



2024 Annual Report to the Synods

Wartburg College is dedicated to challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning.

Guided by our vision, we are answering the call to prepare resilient leaders of positive change for service in a complex world. This will be realized by building on our distinctives and embracing new opportunities to be the leading institution in educating the whole person.

Enrollment and Student Success

- Fall 2024 undergraduate enrollment was 1,452 students from 38 U.S. states and 39 countries, which includes 184 U.S. students of color and 70 international students. More than 20 Christian denominations and several world religions are represented. Twenty-one students are enrolled in the online Master of Arts in Leadership.
- The five majors with the highest enrollment are business administration, biology, exercise science, elementary education, and music education.
- To amplify focus on the first-year experience as a key indicator in student persistence and success, Wartburg partnered with Credo, a higher education consulting firm, to participate in a five-year initiative called Moving the Needle. With the support and guidance of the Credo team, Wartburg faculty and staff will identify, further develop, and implement impactful practices to improve student retention.
- Alumni & Career Connections, a new partnership between Wartburg's Advancement and Student Life divisions, will optimize alumni engagement toward student success. Ignited by a \$1 million gift from Mike and Marge McCoy, the initiative includes a new mentoring platform, Knight Nation, and intentional programming to help students explore opportunities for their future while leveraging our alumni base.

Strategic Positioning

- Starting in fall 2024, the college launched the Wartburg Commitment, a new pricing model and value proposition designed to help students consider, afford, and experience Wartburg College. The comprehensive program includes a new competitive price, reduced financial barriers for lower- and middle-income families, and funding to increase access to immersive experiences.
- Wartburg received a \$2.3 million gift from the John Sauer '78 estate to grow the Knight's Experience Fund, a new endowed fund that helps offset the cost of experiential learning opportunities for all Wartburg students.

Academic and Co-Curricular Programs

- Wartburg was one of 25 schools and the only one in Iowa to earn a Carnegie Elective Classification for Leadership for Public Purpose. The classification acknowledges colleges and universities that have committed to campuswide efforts to advance leadership in pursuit of public goods such as justice, equity, diversity, and liberty. The designation is presented by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the American Council on Education, and the Doerr Institute for New Leaders at Rice University.
- Wartburg announced two new online graduate programs in health and human performance — a Master of Science in sport science and data analytics and a Master of Science in high performance — beginning fall 2025. The programs, which build on the college's reputation for excellence in undergraduate health sciences programs and athletic dominance, will produce students ready to lead and serve in athletic and nonathletic venues.
- Wartburg received a \$185,000 grant from the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust to help transform technology in more than 60 classrooms and advance the college's vision of becoming a fully wireless campus by 2030. The five-year initiative will begin in 2025 and will equip faculty with advanced tools for effective teaching, promoting innovation and creativity in addition to creating a more engaging and interactive learning environment.

- In fall 2024, Wartburg faculty implemented a new General Education curriculum – THRIVE – which stands for Thinking Critically, Human Culture, Reasoning, Information Fluency, Vocation, and Effective Communication.
- The Wartburg-Waverly Sports & Wellness Center (The W) was renamed in honor of former president Jack Ohle and his wife, Kris. The Board of Regents approved the change in spring 2024, and the rededication of the Ohle Wartburg-Waverly Sports & Wellness Center (The W) was held during Homecoming 2024 festivities.

Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry

- Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry supports students in their journey to find connection, presence, and purpose in their life at college. We seek to meet the spiritual and religious needs of our diverse campus community while also building bridges of compassion and understanding through interfaith/ecumenical engagement. Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry oversees over 19 student groups and programs.
- Wartburg College received an \$8,100 Northeastern Iowa Synod Community Engagement Grant to help engage religiously diverse students, employees, and community members as well as grow religious literacy on campus. This grant supplements funding for our Bridge program, which equips students with skills in bridge building across differences, and is executed by our Interfaith and Religious Diversity Council.
- Kelly Sherman-Conroy, an indigenous educator, church leader, and scholar, received the 2024 Graven Award. The annual award for Christian vocation highlights the powerful and positive effect of a strong sense of Christian vocation as it interfaces with service to the community, the church, and the world.
- Nathaniel Knutson '24 received the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Fund for Leaders Direct Full-Tuition Scholarship, which will help him continue his education at Wartburg Theological Seminary.
- Dr. Caryn Riswold, professor of religion and the McCoy Family Distinguished Chair in Lutheran Heritage and Mission, published her fourth book, "ReEngaging ELCA Social Teaching on Abortion."

Recognition

- Kirk Kleckner '81, Mike Mallaro, Matthew Petersen '06, and Gordon Sween '89 were elected to the Board of Regents. Kleckner of Bradenton, Fla., is founder and former president of ValuationUSA; Mallaro of Cedar Falls, Iowa, is executive chairman of the board for VGM Group; Petersen of Denver, Colo., is a partner at Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP; and Sween of Minneapolis, Minn., is a retired health care executive.
- The Wartburg Medal was presented to professor emeriti Gloria Campbell and Dr. Lynn Olson in December 2024. The Wartburg Medal recognizes individuals who have provided significant service to the college over a sustained period and who have a personal commitment to the college's mission, quality, and character.
- Boboya Gabu '26, a Davis United World College Scholar from South Sudan, received a \$10,000 Projects for Peace grant to carry out a summer humanitarian effort empowering individuals living with HIV/AIDS with marketable skills.
- Georgia Nissen '24 received the prestigious R.J. McElroy Graduate Fellowship, designed to encourage persons of accomplishment, intelligence, integrity, and leadership ability to pursue challenging academic careers.
- Dr. Mike Bechtel '94, associate professor of science education, received the Engaged Campus Award for Emerging Innovation from the Seed Coalition, formerly Iowa and Minnesota Campus Compact, for his work with sustainable agriculture. Also honored were Bethany Christians '24, who received the Presidents' Student Leadership Award, and Krystal Madlock, associate dean for inclusive community, who received the Presidents' Civic Engagement Leadership Award.
- Dr. Rebecca Nederhiser, conductor of the Wartburg Community Symphony, was a finalist for the American Prize's Vytautas Marijosius Memorial Award in Orchestral Programming.

Wartburg continues to find focus in a vibrant mission that transforms the entire college community as we learn, work, and serve together. Thank you for your prayers and support as we share in the work of strengthening the Lutheran traditions of higher education and Christian vocation.

Dr. Rebecca Ehretsman, President