



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 2026

Hello from Augustana University!

I pray you and your families are enjoying good health and peace this spring.

As we enter the final stretch of the academic year, campus is alive with energy and anticipation. We are blessed with abundant opportunities to gather in community, foster connection and celebrate the accomplishments of our students and faculty.

In a time of both challenge and opportunity across higher education, we remain deeply grateful for the wisdom, generosity and unshakable Viking spirit that strengthen and distinguish Augustana University. These enduring qualities are at the heart of the continued progress of our Viking Bold journey, and I am pleased to share a few highlights with you.

Enduring Commitments – Faith & Spiritual Life

- Awarded a \$5 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to support a five-year storytelling initiative, “Sacred Discoveries: Stories of Christian Flourishing in College.” Congregations and synods will be key partners in sharing stories of young adult faith through this project.
- Completed Phase I of the Chapel of Reconciliation Renovation Project; the bell tower and surrounding patio (Phase II) will be completed this summer. A chapel rededication, along with the dedication of the bell tower, is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 18.
 - The new Jerstad & Limburg Gathering Place will host meetings, ministry programming and receptions.
- Welcomed the second cohort of Buntrock Scholars in Fall 2025, a gifted group of ELCA students committed to growing in faith, leadership and service.

Academics

- Finalized the new structure of the College of Arts and Sciences and selected inaugural dean and five area chairs (Spring 2025)
- Welcomed the inaugural director of the De & Dave Knudson Center for Global Engagement, established in May 2025 through a \$1 million matching gift (Fall 2025)
- Launched AU-UND engineering partnership to offer 5-year dual degree program with 28 students in the first cohort (Fall 2025)
- Received Candidate for Accreditation status from the International Accreditation Council for Business Education (IACBE) for the Rydell School of Business and added a trust minor (Fall 2025)
- Secured accreditation for the undergraduate Strength & Conditioning and Doctor of Physical Therapy programs (Spring 2025)

Enrollment & Strategic Scholarships

- Continued incremental growth toward enrolling 2,200 undergraduate and 800 graduate students by achieving 85.9% retention of first- to second-year students and record numbers for overall headcount (2,548), undergraduate students (2,143), and graduate and doctoral students (405) (Fall 2025)

Athletics

- Implemented a strategic planning process to navigate the evolving landscape of college athletics, including Augustana's participation in single-sport NCAA Division I and multi-sport NCAA Division II competition.
- Advanced to the Mason Cup Semifinals for the first time in Augustana men's hockey program history.

Physical Campus & IT

- Secured funding for Phase I of the Elmen Center Renovation Project. Lighting and sound systems have been upgraded. The next phase of enhancements — new flooring and chair back seating — will begin in April and is expected to be completed in early August.
- Continued construction of Foundation Heights apartment building on 28th St. and Grange Ave. with completion anticipated in August.

Viking Bold Campaign

With an initial goal of \$175,000,000, as of April 8 Augustana has raised \$220,154,873 for the Viking Bold campaign, established to fuel the university's *Viking Bold: The Journey to 2030* strategic plan. The plan is divided into three phases, with Phase II ending on Dec. 31, 2026. A new goal of \$225,000,000 has been established for Phase II of the campaign.

An enduring commitment of Augustana University is to provide our campus community and the broader region with opportunities to broaden perspectives, gain insight and deepen connections to the important local, national and global issues shaping our world today. During the 2025–26 academic year, the university hosted the third annual Critical Inquiry & Citizenship Colloquium with Dr. Joy Buolamwini — artificial intelligence expert, artist, author and founder of the Algorithmic Justice League — as the featured speaker; the 29th Boe Forum on Public Affairs with former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Adm. James Stavridis; and the South Dakota Supreme Court's March Term of Court.

Through the highs and lows of our time, faith, hope and optimism never waver at Augustana University, where our students, faculty and staff live out our core values: Christian, liberal arts, excellence, community and service. Here, learning, mentoring and exploration are transformative, and bold aspirations lead to bold futures.

We invite you to attend campus events such as those highlighted above whenever your schedule allows. You can stay up to date on Augustana University news and upcoming events at augie.edu and through our social media channels. As always, we encourage the young people in your congregations and communities to visit campus and discover how Augustana can help strengthen their faith, develop their gifts and prepare them for lives of meaning and service.

On behalf of the university community, I share our deep gratitude for the Southwestern Minnesota Synod's prayers and partnership as, together, we continue nurturing and preparing the next generation of servant leaders.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin
President