

# LUTHER COLLEGE®

Greetings from Luther College and our hometown of Decorah, Iowa. In these times of challenge and change, I am honored and excited to have stepped into my role as the 12<sup>th</sup> president of Luther this February. I am proud to share with you some of the ways that our Luther community continues to live into our commitment to prepare students for lives of meaning and purpose in service to the neighbor.

Luther College is known for drawing excellence out of all its students, and we are proud to report that our alumni testimonies earned Luther the No. 1 spot for learning opportunities and community and social life among our peers in Iowa and in the Associated Colleges of the Midwest in a recent Wall Street Journal survey. Luther also scored well in areas of character development, career preparation, learning facilities and campus facilities.

Examples of significant learning opportunities from this past year abound. Faculty member Todd Pedlar earned his seventh consecutive NSF-funded physics research grant, enabling students to contribute to an international research collaboration on elementary particle physics. Our nursing program approaches its 50th year of collaboration with the Mayo Clinic. Education majors continue to fulfill their student teaching placements in locations as varied as our nationally-ranked local Decorah Community Schools; metropolitan systems like Des Moines, Chicago, or Minneapolis area schools; or recently expanding internationally in Norway. Study away entered the second year of offering J-term courses specifically for first-year students. It is all part of a larger initiative to ensure that all Luther students have access to participation in documented high impact practices, such as internships, study away opportunities, and capstone projects. As a result, 99% of our 2024 graduates reported participating in two or more of these high impact practices.

In the past year, Luther has also continued to be recognized for our commitment to sustainability. For the fifth year in a row, Luther has been named a “hidden gem” institution in Iowa and the larger Plains region. We are also proud to have been ranked among the Princeton Review’s Top 50 Green Colleges in the nation, demonstrating our deep dedication to sustainability. Luther ranked seventh in America in 2024 among baccalaureate institutions for sustainable campus practices. This past year, we earned a Bicycle Friendly University silver award by the League of American Bicyclists. Last summer, students conducted significant summer research projects in prairie ecosystem restoration and conservation, using as their laboratory our 800 camps acres of natural lands.

We recognize the cost of higher education is a concern. We continue to increase avenues and opportunities for need-based, scholarship, and merit assistance, and these efforts have resulted in an overall reduction in the average net cost of attendance at Luther for the past three years. We have expanded our Luther College Impact Award, which offers four years of free tuition for qualified students in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. We have also joined with 18 other four-year institutions to form the Iowa Private Transfer Collaborative, a grant-funded initiative to

improve transfer pathways for students. We have been selected as one of 80 new members of the FirstGenForward Network to support first-generation students.

Our students continue to demonstrate passion for and excellence in the arts. The theme of this year's annual Christmas at Luther performance was "Seeking Refuge for a Weary World," and involved more than 400 student performers, and marked another year of exciting growth in on-campus, regional television, and livestream audiences. During the 2024-2025 academic year, three of our choirs were chosen to perform at regional and national professional conferences: Cathedral Choir at the November 2024 Minnesota American Choral Directors Association conference, Norskkor at the February 2025 Minnesota Music Educators Association midwinter conference, and Nordic Choir at the national American Choral Directors Association conference in Dallas, Texas. The Nordic Choir and Jazz Orchestra toured internationally in summer 2024 summer—to Norway and Brazil, respectively—and in summer 2025 summer our Concert Band revives a longstanding tradition of touring in Japan.

While our athletic teams continue to win championships ranging from men's soccer, women's tennis, and both men's and women's swimming and diving in the past year, our greatest pride is reserved for our impressive number of 42 all-time NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship recipients, and the 73 Norse to earn Academic All-American, one of the most recent being softball catcher Abby Spore who was also Luther's 2024 NCAA Woman of the Year nominee. Currently at 22 varsity teams, Luther is set to add women's wrestling in the fall of 2025. The ongoing renovation of the 200,000-plus square foot Gerdin Fieldhouse for Athletics and Wellness will create new opportunities for all students and the greater Decorah community.

It has been a year of celebration, growth, and transition. We want to recognize our retiring President Jenifer K. Ward, who during this year stepped into the role of president emerita and senior advisor for strategic initiatives. We are grateful for her service, wisdom, and leadership, and we wish her the best in her retirement after the close of this academic year.

We do not take for granted the wide network of support that makes all of our work possible. Thank you to all of our local and regional partners, our alumni, and our supporting congregations and Synods. In the rapidly changing landscapes both of the church and of higher education, we continue to lean into the gifts of our Lutheran identity to offer us vision and encouragement in a complicated world.

Soli Deo Gloria!

President Brad Chamberlain