



VALLEY CITY
STATE UNIVERSITY

THE BULLETIN

A Publication for Alumni & Friends of Valley City State University

ISSUE 071671 | DECEMBER 2025

A New Era for Education

McCarthy Hall renovation revitalizes students
and faculty with modern spaces - PAGE 7



THE BULLETIN

ISSUE 071671 | DECEMBER 2025



4



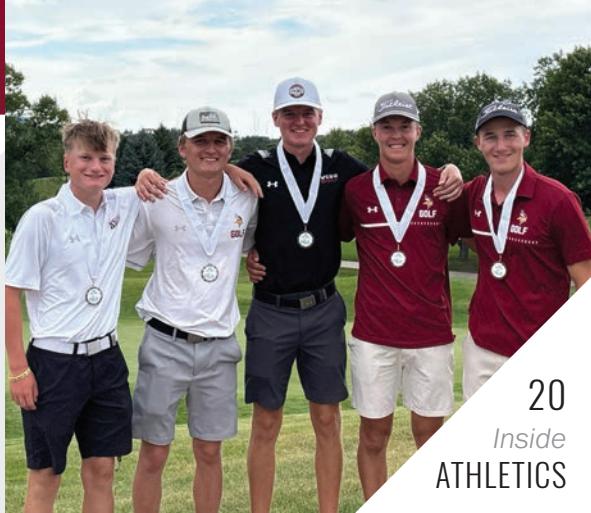
8
Feature
STORY



12



19



20
Inside
ATHLETICS

Acknowledgments

Cory Anderson '89

Executive Director for Advancement
701-845-7216
cory.anderson@vcsu.edu

Kim Svenningsen-Hesch '91

Asst. Director for Advancement
701-845-7403
kim.hesch@vcsu.edu

Loree Morehouse '89

Data Processing and Research
701-845-7203
lore.e.morehouse@vcsu.edu

Dennis McCulloch

Athletic Director
701-845-7425
dennis.mcculloch@vcsu.edu

Steve Olson '88

Director for Athletic Development and
Game Management
701-845-7162
steven.c.colson@vcsu.edu

Mark Potts

Director for Public Relations
701-845-7228
mark.m.potts@vcsu.edu

Features

Page 1	A Message from President LaFave
Page 2	A Message from the Foundation Director
Page 3	VCSU News
Page 8	Feature Story
Page 14	Alumni Corner
Page 20	Viking Athletics Highlights
Page 27	Just Married
Page 28	Lil' Vikings
Page 29	Vikings on the Move
Page 33	In Remembrance

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

Learn more at vcsualumni.org

1-701-845-7203

The Legacy of Larry Robinson

VCSU Advocate Dedicated Nearly 50 Years to Campus

Dr. Alan LaFave, President, Valley City State University



LaFave

Dear VCSU Alumni,

If you've worked on campus or attended VCSU as a student anytime in the last 50 years, chances are you knew Larry Robinson. With a one-of-a-kind personality and a deep passion for North Dakota higher education, Larry was well-known throughout the region and the state after dedicating nearly 50 years of his life to VCSU. He loved this place.

Larry passed away earlier this fall at the age of 75, leaving behind a legacy of service to VCSU. He was an ardent supporter of higher education and proud advocate of VCSU. He will be long remembered.

A 1971 graduate, Larry dedicated more than 49 years of his career to advancing the mission of the university. Beginning as Director of the Memorial Student Center and Student Activities in 1975, he later became the first Director of the VCSU Foundation in 1996, where his leadership greatly expanded scholarship support for students. As the VCSU Foundation Director and the Executive Director of University Advancement, Larry grew the Foundation from \$1.3 million in 1996 to \$24.4 million before his retirement. That growth was instrumental in funding VCSU scholarships which have fueled our enrollment growth over the years. Larry's leadership and vision helped make that happen.

Larry also directed VCSU's first-ever capital campaign, which secured funding for the renovation of the McCarthy Hall School of Education and the construction of the Tharaldson Family Athletic Center, now in progress. He also played a major role in the funding and building of the Gaukler Family Wellness Center in Valley City.

As a longtime member of the North Dakota Senate, Larry



Larry Robinson, center, is pictured with family members during a 2024 retirement ceremony inside the Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts.

was a strong voice for higher education during his 32 years as a senator. His efforts in Bismarck were instrumental in securing state funding for the Rhoades Science Center renovation in 2013 and the Center for the Arts, which opened in 2022. In recognition of his vision and tireless service, the facility was renamed the Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts in 2024, the same year he retired.

Larry was not only a gifted leader, but also a trusted colleague, mentor, and friend. His commitment, warmth, and tireless advocacy for VCSU earned him admiration across campus and beyond. His legacy will live on in the scholarships he helped create, the students whose lives he touched, and the vibrant facilities that stand as a testament to his work.

Our gratitude for Larry's life and legacy will long be remembered. You can read more about Larry's life on page 33.



Giving Hearts Day

 VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY
FOUNDATION

Be a Giving Heart
February 12, 2026

The Power of Momentum

Investing in Our People and Our Places



Anderson

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

As another year comes to a close at Valley City State University, I can't help but pause and reflect on just how far we've come — and how the power of your support has shaped every step of that journey.

For nearly three decades, our campus skyline stood largely the same. The last major building before the turn of the century was the original Rhoades Science Center, completed in 1973. For years afterward, growth came quietly — through the commitment of people rather than bricks and mortar.

But thanks to the loyalty and generosity of alumni, friends, community and state partners, the past two decades have brought a period of transformation unlike any in our history — investments in both our people and our places.

It began modestly, with a small renovation to Graichen Gym in 2003 and the conversion of Kolstoe Hall to all-suites in 2004, followed by Snoeyenbos Hall's suite conversion in 2011.

Then came the \$10 million addition to Rhoades Science Center in 2013 — our first significant new construction in more than 40 years. The renovation of Vangstad Hall in 2015 and the \$16 million Gaukler Family Wellness Health & Physical Education Center in 2016 — a public-private collaboration with Valley City Parks and Recreation — followed in rapid succession.

The momentum continued with the \$32 million Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts in 2022 and the reopening of McCarthy Hall — now housing our School of Education — in 2025 after a \$13.5 million renovation.

And just ahead lies another milestone: the Tharaldson Family Athletic Center for Sports, Health, and Innovative Performance — a \$10–13 million project that will strengthen both our people and places for generations to come.

All these projects share one constant: generous alumni, community partners, and friends who believe in investing in both our people and our places.

Momentum is more than buildings. It's scholarships that open doors, helping enrollment grow and giving students the opportunities they need to succeed. It's capital support that gives us facilities to be proud of. And it's that momentum — visible and tangible — that empowers us to aim high, be bold and dream bigger.

Opportunities remain for alumni and friends to join us in the **Finish the Voyage Campaign**, supporting the Tharaldson Family Athletic Center. Whether through a major commitment or a modest contribution, every gift moves us closer to completion and strengthens the legacy of Viking Athletics for the next 100 years. You can learn more about this campaign at www.vcsu.news/voyage.

As you consider your year-end giving, I invite you to continue rowing with us. Every contribution, large or small, helps move VCSU forward — give something...change everything. Ensure that future generations of Vikings experience the same life-changing opportunities that defined your own time here. See back cover for more information.

2024–2025 VCSU Alumni Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Kendra Krueger '12

FOUNDATION REPRESENTATIVE

Dave Bass '77

VICE PRESIDENT

—

PAST PRESIDENT

Zach McBeain '15

BOARD MEMBERS

Paige Fettig '18

Wendy (Reidman) Hogue '85

Robert Keller '89

Nicholas Lee '16 MAT '21

Paul Leier '85

Stacy Wendel-Monilaws '02

Tristan Ross '08

William Tyrrell '83

Brianna (Johnson) Walsh '16

2024–2025 VCSU Foundation Board of Directors

CHAIR

Jeff Nathan

VICE CHAIR

Matt Pedersen

TREASURER

Liz (Nelson) Ryerson '10

SECRETARY

Dave Bass '77

BOARD MEMBERS

Ken Astrup '73

Kirsten Baesler M.Ed. '10

Bob Bergan '82

DuWayne Bott '58

Joe Deutsch '99

Mark Finstad

Gigi Goven

Dee Jensen '66

Josh Kasowski '05

Ryan Leroux '99

Karsten Melgaard '03

Stephanie (Nelson) Ness '00

Mark Richman '74

Paul Sandness '76

Cory Anderson '89, ex officio

Alan LaFave, ex officio

Erica Buchholz, ex officio

VCSU Sets 3rd Consecutive Fall Enrollment Record

Valley City State University has set a fall enrollment record for the third consecutive year, enrolling 1827 students this semester.

Since 2012, VCSU's enrollment has grown by 34 percent, with the university achieving new fall enrollment records in 12 of the past 13 years. This year's total includes 1663 undergraduates and 164 graduate students. The total headcount surpasses last fall's previous record of 1806 students.

Retention rates also reached historic highs this fall. The first-time, full-time student retention rate increased to 77 percent, a 6-point jump from last year and the highest in VCSU history. The overall retention rate rose to 73 percent, up 3 points from the previous year.

"This is a testament to the incredible work of our faculty, staff and the community," said Dr. Alan LaFave, President of VCSU. "Increasing enrollment and retention rates reflect the growing confidence that students and families have in our quality programs and the positive experiences we offer on campus."

VCSU's fall enrollment includes students from 37 different states and 8 countries, with 74 percent coming from North Dakota.

The university's continued growth is driven by strategic investments in campus improvements, strong institutional partnerships, and a reputation for providing quality education at a great value. VCSU's scholarship program awards nearly \$2 million in student aid annually, and the Forward Together Capital Campaign is transforming the campus through major facility upgrades.



This fall, VCSU reopened McCarthy Hall following a \$13.5 million renovation. It now serves as the home of VCSU's nationally acclaimed School of Education. The university also broke ground on the Tharaldson Family Athletic Center—a major expansion of the athletic facilities—which is on track for completion next fall.

"We've seen tremendous momentum over the last five years," said LaFave. "Our commitment to providing quality student experiences remains evident through our on-campus improvements and educational offerings. In fact, 98 percent of students surveyed last year said a VCSU education was worth the investment."

VCSU's graduate school also announced a fall enrollment record with 164 students, which is up 6% from last year and 30% since 2023. The graduate programs, which primarily serve K-12 educators, have been offered since 2005.

"We're proud to see educators choosing to advance their knowledge and skills in our graduate programs," said James Boe, Dean of Graduate Studies and Extended Learning. "Their commitment to lifelong learning and professional growth strengthens their classrooms and benefits their students."

During the 2024-25 academic year, VCSU conferred a record 537 degrees and certificates. That included 295 undergraduate bachelor's degrees – the highest number awarded since 2018-19.

VCSU 2025 Fall Enrollment

Total Enrollment: 1827

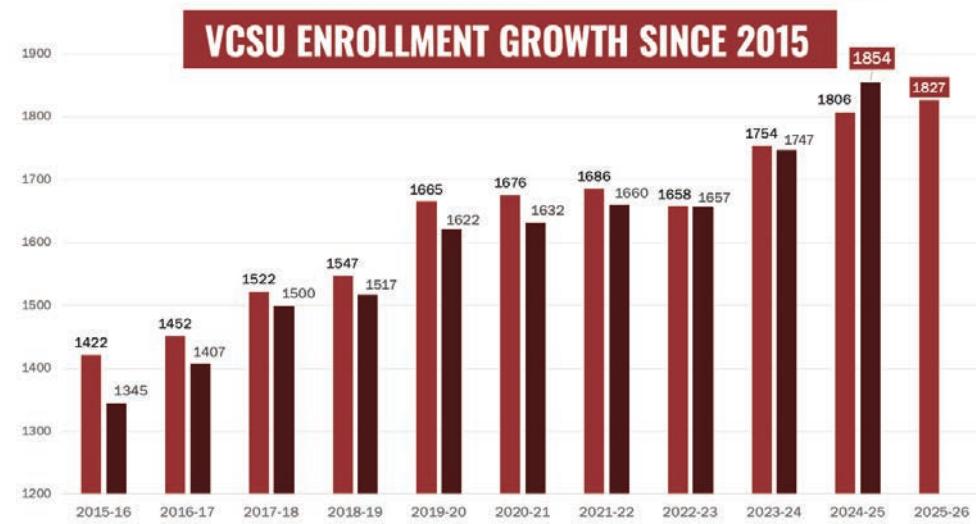
Undergraduate Students: 1663

Graduate Students: 164

VCSU 2025 Fall Retention

First-Time Full-Time: 76.83%
(Record; up from 70.86%)

Overall Retention: 73.25%
(Record; up from 70.45%)





4th Annual Summer Vikings on Central

Valley City State University students, employees and family members enjoyed a night downtown at the annual Summer Vikings on Central held Sept. 11. Summer Vikings is part of the Summer Nights on Central concert series which includes live music, food vendors, games and vendor booths in downtown Valley City. The events continue to grow and have become a “must-do” during the summer months in Valley City. Summer Vikings is specifically geared towards VCSU students as a way to welcome them to the community and familiarize them with various businesses and organizations in town.





Tharaldson Family Athletic Center Construction Update

Work is progressing quickly on the Tharaldson Family Athletic Center, a \$10-13 million expansion of VCSU's athletic facilities.

Crews were working hard in October and November to pour footings and complete the foundation for the new building. The next major step is the actual construction of the building frame, which will begin on-site in January. Walls are projected to be up by the end of February.

The primary building is a custom tension fabric building from Legacy Building Solutions. The new building measures 230 feet by 300 feet and is 73 feet high at the tallest point. The multipurpose indoor turf space will be large enough to play fastpitch softball games.

The install of the indoor turf is one of the final construction items and is scheduled to be completed in August. VCSU will take control of the building shortly after that.

VCSU's LaFave named President at Northern State University



Valley City State University President Alan LaFave has accepted the same position at his alma mater, Northern State University in Aberdeen, S.D.

Northern State University and LaFave announced the hiring on Monday, November 10.

"Although I am extremely excited to be going back to my alma mater, it is a bittersweet moment to realize I am leaving VCSU," LaFave said in a message

to VCSU's campus. "The last seven years have been a rewarding experience, not necessarily for the milestones we have accomplished, but for the relationships I have built with faculty, staff, and students."

LaFave's last official day at VCSU is Dec. 31. He begins his job at Northern State on Jan. 5, 2026.

LaFave was selected to serve at VCSU's president on Sept. 27, 2018, and formally began his service on Dec.

17, 2018. During LaFave's seven years leading VCSU, the university has seen consistent record-breaking enrollment and major campus improvements. Fall headcount has grown 18% under LaFave's leadership, reaching a Fall enrollment record of 1827 students this year.

The campus has also undergone major transformations. The \$32 million Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts opened in 2022, and the University's first-ever capital campaign was launched in 2021. The Capital Campaign has raised money for scholarships and campus projects, including the complete renovation of McCarthy Hall, which reopened this fall. The campaign has also funded construction of the Tharaldson Family Athletic Center, an expansion to VCSU's athletic facilities that began this fall and will be completed in 2026.

LaFave earned his undergraduate degree in music education from Northern State University and worked nearly 30 years there, finishing as provost and vice president for academic affairs before accepting the presidency at VCSU in 2018.

U.S. News Ranks VCSU #2 Public Regional College in the Midwest

Valley City State University has once again earned national recognition in the 2026 U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings, securing the No. 2 spot among Public Regional Colleges in the 12-state Midwest region.

VCSU also maintained its position as the Top Public Regional College in North Dakota for the fifth consecutive year and has been named a U.S. News Best College for 28 straight years.

"We are honored to be recognized as a leader in public higher education, not only in North Dakota but across the Midwest," said Dr. Alan LaFave, President of VCSU. "These rankings affirm what we already know: VCSU offers high-quality, student-centered experiences for all who choose to become Vikings."

In addition to its top-tier public school rankings, VCSU climbed nine spots in the overall Regional Colleges in the Midwest category, rising to #15 out of 89 institutions—both public and private.

Notably, VCSU is one of only two public regional colleges in the Midwest to be named a Best Value School—and the only institution from North Dakota to receive this distinction. This highlights VCSU's dedication to providing quality education at an affordable price.



The Best Value School ranking considers both academic quality and the cost of attendance. VCSU is the top Midwest public regional college in this category. In a recent student survey, 98 percent of VCSU students said their education was worth the investment.

"Our faculty and staff are committed to student success," said Larry Brooks, Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Our efforts to keep education affordable without compromising quality continues to be recognized with rankings such as these from U.S. News."

VCSU also earned U.S. News recognition in several key categories:

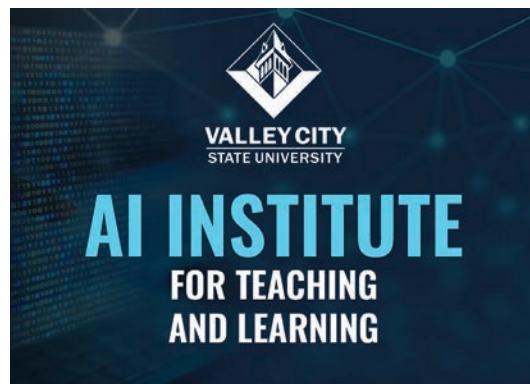
- #3 Best Colleges for Veterans in the Midwest
- #17 Best Value Schools in the Midwest (up from #20)
- #57 Top Performers on Social Mobility (up from #74)

VCSU establishes AI Institute for Teaching and Learning

Valley City State University has launched the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Institute for Teaching and Learning, positioning itself at the forefront of shaping North Dakota's K-12 education future through the integration of AI.

The North Dakota State Board of Higher Education provided final approval for the AI Institute for Teaching and Learning on Sept. 23, and VCSU will now move quickly forward to provide resources and AI training for teachers across the state. The institute is a statewide collaboration of several North Dakota institutions led by VCSU.

A core priority of the AI Institute is equipping K-12 teachers with the knowledge and skills to use artificial intelligence responsibly and ethically in the classroom. Drawing on the leadership and expertise of VCSU faculty along with the partner institutions, the Institute will provide comprehensive, standardized professional development for K-12 educators and administrators. These programs are designed to ensure participants develop the competencies needed to work effectively with AI technologies while



helping students navigate the rapidly evolving world of AI-enabled learning.

"With VCSU's long and distinguished history of preparing teachers and leading in innovation, this is a perfect fit for our university," said Dr. Alan LaFave, president of VCSU. "We are excited to lead this initiative and join forces with several other North Dakota universities and agencies. AI is evolving so quickly and by working together we will help North Dakota teachers adopt and expand new practices more quickly."

The AI Institute received a \$1 million grant from the North Dakota Workforce Education Innovation Fund (WEIF), which provides funding to NDUS institutions for creating and improving educational programs that address the state's workforce needs. The fund was established by the North Dakota Legislature in 2023.

Two other early areas of focus for the AI institute include preparing career-ready graduates who are well-versed in AI, and the use of AI to create and improve personalized learning pathways for students.

VCSU Alum Kirsten Baesler Appointed to Department of Education Position



Kirsten Baesler receives VCSU's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2018.

possibility, and contribution," said Baesler. "In this new role, I hope to elevate and accelerate the kinds of policies that support states, schools, and communities in delivering just that."

A native of Flasher, N.D., Baesler had a 24-year career in the Bismarck Public School system as a vice principal, library media specialist, elementary teacher, and instructional assistant. She holds degrees from Bismarck State College and Minot State University in addition to her master's from VCSU.

"It's where I learned the importance of integrity in leadership, the power of relationships, and the joy of lifelong learning," she said about her time pursuing a VCSU master's degree. "VCSU prepared me not just to teach, but to lead with courage and compassion. It has always been a touchstone in my career, and I carry those lessons with me every day."

She was previously recognized with VCSU's Distinguished Alumni Award and currently serves on the VCSU Foundation Board of Directors.

"Kirsten's leadership and dedication to advancing education across North Dakota and now the nation, reflect the enduring values of VCSU," said Cory Anderson, executive director of the VCSU Foundation. "Her ongoing support and advocacy for her alma mater exemplify the spirit of service and excellence that define our graduates."

During her 13 years leading the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Baesler says she valued the partnerships she and the department were able to make to advance education.

"We built a culture of innovation and shared ownership—teachers, school board members, tribal leaders, lawmakers, families, and students all at the table," she said. "That's rare, and it's what made North Dakota's education system a national leader in so many areas."

Rooted in her North Dakota experiences, Baesler plans to bring a state-based voice to federal decision-making.

"I want to bring a strong, state-based voice to federal decision-making—championing innovations that are already working in places like North Dakota while also removing barriers that get in the way of progress," she said. "My goal is to help build a system that is more responsive to student needs, more supportive of educators, and more accountable for meaningful outcomes."

Valley City State University alum Kirsten Baesler – a 2001 graduate of VCSU's master's program – has been confirmed as the next Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education for the U.S. Department of Education.

Baesler previously served nearly 13 years as the North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction. She was first elected to that position in 2012 and was re-elected to her fourth four-year term in November 2024. She stepped from that position in November to pursue her new role with the U.S. Department of Education.

"At the heart of my work is the belief that every student—no matter their ZIP code—deserves access to a great education that prepares them for a life of purpose,

Alumni Anecdotes



Benjamin Whitmore '21

Benjamin Whitmore, a two-time graduate of Valley City State University, was recently named Post-Secondary Professional of the Year by the North Dakota Association for Technical Education. The award, presented in early August in Bismarck, celebrates Whitmore's outstanding contributions to career and technical education (CTE), recognizing his innovation, leadership, and dedication to culinary arts.

Whitmore is currently serving as Associate Professor of Culinary Arts and Chair of the Culinary Program at North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS).

His journey began at Des Moines Area Community College in 2003 where he earned an Associate of Applied Science in Culinary/Chef Training. He launched BLG Concessions, LLC in Iowa where he served as owner and operator until 2022, gaining valuable industry experience. Whitmore joined the Culinary Arts Program at NDSCS in 2019 as a faculty member, sharing his entrepreneurial endeavors and hands-on expertise with students. That same year, he began pursuing a bachelor's of science degree in Career and Technical Education at VCSU. He graduated in 2021 and immediately started his masters in Education, also at VCSU. He completed that degree in one short year while also teaching full-time.

FEATURE STORY



VCSU employees, members of the building committee, and donors prepare to cut the ribbon on the renovated McCarthy Hall.

McCarthy Hall Returns

A new era for teacher education after \$13.5 million transformation

Valley City State University officially reopened McCarthy Hall with a ribbon cutting ceremony on September 26, celebrating a complete \$13.5 million renovation of the building.

After a yearlong remodel, McCarthy Hall reopened to students and employees in August as the new home for VCSU's renowned School of Education and the Department for Technology and STEM Education. The Ribbon Cutting held during Homecoming Week was the culmination of a project that modernized the building and brought first-class education spaces to VCSU's students.

"We are so grateful for this facility and for all who have helped contribute to it," said Alan LaFave, President of VCSU. "We finally have an updated facility that matches the quality and the reputation of our education program and the faculty. VCSU awards more undergraduate degrees in teaching than any other institution in the state, leading the way in providing this very important and critical part of the North Dakota workforce."

The renovation has done more than just rejuvenate the building; it has also rejuvenated the employees and students who use McCarthy Hall daily. With collaborative

spaces, modern technology, and new resources, students and faculty in the School of Education talk about a new energy in their day-to-day lives.

"My favorite part of being back in McCarthy is being connected again," said Delaney Vilhauer, a senior major in Elementary Education. Delaney took education classes in McCarthy during her first two years before the renovation and is now finishing her degree in the new space. "We have everything we need in one place. The education community we have built here is so strong, and I'm very grateful I get to see it strengthen every day."

McCarthy Hall was built in the early 1930s and initially used as a training school for prospective teachers attending VCSU. The building later housed a wide variety of VCSU courses including technology education, art and psychology. Following the renovations, the first floor now includes a large general classroom, meeting spaces and the offices for the Department of Technology and STEM Education. The second and third floors are for the School of Education and feature classrooms, work rooms, meeting spaces, offices and collaborative spaces for students and faculty.

"The McCarthy renovation was a game changer," said

Joan Klein, assistant professor in the School of Education. "Our faculty and students are more united than before, sharing one beautifully functioning location. Professors have developed an even stronger community from shared office suites and connect daily with students gathered in our common lounge. We are so grateful for this incredible opportunity."

Allen Burgad '89, Dean for the VCSU School of Education, expressed his appreciation for the new spaces during the ribbon cutting ceremony.

"Today isn't about just cutting a ribbon on a newly renovated building," he said. "It's about opening doors to even greater opportunities for our students, our faculty, and the schools we partner with. This new teacher education center will help us continue to prepare educators who go on to impact students, not only here in North Dakota, but across the country and even internationally."

Originally founded as a teacher's college in 1890, VCSU has continued to keep that mission a central focus for the university. More than 1500 alumni are currently working in North Dakota schools as teachers or administrators.

The renovation of McCarthy Hall is part of the first-ever capital campaign project at VCSU. The \$13.5 million project was made possible through the generous support of donors, VCSU funds and

Continued on page 10





Continued from page 9

\$11.5 million allocated by the North Dakota Legislature and approved by former Gov. Doug Burgum. The bulk of the private donations came from the Holcomb and Stowman families who have deep connections to the university.

A dedicated classroom is named “Linda’s Literacy Library” in recognition of Linda Holcomb, who taught at VCSU for more than 30 years. Her son Laren spoke at the ribbon cutting on behalf of the families.

“My mother loved her students, they held a special place in her heart,” he said. “My family often gets a chance to meet her former students throughout our daily lives, and we hear how much her former students loved her too. Four generations of my family have passed through VCSU. It truly is a special place for my family, and we are extremely excited to see all the wonderful improvements through the campus now and coming in the future.”



Watch the Ribbon
Cutting Ceremony



Members of the Holcomb/Stowman families check out Linda’s Literacy Library, named after longtime VCSU professor Linda Holcomb.

About the Project

The remodel of McCarthy Hall was headed by PCL Construction and designed by Foss Architecture and Interiors. The project took about 12 months to complete and was finished on time and under budget. Named after Margaret McCarthy, who directed the college training school from 1919 to 1945, the building was originally built in the 1930s.

"The ribbon cutting at McCarthy Hall marks a proud milestone for PCL Construction," said Trent Johnson, vice president and district manager for PCL's Midwest operations. "Leading the renovation of this historic building was an honor, as we transformed it into a vibrant, modern space for VCSU's School of Education. Collaborating closely with university partners, we preserved its legacy while enhancing functionality and connectivity. This space is built for the future, where educators will be inspired, and innovation will thrive."

Small details – such as retaining some of the original flooring and reusing the wood railings on the staircases – help the building retain some of its historic character. During demolition, the team found hidden historical gems such as coins, soda cans and a newspaper that was enclosed within the structure.

"During the design of the McCarthy Hall Renovation, Foss Architecture & Interiors celebrated its 125th anniversary—a milestone that made the project especially meaningful," said Adam Peterson, architect and principal at Foss Architecture. "Just as VCSU has been preparing educators for over 125 years, our firm has been shaping the built environment for generations of students. To bring these two legacies together in one project was an incredible honor, and it reflects our shared commitment to creating inspiring, future-focused learning spaces that continue to serve students for decades to come."



What They're Saying



"The excitement my students bring to class each day reflects the sense of belonging and purpose created in our collaborative spaces. Thoughtfully designed areas for teamwork, combined with flexible seating and modern technology, have turned the classroom into a community where curiosity, connection, and high-level learning flourish."

David Hanson '83, Associate Professor



"My favorite part of being back in McCarthy is being connected again. We have everything we need in one place. The education community we have built here is so strong, and I'm very grateful I get to see it strengthen every day."

Delaney Vilhauer, Senior Elementary Education Major



"The McCarthy renovation was a game changer. Our faculty and students are more united than before, sharing one beautifully functioning location. Professors have developed an even stronger community from shared office suites and connect daily with students gathered in our common lounge. We are so grateful for this incredible opportunity!"

Joan Klein, Assistant Professor



"I've really enjoyed using the student resources in McCarthy Hall. It's equipped with a variety of materials from paper cutters and markers to a closet full of math manipulatives that make learning more hands-on and engaging. Having access to these resources has made my projects more meaningful and has deepened my understanding of teaching concepts."

Paisley Kleven, Junior Elementary Education Major

VCSU Featured on Amazon Prime TV Series

Valley City State University will be featured on an upcoming episode of *The College Tour*, a national TV series streaming on Amazon Prime.

The College Tour filmed on VCSU's campus September 8-12. The university and 10 standout students and alumni are profiled in the episode. VCSU is the first North Dakota school to be featured by *The College Tour*.

The episode premieres nationally on The College Tour website in January. VCSU's episode premieres on Amazon Prime in June 2026.

"We are excited about this opportunity to showcase VCSU in the national spotlight," said Alan LaFave, president of VCSU. "Host Alex Boylan and the crew were amazing to work with during their visit to campus. We can't wait to see the final episode."

The College Tour is an Amazon Prime TV series brought to life by some of Hollywood's most renowned producers. Created and hosted by Alex Boylan, a former winner of *The Amazing Race*, the series was inspired by his niece's journey to find the perfect college. *The College Tour* is available to stream for free on The College Tour app and website, which reaches over 60,000 high school counselors nationwide.



Saskatchewan will receive the same special tuition rate as Minnesota students who attend VCSU.

Nicknamed the Neighbor Rate, the new tuition rate offers affordable education opportunities to residents in all states and provinces contiguous to North Dakota.

"VCSU has a long history of providing quality education at an affordable cost," said VCSU president Alan LaFave. "This tuition adjustment extends our affordable opportunities to even more students in our region, offering all our neighboring states and provinces the same value."

Neighbor Rate for Neighbor States

VCSU Reduces Tuition for Regional Out-of-State Students

Valley City State University announced this summer that residents of South Dakota, Montana, Manitoba and

Students from South Dakota, Montana, Manitoba and Saskatchewan were able to take advantage of the reduced rate for the first time starting with the 2025-26 school year.

"With strong alumni bases in all our contiguous states and provinces, this is a great opportunity for the children of our alumni to attend VCSU at an extremely affordable rate," said Mark Potts, Director for Public Relations at VCSU.

For the 2025-26 school year, tuition for students from the five neighboring states and provinces is \$260.70 per credit, or \$7821 for yearly tuition (15 credits per semester/30 credits per year.) This rate makes VCSU tuition a more affordable option than many in-state universities for those students.

With higher education rates soaring across the country, VCSU has worked hard to keep its tuition reasonable for students. The school awards nearly \$2 million in scholarships each year, and approximately 87% of incoming freshmen receive academic scholarship dollars.

VCSU Awarded \$478,000 Research Grant

Valley City State University has been awarded a \$478,000 grant from the National Science Foundation that will be used to fund VCSU undergraduate research projects over the next four years.

VCSU is among 10 partnering institutions in North Dakota that were awarded grant money for a collaborative proposal to build a sustainable science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research and education ecosystem in North Dakota. Ten colleges and universities in North Dakota will collaborate to expand STEM research capacity in the state, connect research communities, build STEM research literacy in rural populations, and strengthen the STEM community at the five Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) in North Dakota.

The award will provide research opportunities for both VCSU students and faculty, expanding the school's research capacity by supporting salaries and supplies. Grant money will also be used to build collaborations with area high schools and support their faculty and students in research initiatives.

"This grant makes it possible to continue research within the VCSU science department and provide students with valuable high impact experiences that support their future careers," said Hilde van Gijssel, Ph.D., M.Ed. '15, professor of science at VCSU. "This grant supports salaries and supplies for VCSU Science professors to develop research projects in their area of expertise. It also supports VCSU student salaries and creates opportunities to recruit high school students into the research program at VCSU. Research involving undergraduate students started with Dr. Andre DeLorme '79 (faculty emeritus) in the late 1990s and has had previous support from ND INBRE and through the ND EPSCoR office (ND-INSPIRE and ND-ACES). I am excited to continue the research we have built over the last five years with ND-ACES."

Funded by NSF under their EPSCoR Collaborations for Optimizing Research Ecosystems Research Infrastructure Improvement (E-CORE RII) program, the grant was awarded for the Sustainable Programs Advancing Research and Knowledge across North Dakota (SPARK-ND) proposal. NSF has awarded the project for an anticipated total amount of \$7,963,804 over four years. VCSU will receive \$478,893 over a four-year period.



Keith Baumgartner is presented with the Staff Emeritus Award by members of the VCSU Foundation staff. From left: Loree Morehouse '89, Cory Anderson '89, Keith Baumgartner, President Alan LaFave and Kim Hesch '91.

Baumgartner Named Staff Emeritus

Longtime VCSU staff member Keith Baumgartner was recently honored with the prestigious title of Staff Emeritus. Keith's 30-year tenure with Valley City State University was marked by unparalleled dedication, loyalty, and productivity. He worked 31 years as a facility services staff member at the W.E. Osmon Fieldhouse and also drove the university bus for athletics.

"Keith set an exceptionally high standard for productivity within the athletic department, a benchmark that has yet to be surpassed even after his retirement," said Cory Anderson '89, Executive Director for University Advancement and former VCSU coach. "His work ethic and commitment were evident in every task he undertook, ensuring that everything was completed not just adequately, but with excellence and timeliness."

Keith's contributions also extended beyond his primary responsibilities. He was and still is a steadfast supporter and invaluable contributor to the Viking Booster Board. His loyalty and support in this capacity have been unmatched by any staff member from that department. His legacy of excellence and dedication continues to inspire all who had the privilege of working with him.

Keith retired before there was a Staff Emeritus award in place at VCSU. He was nominated for the award by the VCSU Foundation staff.

Investing in the Future of VCSU Through the ND Challenge Grant Program

On July 1, the North Dakota Higher Education Challenge Fund Grant was renewed through December 2026.

The N.D. Higher Education Challenge Fund, funded by the North Dakota Legislature, aims to advance academics at institutions of higher education across the state. The program provides \$1 in matching grant funds for every \$2 privately raised by North Dakota university and college foundations. To maximize our allocation, we must raise \$2.64 million, which will unlock a \$1.32 million state match.

Currently, the funds support more than 235 scholarship endowments. This summer, our VCSU Foundation Board approved increasing the minimum amount to start a scholarship endowment from \$10,000 to \$25,000. This amount will generate interest earnings of \$1,250, which can be used for scholarships.

If you are interested in contributing to an endowment but not starting one, donations can be made to the VCSU Foundation Academic Endowment. This fund provides long-term flexibility in meeting our scholarship needs. We have allocated \$1.68 million in scholarships for the current academic year.

Since 2012, VCSU's enrollment has grown by 34 percent, with the university achieving new fall enrollment records in 12 of the past 13 years. This year's total includes 1,663 undergraduate and 164 graduate students. The total



Svenningsen-Hesch

headcount of 1827 surpasses last fall's previous record of 1,806 students.

The university's continued growth is driven by strategic investments in campus improvements, strong institutional partnerships, and a reputation for providing quality education at an excellent value. VCSU's scholarship program awards and the *Forward Together Capital Campaign* are transforming the campus through major facility upgrades.

In addition to the state match, North Dakota residents who give qualified endowment funds can receive a 40% state income tax credit for gifts of \$5,000 or more. It is one of the most generous charitable incentives in the country.

For those who are required to take a minimum distribution (RMD) from a retirement account, directing that distribution to an endowment can also be a smart way to reduce taxable income while making a lasting impact for students.

Alumni, your legacy matters. As a proud Viking, you know firsthand the value of a VCSU education. Now, you have the opportunity to pay it forward and help future generations of students thrive. Whether you choose to establish a new scholarship endowment or contribute to the Academic Endowment Fund, your gift will help unlock vital matching funds and directly support student success.

Let's continue building the future—together. Visit www.vcsualumni.org/give to make your gift today or call our office at 701-845-7203 to learn more.



Multiply Your Impact with the Challenge Grant



Make every dollar count twice! Gifts received by December 1, 2026 are eligible for matching dollars—including pledges over seven years, RMD gifts, and even estate commitments.

Every gift helps grow the VCSU Foundation Academic Endowment and will be matched \$1 for every \$2 you give.

Gifts of \$5,000 or more to an endowment may also qualify for a 40% North Dakota income tax credit, making your impact go even further.

Bill '87 and Michele (Bischoff) '86 Trader

Donors and Students meet at Scholarship Dinner

The VCSU Foundation's annual scholarship dinner was held October 6 at the Valley City Eagles Club with more than 100 attendees.

The dinner provides an opportunity for individual donors and organizations to meet the students who are awarded their scholarships. This time also allows students a chance to say "Thank you" to their scholarship donors and learn more about why the scholarship was established.

Anyone interested in establishing a scholarship with the VCSU Foundation or taking advantage of the ND Challenge Grant Program can contact the VCSU Foundation Office at 701-845-7203 for more information.



Atibordin Sophonsakulrat, Dave and Bev Melgaard, and Rosie Anderson (David Melgaard Scholarship)



Hadlee Mathias (Valley City Lions Club Memorial Scholarship) and Dennis Nathan



Louis Wieland '01, Kendra Machart (John & Margaret Wieland Memorial Scholarship) and Angela Wieland



Bobbi Jo and Jeff Nathan, Atibordin Sophonsakulrat & Rosie Anderson (Jeff & Teresa Nathan Scholarship)



Lloyd Thilmony, Tarren Larson (Corcoran Matzke Memorial Scholarship), and Margaret Thilmony



Wesley Gill and Wyatt Landeis (Peggy Lee Music Scholarship), Myron '62 & Jenneice '67 Sommerfeld, and Alyssa Thomsen (Myron and Jenneice Sommerfeld Scholarship)



Joy Rand, Tommy Cox (Roger & Joy Rand Scholarship), and Roger Rand



Mary Lee (Peterson) Nielson '79, Kristen Spanier (Alex Lowe Peterson Memorial Scholarship) and Steve Nielson.



David Olson '79, Tommy Cox (Vince & Dorothy Olson Scholarship), and Linda Olson '77



Gavin Gerhardt, Jan Stowman and Parker Jacobson (Charles & Janice Stowman Scholarship)



Kathy Finstad, Jaycee Richter (James & Elsie Ostrem Memorial Scholarship) and Mark Finstad

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 recognizes future leaders under the age of 40 based on the following criteria of demonstrated achievement in chosen career, demonstrated leadership and commitment to service of others.



Trent Kosek '11 and
President LaFave



Ashley (Smette) Krinke '08
and President LaFave



Jessica (Hintz) Stoen '10
and President LaFave

TRENT KOSEL '11

Trent graduated from Valley City State University in 2011 with a double major in Chemistry and Math Education. He received a master's degree from Minot State University in 2015 and a master's in educational leadership from NDSU in 2017.

Trent has taught and coached at Oakes Public Schools and Northern Cass High School. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Assistant Football coach at Valley City State University. In 2022, Trent received the Junior Faculty Excellence Award. This award recognizes faculty for their exceptional dedication and commitment to students and the university by outstanding teaching, scholarly activities, or university service.

Trent has served on the Viking Oarsmen Board of Directors since 2019 and has done a tremendous job of improving the operations of the Oarsmen club. Each year they have seen increased membership and revenue from his oversight. He has improved communications and active participation throughout the football alumni base. Dennis McCulloch, VCSU Athletic Director stated, "Trent exemplifies the kind of educator-coach who models discipline, balance, integrity and is a significant role model for our Student-Athletes. His calm demeanor is a stabilizing force for everyone that works with him and the students he works with. His calmness allows for rational thought instead of reactive choices, there are so many examples of how this has benefited the Oarsmen club and our football program over the years."

When asked to share a special memory of his time at VCSU he said, "I have fond memories of my time at VCSU whether it was attending classes, competing on the football team, or participating in clubs like Viking Ambassadors. The individuals on campus made this place a second home that I always was happy to come back to. That is why it was an easy decision to return and work on campus when a position was open. I now hope I can give students a similar experience to the one that I received while I was here."

ASHLEY (SMETTE) KRINKE '08

Ashley is a December 2008 graduate of Valley City State University majoring in Elementary Education and a minor in Technology Education. She earned the VCSU Exceptional Student Teacher Award in 2009. She received her master's in counseling in 2015 and a master's in educational leadership in 2017 both from NDSU.

She began her teaching career at Valley City Public Schools before going to Northern Cass Public School in 2011 where she currently serves as the Elementary School Counselor.

Ashley's leadership is rooted in her strong commitment to relationships and community. She has been instrumental in advocating for the whole child, ensuring learners' academic, social, and emotional needs are met. She helped bring an on-site counselor from The Village to Northern Cass, starting with just one day a week and expanding into full-time services, now including family counseling. She also partners with NDSU by hosting counseling interns, giving them valuable real-world experience in schools.

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed—she was named the North Dakota Elementary School Counselor of the Year in 2020. But beyond titles, Ashley is known for her reliability, dedication, creativity, and ability to inspire those around her. She is an active listener, problem-solver, organizer, and innovator in education with a true growth mindset.

Ashley said, "I have so many great memories at VCSU, but one of the most vivid memories was one of my first nights on campus during the freshman orientation. I came to VCSU not knowing anyone and felt quite alone all day long on that first day. There was a street dance outside of our dorms one evening and several of us ended up standing in the entry just peering out trying to decide what we were going to do! Instead of heading out to the dance, we opted for a night of playing cards on the floor for hours. That night led to lasting friendships and future roommates. From that moment on, VCSU and the Valley City community felt like home. Later I completed my student teaching in Valley City, taught there for two years out of college, and built a youth group program at Epworth Church. Valley holds a lot of special memories for me."

JESSICA (HINTZ) STOEN '10

Jessica is a second-grade teacher at Northern Cass School District, a position she has held for the last 16 years. She is a 2010 graduate of Valley City State University, earning a Bachelor of Science in elementary education. She later earned a Master of Education in educational leadership from NDSU.

Jessica received the Northern Cass Teacher of the Year in 2015-2016 and the North Dakota Education Excellence in Personalized Learning Award. In April of this year, she received the Milken Educator National Teaching Award during a school assembly. Milken Educator Awards Vice President Jennifer Fuller said, "Jessica's creative and personalized approach to teaching creates a profound, positive impact on her students, their families and her colleagues in and beyond her school community." Jessica was the only recipient in North Dakota this 2024-25 season

and the first-ever in the Northern Cass School District's history.

Jessica's unwavering dedication to education is evident in the enriching, engaging learning experiences she crafts for her students, as well as her relentless commitment to professional growth for both herself and her peers. She is a role model and example of teaching excellence for educators everywhere.

When asked to share a special memory of her time at VCSU, Jessica said, "The memories I made will last a lifetime. Some of my favorite memories include participating in the VCAB activities and events, whether it was themed dances, scavenger hunts around town, the haunted hall, or Grocery Bag Bingo on campus. These experiences not only made college fun but also gave me the chance to form lifelong friendships that I still treasure to this day!"

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.

BRUCE BABCOCK '78

Bruce Babcock graduated from Valley City State University in 1978, earning majors in Chemistry, Mathematics, and Earth and Environmental Science, along with a minor in Physics. During his time at VCSU, Bruce lettered in both football and track, setting his foundation for a lifelong commitment to athletics and community. He later pursued an advanced education, receiving a Master of Aeronautical Science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida and graduating from the USAF Air Command and Staff College.

Babcock is a retired United States Air Force Reserve Lieutenant Colonel, serving a total of 28 years in both active duty and the reserves. He retired from the USAFR in April 2007, having accumulated a total of 1,500 military flying hours.

He also enjoyed a distinguished career with Delta Airlines, retiring in 2021 after 30 years of service. His final flying base was Los Angeles, where he served as a Boeing 777 First Officer, primarily flying routes to Asia. Throughout his career, Babcock held positions as Captain and First Officer on various aircraft. He currently has over 20,000 civilian flying hours.

His support began with a gift to the Alumni Campaign in 1992, and he has continued giving ever since. As an Impact Scholarship donor, Babcock provides meaningful support to VCSU student-athletes, ensuring that students have the resources and opportunities to succeed both on and off the field.

He has also grabbed an oar and led for advocacy by his leadership and development of the Oarsmen Club. He has been an active member since its inception; served on the Advisory Board since 2018; and is a current executive board member as well as membership chair since 2021. Through his consistent presence at events, his work to encourage others to give, and his own example of loyal support, Babcock has become a cornerstone of the Oarsmen Club and a tireless advocate for VCSU.

Being a VCSU graduate has allowed Babcock to maintain lasting connections with former classmates and teammates, a network that has remained important to him throughout his life and career. His pride in being a Viking is unwavering, and he continues to embody the "Be Viking" spirit, considering his VCSU roots to be a special part of his identity. Football and Track brought him to VCSU, and now VCSU brings him home.

Babcock's fondest memory of his time at VCSU centers around homecoming week. He recalls the excitement that was built throughout the week, the camaraderie of fraternity and sorority float building, the spirited pep rallies, and engaging activities at the Student Center. The parade and influx of new friends and visitors for the football game made homecoming an unforgettable experience. As a football player, the homecoming game was always one of the most significant events of the season. Babcock cherishes having those experiences and still enjoys returning each year.

Bruce and his wife, Karyn, currently reside in Groton, S.D.



Kendra Krueger '12 (Alumni Association President), Bruce Babcock '78 and President Alan Lafave.



From left: Chad Slyter '95, Kimberley (Nudell) Webster '73, Alan Webster '74, Kalyn (Utt) Botz '00, Nate Soulis '19 and President Alan LaFave.

Certificate of Merit Awards

The VCSU Alumni Association presented five alumni with the Certificate of Merit award during Homecoming Weekend. The Certificate of Merit was established by the VCSU Alumni Association to recognize alumni for service, accomplishments, or other noteworthy honors.

KALYN (UTT) BOTZ '00

Kalyn received her Master of Education in Special Education from the University of North Dakota. She is the transition/career work experience coordinator for the Sheyenne Valley Area Career and Technology Center.

- 2019 Advocate of the Year – Freedom Resource Center
- 2019 NDCTE Impact Award
- 2025 Friends of ND Counselor Award

CHAD SLYTER '95

Chad received his Master of Science degree in Psychology with an emphasis in Sport Psychology from Capella University. He is currently a teacher at Oak Grove Lutheran School and the girls' basketball coach.

- 2001 MSU-Bottineau Distinguished Young Alumnus Award
- 2011 Dakota Athletic Conference Softball Coach of the Year
- Coached VCSU Softball to their first National tournament in 20 years
- 2015 Eastern Dakota Conference Softball Coach of the Year
- 2021 CobberSID Coach of the Year
- 2021 Earned his 300th career victory as a Softball Coach
- 2024 Oak Grove Lutheran Shared Value Faculty Award for Community

NATE SOULIS '19

Nate teaches junior high health and senior high physical education at Thompson Public School. He also serves as the Thompson baseball coach.

- 3X Region 2 Coach of the Year
- 2X ND State B Baseball Coach of the Year
- 4X NDHSAA State B Baseball Championships
- 2X ND Legion State B Championships

ALAN WEBSTER '74

Alan is a retired teacher and coach. After retiring, he served 6 years on the Custer School Board. He and his wife Kim operate a farm in Ellendale, N.D., and live in Custer, S.D., the majority of the year.

- South Dakota Middle School Wrestling Coaches Hall of Fame
- South Dakota High School Wrestling Coaches Hall of Fame
- Custer South Dakota High School Teacher and Coaches Hall of Fame
- 2018 Helping Hands Award

KIMBERLEY (NUDELL) WEBSTER '73

Kimberley taught for over 41 years and retired in 2014. She spends her time nowadays with family, grandchildren, volunteering, and spending time at their farm in Ellendale and main home in Custer, S.D.

- 1983 Outstanding Young Woman of America
- 1987 Golden Apple Award
- 1998 State Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching
- 2005 SD National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year
- 2008 Teacher of Year – Custer School District
- 2008 West River Region 7 Teacher of the Year
- 2018 Helping Hands Award

Homecoming Recap

Valley City State University

Homecoming was held Sept. 22-27. Students and alumni enjoyed a week of fun activities and various events. VCSU Football and Volleyball combined to go 3-0 during their Homecoming home games and the weather was perfect for a Saturday morning parade in downtown Valley City.



VCSU students Tucker Johnson and Amelia Johnson were named the 2025 Homecoming King and Queen.



Emma Muggli, left, and Jordan Mount won the annual Bill Osmon Fun Run which kicks off Homecoming week each year at VCSU. They are pictured with members of the Bill Osmon family: Carol Osmon Wolf and Dana Wolf.





INSIDE

ATHLETICS

vcsuvikings.com



vcsuvikings

100 Years of Being Vikings

Steve Olson '88, Assistant Athletics Director



Olson

VCSU is moving forward with our celebration of being the Vikings for 100 years. Valley City State has had athletics for more than 100 years, but 100 years ago our student body adopted the name Vikings. This year we have had celebrations commemorating our history of being the Vikings.

During Homecoming, we had our volleyball alumni back to celebrate 100 years of being the Vikings. They attended the volleyball match on Friday night as the Vikings defeated Dickinson State. The next day, the alumni scrimmaged and attended the football game.

We had our football alumni back for the Mayville State game, and the Vikings picked up a nice win against the Comets. The alumni who came back were recognized in the end zone prior to the game and formed a tunnel helping the current VCSU team enter the field from the Pridestone.

In late November, we welcomed back men's and women's basketball alumni along with all Cheer Team members.

Throughout the fall, we have had Game Ball Presentations by alumni at our home games, celebrating this milestone of 100 years. It's been fun to see our alumni come back and relive their memories as Viking athletes.

Through our main athletic social media accounts, we have also been posting stories, memories and historic pictures from the past 100 years. To learn more about our 100 years celebration, contact Steve Olson at steven.c.olson@vcsu.edu.

We encourage you to give VCSU Vikings a follow on Facebook and Instagram and check out the following:

- **Monday's Viking Lore**
Stories, Memories of VCSU athletics
- **Tuesday's Picture**
Historic Pictures of VCSU
- **Wednesday's HOF Timeline**
Teams and individuals in the hall of fame
- **Thursday – Saturday**
Game Day Stories





Valley City State University is celebrating 100 years of being Vikings during the 2025-26 athletic season. We are welcoming back alumni to partake in special gatherings along with inviting alumni to present the official game ball prior to athletic competitions this season.



Vanessa (Pilipchuk) Kocka '01 is one of numerous VCSU alumni who have presented the official game ball prior to VCSU athletic events this season.



Allyson (Suhr) Dockter '16 with daughters Piper & Olivia



Jeremy Peschel '04 and Mayor Dave Carlsrud



Mark '92, Larry '66 and Tyler '19 Ukestad



Eric '12 and Allen '89 Burgad



Erin Klingenberg, former coach



Jackie (Bisson) Lusk '98, Kelly (Winkels) Holaday '97, and Kelli (Geurtz) Heiser '98, members of the 1996 VCSU Hall of Fame volleyball team.



Bailey Nelson '23

2025 HALL OF FAME RECAP

From top to bottom, Steve Becher '84, Brittany (Lehner) Evans '14, Jordan Maher '11 and Coach Jill DeVries receive their plaques from VCSU President Alan LaFave.



Courtney Titus '13 (left) and Katie (Ralston) Berry '14 (right), receive the plaque for the 2012-13 Women's basketball team.



Jordan Aus '15, a member of the 2011 Football team, spoke on behalf of the team.



Caitlyn (Wojahn) Graf '11 receiving her plaque from VCSU President Alan LaFave.



SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS



Frida Barrera

Barrera Places 73rd at Cross Country National Championships

VCSU freshman Frida Barrera qualified for the NAIA Cross Country National Championships and placed 73rd in the nation, highlighting the fall cross country season. Barrera, from Clara City, Minn., took third place at the Frontier Conference Championships to punch her ticket to nationals. At nationals in Tallahassee, Florida, Barrera placed 73rd out of 331 runners with her 6K time of 22:38.3. It was VCSU's best finish ever at the national meet in the women's 6K race.

The Vikings took part in five meets this fall, starting the season at the Dragon Twilight Meet, where the men's team took 4th of 8. There, Barrera took 15th place running a 18:46.4 5K, which is the fourth fastest 5K in school history. Junior Mason Brehmer set the school record in the men's 6k running an 18:38.1. The Vikings later ran in the Bluehawk Invitational held in Medora, N.D. There, the women were led by Barrera while the men were led by Zach Baumgartner. At the Jimmie Invite, Barrera once again paced the women, taking 2nd among NAIA runners. At the Marauder Open, the Vikings ran against DII competition in University of Mary, Northern State, and Minot State. Mason Brehmer took seventh place to lead the Viking men and Barrera took 5th place.

At the 2025 Frontier Conference Championships, Barrera took third running a 22:28.90, qualifying for the NAIA National Championships. The Viking women took 9th of 11 teams at the conference championships. The men also finished 9th in the conference.

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.

See our website at 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

Viking Golf Begins Season in Frontier Conference

The Valley City State golf teams kicked off their first season in the Frontier Conference this fall. The conference designates two Frontier Conference Invitational Tournaments in the fall and the Frontier Conference Championships in the spring. Invitational Tournaments this year were hosted by Dickinson State and Rocky Mountain College.

The Vikings started the season by hosting the Viking Fall Invite in Bismarck, N.D., where the men's team finished 3rd out of 8 teams. Junior Zach St. Aubin took ninth at the two-day event, tying the 18-hole school record with a round of -2 (67). The VCSU men went on to take 2nd place, and first among NAIA schools, at the Spartan Invite. On the women's side, Sydney Carlson, a senior, took first after carding a 77-82 (159). Sadie Neustel, a freshman, took second with a 77-84 (161).

At the Fall Frontier Invitational hosted by Dickinson State, the Viking men would take 7th place and a few weeks later, they improved their finish at the RMC Beartooth Invitational, finishing 5th of 8 against conference teams.

Back in the Dakotas, Sydney Carlson recorded a fourth-place finish for the Viking women at the one-day UJ Fall Classic. The Vikings closed the season at the Comet Invitational, where the men's team tied for third behind only UJ and Concordia. Sydney Carlson finished third on the female side, going 82-81 (163).

The Frontier Conference Championships is set for April 27-29 at Papago GC in Phoenix, Ariz. All-Conference Selections will be determined by the lowest nine rounds for men and the lowest seven rounds for women over the course of the three-meet conference season.



Sydney Carlson

Volleyball Finishes 7th in Frontier Conference

Valley City State University Volleyball concluded its first season in the Frontier Conference with a 13-15 overall record and went 11-11 in conference games.

The Vikings started the season receiving votes in the national poll and finished the year 7th in the Frontier,

a highly competitive conference that consistently had six teams ranked or receiving votes in the Top 25. The Vikings had wins over four teams that were receiving votes at the time, including Morningside University, Dickinson State University, Montana Tech and Dakota State University.

Valley City State dominated North Dakota competition, going a perfect 6-0 with home and away victories against Mayville State University, Dickinson State University and Bismarck State College.



This season, the Vikings celebrated senior JayCee Richter as she set the school record in career digs, surpassing Shelley Cockerill's 1,958 digs, during an Oct. 26 game against Rocky Mountain College. Richter, a Linton, N.D. native, recorded 21 digs in three sets, and 38 digs in five sets the night before earning her Frontier Conference and NAIA Defender-of-the-Week honors. Richter is the first Viking to record over 2,000 digs and closed the regular season with 2,001 digs.

Offensively, the Vikings had three seniors with more than 200 kills on the season, including Macy Fridgen, Danielle Hagler, and Morgan Freije. Assisting their hitters are freshman Madden Bogenreif and junior Gracie Schumacher, who have both passed for more than 400 assists.

The Vikings were the No. 7 seed for the Frontier Conference Postseason Tournament in Helena, Mont. VCSU had its season come to a close with a 3-0 loss to No. 2 seed Bellevue University – which was the No. 7-ranked team in the entire NAIA.



VCSU Shooting Sports Competes at National Tournament

The Valley City State University shooting sports team had five competitors travel to Bunker Hill, Illinois, for the USA Clay Target League College National Championship this fall.

Cali Steffan, Gretchen Deaver, Kasey Odegaard, Jake Hennings and Tyler Johnson all represented VCSU at the national championship, which included 26 teams and more than 240 shooters. Deaver led VCSU by hitting 189 out of 200 targets, while Cali Steffan hit 184 out of 200 at the national tournament.

Regular Season Tournament Results:

Gretchen Deaver earned the High Score Female award at the North Dakota Fall Collegiate Championships in September. Deaver shot an impressive total of 185/200, sweeping the female division by taking first place in all three disciplines. Andy Nelson and Jake Hennings both

placed in the Top 10 in doubles trap.

VCSU's Skeet Team took first place at the annual Bison Blast tournament in October. VCSU also placed second in Trap Shooting at the tournament, facing teams from North Dakota State University, University of Jamestown, University of Mary, Bismarck State College, and Concordia-Moorhead.

Conference Results:

Valley City State University finished its Fall conference season in second place in both skeet and trap shooting during the five-week conference competition.

Individually, Ty Awender was 2nd in skeet and Cali Steffan was 3rd. In trap shooting, Steffan was 3rd in the conference. VCSU had five shooters in the Top 10 of skeet and had four shooters Top 10 in trap shooting.



Baseball goes 3-2 in Fall Season

The Viking baseball team played five countable games during the fall season against North Dakota schools, finishing with a 3-2 record.

The Vikings played a doubleheader at Dickinson State and split with the Blue Hawks. VCSU also split two games with Bismarck State and beat Mayville State during a game in Valley City. One game against Mayville State was postponed until the spring.

The Vikings hit .289 as a team in the fall led by Connor Hoyt. The senior from Jamestown hit .400 in five games and led the team with five RBI. He also led the team in hits, runs scored, and total bases. Newcomer Nick Senn proved a solid addition to the roster by hitting .353 and starting all five games behind the plate. The junior from Visalia, California, led the team with four walks and an on-base percentage at .476.



Viking Football Finishes 6-4

The Viking football team wrapped up its first season in the Frontier Conference with an overall record of 6-4 and a 3-3 mark in the Frontier Conference East Division. Highlights of the season included three shutout victories and a 29-21 win over Dickinson State University.

Another highlight of the season included the long trip out to Le Grande, Oregon, for a game with Eastern Oregon. The Vikings defense shutout the Mountaineers for their second straight shutout.

The Vikings defeated Mayville State 21-0 for the third shutout of the season. And on Senior Day, the Vikings scored late to pull out a 29-21 over Dickinson State. Junior Jake Deutsch had eight receptions for 145 yards and two touchdowns, all career highs. He earned conference Offensive Player of the Week honors for his efforts. Senior TaQuez Chatman had five tackles, three for loss and three sacks in the win. Plus, his deflection of a pass late in the game stopped Dickinson State on fourth down to preserve the win. It was the first win over the Blue Hawks in six years. The last win in the series for the Vikings was a 23-22 win on October 26th, 2019.

The six-win season is the best since 2021 when the Vikings went 8-2.



2025-26 BASKETBALL CONFERENCE SCHEDULES

Dec. 5	@ Bellevue University	5/7 p.m.
Dec. 6	@ Dakota State University	5/7 p.m.
Dec. 12	@ Montana Tech	5/7 p.m.
Dec. 13	@ Montana Western	5/7 p.m.
Dec. 20	Men vs. Dakota Wesleyan	2 p.m.
Jan. 2	vs. Montana State Northern	5/7 p.m.
Jan. 3	vs. Univ. of Providence	5/7 p.m.
Jan. 9	@ Rocky Mountain College	5/7 p.m.
Jan. 10	@ Carroll College	5/7 p.m.
Jan. 16	vs. Bismarck State	5/7 p.m.
Jan. 17	vs. Dickinson State	5/7 p.m.
Jan. 20	vs. Mayville State	5/7 p.m.
Jan. 30	vs. Dakota State	5/7 p.m.
Jan. 31	vs. Bellevue University	5/7 p.m.
Feb. 6	@ Univ. of Providence	5/7 p.m.
Feb. 7	@ Montana State Northern	5/7 p.m.
Feb. 13	@ Dickinson State	5/7 p.m.
Feb. 14	@ Bismarck State	5/7 p.m.
Feb. 20	vs. Carroll College	5/7 p.m.
Feb. 21	vs. Rocky Mountain College	5/7 p.m.

26 The Bulletin | December 2025
May 1-3 Frontier Conference Tournament



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. Hope Ishizaka '24 and Jacob Romero '24

were married over the summer in Honolulu, Hawai'i, where Hope is from. They had a mini VCSU reunion as many friends and classmates flew from the continental United States to Oahu for their wedding. Hope and Jacob met in 2020 during their freshman year and have been inseparable every since. After graduating from VCSU in 2024, Hope got a job as an admissions counselor at Chaminade University of Honolulu, and Jacob moved to Oahu and began his job as a diesel fleet technician at Reyes Fleet Management.

2. Kecia Ellison '17 M.Ed '24

married Austin Joritz on October 13, 2025.



3. Angela Holland and Louis Wieland '01

were married August 23, 2025, at Brockopp Brewery in Valley City.



4. Megan Trautman '16 and Jacob Messner

were married August 9, 2025.



5. Taylor Sargent '23 and Riley Gerhardt '23

were married on June 28, 2025. They met at VCSU back in 2022, where Riley played football and Taylor played volleyball and ran track. They now live in Grand Forks, N.D., with their two pups. Riley is finishing up his MBA at UND and working as a financial advisor, and Taylor works as a corporate social media and graphic design coordinator.



Not Pictured

Emma Citrowske & Quin Peterson, May 20, 2025

Callen Kruger '25 & Thomas Kudela, May 25, 2025

Kennedy Olson '23 & Jacob Borgstrom, June 12, 2025

Ellie Rush '25 & LaShad Smith, June 26, 2025

Megan Demaray & **Chaser Atwood '22**, June 28, 2025

Amelia Meester & Tucker Johnson, June 28, 2025

Emily Tillma & Adam Jacobson, July 13, 2025

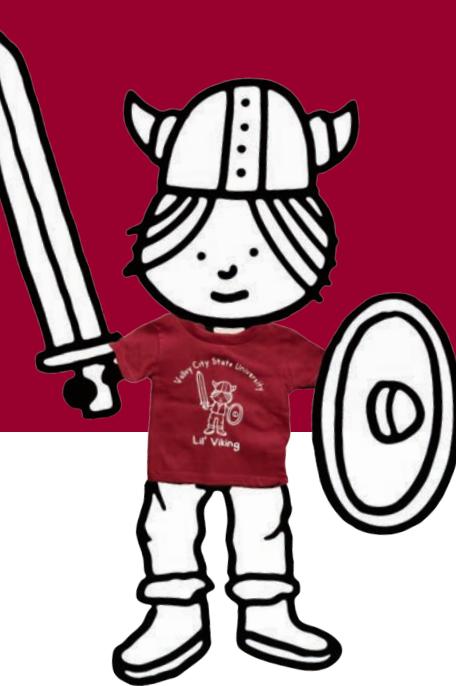
Alexis Bentz '21 & Christopher Bren, August 9, 2025

Dierra Diegel '19 & Audra Durhman, August 23, 2025

Emelia Nilsson & **Jace Trangmoe '25**, August 23, 2025

Heather Lobley '24 & John Reynolds, August 30, 2025

Brenna Dieterle '20 & Austin Volk, September 13, 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**.



Avila Kibbel

October 25, 2024
9 lbs. 1.3 oz., 22 in.

Grandparents: Jennifer (Bierschbach) '93 and Phillip Kibbel



Mavi Ida Jensen

April 10, 2024; 8 lbs. 8 oz., 20.5 in.

With brother Reggie and sister Margot. Chelsey (Dockter) '13 and Preston '13 Jensen. Grandparents: Jim and Rachel '80 Jensen, Brenda (Elhard) '89 and Kirk Dockter



Parker Alan Miller

March 10, 2025
9 lbs. 7 oz., 22.25 in.

Dustin '19 and Clarissa (Olson) '19 Miller. Grandparents: Alan '84 and Trisa Olson, Bobbie Jo (Schell) '95 and Randy Miller



Micah Cunningham

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

Kaylynn Siedschlag '25 and Jordan Cunningham



Roman Connor Rieniets

December 7, 2024
6 lbs. 14 oz., 19.5 in.

Carson '22 and Chelsea (Benedict) '17 Rieniets



Preston David Elston

November 11, 2024
9 lb. 12 oz., 21 in.

Kayla (Sorby) & Jake Elston



Mattea Kathleen Simmons

July 15, 2025
6 lbs. 1 oz., 19 in.

Emily (Kunze) Simmons '10



Vikings on the Move >>>>>>>>>>

Submit your latest news to
alumni@vcsu.edu

CLASS OF 1950s



Letha (Umber) Lewis '55 is a retired elementary teacher and lives in Bismarck, N.D. Prior to attending Valley City State College, she graduated from Bismarck Junior College with an associate degree. Her Bachelor of Science Degree with a Kindergarten Endorsement served her well and Letha says she received a good education at VCSU. She taught in Montana and in Langdon, N.D. Letha is an active member of the First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck.

Bob Bruhschwein '57 and his wife, Rosalyn, have recently relocated to the Touchmark retirement facility in Fargo, N.D. Both turned 90 recently, are in good health, and very comfortable there taking part in many of the activities offered. They have also enjoyed the streamed VCSU football games.

Darlene (Popp) Zabel '58 is busy with lots of activities, especially travel as she just returned from a road trip to Minnesota and North Dakota. She drove 4,320 miles and saw lots of friends and relatives. Now she is getting ready to go to Alaska for 11 days. Darlene is involved in choir in church and other volunteer activities, going when she can. Darlene says "Thank you VCSU for preparing Vint and I for a very good life."

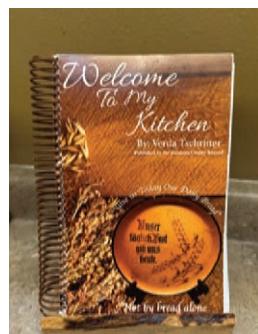
CLASS OF 1960s

Roger '61 and Mary (Skruch) Lipp '59 met at college in 1958 and were married in 1960. Roger and Mary both taught in the Fargo School system for most of their teaching years. They had taught under the rural scholarship program established many years ago.

They have two daughters, Jill (husband Bob) lives in Goodyear, Ariz., and Nancy who resides in Oswego, Illinois. They have two grandchildren who are in college. Roger and Mary retired in 1992 and have lived in Minnesota, Illinois, California and now Sun City West, Arizona, since 2016. They enjoy traveling, eating out with friends, watching old westerns, spending time in the fitness center, and playing games and cards. They still remain in reasonably good health and can get around quite well yet. They say they have been blessed.



Verda (Job) Tschritter '61 taught five years in N.D. After that she taught 36 years in Rochester, Minn., where she and her husband lived for 37 years. They then spent one year in Los Gatos, Calif., while her husband, Reuben, was on special assignment for his company, IBM. Following Reuben's retirement from IBM, he accepted a position at NDSU in Fargo which brought them back to their home state of North Dakota. Here Verda subbed for the West Fargo Public Schools. Also, during this time she wrote a weekly column for the Emmons County Record. The column included North Dakota history and history of life in her home county. Every column had recipes from people in her family and from her teaching days, including staff and moms of students. The columns and recipes were turned into a book titled *Welcome to My Kitchen*. Germans from Russia history and recipes are in the book, too. Verda and Reuben have one son, Tim, who lives in South Carolina with his wife Samantha. Samantha is a professional writer and last year a book of hers took second place in the nation for Christian Writers.



Continued on page 29



Audrey (Wibstad) Heupel '66 turned 80 this year and her family had a surprise birthday week for her in Flagstaff, Ariz.

Myron Loberg '68 lives in Fargo and is retired. Myron volunteers at NDSU with the track and field team. In mid-September he was on a tour of Spain. In the summer, Myron runs a speed and acceleration program to help athletes improve their speed and agility along with increase their vertical jump.

CLASS OF 1970s

Craig Sturlaugson '70 has "finally" and "officially" retired after collecting a paycheck from the Centennial School District in Circle Pines, Minn., for 55 years, starting in 1970. His last student completed behind-the-wheel lessons in November. "Stur" taught 8th grade geography and coached various activities for 33 years, then ushered for the Minnesota Twins for 22 years. He worked primarily in the grandstand area, meeting and greeting fans of all ages. After saluting the Veterans who raised the flag daily, Craig is retiring from that job as well. Besides traveling, spending more time with family and friends will be his next goal.

Dave Magnuson '71 went to Florida for football for two years starting a program down there. He then moved back to North Dakota and worked construction during the summers and back to Florida for the winters. He was hoping to become a professional fisherman. Dave married **Janet Paulson '71** in 1979 and had two sons. He owned a grain bin business in Devils Lake from 1980 to 1987. Dave then went back into teaching for 22 years. He also continued to fish walleye tournaments for many years winning seven and placing in many more. He started the Lake Region Anglers Association in 1977 and made two television shows, Prairie Public Television and one called Fishing Devils Lake with Dave Magnuson. It ran for three years. Dave and Janet traveled the United States until she passed away in 2017; Dave continues to live in Arizona in the winter and Devils Lake in the summer.

Kory Austin '72 has lived in a small town north of Seattle since 1985. He has coached in the Mount Vernon school district since the mid 1990s and is currently the golf coach at Mount Vernon high school. Kory loves the West Coast except for the fact that they don't have snow like Valley City does; but he can play golf all year long. Go Vikings!

CLASS OF 1980s

Lori (Willms) Ricter '88 is currently in her 36th year of teaching! Lori teaches elementary special education in Minnewaukan Schools and still loves coming to school every day. Lori is now an empty nester. Her son, Gabe, is in college at NDSCS and her daughter, Rori, is living and working in Bismarck. Lori is still blessed with amazing friendships that started at VCSC. The TKE Daughters still get together on a regular basis. The photo is from Lori's family Christmas in July, in Alabama!



CLASS OF 1990s

Jeff Hoverson '90 and his wife, JoAnn, have been married for 31 years. Jeff is a pastor at Living Word Lutheran Church of Minot, N.D. They have six children ages 16-28, including four boys and two girls. Jeff is also a ND State Legislator in the House of Representatives.

Melody

(Carter) Mittleider '90 lives in Medina, N.D., where she bought a house about four years ago. She works at Kramlich-



Deede Meats and loves her job! Melody has been by herself for many years but is very happy! She has three boys; Jeff is married to Reese and lives in Jamestown. They have one son, Jason, who has about two years of high school left. Cory is married to Andrea and they live in Fargo. Bill is in Jamestown. Melody does lots of gardening, canning, baking and loves pigs! She recently built a chicken coop and has six chickens.

Mike Bitz '91 is married to **Jessica (Schott) '97**. They live in Ogilvie, Minn., with their three children. Mike has been teaching for 35 years.

Laurel (Howe) Neurauter '92 said her grandpa, Glenn Hanna, taught at VCSU for over 20 years. Everytime Laurel would walk down the hallway by the administration offices, there was her grandpa's picture. She was very proud. Both her parents went to VCSU as well as aunts and uncles and a cousin. Laurel says "VCSU was good to us."

Theresa Carlson '93 Theresa Carlson '93 retired to Colorado in 2023 where she is enjoying the "freedom to go for it." She has founded Rare Aire World International, where she serves as a health consultant advocate and medical mentor for patients with rare diseases or complex medical cases. She supports patients through advocacy, education and inspiration, empowering all to live their best life.



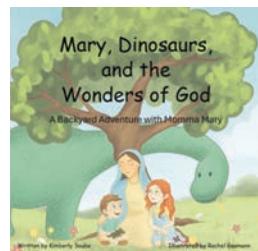
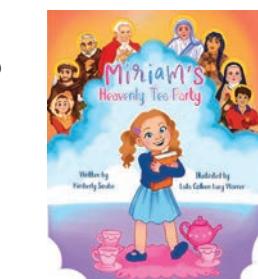
Tony Aukland '96 was inducted to the BSC CyberCon Hall of Fame on October 1 for his nine years of service to the event. This combined cybersecurity and critical infrastructure event works to share security awareness, cybersecurity, physical security, critical infrastructure, mental health, and much more.

CLASS OF 2000s

Stephanie (Iszler) Reinardy '00 lives in Owatonna, Minn. She plans on retiring from the Federal Bureau of Prison in the Department of Justice on December 31, 2025. She and her husband recently celebrated 23 years of marriage. Stephanie enjoys spending time with her husband and three adult sons.

Kimberly Souba '09 and M.Ed

'25 has recently moved to Fargo from Geneseo, Illinois, to take a position with the North Dakota University Systems Core Technology Services as a Communications Specialist. Kimberly has written and published a children's coloring book, *Miriam's Heavenly Tea Party*, and another children's book, *Mary, Dinosaurs, and the Wonders of God: A Backyard Adventure with Momma Mary*. Both are available on Amazon and 100% of the proceeds benefit organizations that support children who have experienced any kind of abuse.



CLASS OF 2010s

Ronnie Blagg '14 lives in Sacramento, California with his girlfriend, Jazmin, and son, Esa. 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.



Nick Lee '16' MAT '21 is the principal of St. Catherine School in Valley City. His wife, **Kaitlen (Uecker) '19** (Dakota College at Bottineau on VCSU campus), is the Program Coordinator for the new infusion center at Mercy Hospital in Valley City. They have three children Micaiah (10), Eliam (7), and Ezra (4) and are proud to have both attended VCSU. A big hello to their EBC Brothers and Philomathian Sisters.



picture is from Harper's 3rd birthday party which they held in their back yard with some family and friends.

Katie (Pautz) Schuster '18 is in her 7th year of teaching at Maple Valley! Katie and her husband, Aaron, have two little boys, Camden (2) and Colter (5 mo.). Life is crazy but they love it!



Continued on page 32.

Eli Luna '19

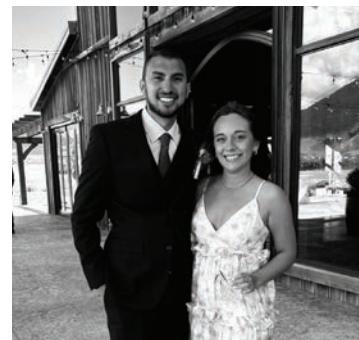
graduated from VCSU with his Bachelors in Elementary Education. Eli is currently in his 7th year of education and his second year as 7-12 Principal at Rolette Public School in Rolette, N.D. He and his wife, Miriah, are blessed with two children, a daughter named Blake (19 months) and they recently welcomed a boy (Fynn) in August. They live in Rugby, N.D.



CLASS OF 2020s

Garrett Berg '21 and his wife Alyssa live in Fargo. They currently do not have any children of their own but they are foster parents and have had foster kids from 8 to 17 year olds. Both sides of their families have always done foster care, so it was something they wanted to do. Since graduating in 2021, Garrett worked in agriculture as an IT support professional. In 2023, he left the agricultural IT side of things and now works at High Point Networks in Fargo where he is a physical engineer at the company. Garrett designs, deploys, and installs camera networks, access control systems, and network infrastructure.

McKenna Briggs '21 is working at Nexus Path case managing kids who are in treatment foster care. She also recently started school and will be obtaining her doctoral degree in psychology. If she's not working or doing homework, she is often times finding activities around town to do with her boyfriend and family.



Robert Young M.Ed '22 lives in Park River, N.D. He is the high school social studies teacher at Park River High School and head boys basketball coach for the Park River-Fordville-Lankin Aggies.

Emma Citrowske '24 and Quin Peterson were married July 28, 2025.

Matt Schlottman '24 has been teaching at Campbell-Tintah Public Schools, teaching 7-12 Health, and K-12 PE. Matt wants to thank VCSU for giving him the tools necessary to make his first year of teaching easier, and for providing him with information that will last a lifetime!

Heather Lobleby '24 and John Reynolds were married August 30, 2025. They are making music together for Jesus!

Kade Queen '24 is in his second year of teaching in Gwinner, N.D. at North Sargent Public School. He also completed his first year of coaching football.

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.

1960

Dale Cameron
Dale Christiansen
Carol (Overland) Evenson
Isabella Huson
Eugene Johnson
Elaine (Stadum) Marquette

1960

Arlene Johnson
Connie Lund
Isabel Prescott
Janice Williams
Robert Woods

1960

Charlotte Tolton
Michael Vanyo
Lillian Wagner

1965

Beverly Anderson
Margaret Corrigan
Gary Glaser
Kenneth May

1966

Jerome Anderson
Elizabeth Barnett
Donald Brandt
Darlene Buelow
Helen (Hendricks) Harper
Irene (Aslakson) Johnson
Wesley Lines

1968

Carol (Amoth) Aamodt
Linda Groth
Ronald Hensler
Shirley Jorgensen
Alan Lindemann
Barbara (Ostlie) Nielsen-Heinle
Joyce Rice
Chuck Sjostrom
Carolgene (Whitney) Wolf

1961

Jerry Brekke
Kirker Clark
Janet Delvo
Dale Gayer
Linda (Anderson) Greer
Mathilda (Neuharth) Holcomb

1962

Jacqueline Dunphy
Judith Ensrud
Florence Gryth
Emilie Halvorson
Douglas Kessler
Sharon Lee
Grace Naatus
Donald Storbeck
Caroline Sundstrom

1963

Alma Nordquist
Frances (Nelson) Olstad

1967

Arla Johnson

In Remembrance

Ethel (Spoerl) Heckman '41, Valley City
Betty (Braa) Liljenquist, Cooperstown, N.D.
Mary Sende, Cambridge, Minn.
Karlene (Scheibe) Frank '57, Great Falls, Mont.
Dale Thompson '57, Puyallup, Wash.
Patricia (Radermacher) Lackmann '58, Northfield, Minn.
Patricia (Hafner) Thomas, '59, Moorhead, Minn.
Peter C. Anderson '60, Minneapolis, Minn.
Larry Lynne '62, Williston, N.D.
Ardyce (Trygg) Kreider '64, South Bend, Ind.
Gary D. Nelson '65, Napoleon, N.D.
Gary P. Olson '65, Otsego, Minn.
Janice (Bender) Wagner '65, West Fargo, N.D.
Thomas E. Nelson '68, Custer, S.D.
Joseph Kalina '69, San Diego, Calif.
Brach Johnson '69, Bismarck, N.D.

Judy (Paulson) MacZura '69, Pickney, Mich.
Fred Fritel '72, West Fargo, N.D.
Arlee Simpson '80, Dilworth, Minn.
Russell Sunderland '84, Jamestown, N.D.
William Gripenetrog, Watertown, S.D.
Terra (Wagner) Engelhart '96, Venturia, N.D.

Bonnie Burchill, Valley City
Margery (June) House, Santa Rosa, Calif.
Pat Nielson, Valley City
Lois Scouten, Spiritwood, N.D.
Bonnie Van Bruggen, Valley City

Former Faculty & Staff

September 3, 2025 – **Larry Robinson '72**, Valley City
September 25, 2025 – **Dina Splettoessner**, Hope, N.D.

Larry J. Robinson '71



Larry James Robinson, the son of Floyd and Denise (Kleiter) Robinson was born October 3, 1949, in Bismarck, N.D. He graduated from Tappen High School and earned his B.S. degree in education from VCSU and his Master of Science degree in Educational Administration from NDSU. He started his career as a teacher in Warwick, N.D., then returned to VCSU.

Larry met his wife, Mary Lee Haugland, while working at the Viking News at VCSU. Following graduation, they were married and had two sons, James and Travis. To all who knew Larry, his family was his world and biggest accomplishments, especially his grandsons Alex, Max and Jax. To them, he was an ordinary person, their biggest supporter and sometimes voice of reason. He was a true legacy, and his favorite quote will live on as a reminder forever: "You're not in control."

Larry's story is woven into the fabric of VCSU. A 1971 graduate, he dedicated more than 49 years of his career to advancing the mission of the university and spent 32 years as a Senator in the North Dakota State Legislature. The years overlapped as did many of his on campus and off campus jobs and legislative accomplishments. Beginning as Director of the Memorial Student Center and Student Activities in 1975, he later became the first Director of the VCSU Foundation in 1996. As the VCSU Foundation Director and the Executive Director of University Advancement, Larry grew the Foundation from \$1.3 million in 1996 to \$24.4 million in 2024. Nearly all that growth has funded VCSU scholarships which have resulted in the record-breaking

enrollment growth of the college that Larry loved. He would humbly point out that he didn't do it alone, but it was his leadership and vision that made it happen.

In 2021, Larry was named Capital Campaign Director for VCSU which led to a major renovation of the McCarthy School of Education and the VCSU Tharaldson Athletic Center. In 2013, his leadership drove the funding of the Rhoades Science Center. In 2022 the 32-million-dollar state funded Larry J. Robinson Center for the Arts was finished on the VCSU campus. Larry was instrumental in securing the funding. He also played a major role in the funding and building of the Gaukler Family Wellness Center in Valley City.

The Robinson Recovery Center in Fargo, N.D., is a bricks and mortar legislative accomplishment that Larry was largely responsible for. Larry Robinson was involved in countless other legislative initiatives that were always about helping the citizens of North Dakota. He truly cared about the least, the lost, and the last.

Larry's involvement in Valley City organizations include Past President, Valley City Area Chamber of Commerce; Barnes County Wildlife Federation; Valley City Area Chamber of Commerce; Governor's Alcohol & Drug Prevention Advisory Task Force; Legislative Council 1991-2014; Member, VCSU-V-500; Century Club Scholarship; Organizations; Elks; Eagles; Knights of Columbus; Kiwanis and member of St. Catherine Catholic Church.

Larry is survived by his wife; son James (Mandi); grandchildren Alex, Max and Jax. He is also survived by his siblings Carl (Sheila) Robinson and Robin Robinson and many nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his parents, his son Travis Robinson and his siblings Paul Robinson and Dennis (Bernie) Robinson.



VCSU

Valley City State University
Alumni Association
101 College Street SW
Valley City, ND 58072

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
FARGO, ND
PERMIT NO. 1159

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

ALUMNI: If your address has changed or is changing, update your address by scanning the QR code or contacting our office at alumni@vcsu.edu or 701.845.7203.



PARENTS: If this issue is addressed to your son or daughter who no longer lives at this address, please share an updated address by scanning the QR code or contacting our office.

Thank you for your help in keeping our records current.

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



FOUNDATION • ALUMNI
VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY