



**VALLEY CITY**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

# THE BULLETIN

A Publication for Alumni & Friends of Valley City State University

ISSUE 071668 | NOVEMBER 2024



## Campus & Community

Vikings enjoy a night downtown at annual Summer Vikes on Central. - PAGE 8



# THE BULLETIN

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The Bulletin is published in spring, summer and fall by the Valley City State University Alumni Association.

Learn more at [vcsualumni.org](http://vcsualumni.org)  
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# Exciting results in Enrollment, Rankings, and AI

President Alan LaFave, D.M.A.

This fall has been very exciting for our university.

Continued record enrollments, national rankings, and the hosting of the first ever North Dakota AI Conference were driving forces for an abundance of positive news.



LaFave

**Enrollment:** We were extremely pleased to have eclipsed 1800 students this fall for the first time in school history! With 1806 students enrolled for the 2024 fall semester, we continue to be recognized as a wise academic investment by students and their families. This number includes 1651 undergraduate students and 155 graduate students.

VCSU enrollment has grown more than 31 percent over the past ten years. This semester, 314 new undergraduate students are enrolled, including freshman and transfer students. We saw growth in our graduate program (23 percent), the number of transfers choosing VCSU (21 percent), and the retention of our current students.

This data helps illustrate that our trusted degrees and generous scholarship programs combine to provide our students with quality education and experiences at an affordable price. We are extremely grateful to our donors and all those who support our mission in the important role of providing an attainable and affordable education for our students.

**Rankings:** VCSU has enjoyed a long and successful history of being recognized by U.S. News and World Report. In fact, we've been recognized as one of the top Best Colleges for 27 consecutive years after the release of the 2025 ranking in September.

Along with being the top public regional college in North Dakota this year, U.S. News ranked us as the No. 2 public regional college in the 12 state Midwest region.

Our commitment to quality, both in and outside the classroom, contribute to these external validations of the VCSU experience. These rankings confirm what we see every day – students who choose to call VCSU home have a great experience and leave with a valuable degree and credentials at an affordable price.

**AI leadership:** Finally, VCSU was honored to serve as the site of the first ever North Dakota Conference on AI on September 26 in the Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts. The conference, entitled “Being Human and Working in the Age of AI” brought researchers, industry practitioners, educators, and thought leaders together to hear from national and regional experts in the field. This event was a collaborative effort and partnership involving Valley City State University, University of Mary, Dakota Digital Academy, North Dakota University System, North Dakota Information Technology, and Department of Public Instruction.

We are grateful for the opportunity to host a conference such as this and look forward to the Center for the Arts venue serving as the site for many more educational and community events.

Our successful growth and recognition have been a team effort. All three of these topics and success stories are the result of an entire team of faculty, staff, coaches, and administrators working to make VCSU the best it can possibly be.

Go Vikings!



## IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

Take advantage of tax savings through a gift to the VCSU Foundation.

Consider a **Year-End Gift** to the Valley City State University Foundation now and take advantage of tax savings when you prepare your 2024 income taxes.

Gifts must be postmarked by December 31 to qualify for 2024 tax purposes.

**Visit [vcsualumni.org](https://vcsualumni.org) for more information.**

# Driving the Transformation and Shaping a Future

Cory Anderson '89 | Executive Director for University Advancement

As we reflect on the 2024 fall semester at Valley City State University, we are reminded of the incredible strides we've made as a community. With a record-breaking enrollment of 1,806 students, surpassing last year's total of 1,754, VCSU continues to grow and thrive. This sustained growth is not just a number—it represents a campus culture that is stronger, more vibrant, and more dynamic than ever.

Behind these milestones lies a story of dedication and generosity. Our alumni and friends have played an instrumental role in supporting VCSU's mission, contributing nearly \$15 million in scholarships over the last 10 years. These gifts have made a direct impact on students' lives, providing the resources they need to pursue their educational dreams. Today, we proudly boast over 230 endowed scholarships, a legacy that will endure in perpetuity, securing the future for generations of VCSU students.

The economic ripple effect of these achievements extends beyond our campus. According to a recent fiscal study, VCSU's total economic contribution to the Valley City community amounted to more than \$114 million last year. This economic boost underscores the university's role as a critical driver of growth, innovation, and opportunity for the entire region.

This era of transformation is further visible in the exciting campus projects and developments underway. After a 40-year drought of new facilities from 1973 to 2013, the university has been on a journey of revitalization. In 2013, we expanded the Rhoades Science Center, followed by the addition of the Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts in 2022—a crown jewel for the arts on campus. In fall 2025, we look forward to the re-opening of the newly renovated McCarthy School of Education.

The momentum continues with the upcoming addition to the W.E. Osmon

Fieldhouse, affectionately known as "The Bubble," which has stood for 65 years. Thanks to numerous donors and the generosity of Gary Tharaldson '67 and his family, who provided the largest gift in university history, we are set to break ground in 2025 on this long-awaited project. The upgrades will include a large indoor turf multipurpose facility, along with other athletic department enhancements that will benefit our student-athletes and the broader VCSU community.

None of this would be possible without the guidance and advocacy of our dedicated boards. The Foundation Board, V-500 Scholarship Board, Viking Booster Board, and Alumni Board are made up of volunteers who lend their time, expertise, and passion to support every corner of our VCSU community. Their leadership helps us meet and exceed expectations year after year.

As you drive down College Street you can see our campus evolving before your eyes. If you've ever thought about getting involved, there are many ways to make an impact, regardless of the size of your contribution. Your support is critical in keeping a VCSU education affordable through student scholarships. Additionally, naming rights in McCarthy Hall are available if you wish to honor a loved one, and phase two of the Osmon Addition will offer ample opportunities to commemorate individuals, families, or businesses.

Together, we are building the future of VCSU, and we invite you to join us on this journey. Every gift, every volunteer hour, and every act of support drives our mission forward and ensures that VCSU continues to thrive as a beacon of opportunity and excellence.



Anderson

## 2024–2025 VCSU Alumni Board of Directors

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—

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*Erica Buchholz, ex officio*



# VCSU Sets Enrollment Record with 1,806 Students



Valley City State University (VCSU) announced on Sept. 24 it has enrolled more than 1800 students for the first time in school history.

A record 1806 total students are currently enrolled at VCSU for the 2024 fall semester. That includes 1651 undergraduate students and 155 graduate students.

Over the last 10 years, VCSU's headcount has grown more than 31 percent and the university set fall enrollment records nine out of the 10 years. This year's total headcount of 1806 surpasses last year's record of 1754 students. VCSU's full-time equivalent count (FTE) has also reached a new record of 1184.

"Our continued growth speaks volumes about the solid reputation and stability we have at VCSU," said President Alan LaFave. "Students and their families trust and recognize the strength of a VCSU degree. We do not take their trust lightly, and our faculty and staff work hard to create an environment where students can excel in their chosen field."

The university enrolled 314 new undergraduate students this semester, which includes freshmen and transfer students. The school had a noticeable uptick in both graduate students and transfer students this fall. The graduate program grew by 23 percent over last fall, and transfer student numbers increased by 21 percent.

A total of 141 transfer students chose to attend VCSU this fall after initially attending other colleges or universities. VCSU's retention rate of its current students also increased by at least 3 percent across the board from last year.

"A VCSU degree continues to be recognized as a smart academic investment," said LaFave. "Our trusted degrees and generous scholarship programs combine to provide our students with quality education and experiences at an affordable price."

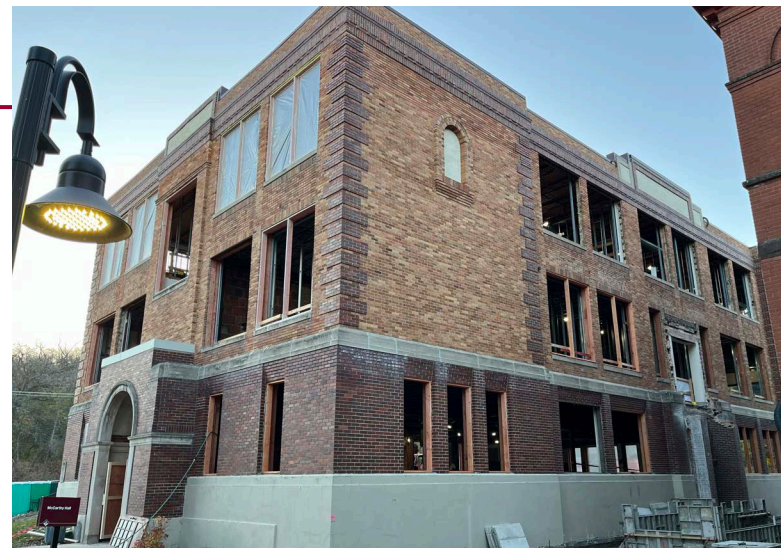
VCSU's momentum is not only limited to enrollment growth. A \$13.5 million renovation is underway in McCarthy Hall, which will be the new home of VCSU's top-ranked School of Education. The university is also close to breaking ground on an expansion of its athletic facilities through fundraised dollars.

The university has strategically added new programs or articulation agreements to address growing workforce needs. VCSU's School of Education is at the forefront of teacher education, awarding more bachelor's degrees in education than any other school in the state.

"Our unique mix of academic programs has positioned VCSU to meet the current and future needs of our state and region," said Larry Brooks, Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Our many partnerships and academic agreements with colleges across the state and region help ensure we're doing our part to fill workforce demands. I'm pleased to see so many students taking the opportunity to pursue their education at VCSU."

## McCarthy Hall Progress

Work continues this fall on the complete renovation of VCSU's McCarthy Hall. The interior of the building has been gutted and is being reframed. Windows are expected to be installed prior to winter and work has begun on the new atrium area that will connect McCarthy to McFarland Hall. The project is expected to be completed in Fall of 2025 and will be the new home for VCSU's nationally-recognized School of Education. The transformation of McCarthy Hall is a part of the first-ever capital campaign at VCSU. The \$13.5 million project is made possible through the generous support of campaign donors, VCSU funds and \$11.5 million allocated by the North Dakota Legislature and approved by Gov. Doug Burgum.



# VCSU Restarts Speech Team

Valley City State University (VCSU) has started a new speech team for the 2024-25 school year.

Under the guidance of assistant professor Tammy Jo Taft, the VCSU speech team was reformed this fall after a near 20-year hiatus from campus. VCSU Speech will compete in five tournaments across the region this year and is actively recruiting members for the current and upcoming year. VCSU had five students attend a recent speech tournament in Brookings, S.D., where Grady Hornung reached finals in Dramatic Interpretation and placed sixth overall.

“Competing in collegiate forensics is one of the best ways for students to build their skills as public speakers and make lifelong connections,” said Tammy Jo Taft, assistant professor in Communication Arts and coach of the VCSU team. “It’s exciting to see so many students on campus interested in participating in collegiate speech. We have a great team lined up and good momentum early in the season. I’m excited to see what the year brings.”

Collegiate speech events are conducted as part of the American Forensic Association. There are 11 different events including Informative Speaking, Impromptu Speaking, Prose Interpretation, Dramatic Duo, Extemporaneous Speaking, Persuasive Speaking, Program Oral Interpretation, After Dinner Speaking, Communication Analysis, Dramatic Interpretation and Poetry Interpretation.



**Five members of the VCSU Speech Team recently competed in Brookings, S.D.**  
**From Left:** Tara Dahl, Grady Hornung, Madi Klabo, Lallie Red Horn and TJ Tegtmeyer.

Upcoming events include a nationwide online tournament, several in the region through the Valley Forensic League, and the Icebox Classic in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

# VCSU Shooting Sports Team Secures Individual Wins at the BSC Fall Championship

Valley City State University freshman Kasey Odegaard and senior Logan Heen both won individual titles on Sept. 21 as the VCSU Shooting Sports Team delivered impressive performances at the North Dakota Fall Collegiate Championship.

Odegaard secured the Men’s High Overall Score with a 173/200. Odegaard shot 88/100 in singles trap, 43/50 in doubles trap and 42/50 in handicap trap to secure the overall win.

Heen claimed victory in doubles trap, winning in a shoot-off that broke a three-way tie for first place. He was 43/50 in doubles and also posted strong numbers in the other disciplines with 88/100 in singles and 38/50 in handicap.

The North Dakota Fall Collegiate Championship was held Saturday, Sept. 21, and was hosted by Bismarck State College at the Capital City Gun Club near Bismarck, N.D. It was the first in-person tournament for the VCSU Shooting Sports Team, which just began competing as an intercollegiate club this August.



**VCSU Shooting Sports Team Members, from left:** Logan Heen, Chase Bladow, Brooke Gaudry, Grant Larson, Kasey Odegaard, Nick Deschamp, Ty Awender, Coach Nick Galt





## VCSU Named the Top Public Regional College in North Dakota

Valley City State University (VCSU) has been ranked the top public regional college in North Dakota for the fourth consecutive year by U.S. News and World Report.

Widely considered the premiere college rankings, the 2025 U.S. News Best College Report was released Tuesday morning. This report ranks colleges annually in areas such as retention, graduation rates, outcomes, peer reviews, measures of student excellence, and the educational expenditure per student. VCSU has now been ranked as one of the top Best Colleges by U.S. News for 27 consecutive years.

“Valley City State University strives to offer high-quality experiences for all students who choose to become a Viking,” said VCSU President Alan LaFave. “This respected ranking from U.S. News confirms what we see every day: students who choose to call VCSU home have a great experience and leave with a trusted degree at an affordable price.”

Along with being the top public regional college in North Dakota, U.S. News ranked VCSU the No. 2 public regional college in the Midwest, which includes North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas.

U.S. News has also named VCSU a Best Value School and a Top Performer on Social Mobility. The Best Value School ranking considers a school’s academic quality and the cost of attendance.

“We are proud to be the top public regional college in North Dakota and a Best Value School,” Vice President for Academic Affairs Larry Brooks said. “We have excellent faculty and staff dedicated to helping students succeed, and our efforts to keep quality education affordable continues to be recognized with rankings such as these from U.S. News.”

Now in its 40th year, the rankings evaluate nearly 1,500 national colleges and universities using up to 17 measures of academic quality and place an emphasis on social mobility and outcomes for graduating college students. To learn more about the U.S. News Best Colleges, visit <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges>.

# JOIN

VCSU ALUMNI & FRIENDS  
FOR GATHERINGS IN ARIZONA  
JANUARY 31 & FEBRUARY 1

All events are open to all alumni & friends of Valley City State University!

RSVP or for more information call the VCSU Foundation & Alumni office at 701-845-7203.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2025**  
**5:30 – 8:30 P.M.**

**Alumni & Friends social at the O.H.S.O. Brewery – Gilbert, AZ**

Join VCSU Alumni and friends for a social including appetizers and cash bar. There is no cost for this event.

O.H.S.O. Brewery  
335 N. Gilbert Rd. Suite 102  
Gilbert, AZ 85234

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2025**  
**11 A.M – 1 P.M.**

**Alumni & Friends Social and Luncheon at Viewpoint Golf Resort – Mesa, AZ**

Social starts at 11 a.m. with cash bar, luncheon at noon with campus updates to follow. There is no cost for this event.

Viewpoint Golf Resort  
650 North Hawes Road  
Mesa, Arizona 85207

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2025**  
**5:30 – 8:30 P.M.**

**Alumni & Friends Social at The Monastery Bar & Grill – Mesa, AZ**

Join VCSU alumni & friends for a bonfire including heavy appetizers and cash bar. There is no cost for this event.

The Monastery Bar & Grill  
4810 E McKellips Rd  
Mesa, Arizona 85215



# 3 inducted into VCSU Music Hall of Fame

Valley City State University inducted three standout alumni into the VCSU Music Hall of Fame during Homecoming weekend.

William “Bill” Wieland '86, John Monilaws '87 and Tricia (Brandt) Lebahn '98 joined the Music Hall of Fame on Sept 20, receiving the VCSU honor that recognizes their standout careers as music educators.

The VCSU Music Hall of Fame recognizes and celebrates VCSU alumni and past professors whose music careers and community service exemplify the highest achievement and professional distinction.

## William “Bill” Wieland '86

A native of Dazey, N.D., Wieland is an educator, pianist and composer who has taught for 30 years at Northern State University in Aberdeen, S.D.

Wieland earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in composite music (piano) from Valley City State College in 1986. He then earned a Master of Arts in theory and composition from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in 1988 and a Doctor of Music in composition from Northwestern University (Evanston, Ill.) in 1991.

Wieland has taught a variety of theory, composition and keyboarding classes at NSU at both the undergraduate and graduate level. He is also a prolific composer, having written and arranged more than 20 liturgical works, a symphonic poem, more than 15 piano works and a double concertino for alto sax, tuba and orchestra.

Most summers, he teaches piano at the International Music Camp on the Manitoba/North Dakota border. Currently, he serves as the piano camp coordinator.

## John Monilaws '87

John Monilaws served as a music educator at area schools for 30 years and continues to stay involved with VCSU as producer and maestro for the annual EBC Alumni Fraternity “We’re in the Christmas Mood” show.

Monilaws earned his degree from VCSU in 1987 and went on to teach at Litchville-Marion and North Central of Barnes County before joining the Lisbon Public School system in 2001. He was the music director at Lisbon for 16 years before retiring in 2017.

While in Lisbon, Monilaws taught grades 5-12 band and vocal music for grades 9-12. He organized music trips for high school students that allowed them to perform in places such as New York, Nashville and Disneyland. Under his direction, the Lisbon High School band was named the North Dakota Governor’s Band. He and his students also performed at numerous community events including Memorial Day services and North Dakota Veteran’s Home programs.



**From left:** VCSU President Alan LaFave, Tricia (Brandt) Lebahn '98, John Monilaws '87, Bill Wieland '86 and VCSU music department chair Ken Jimenez.

Monilaws is the original creator, director and Maestro for the EBC Alumni “We’re in the Christmas Mood” show, which continues to delight audiences each holiday season in the Valley City community. He is also the current director for the Valley Troubadors and was the director for the 61st EBC Bon Voyage Hit Parade.

He received the VCSU Alumni Service Award in 2005 and has been a member of the VCSU V-500 board, Past-President of the VCSU Alumni Board and Past-President of the Valley City Community Theater, Bridges Arts Council, Bonanzaville and the Cass County Historical Society.

## Tricia (Brandt) Lebahn '98

Lebahn has taught for 25 years in regional schools and is in her 17th year leading the music program for LaMoure Public Schools. Since Lebahn took over at LaMoure, the music program has seen significant growth and become a point of pride for the school and community. Under her direction, the LaMoure High School Pep Band was awarded the Organization of the Year by the LaMoure Chamber of Commerce in 2018.

A 1998 graduate of VCSU, Lebahn taught in South Dakota and Maple Valley before taking over grades 4-12 music in LaMoure.

Her LaMoure High School Choir was chosen as the North Dakota Governor’s Choir and has performed at the North Dakota Music Educators Conference. In 2017, Lebahn was named the State Music Educator of the Year by the North Dakota Music Educators Association and was awarded the National Federation of State High School Associations Outstanding Music Educator Award.

In 2016, Lebahn received the VCSU Certificate of Merit Award. Her instrumental and vocal groups perform at concerts, regional music contests, and community events such as Memorial Day Services. She has personally served as the Choir Director and organist for Our Saviors Lutheran Church in Valley City since 2001.



# Donors and Students meet at Scholarship Dinner

The VCSU Alumni Association's annual scholarship dinner was held October 7 at the Valley City Eagles with more than 125 attendees this year.

The dinner provides an opportunity for individuals and organizations who have established named scholarships to meet the students who are awarded their scholarships. This is also a time for students to say "Thank You" to their scholarship donors and learn more about why the scholarship was established. The VCSU Foundation has over 230 Endowed and Memorial Scholarships that pay honor or memorialize those folks who built the foundation of our university.

Anyone interested in establishing a scholarship with the VCSU Foundation can contact the office at 701-845-7203 for more information.



Sarah (Peyerl) Burchill, Isabelle Sundby (Peyerl and O'Connell Scholarships)  
Marianne (Peyerl) Sears, Diane Peyerl, and Peggy (O'Connell) Sola '71



Wyatt Landeis (Schilling Family Scholarship)  
and Harvey Schilling '61



Dr. Gigi Goven and Amber Kologi (Dr. Goven  
Science Scholarship)



Abigail Sundley (Linda & Lynn Holcomb Scholarship)  
and Lynn Holcomb



Kim Svenningsen-Hesch '91, Aibordin Sophonsakulrat  
(Svenningsen-Hesch Family Scholarship) and Wade Hesch.



Zachary St. Aubin (Kyle Bauer Golf Scholarship), Don '63 and Sandy Bauer, and  
Kendra Odegard (Don Bauer Athletic Scholarship)





# Campus & Community

VCSU and Valley City come together for annual Summer Vikes on Central



Summer Nights on Central has become a Thursday night staple during the summer months in Valley City. The six-year tradition of bringing fun activities and street dances to downtown Valley City continued this past summer with monthly events in June, July, August and September. Each night features live music, inflatable games, late night shopping, food and drink vendors, and numerous fun activities on Central Avenue.

For the last three years, the September event has been dubbed “Summer Vikes on Central” as VCSU and Valley City groups partner on a great event to welcome Viking students back to campus and the community.

The night begins on the VCSU campus as hundreds of students and employees gather on the campus side of the historic footbridge. VCSU president Alan LaFave and the VCSU Marching Band then lead the campus group across the bridge and downtown for the real party.

Dozens of booths from community organizations await, all welcoming VCSU students back to the community. Many of the booths feature fun giveaways (giant case of ramen,





anyone?!) or activities and games. The night also features a live street dance and food vendors, allowing students to make it a full night downtown.

“The walk across the bridge is very symbolic,” said President LaFave. “It’s the physical bridge between the university and the community, and to walk across that bridge as a group and head downtown for a celebration with the community is powerful.”

The first hour of the night is a flurry of activity as hundreds of students visit the booths and interact with the community. The VCSU Marching Band performs in the middle of Central Avenue and then the street dance starts with live music from a national touring band, which this year was Tripwire.

VCSU strength and conditioning coach William Rakowski and senior Tara Dahl – VCSU drum major who led the band downtown this summer – were two of the local “celebrities” in this year’s dunk tank, taking cold splashes into water to help raise money for a local charity.

Dahl said the night will go down as one of the top memories from her time at VCSU.

“I got out of the dunk tank soaked with no extra clothes, but I just ran around with all my friends dancing and having a great time,” she said. “We had so much fun.”

“The visual representation of our student body is important,” said LaFave. “It gives people a chance to see the impact that our students make on the community is real and significant.

And it allows our students to see some of the opportunities that exist downtown or in the business community.”

This year’s event featured close to 40 community booths and food vendors, according to Trinity

(Potts) Nelson ‘17, resource development specialist with the Valley City-Barnes County Development Corporation. Nelson has been one of the key figures on the Summer Nights on Central Committee, which has worked hard to make Summer Nights a success over the last six years.

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**“The walk across the bridge is very symbolic”**  
**– President LaFave**

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“I always stress out a bit during planning and setup, wondering if anyone is going to show up,” said Nelson. “Once the event is in full swing and you see people downtown eating, dancing and having a good time, it’s pretty rewarding.”

Summer Nights began in 2019 as a way to get people downtown in front of businesses while the community dealt with disruptive construction. Since then, the events have continued as a Valley City staple getting steady support from sponsorships, businesses and attendees – all of which help make Summer Nights a success.

“It’s one way to help build the community up,” said Nelson. “Making Valley City somewhere that people want to live and enjoy their time here.”

The participation from campus students continues to increase, with more and more returning students attending the event each year. Nelson said the creativity at the business booths continues to amaze her.

“It’s impressive how fun and interactive they can make their booths,” she said. “And to see the students come across and meet our businesses is so much fun.”

“We know that we can’t exist without the support of the community,” said LaFave. “We’re grateful that they continue to earmark one of the Summer Nights events to bring the campus and community together with Summer Vikes. Our students get to meet the community, and vice versa. That face-to-face interaction is really important.”







# VCSU Hosts Inaugural AI Conference

Valley City State University recently partnered with the Dakota Digital Academy, North Dakota University System, University of Mary, NDIT and the NDDPI to host an Artificial Intelligence Conference on the VCSU campus.

The event featured nationally recognized keynote speakers and breakout sessions focusing on "Being Human and Working in the Age of AI." Presentations explored how users can leverage the transformative power of AI while maintaining human connection across all sectors of society.

Approximately 200 professionals and students from throughout the region attended the conference on Sept. 26.

## Alumni Anecdotes

### Brittany (Lehner) Evans '14

Dr. Brittany (Lehner) Evans is currently working as a traveling physical therapist. Brittany, husband Josh Evans '12, and children Braden (5) and Easton (3) have lived in Texas, California, Washington, Massachusetts and South Dakota over the last year as Brittany works in clinics to help fill needs companies have.

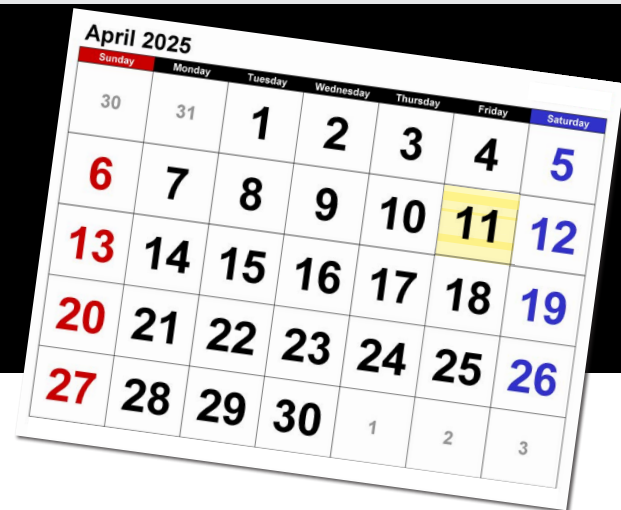


"We love exploring different regions of the country and learning about new cultures," she said. "As a family, we love to be outdoors and have spent many days over the past year hiking and enjoying warm days at the beach."

During college, the former VCSU student-athlete dominated in her sports, earning Female Senior Athlete of the Year (basketball) and NSAA Softball Player of the Year. Evans also excelled academically, earning Outstanding Health Science Student award and graduating Magna Cum Laude. She went on to earn a Doctor of Physical Therapy from St. Catherine University.

SAVE THE DATE

## 30th Annual VCSU Scholarship Auction Friday, April 11, 2025



Last year we raised over \$129,000 in scholarships at this one-night event. Help us continue growing the auction by giving serious consideration in making a donation to the auction.

### Popular items include:

- Tools
- Artwork
- Outdoor / Summer items
- Gift Certificates for food or Experience Packages
- Tickets for Concerts or Sporting Events
- Condo Stays
- Donation of Cash for Committee to purchase an item



**FOUNDATION ♦ ALUMNI**  
**VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY**

All auction donors receive recognition in our auction program. Call the VCSU Foundation Office at 701-845-7203 or contact [kim.hesch@vcsu.edu](mailto:kim.hesch@vcsu.edu) for more information.



# ALUMNI CORNER

Kim Svenningsen-Hesch, '91  
Asst. Director for University Advancement and Alumni Relations



Svenningsen-Hesch

This fall we had another successful Homecoming weekend! Once again, our office had the privilege of reconnecting with alumni and old friends during Homecoming activities. The weekend kicked off Friday night with our annual Viking Hall of Fame banquet. This year's inductees included a special group of young women and coaches that I have fond memories of watching: the 2010-

11 Women's basketball team. I remember watching them play in front of a packed crowd and beating Jamestown for the postseason championship and earning the opportunity to play in the NAIA National Tournament for the first time in the school's history. It was heartwarming to watch these ladies come together with their families as if they just graduated from VCSU. Congratulations to all the inductees on this wonderful honor.

During homecoming weekend, we were also able to honor Dr. Joe Deutsch with the Distinguished Alumni Award. We have approximately 12,650 active alumni in our database with just over 27,750 diplomas and degrees being conferred to graduates at VCSU. Only 63 individuals have received the Distinguished Alumni Award in the history of VCSU. We are extremely proud of Dr. Deutsch.

See page 15 to read more about Dr. Joe Deutsch and the seven other alumni honored during homecoming weekend. Congratulations to them all – we are proud of you and your accomplishments!

Valley City State University is proud of its alumni and the tremendous impact they have and are continuing to make across the nation. If you know of a VCSU alumni who should be recognized for their achievements, please take the time to nominate that person for one of the Alumni Association's awards. See more information below.

We capped off homecoming activities with a post-game social with a record number of folks stopping by the Eagles for good food and conversations. Our office is already in conversations on activities for next year. Make plans to return to campus to celebrate Homecoming next fall!

To all the VCSU Alumni out there, I challenge you to get involved with your alma mater. Our office will be hosting our VCSU socials around the state this spring and holding our annual events in Arizona. Take time to get to one of them near you. Reacquaint yourself with your friends and fellow alumni. When the phone-a-thon calls upon you in February, try to find a little "extra" to help keep your alma mater the best we can be.

Once a Viking. Always a Viking!

## NOMINATE OUTSTANDING ALUMNI

Valley City State University is proud of its alumni and the tremendous impact they have and are continuing to make across the nation. All nominations will be forwarded to the appropriate screening committees and will receive full consideration.

**Certificate of Merit:** This award provides the Alumni Association with a way to recognize alumni for accomplishments, service, or other noteworthy honors.

**Alumni Service Award:** This award is presented to alumni and university friends who have attained exceptional achievements in their careers and have made a significant contribution to the university through dedicated service, promotion, financial support or other efforts.

**Distinguished Alumni:** The Distinguished Alumni Award is the highest honor presented by the Alumni Association. This award recognizes Valley City State University alumni who have achieved prominence in their chosen field of endeavor. The nominee must have received national or international recognition and must have been identified as an expert in the individual's chosen field.

**Young Alumni Achievement Award:** The Young Alumni Achievement Award was established in 2012 to recognize VCSU's more recent, outstanding alumni as they embark on their chosen paths and strive for greatness. The award is presented to recognize future leaders under the age of 40 based on the following criteria.

- Those who have demonstrated high levels of achievement in one's chosen career or profession,
- Those who have demonstrated leadership ability or the potential for leadership and distinction in the long term,
- Those who have shown support for Valley City State University, and
- Those who have shown substantial commitment to the service of others.



See our website at [vcsualumni.org](http://vcsualumni.org) and click on Awards & Recognition where you will find award descriptions along with nomination forms. Send nominations to: Kim Hesch, VCSU Foundation, 701-845-7403 | E-Mail: [kim.hesch@vcsu.edu](mailto:kim.hesch@vcsu.edu)





# VCSU Alumni Association Honors Alumni

## Certificate of Merit Awards



**Certificate of Merit:** Kendra Krueger '12 (Alumni Association President), Anna Schwan M.ED. '12, Michael McNeff '04, Ryan Hanson '92 and President Alan LaFave. Not pictured: Bill Engel '95

**Certificate of Merit:** Kyle Vareberg '12

The Certificate of Merit was established by the VCSU Alumni Association to recognize alumni for service, accomplishments or other noteworthy honors.

### William (Bill) Engel '95

Bill is currently the head men's basketball coach at Eastern Wyoming College and also is serving as the Athletic Director. He received his Master of Science degree in Sports Management from Texas A&M University in 2015.

- 2x District Coach of the Year
- 1x Region Coach of the Year
- 4x Coach of the Year for the MCAC Northern Division
- 1x NJCAA Region 13 Coach of the Year
- 1x NJCAA Great Plains District Coach of the Year

### Ryan Hanson '92

Ryan is the Principal at Devils Lake High School. He earned his Master of Educational Leadership at UND in 2005.

- 2008 Special Olympics ND Coach of the Year
- 2009 CSTAND Administrator of the Year
- 2014 Devils Lake July Unsung Hero Award
- 2018 Quality of Distinction AdvancED
- 2018 Patriotic Employer of the Guard & Reserve
- 2020 Friend of Counseling
- 2023 Secondary School Principal of the Year in ND

### Michael McNeff '04

Michael has been Superintendent at Rugby Public School District since 2012. He earned his doctorate from the University of North Dakota.

- 2024 North Dakota Superintendent of the Year
- 2023 National Blue Ribbon School Award – Rugby High School
- 2020 Northwest Region Superintendent of the Year

### Anna Schwan M.ED. '12

Anna is the Dean of the Millicent Atkins School of Education at Northern State University.

- 2021 Northern State University Outstanding Early Career Award
- 2021 Northern State University Professor of the Year Thunder Award
- 2017 South Dakota Principal of the Year, Region 4
- 2017 Recipient of the E. Gordon Poling Administrator Award from the SD Counseling Association
- 2016 South Dakota Principal of the Year, Region 4

### Kyle Vareberg '12

Kyle serves as an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Northeastern State University in Oklahoma. He earned his MA in 2016 and PhD in 2021 from North Dakota State University.

- Top 10 RiverHawks Award, Northeastern State University
- 2023 Scholar of the Year - CSTAND



# Alumni Service Award

The Alumni Service Award was adopted by the VCSU Alumni Association to recognize alumni or university friends who have attained exceptional achievement in their careers and have made significant contributions to the University through dedicated service, promotion, financial support or other efforts.

## Joan (Leichtman) Heckaman '67

Joan graduated from Valley City State University in 1967 with a double major in Mathematics and Health/Physical Education. She received her Master's Degree in Special Education from Minot State University.

Joan taught at East Central Special Education Unit in New Rockford until her retirement in 2004. Following retirement, she taught at the Four Winds Tate Topa elementary and middle school and the Four Winds Alternative High School until final retirement in 2013.

Joan's legislative career began in the 2006 session when she was elected to the Senate to serve District 23. As a state senator, she excelled in building relationships, doing her homework, and understanding the needs of her district and state. Joan was an advocate in VCSU's quest to fund the addition to the Rhoades Science Center and the building of the Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts. She served two sessions as the assistant minority leader in the Senate and three sessions as Minority Leader. She ended her service to the legislature in December of 2022.

Joan has received several acknowledgements and awards during her legislative career including the VCSU Certificate of Merit Award (2018), Rural Health Champion Legislative Years of Service Award (2022) and the Governor's Legacy of Leadership Award (2022).

She has served in several community and church organizations over the years and serves on a few nonprofit board of directors across the state.

"VCSU provided me with a sense of belonging and success," Joan said. "The focus on academic excellence continues today along with the college's ability and willingness to adapt to student and business/industry needs. But foremost is VCSU's continued emphasis on developing well equipped educators."

Joan's special memory at VCSU is the solid foundation she received from the instructors because of the manageable class sizes. Mr. O'Connell, Ms. Graichen, Dr. Dafoe, and Dr. Waa helped Joan form her philosophy on education. Joan remembers her participation in Atheneum Antics and keeps in touch with some of her sorority sisters.

Joan now lives in Dickinson, N.D. with her husband, Duane. She is a proud wife, mom, grandma and great grandma!



Alumni Service Award L to R: Chet Pollert '77, Joan (Leichtman) Heckaman '67 and President Alan LaFave.

## Chet Pollert '77

Chet earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration in 1977. He has been a successful small business owner of G&R Grain and Feed in New Rockford, N.D. Chet is currently retired.

Chet was elected to the House of Representatives in 1998 continuing his service through 2022. He quickly became the voice of reason for rural North Dakota. He focused on education at all levels, agriculture, human services, rural health care, and promoting a positive business climate in our state. Chet is a good listener, does his homework and is passionate about his district, his state and his country. He served as the Majority leader from 2018-2022. His influence was key in VCSU's ability to secure funding for the Rhoades Science Center addition and the building of the Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts.

Chet was recognized with the Legislator of the Year award by the ND Township Officers Association in 2020, the Legislative Service award by the State Bar Association in 2020 & 2021 and the Rural Health Champion Legislator of the Year Service Award in 2022.

He has served in several community and church committees over the years and was a member of the North Dakota Grain Dealers Association as a board member in addition to serving as the President for two years.

"I'm honored to be an alumni/graduate from a smaller-sized university. You do not get lost in the crowd, and I also felt like I was part of the close-knit community," said Chet, remembering his time at VCSU.

His special memory was being part of the original chapter of Sigma Nu. The friendship and comradery were second to none.

Chet and his wife, Corine Jo, live in Carrington, N.D.

# Distinguished Alumni Award

The Distinguished Alumni Award Recognizes Valley City State University alumni/alumnae who have achieved prominence in their chosen field of endeavor. The nominee must have received national or international recognition and must have been identified as an expert in the individual's chosen field.

## Dr. Joe Deutsch '99

Dr. Joe Deutsch has been selected by the Valley City State University Alumni Board of Directors to become the 63rd recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Joe graduated from Valley City State University in 1999 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education. He then earned his master's and doctorate degrees from North Dakota State University.

Joe taught Physical Education for six years in Fort Yates, Bismarck, and Fargo before accepting a position in the Department of Health, Nutrition, and Exercise Sciences at North Dakota State University in 2004. Joe is currently a Professor of Physical Education and Coaching at North Dakota State University, a position he has held for the last 20 years.

Joe is a tenured full professor with 50+ peer-reviewed refereed publications and multiple book chapters and has delivered 100+ national and international presentations. His expertise in the Physical Best curriculum that teaches concepts-based fitness to children is very well respected throughout the profession. Joe has been involved in serving from the ground floor to the top of his profession. Starting as a K-12 PE teacher and coach, he got involved with NDSHAPE, serving as the treasurer. Twenty-five years later, he has served at every level of SHAPE America, from NDSHAPE to Central District SHAPE and even the SHAPE America board of directors. Joe was just elected President-Elect of SHAPE America, the highest office anyone can serve in the profession and means he will have served as President at every level of the profession. Joe further serves as the Governor of Americas for the International Association for Health, Physical Education, Dance and Recreation and on the board of directors of the National Association of Kinesiology in Higher Education. While Joe has served at the highest levels, he returns to Valley City State every fall to present to the seniors on the various levels of the profession, specifically the value of servant leadership.

Joe has served as a publicly elected member of the Fargo Park Board for 18 years. During this time, he has seen the city's footprint grow threefold. He was also instrumental in the development of public/private partnerships, which have included, most recently, the Broadway Square project in



**Distinguished Alumni Award:** Kendra Krueger '12 (Alumni Association President), Dr. Sharon McCarriar, Retired Faculty; Joe Deutsch, and President Alan LaFave.

downtown Fargo, the Island Park renovation, and the new Fargo Park District Sports Center. All of these projects have garnered much-needed recreational opportunities for the greater Fargo-Moorhead region.

Joe has also enjoyed coaching several sports throughout his career, from his sons' youth teams to the varsity level, and is a 'Lifetime Member' of the North Dakota High School Coaches Association.

"I am truly honored to be a graduate of VCSU," said Joe. "Attending a school the size of VCSU afforded me the opportunity to be heavily involved in several aspects of college life. While intercollegiate sports drew me to VCSU (wrestling), I soon grew to enjoy fraternity life (EBC) and the Student Senate. Professors and staff at VCSU didn't just know your name; they knew you well and cared about you as a person. This is something that I appreciate immensely and strive to accomplish as a professor myself every day."

Special memories of his time at VCSU include the privilege of taking Physical Education Teacher Education classes from Dr. Sharon McCarriar.

"She introduced us to our national association (SHAPE America), the national standards, and other professional development opportunities," Joe said. "She taught us the importance and value of life-long physical activity for our students, and I wouldn't be the professional I am today without her support and guidance."

Joe and his wife, Brandi, live in Fargo, N.D. They have three children, Andy, Jake, and Jackson. In their free time, they enjoy following their kids in sports and participating in many recreational opportunities. Joe's middle son, Jake, currently attends VCSU and plays football. Joe also enjoys volunteering for the Special Olympics of North Dakota.



# Homecoming 2024

VCSU 2024 Homecoming Royalty were selected in September.



Grant Larson, a senior from Leeds, N.D., and Emma Bastian, a senior from Casselton, N.D., were named 2024 Homecoming Royalty during a ceremony at the Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts.



**Members of the Homecoming Court included, from left:**  
**Back row** – Grady Hornung, Sadie Hansen, Sarah Monillaws, Dane Lebahn  
**Middle row** – Grant Larson, Sabrina Volk, Emma Bastian, Jace Trangmoe  
**Front row** – Arik Christanson, Tara Dahl, Makenzee Stone, Jaden McNeiley







**2024 Osmon Fun Run Winners, from left:**  
 Luis Garcia, Arcadia Brown held by Karly Just,  
 Mariana Quezada (homecoming chair)







# I N S I D E ATHLETICS

[vcsuvikings.com](http://vcsuvikings.com)



[vcsuvikings](https://www.facebook.com/vcsuvikings)

## Athletic Facilities Undergo Renovations

Dennis McCulloch, Athletic Director

Hopefully you've been on campus this fall and able to experience some of the new and updated facilities within Viking Athletics. I appreciate the support we've received from our president Dr. Alan LaFave, Vice President for Business Affairs Erica Buchholz and the facility services employees to be able to move these projects forward.



McCulloch

Projects that have been completed over the last two years include new press boxes and a President's Box at the football stadium; added fencing for tailgating and beer garden; new press box at softball field; painted/branded interior of the W.E. Osmon Fieldhouse, often referred to as the Bubble; remodeled concession stand into a merchandise store at the Bubble, and new locker rooms/batting cages at Charlie Brown Field (home of Viking Baseball) which was done by the Valley City Baseball Association.

Projects on the horizon include new turf and visitor stands for the football field; moving seatback bleachers and player benches/scorer's table in the Bubble; and the biggest project that changes our future will be our new indoor facility – much more to come on that!

I would tell you that the idea of improving our facilities with a focus on engagement with our alumni, fans, donors and community is always a top priority – we cannot be successful without that support. When someone shows up to one of our events, we want an environment that encourages them to come back.

Of course, having competitive teams is the number one way of creating a positive environment but there are so many other things

that can make the experience better or worse. We want to create a great gameday atmosphere by having accessible, comfortable seating and viewing for all fans. We want to create greater value in our seat back bleachers in the Bubble by making them truly the best seats in the house. This is not completed, but we are moving the idea forward.

I know our alumni, fans and community want to watch a great game, but we also want to supply an opportunity to socialize before, during and after games with tailgating, beer garden, Club 32 (rental opportunity) and the President's Box (used to host alumni, donors, business supporters/partners, and special guests of the university). Then, after the game, inviting them to enjoy the many restaurants, bars and hotels in beautiful Valley City.

We've added a new merchandise store where you can buy exclusive Under Armour VCSU Viking Gear. As of today, we have it open for athletic events in the Bubble, but a lot more open hours to come. The promotion of Viking merchandise, including apparel and accessories, allows fans to showcase their support of Viking Athletics.

I know we have a long way to go, but I wanted to share our vision and continued improvements to our athletic facilities and continued improvement to our alumni, fan and community engagement. I hope when people see our facilities they understand we take great pride in our image, and we want them leaving our events with a positive feeling and want to come back again and again.



The interior of The Bubble received a new paint job over the summer and a merchandise store was added.



New Press Boxes and a President's Box were installed this fall at VCSU's Lokken Stadium.



# 2024-25 BASKETBALL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE



DATE	OPPONENT	TIME
Dec. 14	at Bellevue University	3/5 p.m.
Dec. 15	at Dakota State University	3/5 p.m.
<b>Jan. 3</b>	<b>University of Jamestown</b>	<b>5:30/7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>Jan. 4</b>	<b>Dickinson State University</b>	<b>3/5 p.m.</b>
<b>Jan. 10</b>	<b>Mayville State University</b>	<b>5:30/7:30 p.m.</b>
Jan. 17	at Dickinson State University	5:30/7:30 p.m.
Jan. 18	at University of Jamestown	3/5 p.m.
Jan. 24	at Mayville State University	5:30/7:30 p.m.
<b>Jan. 31</b>	<b>Bellevue University</b>	<b>5:30/7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>Feb. 1</b>	<b>Dakota State University</b>	<b>3/5 p.m.</b>
<b>Feb. 7</b>	<b>University of Jamestown</b>	<b>5:30/7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>Feb. 8</b>	<b>Dickinson State University</b>	<b>3/5 p.m.</b>
Feb. 14	at Bellevue University	5:30/7:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	at Dakota State University	3/5 p.m.
Feb. 21	at Mayville State University	5:30/7:30 p.m.
Feb. 26	NSAA Quarterfinals	Campus Sites
Mar. 1 & 4	NSAA Final Four	Campus Sites

**Bold = Home contest**



## 2024 Hall of Fame Inductees

VCSU Athletics inducted five individuals and one team into the Vikings Hall of Fame during a Sept. 20 ceremony.



**2010-11 Women's Basketball Team, from left:** Assistant Coach Ryan Bomstad, Amanda (Brown) Dechant '11, Jenna (Vrchota) Nordquist '11, Mandi (Bindas) Maher '12, Caitlyn (Wojahn) Graf '11, Abby (Rittenhouse) York '11, Mandy (Johnson) Haggin '13, Jacklyn Mitchell '11, Courtney Titus '13, head coach Jill DeVries.



**Individual inductees, from left:** Cara (Miller) Gylywoychuk '02, Darin Walters '02, Erin (Maitland) Draper '03 and Amanda (Brown) Dechant '11. **Not pictured:** Brent Miller '02

# SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

## Cross Country

VCSU cross country junior Karly Just recorded Top 10 finishes in four events this fall, including third place finishes at the Blue Hawk Invite and the Jimmie Invite. Just has recorded multiple school records in the Women's 6K. Her best time this season was 22:27.8 at the Marauders Invite. She has also earned NSAA Runner of the Week honors three times this season. VCSU cross country hosted the NSAA Championships at the Valley City Town & Country Club on November 8. For the latest news and results, visit [www.vcsuvikings.com](http://www.vcsuvikings.com)

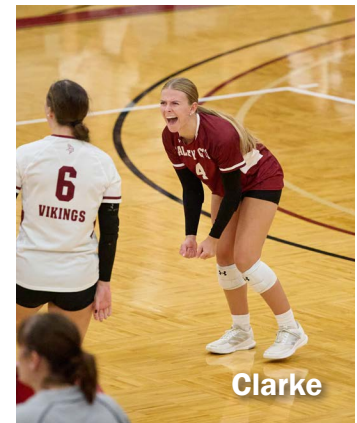


## Volleyball

The Valley City State volleyball team's first half of the season was highlighted by a big 3-2 victory over Mayville State University in front of a full crowd at the W.E. Osmon Fieldhouse.

The match was sealed with kills from Morgan Freije and Emma Lucas in the final set 17-15 in favor of the Vikings. Morgan Nelson recorded a career-best 11 blocks against the Comets, tying the VCSU single-game blocks record.

VCSU senior Sadie Hansen notched 4,000 career assists this season and is just the second Viking to reach the milestone. Delani Clarke, a junior from Bismarck, recorded her 1,000th career dig in 2024, joining just 20 other Vikings to reach the milestone.



## Sadie Hansen earns NAIA Dr. LeRoy Walker Champions of Character Award



Sadie Hansen, pictured with VCSU president Alan LaFave, was honored with the Dr. Leroy Walker NAIA Champions of Character Award prior to a match this season.

Valley City State's Sadie Hansen has been selected as the national winner of the NAIA Dr. LeRoy Walker Champions of Character Award, the national office announced this fall.

The prestigious Dr. LeRoy Walker Champions of Character Award recognizes one male athlete and one female athlete who best demonstrate the NAIA Champions of Character values of respect, integrity, responsibility, sportsmanship, and servant leadership in their daily lives.

"Her passion, determination, empathy, positivity, communication skills, and leadership skills combine to make her a person every athlete on her teams, every student in her classes, every coach in her two sports, and every teacher in her classes holds as a model for who we should all aspire to be," said Dave Bass, VCSU's Faculty Athletic Representative.

Hansen will be honored during the 2025 NAIA National Convention in San Diego, where she will receive her award at the annual NAIA Awards Banquet.



# Golf

The Valley City State fall golf season featured four tournaments for the Viking women and five tournaments for VCSU's men under first-year head coach Collin Hoss.

Sydney Carlson totaled three Top 10 finishes this fall, including a 3rd place finish at the UJ Fall Invite in a field of 42 golfers. Carlson fired a modern-day school-record 75 in the opening round and followed with an 82 in the second round to finish just four strokes off the lead.

The fall golf season was highlighted by several personal-best performances at the NSAA Fall Championships, hosted at CrossRoads Golf Club in Carrington, N.D.

The Viking men carded a season-low 664 (332-332) team score and was led by Owen Haase's 148 (75-73). After the fall conference meet, Haase sits in 11th place overall. The Viking women fired a 684 (348-336) at the tournament, led by Kathleen Vetter's personal-best 159 (82-77) and Sydney Carlson's 165 (83-82). Vetter holds onto 12th place and Carlson holds a tie for 15th place individually.

The NSAA Spring Championships will be played April 28-29, 2025, at Platteview Golf Course in Bellevue, Neb. The conference tournament will combine scores from the Fall Championships and Spring Championships to make up a 72-hole tournament.



Carlson



St. Aubin

# Football

The Valley City State football team produced its staple win of the season in early October against rival University of Jamestown. In a packed Lokken Stadium, the Vikings tallied season highs of 343 yards of offense and 38 points in their 38-7 Ag Bowl and Paint Bucket victory. The Vikings got ahead early due in part to a balanced attack from quarterback Avery Thorsgard, who passed for 136 yards and ran for 119 yards and a touchdown.

Early in the third quarter with a Viking lead of 14-7, Exavian Westbrook took a 96-yard kickoff return all the way, tying for the 7th longest kick return in school history. In the fourth quarter the Vikings continued to extend their lead capitalizing on Jimmie mistakes and finding the endzone two more times to lock up the win.

For full results from the season, visit our athletic website at [www.vcsuvikings.com](http://www.vcsuvikings.com).



Thorsgard



Westbrook



# Just Married

Send us your wedding photo so we can include it in the next issue of **The Bulletin**. Email the photo and short description to [alumni@vcsu.edu](mailto:alumni@vcsu.edu) or scan the QR code and fill out the Weddings Form.



**1 - Mikayla Mellem '19 and Nate Bagby '18** were married August 10, 2024.

**2 - Kourtney Hintz '21 and Benjamin Baasch '19** were married on August 16, 2024. Ben and Kourtney reside in Hazen, N.D., where Kourtney teaches high school math and coaches junior high volleyball. Ben works for the City of Beulah doing maintenance. Ben and Kourtney met while attending VCSU.

## Not Pictured

**Arial Quick '11** & Stacy Schaffer, June 29, 2024  
**Abby Ingstad '24** & Nick Strom, August 3, 2024  
**Autumn Riedlinger '22** & Hunter Holverson, August 24, 2024  
**Adrienne Rodlund '21 & Brady Matheny '20**, September 21, 2024  
Kylie Tucker & **Jesse Johnson '20**, September 21, 2024

## Continuing the Connection

If you know the address of any of these individuals, please contact the VCSU Foundation Office at 1-800-532-8641 ext. 37203 or email [alumni@vcsu.edu](mailto:alumni@vcsu.edu).

### 2015

Aurissa (Martens) Brinson  
Jason Elliott  
Laura Francis  
Tao Tao Le  
Ray Mering  
Rebecca Miller  
Kya Range  
Ryan Shaw  
Nicholas Sponsel

Tyler Swenson  
Alley Theroux  
Samuel Varnum  
Yi Wang

### 2016

Jessica (Trandem) Carlson  
Joanna Garcia  
Alessandra Taddeini  
Riley West

### 2017

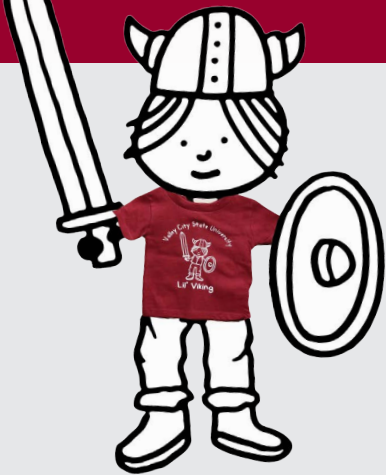
Joshua Edmonson  
DeJhon Edwards  
Geneva Espinoza  
Kelcie Hanson  
Nermina Roggow  
Mariah Smith  
Jessica Teubner  
Macey (Brudwick)  
Wanderscheid

### 2018

Justyn Galloway  
Benjamin Holen  
Stephanie Kietzman  
Benjamin Magstadt  
Rebecca (Nelson) Mayr  
Reed Olstad  
Patrick Phagan  
Jillian Stockert  
Nina (Seidl) Stott







# Lil' Vikings

Have you had an addition to your family?

Share your good news with the Viking family!



Contact Kim Hesch at [kim.hesch@vcsu.edu](mailto:kim.hesch@vcsu.edu) or scan the QR code and fill out the form to receive a free t-shirt for your new Lil' Viking. Include your baby's name and birth date. After you have your Lil' Viking shirt, send a photo to [kim.hesch@vcsu.edu](mailto:kim.hesch@vcsu.edu) so we can include it in the next issue of **The Bulletin**.



## Kendalyn Joelle Kelly

**January 3, 2024**  
**6 lbs. 3 oz., 18.75 in**  
Cole '19 and Rachel Kelly



## Sienna Wren Frieson

**December 14, 2023**  
**7 lbs. 2 oz., 22 in.**  
Samantha (Pavlenko) and Derrick Frieson



## Patrick Joseph Fries

**May 19, 2024**  
**8 lbs. 3 oz., 21 in.**  
James '10 and Kimberly (Wanner) '10 Fries  
Joins siblings: Maria, Lily, Thomas, and Chiara



## Liv Evelyn Kohler

**April 21, 2024**  
**7 lbs. 4 oz., 20 in.**  
Janna (Strege) '15 and Derek Kohler  
Siblings: Peyton (10), Paisley (10), and Lainey (3)



## Payton Margaret Conlon

**January 25th, 2024**  
**9 lbs. 2 oz., 21 in**  
Jenny (Riemann) '18 and Alex Conlon '17  
Grandparents - Jennifer (Bennett) '87 & Mark Conlon '81



## Boden Tschritter

**August 23, 2024**  
**8 lbs. 4 oz., 20 1/2 in.**  
John and Caitlin (Miller) '13 Tschritter



## Sullivan Krebs

**January 2, 2024**  
**5 lbs. 12oz., 21 in.**  
Rachel Krebs '18 and Alex Krebs





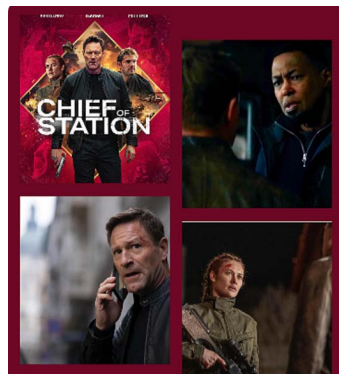


plays pickle ball. Joe and his wife also enjoy domestic and international ocean and river cruises. He still has fond memories of his years at VCSU which include successful years with Bill Osmon Golf Team and the 1974 undefeated Viking Wrestling Team coached by Don Lemnus who recently passed. Coach Lemnus had a lengthy history of conference championships and NAIA place winners.

**Genelle (Rumer) Brunner '76** and her husband, Jim, happily reside in Show Low, Ariz., in the summer months and in Goodyear, Ariz., in the winter months. They enjoy living in their two 55-and-over resort communities, playing pickleball, swimming, hiking, and traveling throughout the Southwest in their travel trailer. They've been retired since 2013. Genelle says "hi" to all of the class of 1976!



**Mike Hangaard '77** and his wife, Mary, celebrated their 45th anniversary in August. They love tending to their three grandchildren and seeing VCSC (yup... he's that old!) friends at the different events at the university. Mike continues to develop his welding skills with the scrap metal art that he dabbles in. He had two pieces at the Alumni Art Exhibit at the Art Center this past summer. Mike says hello to all his friends out in the wide world and invites them to stop by Elk River anytime!



**Josef Cannon** was a former Viking basketball player and runner for both the track &

cross country teams while at Valley City. He can currently be seen in the motion picture "Chief of Station" starring Aaron Eckhart and Olga Kurylenko on HULU, as well as the award winning performance (Best Supporting Actor) in "Paul's Promise" starring Dean Cain and Linda Purl. Cannon can

also be seen in "White Elephant" starring John Malkovich, Michael Rooker and Bruce Willis currently on Hulu. With new series coming in 2025 and more projects dropping in 2024, this former Viking was truly inspired by his time on campus there! Josef thanks all the amazing coaches, teachers and staff that helped shape the man he has become!

## CLASS OF 1990s

**Lynn Pedersen '93** has been the office manager at Stoudt Miller in Valley City for 25 years. She was born and raised in Valley City and loves her hometown. Lynn enjoys spending time with her dog, Daisy, and thrifting!



## CLASS OF 2000s



**Kristel (Rohwedder) Amundson '01** retired from the North Dakota Army National Guard on September 1, 2024. She served for 28 years, with 20 years on Active Guard Reserve (AGR) status. Kristel deployed twice to Iraq in 2003-2004 and 2008-2009. She also completed six overseas training events in Honduras, South Korea (two times), Germany, Africa, and Romania. Kristel was also mobilized for three state active duty missions in support of state flooding and COVID response. She resides in Reile's Acres, N.D. with her husband, Shane, and their son, Asher (12). Their older children, Destiny (30) and Charity (25) have flown the nest and are busy working and going to school. Throughout her military career, Kristel has kept her teaching credentials current. She will keep busy in retirement as a substitute teacher at Oak Grove Lutheran School in Fargo, N.D.



## CLASS OF 2010s



**Jessica (Fischer) Johnson '10** has worked at SMP St. Raphael for almost 15 years. Her husband, Ryan, works for Valley City US Postal Services as a mail carrier. They have 2 kids,

Oakleigh (7) and Lincoln (4). They enjoy living in Valley City.

### **Emily (Waswick) '14 & Josh Harrison '13**

are currently living in West Fargo, N.D. with their daughter, Fiona, and senior dog, Oliver. Emily is an instructional coach at West Fargo Public Schools and



Josh is an enterprise digital specialist at Microsoft in Fargo. Fiona is turning three years old in January and loves to dance, watch movies, read her books, and play "Mermaids". Recently, Josh and Emily visited Valley City to take a trip down memory lane and walked through the campus, touring all their favorite locations. Josh worked at the IT department during his years at VCSU and graduated with a B.S. in Mathematics. Emily worked in the Communication Arts and Social Sciences Department and graduated with a B.S. in Elementary Education. Josh and Emily met at VCSU in 2010 and married in 2014. Emily received her M.S. in Educational Leadership in 2019 and plans to pursue a Doctorate's Degree in the future. Fiona Kit Harrison was born on January 7th, 2022, and keeps them both busy with toddler wrangling. Emily is actively skating for the Fargo Moorhead Derby Girls, which is a non-profit organization that plays flat-track roller derby. Josh spends time with friends playing various online and role-playing tabletop games. They are both very grateful for the education and experiences at VCSU, most notably the professors that emphasized building relationships with students.

**Jacob Pommerer '18** completed his Masters in Sports Performance and Leadership from Northern State and is now living in Bottineau, N.D. He is entering his third year as the Sports Information Director and second year as an Academic Advisor at Dakota College at Bottineau. When Jake is not working a Lumberjack sporting event you will find him across the street working Bottineau High School sporting events.



### **Lexie (Jacobson) Thares '18**

currently resides in Aberdeen, S.D. She is in her sixth year of teaching and currently teaches second grade at Northwestern Area School District in Mellette, S.D. Lexie and her husband, Brayden, have 1 son named Chase who will be 2 in January and they are also expecting another baby in January!

**Ryan Sand '19** works at Leeds public school as the agriculture teacher and FFA advisor. His wife, Becca, has just began a new full time RN position from home while continuing to help pick up shifts at the kidney dialysis unit in Devils Lake. They have 3 children; Logan (6), Brailee (4), Bauer (18 months).



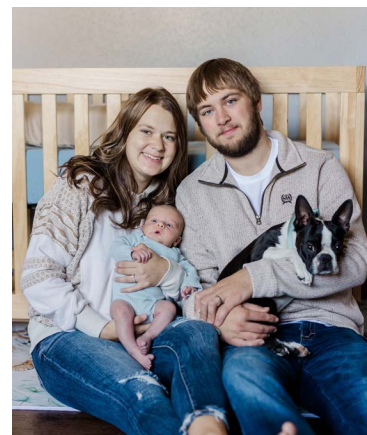
## CLASS OF 2020s



**Guy Ross '20** has been working as a P.E. teacher at Fox Hills Elementary in Watford City, N.D., where he lives with his wife, Hannah and their son, Buck. This year, Guy was promoted to Staff Sergeant in the NDNG and accepted an assistant cross-country coaching position at the WCHS. He is also continuing his master's degree in education through VCSU.

### **Shelby (Faul) Felchle '21**

currently teaches 1st grade at McClusky-Goodrich Elementary School and is loving it! Shelby and her husband, Cole, were married in October of 2023 and they welcomed their baby boy in August. Along with a new baby, they have an energetic puppy, Bella, that loves tractor rides and chasing flies.







**Brian Morales '22** got his teaching certification in Arizona after obtaining his Music/Technology Education degree. He is on year 3 as Director of Bands and Orchestras at Trevor Browne High School and starting his 1st year as Performing Arts Department Head. Brian was hired to rebuild the band program. When he started, their marching band had 7 students; they now have 59 members and went to their first competition of the season this past October.



**Jessica Keith '22** lives in Casper, Wyoming and was so thankful to have an online option for her education! She is a 5th grade teacher serving on multiple state standards committees this year. One of her teaching partners also graduated from VCSU! As a busy mom of five and a volleyball coach, this program offered her the flexibility she needed. Jess is also a semester away from her Masters through VCSU.

**Robert Young M.Ed '22** got his Masters' in Teaching and Technology with an emphasis in History at VCSU. He was employed by Pingree-Buchanan High School for 12 years and served as the 7-12 socials studies teacher, Dean of Students, athletic director, senior class advisor, assistant football coach and head boys basketball coach. This fall he started a job in Park River as the high school social studies teacher and head boys basketball coach. This is his 13th year in education.



**Brittany Barnhardt '22 and Jared Mendoza '22** met while going to school at VCSU and are now engaged! They went back to Valley City to take their engagement photos. They live in Bismarck, N.D. where Brittany is a child protection worker and Jared is a store manager. Go Vikings!

**Kade Queen '24** lives in Valley City and Lisbon and teaches P.E. at North Sargent in Gwinner, N.D. He is enjoying his job at North Sargent and is happy that he can have a job in his career.



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# In Remembrance

**Emily (Braxmeyer) Joy '45**, Los Angeles, Calif.

**Lois (Rohrer) Ljungren '46**, Sun City, Ariz.

**Dorothy Ann Olson '49**, Fargo, N.D.

**Jerome Watson**, Southampton, N.J.

**Arthur Leadbetter '51**, Midland, Mich.

**Harriet (Weber) Dimmer '53**, Valley City

**Constance (Borlaug) Cleveland '55**, Rapid City, S.D.

**Leland Reynolds '56**, Great Falls, Mont.

**Bette (Stanton) Onsager '56**, Bozeman, Mont.

**Florine (Odegaard) Winter '56**, Denton, Mont.

**Donald Johnson '57**, Edmond, Okla.

**Dennis Rorvig '57**, McVille, N.D.

**Richard Eberly '58**, Sun City, Ariz.

**Audrey (Kemmer) Solhjem '59**, Leonard, N.D.

**Eunice (Harju) Korpi '61**, Mountain Iron, Minn.

**Larry Sheldon '62**, Chandler, Ariz.

**Richard Muldoon '64**, Spearfish, S.D.

**John Fuller '65**, West Fargo, N.D.

**Grover Peterson '65**, Billings, Mont.

**Edward Stahl '65**, Tempe, Ariz.

**Duane Stahl '66**, Valley City

**Larry Houser '68**, Park River, N.D.

**Linda Zimmerman '69**, Fargo, N.D.

**Ruby (Lucht) McCann '70**, Fargo, N.D.

**Lorraine (Benson) Fornes '72**, Kathryn, N.D.

**Doris (Kahler) Sanden '72**, Valley City

**Robert W. Young '76**, Valley City

**Tamara (Hajek) Ness '90**, Ada, Minn.

**Cara Kamstra '91**, Valley City

**Douglas Holmstrom '93**, Fargo, N.D.

## Former Faculty & Staff

**Doug Hamilton**, Valley City

**Don Lemnus '58**, Lakewood, Colo.

**Luther Skogen '68**, Alexandria, Minn.

## Melvin "Luther" Skogen



Melvin "Luther" Skogen, 79, of Alexandria, Minn., passed away peacefully on September 26, 2024. He was surrounded by his family as he passed on to his eternal home.

Melvin Luther Skogen was born September 15, 1945, in Valley City, N.D., to Melvin and Ardell (Lassey) Skogen. He grew up the oldest of three children

on a farm west of Valley City. Luther, as everyone called him, graduated from Valley City College High in 1963. He obtained his bachelor's degree in education from Valley City State Teacher's College in 1968. Luther served in the North Dakota National Guard. Luther taught Geography and Physical Education in Fingal, N.D. He also served as the head boys' basketball coach in which he coached several winning teams. Luther went on to work at Valley City State University as the V-500 and Alumni Director. Luther was also an avid farmer. He farmed for several years with his brother.

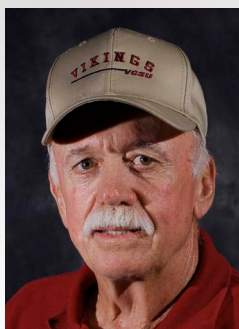
On September 18, 1965, Luther was united in marriage to Linda Sowden. Luther and Linda met in kindergarten and spent almost 56 years together as a happily married couple. They raised their two children in Valley City, ND. In 2019, they moved to Alexandria, Minn., to be close to their daughter and her family. They wintered in Mesa, Arizona. Luther enjoyed hunting and fishing. He was an avid fan of the MN Twins and MN Vikings.

Luther is survived by his daughter, Sara (Jeremy) Anderson, Alexandria, Minn.; and two grandchildren, Lauren and Madeline Anderson, Alexandria, Minn. Also surviving is a daughter-in-law, Heather Skogen, Grand Forks, N.D.; a sister and brother-in-law Carol and Jerry Meyers, Erie, N.D.; and a brother and sister-in-law, Allan and Janelle Skogen, Bozeman, Mont. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Luther was preceded in death by his wife, Linda; his son, Matthew Skogen; his parents Melvin and Ardell Skogen; and his nephew, Chad Meyers. He will be greeted by all his family as enters his eternal home.



## Douglas Hamilton



Douglas Hamilton, 81, Valley City, North Dakota, passed away October 16, 2024 at his home.

Douglas Hugh Hamilton was born March 15, 1943, in Topeka, Kansas, the son of Dr. Richard & Bette (Crawford) Hamilton.

Doug lived life to the fullest in everything he did. He had a ready smile and was a great conversationalist. His adventures

took him from Kansas to the West Coast and finally to North Dakota where he has resided for the past 30 some years. During his time in North Dakota, he worked for The Open Door Center and Valley City State University in Facilities Services. He retired from VCSU in 2014.

Doug married Videlle Olson on February 16, 1995. Their blended family included 6 children.

Doug had a passion for farm life. He raised livestock for several years including cattle, sheep, chickens and even a donkey or two. He was an avid deer hunter always saving the best shot for the last weekend of the season. Summers would find him on the golf course and fall at VCSU football games.

He was a member of Our Savior's Lutheran Church where he was a committee member, kitchen helper and Sunday School teacher as well as a chaperone on several youth trips to the Twin cities.

Doug is survived by his wife, Videlle; mother, Lorene; brothers Brad (Beth) and Scott (Mary); children, Todd, Douglas (Binky), Amy (Rudy) Spajic, Kristal, Michaela and 7 grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents Richard and Bette, infant brother and daughter Suzanne.

## Don Lemnus



Don Lemnus, age 88, died Friday, September 27 at The Village at Belmar in Lakewood, Colorado, surrounded by his loving family.

Donald Eugene Lemnus was born March 11, 1936, in Sheldon, N.D., the son of Arthur and Mildred (Pederson) Lemnus. He grew up in the Sheldon area, later moving and graduating from

Enderlin High School in 1954. He continued his education at Valley City Teachers College, graduating in 1958.

Don accepted his first teaching and coaching position at Napoleon High School. He married Mary Jane Regner in 1961 after which they moved to Fargo where Don completed his master's degree from North Dakota State University in 1962 and was then hired at Valley City State as a professor of Physical Education and also coached wrestling, football and baseball.

In addition to his coaching and teaching positions, Don was an active referee for many high school sports and was very proud of his referee accomplishments. In 1984, Don and Jane moved to Dickinson, ND accepting the Chair of Physical Education at Dickinson State in addition to coaching cross country and later served as the Athletic Director. Don retired in 1997 and moved back to Valley City spending summers at the cabin on Lake Ashtabula and winters in Mesa, AZ.

Don was fondly known by many as "Coach". His passion for sports and his athletes was a special gift. His enthusiasm as a coach and dad cheering on his teams and later his children and grandchildren is a trait that will be forever remembered by many. Don had a deep love for his friends and family. Spending winters in Arizona, he was able to enjoy his retirement to the fullest. He was an avid golfer and spent many hours on the golf course with his friends. He enjoyed driving his golf cart through the retirement park in Arizona and waving at anyone who passed. He considered everyone his friend. While Don persevered through many health issues, he had a will to live that was remarkable. Bring a dog near grandpa and that dog would surely be his new best friend. His kind soul was felt by many. Children brought him such joy and we are blessed he was able to spend his last months enjoying his grandkids and great grandkids.

He is survived by: wife Mary Jane Lemnus, his children, Patty Gleason, Deb Horner, Susie (John) Morgan and Bob (Roberta) Lemnus; 14 grandchildren: Annie (Alec) Szuch, Amanda (Wes) Buntin, Ashley Smith, Ben (Taylor) Horner, Nick (Ashley) Horner, Steven (Abbi) Horner, Mike (Emilee) Morgan, Sarah Morgan, Janelle Morgan, Mark Morgan, Rylan Morgan, Jackson (Lacie) Lemnus, Abby Lemnus and Natalie Lemnus, and 8 great grandchildren: Scarlett Horner, Alexis and Rowan Horner, Parker and Carter Smith, Sophie, Mason and Bailey Morgan.

He was preceded in death by his parents, sisters Ethel (Kenny) Wallner and Delores (Jack) Card, brother Merle Lemnus (Mary) and son-in-law Pat Horner.





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