Hearts Together

A PUBLICATION OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN & ANN ARBOR

BUILDING UPON A LEGACY

Dr. Erik Ankerberg takes his place among Concordia's storied and richly blessed history.

SPRING/SUMMER **2023**

Hearts Together contents

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

ON THE COVER

Among Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor's many celebrations this year is the arrival of a new president. Pictured above, Erik Ankerberg, PhD, and his wife, Jennifer, have been married for 27 years. They have two sons, Peter (right) and David.

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Greetings, Concordians!

I am so honored to have the opportunity to write this letter of welcome and introduction to our Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor community. The English professor in me was tempted to pluralize the word "community" because each district, state, campus, program, team, and ensemble experience is unique and appropriately so. Even though our university has for decades included many groups, 10 years ago a group of forward-thinkers recognized that these very different universities could make an even greater impact on the lives of students and the health of our Church and the world if they could find a way to do that work **together**.

As the name of this publication indicates, today we are indeed *hearts together*, one Lutheran university with two remarkable residential campuses. We are the Church's school and fulfill a vital role in the Church. Guided by our understanding of Christian vocation, we prepare men and women to carry out meaningful work and serve the needs of the neighbors our Lord brings our way.

In this magazine, we celebrate the 10th anniversary of this uncommon idea; we recognize the many blessings of this collaboration; we revisit the leaders who helped make this possible.

I am certainly grateful I come to this university on a high note! This year also marks the 60th anniversary of CUAA and the 40th anniversary of CUW's move from downtown Milwaukee to Mequon. I am looking forward to all of the opportunities we are planning through the coming year to celebrate these milestones.

I also look forward to meeting many of you along the way.

As I write this letter, I am already months into my role as president of CUWAA. It is no surprise to you, Concordians, that after countless meetings with faculty, staff, students, alumni, district leaders, and members of our Board of Regents, I confidently affirm this university is financially healthy, strong in its missional commitments, and, most importantly, faithful to the truths of Holy Scripture.

Are there opportunities for improvement? Of course. I have been doing much learning and listening in my first three months. While I do not anticipate any disruptive changes, in the coming days we will be developing a new strategic plan that will ensure our strength well into the future.

What will never change is that we as a Lutheran university community prioritize the Christian tradition, foster a culture of innovation, and nurture our students in thought, in word, and in action to make them—and the world—whole.

Erik P. Ankerberg

ERIK P. ANKERBERG, PhD
President

Hearts Together

HEARTS TOGETHER is a joint publication of the Mequon and Ann Arbor campuses of Concordia University. In 2013, the two formerly independent universities merged into one institution, overseen by one president and one governing board. This publication shares the stories of the exciting advancements on each campus; the notable accomplishments of faculty, staff, students, and alumni; and the life-changing service Concordians—hearts together—undertake for Christ in the Church and the world.

The Strategic Communications department is responsible for the production of *Hearts Together*. The magazine's editorial team welcomes your feedback. Please send comments or queries to Kali.Thiel@cuw.edu.

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social scene

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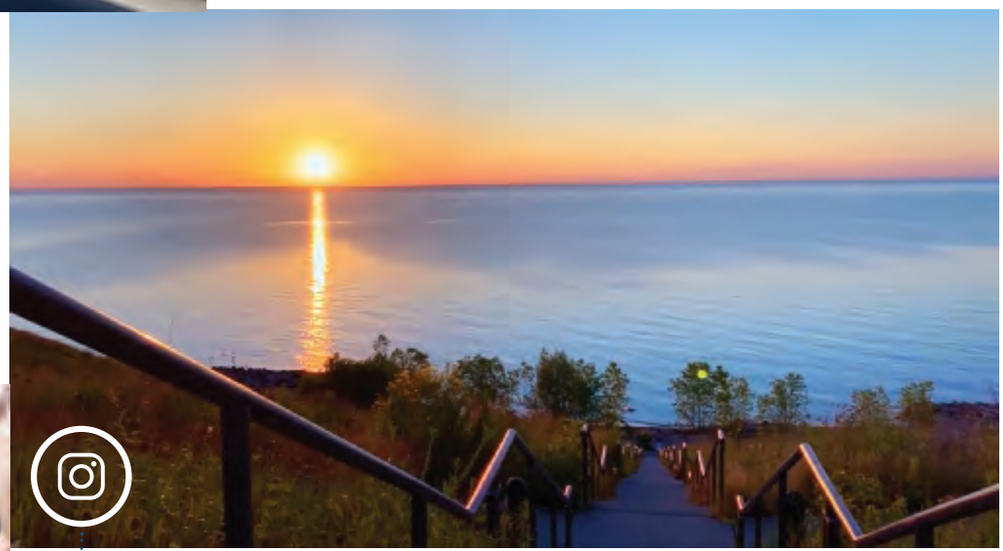
NEW DIGS The Nest just got a little cozier! One of the most highly trafficked student hangouts on the CUW campus was due for some new furniture. Over winter break, SGA and Student Life made it happen. See more pics on CUW's Facebook.

CIT CHEER CHAMPS
At the first CIT since 2020, CUAA's cheer team took home the championship title this year at the annual Concordia Invitational Tournament! Go Cards!



A fresh perspective
Ah, that view! It never gets old. View the full video on CUW's Insta.

BRASS THAT BONDS
Brian Pollatz ('87), band director at Lutheran Northwest High School in Michigan, joined his son Bruce on CUAA's winter music tour through Arizona, Nevada, and California. The family that plays together stays together!

SKIN IN THE GAME

CUAA students who attended this year's Super Bowl got more than just a peak fan experience. They grew in the knowledge and skills it takes to become a leader in the sport and entertainment industry.

ALL HANDS ON SET

For the CUW Players performance of "Swiss Family Robinson" this past February, students and faculty came together to build a set that transported audience members to the shores of a deserted island. *Photo courtesy of CUW student Joshua Barclay*

A decade together

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the merge between CUW and CUAA .... So happy together! 🎵

Lauding our new leader

The November 2022 announcement that Dr. Ankerberg would serve as the next president of Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor was met with enthusiasm on social. Here's what a few of our alumni and stakeholders had to say.

Sid Kemmis

"We have 2 grandchildren at CUW—thanks for caring about students. God's blessings on your leadership!"

Jeremiah Hoehner (CUAA '02)

"Congratulations Dr. Ankerberg! I will always remember our engaging 8am English lit classes. God's blessings on your new journey. Prayers for you and our university!"

Becky Dhuse Williams

"God's blessings to Dr. Ankerberg and everyone involved in the transition."

Rev. Dr. Douglas Rutt

"Congratulations Erik! And God grant you his wisdom and strength."

Jamie Boinski

"Congratulations! This is so exciting! I loved your AP English class at ML. You will do great things!"

Rev. Christian F. Gugel (CUAA '83)

"Thanks be to God."

code blue

Senior nursing students test their skills and preparedness in a "code" drill at the Concordia University Wisconsin School of Nursing simulation lab. This state-of-the-art facility presents with a wide variety of potential patient scenarios.

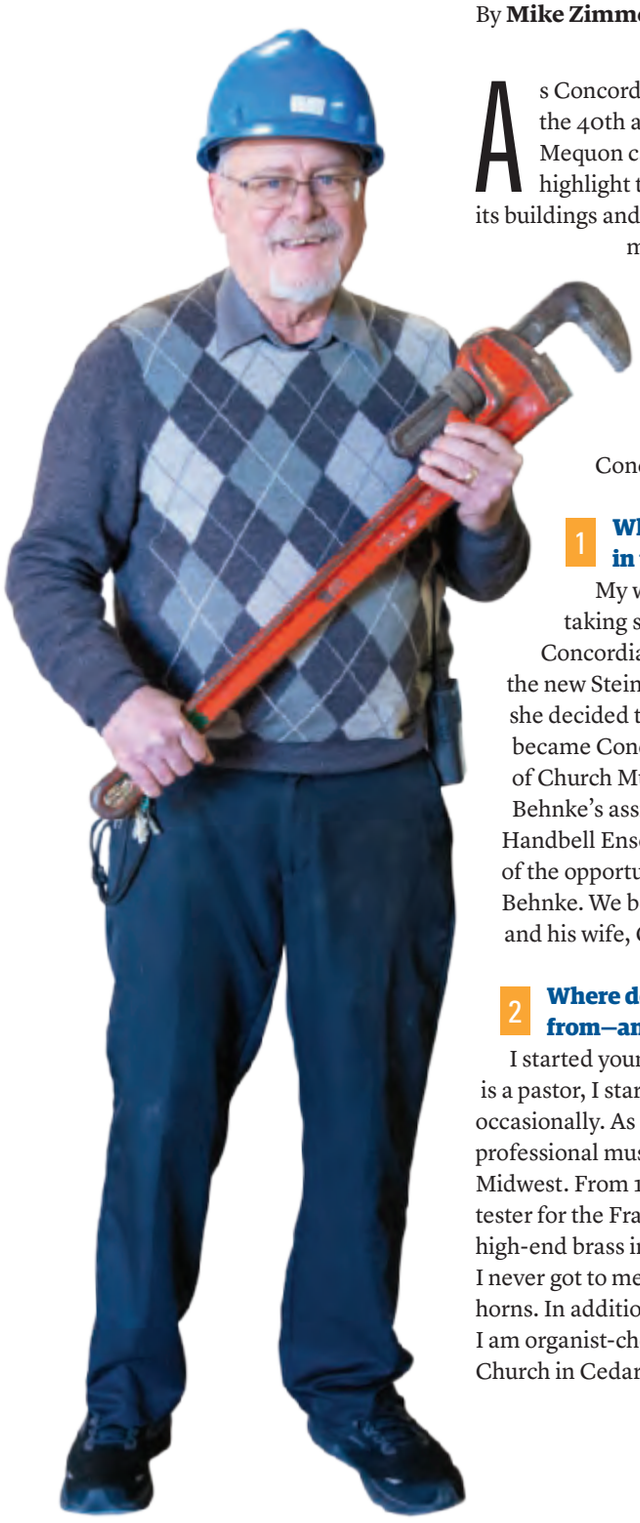
"Simulations are set to challenge students' critical thinking and allow for exploration of nursing assessments, interventions, and psychosocial patient care," said Nursing Simulation Lab Coordinator Tina Gaffney. "These experiences prepare students for the many times during their careers they will need to think and act in critical situations."

To read more about this important facility, visit **blog.cuw.edu/sim-lab**.

take five

Get to know one of our *uncommon* Concordians, Director of Buildings and Grounds Steve Hibbard.

By **Mike Zimmerman**, *Strategic Communications*



As Concordia University Wisconsin celebrates the 40th anniversary of its move to the Mequon campus, it's the perfect time to highlight the person who knows more about its buildings and facilities than anyone else. Sure, many know Steve as the guy who has been keeping things together since 1999—and maybe some have noticed him playing organ during Chapel services from time to time. But there's more to know about this musical, multifaceted Concordian than first meets the eye.

1 What brought you to Concordia in the first place?

My wife, Suzanne, had just started taking some classes when we drove up to Concordia from Hales Corners in 1989 to hear the new Steiner-Reck organ in the Chapel. After she decided to continue her education here, she became Concordia's first graduate of the Master of Church Music program and later was Dr. John Behnke's assistant director for the Milwaukee Handbell Ensemble. Meanwhile, I took advantage of the opportunity to study organ under Dr. Behnke. We became lifelong friends with John and his wife, Chris.

2 Where does your love of music come from—and does it go beyond the organ?

I started young on the piano, and since my dad is a pastor, I started to play for church services occasionally. As a young man, I played in a professional music group, doing shows around the Midwest. From 1989–92, I was chief instrument tester for the Frank Holton Company, which made high-end brass instruments in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. I never got to meet Miles Davis, but I worked on his horns. In addition to playing occasionally at CUW, I am organist-choir director at Faith Lutheran Church in Cedarburg.

3 What's your favorite story to tell about your job?

There are so many! Like when the NFL's St. Louis (now Los Angeles) Rams had a three-week camp here in 2008. That was really exciting. But by far the biggest event was in 2004 when U.S. President George W. Bush came to campus to give the commencement speech. I got word of it on April 1, so when I tried to tell the team they all thought it was an April Fool's Day joke! We had just six weeks to accomplish a lot of things for the May 14 graduation.

4 What's the best part of the job—and what's a pet peeve?

Favorites are working with the people and enjoying the view every morning when I arrive on campus. I always drive along the lake and never take that beauty for granted. As for a pet peeve, it's definitely when people want to give me verbal "work orders" when I'm walking in the hallway. Please use the link on the portal!

5 How important is it to have a great team in your job?

Super important! CUW is blessed to have great craftsmen working on our campus. In addition to our skilled maintenance team, we have dedicated and thoughtful housekeepers led by Laurie Strommen, one of the most caring people I know. I enjoy coming to work every day and being able to interact with the entire team.

STEVE AND HIS TEAM ARE ABLE TO KEEP CONCORDIA FUNCTIONAL AND FRESH THANKS TO SUPPORT FROM THE CONCORDIA FUND. The Concordia Fund is a yearly giving opportunity that provides critical operational revenue for the university. Gifts are used in the year they are given, allowing the university to offer Concordia students the increased quality and excellence they deserve while offsetting the cost of tuition. Learn more by visiting **cuw.edu/Concordia-fund**.

Keith Hacker (left) learns Chinese calligraphy during International Education Week this past November.

Carrying on

After a year and a half of faithful service as interim president, Dr. William Cario remains at Concordia and has helped to ensure a smooth transition for President Ankerberg. Cario now splits his time serving as both interim chief of staff for the Office of the President and overseeing the International Office during its search for a new director.

"It was an honor to serve as the interim president, but I'm very happy that we're on to this next phase of Concordia's history," Cario said.

Thanks go to Dr. Cario for his dedicated and tireless service on behalf of the university and, more importantly, his service to Christ in the Church and the world.

FRIENDS OF THE CIC

One thing that makes the CUW on-campus community so distinct is a robust international student population. On average, more than 350 students from other countries live on the Mequon and Ann Arbor campuses while in pursuit of their degrees.

To help these students adapt to a new cultural, educational, and spiritual environment, the Concordia International Center (CIC) is blessed to have a team of dedicated volunteers to guide and mentor students as they navigate new and exciting waters.

Don Bader

As a professional chef by training, Don Bader said he has often worked with a lot of people for whom English is not their native language. Later when he went into ministry, it became natural to reach out to non-Americans and help them acclimate to life in the United States. His service to CUW began when he and his wife, Terry, invited two international students to their home—or so they thought.

"We met a group of Taiwanese students and meant to invite two of them to our home," he recalled. "And then 11 of them showed up! I remember watching at the window as one car after another pulled up and saying, 'Terry, get more snacks!'"

Bob Johnson

Bob Johnson is a retired CUW faculty member who was a military engineer before he came to Concordia to teach physics and computer engineering in 1991. Many of the computer engineering students came from other countries, so he developed international friendships right away. The mentoring began while he was teaching, and he loved it so much he kept doing it after he retired in 2011.

"In many respects, it's like a ministry," Johnson said. "It's a ministry to help these students get kind of acclimated to Concordia and give them an example of an American who likes to be helpful to international students."

Keith and Ann Hacker

Keith and Ann Hacker have been hosting international students almost as long as they've been married (more than 30 years)—first at UW-Milwaukee and later at CUW. In fact, working with international students is how they met. These days, hosting CUW students at holidays is a favorite time because it makes it that much easier to share God's Word as part of the festivities.

"As Paul said, we are the body of Christ, the church is the body of Christ," Ann explained. "He needs people to love these international students, so we're happy to volunteer, to serve God in that manner."

UPCOMING EVENTS

For more happenings or full event information, visit **cuw.edu/events**.

COMMENCEMENT
May 12–13

FALCON DAYS
For new, incoming students
May 24; June 2, 16, 26; July 7

LCMS NATIONAL CONVENTION
June 21–26
Wisconsin Center, Milwaukee

VISIT ON THE LAKE
For prospective undergraduate students
June 23

TASTE OF CONCORDIA VISIT DAYS
July 10–14

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

Classroom learning is essential, but some lessons are more profound when experienced firsthand. It's a main reason why CUW Associate Professor of Pharmacy James Lokken, PharmD, commits several of his "off days" each academic year to student-learning opportunities at City on a Hill in Milwaukee.

Founded in 2001, City on a Hill is a faith-based nonprofit that works to break the cycle of generational poverty in Milwaukee through training, education, and resource allocation.

About once a month, Lokken oversees onsite Saturday workdays so that CUW pharmacy students can fulfill course requirements or simply volunteer. The students have helped with a variety of programs over the years: an "ask a pharmacist" station, vaccine clinics, smoking cessation workshops, health screenings, and more.

The experience often stretches students to apply knowledge in new ways, said Lokken. For example, City on a Hill maintains a "med room" full of slightly expired or discarded medications. The medications are still safe for use—and for an uninsured, low-income population they fit the price tag—but prescribing them requires an extra-diligent eye from a licensed pharmacist. That's where Lokken can help. CUW students play a role in meticulously inventorying the supply so that pharmacists like Lokken can assess their efficacy.

"That's one of the beautiful aspects of our work at City on a Hill: It teaches students how to function in a resource-poor environment," Lokken said.

City on a Hill also helps instill a core virtue that is upheld by Concordia's School of Pharmacy: servant leadership.

"It puts a whole new perspective on how we can use our God-given time, talents, and treasures to help those who need it most," Lokken said. "There are so many opportunities to help if we just take the initiative to do so."

Learn more at **cuw.edu/pharmacy**.

ENGINEERING COMING SOON

Concordia University Wisconsin announces the addition of chemical and industrial engineering programs to its long list of S.T.E.M. offerings. CUW's engineering programs are distinct in the marketplace because they're anchored in the liberal arts and designed to prepare engineers through a Lutheran Christian worldview. As students hone their science, math, and technology skills for success in their vocation, they also deepen their people and critical-thinking abilities to solve problems and contribute to a better world.

Both chemical and industrial engineering are highly in-demand fields with excellent job prospects and opportunities for career advancement. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are 2,000 openings for chemical engineers annually. Wisconsin has the third-highest concentration of industrial engineer jobs in the U.S., with an especially high need in counties within driving distance of CUW's Mequon campus.

By offering these programs, Concordia University Wisconsin is helping to meet the needs of students interested in pursuing careers in these essential and rapidly evolving fields.

Applications are now being accepted for pre-engineering in fall 2023. Because the programs are rooted in the liberal arts, students can already be working toward their degree in engineering before it's officially launched without added time or expense. Current and transfer students are strongly encouraged to apply.

Learn more at **cuw.edu/engineering**.

LESS is more

CONCORDIA DEBUTED A SCHOLARSHIP FOR STUDENTS PURSUING CAREERS IN LUTHERAN EDUCATION that puts tuition on par or lower than most other Lutheran universities in the United States. The LESS scholarship is a $3,000 renewable award that provides support for traditional undergraduates at both CUW and CUAA. The LESS scholarship may be "stacked" on top of the Forward in Faith scholarship to maximize the support.

#1

CUW produces more church workers than any other school in the Concordia University System. Explore church work careers at **cuw.edu/church-worker**.

'93 Kris Best

BA in accounting ('93)

BEST ALL AROUND

As CFO of one of the Top 25 largest independent ad agencies in the country, Kris Best has more than proven she has what it takes to rise to the top. How did she get there? She'll tell you it has everything to do with diverse experiences.

At CUW, for example, Best studied accounting, competed in volleyball and softball, and played the pipe organ (under the legendary Dr. John Behnke). In other words, she was preparing for a career in advertising. "My life is full circle," she says. "At BVK, I'm surrounded by creative and competitive people who feed my love of music and the arts, and who team up to bring something different and unexpected to our clients."

Agency life is tough because it's creating and creating again for multiple clients at once. And there's always the potential for rejection. In Best's experience, former student-athletes have tended to thrive because they produce under pressure, know the importance of every position, and accept wins and losses with humility.

Kris is a generous donor and volunteer of CUWAA. She currently serves on the university's Foundation Board. For more information visit **cuw.edu/Concordia-fund**.

SPACE TO SUCCEED

Concordia's Academic Resource Center (ARC) is stepping up to help pandemic-era high schoolers make up for lost academic progress.

Countless studies have found that academic achievement across all grade levels slowed amid COVID-19. The latest national ACT scores seem to corroborate the findings, with last year's test scores falling to a three-decade low. The delay in academic achievement has now carried over to colleges. At Concordia, the ARC has never been busier as a result.

Before the pandemic, center staff recorded roughly 1,600 student visits in an average academic year. That number more than tripled last school year, and this year the resource center is on track to surpass its total yet again.

Of course, the increased demand requires the ARC team to be on their A game. The center has hired more student tutors, increased the number of classes in which support is offered, and expanded hours. It also refined the peer academic coaching model and introduced a summer bridge program to assist with students' transition from high school to college.

And now the ARC has a new home, with more space to better accommodate its heavily utilized services. Thanks to funds from a Title III grant and private donations, structural upgrades were made to offices and classrooms at the back of Rincker Memorial Library, allowing the ARC to expand its physical footprint to about 2,000 square feet. ARC staff moved into their new digs at the beginning of the year.

All their efforts are paying off. At the start of the spring 2022 semester, about 130 students were on academic probation, which means they had a GPA of 2.0 or lower. By the start of this year's spring term, that number had shrunk by 23 percent.

"Students have invested a lot to come to Concordia, so it's only fitting that we invest our best in them," said ARC Director Jan Chapman. "We want to see students succeed, and all of them have it in them to be successful. We're all working hard to bounce back from the pandemic."

Learn more about Concordia's Academic Resource Center at **cuw.edu/ARC**.

UPGRADED

Ever since the pandemic, the Academic Resource Center has experienced a boom in demand for services. The ARC staff has managed to keep pace thanks in large part to an increase in physical space and resources.

3,167
ARC VISITS RECORDED IN FALL 2022

462
INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS (OR 16% OF UNDERGRADUATES) SERVED IN FALL 2022

3.5x
MORE ARC VISITS IN 2021–22 THAN 2018–19

71
PEER MENTORS AND STUDENT TUTORS ON STAFF

23%
DECREASE IN STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC PROBATION FROM SPRING 2022 TO SPRING 2023

LET'S GET CLINICAL

The School of Health Professions has a new Interprofessional Clinic on campus. The 9,150-square-foot space boasts top-of-the-line rehabilitative equipment, a simulation room, and much more. Take a peek at the space below and learn more at **blog.cuw.edu/interprofessional-clinic-dedication**.

Students began using the clinic in January to serve community patients. An open house was held March 29 to dedicate the space.

Professional-grade equipment, like this Biodex Unweighing System and parallel bars, serve as resources for weakened or balance-deficient patients.

A patient from the community utilizes a new set of rehabilitative training stairs with the guidance of faculty, allowing students to observe and learn from their instructors.

Two rooms in the clinic are equipped with hospital beds to allow for simulation exercises that promote authentic student learning.

2023:

A YEAR OF REFLECTION, CELEBRATION, AND EXCITEMENT

60 YEARS AGO: CUAA is born.

40 YEARS AGO: CUW moves to the bluff.

10 YEARS AGO: CUW and CUAA join forces.

THIS YEAR: Dr. Erik Ankerberg becomes president of CUWAA.

Each of these milestones is monumental in its own way. We didn't know how things would work out; but God did. As the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (29:11 ESV).

In each case, the faithful called upon Him, prayed to Him, and sought Him with all their heart (29:12–13). God heard—and His plan came to fruition.

As we reflect on these milestones and celebrate where we are, there's more reason than ever to feel thankful for our past, blessed in our present, and excited for our future in the Lord.

ANKERBERG ASSUMES PRESIDENCY

Dr. Erik Ankerberg has begun his tenure as president of Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor. He is the ninth leader to hold office on behalf of CUW and the seventh for CUAA.

After a global call for candidates in the summer of 2021 and an endorsement from a Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod Prior Approval Panel, Concordia's Board of Regents unanimously voted to extend Ankerberg a Divine Call on Oct. 25, 2022. He officially began his term on Jan. 9, 2023.

A lifelong Lutheran, Ankerberg has devoted his entire career to serving within Lutheran schools. His first position after graduating from Concordia University Chicago was as an English teacher at Martin Luther High School in Greendale, Wisconsin. From there, he made a transition to the collegiate level, serving as an English instructor at CUW for a year and then as assistant professor of English at CUAA from 1999–2004.

His acumen for strategic planning and curriculum oversight helped him quickly rise in the ranks. For the majority of his career, he has led academic operations for three separate Lutheran universities, most recently as provost for Concordia University Chicago.

"This university has a long and rich history of serving Christ, the Church, and the wider world through a rigorous, holistic, and Christ-centered approach to education," said Ankerberg. "The Lord has richly blessed Concordia University Wisconsin and Ann Arbor, and I am humbled and honored to join this faithful university community, whose members are deeply committed to student success."

An installation service was held on Sunday, Feb. 5. The Concordia community will again celebrate Ankerberg during his inauguration ceremony, which will occur closer to the start of the 2023–24 academic year.

FROM THOSE WHO KNOW HIM …

Ankerberg's professional resume includes nearly 15 years of experience in Lutheran higher education. Along the way, he gained a few supporters—individuals who understand what it takes to lead. Here's what they had to say about their trusted colleague and friend.

"Erik is a gifted strategic thinker. His linear planning—getting from the current situation to the goal—is very sound and detailed, but it's never merely linear. His strategies always reflect careful thought on an entire matrix of possible influences and outcomes. A complex institution like CUWAA will benefit from his leadership."

—Concordia University Chicago President Russell P. Dawn, DPhil, JD

"Dr. Ankerberg is a Christ-centered leader with a deep knowledge of higher education based on his experiences as a faculty member, researcher, and senior administrator. His calm presence is an encouragement to others as he intently listens to their thoughts, opinions, and concerns. At his core always will be a heart of humble vocational service toward those he leads in fulfilling the institution's mission and vision."

—Wisconsin Lutheran College Provost John Kolander, PhD

Ankerberg was installed as president on Feb. 5, 2023.

10 YEARS TOGETHER

It's a dramatic tale of faithful people who came together to save a school from the brink of extinction.

At its start, Concordia in Ann Arbor, Michigan, existed to honor God and train up students to better serve the Lord throughout the world. The school prospered in its mission for several decades. However, somewhere around the turn of the century the path forward became difficult. By 2010, the institution was on the verge of closure.

But at the same time, the Lord was at work within the hearts of many faithful leaders who could not bear to see Concordia close. It took a collective effort to right the ship because the solution—merging two separate institutions in two separate states—was so Herculean that had one person been the only driver it surely would have failed.

The collective, by God's grace, prevailed, and on July 9, 2013, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association approved CUW's acquisition of CUAA, completing the final piece of the strategic merger between the two schools.

It has been 10 years since Concordia University, Inc. became "one university with two residential campuses." To celebrate, some of the champions of the merger gathered on a Zoom call to share a collective oral history of the momentous feat.

Comments have been edited for length and clarity. Read the transcript of the full conversation at ***blog.cuaa.edu/merger-oral-history****.*

Those on the call and their positions at the time of the merger:

- **Rev. Patrick T. Ferry, PhD,** president of CUW
- **Rev. David Maier,** president of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) Michigan District
- **William Cario, PhD,** head of academic operations for CUW
- **Kenneth Gaschk,** senior vice president of enrollment for CUW
- **Jim Saalfeld,** chairman of the Board of Directors for Michigan Church Extension Fund
- **John Bates,** CFO at Michigan Church Extension Fund

A PIVOTAL MEETING

In November 2011, leaders from CUW, CUAA, The Synod, the Michigan District, and Michigan Church Extension Fund met on CUAA's campus for what has been described as a make-or-break meeting.

Saalfeld: We had been the primary lender to Concordia Ann Arbor for years, and they struggled. We had gone so far as to talk at board meetings about what if it closed? So heading into that meeting I knew the university was down to its last option. I was hopeful, but I was also concerned because I knew that in order to make it happen we were going to have to do something that we almost never, ever do and that was forgive some debt.

Bates: God forgives. CEF does not. That's our tagline. [laughter] Yeah, we knew it was pretty precarious. We had a first mortgage on not all the land but most of the land, and if we were just coldhearted businessmen then probably the simplest thing to do would have been to foreclose. But as ministry-hearted men, that didn't seem to be the right direction to go.

Saalfeld: The thing I recall about the meeting is how relatively short it was on the front end. I think we opened it, introduced ourselves, and Al [Prochnow, head of financial operations at CUW] just got right to it: "If we're going to make this happen, these are the things we need." And he just went down the line letting people know what they either needed to forgive or take on in order for Concordia Wisconsin to agree to make it happen.

Ferry: The other part of that was that CUW was going to take on half of the debt. And we wanted to know that our partners were going to meet us halfway, and they did.

WORTH THE INVESTMENT

Maier: Nine days into my presidency, I was called to the Board of Regents meeting, and they told me they were closing Ann Arbor. And I talked with the chairman there, and I just said, "You know what? Not on our watch. Not on our watch!" Keep in mind, I had no idea what I was doing yet! [laughter] I didn't know how formative that speech was. I meant it, but I didn't know what I was quite saying. But God was good!

Ferry: When we looked at Ann Arbor, we thought, in so many ways, it's just like what we have going on in Wisconsin and better in some respects. I mean, Ann Arbor had more Lutherans in that region than anywhere else, and we just really believed that we could kind of replicate what we'd done in Wisconsin.

Gaschk: I went to Concordia [Wisconsin] when it was a two-year school. There were people who talked about "maybe Concordia Milwaukee should close" at the time. And Concordia Wisconsin was given that second chance. And my feeling was "Look at how the Lord blessed Concordia with that second chance." The impact that Concordia had on my life and on so many other people's lives—I knew I was going to do whatever I could, whatever small part I could play to help Ann Arbor be successful.

Cario: There were several of us faculty members on the Mequon campus who had Concordia Ann Arbor ties. Along with me, Randy Ferguson, who was in the Academic Office at the time, was a CUAA alum. So we did feel like we had a special tie there and a sense of "We don't want this to fail. We want to do this right."

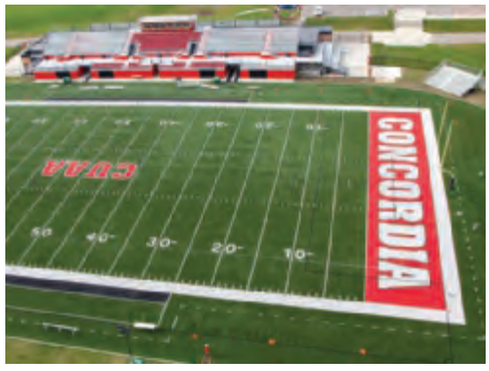
OUR GOD, OUR HOPE FOR YEARS TO COME

Ferry: We're people of faith, and people of faith sometime need to take a step of faith—or even a *leap* of faith. In retrospect, what's the worst thing that could have happened? Well, we all could have lost some money for sure. But look what has happened instead. And I'm not just talking about Ann Arbor's growth in its enrollment. I'm talking about the 90 students on our two campuses—most of them in Ann Arbor by the way—who have been baptized into the faith in the last 10 years. The angels in Heaven rejoice over that. Even if it was just one it would have been worth whatever we could have invested in order for that to be made possible. And it's not just one, it's 90, it's more than that who have grown in their faith and who are having an impact on the Church throughout the world.

CHANGE IS GOOD

Among the many changes since the 2013 CUWAA merger are several physical improvements to the Ann Arbor campus. Here are some of the significant upgrades, renovations, and additions CUAA has seen in the past decade.

Kreft Center for the Arts renovated
(2015)



Cardinal Stadium constructed
(2015)

North Building acquired
(2016)

Thunder Sports Complex constructed
(2018)

Cardinal Fieldhouse renovated
(2019)

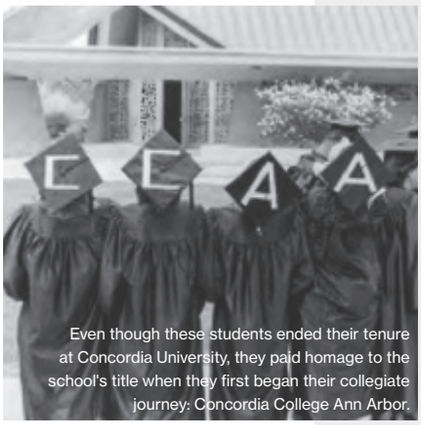
School of Health Professions wing at North Building created
(2021)

Chapel of the Holy Trinity pipe organ restored
(2022)

60 YEARS OF GROWTH ON GEDDES

Today's students celebrate 60 years of CUAA with balloons.

Students stroll to class on a rainy day in 1968.


Even though these students ended their tenure at Concordia University, they paid homage to the school's title when they first began their collegiate journey: Concordia College Ann Arbor.

Dorm loyalty is strong at CUAA. These John Mark ladies pose near their residence hall's fireplace in 1968.

Concordia University Ann Arbor may be relatively small in terms of its enrollment, but the passion displayed by its community of students, alumni, employees, and stakeholders lives large. A spirit of fun and won't-quit attitudes possessed by generations who have attended has shaped CUAA's past and brought it to where it is today.

This year marks six decades since the school at 4090 Geddes Road began, first under the name of Concordia Lutheran Junior College (CLJC) and eventually Concordia University Ann Arbor. In celebration of this milestone, we've rounded up alumni from various decades to give their take on what makes their alma mater special.

1960s

Concordia was built upon the motto "that in all things, Christ might have preeminence." The phrase and a desire to grow the Lord's Kingdom have long held a special place in alumni's hearts.

"I'll never forget the deeper understanding of the word 'ministry' as exhibited by the professors at Concordia Lutheran Junior College," said Dan Johnson ('68). "Those men and women were true inspirations, especially for me, a public school-educated kid from western Pennsylvania."

1970s

In 1978, CLJC transitioned to a four-year college and became Concordia College Ann Arbor (colloquially called C2A2 by students). In the coming decade, a School of Business would be added in addition to the School of Education and School of Arts and Sciences. At this point in the school's history, C2A2 was a college with a full supply of educational offerings, extracurriculars, and residential life experiences.

1990s

One of the highlights for Susan R. Opel ('91) was during an annual choir tour. "We were kicked out of the Washington National Cathedral in D.C.," Opel described. "We were touring the cathedral one day and couldn't resist testing the acoustics despite the signs that read 'No singing.' Our director, Kurt Amolsch, was with us, and we launched into 'E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come.' It was glorious! And then we were asked to leave. So rebellious!"

2000s

It wasn't until the turn of the century that C2A2 gained university status and updated its name to Concordia University Ann Arbor.

"There are too many memories to count," reflected Josh Kittleman ('02). "But a favorite is when my roommate, suitemates, and some other friends formed a band together. We played our one and only concert in front of our friends on campus at Concordia Palooza in spring of 2002. While we were never going to win any awards, I did get to live out my dream of being in a band."

Left: Mequon campus move (August, 1983).
Below: campus students (1983).

Mequon campus dedication (September 11, 1983).

THE MIRACLE OF MEQUON

Concordia University Wisconsin has come a long way since its 13-student start in the basement of Trinity Lutheran School in downtown Milwaukee.

From its inception in 1881 to today, CUW has grown to encompass thousands of students made up of on-campus, online, and hybrid learners at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels. CUW now offers more than 70 undergraduate programs, 50-plus graduate degrees, and six doctoral offerings in fields including education, church work, business, the liberal arts, and a wide variety of health care-related fields. And it has expanded its reach into Michigan thanks to the 2013 merge with Concordia University Ann Arbor, making CUWAA the largest Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod school of higher education in the United States.

But before the university took a leap of faith in adopting a new campus in an entirely different state, school and Synod leaders made another decision that many deemed risky by relocating from its established home in the heart of Wisconsin's largest city to a new home 20 miles north. And it has made all the difference.

The decision to move came at a pivotal point in the school's history. In 1978, Concordia's transition from a two-year school to a four-year accredited college prompted growth. For several years, university leaders hung their intentions on an expansion plan that would keep the school in Milwaukee. That plan would have required the school to purchase and raze an adjacent neighborhood of homes, however, and when pushback from community members arose, the university's leadership needed to pivot. Ultimately, the decision was made to explore the feasibility of relocating to an entirely different campus, one that would afford ample room for future growth.

The LCMS Board of Directors scouted the Notre Dame of the Lake campus in Mequon, which was owned at the time by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and used as a motherhouse and training center for teaching nuns. In July 1982, a momentous decision was made: Concordia would move to Mequon. The following year, CUW ushered in its first students—and its largest class yet—at 12800 North Lake Shore Drive in Mequon. And thus, "The Miracle of Mequon," as it is colloquially called, officially began.

While the downtown campus still holds a special place in the hearts of many in the CUW community, the move to Mequon undisputedly afforded a plethora of possibilities and growth opportunities that would not have been feasible had the school remained. This year, the Concordia community celebrates 40 years by the lake, giving thanks to the Lord for all of the opportunities its "new" location made possible.

Read more details about the move to Mequon at **blog.cuw.edu/historical-expansion**.

Aerial view of the Mequon campus (1981–1990).

Aerial view of the Milwaukee campus (1961–1970).

Milwaukee campus dining hall (1951–1960).

Mequon campus dedication day (September 11, 1983).

fireside chat

Nothing beats an evening spent with friends, and what better setting than CUAA's new firepit? Last summer, members of the Concordia University Ann Arbor Student Government Association volunteered their "time off" to help beautify campus. They joined forces with maintenance employees to help install hammock poles, a furnished patio, and a new firepit for students like Derek Hebner, Ambryn Diener, and Molly O'Connel to enjoy.

take five

Get to know one of our *uncommon* Concordians, Travis Wright ('25), finance major, entrepreneur, and lacrosse player.

By **Lisa Liljegren**, *Strategic Communications*

For most people, the phrase "waiting for the shoe to drop" is a folksy expression for anticipating something dreadful to happen. For Travis Wright, owner of Kicksandcash, shoes dropping is a highly profitable business opportunity. The sophomore finance major is learning on his Nikes how to navigate his million-dollar enterprise and have a rewarding college experience.

1 What's your business?

The term for what I do is "middlemanning the pairs," which is a cool way to say that I buy and sell shoes online. I buy large quantities of shoes as they are released, or "dropped," by the manufacturer, and then I sell them to businesses for a profit. In finance terms, I am a wholesaler. My company is named Kicksandcash LLC, and we specialize in moving Nike Dunks, Jordan 1s, and Jordan 4s. I don't sell to consumers, so I don't have a website, but I promote my business on Instagram.

2 How did you get started?

I have always been entrepreneurial. In elementary school, I had lemonade stands and sold Pokémon trading cards. I sold candy and fidget spinners in middle school when they were popular. I also earned money by mowing lawns and shoveling snow. In high school, I started selling shoes and clothes, and kept my shoveling and landscaping gigs to buy more shoes and clothes to sell. That inventory has grown to 40–50 shelves storing more than 2,500 pairs of shoes!

I'm using shoes to set me up for life. I'm looking to open multiple resell stores inside shopping malls in the near future. Beyond shoes, I'm interested in real estate and intend to invest in rental properties before I graduate.

3 What advice do you have for budding entrepreneurs?

My biggest advice to young entrepreneurs is to learn that success takes time. So often, people in the online wholesale business are looking for one-offs and quick sales. Instead, I focus on building relationships with my buyers and sellers, and reinvesting profits for steady, long-term growth.

My other piece of advice? Become an expert in something that has value and then help people find that something at the best price.

4 How has Concordia helped you?

Concordia has been a huge help to me! Last year I presented my business at CU Launch, the university's business pitch event. From there, I connected with an accountant and a lawyer to help me with my business practices. All my professors are supportive and understanding if my business occasionally interferes with my class schedule. They work with me through my crazy-busy times because they want me to succeed. I don't think I'd get that at another school.

5 What shoes are you currently wearing?

Here's the thing: I'm really frugal (my dad calls me cheap). I'm wearing destroyed Air Force 1s from over a year ago with holes in the bottom.

A VIRTUOSO WITH VALUES

Concordia University Ann Arbor's newest music faculty member, Angie Zhang, is a respected Yamaha Artist and concert pianist. Zhang, a Juilliard graduate who is currently a Doctor of Musical Arts candidate at the University of Michigan, was signed to the prestigious Yamaha Artist roster in 2018. The Yamaha Corporation bestows the honor on musical artists worldwide who are considered the best in their field, allowing the musicians certain exclusive rights such as on-demand access—regardless of location—to the highest-quality Yamaha instruments. In addition to piano, Zhang teaches cello and music theory classes at CUAA.

Zhang is grateful for all of the Yamaha pianos CUAA has on campus as part of a loan program generously administered by Thomas Solich, owner and president of Solich Piano and Music Company. The Yamaha loan program launched in 2020 provides brand-new instruments at no cost to the university. Each year, the public is invited to campus to purchase these and other pianos, which allows the program to continually be upgraded, giving students access to top-notch acoustic and digital pianos.

Zhang and the Yamaha loan program aren't the only assets to be added to the music department recently. Last year CUAA received a generous donation from Karl and Shirley Kreft to form the university's first-ever endowed chair. CUAA filled the position with John Boonenberg, DMA, a lifelong Lutheran and Juilliard graduate himself.

"Professor Zhang combines her rare God-given gifts with a passion for teaching and mentorship," Boonenberg said. "Her inspiring way of enriching students in mind, body, and spirit puts her firmly within the mission of our department and university, and we are thrilled to have her on faculty as part of the whirlwind of growth and excellence that we have been blessed to experience in the past year."

Zhang said she is excited to see how the Lord will continue to use her and the other talented faculty at Concordia into the future.

"We are humble contributors," she said. "The CUAA music department's growth potential rests in the hands of God. I believe He will do amazing things for this amazing place."

Read more at **blog.cuaa.edu/Yamaha-Artist**.

WELCOME HOME

A former guest house on campus has been converted into a welcoming and fully stocked space to better serve Concordia University Ann Arbor students. Using Title III grant funding, CUAA renovated the facility situated between John Mark and Luke residence halls to create the Center for Intercultural Affairs (CIA). The 1,650-square-foot center boasts three meeting rooms, a common area, a restroom, washer and dryer, and a full kitchen.

The CIA also houses a new offering, the Cardinal Cabinet, which is a room full of items, such as nonperishable food, hygiene products, clothing, and winter coats that are free to any CUAA student.

With its varied resources and multifunctional space, the CIA is meant to serve an assortment of student needs. Commuter students, for example, now have a devoted space for socializing, studying, food prep, or even laundry in between classes, while low-income students have discreet access to free utilities, groceries, and other essentials. More than half of CUAA's undergraduate population and a majority of its graduate population are commuter students. Nearly 30 percent of traditional undergraduates are Pell Grant eligible, an indicator of income status.

No matter their background or need, however, all students are welcome at the center, said CUAA Director of Multicultural Engagement Shanitra Cheff.

"The CIA is a place where students can connect and feel cared for," said Cheff. "We're always looking for new and fresh ways to improve the student experience at Concordia, and I'm excited to see how the CIA will foster a sense of belonging for each and every student into the future."

See more pictures at **blog.cuaa.edu/CIA-opening**.

A host of alumni backers

MEMBERS OF THE CLASSES OF 1969 through 1972 have raised more than $133,000 in support of church work endowments at CUAA. Each class set a fundraising goal of $25,000 in honor of its 50th anniversary as graduates of Concordia Lutheran Junior College. The Class of 1972 is halfway toward its goal, while the prior three cohorts have already surpassed theirs. Altogether, more than 140 individual gifts have been given. Read why alumni, like Rev. Dr. Mark ('72) and Margy ('73) Whitsett (pictured left), choose to give at **blog.cuw.edu/50th-anniversary-endowments**.

Photo courtesy of Brad Wigginton

WASHED IN HOLY WATERS

People who travel to Israel often come back changed in some way. For one CUAA student, a study abroad visit to Israel brought about the very best kind of change.

Alonzo Johnson, a December 2022 graduate in sport and entertainment business, was raised in a Christian home in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He has always loved the Lord, but after enrolling at CUAA to play football, his faith began to grow in new ways.

During his freshman year, he became close with his REL 100 professor, Rev. Daniel Flynn, who encouraged Johnson to go on the annual Israel trip he leads. But it never seemed to work out until this January.

Getting baptized was also something he'd been meaning to do but kept putting off. It didn't feel urgent Johnson said. "But I don't think I understood the true importance of it, and how much it means to someone to be truly saved by the Lord and be accepted into His Kingdom."

It was Johnson's father who first planted the seed of getting baptized in Israel, but it wasn't until Johnson himself arrived in the Holy Land that the idea started to take root. A phone conversation with his parents was key.

"They were telling me things that the tour guide already told me 30 times that day, and I thought it was funny," Johnson recalled. "But, and I don't know why, when my father said it, it just hit differently."

So he talked with Flynn, and the next morning, in the presence of dozens of fellow students, including two other football players—along with his parents in Virginia via Zoom—Johnson was washed in the Spirit in the cold and cleansing waters of the Sea of Galilee. On the phone, his father sobbed with joy.

For Flynn, it was a confirmation that God is always at work.

"Even today, I'm still emotional about the moment, and I do thank God for the ministry of the classroom," Flynn said. "Who would have ever thought that five years after we met in a freshmen religion class I would now stand with my friend Alonzo and have the gift of baptizing him."

Study abroad opportunities, such as Johnson's Israel trip, are available at both CUW and CUAA. For more information, visit **cuw.edu/study-abroad** or **cuaa.edu/study-abroad**.

New birth

Baptism indicates that the Old Adam in all of us should be daily drowned, and that a new person should emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity. At CUAA, students are readily reminded of this through the central placement of a custom baptismal font in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity. Designed and built in 2019 by Nate Harris ('19), the font complements the chapel's architectural design with its three-sided stand matching the chapel's three walls and, when not in use, fitting naturally where the aisles meet on the chapel floor. Learn more at **blog.cuw.edu/inspired-design**.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For more happenings or full event information, visit **cuaa.edu/events**.

THEATRE CABARET DINNER FUNDRAISER
April 29

ALUMNI LEGACY TRACK MEET
April 29

COMMENCEMENT
May 14

CARDINAL CONNECTION DAYS
For new, incoming students
May 10; June 7, 21; July 19

TRINITY TIME
July 23–24

CLJC CLASS OF '73 50TH REUNION
Aug. 4–5

VIRTUAL POSSIBILITIES

A nonprofit arm of Concordia University ultimately aimed at generating revenue to fund grants and scholarships for students has a CUAA-based start-up within its portfolio that's gaining traction.

The Center for Simulation and Innovation (CSI) exists to improve the way people learn through the creation and implementation of immersive simulation technologies and practices. It's an effort of Cindy Fenske, DNP, RN, assistant vice president of academics at CUAA, and Chris Raasch, who formerly served as head of CUAA's IT services.

The team offers training and consulting services. Earlier this year, CSI hosted its first workshop which drew more than two dozen attendees.

They've also thrown their hat into the rapidly growing field of augmented reality (AR)/virtual reality (VR) product development. Fenske and Raasch are set to launch their first VR program, which will be available for remote use by anyone in the world. All that it requires, beyond the license, is a VR headset or smart device.

To create the program, the team tapped CUAA Athletic Training Education Program Director Tim Neal to design a concussion assessment training program. The program offers about a dozen scenarios meant to assess an individual's ability to implement the appropriate medical response after a player is injured on the field. Neal, who previously served as head athletic trainer for Syracuse University, is a member of the National Athletic Trainers' Association Hall of Fame.

Fenske brings years of expertise in higher education, specifically in the area of simulation, while Raasch lends insight to the tech components of the operation.

"We're taking what we know about education and best practices and bringing that into our efforts," Fenske said. "We know that simulation technology improves learning. It's really a way to better prepare people for the ever-changing marketplace."

BUCKING THE TREND

CUAA notched another record-breaking enrollment this year. The achievement stands in stark contrast to nationwide collegiate trends, where average enrollment declined for the third straight year, according to a 2022 National Student Clearinghouse report. At CUAA, total enrollment not only increased, it hit an all-time high, with especially strong gains among the campus' graduate learner population.

1,201
FALL 2022 TOTAL ENROLLMENT

252
GRADUATE-LEVEL LEARNERS (UP 85 FROM LAST YEAR)

60%
GROWTH IN TOTAL ENROLLMENT SINCE 2013 MERGER

9%
DECLINE IN AVERAGE ENROLLMENT AMONG MICHIGAN'S OTHER INDEPENDENT COLLEGES OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS

22
NEW UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS ADDED IN THE PAST 10 YEARS

14
NEW GRADUATE PROGRAMS ADDED IN THE PAST 5 YEARS

FAITHFUL AND GROWING

At a time when some institutions of higher education have abandoned their mission statements, Concordia University has remained faithful: We are "a Lutheran higher education community committed to helping students develop in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the world." Joyfully, this mission alignment has yielded growth, as noted through some of the statistics on this page. CUAA notched another record-breaking enrollment this year. This stands in stark contrast to nationwide collegiate trends.

While our campus is thrilled to share this news, we're more excited about what it really means. More students than ever are having the opportunity to engage in an uncommon Concordia experience and are being prepared to live uncommon lives of service, leadership, and purpose. One of my greatest joys is seeing this reality every day in our classrooms, in Chapel, on the field, in the Black Box, and in every place our students go. While enrollment growth is good, the most significant growth is that which happens in the lives of our students every day.

As CUAA celebrates its 60th anniversary, and we all celebrate 10 years of the incredible relationship of CUWAA, we continue to give thanks for the Lord's goodness and faithfulness. We're thrilled to welcome Dr. Erik Ankerberg as president. We're excited to remain steadfast and faithful to our Christ-centered mission. We're eager for opportunities to continue growing our students "in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the world."

REV. DR. RYAN PETERSON
Vice President of Administration
Chief Liaison to the Office of the President

Dean Pate '87

BA in liberal arts ('87)

SKILLS FOR THE WORKPLACE

Dean Pate will readily say that his time at CUAA prepared him for life after graduation but not in the ways one might expect. Sure, professors' lectures and assigned readings played a role, but it was the lived experiences that made all the difference.

In particular, Pate's time as Student Government Association (SGA) president taught him important life lessons like how to work toward a consensus, have productive meetings, and delegate. He continues to employ these skills as strategic products & solutions manager at Konica Minolta Business Solutions U.S.A., a global manufacturer and distributor of software and hardware products.

Pate wants to ensure that today's CUAA students and alumni reap the benefits that exist beyond the classroom. He's looking to develop a professional network of CUAA SGA alumni to mentor current members, and create an SGA endowment to provide annual funds for community service events and campus projects.

Learn more about the effort and read more about Pate at **blog.cuaa.edu/alum-Dean-Pate**.

Projects fulfilled

This past semester, a number of projects have either been completed or begun, thanks to the generosity of donors to the university. On the Mequon campus, the John M. Bahr Academic Resource Center (ARC) was dedicated on February 24, and the School of Health Professions Interprofessional Clinic was dedicated on March 29. On the Ann Arbor campus, renovations have begun on one of the campus's larger classrooms, Krieger 109.

Fundraising underway

We have two major projects, one on each campus, for which we are currently soliciting financial support. We hope to break ground on each before the end of the year: a fitness center in Ann Arbor and a music rehearsal space addition in Mequon. Philanthropic support is key for both of these projects, as they are being funded by generous donors. Please visit **blog.cuw.edu/music-building-campaign** or **blog.cuaa.edu/fitness-center-campaign** for more details.

ADVANCING THE *mission*

On January 9, 2023, a new era for Concordia University began when Dr. Erik Ankerberg officially began his term as president. His arrival certainly ushers in excitement and anticipation as we look to the future of our university.

While we are eager for what is to come, 2023 also allows us to look back at several milestones for which we can praise God and be thankful for His guidance in our history. Those milestones have been highlighted in earlier pages of this publication: the 60th anniversary of CUAA, the 40th anniversary of the move to Mequon, and the 10th anniversary of the merger.

All of these milestones started with visionary leaders who were willing to take a leap of faith. They had the courage to grow the kingdom of God by bringing students into a Lutheran university setting. It also took people who were generous with their time and financial resources, as well as a plan to move the mission forward.

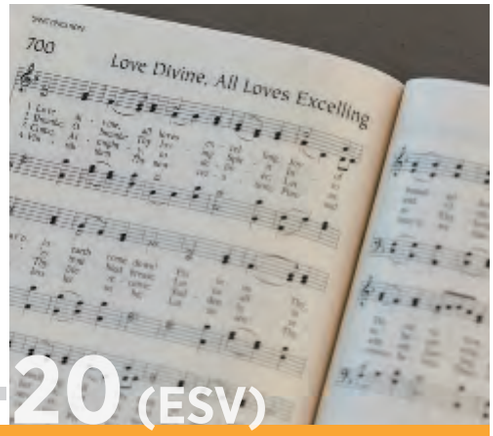
Fast forward to today. We honor the legacy of those leaders whose hope was to create a vibrant university where faith can thrive and students receive a quality education preparing them for their future vocations. With that entrepreneurial spirit, we continue to work to enhance the student experience. On this page, you will see some of the efforts that are underway.

People often ask, "What can I do for Concordia?" The response is threefold. Certainly pray for our continued work and success as we fulfill our mission to God and the Church. Second, refer potential students to our university. And third, prayerfully consider making a financial gift. We are grateful for the many students, alumni, parents, and friends of Concordia who have supported us, as they truly make a difference. Gifts to our endowment and the Concordia Fund help ensure opportunities for students today and into the future. Thank you for your help in making Concordia a rising Lutheran Christian university.

DEAN RENNICKE
Vice President of Office of Advancement
President of Concordia Foundation

After God's own heart

Professor of Theology Rev. Dr. Jason Soenksen reflects upon *kardiokratia*, the rule of the heart, and reminds us that our hearts do not rule. Instead, it is Christ who rules in our hearts. Read the full devotion at **blog.cuw.edu/benediction-Soenksen**.



1 John 3:19–20 (ESV)

"By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything."

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10 YEARS

HEARTS TOGETHER

A lot has changed on our campuses within the past decade.
If you haven't seen us lately, it's time to schedule a visit!

CUW.EDU/VISIT • CUAA.EDU/VISIT