

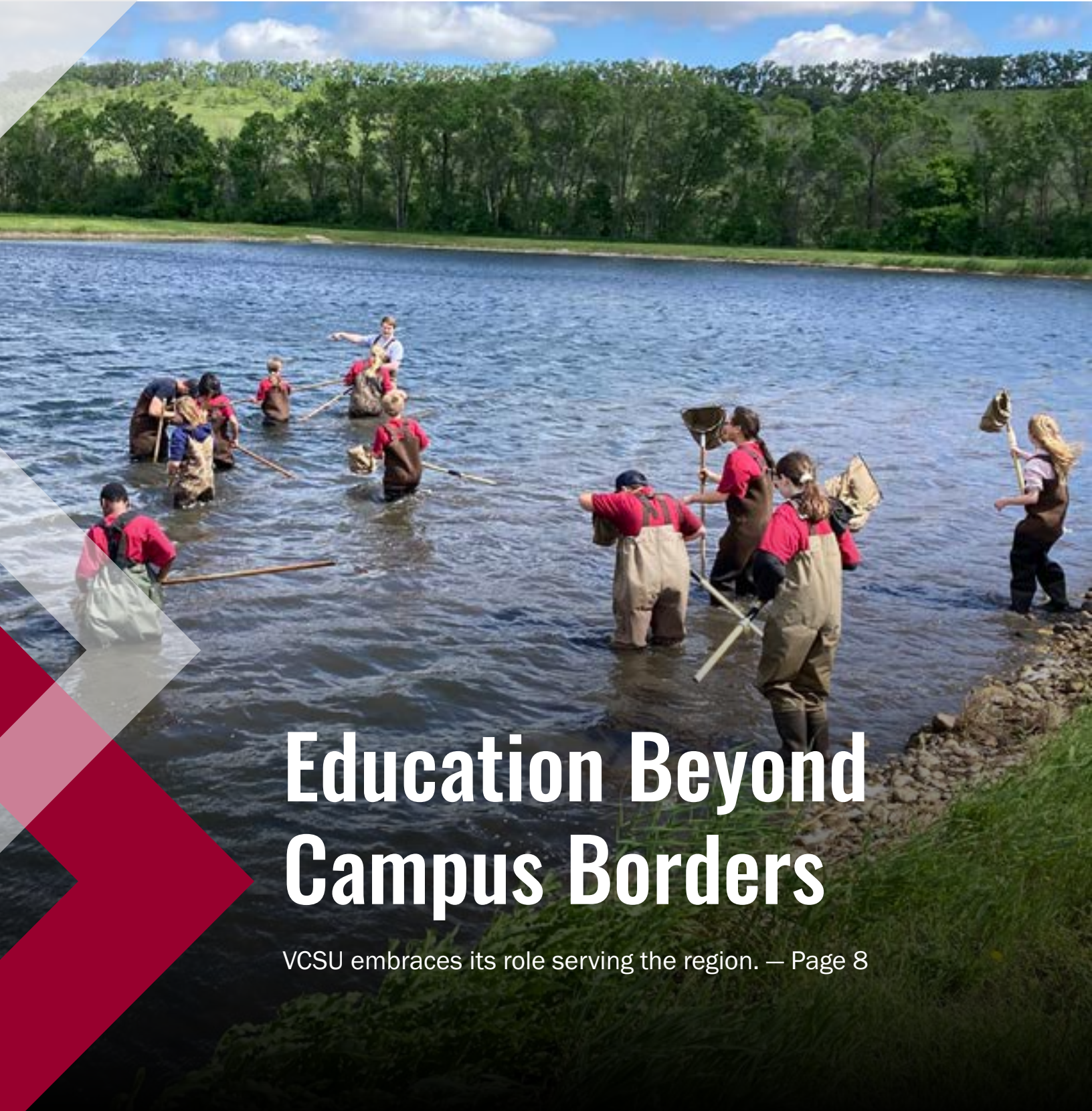


VALLEY CITY
STATE UNIVERSITY

THE BULLETIN

A Publication for Alumni & Friends of Valley City State University

ISSUE 071672 | APRIL 2026



Education Beyond Campus Borders

VCSU embraces its role serving the region. — Page 8

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Learn more at vcsualumni.org

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Student-Focused and Learning-Centered Begins with People

Allen Burgad, Interim President, Valley City State University

During my short time serving as Interim President at Valley City State University, I have had the opportunity to spend time and learn from many members of our campus community. Through those conversations, I quickly connected with the importance of our core values, which include:



Burgad

- Student-Focused: Placing students at the center of all decisions
- Innovative: Trying new things to create the future
- Learning-Centered: Developing a culture of lifelong learning
- Collaborative: Working together to advance the university's mission
- Engaged: Actively participating in the work of the university

I began reflecting more deeply on our first value, student-focused, and how we elevate this value through our daily actions as an institution. It quickly became clear during my many meetings and conversations with faculty and staff that student focus is not simply a statement at VCSU. It is a deeply embedded value that guides the work we do every day.

Our society is constantly changing. Many would argue that these changes are driven by technology and innovation. Yet throughout these changes, one constant remains: the importance of people and relationships in helping organizations reach their mission and goals.

Recently, I reflected on a message from Simon Sinek's book "Leaders Eat Last." Sinek emphasizes that successful organizations do more than focus on results. They create working and learning environments where people feel valued, trusted, and supported. When organizations place people at the center, collaboration grows, innovation flourishes, and individuals invest more deeply in the mission.

Our commitment to being student-focused and learning-centered begins with people. It begins with the faculty and staff who serve students each day, the alumni who

carry forward the values of this institution, and the legacy of individuals who have shaped the culture of Valley City State University. Our faculty mentor students not only academically but also guide them as they grow socially. Our staff provides support that helps students navigate challenges and pursue opportunities. These relationships matter. They are often the difference between a student simply attending college and truly belonging to a community.

The strength of VCSU has always been rooted in these relationships. For more than a century, generations of faculty and staff have invested in students, helping build the culture that defines the university today. Many of those individuals are no longer on campus, yet their influence continues to shape our students' experiences and the work we do each day.

Conversations with VCSU alumni consistently highlight the mentors who encouraged them and helped shape the paths they pursued after leaving campus. What is especially meaningful is that many of our alumni now return to that same role. They serve as mentors, partners, and supporters for today's students, helping create the same sense of connection and belonging they once experienced. In doing so, they carry forward the tradition of people investing in people that has defined VCSU for generations.

The future of VCSU will continue to be built by the people who believe in its mission, including our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners. By continuing to invest in one another, we ensure that Valley City State University remains a place where students learn, grow, and prepare to make a difference in the world.

At its heart, being student-focused and learning-centered begins with people, and that has long been VCSU's strength. When I reflect on my own time as a student and the individuals who helped shape my journey, I am reminded of something simple but powerful. **It was not always what they said, but that they took the time to say it.**

Construction work continues on the Tharaldson Family Athletic Center – a major expansion of VCSU's athletic facility. The new building will include a new multipurpose indoor turf practice space, along with strength and conditioning areas and locker rooms. Once the frost comes out of the ground this spring, major construction will ramp up with the walls being enclosed and turf installation.



Make Your Future Gift Count Today

Cory Anderson '89 | Executive Director for University Advancement and the VCSU Foundation

As alumni and friends of Valley City State University, many of you have spent a lifetime building something meaningful — a career, a family, a set of values that matter. Increasingly, we are having conversations with donors who want that impact to extend beyond their lifetime and continue shaping students for generations to come.



Anderson

There is an important opportunity I want to make sure you are aware of.

If you have considered including VCSU in your estate plans — whether through a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, farmland, retirement assets, or other property — you do not have to wait until your passing for that commitment to make a difference. If your estate gift is structured as irrevocable, it may qualify for submission to North Dakota's Challenge Grant program now, allowing VCSU to receive matching funds during your lifetime.

In practical terms, that means your future gift can begin working today.

Those matching funds can be directed according to your wishes — toward an endowed scholarship in your name or in honor of someone important to you, toward the VCSU Foundation Academic Endowment, or another priority that reflects your values. You retain the satisfaction of knowing your legacy is already strengthening the university, while students benefit from additional scholarship support right away. It is a thoughtful and strategic way to multiply your impact.

A second matter I would encourage you to consider relates to existing endowed scholarships. Many alumni have generously established endowments over the years. The question we occasionally ask — and one that sometimes goes unaddressed — is this: who will oversee and maintain that scholarship after your lifetime?

If you already have an endowed scholarship, or are considering one, it is important to ensure your estate documents clearly outline how it should continue. The VCSU Foundation can serve as the long-term steward of your scholarship, administering it exactly according to your wishes. We can also help you include simple language in your will or trust that provides clarity, protection, and continuity.

This does not need to be complicated. In fact, it is often a straightforward conversation.

If you would like to explore establishing an irrevocable estate commitment eligible for the Challenge Grant match, or if you would like to review the language connected to your current endowment, I encourage you to reach out to the VCSU Foundation Office. We are here to visit with you, work alongside your advisors, and ensure your intentions are clearly documented and honored.

Legacy giving is not about wealth — it is about stewardship. It is about making sure what you care about continues long after we are gone.

If VCSU has played a meaningful role in your life, there is a way to make that impact permanent — and even multiplied — starting today.

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VCSU undergraduate student

VCSU Begins Search for Next President

Valley City State University is currently searching for its next university president.

Dr. Alan LaFave, president since 2018, resigned in December to take the same position at his alma mater, Northern State University in Aberdeen, S.D.

A search committee is in the process of reviewing applications and interviewing applicants for the position. Top candidates are expected to visit campus in late April, and the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education currently plans to select the next president at its May meeting.

State Board of Higher Education Vice Chair D.J. Campbell and VCSU Vice President for Business Affairs Erica Buchholz are serving as co-chairs of the search process.

“The ideal leader will help us continue the momentum our campus has built over the last 15 years, which have included record enrollment, major facility upgrades and recognized academic excellence,” said Buchholz. “A strong community presence, partnership-building mindset, and political savvy are essential to advocating for VCSU and strengthening its regional impact.”

VCSU is currently under the leadership of Interim President Dr. Allen Burgad '89. Burgad was appointed interim by the State Board of Higher Education on Dec. 4. He has been VCSU's Dean of the School of Education since June 2021 and has more than 35 years of experience in education. Previously, he served as an administrator in multiple North Dakota schools. He was the assistant superintendent for eight years at West Fargo, one of the largest school districts in the state of North Dakota.

“I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to President LaFave for his years of leadership and commitment to the students, faculty, staff, and community at Valley City State University,” said Burgad. “I believe I speak for all of us in expressing our sincere appreciation for President LaFave and the vision, mentorship, and friendships he provided during his tenure as president.”



The 1973 Spitz projector is shown darkened in the foreground while a video from the new Warped Media projector plays on the VCSU planetarium dome.

VCSU Planetarium Receives Major Upgrade

The Valley City State University Planetarium received a major upgrade in November, adding a new full-dome projection system that greatly improves the quality of future presentations.

The Planetarium recently installed a Warped Media system, which includes a 1K laser projector and the ability to warp an image or video to fit the entire planetarium dome. The new system debuted to the public with a free show on Saturday, Dec. 20.

“This is the first truly major upgrade in 20 years for our planetarium,” said Wes Anderson, VCSU planetarium director. “The new projection system greatly improves the offerings we can provide to visitors, offering a fun, immersive experience. It works in tandem to our original Spitz machine and comes with 22 professionally created presentations and shows.”

“Sitting under the dome watching these videos can feel like stepping into a different world,” said Teather

Sundstrom, professor in the science department. “This Warped Media system is truly remarkable.”

Along with the 22 new shows, VCSU can also buy or rent hundreds of professionally produced shows that are featured in planetariums across the world. Anderson said the planetarium will also continue to use its 1973 Spitz machine in conjunction with the new system.

The VCSU Planetarium offers free public shows once per month. School classes and youth groups

can also schedule free showings by emailing Teather Sundstrom, teather.sundstrom@vcsu.edu. Private parties can schedule planetarium shows for a small fee.

The VCSU Planetarium is located in the Rhoades Science Center, 3rd Floor #309. Elevator access is available at the west entrance to Rhoades Science Center.

“Sitting under the dome watching these videos can feel like stepping into a different world.”

– Teather Sundstrom



Spring Enrollment Reaches Record High

Valley City State University set another enrollment record during the 2026 spring semester, posting a total headcount of 1,868 students—the highest ever in school history.

This year's spring enrollment reflects an increase of 14 students over last spring and marks the third consecutive spring semester of record-breaking enrollment. VCSU welcomed 72 new undergraduate degree-seeking students at semester break, including 20 first-time freshmen and 52 transfer students—the most mid-year newcomers since 2017. The university also achieved a 91% fall-to-spring retention rate among undergraduate degree-seeking students.

North Dakota students continue to make up the majority of VCSU's population, with 75% of students hailing from within the state and 87% representing the four-state region of North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Montana.

Areas of Notable Growth

Several programs and partnerships contributed to this spring's enrollment gains:

- Graduate programs increased by 10%, reaching a record spring enrollment of 161 students and 71 FTE (full-time equivalent). Twenty new students started in the graduate program this semester.
- The James River Correctional Center program expanded by 225% to 26 total students in only its second year.
- A new articulation agreement with Bismarck State College added 13 students in its first semester.
- A partnership with College of DuPage (Illinois) continued to grow with a 60% increase in enrollment.
- Dual-credit enrollment rose by 6% as more high school students pursued early college coursework.

"It's encouraging to see growth across several areas, including new and expanded partnerships in the region," said Dr. Allen Burgad, Interim VCSU President. "VCSU continues to offer highly respected courses and degrees at a great value, and we're working to bring those offerings to even more students. Our extremely affordable tuition rates make VCSU a strong fit for many different types of learners."

VCSU's spring headcount of 1,868 students includes both full-time and part-time learners. While the university's FTE enrollment declined 2.9% from last spring, it remains the second-highest spring FTE in school history.

Alumni Anecdotes



Darrin Roach '88

Darrin Roach is in his 37th year as an educator, serving both as a classroom teacher and an administrator since graduating from Valley City State with a degree in history education. He has taught social studies, science, physical education, psychology, health, careers, and English, and has also worked as secondary principal, superintendent and activities director.

Currently, Darrin is teaching at Ben Franklin Middle School in Fargo, N.D.

"I am extremely proud of my 37 years as an educator and administrator where I have had the privilege to serve 15 different schools in 12 different cities and towns in 3 states...by choice," said Darrin. "I have made numerous friends and impacted 1,000's of K-12 students."

Darrin played on the Viking Tennis team throughout his college career from 1984-88 and was a part of three NDCAC championships. He has continued to stay active, participating in half and full marathons along with playing softball for 35 years. Darrin says his time at VCSU truly developed who he is today.

"VCSU was a very special place in the '80's. The students were terrific and caring, the staff were genuine and nurturing, and the activities/sports teams that I was a part of taught me a tremendous amount about teamwork, maturity, and integrity. That shy, lost, nerdy 18-year old who came to VCSC in '83 left VCSU after 5 years as a confident, mature education professional ready to conquer the world."

Darrin's greatest personal accomplishment is his family. He is married to wife Andrea (33 years) and they have six children, four daughters and two sons (both deceased), and three grandchildren.

2025 Winter Commencement

Valley City State University honored more than 120 graduates at its 2025 Winter Commencement Exercises, held December 19 in Vangstad Auditorium. Fifteen students were recognized for completion of master's degrees and 106 students for undergraduate degrees.

Macy Fridgen, a graduate from Bismarck, N.D., delivered the undergraduate address. Fridgen transferred to VCSU as a sophomore in 2023 and was an active leader of the VCSU volleyball team while earning a degree in business administration. She graduated with highest honors.

Dr. Nicholas Galt, assistant professor in the Department of Science, delivered the faculty reflection.





Education Beyond VCSU's Borders

A university can be countless things to its people: a place of study, a launchpad for careers, a second home, or maybe a place to meet one's future spouse. But the most impactful institutions become something more—a trusted resource and a vital part of the community. Valley City State University has embraced that identity wholeheartedly, serving not only its students but also families, educators, and learners of all ages across North Dakota.

"As a university funded largely by state dollars, we work hard to serve more than just our students," said Allen Burgad, interim president of VCSU. "The financial impact VCSU has on the region is well known, but the impact we have with our outreach programs and campus resources can truly make a difference in North Dakota."

From environmental science to music, STEM discovery, and now artificial intelligence, VCSU's numerous programs open doors for thousands of non-VCSU students each year. What follows is a look inside just some of VCSU's initiatives serving the region.

Prairie Waters: Curiosity Meets Conservation

Just a few miles from campus, the Prairie Waters Education and Research Center has become a cornerstone of hands on environmental learning. Located at the Valley City National Fish Hatchery, the center welcomes K-12 students and teachers for immersive experiences in water science and ecology.

Field trips to Prairie Waters are anything but passive. Students wade into streams to collect macroinvertebrates, test water chemistry, explore geocaching, and examine organisms under microscopes. These activities bring science to life in ways that traditional classrooms can't always replicate.

"At Prairie Waters, we get to cover topics that aren't typically covered in the classroom and do it in a hands-on way," said director Ellen Fehr, who took over the program this year following the retirement of longtime director Andre DeLorme. "Students





seem to get really engaged when they are physically involved in their learning or get to learn in an outdoors environment.”

For Valley City junior high science teacher Joelle Manlove, the program has been transformative. She was the first educational specialist employed by Prairie Waters with Dr. DeLorme, and now as a teacher at Valley City Junior High School she has been there to see the program grow and expand over the years. Valley City 7th grade students have participated in Prairie Waters field trips every year since the center opened in 2011.

“Our field trips allow us to get kids outside and experiencing nature,” she said. “They learn valuable lessons about water quality and water conservation which gives them more of an appreciation and understanding of their impacts on the environment.”

One of Prairie Waters’ flagship programs is River Watch, which equips high school students and teachers to monitor water quality in their local rivers. Twice a year, participating schools gather to share data and discuss environmental trends.

Manlove’s dual credit biology students monitored the Sheyenne River through River Watch—an especially meaningful project given the river’s importance to the community’s drinking water.

Her verdict on Prairie Waters is unequivocal: “I love taking my students to Prairie Waters each year. They have

so much fun and learn so much. It is a great opportunity for environmental education in our own community.”

Infusing The Region With Music

The arts have long been a bridge between VCSU and the surrounding region. Each year, the Music Department hosts numerous events, including North Dakota High School Activities Association competitions which invite young musicians to perform on campus. VCSU Music brought its student ensembles on tour last spring, playing several free concerts in both North Dakota and South Dakota, and the campus’s Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts opens its doors to the public for various concerts and community events.

One of those events is the Ployhar Honor Band, named after VCSU alumnus and renowned composer James D. Ployhar. This event brings about 90-100 students in grades 8–12 to campus for two days of rehearsals and a culminating performance.

For many participants, the Ployhar experience becomes a turning point in their future plans. VCSU music education major Jaydin Rombs first visited campus as a Ployhar participant. “Within three hours of our rehearsal, I felt like this could be the college I go to,” Rombs said. And after her second year attending Ployhar, Rombs was “100% committed to VCSU. I didn’t even bother touring any other universities.”

Continued on page 10

K-12 students participate in various VCSU outreach programs.



Jerold Heide, associate professor of music and current organizer of the Ployhar Honor Band, said over the past decade, more than 1,500 students have attended the two-day honor band. Former participants now make up 40% of VCSU's Concert and Athletic Band rosters.

"Hosting events such as the Ployhar Honor Band allow us to showcase the opportunities available to prospective students in our state-of-the-art facilities," said Heide. "The quality relationships we build through the event's audition and rehearsal processes allow our band program to continue to serve the university and greater region with high-quality, engaging performances."

Now in its 22nd year, the Ployhar Honor Band has become a signature event on campus for regional high school musicians.

INSTEM: Highlighting Pathways for STEM Careers

Another standout initiative is INSTEM, a program designed to increase awareness of STEM careers among Native American students. Organized by Dr. Jamie Wirth, director for VCSU's Great Plains STEM Education Center, the summer INSTEM program brings students to campus for hands-on activities, faculty led projects, and a taste of college life.

"I love going to INSTEM every year. There's so much to look forward to."

What began as a small 12-student cohort in 2018 has grown to more than 90 participants in 2025. Many students return year after year, building confidence and community along the way.

"It gave me an opportunity to learn about college and campus life, and it really connected me with friends who share similar interests," said Jayna Lockwood, a former New Town student who attended every session from 2018 until her high school graduation in 2024. Lockwood is now attending Nueata Hidatsa Sahnish College and credits her

INSTEM experiences for introducing her to college life and expanding her STEM interests.

Dr. Wirth sees this pattern often. "Students gain significant confidence and self-efficacy, not only in STEM but also in navigating a college campus," he explained. "Repeated participation helps students move from uncertainty to clearer ideas about future STEM interests and pathways."

A Universe of Learning: The VCSU Planetarium

For decades, VCSU's Planetarium has been a favorite destination for school groups as the only permanent planetarium in North Dakota. Recent upgrades—including a full dome Warped Media projection system—have transformed it into an immersive, cinematic learning environment.

"Sitting under the dome watching these videos can feel like stepping into a different world," said Teather Sundstrom, professor in the science department who regularly presents shows at the planetarium.





With an expanded library of shows, the planetarium welcomes groups ranging from pre-K classes to community organizations, offering experiences that spark curiosity about astronomy and space science. Along with free showings for schools and youth groups, the campus also presents free public shows once per month and is ADA accessible, allowing access for all.

Many groups choose to pair their planetarium visit with a tour of VCSU's Medicine Wheel Park, where they learn about the park's solar calendar and Native American history. Created and maintained by Dr. Joe Stickler and volunteers, Medicine Wheel Park has become a popular tourist stop in Valley City.

Building Skills and Confidence Through Viking Athletics

VCSU's athletic camps provide another avenue for outreach, giving young athletes early exposure to campus life and collegiate sports. These camps help students build skills, confidence, and connections—often planting the seeds for future athletic careers.

Many of VCSU's athletic programs offer introductory camps for elementary students, and camps increase in intensity as the students get older. One prime example is the VCSU Football Line of Scrimmage Camp, which has been running for 28 years. The camp welcomes more than 200 linemen each year from regional high schools and its reputation continues to grow as the camp had a record 262 participants in 2025.

"It is the best position specific offensive line/defensive line camp we have ever been to," said Bill Nelson, head coach for Jamestown High School football. "Every player that has attended has grown tremendously from it, and it's helped us reach a new level of competition."

In addition to football, VCSU also annually offers volleyball, basketball, baseball and softball camps throughout the year. VCSU's athletic camps typically serve more than 1,000 high school and elementary students each year in various sports.

AI: Using New Technology Responsibly

Artificial Intelligence has become the hot topic and a widespread tool for professions across the world. In North Dakota, Valley City State University is helping to lead the way to integrate responsible use of AI into education. Through the establishment of the AI Institute for Teaching and Learning, VCSU is training its current students and employees on responsible use of AI, and the institute will soon offer statewide AI professional development for K-12 teachers. This is not a charge that VCSU takes lightly, recognizing both the advantages and challenges of AI technology.

"The creation of the AI Institute is not about chasing trends or replacing traditional education," said Jerry Rostad, director for special projects at VCSU. "It's about preparing students for a world where AI will be present, and it's about supporting faculty and staff as they explore how AI might improve teaching, enhance services, or streamline routine tasks. As we adopt new technologies, we must ensure we do so with the integrity, thoughtfulness, and human focus that define this institution."

Along with its focus on AI in education, the Institute recently hosted a series of local and statewide public presentations for anyone interested in learning more about AI and how it's impacting both education and the workforce.

A University Rooted in Service

Across all its programs, VCSU demonstrates a deep commitment to serving the region. Through environmental education, fine arts, or emerging technologies, the university continues to enrich lives across North Dakota as a partner and a resource.

And those are just a few of VCSU's offerings. Whether it's hosting a high school math or DECA competition, inviting hundreds of elementary and middle school students to campus for career exploration, offering free tax preparation to community members, or faculty and staff serving in community organizations, VCSU's commitment to service is embedded deep in the campus culture.

The Forge Wins Highest Honor

The Forge, Valley City State University's student literary magazine, has been recognized as a 2025 REALM First Class magazine by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

It is the second consecutive year The Forge has received the highest honor for the Recognizing Excellence in Art and Literary Magazines (REALM) contest. The Forge annually compiles and publishes works from VCSU students and employees that highlight their creativity, including poems, short stories, essays and visual art. This edition also featured several works by VCSU dual credit high school students.

The 2024-25 edition of The Forge was produced by students in the Literary Publications course offered by VCSU's Language and Literature Department. Faculty member J. Gregory Brister advised a team of six student editors including Landen Eback, Gabrielle Erickson, Beth Mehus, LilyBeth Townsend, Abigail Dreher and Grace Mueller.



The Forge student editors are pictured, from left, LilyBeth Townsend, Gabrielle Erickson, Landen Eback, Abigail Dreher, Grace Mueller, Beth Mehus.

U.S. News Ranks VCSU Among Best Online Programs

Valley City State University has been ranked among the 2026 Best Online Programs by U.S. News & World Report.

U.S. News ranked VCSU in both the 2026 Best Online Bachelor's Programs and the 2026 Best Online Master's in Education categories. VCSU is the #2 North Dakota school in both online categories. U.S. News annually evaluates schools more than 1600 online programs based on a variety of factors, such as student engagement, faculty credentials, services and technologies.

"We know that VCSU is one of the top schools in the region for our combination of student support, academic quality and affordability," said Dr. Allen Burgad, interim president. "Whether they choose to study on-campus or online, our students are receiving a quality education that fits their personal needs."

About 27 percent of VCSU's enrolled students are classified as online students. That includes the master's degree programs in education, which are affordable online options for working teachers to further their education and career.

VCSU Adds Master of Education in Learner-Centered Instruction

The VCSU Master of Education program has added a Learner-Centered Instruction option to its offerings this semester.

This 33-credit program is designed to help educators in any discipline become skilled in equitable teaching and leadership. Students who complete the coursework will earn a Master of Education in Teaching and Technology, Learner-Centered Instruction.

VCSU has partnered with 2Revolutions to build a program that focuses on the Global Skill Areas for Educators. Courses will provide knowledge and skills in the Global Skill Areas of Equity, Human Centered Ecosystems, Leadership, Achievement & Assessment Systems, and Learning Design.

For more information, contact James Boe, jim.boe@vcsu.edu, or Heather Kvilvang, heather.kvilvang@vcsu.edu.

VCSU Named STEM School of Excellence

Valley City State University has been named a 2025-26 STEM School of Excellence, and assistant professor Clayton Mannie was recognized as an Emerging Leader by the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEEA).

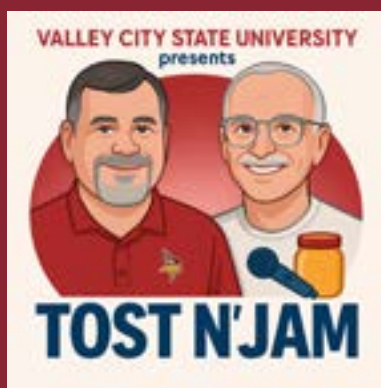
This is the second consecutive year that VCSU has received the ITEEA recognition, which honors outstanding schools that have demonstrated a commitment to providing a robust integrative STEM education program. Schools receiving the award have undergone a rigorous application process, showcasing their exemplary STEM programs and best practices. VCSU was one of just seven universities nationwide to receive the STEM School of Excellence designation.

“This recognition reflects the commitment, innovation, and collaborative efforts of our faculty, staff, and students in advancing STEM education at VCSU,” said Peder Gjovik, Chair of the Department of Technology and STEM

Education. “Being named a STEM School of Excellence by ITEEA is a tremendous honor and underscores our dedication to meeting the highest standards in technology and engineering education.”

Clayton Mannie, assistant professor for technology and STEM Education, is one of seven outstanding teachers nationwide to receive the Emerging Leader recognition from ITEEA.

Mannie earned a VCSU bachelor’s degree in technology education in 2006 and then finished a VCSU master’s degree in technology education in 2016. He returned to campus in 2020 as an assistant professor in the technology department.



Tost N' Jam Podcast Partners with VCSU

The Tost N' Jam Podcast, featuring local Valley City news and sports, is now recording on the campus of Valley City State University.

Hosted by Tim Ost, former radio personality in Valley City, and current VCSU sports information director Paul McDonald, Tost N' Jam records new episodes weekly. Each episode includes a guest interview, which regularly features VCSU alumni, students or employees.

Tost N' Jam is available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, VCSU YouTube and www.tostnjam.com

Two Students Qualify for DECA Nationals

Valley City State University students Sarah Monilaws and Katie Jones qualified for DECA nationals after taking first place in a team event at the 2026 State Career Development Conference (SCDC), held Feb. 9-10 in Fargo.

Monilaws and Jones teamed up to take 1st place in Event Planning at the DECA state conference. Individually, Jones took 3rd in Travel & Tourism and Monilaws placed 3rd in Hotel & Lodging. Monilaws and Jones will compete in their team event at the Collegiate DECA International Career Development Conference (ICDC) in Louisville, Kentucky, this April.

The VCSU DECA chapter was honored for a community service project during the state conference opening ceremony, and Monilaws was also presented with one of the outstanding member awards.



Katie Jones, left, and Sarah Monilaws celebrate after taking 1st place at a state competition.

Bismarck State College and VCSU Launch Dual Degree Partnership

Bismarck State College and Valley City State University have formed a new academic partnership designed to strengthen North Dakota's teacher workforce pipeline by creating a teaching degree pathway at BSC.

The four-year collaborative program allows students to complete coursework through both institutions while remaining at BSC. Students will simultaneously earn a Bachelor of Applied Science in Foundations of Teaching from BSC and a Bachelor of Science in Education from VCSU, making them eligible for initial teacher licensure upon completion of program requirements.

The four-year degree plan has students enrolling in 9+ credits at BSC and 3+ credits through VCSU each semester.

Dr. Allen Burgad, interim president at VCSU, said the partnership is the result of a shared mission to prepare future educators.

"This partnership reflects the shared commitment of our institutions to prepare high-quality teachers for our schools and communities," Burgad said. "We are excited to create a strong career pathway for students who have a passion for working with children while helping address the growing need for educators."

By expanding access to teacher preparation in central North Dakota, the partnership aims to grow the state's educator pipeline and prepare more teachers to serve schools and communities across the region.



VCSU interim president Allen Burgad, right, and BSC interim president Dan Leingang shake hands during the announcement of a dual degree partnership.

NDSCS and VCSU Sign Elementary Ed Agreement

North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) and Valley City State University have formally signed a new articulation agreement creating a seamless, affordable pathway for students pursuing careers in elementary education.

The agreement allows students to complete an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree at NDSCS and transfer directly into VCSU's Bachelor of Science in Education (B.S.Ed.) program with a major in Elementary Education. This agreement reduces duplication of coursework and accelerates the time to graduation.

Through the agreement, instruction will be delivered using a combination of on-campus and distance-delivery methods. Academic advising, student support services, and financial aid coordination will be provided collaboratively by both institutions to ensure a smooth transition from NDSCS to VCSU.

Graduates of the program will earn a Bachelor of Science in Education from VCSU and be eligible for licensure in North Dakota through the Educational Standards and Practices Board.

VCSU and UND Sign Engineering Agreement

Valley City State University and the University of North Dakota have signed a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) creating expanded and flexible pathways for students pursuing engineering careers.

The agreement allows VCSU students to take engineering courses online through UND's College of Engineering & Mines while completing face-to-face coursework at VCSU. Students will enroll at VCSU as mathematics majors and may follow multiple plan-of-study options aligned with their academic and personal goals.

Through this partnership, students can complete all general education requirements, mathematics courses, and required science coursework at VCSU, while taking specialized engineering courses from UND. The agreement ensures seamless transfer of coursework between the two institutions.

"This agreement expands access to high-quality engineering pathways while preserving the supportive learning environment VCSU is known for," said Dr. Jamie Wirth, chair of the VCSU Department of Mathematics. "Students gain flexibility and strong preparation without having to leave VCSU before they are ready."

Students may pursue an Associate of Arts degree in applied mathematics for pre-engineering before transferring to UND, or students may choose to remain at VCSU for up to four years to complete a bachelor's degree in mathematics with a pre-engineering focus. The four-year option is particularly beneficial for student-athletes who wish to continue competing for the Vikings while preparing for engineering careers.

Under the agreement, students may prepare for UND engineering programs including aerospace, biomedical, chemical, civil, electrical, geological, mechanical, and petroleum engineering.

Alumni and Friends Gather in Arizona

Valley City State University alumni and friends once again reunited this winter for the annual Arizona alumni events. Hosted from January 29–31, these gatherings offered a variety of opportunities for Vikings across the country to reconnect, share stories, and build stronger ties with fellow alumni and the university.

Thank you to our Executive Director, Cory Anderson for hosting these gatherings bringing together Vikings from across the region for social time, lunch, and updates on campus happenings.

In conversations with alumni this year, it's become clear that our alumni are less inclined to drive long distances or at night with the desire for events scheduled earlier in the day. In response, next year's Arizona events will introduce new timing aimed at improving comfort and accessibility. The popular Friday luncheon will return to the Viewpoint Golf Resort in Mesa, while the Saturday social transitions to an afternoon gathering at the O.H.S.O Brewery in Gilbert.



Svenningsen-Hesch

The VCSU Alumni Association also aims to welcome alumni interested in a winter getaway. Plans for Sunday include a kickoff social at TopGolf in Gilbert, followed by a two-person golf scramble and meal the next day. This expanded schedule offers additional opportunities for Arizona-based alumni and those traveling to reconnect with former classmates, roommates, and teammates.

A full announcement, including finalized dates and registration details, will appear in the July issue of the Bulletin. Alumni are encouraged to watch for the update and begin planning their winter escape.

Those wishing to receive future communications about Arizona socials and golf outings may email their contact information to alumni@vcsu.edu.

Looking ahead, Homecoming is scheduled for September 18–19 and promises to bring another exciting lineup of events and celebrations. A tentative schedule can be found on page 17 and online at vcsualumni.org. We look forward to welcoming alumni back to campus for another memorable Homecoming weekend.



James Fisher, Brady Anderson, Sharla (Huston) Fisher and Cory Anderson '89



Carole (Jenson) '74 & Mark '74 Richman, Brady Anderson, Wendy (Reidman) Houge '85, Cory Anderson '89 and Dee (Isensee) '69 & Dale '69 Hillstrom



Thomas Cortez '15 and Noah Nicolai '13



Front row: Carol Schaller, Melanie Chandler, Rae Ann (Rolshoven) Vandrovec '75, Jan Eggert, and Thomas Cortez '15.

Back Row: Craig '76 & Sue (Cole) '76 Petersen, Bill Schaller '74, Steve Koenig '93, Tom '87 and Pat Kinn, Jim Vandrovec '74, Al Eggert '73, Brady Anderson, and Cory Anderson '89.

Phone-a-Thon & Giving Hearts Day

The VCSU Alumni Association's annual Phone-A-Thon is one of our major activities each academic year which allows our alumni to show their Viking Pride in supporting our university. Donations allow us to stay in touch with alumni in several important ways, including publication of The Bulletin, hosting socials and reunions, sponsoring alumni award programs and supporting programs on the campus of Valley City State University. The Phone-A-Thon also provides scholarship support to our current students attending VCSU.

By supporting the annual Phone-A-Thon, you can help VCSU achieve the strategic initiatives underway that move VCSU forward.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the 2026 Alumni Phone-A-Thon. The following list includes cash donations and payment on pledges received as of March 15, 2026.

If you haven't made your donation, there is still time! Send your contribution today or find us on the web at www.vcsualumni.org and click on the "Make a Gift Online" button. We accept Visa, Discover and MasterCard, or if you prefer, call the VCSU Foundation Office at 701-845-7203. Thank you for your continued support.

♥ Indicates the donor gave on Giving Hearts Day

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224 Donors
\$31,000 Raised



SAVE THE DATE

Homecoming

September 14-19, 2026

The VCSU Alumni Association invites you to return to campus for Homecoming 2026. This annual celebration offers an opportunity to reconnect with fellow alumni, honor shared traditions, and engage with the Viking community. We look forward to welcoming you back as we celebrate the spirit of "Once a Viking, Always a Viking."

Monday, September 14

44th Annual Bill Osmon Fun Run 4 p.m. Lokken Stadium

Friday, September 18

Alumni Welcome Back Ice Cream Social 1:30 p.m. Student Center – Upper Lounge
 Hall of Fame Social 5 p.m. Valley City Eagles
 Hall of Fame Banquet & Ceremony 6 p.m. Valley City Eagles
 All Greek Social 7 p.m. Valley City Eagles

All Greek alumni are invited to this no-host gathering to connect with inductees and fellow alumni.

Saturday, September 19

Alumni Honors Breakfast 8:30 a.m. Student Center Cafeteria
 VCSU Bookstore Open 8 a.m. – noon Student Center
 Homecoming Parade 10:30 a.m. Central Ave
 Viking Tailgating 12 – 2 p.m. Lokken Stadium
 Vikings vs. Eastern Oregon University 2 p.m. Shelly Ellig Field
 Postgame and All-Alumni Social 5 p.m. Valley City Eagles

The Postgame and All-Alumni Social is open to all alumni and friends. No charge; attendees must be 21 or older.

College Student and Alumni Dance 9 p.m. Valley City Eagles

The College Student and Alumni Dance is open to students, alumni, and friends. No charge to attend.

Alumni Anecdotes



Kayl Hamre '14

Kayl Hamre was recently hired as a new Assistant Director for the North Dakota High School Activities Association where he will help oversee extracurricular sports for the more than 170 high schools in North Dakota. Hamre starts his new position on July 1, 2026.

He graduated from VCSU with a degree in history education and was a member of the Viking baseball teams. He is currently working as the Junior/Senior High School Principal at Enderlin High School.

Kayl has been an active high school official for both baseball and basketball, something he started doing while still in college. He also officiates women's college basketball and just finished up his first season working NCAA Division I games. He has also worked three NCAA Division II National Tournaments. Kayl currently serves on the North Dakota Officials Association Board.

Kayl and his wife Kaitlyn were married in October, 2025.

For more information visit www.vcsualumni.org for updates and additional events.

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Valley City State University will honor five individuals and one team with induction into the VCSU Hall of Fame during Homecoming weekend this fall.

Player and coach Al Olson '84, Brandon Bata '07, Sekani Milligen '13, Andrew Warcken '99 and the 2012-13 Men's Basketball Team will be inducted in the VCSU Athletic Hall of Fame in honor of their accomplishments at VCSU. Greg Stemen '88 will be inducted into the Osmon Icon Coaches Hall of Fame in recognition of his coaching accomplishments after graduating from Valley City State.



2013 VCSU Men's Team—(l to r) front: Craig Richards (National Tournament team host), Christopher Embden, AJ McDonald, Patrick Rogers, Aaron Duske, Dillan Ostrom, John Raquel, Karen Hall (National Tournament team host); back: Athletic Trainer Alyssa Sorensen, Assistant Coach Matt Karlgaard, Assistant Coach Nathan Stover, Sekani Milligen, Ty Pratt, Gus Kueber, Anthony Saavedra, Assistant Coach Karl Sorby, Head Coach Jeff Kaminsky
Not pictured: Harrison Weber, Malcolm McDonald

2012-13 Men's Basketball Team

The 2012-13 Valley City State University men's basketball team delivered one of the most significant seasons in program history. The Vikings finished with a 23-7 overall record, including a dominant 12-1 mark at home, and placed second in the Association of Independent Institutions (A.I.I.) regular season.

Most notably, the team earned a berth in the NAIA National Tournament—the program's first appearance since 1987—ending a 26-year drought. In the national tournament, VCSU narrowly fell to Indiana University Southeast in a 75-72 contest.

Led by head coach Jeff Kaminsky, the 2012-13 squad combined high-level performance with historic achievement, marking a turning point for the program and setting a new standard for success in Viking basketball.

Sekani Milligen '13 Men's Basketball 2011-2013

Sekani Milligen established himself as one of the most dynamic scorers in recent VCSU history during his two-year career (2011-2013). A two-time First Team All-Conference selection, Milligen earned Second Team All-American honors in 2011 and Honorable Mention All-American recognition in 2012.

Milligen played a key role in leading the Vikings to a 43-17 record over his two seasons, highlighted by a berth in the 2013 NAIA National Tournament. He scored 1,060 points in just two seasons, ranking fifth all-time in program history with an average of 18.6 points per game.

Known for his perimeter shooting, Milligen made 189 three-pointers in his career, including 104 during the 2012-13 season—the second-highest single-season total in VCSU history. His scoring ability and leadership were central to one of the most successful stretches in the program's modern era.



Al Olson '84
Coach/Athlete
Player: 1980–84;
Coach: 1990–2001

Al Olson's impact on Valley City State athletics spans multiple sports and roles, leaving a lasting legacy as both a student-athlete and coach. As a player (1980–84), Olson was a member of five conference championship teams and earned All-Conference honors in baseball in 1983 and 1984, finishing his career with a .293 batting average and an outstanding .981 fielding percentage. He was also recognized as the 1983 Team Hardest Worker.

As a coach (1990–2001), Olson led the VCSU women's basketball program to sustained success, compiling a 73–56 overall record. His teams captured the 1990–91 conference championship and the 1991–92 co-conference championship, while his 1993–94 squad reached a national ranking of No. 23. Olson won over 100 games in his VCSU Coaching career.

Across every role, Olson demonstrated a commitment to excellence, consistency, and program-building that has had a lasting impact on Viking Athletics.



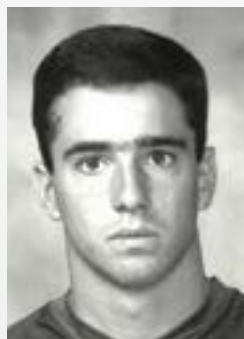
Andrew Warcken '99
Football
1989–1992

Andrew Warcken was one of the most impactful defensive players in VCSU football history during his career from 1989 to 1992. A 1990 Honorable Mention All-American and two-time All-Conference selection, Warcken built a reputation as a true playmaker in the secondary.

He finished his career with 14 interceptions, tied for fourth all-time in program history, and recorded one of the greatest single seasons ever by a Viking defender in 1990. That year, Warcken tied the school record with eight interceptions while earning All-American recognition. He also recorded three interceptions in a single game, tying another program record.

In addition to his defensive impact, Warcken contributed on special teams, totaling 171 career punt return yards and averaging 10.06 yards per return, ranking among the program's best.

Warcken's ability to change games through takeaways and field position solidified his place among the top defensive players in VCSU history.



Brandon Bata '07
Men's Basketball
2002–2006

Brandon Bata was one of the most efficient and productive players in VCSU men's basketball history during his career from 2002 to 2006. He scored 1,246 career points, ranking 11th all-time, while also recording 646 rebounds, placing him eighth in program history.

Known for his efficiency, Bata finished with a .621 career field goal percentage, the second-highest in school history. His 65.5 percent shooting performance during the 2003–04 season remains a program record.

Bata's all-around play and consistency earned him All-Conference recognition and DAC Most Valuable Senior honors, solidifying his role as one of the program's top performers of his era.



Greg Stemen '88
Osmon Icon
Coaches Hall of Fame

Greg Stemen's coaching career reflects a sustained record of success, leadership, and versatility across multiple programs and levels. As head men's basketball coach at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) from 2001 to 2009, Stemen compiled a 141–97 record, ranking among the winningest coaches in program history.

His tenure included a Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC) championship and NSIC Coach of the Year honors in 2008–09, as well as a deep postseason run that culminated in an NCAA Division II Elite Eight appearance.

Prior to SMSU, Stemen led North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) to a 69–40 record over four seasons, capturing two NJCAA Region 13 championships and earning Region 13 Coach of the Year honors twice.

In addition to basketball, Stemen demonstrated exceptional versatility as head coach of the SMSU women's golf program, guiding the team to four consecutive NSIC championships and three NCAA regional appearances while earning multiple Coach of the Year honors.

Across every stop, Stemen built winning programs and developed student-athletes, leaving a lasting impact on the institutions he served.





I N S I D E ATHLETICS

vcsuvikings.com



vcsuvikings

Champions Walk: *Our History. Our Future. Our Turn.*

Steve Olson '88, Assistant Athletics Director



Olson

As we celebrate 100 Years of Viking Athletics, Valley City State University is creating something that will stand long after this anniversary year is over — the Champions Walk.

This permanent hallway will connect the Osmon Vikings Hall of Fame to the new Tharaldson Family Athletic Center for Sports, Health and Innovative Performance. Every recruit, every student-athlete, every alum returning to campus will walk that corridor. It will

physically connect our past to our future, and it will tell our story.

The Champions Walk will feature permanent Team Shields honoring championship teams, Hall of Fame teams, and historically significant groups. These custom shields will display

the year, sport, and achievement — installed as lasting recognition of what those teams accomplished together.

Several teams have already stepped forward and begun organized efforts to secure their place on the Walk. We are rolling this out in phases, working with team influencers who are helping rally their teammates. It has been encouraging to see former captains, coaches, and leaders lend their voice and credibility to the effort.

This invitation is not limited to those teams. If your team is not currently part of the initial rollout, that does not mean you are excluded. Every team and organization that left its mark on Viking Athletics has the opportunity to participate.

The collective goal for a Team Shield is \$25,000. Gifts can be pledged and paid over five years to make participation manageable. This effort is not about equal gifts — it is about shared participation. Some will give at higher levels, others more modestly, but what matters is that teams row together one more time.

Individual recognition opportunities are also part of the Champions Walk. Donors at certain levels will receive Pride Stone recognition or a personalized Commemorative Oar, ensuring that individual commitment is honored alongside

team achievement.

Viking Athletics has always been built on something simple: nobody rides this ship — we all row.

Champions Walk gives us a way to live that out again.

If you are interested in

organizing your team or learning how your group can be included, contact the VCSU Foundation Office. We will help compile your roster, prepare materials, and guide the process. All we need is a willing teammate to serve as the voice.

We accomplished something special together once. This is our opportunity to make sure it stands tall for the next generation.

The hallway will be built regardless. The question is simple: will your team be on it?

“Viking Athletics has always been built on something simple: nobody rides this ship — we all row.”

VIKING CHAMPIONS WALK



Rendering of what The Champion Walk hallway could look like. This permanent hallway will connect the W.E. Osmon Fieldhouse to the new Tharaldson Family Athletic Center for Sports, Health and Innovative Performance.



Finish The Voyage



A special opportunity to leave your mark on this historic project — all gifts help support the new facility and the next generation of Vikings.

Viking Centennial Shield – Limited to 20 Donors

\$25,000+ Gift/Pledge = Custom Shield in Hall of Champions
Perfect for families with a deep Viking tradition

Viking Commemorative Oar – Limited to 100 Donors

\$5,000 Gift/Pledge = Personalized Oar displayed in facility
Celebrate the centennial with this iconic rowing symbol

If you'd like to make your commitment by check or discuss pledge options, please contact the VCSU Foundation at 701-845-7203 or alumni@vcsu.edu



WINTER SPORTS RECAP



JR Cison



Abby Aslesen

Basketball

The Vikings men's and women's basketball teams had a season of change. Not only playing in a new conference but having to play home games away from home.

Both the men and women ended the season with 10 wins. And both teams nearly reached the Frontier Conference Postseason Tournament in their first year in the conference.

The women ended with a 10-16 record and were 7-15 in the conference. They finished just two games behind Bismarck State in the chase for the last spot in the conference tournament.

Ellie Braaten led the team in scoring with a 12.9 points per game average. She also led the team in assists with 87 and steals with 49. She was named 2nd Team All-Conference. JayCee Richter was right behind averaging 12 points per game and newcomer Tiyana Schwinghammer averaged 9.9 points. Abby Aslesen averaged 9.7 points per game and led the team with 162 rebounds and a 6.2 rebounds per game average. Aubrey Prunty was VCSU's recipient of the Champions of Character honor for the Frontier Conference.

The Viking Men ended the season 10-17 and were 6-16 in the conference. Reaching the conference tournament came down to the last game of the season, a win over

Rocky Mountain would have put the Vikings in, but the Bears had other ideas and downed the Vikings in the season finale. VCSU was part of a three-way tie for eighth in the conference but Mayville State earned the last spot through the tie-breaking process.

A couple of newcomers led the offense for Valley City State, JR Cison and Kaleb Larson. Cison averaged 17 points per game and Larson just under 15 per contest. Cison also led the team with 86 assists and 23 steals. Cison was named 2nd Team All-Conference for his efforts. Another newcomer, Logan Deal led the team in rebounds with 183 and average at 6.8 per game.

The biggest change this year for the Vikings hoopsters was the fact that they had to play the last seven home games of the season at different venues due to water damage to the floor at the W.E. Osmon Fieldhouse. With games at the Jamestown Civic Center, the Ed Werre Arena at the North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, and the Memorial Auditorium at Concordia College in Moorhead, the Vikings had homes away from home.

For both the men and women, youth was served this year, and they have a strong foundation of players returning for the 2026-27 season.



Jordan Mount



Frida Barrera

Indoor Track and Field

Indoor track and field season was one of improvement and personal bests. Four school records also fell during the indoor season.

Freshman Frida Barrera set three school records this season. Barrera now is the school record holder of the 800 meters, mile run and the 3000 meters. She set the latter in the Frontier Conference Championships, where teammate Carlee Fuchs also set the school record in the weight throw.

Two Vikings earned All-Conference honors this season. Barrera for the women and Jordan Mount for the men. Barrera was All-Conference in the 800 meters and the mile run. Mount was All-Conference in the long jump. It is the fifth All-Conference performance for the sophomore Mount.

Fuchs and Isaac Eichhorst earned the Champions of Character honor for the Vikings at the Conference meet.

SPRING SPORTS SCHEDULES

BASEBALL

- April 17 @ Mayville State (DH)
- April 18 @ Mayville State (DH)
- April 21 @ Dakota Wesleyan (DH)
- April 24 Dickinson State (DH) 1 p.m./4 p.m.**
- April 25 Dickinson State (DH) 12 p.m./3 p.m.**
- April 30 – May 1 Frontier Conference Tournament

SOFTBALL

- April 17 @ Carroll College (DH) 2 p.m./4 p.m.
- April 18 @ Carroll College (DH) 12 p.m./2 p.m.
- April 24 University of Providence (DH) 2 p.m./4 p.m.**
- April 25 University of Providence (DH) 12 p.m./2 p.m.**
- May 1 – 4 Frontier Conference Tournament in Dickinson

TRACK AND FIELD

- April 18 Blue Hawk Games at Dickinson State
- April 21 Viking Twilight at Valley City State
- April 29 Marauder Tune-up at University of Mary
- May 2-3 Frontier Conference Outdoor Championships at Dickinson State
- May 8 NDSU Tune-up at North Dakota State
- May 20-22 NAIA Outdoor National Championships

GOLF

- April 19-20 Dickinson State Invite in Dickinson at Heart River Golf Course
- April 27-29 Frontier Conference Championships in Phoenix, Arizona

SPRING SPORTS UPDATES

Golf

The Viking golfers are getting ready for a competitive Spring season. The Frontier conference has a strong national showing with one team in the Top 25 and another receiving votes.

With only one senior of the men's team and two on the women's team, the Vikings future looks bright on the links.

VCSU has a couple of tournaments lined up in April, leading up to the Frontier Conference meet which will be held in the Phoenix, Arizona area at the end of April.

Leading the way for the Viking Men will be a pair of Juniors Owen Haase and Zach St. Aubin. On the Women's side, senior Syndey Carlson leads the way. Carlson holds five of the top seven low scores in school history going into this spring.

Track and Field

As the outdoor season approaches, the Vikings have ten meets lined up to compete in leading up to the Frontier Conference Championships in May in Dickinson.

The Vikings are led by returning NSAA All-Conference selections Jordan Mount, Tayshaun Robinson, Cameron Champagnie, Zeke Barnick, and Olivia Backus.

VCSU is scheduled to host the Viking Twilight meet on April 21st at Lokken Stadium and the Hill Track and Field Complex.



Hunter Logan



Cody Wielgosh

Baseball

The Viking Baseball team has kicked things up with a strong start to the spring portion of the schedule, including a 7-3 record on their spring trip to Florida. This is the best Southern trip the Vikings have had since they went 5-2 in Tucson, Ariz., in the 2021-2022 season. The current Vikings are 14-15 overall after the completion of their spring trip.

The Vikings are picked to finish fourth in the Frontier Conference this season. There are no Montana baseball teams in the Frontier Conference, making the new conference the five teams that came over from the North Star Athletic Association with the addition of Bismarck State College.



Softball

Valley City State softball has a 16-13 overall record following its annual spring trip to Tucson, Ariz. VCSU began the season with 12 indoor games in February before playing nine games in Tucson.

The Vikings are picked to finish third in the Frontier Conference behind Bellevue and Dickinson State. Unlike baseball, there are two Montana schools that have softball. The University of Providence and Carroll College. North Star holdovers Bellevue, Dickinson State, Mayville State, and Dakota State, along with newcomer Bismarck State make up the eight team Frontier Conference.

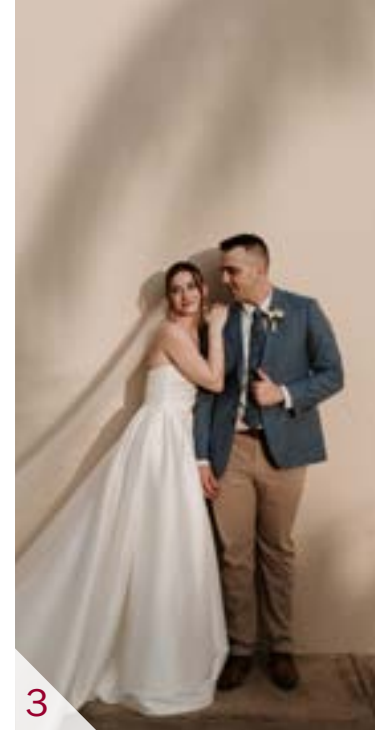
VCSU has a good mixture of veterans and youth that make up the 2026 edition. After a runner-up finish in the conference tournament last season, the Vikings are looking to make some noise this season.

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 or scan the QR code and fill out the Weddings Form.



1. Kacie Reardon & **Travis Rickford '06** were married September 19, 2025.
2. Kaitlyn Wagner & **Kayl Hamre '15** were married October 25, 2025.
3. **Darrien Cantelo '17** and Tim Plamondon were married January 14, 2026.
4. **Autumn Perry '21** & Ryan Torbenson were married November 15, 2025.
5. **Brittany Barnhardt '22 & Jared Mendoza '22**, October 11, 2025. They met at VCSU in 2019. Brittany is a child protection worker and Jared is employed at Job Service. They love traveling, cooking, and hanging out at home with their 3 dogs and cat.
6. **Ellie Rush '25 and LaShad Smith '25** were married June 26, 2025.
7. **Kristin Albrecht '25 & Tyler Johnson '26** were married October 25, 2025.



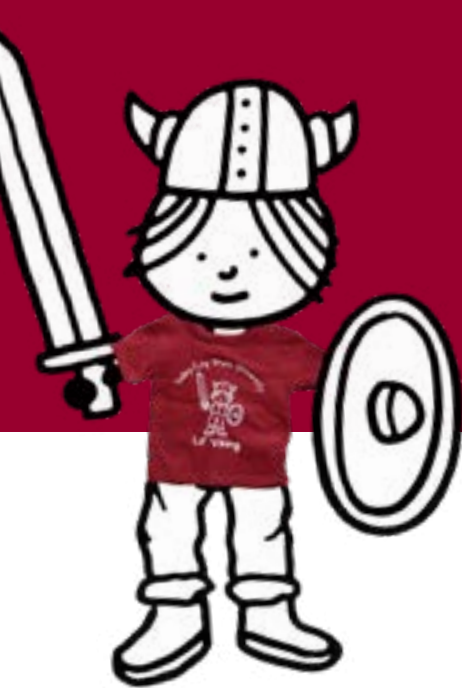
Not Pictured

Avery Vasicek '23 and Jayden Wheeling '22 were married September 13, 2025 and celebrated in Grand Forks, N.D. with all of their loved ones!

Alyssa Jacobsen '17 & Troy Rudolph, September 5, 2025.

Kirsten Demke '23 & Skyler Van Bruggen '21, September 6, 2025.





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 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 so we can include it in the next issue of **The Bulletin**.



Micah Cunningham

September 1, 2024
7 lbs. 5 oz., 20.75 in.

Kaylynn Siedschlag '25 and Jordan Cunningham

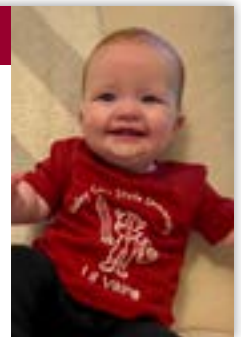


Eden Hirschhorn

June 25, 2025
7 lbs. 2 oz., 20 in.

Levi '21 and Tess Hirschhorn

Grandparents: Kelly (Habeck) '92 and Tom Scott.



Harvey Everett McMahon V

April 5, 2025
9 lbs. 13 oz., 21 in.

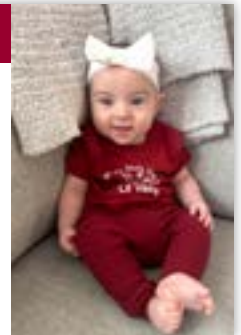
Harvey '16 and Allie McMahon



Isabelle Lloyd Thomas

August 20, 2025
5 lbs. 15oz., 19.5 in.

Tasha (Piehl) '18 and Eric Thomas



Asher Rae Motschenbacher

August 16, 2024
7 lbs. 14 oz., 20 in.

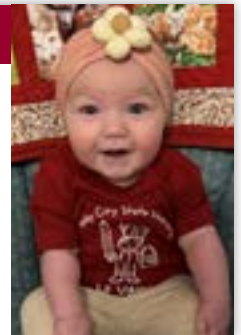
Marissa (Oestreicher) '13 and Dustin Motschenbacher



Kennedy Jane Brisk

July 30, 2025
8 lbs. 6 oz., 21 in.

Curtis '18 and Allison Brisk





Elias Anthony Hanson

November 17, 2024
7 lbs. 6 oz., 20 in.

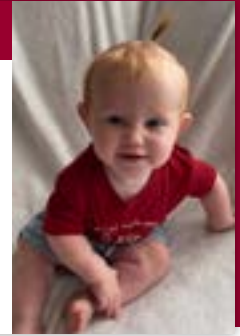
Jessica (Ronning) '20 & Thor Hanson
Big brother - Everett
Grandparents: Teri (Cisinski) '89 and Paul Ronning



Hannah LaVoy Buchholz

January 16, 2025
7lbs. 7oz., 21 in.

Erica (Bunn) '10 and Casey Buchholz
Joins siblings Lily, Micah, and Roman



Theodore Daniel Spanier

March 17, 2025
7lbs. 7oz., 18.9 in.

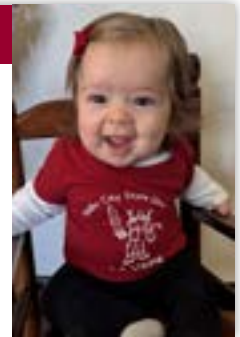
Tyler Spanier and Arliss Rabbit
Grandparents: Alan '13 and Kelly (Edwards) '17 Spanier



Lorna Marlys Diegel

May 9, 2025
9 lbs. 7 oz., 20.75 in.

Beau '16 and Hannah (Schlecht) '19 Diegel
Grandparents: Barbara (Bunn) '92 and Nathan Schlecht



Shep and Theo Berggren

Theo – January 25, 2023
Shep – May 11, 2025

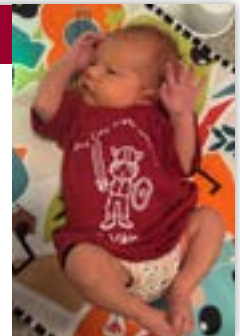
Kaia (Lunde) '18 and Andrew Berggren



Elle Bjerken

May 20, 2025
7 lbs. 5.5 oz., 21.5”

Becca (Meyer) '19 and Brady Bjerken



VCSU NIGHT AT THE F-M REDHAWKS GAME!

PLEASE RSVP. Call 701-845-7203 by July 27 to reserve your tickets.

The VCSU Alumni Association invites you to join alumni and friends at Newman Outdoor field for an F-M RedHawks baseball game on Wednesday, **August 12.**

We will gather for a picnic prior to the game and then have reserved tickets for the game.

COST \$20 PER PERSON

- INCLUDES**
- Reserved Game ticket in Section A
 - All-you-can-eat picnic including hot dogs and pulled pork served with potato salad, potato chips, pop and water.

6:02 PM GATES OPEN | SOCIAL HOUR AND PICNIC

7:02 PM GAME TIME



Jay Morgan '69 and his VC High School class of '65 gathered on the steps of the President's House in the summer of 2025 to celebrate their 60th class reunion organized by Jan Stowman. **Ken Welken '69**, Jay Morgan and some of the women all graduated from VCSU.

Raymond Holzworth '69 retired in 2005. He stays in shape the best he can. Ray still hunts deer and game birds and sets a few traps to get him out of his apartment. He also tries to fish 2 or 3 days a week. Ray goes to Texas for the winter months. He still enjoys dancing and karaoke with his friends and walks a mile just about every day.

Robert '68 and Linda (Sanden) '70 McKenzie have been retired for 20 years! They divide their time between Oregon in the summer months and Arizona in the winter months. They are very grateful for VCSU and all the wonderful teachers and coaches. Alumni are invited to visit them in either location.

CLASS OF 1970s

Sue (Holmes) German '73 is busy teaching music and promoting education for music educators at Valley City State! Since retiring, Sue has served as a judge for the regional large group and solos and ensemble music contests, as well as a judge at the Class "B" State Contest. Sue was also a guest conductor at the Barnes County Festival. She enjoys giving lessons to her grandchildren and accompanying them for their contest solos. Sue still loves to substitute teach at Oakes in choir, music, and band; and helps mentor the excited young music teachers there! She has given a perpetual music major scholarship from her mom and dad's family, and another in her name at VCSU since 2008. Sue says it is rewarding to see the new teachers who are finding their careers in music education. This season, she is director again of the Oakes Community Choir who performs a cantata each year that honors one or more individuals in the community who are dealing with life-changing illnesses. Those who attend the performance give generously in a free-will offering for these deserving individuals.

Kathy (Shape) '74 and Boyd Sussex '75 send their greetings from Big Stone Lake, S.D. They are not sure how time can fly by so fast, but they have been retired nine years and have been kept busy following their two grandkids in Grand Forks. They were blessed to spend some time on the beautiful VCSU campus this past summer when Boyd was honored by being inducted into the Osmon Icon Coaches Hall of Fame.

Douglas Bertsch '74 has been retired since 2008 after 34 years in education. He also spent the last 20 years as a high school principal at Fairmount and Valley of Crystal-Hoople.

Barbara Stockstad '75 is loving her retirement.

Valerie (Thorsness) Vogel '75 moved on to the next chapter, which is spending more time with family and friends. She retired in 2019 after spending the last 29 years of her education career and 21 of those as the principal at St. Joseph School in Mandan. Valerie continues to live in Bismarck and spends a lot of time on the interstate traveling to West Fargo, where Mike, Mary Ellen, Parker, Brayden and Cullen Rolfson live; to Goodhue, Minn., where David, Logan and Shelby Vogel live; and beyond for activities of her five grandkids, who range from 9 to 22 years old. Valerie has enjoyed attending their elementary through college activities, which have consisted of basketball, baseball, volleyball, softball, football, theater and concerts! Since retiring, she has also had several enjoyable trips with family and friends, which she looks forward to continuing in between the grandkid's activities. She says thanks to VCSU for providing her with an excellent education and the tools for her to have a great educational career! She sends her greeting to all that lived in MCCoy Hall, especially to those on the 3rd floor.

David Wyum '76 and his wife, Rhondalyn, are both retired and enjoying travel very much. David is still drag-racing (on authorized tracks, not the streets). They recently celebrated 46 years of marriage!

Genelle (Rumer) Brunner '76 still enjoys retirement in Arizona (Phoenix area in the winter) and northeastern Arizona in the summers. She and her husband play pickleball for fun and are building a new home.

Kay (Haugen) Omdahl '77 and her husband, Neil, celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary last June. They are so thankful for God's provision, their children and grandchildren.

David Katzenmeyer '78 is enjoying his 10th year of retirement with their boys and two grandchildren. One of their sons is getting married this coming summer in Fargo (all roads lead back to N.D.). David finds it hard to believe it will be 50 years this fall since his football team went to Redlands; and it still hurts!

Nina (Rufsvold) Ardahl '79 recently retired after about 40 years of teaching music privately and in schools.

Continued on page 31

CLASS OF 1980s

Michael Foss '80 and his wife, Karen, are both enjoying retired life, with their children and three grandchildren nearby.

Diane (Winter) Graff '82 is working her way to retirement from her wedding business with plans to spend more time with the grandkids. Together with Brad, they are finishing up projects on the tiny house in Missouri.

Kevin Froeber '83 retired at the end of the 2024 school year after spending 41 years of teaching and coaching at Hannaford, N.D. (3 years), Glyndon-Felton, Minn. (3 years), and West Fargo, N.D. (the last 35 years). His wife of 26 years, Missy, works for Communications Network Engineering in Fargo. They have two sons: David (25) and Michael (22) and continue to live in West Fargo. Kevin sends his greetings to all EBC's; he has many fond memories of being the president of the fraternity and co-director of the Hit Parade during the 1981-1982 school year.

Jaci (Miller) Gately '84 retired in March 2026 after 38 years with Job Service ND. She plans on spending more time at Six Mile Bay Campground in Devils Lake, N.D., with her husband, Doug, and their golden retriever, Sunny. She invites alumni to stop by lot 79 if you are in the area.

CLASS OF 1990s



Daryl Miller '92 and his wife of 41 years, Melissa, have enjoyed playing Santa and Mrs. Clause for well over twelve years. The past six years they have been welcoming the children and their families at the Woody Keeble shelter located in the Chahinkapa Park in Wahpeton, N.D. This year the couple was

honored to have welcomed well over 800 guests. The couple is so very grateful for the community support and have hopes of continuing the yearly tradition long into the future. Melissa estimates that this year it took her approximately 30 hours to complete the decorating of shelter. Daryl believes that it is, by far, her best effort yet. They both report that they love the opportunity to serve the community that they both grew up in (two blocks away from each other) and they love very much. Merry Belated Christmas everybody!!

Nicole (Horn) Burtman '94 and her husband, Paul, have been married since July 1999. They own a cattle ranch near Wildrose, N.D. Nicole teaches 5th grade at Divide County School District in Crosby, N.D. Nicole and Paul have 3 children: Sophie, 24, is an EMT in Jamestown, N.D., while also working toward her paramedic license; Samuel (Sam), 23 attends NDSU and works for UPS at Hector Int'l Airport; and Maren, 21, attends UND, works for FedEx and is on the ice crew at the Ralph Englestad Arena for UND hockey games. Nicole has either coached or officiated high school volleyball since her days at VCSU. She is currently the head volleyball coach at Divide County High School and the director of the Crosby Storm Volleyball Club she started in 2019.

Tony Aukland '96 was inducted to the BSC CyberCon Hall of Fame on October 1 for his nine years of service to the event. This combined cybersecurity and critical infrastructure event works to share security awareness, cybersecurity, physical security, critical infrastructure, mental health, and much more.



CLASS OF 2000s

Wendy (Matcha) Waleri '08 married Cody Waleri on October 23, 2021, in Windsor, N.D.

CLASS OF 2010s



Ronnie Blagg '14 lives in Sacramento, California with his girlfriend, Jazmin, and son, Esao. Ronnie recently received his Education Specialist Teaching Credential. He is in his first year as a Resource Specialist Program teacher who provides specialized instructional support to students with mild to moderate learning disabilities or behavioral challenges at Sacramento Academic and Vocational Academy.

Marissa (Oestreicher) Motschenbacher '13 teaches 6th grade at Lidgerwood Public School and coaches fastpitch softball. She is also the Southeast Regional Science and Engineering Fair Director.



In Remembrance

Rita (Hansen) Clancy '47, Valley City
Ann (Ness) Hillesland '49, Bismarck, N.D.
Shirley (Strand) Ruud '54, Fargo, N.D.
DeLette (Berg) Winkelman '55, Fargo, N.D.
Janice (Schneekloth) Diemert '56, Fargo, N.D.
Shirley (Bayley) Disher '56, Fargo, N.D.
Rita (Kasowski) Anderson '57 STAND and '63 BS-EE, Granite Falls, Minn.
Janice (Anderson) Franck '58, Sherburn, Minn.
Jacqueline (Foley) Hildebrant '58, Lakota, N.D.
Matt Burgad, Stockton, Calif.
Elaine (Arndt) Peitz '58 STAND and '72 BS-EE, Oakes, N.D.
Lila (Shipe) Shaffer '58, Boise, Idaho
Mary (Christensen) Kroshus '59, Underwood, Minn.
Peter C. Anderson '60, Minneapolis, Minn.
Vern Davis '60, Mandan, N.D.
Carl "Ed" Hasche '60, Bismarck, N.D.
Elaine (Stadum) Marquette '60, Fargo, N.D.
Betty Lou (Frandsen) Hanna '61, Canby, Minn.

Graydon Pladson '61, Wadena, Minn.
Verna Anderson '62, Gwinner, N.D.
JoAnn (Vangsness) Erickson '62, Southern Pines, N.C.
Fae (Neubauer) Rieger '55 STAND and '65 BS-SE, Wishek, N.D.
James E. Lee '66, Elko, Nev.
Susan (Solid) Anderson '67, New London, Minn.
Vernell (Sorenson) Wicks '68, Chandler, Ariz.
Ginger (Anderson) Utecht '68, Oakes, N.D.
Eileen (Pavlicek) Berntson '69, Valley City
Ronald "Red" Hunking '73, Lompoc, Calif.
Neil Christenson '74, Grand Forks, N.D.
Janet (Erickson) Staples '80, Moses Lake, Wash.
Dean Thiery, Vancouver, Wash.
Richard Martin '93, Fargo, N.D.
John Lulay '98, Sedona, Ariz.
Kyle Hardy '12, Cavalier, N.D.
Floyce Cummings, Mesa, Ariz.
Robert Hetler, Valley City

Continuing the Connection

If you know the address of any of these individuals, please contact the VCSU Foundation Office at 1-701-845-7203 or email alumni@vcsu.edu.

1969

Ally Dorrance
Linda (Hood) Field
Ronaldo Halverson
Ronald Haugen
Gladys Maasjo
Christy Miller
Lucille Olson
Roleen (Ussatis) Richards
William Vasey

1970

Justin Barrett
James Koch
Ellen (Robinson) Larson
Carol (Mowbray) Mason
Sandra Walks

1971

Ronald Geerdes
Vance Gillette
Ruth (Anderson) Goll
Larry Hehr
Kathryn Jones

Cathleen (Culliton) Martinez
Astrid Mills
Albert Ruckaber
Jane Thoenke
Linda Thompson
Glenn Van Enk
Daniel Welander

1972

Linda (Evanson) Blasczyrk
Dennis Clark
James Friskop
Muriel King
Steven Maksymiuk
Bill Martell
Sandra Olson
Marlys Palmer
Susan (Roller) Selle
Marilyn (Sims) Sudbeck
Jane Tronson
Rita Vandrovec
Larry Weigel
Richard Wright

1973

Lane Bergman
Debra (Scoular) Broome
Hidemasa Ioka
Nancy (Raveling) Persons
Verna Weber

1974

Robert Becker
Rachel Koehn
Gerald Nagel
Rosemary Olson
Sharon (Deconcini) Pfeifer
Phillip Schmidt
Elizabeth (Redmann)
Swanson
Thomas Weinmann
Marcia (O'Brien) Weisser

1975

Robert Dahl
Joseph Maloney
Edna Olson

1976

Cynthia Abraham
Vernon Engblom
Helen (Feist) Gassmann
Lynda (Carlson) Goggin
James Hanson Jr.
Joel Hillius
Judith Kaiser
David Lloyd
LaRee (Wetzel) Misesk
David Tischer
Sheila (Goll) Zerr

1977

Larry Abdallah
Sandy (Rood) Heise
Daniel Liberda
Robert White

1978

Blane Braunberger
Jeronald Davis
Gayle Haugen

1979

Faye Anderson
Rod Berger
John Overbey

1980

David Bjornson
James Brewer
James Clemens
Charles Gibson
Jon Gilbertson
Debra (Coughlin) Kottsick
Patti (Tompkins) Lawson
Roy Ottinger
David Shorey
MaryBeth (Frey) Wallner



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