEMENT

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

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President's Message

DR. MARYSZ RAMES



Five hundred twenty-nine million dollars! A recent economic analysis of the value of the Nebraska State Colleges found that in 2022-23, Wayne State alumni generated \$529.5 million in added income for the state economy. While your worth is invaluable to us as alumni and supporters of Wayne State, the study made clear that our alumni make valuable contributions to the state's economy as the critical components of a professional workforce.

The economic analysis also noted that Wayne State's total contribution to the state economy through operations, construction, student spending, and alumni totals \$573.1 million. The Nebraska State Colleges' total effect on the state economy is \$1.4 billion. We are proud to be part of such an impactful and effective higher education system that delivers real value to the state of Nebraska.

As alumni, you make your marks in many other ways, as well.

In addition to the economic impact study, this issue of the magazine recognizes our Teaching Excellence Award winner, our Alumni Achievement Award recipient, alumni contributions in the areas of filmmaking, education, Service-Learning, workforce development, and professional sports. On a solemn note, this issue also marks the passing of former WSC President Curt Frye.

We celebrate the work of 2024 graduate Nathan Blizzard of Omaha, who's first full-length feature film, "Lost Soul," premiered at the Majestic Theater in Wayne in February.

We join the students, staff, and teachers at Neligh-Oakdale Junior/Senior High School in applauding 2026 graduate Dexter Hanzel for winning the Milken Educator Award for Nebraska this year. Known as the "Oscar award of Teaching," this recognition honors the qualities of teachers that we like to think are the qualities of every Wayne State education graduate: empowering students, engaging in community-connected real-life learning, and elevating education. Hanzel is the second WSC grad to win the Milken award. Jon Pickinpaugh, a 2005, 2010, and 2018 WSC grad, won the award in 2018.

We proudly recognize Service-Learning for its 25th year of making a difference in our community and surrounding communities. Service-Learning is an important part of the mission of the College and I extend my deepest appreciation to all of our alumni who worked on a service-learning project while here at Wayne State.

We proudly share that the College's newest workforce development program, Growing Together Career Scholars, was recognized by the Mid-America Economic Development Council at its annual economic development awards in December. The award celebrates workforce initiatives that attract new talent, strengthen workforce skills, and encourage the retention of young professionals.

And finally, we raise our Wildcat paws to honor former WSC volleyball player and three-time All American Taya Beller, who after graduating from WSC was drafted by the Atlanta Vibe of the Pro Volleyball Federation (PVF). Beller is the only Division II athlete competing in the PVF.

We are proud of each of you as you make your contributions to your professions. Enjoy this issue of the magazine and, as always, Go Cats!



Wayne State Holds Two Commencement Ceremonies for Graduate and Undergraduate Students on May 10 in the College's Historic Willow Bowl Amphitheater

A total of 627 degrees were conferred by Wayne State President Marysz Rames. Those students receiving their degrees included 495 undergraduates and 132 graduate students. 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 Gwenn Indira Davelaar of Aruba; 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 Kristi Ann Anderson of Wayne, Neb., delivered graduation remarks.

The undergraduate ceremony featured an invocation by bachelor's candidate Griffin Ryan of Wahoo, Neb.; Carter "Cap" Peterson, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State College System, delivered greetings from the board; Matt Kneifl, a 2002 graduate of Wayne State, received the Alumni Achievement Award; two retiring faculty were recognized; and Dr. Sean Ahern, associate professor of communication arts, received the State Nebraska Bank & Trust Teaching Excellence Award and the Nebraska State College System Teaching Excellence Award.



Gwenn Indira Davelaar Graduate Invocation Speaker

Gwenn Indira Davelaar of Aruba delivered the invocation. She graduated with a master of science in education degree in Curriculum and Instructional Leadership.

After graduating from high school, Davelaar moved to the Netherlands to study chemical analysis. However, after completing her first year, she decided to change careers and began pursuing a degree in education with a focus on teaching science.

For the past 10 years, she has been teaching at Colegio Arubano, a high school in Aruba. In addition to her role as a teacher, she has also worked as the exam coordinator at Aruba's Examination Department, where she was responsible for coordinating the development of science exams and health care exams for the lower vocational education level.

As an educational consultant, Davelaar has had the opportunity to help establish a science curriculum for primary schools in Aruba, contributing to the development of the country's educational framework.



Kristi Anderson Graduate Speaker

Kristi Anderson, originally from Plainview, Neb., who now lives in Wayne, delivered the graduate student address. She graduated with a master's degree in organizational management with a focus in Information Technology

Management. She is the daughter of Gene and Velma Thomsen of Plainview.

Anderson earned her bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Business Management with a minor in Computer Information Systems from Wayne State in 2009. She was named to Alpha Lambda Delta (first-year student with a GPA of 3.5 or higher) in her freshman year.

Anderson's activities include 19 years volunteering as a 4-H Certified Leader in Pierce and Wayne Counties, Vice Chair for the Wayne State College Professional Staff Senate, and she remains active in the Wayne First United Methodist Church.

Anderson's brother, David Thomsen, is also a Wayne State graduate.

Anderson said her plans after graduation are to, "Grow my career, raise my daughter, continue to learn, and take chances."



Griffin Ryan Undergraduate Invocation Speaker

Griffin Ryan of Wahoo, Neb., delivered the undergraduate invocation. He graduated with a bachelor's degree with majors in Political Science and Business Administration with a concentration

in Economics. He is the son of Rika and Steve Ryan of Wahoo.

Ryan was a member of Alpha Lambda Delta in April 2022 (first-year student with a GPA of 3.5 or higher); an FBLA Collegiate National Stock Market Game winner in Fall 2022; a member of Pi Sigma Alpha in April 2024 (Distinguished Political Science student); was named Outstanding Student in Political Science in April 2024; a member of Sigma Beta Delta in April 2024 (Distinguished Business student); and was named to the Dean's List each semester from 2021 through 2025.

His activities at Wayne State included Student Senate, Delta Sigma Pi, Philomatheans President's Honor Society, Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society in Social Sciences, Rural Law Opportunities Program (RLOP), and Future Business Leaders of America Collegiate (FBLA-C).

Ryan plans to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Law beginning in August.

Alumni Achievement Award

Matt Kneifl '02

Matt Kneifl was presented with the Alumni Achievement Award from the Wayne State Foundation. Kneifl earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration/ Finance in 2002 from Wayne State College.

In addition to his studies, Kneifl earned Academic All-American honors and became an All-American in the 55m hurdles in 2001, running for the WSC Men's Track and Field Team. He began his career with Edward Jones in 2002 at the home office in St. Louis, Mo., before assuming the Des Moines Metro financial advisor position in 2004.

Kneifl has been a financial advisor with Edward Jones for more than 20 years. He has earned the Accredited Asset Management Specialist™ (AAMST™) and Certified Exit Planning Advisor® (CEPA®) designations, as well as the CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™, CFP®, certification.

Kneifl says he has a passion for helping people make smart decisions about their money to help them achieve what is most important to them. He not only helps clients achieve their goals but has also held numerous leadership and coaching roles with Edward Jones and his local community. Kneifl says these opportunities have helped him implement processes that he uses to understand and meet his clients' needs.

"My team and I use a comprehensive process to help our clients address each of their five key concerns: making smart decisions about their money, mitigating their taxes, taking care of their heirs, making sure their assets are not unjustly taken, and magnifying their charitable gifts," Kneifl said. "We work with a network of professional advisors to help our clients maximize the probability of achieving everything that is most important to them."

Kneifl is honored to have been named as one of Forbes Best-in-State Wealth Advisors in Iowa from 2022 to 2024: ranked #10 in 2024; ranked #10 in 2023; and ranked #11 in 2022.

From 2014 to 2023, Kneifl was honored to be invited to the annual Edward Jones Managing Partners Conference, which celebrates the contributions and achievements of the top 400 of the firm's nearly 19,000 financial advisors.

Outside of Edward Jones, Kneifl is married and has one son. He enjoys reading, fitness, traveling, spending time outdoors, and most importantly, spending time with his family.



Honored Retiring Faculty



Dr. Alan Bruflat, Professor of Language and Literature

Dr. Alan Bruflat began his faculty career at Wayne State in July 1990. He earned his Ph.D. in Spanish in 1986 at the University of Kansas, his master's in Spanish in 1981 at the University of Iowa, and his bachelor's degree in Spanish in 1979 from Augustana College in South Dakota.

Dr. Bruflat taught courses in Spanish language, Spanish literature, Spanish translation, Spanish for Criminal Justice, and Spanish for health professionals. Bruflat's teaching and research interests include modern and contemporary Spanish poetry, Christian literary scholarship, and Spanish for the professions. He also performs community interpreting and translating.

In addition to his work as a professor of Language and Literature, Bruflat also served as the advisor of Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society, chair of the Language and Literature Department, and interim dean of the School of Arts and Humanities. He served on various committees as a faculty member, including Academic Policy; Rank, Promotion, and Tenure; Graduate Council; General Education; and Assessment.

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“The most rewarding things about teaching at WSC were working with the students and attempting to connect Spanish to their career interests,” Bruflat said.

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Dr. Kevin Hill, Professor of Health, Human Performance, and Sport

Dr. Kevin Hill began work at Wayne State as a graduate assistant men's basketball coach in 1990 and became a full-time instructor in 1992. He earned his doctorate of education in 1997 from the University of South Dakota, his master's of science degree in Sports Administration in 1992 from Wayne State College, and his bachelor's of science degree in 1985 from the University of Northern Iowa.

Dr. Hill primarily taught pedagogy courses in health and physical education and supervised hundreds of student teachers during his tenure at Wayne State. Hill's academic interests include rural health and sport skill instruction, as well as physical and health education.

Hill advanced through the faculty ranks at WSC, serving as instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor of Health and Physical Education. During his time as a faculty member, Hill also served as interim director of Education Field Experience, chair of the Health, Human Performance and Sport Department, interim dean of the School of Natural and Social Sciences, and dean of the School of Natural and Social Sciences. Hill served on various committees as a faculty member, including Faculty Senate, General Education, Scholarships, and Retention. He also served as an assistant softball coach.



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“The most rewarding part of my work at WSC has been the relationships formed with students, colleagues, and staff,” Hill said. “All have enriched my life immensely. What was supposed to be a two-year stint as a graduate assistant basketball coach turned into a very rewarding 35-year career.”

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Dr. Robert Machovsky Named Chief Executive Officer of the Wayne State Foundation



The Wayne State College Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Robert “Bob” Machovsky as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective April 21, 2025.

With more than two decades of experience in advancement and philanthropic leadership, Machovsky brings a proven track record of building strong donor relationships and leading successful fundraising initiatives. His passion for higher education and deep commitment to student success align perfectly with the Foundation’s mission to support and advance Wayne State College.

A native of South Dakota, Machovsky earned his bachelor’s degree in Allied Health from the University of South Dakota, his master’s degree in Higher Education Leadership from Northwest Missouri State University, and his doctorate of education in Higher Education Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri. His most recent role was as the associate director of development at the University of Iowa Center for Advancement.

“We are thrilled to welcome Bob Machovsky as the new CEO of the Foundation,” said Brenda Carhart, president of the Wayne State Foundation. “His visionary leadership and strategic insight will be invaluable as we continue to grow our impact and support the college’s goals.”

Machovsky, his wife, Katie, and their son, Lincoln, look forward to being part of the Wayne community. Outside of work, Machovsky and Katie enjoy taking Lincoln to parks, playing outside with their dog Kota, and planning family vacations.

“This is an exciting time to join Wayne State College and be part of the Wayne community,” Machovsky said. “I am eager to collaborate

with the Foundation Board, alumni, college community, and current Foundation team. The team is already doing great work, and I know together we will be successful in meeting the vision and implementing the strategic initiatives of the College, Foundation Board, and President Rames.”

Machovsky succeeds Melissa Nelsen, who has served as interim CEO since July 1, 2024. Nelsen will resume her role as director of major gifts, where she will continue to play a vital role in the Foundation’s advancement efforts.



Wayne State Mourns the Loss of Former President Curt Frye



Former Wayne State President Curt Frye, who served as the College's 12th president from 2011 to 2015, passed away May 13, 2025, at Avera Sacred Heart Hospital in Yankton, S.D. He was 77.

Frye began his career at Wayne State College in 1985, serving as associate dean of students, dean of students, and in 1995, vice president and dean of students. He served his first stint as interim president from 2003 to 2004. Frye retired from Wayne State in 2009, but returned in 2010 to serve as interim president for a second time. Frye was selected as the 12th president of Wayne State College in 2011, serving until his retirement in 2015.

Former President Frye often noted that it was his pleasure to come back to an institution as successful in its mission as Wayne State. Upon his inauguration, he said that the College's points of distinction and centers of excellence made it easy for him to leave retirement after bidding farewell and made him comfortable telling those assembled that the campus can do even greater things, based upon its many successes over time.

He has been remembered across Wayne State's social media accounts for his warmth, quick wit, big heart, sharp memory, his respect and love for students, sense of humor, and his longstanding belief that you can go anywhere with a degree from Wayne State College.

Frye and his wife, Dianne, avidly supported Wayne State College, Wayne State athletics, and served as trustees of the Wayne State Foundation. They established the Curt and Dianne Frye Annual Athletic Scholarship in 2004. Curt and Dianne have also been longtime members of the Cat Club, and have supported several athletic improvement projects, including renovations to the track, stadium, and football field. They have also donated to the Wayne State Foundation's Greatest Needs Fund and supported renovations to the Willow Bowl and Conn Library.

Frye served the community of Wayne for many years as a member of Kiwanis, president of Wayne Area Economic Development Board, and was a member of Our Savior Lutheran Church. He was inducted into the Wayne State College Athletics Hall of Fame in 2017 as a contributor.

He was born Sept. 14, 1947, in Elk City, Neb., to parents Janet and Eugene Frye, and attended Elk City Schools. He credited his passion for education with his small school start: "I always wanted to be an educator. It started back in country school because when we got into the upper grades, we would help the younger children with their reading, math and science because there was one teacher and 36 children."

He went to high school in Bennington, Neb., graduating in the class of 1965. While there, he played on the Legion Baseball team, coached by Bill Muller, (Dianne's father). Curt and Dianne met in 1961. The two were married June 1, 1968, at Zion Lutheran Church in Omaha. Curt and Dianne would have celebrated 58 years of marriage on June 1, 2025.



Four Past Presidents (left to right): Curt Frye, Dr. Sheila Stearns, Dr. Richard Collings, and Dr. Don Mash.

Frye continued his education and graduated from Midland College in Fremont, Neb., in 1969. With his degree in education, he sent out 60 applications for a teaching job and landed his first job at the Cody Kilgore Unified School District.



(Above, left to right): Phyllis Conner, Ron Holt, and Curt Frye.

While in Cody, he coached football, basketball, track, was the junior class sponsor, and served as the athletic director. In his spare time, he also taught history. He was a successful coach and would often humbly brag about coaching the Cody Kilgore Cowboys eight-man football team to undefeated seasons four out of the five years he was there.

Frye's next move was to Neligh/Oakdale Public Schools, where he took a position as a high school counselor and girls' track coach. He also continued his education at Chadron State College and obtained his master's degree in School Counseling in 1975.

After two years in Neligh and a fresh master's degree, he took a position at Wayne-Carroll High School as a counselor, freshman football coach, and girls' basketball coach in 1976. In the summers he worked for Wayne State as a summer internship advisor. After nine years at Wayne High, he started a new position at the College as associate dean of students in 1985.

Frye enjoyed spending time at the lake, boating, fishing, socializing and telling limitless stories and jokes, a few of them funny. He also loved spending time with his grandchildren, Logan and Lincoln, and teaching them to water ski and fish, and the words to every Jimmy Buffett song.

Frye is survived by his wife, Dianne; their two children, Corey Frye of Lesterville, S.D., and Kelli Rahn (Marc) of Sioux City, Iowa; and two grandchildren Logan Rahn (Katelyn) of Woodbury, Minn., and Lincoln Rahn of Lincoln, Neb. He is also survived by his brother, Lee Frye of Bennington, Neb., and several nephews and nieces. He is preceded in death by his parents, Eugene and Janet Frye, his little sister, Wanita, and his youngest brother, Marty.

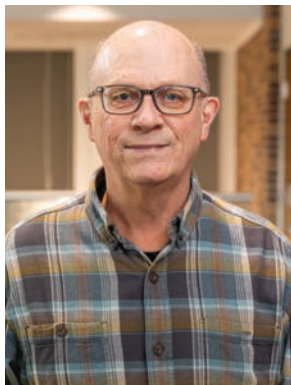
Memorials can be made to Our Savior Lutheran Church and Wayne State College (The Curt and Dianne Frye Annual Scholarship Fund).



Dianne and Curt Frye.



Alyssa Bish and Curt Frye.



Dr. Alan Bruflat, professor of modern languages, presented a paper, “The Jet Age and the Quest for Identity: Julio Cortázar’s ‘The Island at Noon,’” at the 35th Congreso Internacional de Literatura y Estudios Hispánicos in San Sebastián, Spain, June 26-28, 2024. An article based on this paper will appear in the Spring 2025 issue of the journal *Confluencia*.



Dr. Barbara Engebretsen, professor of health, human performance and sport, and 2018-2019 Fulbright Global Scholar in Nepal and Ethiopia, has published a textbook based on her work with global and local health professionals, “Applied Perspectives of Personal, Public, and Global Health” (<https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/applied-perspectives-personal-public-and-global-health>). For

three years she has coordinated the development of a novel interdisciplinary One Health Studies major with WSC faculty from diverse schools and departments as well as regional and global partners. The first One Health major in Nebraska, it was approved by the Nebraska State College System, the Higher Learning Commission, and Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education for implementation in Fall 2024, and coincides with the new RHOP-MPH agreement with UNMC College of Public Health that she will advise. (<https://www.wsc.edu/OneHealthStudiesDegreePrograms>). In January 2024, she was an invited speaker for a workshop in Nepal on “Climate Change: Today’s Impact on Health, and Innovative Solutions for Tomorrow”, her topic was “The Global Syndemic, One Health, and HEARTS Daring to Hope”. The publication summarizing the workshop discussion can be found here: <https://bpeyefoundation.org/publications/>.



Dr. Phillip Fox, associate professor of history, conducted archival research in Madrid at the Archivo Histórico Nacional during the summer of 2024 on church and state relations in eighteenth-century Spain. He also presented a paper entitled “Confessional War in the Age of Enlightenment: Religious Interpretations of the War of Spanish Succession,” at the

Annual Conference of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies, which was hosted by the Centre for History of the University of Lisbon, Portugal. WSC has awarded him a sabbatical leave for spring 2025, during which he will draw on this material as he develops a book manuscript tentatively entitled *Negotiating the Borders of Church and State in Bourbon Spain, 1700-1759*.



Above: Dr. Phillip Fox with a globe made by Vincenzo Maria Coronelli in 1688, on display at the Museo Naval de Madrid

STAY CONNECTED

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Dr. Jason Price, associate professor of Earth science, spent mid-term break 2024 in the remote wilderness of high-elevation Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado on a lake-bottom sediment collecting expedition with WSC undergraduate James Kinnison (Earth Science, '25). In September 2024, Price completed a three-year term as chair of the Limnogeology Division of the Geological Society of America and will continue to serve for the next year as past-chair.

Left: Self-proclaimed "tall dude in the photo" Dr. Jason Price on his high-elevation expedition at Rocky Mountain National Park



Dr. Brian Kufner, professor of human resource management, was a contributing author to the article, "INSPIRE program: Eleven years of promoting STEM and healthcare careers among low-income, under-served, minoritized high school students," which was published in the Journal of STEM Education: Innovations and Research.



Dr. Kristina Nelsen, assistant professor of education and behavioral sciences, received her Doctor of Philosophy Degree in special education from Liberty University. Dr. Nelsen graduated in July 2024 with high distinction.



Rusty Ruth, associate professor of theatre at Wayne State College, received a Road Warrior Award during the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) for Region 5. Ruth is one of three Road Warrior Award recipients to be honored at the festival Jan. 19-25, in Des Moines, Iowa. Region 5 consists of Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri,

Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Ruth, who grew up in Deadwood, South Dakota, has worked professionally as an actor, stage manager, and assistant director for The Black Hills Playhouse, Dakota Players, and Highland Summer Theatre. He also served as the director of theatre at Mount Marty College and Lincoln Trail College, and as the executive artistic director for the Spencer Community Theatre in Spencer, Iowa. Ruth's passions are teaching acting, directing, dramatic literature, and stage dialect courses. Some plays he's been involved with as an actor and director include "The Squirrels," "Eurydice," "She Kills Monsters," "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," "God of Carnage," "November," "Betrayal," "Bus Stop," "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," and "Of Mice and Men." Ruth is an associate member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, and a member of the Association of Theatre in Higher Education where he currently serves as the conference planner for the focus group Theatre as a Liberal Art. Ruth earned his bachelor of fine arts degree in Theatre from the University of South Dakota, and his master of fine arts degree in Directing from Minnesota State University in Mankato, Minn.

Dr. Sean X. Ahern Receives State Nebraska Bank & Trust's Teaching Excellence Award

Wayne State College is proud to announce that Dr. Sean X. Ahern, associate professor of communication arts, was presented the State Nebraska Bank & Trust Teaching Excellence Award at the college's May 10 baccalaureate commencement ceremony.

Ahern has taught at Wayne State since 2020; he also serves as advisor to KWSC-FM 91.9 The Cat, the campus radio station.

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.

"I am grateful and humbled as the recipient of the State Nebraska Bank & Trust Teaching Excellence Award and Nebraska State College Teaching Excellence Award," said Ahern. "Coming to Wayne in the fall of 2020 was a risk, but one that has rewarded me with life-changing experiences, honed my pedagogy, and reinvigorated my love of teaching in mass communications. To quote The Clash, 'go easy, step lightly, stay free.'"

Ahern's commitment to his students and teaching is reflected each

year by the numerous nominations and awards his students receive for Golden Leaf Awards and Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Student Media Awards.

In March, Ahern received the Nebraska State College System Teaching Excellence Award. After being selected as the college-level Teaching Excellence Award recipient, a nominee from each of the three Nebraska state colleges is submitted for consideration. The award recognizes superior teaching and advising, innovative instructional practices, high educational standards, and engaging learning environments that inspire and motivate students.

Ahern earned his bachelor of arts degree in Communication Studies from Colby-Sawyer College, his master of arts degree in Popular Culture from Bowling Green State University, and his Ph.D. in American Studies from the University at Buffalo (State University of New York system).



KWSC-FM Receives 2024 Spirit of College Radio Award

For its participation in World College Radio Day on Oct. 4, KWSC-FM 91.9 The Cat has received a 2024 Spirit of College Radio Award – making it one of only 10 college radio stations in the world to get the award this year. KWSC-FM was one of seven college radio stations in the United States to get the award; the other three were in Argentina, Ireland, and Italy.

"I am honored that KWSC has received this award," said Dr. Sean X. Ahern, associate professor of communication arts at Wayne State. "College radio is an important space for students to curate their creativity while acting as a font for alternative voices and music. World College Radio Day highlights the unique sounds of college radio and the students who inject their everyday lives onto the airwaves."

The Spirit of College Radio Awards are presented by the College Radio Foundation in recognition of truly outstanding and spirited efforts made by college radio stations on World College Radio Day.

Stations are voted for by the team that organizes College Radio Day, which seeks to shine a spotlight on college radio stations that not

only go above and beyond to celebrate the annual event but also embody the passion and mission of college radio, according to the College Radio Foundation website.

Out of the hundreds of stations that participate, only 10 stations are chosen. This year the following college radio stations were selected to be recognized:

- Aggie Radio 92.3 KBLU-LP – Utah State University (USA)
- Coneción Abierta – Universidad Abierta Interamericana (Argentina)
- Juice FM – Cork (Ireland)
- KWSC-FM 91.9 "The Cat" – Wayne State College (USA)
- Radio Mitchell – Mitchell College (USA)
- Unica Radio – Università degli Studi di Cagliari (Italy)
- 90.5 WERG – Gannon University (USA)
- WESS 90.3FM – East Stroudsburg University (USA)
- WOLF Radio and WOLF Sports Network – University of West Georgia (USA)
- WXBC – Bard College (USA)

Wayne State Graduate Dexter Hanzel Wins 'Oscar of Teaching'

Dexter Hanzel, a Wayne State College graduate who is currently a math and science teacher at Neligh-Oakdale Junior/Senior High School, has received the Milken Educator Award for Nebraska. Hanzel, who is originally from Platte Center, earned his bachelor's degree in Math Education from Wayne State in 2016, and is pursuing a master's degree at Wayne State.

This marks the second time since 2018 that a Wayne State graduate has received a Milken Educator Award. Jon Pickinpaugh, a 2005, 2010, and 2018 graduate of Wayne State, also received the honor.

The award includes an unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize the recipient may use however they choose. Hailed as the "Oscar of Teaching," the award was created by philanthropist and education visionary Lowell Milken in 1987 to further excellence in education and inspire the next generation of educators. Governor Jim Pillen and State Commissioner of Education Dr. Brian Maher joined Milken Educator Awards Vice President Jennifer Fuller in recognizing Hanzel – the first Milken Educator Award winner in the district's history.

"Today we celebrate Dexter Hanzel for his immense commitment to excellence in education and ability to create powerful, creative learning opportunities for students," said Fuller, who is a 2017 Texas Milken Educator herself. "Dexter's leadership and positive influence are changing the lives of his students, supporting his colleagues, strengthening his community, and elevating education in Nebraska."

Hanzel, Nebraska's 49th Milken honoree, was honored as part of the Milken Family Foundation's 2024-25 Milken Educator Awards season. The tour will honor up to 45 pioneering professionals coast to coast, marking the 3,000th Milken Educator in the awards' ranks and celebrating a history of changing lives in communities across America. Since the presentation of the first Awards in 1987, more than \$75 million in individual cash prizes and more than \$145 million have been invested in the Milken Educator Award national network overall, empowering recipients to "Celebrate, Elevate, and Activate" the K-12 profession and encouraging young, capable people to consider a career in education.

"Dexter's commitment to his school and to his students is evident in all of the extra things he chooses to do above and beyond his normal duties as a teacher," said Commissioner Maher. **"We are thrilled to see him recognized with this award and so happy that his story will be shared as an example of the excellent educators we have in Nebraska."**



Photo: Dexter Hanzel

About Dexter Hanzel

Empowering students and the community, Hanzel's outstanding dedication to his students, colleagues, and community plays a significant role in the academic, professional, and personal growth of those around him. A math and science teacher at Neligh-Oakdale Jr./Sr. High School, Hanzel engages students in grades 8-12 well beyond note-taking and memorization: His classroom is a hub of exciting hands-on activities and experiments, collaborative group projects, and community-connected, real-life learning. Hanzel's students partnered with the Neligh Economic Development Council to create a promotional video and presentation for the City of Neligh, complete with voiceovers and footage from drones, which Hanzel taught them how to operate. Other projects include calculating the slope of the school's steps; building bridges, ramps, and towers; and designing containers to protect fragile eggs from an elevated drop.

As part of his role on the district's multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) team, Hanzel presented at an MTSS Summit in Kearney. Also within the district, Hanzel serves on the classification of instructional programs (CIP) committee, mentors new staff, and is an instrumental leader in updating and adopting new districtwide math curriculum. At the school level, Hanzel participates on the student success team, where he collaborates with colleagues on intervention strategies for students, harnessing his experiences from serving on the SAT/SCIP (School Community Intervention and Prevention) team. He previously headed a math readiness program in partnership with Northeast Community College and is currently working with the district on securing a STEM/robotics club.

A service-oriented leader, Hanzel helps the community wherever he can. He is the school's head boys golf coach, assistant football coach, and oversees a weights program during the summer. Before and after school he offers additional academic help to students and has supported summer custodial staff. Always modeling "The Warrior Way" for students, Hanzel serves as a positive adult role model and a valued mentor within the school's Teammates Mentoring Program.

Wayne State Service-Learning Program Hits 25th Year

When Lisa Nelson began working as a service-learning specialist at Wayne State College in 2005, she didn't know she'd eventually become director of the Service-Learning Program, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary with the 2024-25 academic year.

Since 1999, Nelson said the program's growth and student appeal have been astounding. Several service-learning projects have been added over time, and they have served the Wayne State campus, the Wayne community, and several surrounding communities.

For example, approximately 520 Wayne State students enrolled in 14 projects and events across numerous disciplines finished their Fall 2024 semester service-learning projects. This translates to 4,635 hours of service with 24 community partners. Each year, hundreds of Wayne State students make a difference in the community by participating in service-learning projects, contributing nearly \$250,000 to the region in community service.

Additionally, "Cram the Van," a long-standing food collection project held during National Hunger and Homelessness Week; Literacy Assessment; Ike's Lake Environmental Education Day; and Family, Math, Science & Art Night are all projects that have been around for about 20 years.

Nelson said these numbers are indicative of each semester's projects and that it's always a team effort.

"Our faculty, students, and community partners who choose to participate in service-learning projects and events each semester are the backbone of the Service-Learning Program," said Nelson, who earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology and her master's degree in Education from Wayne State. "I love reading all the post-service surveys where students express their gratitude for the hands-on opportunity to apply their academic skills to meet a community need. They also communicate how pleased they are to work with community leaders, teachers, and children. This really helps them feel like part of the Wayne community."

"When Dr. Jean Karlen asked me to take over the Service-Learning Program, I had no idea it would grow into the enterprise it has become," added Nelson.

The benefits of service-learning for students are numerous. They include engaging in career affirming experiences; research and conference opportunities; developing relationships with peers, community partners, and faculty; enhancing communication skills and an increased understanding of subject matter; and an increased sense of belonging.

Many Wayne State service-learning students serve as instructors and mentors for the numerous projects they are involved with during a semester.

For five consecutive years, Wayne State was recognized as a member of the national President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. 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.

Each spring semester, the Service-Learning Program concludes with the Ron Holt Civic Engagement Award recognition dinner. The award provides a \$1,000 gift, a trophy, and graduation recognition to a graduating senior who, while in college, has served as an exemplary role model and contributed to the service ethos of the college campus and community at large. Holt is a 1989 graduate of Wayne State.

Participation in service and leadership activities and at least one service-learning project, placement, or event, academic or co-curricular project, must be included.



Growing Together Career Scholars Program Recognized for Workforce Development

Northeast Nebraska Growing Together powered by Aksarben was named the winner in the Workforce & Talent (Large Division) category for the Mid-America Economic Development Council's 2024 Annual Economic Development Awards on Dec. 5 in Columbus, Ohio. Wayne State College plays an integral role in the Growing Together initiative through its Career Scholars program.

The award celebrates innovative initiatives that attract new talent, strengthen workforce skills, and encourage the retention of young professionals. Northeast Nebraska Growing Together's efforts stood out among programs across 13 states, highlighting our region's commitment to building a strong and vibrant workforce.

"We extend our gratitude to the City of Norfolk for championing the work of Northeast Nebraska Growing Together," said Executive Director Angie Stenger. Stenger and Dr. Marysz Rames, president of Wayne State College, accepted the award on behalf of Northeast Nebraska Growing Together. "This achievement reflects the strength and dedication of everyone working to foster talent and workforce innovation in our region," Stenger said.

Wayne State's Career Scholars cooperative education program combines classroom education with real work experience for college credit. At its core, the Career Scholars Program supports workforce and economic development in Nebraska.

Students' journeys as cooperative education scholars begin their freshman year at Wayne State. During their time here, career scholars participate in career readiness activities, including business site visits and job shadowing, all while learning the fundamentals of professional practice. After three years on campus at Wayne State, students complete their senior year while living in Norfolk or Grand Island, Nebraska, where they'll be hired and mentored by one of our participating business cohorts. Students earn 18 credit hours while working 30-40 hours per week at a paid job using skills relevant to their degree.



WSC President Marysz Rames, Northeast Nebraska Growing Together Executive Director Angie Stenger, and Matt Marshall of Mid-America Economic Development Council

Service Learning (Page 10 Captions)

Photo #1: Wayne State College students (left to right) Amber Kotas of Western, Neb., Allison Haney of Grand Island, Neb., and Nathan Sila of Omaha, Neb., work with students from Wayne Elementary School during Family Math, Science, and Art Night. The event, part of Wayne State's Service-Learning Program, provided several STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) activities for about 100 elementary school students.

Photo #2: Jessica Loberg, an elementary education major from Carroll, Neb., works with an elementary school student as part of a service-learning project for literacy assessment.

Photo #3: Service-Learning Comes Full Circle Several Wayne State alumni, who participated in service-learning projects as students, have kept service-learning in their teaching careers. Dr. Sara Walsh (second from left), instructor of education at Wayne State, is pictured with some former students who are now elementary school teachers who have brought their classes to service-learning projects. Pictured are (l-r) Jessi (Vavrina) Gallegos '19, '21, Wakefield; Walsh; Alex (Gerholdt) Stephens '14, Allen; Brittany (Sullivan) Eisenmann '19, '23, Wakefield; and Sydney Hughes '23, Emerson-Hubbard.

I am so proud of the recognition for the Growing Together initiative," said President Rames. **"Aksarben, the state of Nebraska, the city of Norfolk, our business partners, and our faculty and staff have worked well together to ensure that this innovative program makes a difference for the future of Nebraska's workforce and provides an affordable pathway to relevant and in-demand degrees for our students."**

Learn more about Wayne State's Career Scholars program at www.wsc.edu/career-scholars.

Wayne State Delivers a \$573.1-Million Boost to Nebraska's Economy

Wayne State College significantly contributed to Nebraska's economy in fiscal year 2022-23, adding \$573.1 million in income and supporting 7,940 jobs across the state, according to a newly released economic impact study.

Wayne State creates a significant positive economic impact on the business community and generates a return on investment to its major stakeholder groups — students, taxpayers, and Nebraska as a whole. Using a two-pronged approach involving an economic impact analysis and an investment analysis, this study calculates the benefits received by each of these groups. Results of the analysis reflect fiscal year (FY) 2022-23.

Driving Economic Growth

The study revealed that WSC's operations, construction projects, student expenditures, and alumni contributions collectively generated a substantial economic impact:

Operations Spending: WSC employed 991 faculty and staff, with a payroll of \$35 million, contributing \$36.3 million in income to the state economy.

Construction Investments: Capital projects provided \$3.4 million in added income through short-term spending and job creation.

Student Contributions: Relocated and retained students contributed \$3.8 million to the local economy through living expenses.

Alumni Impact: Former students employed in Nebraska added \$529.5 million in income, demonstrating the long-term value of a WSC education.

Investment Benefits for Students, Taxpayers, and Society

The analysis also highlighted the return on investment for key stakeholders:

Students: For every dollar invested in their education, WSC students can expect \$4.90 in higher lifetime earnings, with an average annual return of 17%.

Taxpayers: With \$30.4 million in state funding, taxpayers will see \$65.1 million in benefits, equating to \$2.10 in returns for every dollar spent.

Society: Nebraska's total investment of \$114.3 million will yield \$893.7 million in economic growth and \$130.3 million in public and private sector savings, translating to \$9.00 in returns for every dollar invested.

"Wayne State College continues to be a powerhouse of economic and social growth for Nebraska," said Marysz Rames, president of Wayne State. "From supporting local jobs to empowering students with high returns on education, WSC is proud to create lasting value for our state."

For the full report for the Nebraska State College System, as well as the full Wayne State report and executive summary, please visit <https://www.nscs.edu/workingforNE>

The Economic Value of Wayne State College



Nebraska

About WSC



5,944

Credit students



0

Non-credit students



991

Employees

Economic impact analysis



\$529.5 million Added income

Alumni impact

Impact of the increased earnings of WSC alumni and the businesses they work for

An economic boost similar to hosting the Super Bowl 1x



OR **6,869** Jobs supported



\$36.3 million Added income

Operations spending impact

Impact of annual payroll and other spending

Enough to buy **769** new cars



OR **965** Jobs supported



\$3.8 million Added income

Student spending impact

Impact of the daily spending of WSC students attracted to or retained in the state

Enough to buy **261** families* a year's worth of groceries



OR **65** Jobs supported



\$3.4 million Added income

Construction spending impact

Impact of expenditures for ongoing construction projects

OR **42** Jobs supported

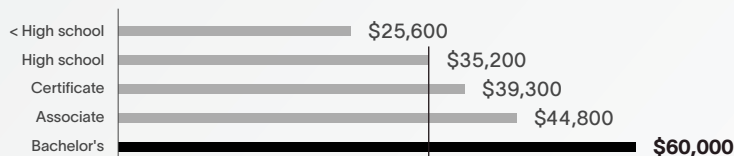


● = 100 jobs * = family of four

Investment analysis



Average earnings by education level at career midpoint



The average FY 2022-23 bachelor's degree graduate from WSC will see an increase in earnings of **\$24,800** each year compared to a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in Nebraska.

For every \$1...



Students gain **\$4.90** in lifetime earnings



Taxpayers gain **\$2.10** in added tax revenue and public sector savings



Society gains **\$9.00** in added income and social savings

ATHLETIC AND RECREATION COMPLEX



The athletic project's historic improvements will be critical in our ability to continue to recruit and retain students by providing an exceptional overall student engagement experience, and included renovations to the Recreation Center, Rice Auditorium, and the Kirk Gardener Indoor Athletic Complex.

The project also included a new 17,000-square-foot addition filling in unoccupied, open-air alley space between the Recreation Center and Rice Auditorium dubbed 'Wildcat Alley', and the New 97,000-square-foot Air-Supported Structure 'Wildcat Dome' that students have already nicknamed 'the bubble'. It includes a 300m synthetic track, two pole vault boxes, two jumping pits, and two throw circles with safety cages. The infield of the track will have a multi-functional artificial turf with a perimeter protective netting system and four baseball/softball/golf hitting cages.

An auxiliary link and structure provides the primary means for access to the air-supported structure, and its connection to the recreation center houses two newly constructed locker rooms for the men's and women's cross country and track and field programs.

Wayne State named the new residence hall in honor of Dr. Sheila M. Stearns' distinguished leadership of the college from 1999 to 2003. Stearns served as the 10th president of Wayne State and was the first woman to lead the institution. Stearns passed away May 23, 2023.

Hal Stearns, husband of the late Dr. Stearns, was among the ceremony's guest speakers, which also included Dr. Paul Turman, chancellor of the Nebraska State College System; Dr. Marysz Rames, president of Wayne State College; and Greg Evans, a senior resident assistant in Stearns Hall.

Stearns Hall is the first residence hall built since the construction of Bowen Hall in 1966. The four-story structure accommodates 276 new and returning students and features 168 suite-style beds and 108 traditional beds. The main lobby has an open kitchen, two televisions, a lounge area, pool table, and a front desk reception area. Each floor above the main lobby has a smaller lounge area. There is an exercise area on the second floor.



STEARNS HALL



BERRY HALL



Students and Alumni reflect on the residence hall they called home at WSC:

I came to WSC from little Jasper, Minn., and didn't know anyone on campus. (My roommate that first year had a boyfriend so I saw her very little). My first night in the dorm, I met a girl from Howells who invited me to the room of two other Howells girls to share popcorn. We are still friends all these years later, even though we are scattered across the country.

I remember floor parties, Secret Santa, candle passing ceremonies, holiday door decorating contests, 101 foods you could make in a popcorn popper, the occasional streaker (it was the 70's), laughing together, crying together. So many good times with so many good people. We even made time for studying! That's what Berry Hall was about.

I was an RA there in the Fall Semester of 2015. It was there, on the second day of classes, I met my now husband, Bryan Vacha, in the front lobby. He taught me how to play the guitar in the lower/basement lobby of Berry and the rest is history! We have been happily married now for five years and have two of the sweetest girls!

I moved to Berry 3 during my freshman year of college. Some of the best women I have ever met lived with me on that floor. Many of us were in the high school class of 2001, so shortly after starting college we endured 9/11 together. It was also that freshman bond that developed into a sisterhood as many of us pledged Zeta Tau Omega. Several of us still keep in touch today.

I was a Berry Hall resident the entire time I was a WSC student, from the fall of 1973 until my graduation in April of 1976. And all on 3rd floor. Lots of trips up and down those stairs over the years! My first year I lived in a room on the back side of the dorm. But then I moved to Room 324 on the campus side. Lots more excitement being on that side of the dorm! And my roommate for those last two years remains a dear friend to this day. I was maid of honor at her wedding. Room 324 was a corner room, so there were two sets of windows, one facing campus and one facing the "boys" side. The room was right at the top of the stairs, so everyone had to pass by. You could leave your room door open and someone would inevitably stop by to talk.

Way back in the 70's, there was one phone booth for the entire floor. Whoever was walking by when the phone rang would answer it and then track down the student. Getting a phone call was a big deal!

In the bathroom, you needed to yell "flush" when flushing the toilet so someone taking a shower wouldn't get scalded because the flushing would take away the cold water!

I did not get along with my first roommate at first but became good friends as time went on. Along with two other friends from 3rd floor, we visited him in the Black Hills where he was working a summer job. These same friends and I attended his wedding in Crawford. (We also attended two other weddings of friends from the 3rd floor of Berry Hall)

GOODBYE. BERRY HALL!



“These memories of Berry Hall were some of the good times I will always cherish.”

Went home one weekend to watch my brother's basketball tournament game in Fremont. While sitting in bleachers awaiting the start of the game, here came two of my 3rd floor friends. They had hitchhiked from Wayne to Fremont as neither one of them had a car. Yes, they stayed with my family and I that evening and we returned to Wayne the next day.

I moved to the basement during my junior and senior years as an RA. My senior year, somebody went to the flower shop behind Berry Hall, ordered daisies, and delivered them to me three days in a row. That person also had access to mailroom, because it was the boys basement RA, Rick. It wasn't long before Rick and I started dating. My favorite memory of the two of us dating was when Rick had taken an empty dorm room, and transformed it into a candlelit dinner. Candles in the dorm you may ask? Rick had bought battery operated candles, white Christmas lights, and a white table cloth for our meal....Chinese food from downtown. Prior to our date, Rick had told me that he was allergic to Chinese food. That night he professed he was not, just a picky eater. But he was willing to give it a try because he knew Chinese food was my favorite. On December 23, 2024, Rick and I were married for 18 years. We have two beautiful daughters, Madelynn, 14, and Molly, 11. I'm a teacher. I teach 5th grade and have now for 20 years. We are both business owners. In our marriage we have owned car washes, houses, apartments, duplexes, the properties of a mechanic shop, and a butcher shop. We also are current owners of a grocery store.

Returned to college after a weekend at home. Parked my car by the backdoor on the Southwest corner of the hall to take my belongings to my room. While in my room, before taking car to parking lot, some friends from the 3rd floor completely "papered" (wrinkled up newspaper) in my car. I, in turn, took the newspaper inside the hall to the trash chute, which I plugged.

One 3rd floor occupant, from Iowa, was a big fan of Buddy Holly who, at the time, was killed in a plane crash. He had a guitar and would sing various verses of Buddy Holly songs.

I can remember some good card games in different rooms on 3rd floor and also a water fight or two.

One cold and snowy Saturday evening, three or four of my 3rd floor friends and I went out in the snow to play a game of football on the lawn. Yes, it was cold but we had fun.

My closest friend, and later roommate, was a year ahead of me. I visited him at his home in Ruthven, Iowa, during one summer. When he took a teaching job in Whiting, Iowa, I drove from Wayne to visit him as he was sponsoring a school dance one evening. Later he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. By this time, I was living in Wyoming. Every year that I came back to Nebraska to visit my parents, I drove up to Sioux City to see him until he finally lost his battle with this disease.



Left: MVP Trent Draper

Men's Rugby Captures First Championship

After finishing as the national runner-up the previous three seasons, the Wayne State Wildcat men's rugby team won its first National Collegiate Rugby Division III championship on Dec. 15, 2024, with a 27-8 victory over Holy Cross at SaberCats Stadium in Houston.

During an incredible five-game playoff run, the Wildcats only allowed an opponent to score in double digits once when they defeated Colorado School of Mines 46-15 in the semifinals. Captain Trent Draper, a junior from Johannesburg, South Africa, was named Most Valuable Player.

"Being named MVP was a great honor and I am grateful for it, but anyone on our team could have won it as we all had a great season, and we all put in the hard work," said Draper.

Draper, who played on the last two national runner-up teams, said it's a relief to finally win a championship.

"It's a massive achievement for the team, and it feels like we

have jumped over the hurdle that tripped us up the previous years," said Draper. "The team had a sense of calm and confidence before the final. A lot of us had felt the hurt from the previous years, and we all said that we didn't want to feel that way again."

Second-year head coach Bryn Chivers echoed Draper's sentiments.

"We definitely got the monkey off our back," said Chivers, who is the head coach of Wayne State's men's and women's rugby teams. "The consecutive second-place finishes became a weight that we had carried from season to season. Now, we can move on to growing the program and possibly move up a couple of divisions where we can challenge the large schools like Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma State."

The Wildcat women's rugby team, winners of 13 national championships, finished the season with a 3-4 record and lost 41-40 to the University of North Dakota in the Round of 16 during the playoffs.

Beller Makes Atlanta Vibe Pro Volleyball Roster

Three-time Wayne State College All-American Taya Beller has made the opening day roster for the Atlanta Vibe of the Pro Volleyball Federation the team announced Jan. 8.

The Vibe, who won last year's regular season title in the inaugural year of the league with a 19-6 record, is one of eight teams in this year's league and opened their season Jan. 10 in Omaha against the Supernovas at the CHI Health Center.

Atlanta was voted first in this year's Pro Volleyball Federation Preseason Poll that was released on Monday, just ahead of second-place Orlando and third-place Omaha, who won last year's inaugural Pro Volleyball Federation championship last season.

The Vibe will play 28 regular season games this season, running through the first week of May with playoffs to follow.

Beller, a 6-2 middle hitter from Lindsay (Humphrey HS), was a three-time AVCA and D2CCA All-American and four-time All-NSIC First Team selection for the Wayne State volleyball team. She ended her Wildcat career ranked fourth in all-time kills with 1,545 and second in career hitting percentage at .369. Beller helped Wayne State win back-to-back regular season Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference titles along with one NCAA Central Region championship in 2023.

Taya Beller



VOLLEYBALL

Overall record: 23-7 | NSIC record: 14-4 (3rd place)
Finished season ranked 19th in AVCA Division II Top 25 Coaches Poll



BELLER



BRAHMER



ROBLES



All-NSIC Volleyball Team

Taya Beller – First Team
 Maggie Brahmer – First Team
 Channatee Robles – First Team
 Brooke Peltz – Second Team
 Molly Romano – Second Team

D2CCA All-Central Region Team

Taya Beller – First Team

AVCA All-Central Region Team

Taya Beller – First Team
 Maggie Brahmer – First Team

AVCA All-American

Taya Beller – First Team
 Maggie Brahmer – Honorable Mention

D2CCA All-American

Taya Beller – Second Team

NSIC All-Academic Team of Excellence

(3.60 GPA or higher)

Taya Beller – Senior
 Maggie Brahmer – Senior
 Allie Petry – Senior
 Jordie Nekl – Junior

NSIC All-Academic Team (3.20 – 3.59 GPA)

Brooke Peltz – Senior
 Taylor Bunjer – Junior
 Gracen Evans – Sophomore
 Laney Kathol – Sophomore
 Ella Myler – Sophomore

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District

Taya Beller – Senior
 Maggie Brahmer – Senior

**College Sports Communicators
 Academic All-American Second Team**

Taya Beller – Senior
 (first-ever three-time Academic All-American at WSC)

FOOTBALL

Overall record: 7-4 | NSIC South Division record: 6-4 NSIC (tie 5th place)

NSIC All-Conference Honors

Jett Janssen / OL / Senior / First Team Offense

Trevor Marshall / P / Senior / First Team Special Teams

Dexter Larsen / LB / Senior / First Team Defense

Carter Sitzman / DL / Sophomore / First Team Defense

Latravis Boyd / RB / Sophomore / Second Team Offense

Jacob Byrd / DB / Junior / Second Team Defense

Kendrick Watkins-Hogue / WR / Sophomore / Second Team Offense

D2CCA All Super Region 4 Football Team

Carter Sitzman – Second Team

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

Jett Janssen, Senior

Alex Kowalczyk, Senior

Dexter Larsen, Senior

Sam Rallis, Senior

Alex Schall, Senior

Dawson Forgy, Junior

Kaden Johnson, Sophomore

Luke Lambert, Sophomore

NSIC All-Academic Team (3.20 – 3.59 GPA)

Jacob Byrd, Senior

Jaxon Johnson, Senior

Tyler Leclair, Senior

Trevor Marshall, Junior

Lane VanderWal, Senior

Ashten Schmaderer, Senior

Colton Andrews, Junior

Isaac Robinson, Junior

Will Washenberger, Junior

Clyde Hinton, Sophomore

Cory Hollinger, Sophomore

Carter Sitzman, Sophomore

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District

(3.50 GPA and above)

Jett Janssen, Senior

Dexter Larsen, Senior

Sam Rallis, Senior

Alex Schall, Senior

Ashten Schmaderer, Senior

Luke Lambert, Sophomore



WOMEN'S SOCCER

7-7-5 overall, 6-4-4 NSIC (8th place)

Qualified for NSIC Tournament for first time since 2019

First winning record in NSIC play since 2005

All-NSIC Team

Paige Pemberton / Junior Midfielder / Second Team

Alaina Sorensen / Junior Midfielder / Second Team

Maia Vacks NSIC Offensive Player of the Week (9/9/24)

Addison Walker NSIC Defensive Player of the Week (9/9/24)

Sidney Truman NSIC Goalkeeper of the Week (11/11/24)

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

Haley Hoffman, Senior

Erin Peters, Senior

Morgan Rhodes, Senior

Reagan Allen, Junior

Christina Marlow, Junior

Tatum Berry, Sophomore

Tyler Donaldson, Sophomore

NSIC All-Academic Team (3.20 – 3.59 GPA)

Riann Daas, Senior

Sydney Schnase, Senior

Sidney Truman, Senior

Maia Vacks, Senior

Alyssa Ferrin, Junior

Kaylee Herall, Junior

Alaina Sorenson, Junior

Brynn Magner, Sophomore

College Sports Communicators Academic All-District Team

Riann Daas, Senior

Erin Peters, Senior

Morgan Rhodes, Senior

Kaylee Herall, Junior

FEATURED:

Alaina Sorenson (Women's Soccer)

Paige Pemberton (Women's Soccer)

Quentin Dreyer (Cross Country)

Kaitlyn Bloomenrader (Cross Country)

WANT TO SUPPORT THE TEAM?

FOLLOW THE CATS

www.wscwildcats.com

- Sports schedules
- Scores
- News releases
- Team information
- Watch Wildcat athletics online and more...



JOIN CAT CLUB

All Cat Club proceeds go to support the Wayne State Student Athlete Scholarship Fund. Cat Club membership comes with various giving levels and benefits.

For more information, visit www.wscwildcats.com



CROSS COUNTRY

Six meets – Wildcat Classic Men and Women – Runner ups (9/28/24)

NSIC Conference Championship Results

Men – 10th place – 257 points

Women – 13th place – 378 points

Top Wildcat Finishers

Quentin Dreyer, Junior (Top WSC runner at five of six events)

Ethan Walters, Freshman (Top WSC runner at one event)

Kaitlyn Bloomenrader, Freshman (Top WSC runner at four events)

Allie Czaplá, Freshman (Top WSC runner at two events)

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

Quentin Dreyer, Junior

Taylor Thorp, Senior

Maelee Beacom, Junior

Sydney Escritt, Junior

Meghan Cunningham, Sophomore

NSIC All-Academic Team (3.20 – 3.59 GPA)

Brandon Mitzel, Senior

Andrew Wyllie, Senior

Brady Franzen, Sophomore



WOMEN'S GOLF

Fall portion of schedule

1st place at Sioux Falls Invite with season-best score of 626

2nd place at Nebraska Intercollegiate Invite (628)

3rd place at Maverick/Golden Bear Fall Brawl (643)

Senior Abbigail Brodersen, 2nd overall at Sioux Falls Invite

Freshman Camryn Johnson, 3rd overall at Nebraska Intercollegiate

Senior Abbigail Brodersen, 3rd overall at Maverick/
Golden Bear Fall Brawl

SUPPORT THE CATS

Donors like you help strengthen our students, faculty, and campus. We are incredibly grateful to the generous alumni, organizations, and individuals who are making a difference for Wayne State College.



www.wsc.edu/donate



1984 James Larsen retired from a career in global hydrocarbons construction contracts and supply chain senior management in 2022. His career took him to assignments in Kuwait, Iraq, Yemen, Qatar, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, Australia, Paris, and London. He retired from

Houston, Texas. James held senior leadership positions on many projects, including the construction of the largest Liquefied Natural Gas plant in Australia (Gorgon) and on the project team constructing the largest infrastructure project in the world, ASGHAL, which built infrastructure in Qatar for the 2020 World Cup. Prior to joining this industry, James served in the U.S. Army with Airborne and Special Operations and deployed in Desert Shield/Storm with the 101st Airborne Division (AASLT). James and his wife, Paula, now travel the U.S. and internationally. They currently spend their summers in Tea, South Dakota, and are spending this winter in San Antonio, Texas.

1989 Michele Obert attended WSC to become a teacher, but the job she wanted, high school chemistry teacher, wasn't offered to first-year teachers unless you also taught Earth science, general science, and biology in a small school. While Michele didn't mind the idea of living in a small town, she didn't think she was qualified to teach the other science courses, so she pivoted. Michele started applying for jobs as a chemist. Luck was on her side when she took an entry level chemist position with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the Kansas City District Office in December 1989. Her starting salary was less than \$15,000. She has her first pay stub in a frame in her office; taking home a little more than \$400 every two weeks. Thirty-five years later, Michele is still with the FDA, leaving the laboratory in 2012 to become an Investigator. She spent the next 10 years inspecting pharmaceutical manufacturers, domestic and foreign, and related businesses to ensure they were complying with U.S. regulations and that human and animal drug supplies were safe. She was awarded the Patrick J. Pouzar award in 2017 for FDA Investigator of the year. That is the highest honor one can achieve for inspections. In 2022, Michele became a Program Expert for the Pharmaceutical program, providing inspectional, investigational, and technical advice to the pharmaceutical divisions, headquarters, and other government agencies. While not a teacher, she has been involved in the education of the scientists and investigators at the FDA since 2010. Throughout Michele Obert's career, she has traveled to 25 countries on five continents while performing inspections. She cannot say enough good things about her career. "Looking back, this was not a career I even knew existed when I was at WSC, but it was the right path for me."



2003 Robyn (Anderson) Lieber started a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization called Sweet Like Honey on July 28, 2022. The mission of the nonprofit is to enrich lives by sharing the gift of unexpected kindness. This is done in three ways:

1. Repurposing fresh flowers from weddings, celebrations of life or other special events and taking the smaller bouquets to care center residents, hospital patients, and other individuals with difficult life circumstances
2. Sending positive, encouraging handwritten notes
3. Delivering small gift bags as tokens of appreciation to individuals in the community.

2005 Nikki (Field) Heidemann (below) was named to Medical Laboratory Observer magazine's "55 under 55 Laboratory Professionals".



2005 Jodi Richey and Tom Richey '04 (above) welcomed their third child, daughter Riven Trinity Richey, to their family in September 2024, joining their son, Moxon, and daughter, Aspen. The family lives in Norfolk where Jodi works remotely as a graphic designer for Eleanor Creative and for her own business, Jodi Richey Design, and Tom is a property inspector for his own business, Nebraska Inspections.



2009 Michael Chittenden (MBA '23) was recently appointed as the Director for the Center for Home & Community Based Services for the New York State Department of Health.

WILDCAT NEWS

Stay up to date with the latest news by visiting the link below or by following our social media pages!



www.wsc.edu/newscenter



2013 Marisa (Sieler) Goedhart and her husband, Jared Goedhart, (*below*) welcomed twin boys in April of 2022, Trevor and Liam. They are now two years old and keep their parents very busy.



2013 Nikki (Garden) Hart and her husband Stephen, of Atlantic Beach, FL, welcomed a son, Van James, (*above*) born August 2024.

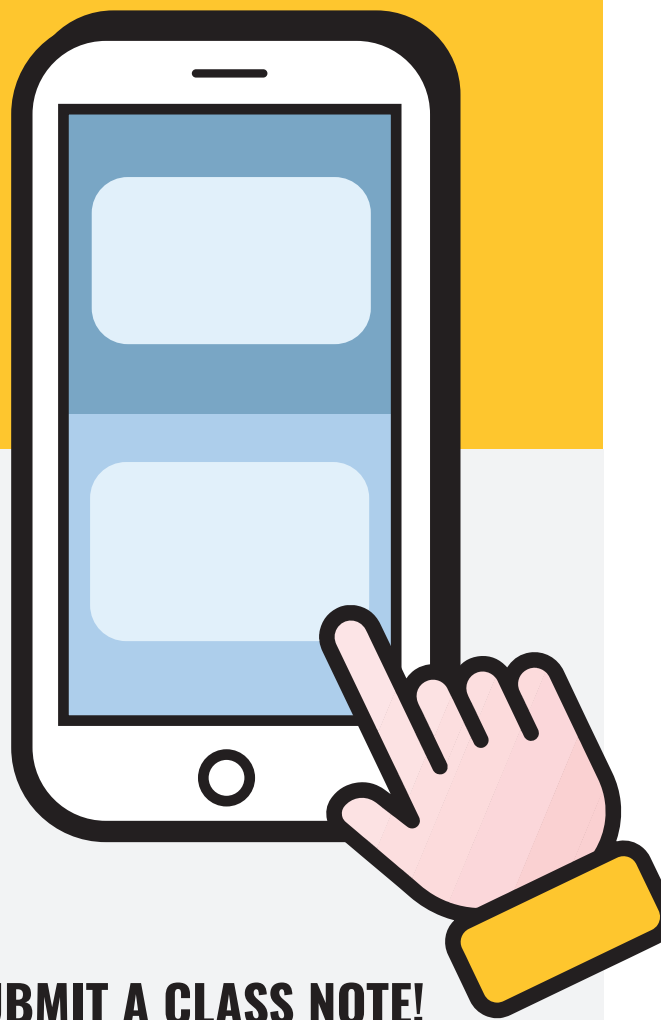
2017 & 2018 Zachery Halsey and Emma (Osnes) Halsey (*below*) met at Wayne State College in April 2017 performing in WSC's spring production of *Alice in Wonderland* as the mad hatter and the white rabbit. Emma is currently working as a graphic designer here at Wayne State (*and I needed one more story to round out the alumni notes section as I edited this magazine together!*) Zachery graduated with a BS in Mass Communications, and after working four years at ABC's KLKN Channel 8 in Lincoln, he is taking a break from the news cycle to help at his family shop in Pierce. They were married in 2023 at Mahoney State Park, and have enjoyed a happy two years married so far.



2020 Cory Frewing met his wife, Allee, (*above*) in summer 2023, and six months later got married on April 20, 2024. They are thrilled that God gave them one another and are excited to pursue their faith in Him together.

2022 Paris TeBrink is in her third year of teaching 8th grade math at Norris School District and is currently working to complete her masters in Curriculum and Instruction. Paris was awarded the 2024 Rookie of the Year Award from Nebraska Association of Teachers of Mathematics.

Did you recently get married?
Have a baby? Relocate? Get promoted? Retire? We'd love to hear about it!



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:

Betty E. (Dye) Wortman `50, 94, McCook; Sept. 30, 2024.
 Carol J. (Haley) Baker `52, 90, Laramie, Wyo.; Sept. 4, 2024.
 Marcile S. (Samson) Thomas `55/WSF Trustee, 90, Wayne; Dec. 27, 2024.
 Dr. Brad Bigelow `57, 87, Kearney; May 29, 2024.
 Donna J. (Lage) Hansen `57, 87, Wayne; May 22, 2024.
 James M. Hansen `58, 93, Pleasant Prairie, Wis.; Nov. 15, 2024.
 Larry D. Schwarting `58, 90, Falls City; Dec. 31, 2024.
 Dalbert L. Isom `59, 91, Gowrie, Iowa; Sept. 24, 2024.
 Gary A. Spear `60, 86, Omaha; June 24, 2024.
 Michael "Mike" G. Batenhorst `61, 85, Kearney; July 6, 2024.
 Gary N. Lingenfelter `61, 86, Norfolk; Aug. 6, 2024.
 Loren R. Park `61, 90, Wayne; Sept. 6, 2024.
 Lyle D. Colsden `63, Kearney; July 22, 2024.
 Patrecia L. (Peach) Broederssen `60, 86, Hartington; July 28, 2024.
 Phyllis M. (Rudloff) Tharnish `60, 85, Elgin; July 5, 2024.
 Loren D. Nelson `65, 89, Elgin; Oct. 4, 2024.
 Joyce P. (Dangberg) Zimmerman `65, 80, Vermillion, S.D.; Jan. 8, 2025.
 Donald C. Munger `66, 101, Woodville, Wisc.; Sept. 27, 2024.
 Ruth V. (Roberts) Kerstine `67, 98, Mesa, Ariz.; June 1, 2024.
 Richard "Randy" R. Rogers `68, 78, Wayne; Oct. 6, 2024.
 Betty J. (Olson) Shambley `69, 77, Norfolk; Oct. 16, 2024.
 Sally A. (Hirschman) Manzer `71, Seward; Sept. 14, 2024.
 John "Jack" A. Sehi `71, 79, Elgin; Dec. 4, 2024.
 Mary A. (Sindelar) Hefti `72, 74, Columbus; Nov. 29, 2024.
 Charles "Chuck" L. Rutenbeck `72, 74, Wayne; Oct. 10, 2024.
 Patricia J. (Evers) Danielson `73, 72, South Sioux City; Aug. 16, 2024.
 Roger D. Rogge `73, 82, Danbury, Iowa; Aug. 18, 2024.
 Leon "Lee" O. Trautwein `73, Tontitown, Ark.; Oct. 7, 2024.
 Terry L. McKibbin `74, 77, Norfolk; Oct. 26, 2024.
 Susan M. (Marchand) Christensen `75, 63, Lincoln; Nov. 18, 2024.
 Linda A. (Johnson) Harris `75, 70, Olivet, S.D.; Jan. 1, 2025.
 Doris A. (Keck) Montgomery Carlson `76, 88, Royal; Nov. 11, 2024.
 Tearle "Terry" P. List `MSE 76, 81, Lincoln; Dec. 29, 2024.
 Claribel E. (Eckmann) Wulf `76, 99, Clarkson; July 25, 2024.
 Paul F. Jungers `77, 83, Lyons; July 5, 2024.
 Daryl D. Hubbard `79, 80, Madison; July 2, 2024.
 Daniel "Dan" E. Ingwersen `83, Humboldt, Iowa; July 17, 2024.
 David K. Podany `89, 68, Allen; Dec. 27, 2024.
 Trudy E. (Hass) Jones `MSE 93, 71, West Point; July 24, 2024.
 Cheryl A. (Brummels) Meier MSE `95, 75, Orchard; June 6, 2024.
 Tommy "Tom" L. Nissen `90, 65, Allen; June 18, 2024.
 Todd A. Gunsolley `98, 49, Stanton; June 18, 2024.
 James Nykodym `MSE 08, 80, Tilden; Aug. 24, 2024.
 Janet A. (Houdek) Koch `04, 73, Norfolk; Oct. 15, 2024.
 Tracy A. Mortenson `02, 45, Laurel; Oct. 19, 2024.
 David J. Wennekamp `01, 45, Omaha; Dec. 20, 2024.

FRIENDS WE WILL MISS:

Patrick "Pat" J. Craig, 67, Wayne; April 30, 2025. Craig was a Maintenance Repair Worker I for the College from Dec. 5, 2011, to June 10, 2024.

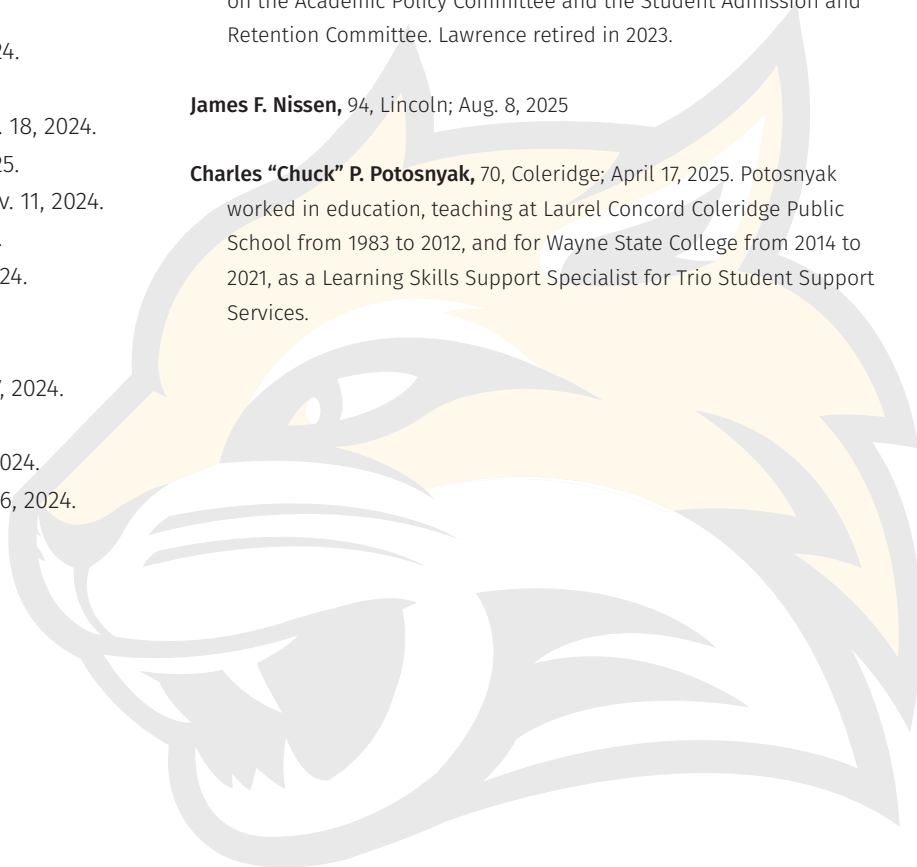
Robert "Bob" E. Dempster, 83, Dixon; July 22, 2024. Bob served Wayne State from 1963 until his retirement in 2009. He worked in the college's power plant his entire time at WSC, providing maintenance and engineering services for 46 years.

Marjorie "Marge" J. Holland `82, 97, Aurora; Feb. 2, 2025. Marjorie Stewart Holland earned a bachelor's degree as well as a master's degree in education from Wayne State College. After graduation, she served as director of the learning centers at Wayne State College before her retirement in 1988. She and Bill served on the board of directors for the Wayne State Foundation for 18 years, and the Holland Academic Success Center is named in their honor.

Gloria J. Lawrence, 70, Grand Island; March 21, 2025. Lawrence began teaching at Wayne State in 1988. She earned her Ph.D. and master's degree in Psychology in 1986 and 1984 from Kansas State University, and her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Kearney State College (now the University of Nebraska-Kearney) in 1981. During her 35 years at Wayne State, Lawrence taught courses in general psychology, physiological psychology, death and dying, abnormal psychology, evolutionary psychology, personality, life span, forensic psychology, social psychology, psychopharmacology, human sexuality, experimental psychology, and health psychology. In addition to teaching, Lawrence served as the advisor for the Red Cross Club, Active Minds, and Psi Chi, the international honor society in psychology at WSC. She also served on the Academic Policy Committee and the Student Admission and Retention Committee. Lawrence retired in 2023.

James F. Nissen, 94, Lincoln; Aug. 8, 2025

Charles "Chuck" P. Potosnyak, 70, Coleridge; April 17, 2025. Potosnyak worked in education, teaching at Laurel Concord Coleridge Public School from 1983 to 2012, and for Wayne State College from 2014 to 2021, as a Learning Skills Support Specialist for Trio Student Support Services.



HOMECOMING WILDCAT DAYS

Sept. 22 - 27

Questions? Please contact:
Wayne State Foundation
1111 Main Street • Wayne, NE 68787 • 402-375-7510



We are planning to see you at Homecoming, but all events are subject to change. For the most current information, please visit: www.wsc.edu/homecoming



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