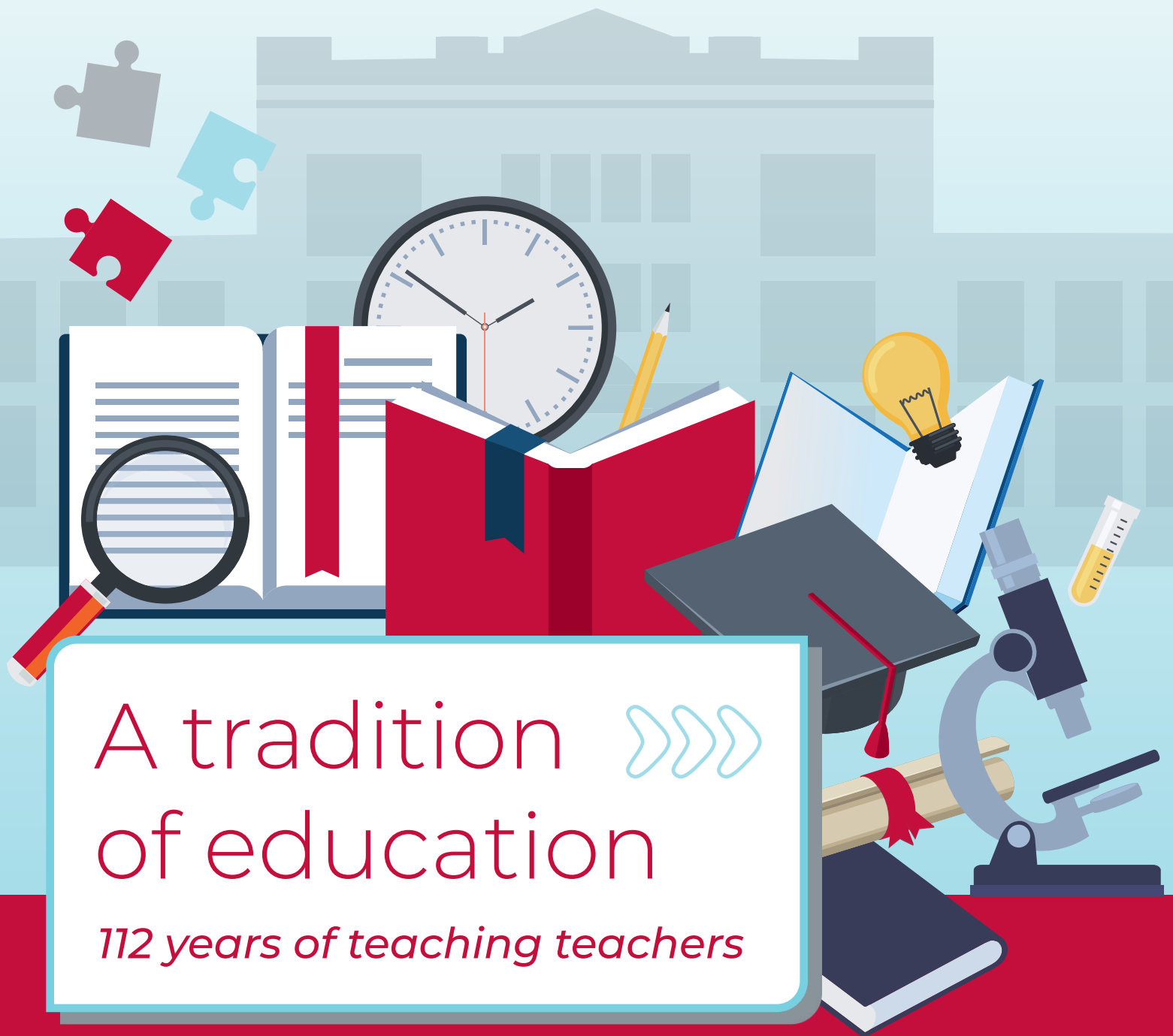


Connections

Spring 2025



A tradition >>>>
of education

112 years of teaching teachers

Alumni Association and Development Foundation





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MINOT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As I type these words, the sun is shining outside but the temperature is nearly minus 30 degrees – the coldest temps in Minot since 2009. As you know, we get students from all over the country and around the globe, and this year they are definitely getting a taste of a good old-fashioned North Dakota winter!

This issue of Connections is focused on the signature program at Minot State University since its founding days, teacher education. MSU was established as a Normal School in 1913 with the purpose of training new teachers who could educate students on the rural plains. With these historical roots, it is not at all a stretch to state that teacher education truly represents the very fabric of what today is a comprehensive university. Please take a few minutes to read the profiles of alumni who are making positive impacts at all educational levels across North Dakota and beyond. MSU is proud of our roots, and we very much look forward to the next 112 years of continuing to train teachers, coaches, administrators, and all those in the world of education!

MSU's student enrollment increased by 2.6% this spring compared to the Spring 2024 semester. This is the third consecutive semester of growth following

the increases we also saw last fall and the previous spring. These enrollment numbers are great news for the campus and are solid indicators that new initiatives, expanded scholarships, and new academic offerings are making an impact and helping to attract additional students to Minot State University.

The winter months also include time in Bismarck as the North Dakota Legislature is in session (as you likely know, the North Dakota Legislature only meets every odd-numbered year). We have been busy sharing information, presenting overviews, providing testimony, and responding to legislative inquiries as they arise. There are a number of MSU alumni serving in the Legislature, and we are grateful to each of them, along with all of their colleagues, for the time and effort these citizen legislators from across North Dakota devote to public service.

On campus we recently held an open house for our new MSU Greenhouse (attached to the Cyril Moore Science Center) that was primarily funded thanks to the support of several generous donors. This facility is an important asset for many students across campus, but especially for those in the sciences. The new greenhouse is a major improvement over the former decades-old facility that had long outlived its usefulness.

For the third consecutive year, MSU also recently hosted the North Dakota Native American State Science and Engineering Fair. Nearly 200 K-12 students from 10 schools across the state were on campus displaying their projects and competing in such areas as computer science, artificial intelligence, microbiology, and chemistry.

The winter athletic seasons are wrapping up, and we are preparing for various post-season tournaments while other student-athletes are gearing up for the start of the spring sports seasons with baseball, softball, golf, and track & field moving forward (hopefully, the long winter will eventually be over!).

A busy spring and summer is planned with many MSU alumni events across the state, so please see page 31 for more details and join us if you are able. Best wishes to all from the MSU campus, and as always,

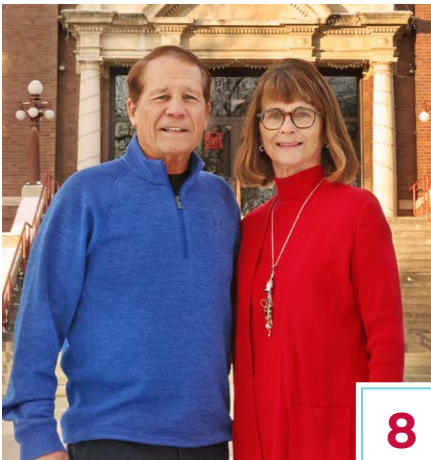
GO BEAVERS! ::::

Steven W. Shirley, Ph.D.
President

Cover story

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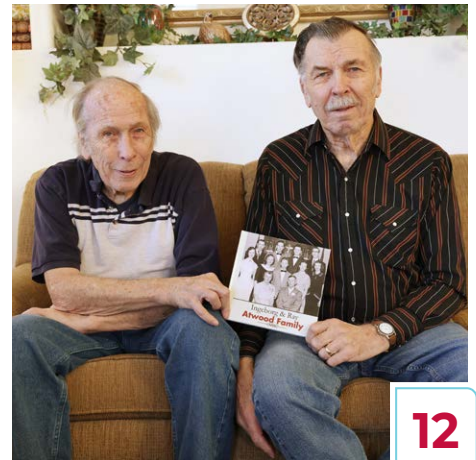
A tradition
of education



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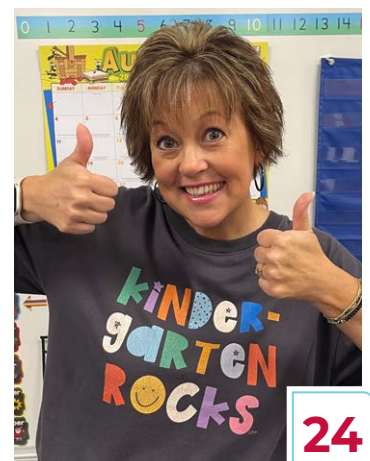
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Corrections: In the Fall 2024 edition of *Connections*, there were two errors. On page 10 in the Alum from Day One section, Walker Jerome's name was transposed. On page 35 in the In Memory section, David Williams was incorrectly listed as retired staff emeritus when he was retired faculty emeritus. The editorial staff at *Connections* apologizes for both errors.

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Have you had a recent change to your home, seasonal, or email address?

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A tradition of education

By Michael Linnell

Minot State University can trace its roots in education back to its very beginning.

Since opening its doors in 1913 on land donated by Erik Ramstad nestled on the rise of Minot's North Hill, the State Normal School of Minot, Minot State Teachers College, Minot State College, Dakota Northwestern for a very brief time, and now Minot State University has been where the future educators in Northwest North Dakota and throughout the country come to learn and grow.

The names have changed, the students have changed, and even the ways of teaching have changed, but a constant has been teachers teaching teachers.

"Minot State's history as a teacher's college inspires us every day," said Dan Conn, current chair of the Department of Education and Inclusive Services. "We carry forward the vision of individuals like Erik Ramstad, who believed that education is a right for everyone in northwest North Dakota. I am proud and humbled to be part of this legacy, and I feel a deep responsibility to ensure our programs continue to reflect the values and traditions that have shaped our institution. Minot State remains a beacon for teacher preparation, and it's a privilege to contribute to this tradition while helping to write the next chapter."

From those humble beginnings, first in the Minot Armory and then Old Main, to its current homes in Swain Hall and Memorial Hall, MSU has evolved into its current version. Minot State offers multiple areas of study within the educational realm, including early

childhood education, special education, elementary education, American Sign Language, and driver traffic safety.

After offering two-year degrees as part of the Normal School designation, MSU began offering four-year degrees in 1924 and, in 1946, changed its professional teaching degree to a Bachelor of Science in education and offered a Bachelor of Arts degree to students interested in other educational fields.

One of those fields, special education, officially began in 1962, but its roots can be traced back to the 1930s.

"We have a rich history dating back to President (George) McFarland in 1930 when President McFarland asked a new faculty member, Edna Gilbert, who taught general speech and children's literature courses, to help three MSU teacher graduates who were finding it hard to find a job due to their speech disabilities," said Holly Pedersen '93/'94, professor in special education. "This led to a course in 'speech correction' being offered in 1931. This evolved into the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders we have today. In 1962, a major in education of the deaf was added with a federal grant."

"The Division of Special Education was officially created with Gilbert serving as chairperson. The special education department continued to expand to meet statewide needs. In 1990, the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities began as part of the department and now is a



"Minot State remains a beacon for teacher preparation, and it's a privilege to contribute to this tradition while helping to write the next chapter."

*– Dan Conn, chair
Department of Education
and Inclusive Services*



Members of the Minot State University Department of Education and Inclusive Services pose for a photo in the Swain Hall Second Floor Atrium. The team includes front row from left: Chelsie Terez Hultz '06, assistant professor, elementary education program director; Kathy Hintz, professor, field placement director; Lisa Borden-King, associate professor, director of teacher licensure programs; and Molly Paszek '88/'01, instructor. Back row, from left: Teresa Witteman, administrative coordinator; Evan Borisinkoff '00, associate professor, human services program director; Warren Gamas, associate professor; Erica Bailey '24, instructor; Laura Zucca-Scott, professor, master of education program director; Nichol Anderson '08, instructor, early childhood education program director; Jana Schultz, administrative assistant; Holly Pedersen '93/'94, professor, special education graduate program and undergraduate sign language/interpreting programs director; Wenjing Zheng, associate professor, special education undergraduate program director; and Dan Conn, associate professor and chair of the Department of Education and Inclusive Services.



University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research and Services, the only one in our state. In recent years, programs in American Sign Language and sign language interpreter training have been established to ensure appropriate services to those who need them."

A relatively new area in the education department at MSU is the Teacher Licensure Program (TLP), directed by Lisa Borden-King. It was established to create a strong, unified voice for programs that lead to licensure as a teacher and to assure consistency and rigor across all teaching licensure programs.

"We have been leaders in promoting trauma-sensitive teaching and hope to initiate a concentration in that area," she said. "As they enter the profession, our students will be facing challenges related to workload, classroom management, and increased curricular demands, and it is crucial that we continue to support them in developing resilience and professional skills to overcome these challenges."

MSU's faculty sets the University apart from its competitors and attracts talented individuals from across the country and its own backyard. Conn grew up in Colorado Springs, Colorado, earning degrees from Northeastern Junior College, the University of Northern Colorado (including his doctorate), and Adams State College. He taught and coached at multiple levels in Colorado before his time at MSU. Borden-King is a native of Alaska who moved to Grand Forks at the age of 8 and earned degrees at the University of North Dakota and a doctorate at Indiana University. She taught for several years in Iowa before coming to Minot State in 1997. Pedersen grew up on a farm in Macoun, Saskatchewan, and earned two degrees at Minot State. She joined the special education faculty at MSU in 2006.

"We have outstanding faculty who connect with students and are committed to their personal and professional development, and we have a rigorous teacher education core that we remain committed to despite the pressure to reduce expectations and requirements due to the teacher shortage," Borden-King said.

The impact MSU graduates have on their various communities is also a point of pride for Pedersen.

"I think I'm especially proud of the impact our students have," she said. "This year, I watched proudly as one of our candidates worked with a high school student with a disability and daily worked to build a relationship that formed the

foundation for learning. In one year, the student went from refusing to be in the same room with our candidate to thriving – meeting goals, getting a job, exploring career opportunities, and looking forward to graduation.

"Watching my students teach and impact individual children and youth is why we do what we do."

Looking forward to the department's continued evolution, Conn points to imaginative programs and flexible options as the keys to the future.

"We are tackling the nationwide teacher shortage with innovative programs like para-to-teacher pathways and the ASPIRE dual-credit program," he said. "We've also expanded flexible online options while maintaining our high standards for teacher preparation."

Even as the University moves forward in curriculum and modes of delivery while keeping up with the ever-changing times in education, it won't forget its roots.

"I know that pride in being the teacher's college is alive and well for sure in the area community," Borden-King said. "Our school partners also often reference this fact as a source of pride. When our offices were in Old Main, I was always reminded of this legacy when I would pull up in front of the bench with 'Normal School' on it.

"I believe that our programs in teacher education best honor this legacy by serving our students well, working collaboratively with area and regional P-12 partners in the schools, and by being defenders of the importance of teaching as a profession." ::::

"Watching my students teach and impact individual children and youth is why we do what we do."

— Holly Pedersen,
professor in
special education





Prior swimming instructor dives into **NEW ROLE** as superintendent

By Emily Schmidt

Just five years after graduating from Minot State, Hadlee (Schell) Brandt '17 became superintendent of Newburg United School District. Motivated by her time at Minot State, she dove into her new role and has brought incredible developments to the district.

From Westhope, Brandt instructed swim lessons in high school which inspired her to pursue an education degree at MSU.

After student teaching in Newburg, she moved there to live on a ranch with her husband, Dusty Brandt. She taught first and second grade until Newburg's previous superintendent, Jason Kersten, prepared to retire. As the community discussed finding a replacement, Brandt put her name into the conversation, eager at the opportunity to pursue her goal of becoming a school administrator.

"As a teacher, I saw things that I wanted to implement, and as an administrator, I could make that change for more kids," she said. "I thought, 'I'm here, I'm young. Let's do this.'"

Being a new administrator in a small, rural town, Brandt looked to build her skills to be the best superintendent she could for her students. Having first mentored with her predecessor before he retired, she also joined the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders and has made valuable connections with her fellow administrators across the state.

"There's no one else doing this job in your building," she explained. "Having a mentorship program where I meet other people doing the same job, people I can contact to find answers and build relationships, it's been beneficial."

In addition to looking for ways to better herself, Brandt was also quick to develop new programs for Newburg students.



The summer she became superintendent, she applied for a grant that funded a new STEM room, complete with medical, aviation, graphic design, agriculture, and coding technology. Similar to a study hall, students who enroll in Newburg's STEM class have open access to the new equipment to lead their own learning and try out new career paths.

Having stayed somewhat in her shell during her time at Minot State, focusing mainly on her studies, Brandt is grateful to have the chance to expand students' space for exploration. And as superintendent, she's been able to make the impact she always hoped to make.

"Being in this position has allowed me to create more opportunities for kids," she said. "I've taken some time to write some grants and have received nearly \$400,000 for an array of things within our building. One I'm most proud of is knowing that outside of our walls, there's more out there for these kids."

Now in her third year as superintendent, Brandt appreciates all the people in her life who have supported her on her journey, including the education faculty at Minot State.

"Minot State was my foundation to build me up to be where I am now," she said. "That was my starting point. I had great educators who led me down this path. It was easy for me because I was surrounded by great people." ❄️

BUILDING a LEGACY.....

through teaching and sports

By Veronica Corey



Originally from Binford, sports were a big part of life for the Risks.

"In a town of 300 people, there's not a lot to do other than mischief and sports," Jeff joked. "I participated in baseball, and we both played softball and basketball."

"We didn't have volleyball. When we were in school, he didn't have an option for football because there weren't any co-ops," Tammy added. "We go to a lot of sporting events now here at the college, Minot High, and we went to Minot North for their first girls' basketball game."

Jeff's interest in sports extended beyond the field.

"I knew because of my size and my ability, my playing days were numbered. So, when I got a call the summer after my eighth-grade year from Vernis Haines, who managed Red Willow Resort, asking me about umpiring, I thought it was worth a try. The Binford area had an amateur basketball team, and I would work their home games and even travel with them when they went on the road. When the NDHSAA decided to add girls' basketball, I would referee high school games with my head coach."

At Minot State in 1975, Jeff continued pursuing his passions.

"Two things kept me interested in school: music and sports. I started as a music major, but music and officiating took the same time block, so I switched to P.E."

The Sig Tau social chairman was able to attend Minot State and umpire school in California. He finished umpire school in 1977, worked in minor-league baseball for seven years, and graduated with physical education and recreation degrees.

"Teaching and officiating are similar; you improve by paying attention to how the veterans

handle situations and with practice," Jeff said. "I umpired baseball professionally, retiring after the 1984 season; it was a great experience and a good way to see the country. I worked baseball day after day; it was not as enjoyable to me as working basketball every day. But it did teach me a lot of things about officiating."

Tammy started her journey at Minot State, completing her first two years before transferring to NDSU to finish her home economics (FACS) degree.

"I wanted to major in home ec and physical education," she said. "There are a lot of similar things with nutrition for both exercise and wellness. They told me no, those two don't go together. Years later, they are in the same college at NDSU. I guess I was ahead of my time."

Tammy joined Jeff in Minot after graduation, where they got married and have taught ever since.

"I took an administrator/teaching role at Ramstad (Middle School) for one year, then was hired at Nedrose," Jeff said. "It was a K through eighth-grade school for the 25 years I was there, and then we built the high school. I retired and was hired back to start athletics. I did that for three years."

"My first year, I was in Drake; the next year, I was in Glenburn," said Tammy. "I was there for 12 years, then moved to Minot Public for 22 years."

Even if they aren't in a classroom full time anymore, the couple still have a hand in teaching one way or another.

"I've been subbing for 10 years now. Retirement is getting closer, but not yet," Tammy said. "I still like teaching."

"As soon as I retired, Terry [MSU professor Terry (Ferebee) Eckmann '81/'82] called me and asked if I'd supervise the physical education student teachers for MSU," Jeff said. "I said yes and have enjoyed working with Kathy Hintz (MSU professor) and others in the education department. I try to guide them and help them with the application process of the information they have learned. They've been students for the majority of their lives, and now they are transitioning to the teacher role. Most of the time, it's just helping them progress and avoid some of the pitfalls young teachers make. If they have a less bumpy road, I think we will keep educators in the profession longer."

"Minot State has done a really nice job preparing them by having quality instructors that supply great information and by getting them into classrooms earlier in the education process." ❖❖❖

*Jeff '81 and Tammy Risk
have created a legacy of
dedication and excellence
during their combined 58
years of teaching experience.*

BAESLER'S

experiences guide her as state superintendent

By Michael Linnell



Kristen (Schafer) Baesler's '01 decision to continue her higher education experience at Minot State University came with some limitations.

Her schedule required nontraditional, remote access – and not the technology-driven, online learning environment of the present day.

"I knew what my limitations and the constraints were. I knew I would be doing night classes and needed a schedule that would be creative," she said. "I had been on campus a few times; growing up in Class B, you know where the girls' basketball tournament is held. But I had to figure out all the moving parts. What clinched it for me was that Minot State coordinated with me and met my needs as a learner."



Baesler took MSU coursework at its Bismarck site and commuted to Minot on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to earn an elementary education degree.

"That's really why Minot State holds a special place in my heart," she said. "If it wasn't for the school's willingness to meet me where I was as a learner, I would never have been able to earn my bachelor's degree in teaching and, therefore, never be where I am today."

Where she is today includes an impressive resume as she climbed the educational ladder. Starting as a library assistant, Baesler moved to a teacher, assistant principal, district technology integration specialist, and Mandan School Board president.

These experiences propelled her to seek public office, winning the 2012 election for state superintendent of public instruction. She was recently re-elected for her fourth term in 2024, to an agency that oversees the education of over 135,000 students.

"I started in a classroom helping 25 students to assistant principal helping 350 students find their passions and prepare them for life," she said. "On the school board, it was 9,000. When I was approached to run, there were 102,000 students in the state."

"It seemed like the right fit for me and the natural trajectory for taking my passion and experience to that level. That is one of the main reasons I said yes and ran the first time."

In February, Baesler's upward trajectory took another step as she was nominated to serve as assistant secretary for

elementary and secondary education in the U.S. Department of Education, a federal agency charged with promoting student achievement and preparation for a global community.

"My mom and dad instilled in us three core values: God, family, and country. They taught us that it wasn't a question of if you served; it was a question of finding how you can best serve," she said. "The opportunity to work as the

next U.S. education assistant secretary is my call to serve."

Her work as a paraprofessional helped spur the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to partner with schools like Minot State on the Paraprofessional to Teacher Pathway program.

"What a different experience it would have been if I'd had that program available," she recalled. "It was a lot of the motivation behind me wanting to make it work. We have tremendous paraprofessionals, and we wanted to remove some of the constraints of getting a teaching license. Minot State was the institution that brought it to me, and I'm grateful we could bring it to scale."

A lot has changed in the political realm since her first campaign, especially in technology and her understanding of the politics of the job. While Baesler used to take offense to the term politician, opting for an elected official, she recognizes what being in a prominent position means.

"I'm accustomed to and take less offense to the term," she said. "I understand that you must deal with politics; a negotiator and a compromiser and all those things fall under the umbrella of politics."

As she reflects on her time in office at the state level, she feels her legacy is rooted in ensuring North Dakota students are ready for the next chapter in their lives.

"I think I'm most proud of transforming the agency from a regulatory arm of the federal government to an agency serving students," she said. "One whose mission is to ensure every student graduates from high school equipped with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to pursue whatever path they choose." ■■■

Grounded in service, Johnson SOARS in education



By Michael Linnell



**Lisa (Footh)
Johnson's '95/'00
career in higher
education wasn't
meteoric.**

Instead, after weighing her options and getting a firm "no" from her parents on paying for college, she joined the United States Air Force and moved to San Antonio, Texas, for basic training.

But, slowly and steadily, things started to fall into place.

"I accepted an assignment to return to the newly completed 857th Strategic Hospital at the Minot Air Force Base as a dental lab technician," she said. "As I wrapped up my four years of service, I began taking courses through MSU at the base education center.

"Within months of my arrival on campus, the MSU student records office contacted me and asked if I was interested in a position as a student worker only available to service-connected students. I worked in the records office for three years while completing an associate degree and a bachelor's degree in marketing."

That was the humble beginning of a 30-plus year career in higher education, split in half with Minot State and the North Dakota University System (NDUS). She now serves as the vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, advocating for and supporting the system's 44,000 students.

"I credit MSU with providing great teachers and supervisors who served as mentors along my academic trajectory," Johnson said. "In the NDUS, we've had positive relationships with both the North Dakota Student Association – supporting key priorities during the legislative session to include affordable tuition, scholarship

opportunities, wellness, and comfortable, accessible resident halls – and the NDUS faculty as we navigate important and sometimes challenging topics like free speech, academic freedom, and tenure."

While her duties within the NDUS keep her busy, Johnson does try to find time to get away from it – literally by climbing into the right seat of a small plane, escaping gravity to various destinations in and around North Dakota.

"Weather permitting, a good friend and I fly to numerous North Dakota towns in search of a great breakfast and observe the color of changing seasons, the beauty of rugged badlands, the meandering Missouri River, and the artful patchwork of an ever-changing agricultural landscape," Johnson said.

As Johnson progressed through her career at MSU and the NDUS, her time being involved in multiple departments at various levels as an undergrad, graduate student, and full-time employee shaped her in the profession.

"I actually experienced being a student while at Minot State, that really helped shape my view of the college experience as a slightly older, first-generation attendee," she said.

She also credits her parents and her upbringing on a small dairy/ranch operation in Powers Lake.

"After my parents informed me they wouldn't be able to pay for school, they encouraged my sister [Cindy (Footh) Weltz '95] and me to establish a small hog operation," she recalls. "It enabled each of us to save enough money to attend nearly all four years at MSU. My parents still enjoy telling the story that I completely missed attending senior prom while tending to the birth of nearly a dozen piglets that arrived that evening.

"I'm grateful to my ever-supportive parents, who instilled qualities of quiet humility, hard work, and kindness for others." ...



shaping futures through shared passion for teaching

By Veronica Corey

Ray and Ingeborg (Sjoquist) Atwood raised their family on a farm near Tolley in Grover Township, Renville County. The couple encouraged their children to seek out education, and with that, seven out of their nine children attended Minot State University, six of whom became educators.

Two of the siblings, Raymond '61 and Larry '66, explained why their roots run deep at Minot State.

"It all started with our parents, who saw teaching as a noble profession and encouraged us to follow that path," Raymond said. "We forged a legacy at Minot State, with brothers even marrying fellow alumni who were also teachers. In total, there were 10 of us who graduated from Minot State, and we went on to shape the lives of countless students.

"The love for teaching seemed to run in our veins."

"We didn't come from a large farm, so you can't pass the farm down to nine people," Larry added. "They appreciated education, something they didn't have."

From there, the passion for teaching only grew in the Atwood family.

"Even our children caught the bug, with nine of the 21 grandchildren attending Minot State and seven of them becoming teachers themselves," Raymond said. "When we gather for our annual family reunion, it's a celebration of our shared passion for education."

"The estimated years of teaching for the whole family is over 430 years and over 130 years of nursing," Larry added.

Larry, Minot State professor emeritus, was instrumental in starting the robot program. He also made sure to leave a lasting impact at Minot State by making connections.

"We were the first ones in Minot to have a network and connection," Larry said. "Back in '92, there were no browsers. You had a computer where you could FTP (File Transfer Protocol) something to someone, you could telnet, and you had email. That's all we gave people, three programs.

"We had every building connected except Campus Heights. We worked on that for about six years. It was a challenging project."

While Larry was busy connecting Minot State to the digital age, Raymond was connecting with his students. He taught

physics and chemistry to juniors and seniors at Powers Lake High School for 18 years. After taking a Saturday class at Minot State, focusing on how to do more hands-on projects with kids to cover subject material, he was able to accelerate their learning.

"We did a lot of really interesting experiments that shocked the kids," Raymond said. "We were covering speed, velocity, and acceleration. We got a Hot Wheels track and fastened it on an incline. They put their cars up on the top and let them go down the track. Every 20 centimeters, I drilled a hole and put a photo-electric eye in each. Then, on the side of their cars, they put a five-centimeter card. From there, the computer could give them the time between lights, and they had to calculate if the car was accelerating or decelerating.

"I went last, and my car always won. I had found a Hot Wheels car that, when you pull it back, had a little motor in it. I didn't tell them that. I wanted to win and have more discussion."

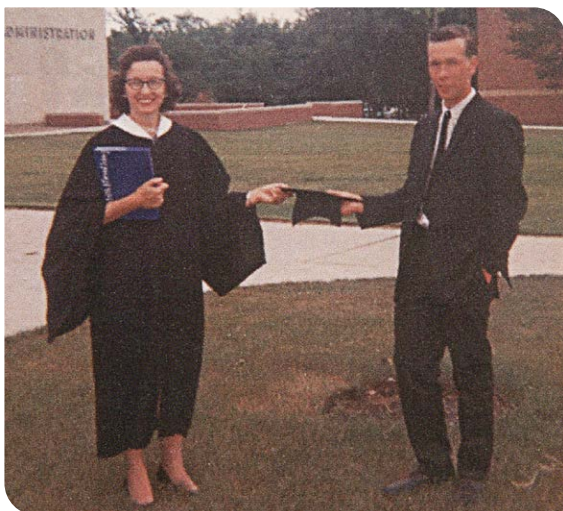
Not only did Raymond's car win, but he won Teacher of the Year for Western North Dakota after his lesson was filmed and submitted after the superintendent happened to walk by his classroom.

For the Atwood family, Minot State wasn't just a university — it was the foundation of an educational dynasty.

Raymond, Lela (Atwood) Peterson '64, and Larry are the last three surviving siblings. Lela, who tied for valedictorian the year she graduated, has authored three books: "A House Divided," "Selma," and "Pencil Shavings." She now resides in Reynolds, while Raymond and Larry remain in Minot.

The Atwood family has been an integral part of Minot State. Dale '57, the second oldest brother of the Atwood family, was Minot State's chair of the Division of Business for 29 years. The family also established a scholarship fund at Minot State University, which awards two scholarships each year. The Atwood's dedication to giving shapes and inspires generations of students, creating a legacy that will endure for years to come.

"It's a legacy that fills us with immense pride and a deep sense of purpose," Raymond said. "Teaching wasn't just a job for us; it was a calling that connected us across generations." ❖❖❖



June '65 passing the mortarboard to Larry '66 on Commencement day, spring 1965

Larry '66 (left) and Raymond '61 (right), December 2024 ❖❖

Opposite page - the Atwood family, March 2, 1958

Front row: Ingeborg and Ray

Middle row: Lela '64, Eileen, Larry '66, June '65, and Glee '51

Back row: Jerry, Justin, Dale '57, and Raymond '61



Marcellais lays his **TEACHING FOUNDATION** at Minot State

By Emily Schmidt

When Patrick Marcellais '23 graduated high school, he never wanted to step foot in school again.

After graduating from Minot State's Paraprofessional to Teacher Pathway, he couldn't see himself anywhere else.

Marcellais became a special education paraprofessional in 2018 after seeing both his mother and his wife enjoy similar roles. Wanting to take a step to further his career, he applied to the University's online Paraprofessional to Teacher Pathway (PTP), where he could stay in Belcourt – his hometown – take classes, gain classroom experience, and make connections with his future colleagues in the very district where he wanted to teach.

Growing up with a learning disability, Marcellais initially questioned whether special education was the path for him, having less than two years of experience in the field before joining PTP. But when he started taking classes and learning from Minot State's Department of Special Education, he knew he chose right.

"A guy that has a learning disability teaching students with learning disabilities? I didn't think it made sense," he said. "In reality, it did because I've been through the level that I was teaching. A lot of kids feel hopeless, and me being fortunate enough to work through similar stuff at one time in my life, it helped to put my experiences into practice."

As Marcellais taught full time while completing his degree, he could apply what he was learning to his daily classroom management. If any questions or problems arose, he knew he could reach out for guidance at any time.

"Minot State was really good about letting me know I wasn't making all these decisions by myself even though I was going to school online," he said. "I could call anybody in that department, and they'd pick up the phone for me and guide me through it. They were always there for support."

Now in his third year of teaching special education, Marcellais is preparing for a new phase in his career: teaching general computer science and technology. Because many special education students in Belcourt take general education classes, Marcellais will still see his same students, many of whom even wrote him notes thanking him for being a great teacher.

Looking forward, Marcellais appreciates the educational foundation he built with his special education degree and knows he'll continue to use what he learned. He is a strong promoter of PTP in Belcourt, even recruiting some of his



friends to apply and become teachers in their community.

"I know they'll do a phenomenal job because they've been in the department," he said. "My degree gave me all the tools and insight on how to manage a classroom, look for weaknesses, look for strengths, build accommodations, collaborate, basically how to be a good person," he said. "It helped me focus on where I needed to go. I never thought I'd be a teacher in my life. Now I'm here, and I wouldn't trade it for anything because I see myself mentoring these kids who are going to be the future of my community." ■■■



Alum from DAY one

Why did you choose Minot State?

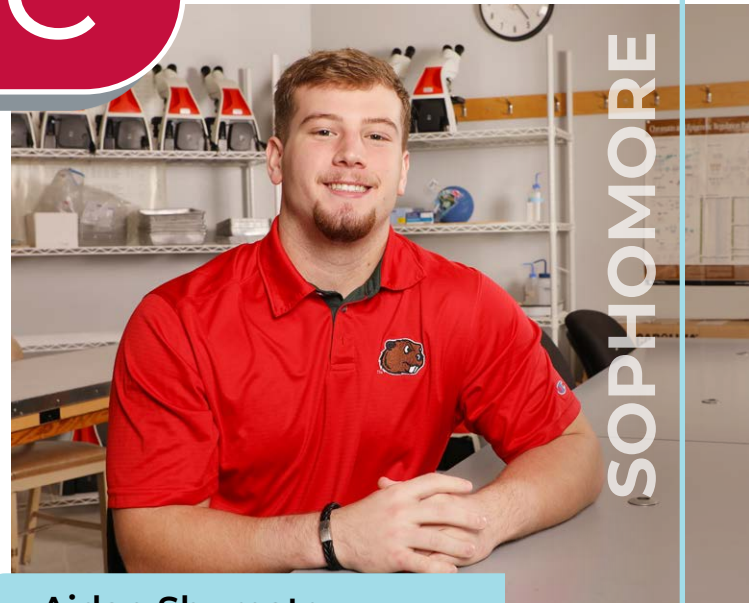
I chose Minot State because it was so close to home, and I knew a good amount of the professors here already, so it was an easy choice.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

The MSU professors, because of their kindness and knowledge of their field, have helped me become the person I am today.

What has been your favorite class?

My favorite class has been Audio/Video Technology.



SOPHOMORE

Aidan Shumate

Cypress, Texas • nursing

Why did you choose Minot State?

I felt drawn to the school despite not knowing much about MSU or the city of Minot itself. I wanted to venture out from Texas, give myself a major change in scenery, and be able to meet all sorts of new people.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

The professors are so helpful and inclined to know you personally, and that has truly been so beneficial to my learning experience. The nursing faculty is so helpful and supportive in making sure you achieve the best education for your career.

Who has been your most influential professor?

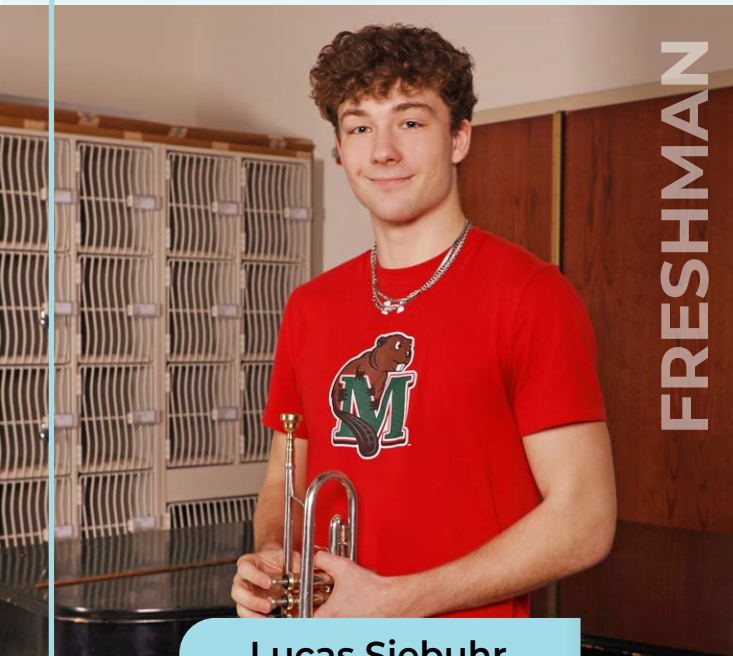
Janelle Green (instructor in biology) for both anatomy and physiology classes. She has been very helpful in assisting with questions I might have and always made the class a joy to be in!

What is the best-kept secret about Minot State?

The bonds you create within the school and its classes. I have made many great friends and connections throughout my time here, and the size of the school and classes helps you to create bonds even with staff and professors.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

Winning the final game of the football season this year against Winona State. It was a landslide victory, a great way to end the year of hard work we put in, and to send some of the seniors off on a well-deserved high note.



FRESHMAN

Lucas Siebuhr

Velva • music

Who has been your most influential professor?

There is no definite answer to that question because Dr. (Emerson) Eads and Dr. (Erik) Anderson have been so kind and supportive during my time here.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

I had a solo with the choir, and we sang a piece called "Meet Me Here" from "Considering Matthew Shepherd," written by Craig Hella Johnson.

Why did you choose Minot State?

First, I was recruited for athletics. MSU also offers much more affordable tuition than most schools in the country. A unique thing about MSU is its bachelor's degree in special education, which is not common, and I was lucky to find it at a school that also wanted me to run.

JUNIOR



Nicole Reeves
Anaheim, California
special education

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

MSU has given me the opportunity to pursue a career in special education. It offers a high-quality educational experience with small class sizes and caring teachers. I have all the resources I need to reach my full academic potential.

What has been your favorite class?

ART 112: Print, Web, and Social Media Graphics with Greg Vettel '18.

Who has been your most influential professor?

Wenjing Zheng (assistant professor in special education). She has been my professor for multiple SPED classes and has wonderful insights on how to help students with disabilities.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

The cross country team winning the Chili Pepper Invitational in Arkansas in 2023. Standing on the podium with my teammates, who put in months of training and kept their determination throughout the race despite the not-so-great conditions, is something I will never forget.

Why did you choose Minot State?

As a smaller school, I knew I would have more opportunities in smaller class sizes. I was also drawn to the idea I could still play a sport (hockey) that I grew up loving. It's close to home for me, but still far enough away that I can truly experience what it is like to go to a university.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

Being able to meet with professors when I have a question and establish connections with them has allowed me to water the seed of my academic career. The University has also provided different opportunities for me to grow, such as leadership development, health and wellness development, and building a network of connections that can help me later in life.

What has been your favorite class?

Any of the elementary education-focused courses that I've taken where I get to have field experience teaching in public schools around Minot. Being able to work with children and experience first-hand what being an educator is like is an awesome class.

SENIOR



Brayden Pawluk
Petersfield, Manitoba
elementary education

Who has been your most influential professor?

Karen Foley '87 (instructor in teacher education and kinesiology). Not only does she support me in the classroom, but she is also a supporter of the athletics I participate in.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

Winning an ACHA Division 1 national championship in the spring of 2023 in Marlboro, Massachusetts.

MASTERS



Howard Wade Jr. '22

Nassau, Bahamas
sports management

Why did you choose Minot State?

I chose Minot State because I was searching for a university that would allow me to transfer most of my credits to pursue my dreams of broadcasting.

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

Minot State has impacted me in more ways than one can count. Thanks to the wide array of classes, I have been able to advance my knowledge in many topics. From general education courses to graduate-level courses, there was always something new to learn. The great interpersonal communication between professors, my fellow students, and I made it easier to grasp concepts that I will hold onto forever.

What has been your favorite class?

My favorite class was BIT 510 Leadership Communication.

Who has been your most influential professor?

Neil Roberts (associate professor) in professional communication.

What is the best-kept secret about Minot State?

I think it is, without question, the Northwest Arts Center.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

Walking out of the Beaver Dam and seeing snow for the first time.

Why did you choose Minot State?

In 1980, the business programs – and Doris Slaaten '49 and Adelaide Johnson's '47 private tour – drew me in. The two-year programs caught my attention, specifically the legal secretarial, even though my heart kept nudging me towards education. Fast forward to 23 years of teaching secondary business education, the opportunity came to teach and coordinate the business teaching program at MSU, and here I am 18 years later!



Jan (Thompson) Repnow '84

Ray • business education

How has Minot State helped you further your academic career?

My passion continues to revolve around education. MSU has always had pride and tradition in providing quality teachers for students in P-12 settings.

What has been your favorite class?

As a student, shorthand with Mavis (Avery) Williamson '72, business teaching methods from Adelaide, and business communication from Doris. As a teacher, business teaching methods and business communications.

Who has been your most influential professor?

Mavis, Adelaide, and Doris are the top three. They each have shaped the teacher that I have become, and for that, I am forever grateful.

What is your most memorable moment at MSU?

A Phi Beta Lambda meeting in 1982 when my advisor, Doris, asked me to help the ND PBL state historian with typing reports for the state conference. His name was Chuck Repnow '83. You know the rest of that story!

Back to *art*, back to basics

By Veronica Corey

Sometimes you need to go back to the basics to find your future. For Tienna Johnson '20, that meant returning to her love of art.

The Wilton native started her college journey at Bismarck State College, where she focused on general courses. After a year, Johnson transferred to Minot State University with an interest in multimedia studies. Having a mix of both broadcasting and art classes, it was then she knew she wanted to focus more on art.

"I was talking to my mom about how I didn't know what I wanted to do," Johnson recalled. "She said, well, go back to the basics. What do you like doing? I went back to art, and then I thought, I need to teach art."

"It kind of came out of nowhere, so then that summer, I worked for my first time as a camp counselor. I worked a lot with younger kids, and then I was like, oh, I want to be with the younger kids too. So, I actually ended up going

into the education department and pursuing a double major in art education and elementary education."

Now in her fifth year at Simle Middle School in Bismarck, the art teacher shares empathy with her sixth and seventh-grade students.

"They hold such a special place in my heart because I remember what it was like to be a middle schooler so well. They don't really even have the capacity to understand everything, and it is so hard right now because their brain is developing and so many things are happening. It can be such a hard time for them, and I remember that so well," Johnson said. "I feel like I understand that mindset, and I also have an understanding more so now that I'm an adult."

Like many of her students, Johnson didn't take an art class until later in her academic career. She took her first art class in her senior year of high school to fulfill a promise to a friend. Although scared, she went in with an open mind, something she tries to encourage her students to do as well.

"I just went into it with the mentality, like I'm probably going to be terrible, but I can't get worse," she said. "My students joke that I need a shirt that says, 'There would be no point in doing this if it was easy,' because I say it so



often. You're not learning anything if it's not a challenge."

Taking her own advice, Johnson has continued to challenge herself and is currently finishing her master's in education with a concentration in art at Minot State and is set to graduate in Spring 2025. Johnson exhibited her graduate capstone in the art exhibition "Those Who Can" at the Northwest Arts Center last fall.

"I did all pottery and sculpture credits. We just had our show in August. Mine was set up like a library with shelves. I called it 'Athenaeum,'" she said. "My goal is, school ends, and then I'm just making stuff all summer. I want to keep pushing myself to enter my work in more exhibitions." ...

MSU ALUMNI
UNDER
30



..... From the ranch to Rugby schools, Leier educates in more ways than one



When Kevin Leier says yes, he means it.

The 2011 graduate goes all in if it means he will better his community through education.

"If I can't do something well, I'm not gonna do it because it's just not fair to the people who I'd impact," he said. "I thrive when I'm doing something in service of others where I can make a positive change."

Born in Las Vegas, Leier and his family moved to Rugby in 1996 to open Heartland Bison Ranch. He always enjoyed school, his mother using her own teaching career to homeschool him early on, and his high school teachers encouraging him to pursue the same path. This positive educational upbringing motivated Leier to become an educator himself and give future generations the same great experiences.

As he contemplated where to attend college, Minot State was an easy choice. Only an hour's drive from his home, Leier could still ranch and pay for tuition by working at his family's construction company. Not to mention, he knew the education program was one of the best in the state.

A social science education major, Leier studied a variety of subjects, his favorite being economics. For one project, he and his classmates surveyed Minot residents to find the economic value they saw in one of the city's largest green spaces, Oak Park. Speaking directly to residents, Minot's parks and recreation department eventually asked

for the data to learn more about the community's perception of the park. Leier appreciated the opportunity to have a real-life effect on his community and continues to implement similar projects in the many educational roles he's had since then.

"We were getting an authentic experience of learning something of value in the real world," he said. "That was a really cool project for sure."

After Leier graduated, he taught high school social studies in Rugby for nearly 10 years. While he's no longer a classroom teacher, he's still an active educator. In 2021, he joined the North Central Education Cooperative (NCEC) and launched a new learning management system for teachers across the state to develop their skills. A year later, he became principal at Little Flower elementary school. Today, he still writes teacher development courses and manages NCEC's technological support, and he hosts educational outings for people of all ages at Heartland Bison Ranch. His community also regularly invites him to teach lessons on agriculture, ranching, construction, technology, and the many other subjects he's studied.

Like his eclectic college education, Leier's variety of career paths have given him many opportunities to pass on his knowledge and experience to the next generation.

"I always knew I was going to do a lot of different things," Leier said. "I had enough experiences at Minot that put me in the direction to keep going this way. But education has been an essential theme in my life. For whatever reason, I feel like I've been given a gift to do that, and Minot State allowed me to. I'm very thankful." ...

By Emily Schmidt

WHERE are they NOW

By Veronica Corey

GARY LESLIE '61 made a lasting impact on countless lives through his roles as a teacher, coach, and administrator at Minot State.



Leslie began his teaching career at Minot High School, where he encouraged his students to participate in gymnastics.

"We didn't have a competitive team at the time at Minot public. I used to take my students, and we did demonstrations at halftime," Leslie said. "We would go to small towns all around and take over their physical education programs during the day. These kids were high school kids, and they would teach. They would help me pick out students to be involved in our half-time program. People would say, that's our kids out there. Why don't we have a program? That's how it perpetuated.

"I was fortunate enough to have some real talented kids who were non-scholarship in gymnastics here."

Leslie met his future wife, Sheryl (Olson), in Minot while he was teaching at Minot High. He left for a job in Minneapolis in the spring of 1968. The couple got married later that year, in the fall of 1968, in Minot. He moved back in 1969 and started working at Minot State that fall, where he taught physical education.

"I had 20 some students that I advised, supervised almost all student teachers in our department, and I taught 12 hours," he said. "I enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun."

Leslie continued to coach and was involved with many sports, such as gymnastics, tennis, women's track & field, and football.

"I had so much fun getting involved with these people because they wanted to learn," Leslie said. "I'm a firm believer you can't teach anybody if they don't want to learn. If you don't get them enthusiastic about learning, they're not going to do it."

As the second and final coach of the gymnastics program, he helped the NAIA powerhouse. The sport was disbanded in 1986. Leslie recalls some groundbreaking moments during his time with the team.

"We hosted the national championship twice, and we hosted the state college and university championships here probably four or five times," he said. "Those athletes, students, women, were never beaten in the state by anybody from any of the universities, including Grand Forks and Fargo. We beat Minnesota in Minnesota."

"I was lucky enough to coach several national champions in gymnastics. I didn't win that. They won. I've always said that coaches make up 10% of the program, and 90% comes from the athletes."

After his retirement in 2005, Leslie remained busy with old and new hobbies.

"My father was a contractor. I worked with him growing up," he said. "When we first came back to Minot, I built the first three houses that we lived in by myself. I built a lot of stuff on the air base (Minot Air Force Base), so I still did that after I retired."

As for the future, he is looking forward to discovering something new.

"I would like to try to do something I haven't done before. I don't know what that is yet," Leslie said.

"I'm hoping I can talk my daughter or son into doing something." ❖❖❖

Separate paths lead Hendershots to shared experiences

By Michael Linnell



Chauncy and Kelly (Olson) Hendershot's paths to becoming educators couldn't be more different.

Chauncy '08, who teaches and coaches at Minot High School, knew early on he wanted to be a teacher and had an early interest in history.

Teaching was not on Kelly's radar as she studied English, writing, history, and political science at Concordia College (Minnesota) and earned a law degree at the University of North Dakota before working as city attorney for Minot. She decided to join Minot State University's accounting and finance department in 2022.

The couple now learns from each other's classroom experience.

"We teach in different settings, but there are many similar challenges in covering the content while trying to make it engaging and relevant to our students," Chauncy said. "Being away from college, I forgot how much and how fast college classes move through content! It's been fun to witness Kelly's career transition into education."

"I'm not formally trained to teach, so I feel lucky to get advice from Chauncy," Kelly added. "We talk a lot about student engagement, classroom energy, and course development. Our subjects are not identical, but there is some overlap. It's been fun for both of us to share resources and strategies, too."

The Bishop Ryan grads have meaningful ties to MSU.

Kelly's more recent connections include time with the late Dean Frantsvog '97, longtime professor and former alderman in Minot, and Chuck Barney, former mayor of Minot and past director of the Severson Entrepreneurship Academy at MSU.

"I was lucky enough to get to know Chuck and Dean. They both spoke so highly of MSU," she said. "I can specifically recall Dean frequently bragging that he had the best job in the world – and you could tell he genuinely felt that way."

Chauncy's ties go back to his childhood.

"I grew up right across from Herb Parker Stadium," he said. "I learned to ride a bike in the library parking lot, where my grandpa Edmund C. Leonard was the architect. My childhood was spent riding a bike around the campus and attending sporting events, concerts, and plays at MSU Summer Theatre.

Minot State was a big part of my upbringing."

Proximity, MSU's reputation in education, and playing football for the Beavers were factors in his decision to attend the University. As a wide receiver, he earned all-conference honors and was captain of the 2007 DAC co-championship team.

"I couldn't have asked for a better college athletic experience," he said. "Minot State is known for its excellent teacher education program, making it a great choice. There were great coaches, professors, and teammates that left a huge imprint. I loved it."

Athletics continue to be important as he is head football coach at powerhouse Minot High School, guiding the Magicians to a state championship in 2023.

"Minot High has a good football tradition with great players and coaches, and we've been blessed with gritty athletes and great assistant coaches," Chauncy said. "Winning the title was an awesome shared experience."

While Kelly might not have the same history at MSU, her first three years have been equally rewarding.

"Deciding to transition from practicing law to teaching law in such a short timeframe was uncharacteristic for me, but one that felt exciting and right," she said. "Learning how to teach, assess learning, and effectively communicate with students was challenging. Thankfully, I had support from Chauncy, my chair (Jay Wahlund '90), co-workers, and some great students.

"Now, I'm in my third year, and I can't even believe how time flies." ::::





HORNECKER family patriarch of Minot educators



Growing up in the small town of Pekin in central Illinois, Brian Hornecker '87 could never have foreseen the impact he'd have on education 1,000 miles away.

An October trip to visit high school friends attending Minot State University changed everything.

"I loved everything about (Minot State)," Hornecker recalled. "I transferred that winter so I could play baseball as a freshman."

During his time at MSU on the diamond, Hornecker earned All-North Dakota Collegiate Athletic Conference honors in 1984, 1985, and 1986 and recalls the impact of then-Beaver head coach Randy Hedberg '77.

"Randy convinced me to stay at Minot State at a time when I considered going back home to play baseball elsewhere," he said. "To this day, I think of how that decision has affected my life in so many positive ways."

Opting to stay in the Magic City, Hornecker earned a degree in physical education, which led to a 36-year career teaching physical education at all levels. He spent 32 of those years with Minot Public Schools.

"I always felt my job was to have my students leave the gym happier and healthier than when they arrived," Hornecker said. "I strived to treat all my students and athletes with the dignity they deserved, and hopefully, they are all able to look back at their time spent with me in a positive light."

Retired from teaching, Hornecker continues to educate as he is in his 34th year as an assistant basketball coach at Minot High School.

Minot State played a huge part in guiding Hornecker down his career path as a coach and educator, especially former Beaver coach and longtime member of the College of Education Gary Leslie '61.

"I knew I wanted to coach and teach," Hornecker said. "Gary was a huge part of instilling the love for working with students; he was a tremendous role model. I see him at church often and have so much respect for him today."

His impact on education in Minot stretches beyond his own work with students. His wife, Janet (Wahlund) '87, spent 35 years as a teacher, mainly with Minot Public Schools, and his kids, Ryne '12 and Alexa (Hornecker) Rostvedt '14, followed in their parents' career

footsteps. Ryne is an elementary PE teacher at Edison Elementary, and Alexa teaches first grade at Lewis & Clark Elementary, both in Minot.

Ryne also played baseball from 2009-12 for the Beavers and was a three-time Gold Glove winner at shortstop (2009, 2010, 2011) and two-time All-Dakota Athletic Conference player (2010, 2011), and Alexa ran cross country for the Beavers.

While Hornecker and his family had an impact on Minot and Minot State, he gives just as much credit to his alma mater for making him who he is today.

"I grew up quickly and owe so much to the University and the folks who guided me in my time there," he said. "I have so many friends that I met in college that still are a huge part of my life."

Hornecker still gets back to campus, attending Beaver basketball games when his own coaching obligations allow, and he has even umpired MSU baseball games.

"I loved the closeness of the campus, Homecoming week, and the annual Johnny Holm concerts," he said. "I look back fondly at my college experience, pre-cell phones, pre-social media; the simplicity of life in general." ...

Minot State guides **COWDEN** down career path as an educator



When California native Lauren Cowden '19/'22 hit the Minot State University campus in the fall of 2015, she never expected that her time at MSU would lead her down a path in education.

Originally a criminal justice major who came to North Dakota to play softball for the Beavers, Cowden now teaches at Samuel's Elementary School in Denver, where she is also a director of youth ministries at University Park United Methodist Church. All the while, she is currently finishing her doctorate in educational leadership and policy studies at the

University of Denver.

"I have always loved working with youth and for youth," Cowden said. "I love being a student, and I believe pursuing education was my natural calling.

"Minot State has made me who I am today. I met some of the most amazing people, professors, and lifelong friends there. I am grateful for Minot State."

One of those amazing people was Dan Conn, department chair of Education and Inclusive Services, who provided the spark for Cowden that led her down her current path to be a career educator.

Changing her educational path, she earned a bachelor's in sociology and a Master's in Education at MSU before moving to Denver to pursue her doctorate.

All inspired by a passion to educate others.

"I hope to inspire young people to believe in themselves and in the purpose of service and education," Cowden said. "As soon as I graduate, I hope to educate and advocate for youth in either a non-profit or untraditional classroom setting. I would love to be on the ground working with youth to reach educational equity.

"My dream is to retire as a professor and a softball coach in higher education."

While Minot State inspired Cowden to be an educator, it also provided plenty of fond memories during her four years on the softball field. She earned All-NSIC second-team honors as an outfielder as a senior in 2019 and wrote her name into the Beaver record books as the all-time leader in career triples with 20 over her four seasons.

A four-year starter as a utility player, Cowden played in 189 games, hitting .326 for her career (196-of-602) with six home runs, 31 doubles, 20 triples, 100 RBIs, and 42 stolen bases. No. 1 all-time in triples, her 189 games played ranks second all-time, she is No. 3 all-time in runs scored with 145, No. 6 in career hits with 196, and No. 8 in putouts with 368.

Cowden remembers her time on the diamond for far more than just stats or wins and singles out Bill Triplett '80, former Beaver head softball coach, as the one who brought her to the Magic City.

"My fondest memories include traveling and playing softball with my teammates," Cowden recalls. "Hanging out with friends, eating in the caf (the Beaver Creek Cafe), walking in the snow to the Loaf (Loaf 'N Jug) – there are too many good memories."

Cowden also gave back to Minot State as an assistant coach during the 2020 season while pursuing her master's and adds she continues to follow Minot State's athletic achievements – if not in person at the game then through updates on social media. ::::





For the last 30 years, Tonya (Gandrud) Pankow '93 has been the steady, guiding hand helping the tiniest learners take their very first steps into the world of education. . . .

A lifelong love for little learners

By Veronica Corey

The Minot native knew from an early age she wanted to work with children.

"I've always loved working with children. Even as a small child, I would play school with my neighborhood friends," Pankow recalled. "I knew I wanted to be a teacher for as long as I can remember. I loved school growing up. I was fortunate to have so many wonderful teachers from my elementary years all the way through my time at MSU. My favorite teachers were the ones who were excited about what they taught and those who created positive relationships with their students. These are two qualities that I strive to replicate in my classroom.

"When students feel their teachers care about them and the topic they are teaching about, great things are bound to happen!"

Pankow's time at Minot State solidified her love of

working with children.

"When I attended Minot State, the classes I enjoyed the most were the ones that actually involved working with children," she said. "The degree I earned was in elementary education, grades K-8. Back then, adding the grade level of kindergarten to my degree required my student teaching experience to be doubled."

Throughout the years, the expectations for kindergartners have changed, and Pankow has taken those challenges in stride while also helping her students find their love for learning.

"As a kindergarten teacher, there are many important lessons to teach children during their first year in school," Pankow explained. "The learning expectations for kindergarten students have changed a lot over my career. It has

definitely gotten much more challenging. The current expectation of students being proficient at reading and writing sentences was not even on the radar for kindergartners when I started teaching. I work hard to find a balance between covering the new standards and doing it in engaging ways with age-appropriate learning activities.

"Along with all the academics, I strive to develop a love of school with my students. It's wonderful to hear them say things like, 'This is the best day ever,' 'I love school,' 'I love you,' and 'You're the best teacher ever.' Their smiles and hugs brighten my days just like I try to brighten theirs."

Over the last 30 years of teaching, one of the biggest benefits for Pankow has been making connections with students, families, and



her fellow teachers.

"I am currently in my 30th year of teaching, 28 of them have been at Edison Elementary," Pankow said. "I consider teaching at the same school for so many years a true blessing. I've had the pleasure of working alongside so many talented educators. I've also been very lucky to have worked with hundreds of students and their families.

"All these wonderful people have helped to shape me into the teacher I am today. I have made so many lifelong friendships thanks to my career in education." . . .



Stockie uses **TECH** to energize extracurriculars

By Emily Schmidt

Technology has been an important asset in today's careers. Inspired by the benefits of extracurriculars, one Sawyer educator used his personal passion to bring career-building technology to his students.

Ryan Stockie '13 has always been interested in technology, playing video games all his life and trying a degree in computer science. Even so, he learned early in his studies that a tech career was not for him. Instead, he wanted to become a teacher.

"I love learning," he said. "I love reading. I love getting to meet and interact with so many different people on so many different levels. It's a great opportunity to be a mentor and a leader in the community."

Growing up in Surrey, Stockie knew of the Minot State education department's excellent reputation and knew a degree at the University would fit his budget. Graduating with an elementary education degree, he taught fourth and sixth grade in his hometown before leaving to focus on another passion of

his: physical health. Later earning a master's degree in leadership and sport coaching and certification in strength and conditioning, he ran his own training facility in Minot as he looked for a physical education opening near him.

Now in his third year as a P-12 physical education teacher in Sawyer, Stockie is combining all his passions as the school's esports and drone racing coach. Knowing the student benefits that extracurricular activities can have, Stockie applied for a grant to introduce technological opportunities to Sawyer students, including a new computer lab and several small drones.

"There's a tremendous amount of data available on the benefits of kids coming in for extracurricular activities, getting social interaction and interaction with coaches and mentors. I wanted to see the kids getting that engagement and involvement," he said.

Stockie earned the grant in the spring of 2023 and launched esports and drone-racing teams in Sawyer later that year. While these activities are fun, Stockie also includes valuable educational lessons.



"I think there's a lot of negative stigma around video games and technology," he said. "With good mentorship, practice, and keeping it involved in school, we get that social interaction. It's not just isolating yourself. Lots of kids play, but not so many realize there are a lot of career opportunities, whether that's in gaming itself, video game design, or streaming. In the oil sector, they put drones down pipelines, and in the energy sector, they do drone inspections of windmills. Tying it into education makes a lot of sense because our society is becoming so much more technologically oriented."

In addition to the social and career focuses, Stockie also uses his physical education expertise to promote a healthy lifestyle, incorporating physical activities and healthy snacks into practice each day. The esports and drone-racing teams have great engagement in Sawyer, one team having 20 members out of a 90-student school.

Stockie and his students are excited to continue developing their skills and eventually plan on competing in Minot State's esports tournament in the upcoming season. ...



Surrounded by support, Carlson thrives as an administrator



By Michael Linnell



Kendo Carlson '99 wasn't completely sure what his future held as he began his college career at Minot State University, but he knew he wanted to be involved in athletics.

"I wasn't sure what I wanted to major in," he said. "I had the privilege of competing on the track & field team (javelin) and was

fortunate to qualify for nationals in both my junior and senior years – which was an incredible experience.

"I ultimately decided on elementary education with a minor in physical education. I started my professional career as a guidance counselor at Parshall, North Shore, and Plaza schools and coached basketball and track. This opportunity set me on a path that led me to where I am today."

That path eventually led to Minot Catholic Schools, South Prairie, and Eureka, along with Minot Public Schools at Sunnyside Elementary, Minot Air Force Base's Dakota Elementary, Bell Elementary, and Washington Elementary, where he has served as principal since 2012.

While he continues to support athletics by coaching youth sports, he turned his professional attention to administration.

"(After joining Minot Public Schools in 2006), I realized how much I enjoyed working with students, staff, and families, which inspired me to pursue educational leadership classes," he said.

While at Washington, he earned the National Distinguished Elementary Principal Award for North Dakota in 2021.

"Thanks to the incredible support of my staff, co-workers, and past experiences, I was honored to receive that honor. Each state selects one recipient for this award, and it was a true privilege to be recognized," he said. "I owe this achievement to my savior, Jesus Christ, my family, and all the amazing people and students who have impacted my life along the way."

As with all his successes as an administrator, Carlson is quick to deflect the praise solely from him.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is helping students overcome life's obstacles and find success. I am fortunate to work with an amazing staff who share this mindset and are innovative in finding ways to support students and families," he said. "Through a Full School Community Grant, we have built strong connections within our community. These partnerships remain active, and our team has continued to adapt and grow through changing times."

His roots at the University run deep.

Both of his parents, Wayne '70 and Lynndell (Boyeff) '75 Carlson, and his wife, Niki (Wegenast) '05 are MSU grads, and his grandmother, Ardell Boyeff, worked in the registrar's office for many years.

"I have many extended relatives who are also proud Minot State alumni," he said.

Carlson's family history, as well as his time both as an undergrad and as an adjunct professor in the education department at MSU, have continued to shape his career.

"My experience at Minot State laid a strong foundation for my professional journey," he said. "Our partnership with MSU remains strong through practicum experiences and student teaching opportunities, many of which have led to employment within our district. MSU continues to provide education experiences that are highly relevant to today's evolving education system."

"The education program provided valuable support and established practices that helped me succeed in the field of education." ■■■

“What sculpture is to a block of marble,
education is to a human soul.”

– Joseph Addison

This issue of Connections highlights Minot State's storied history in producing outstanding teachers. Over the last 112 years, MSU's teacher education program has made a significant impact, producing thousands of graduates in dozens of disciplines.

Several stories in this publication highlight the impact of MSU's teacher education graduates. These individuals have shaped countless lives during their time in the profession. Henry Adams may have said it best when he stated, “A teacher affects eternity; he or she can never tell where their influence stops.”

According to recent data, the number of people across the country entering the teaching profession is significantly declining, with fewer individuals earning education degrees and becoming new teachers compared to previous decades. Projections indicate a continued decline in new teachers in the coming years. These are alarming statistics.

The teaching profession plays a vital role in shaping the future by providing

students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to succeed in life, acting as role models, and fostering personal growth. Teachers contribute significantly to society by educating the next generation. Teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions.

It's vitally important we provide support to our current teaching professionals and to those aspiring to become teachers. We've been fortunate to add several scholarship endowments in the last few years to support our teacher education students. Jeff '81 and Tammy Risk, featured on pages 8 - 9, have done just that. Their scholarship supports students in physical education. Donna Freer-Stannard '62, who was highlighted in the President's Report Summer 2023, created an endowment to support Minot State's Reading Clinic and Early Literacy Camp hosted on campus by MSU faculty and elementary education students assisting young, struggling readers.

The Risks and Freer-Stannard had a significant impact on students

during their time in the classroom, and now, in retirement, they continue to impact future teachers through their endowments.

If you or anyone you know wishes to have a similar impact on Minot State teacher education students, thus impacting the next generation of students, please contact the MSU Development Foundation. Matching funds are available through the North Dakota Challenge Grant, and tax benefits may be realized through the ND Tax Credit for Charitable Giving. ::::



Rick Hedberg '89
Vice President for Advancement
Executive Director,
Development Foundation
rick.hedberg@minotstateu.edu
701-858-4483



The Alumni Association is now accepting nominations for the 2025 Golden Awards and Young Alumni Achievement Award

NOMINATE AN ALUM who has excelled in his/her profession, in service to their community, or in service to Minot State. **SCAN THE QR CODE** to make a nomination, review the qualification criteria, and see the full list of past recipients. **The deadline to submit nominations is March 31, 2025.**

For more information call the Alumni Office at 701-858-3373 or 800-777-0750.



Alumni and friends

::: FALL/WINTER EVENTS

MSU Night at Berry Acres Pumpkin Patch





Eden Prairie Social



MSU Basketball Alumni Night



Bingo Night at Spicy Pie

Alumni Appreciation Night at the Dome





Alumni Association GALA

Friday, May 9, 2025
CLARION HOTEL

Silent & Live Auctions
Elegant Dinner | Cocktail Hour
Raffles & Games

Contact the MSU Alumni Office at
701-858-3234, scan the QR code,
or visit MinotStateU.edu/Alumni
for more information.



»» ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

Upcoming EVENTS

Alumni & Friends Social
FARGO



June 5

Friend-Raising
GOLF TOUR



June 10 VELVA
June 24 GARRISON
July 31 KENMARE

Alumni & Friends Night



June 18

Summer
Theatre Alumni
Night



July 10

North Dakota
State Fair



July 23

Alumni & Friends Social
BISMARCK

Aug. 14

HOMECOMING



SAVE THE DATE
Sept. 10 – 13

CLASS NOTES

1965



Tom Fredericks was inducted into the North Dakota Native American Hall of Honor for his leadership and work as a Native American rights lawyer. He retired in 2020.

1977



Randy Hedberg, North Dakota State University associate head coach, announced his retirement following an impressive 45-year college football coaching career. As quarterbacks coach at NDSU since 2014, he was part of eight Missouri Valley Football Conference championships and seven NCAA Division I FCS national championships. He was head coach at St. Cloud State from 1999-2007 and at Minot State from 1982-1989. An eighth-round draft pick of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1977, Hedberg started four regular-season games.

1981



Tim Mihalick, senior vice president at First Western Bank & Trust and chair of North Dakota's State Board of Higher Education, has been elected treasurer of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact.

1988



Gail (Warner) Bowers was recognized as California's Choral Conductor of the Year 2025 by the California Choral Directors Association for her outstanding service to the choral profession.

1990



Chad Vogel has been promoted to VP mortgage banking manager at First Western Bank & Trust. He is located in the Minot region and has over 20 years of mortgage lending experience.

1996



Lisa (Seivert) Lysne has been promoted to senior consumer lending underwriter at Town & Country Credit Union. She joined the credit union in 1989.

1997



Marsha (Winckler) Dupre, member of the Magic City Lions Club, has received the Lions Club International's highest form of recognition with the presentation of the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award.

1999



Bart Manson was named Fargo Public Schools' 2025 Teacher of the Year. He is a social studies teacher and head boys basketball coach at Fargo Davies High School.

1999



Larry Hubbard, board member of the Northern Plains Children's Advocacy Center, was presented The Nonprofit Board Member of the Year award by the Minot Alliance of Nonprofits. The distinction honors an individual who effectively serves as a community ambassador of their nonprofit and serves as an example to other board members.



Rachel (Holien) Nannenga has joined the Ackerman-Estfold Minot office as the director of human resources. She earned her certified plan sponsor professional credential in 2020 and is a member of Plan Sponsor Council of America and International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans.

2000



Evan Borisinkoff, associate professor in the Minot State Department of Education and Inclusive Services, had his sabbatical research from Fall 2023 approved for publication in the Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals. The article will appear in the Winter 2026 edition. He also recently earned the Special Education Director credential issued by the State of North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.



Matthew Hallaway has been appointed as executive director of the North Dakota State College of Science Alumni Foundation Board. He previously served as vice president for advancement at Oak Grove Lutheran School and Oak Grove Lutheran Foundation.



Tom Rafferty has been appointed to the Town & Country Credit Union Board of Directors. He has been a member of TCCU since 2001 and is the member services manager for Verendrye Electric Cooperative.

2001



Nadine (Hetletved) Nelson was selected as the 2024 Educator of the Year for the North Dakota Association for

Lifelong Learning for her work as an English language learner instructor at the Minot Adult Learning Center.

2003



Karna Taft has been promoted to VP operations at Town & Country Credit Union. She will oversee consumer lending underwriting, the Visa department, core services, and consumer and business loan processing.

2007



Mat Jensen, agriculture loan officer, has been promoted to senior vice president at First International Bank & Trust. He previously held the title of vice president. He joined FIBT in 2011 and has developed an outstanding reputation in the ag community.

2009



Tyler Neether has been promoted to VP ag and commercial lending manager at Town & Country Credit Union. He joined TCCU in 2008.

2010



Preston Phillips, commercial loan officer, has been promoted to senior vice president at First International Bank & Trust. He previously held the title of vice president. His career at FIBT began with an internship in 2010.



2011



Nikki Kallias has joined Gate City Bank, Minot as a treasury management consultant.

2012



Kelsey (Barney) Aller has been promoted to AVP human resource officer at First Western Bank & Trust, Minot. She has been with the bank since 2013.

2016



Kasey (Rademacher) Rabe has joined the Trinity Health behavioral health team as a psychiatric mental health practitioner and is board certified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. She has worked as a nurse with Trinity Health in various units since 2017.

2017



Alexander Buchholz has joined the Trinity Health emergency/trauma medical team. He is an instructor of emergency medicine and a member of the American Medical Association and the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine.



Kacey Donamaria, Minot State record specialist, received the Exemplary New Member Award from the Upper Midwest Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. She sits on the UMACRAO Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, supported the creation of the

strategic plan, and wrote an article for the UMACRAO newsletter last fall.

2018



Amanda (Mogen) LaCroix has joined Four Seasons Realty in Bottineau after dedicating five years to

teaching. She is also the owner and travel advisor for Dakota Dream Destinations, LLC.

Casara (Tessendorf) Wigness began working full time at SCHEELS, Minot in 2024 as a data entry and receptionist.

2019



Katharina Schmolly is serving as a physician at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire.

2020



Cody Longie has become the agency owner of Farmers Union Insurance company in Bottineau. He

worked at State Bank of Bottineau for three years before switching over to the insurance business.

2021

Ashly (Laducer) McCloud is employed at Turtle Mountain Community High School as a specific learning disability teacher.

2022



Patrick Heide was promoted to credit analyst II at First Western Bank & Trust, Minot region. He has been with First Western since 2020.

2024



Ben Bohl has been promoted to commercial banker at First Western Bank & Trust, Minot region. He joined the team in 2022 as an intern before becoming a banking associate.



Trace Goven is working for LaMoure County as a deputy sheriff. He received his peace officers license shortly before taking the position.

Attended



Jim Rostad, former Minot School Board member, was recognized at the North Dakota

School Board Association's annual convention with the Legacy of Service award in the Steadfast Commitment category for his dedicated service to his local school board.

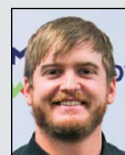
Friend



Brent Lohnes, Hess Corporation general manager, received the 2024 Impact Award for outstanding leadership from the Minot Area Chamber EDC.

MACEDC Eagle Award

The Minot Area Chamber EDC honors individuals who have excelled in customer service with the Eagle Award. The following Minot State alumni were recipients of the Eagle Award:



Easton Evanoff '22
Scheels



Megan (Berg) Miller '13
Trinity Health Medical Arts



Madison Fried '24
Trinity Health



Julie (Bachmeier) Reinisch '92
Midco



Paige (Aaseth) Hanson '15
Trinity Health



Chris Seil '04
Trinity Health Medical Arts



Devin Koppinger '15
UPS



Jakob Zerr '15
Northland Health Centers

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It is with honor we dedicate this section to recognize alumni and friends who have passed away from approximately October 2024 through February 2025 or as submitted.

In memory

Graduates

'41 Westby (Schmid), Lucille; Devils Lake
'46 Eidsness (Stotts), Mary Jane;
Thornton, Colo.
'47 Westerlind (Miller), Mary Ann; Mercer
'50 Anderson (Stutrud), Amy; Leeds
'50 Baker (Gordon), Donna; Minot
'54 Hysjulien (Volberg), Bernice; Lignite
'54 Smith (Des Lauriers), Ione; Sherwood
'56 Larson (Momerak), Carol;
Helena, Mont.
'57 Opland (Peterson), Phyllis; Minneapolis
'58 Hovland, Tilman; Rugby
'60 Elsburnd (Bauer), Marcia;
Hartford, Wis.
'60 Wass (Foster), Patricia;
Scottsdale, Ariz.
'61 Conroy, Donald; Minot
'61 Wetzell (Page), Sandra; Minot
'62 Priebe, Larry; Austin, Minn.
'62 Priem (Harkness), Hazel;
Bigfork, Minn.
'62 Roen, Gordon; Sun Lakes, Ariz.
'62 Rustad (Jacobson), Marlys;
Leesburg, Va.
'63 Adams, David; Bird Island, Minn.
'64 Jostad, Charles; Modesto, Calif.
'64 Lee, George "Joe"; Sioux Falls, S.D.
'64 McQuay (Wilson), Judith;
Shamrock, Texas
'64 Moldenhauer (Laukner), Karen; Velva
'64 Norstedt, Larry; Dickinson
'64 Skelton, Irvine "Irv"; Melita, Manitoba
'65 Cote (College), Sharon;
Nehalem, Ore.
'65 Fettig, Lester; Bismarck
'65 Halgrimson, Terrence "Terry"; Minot
'65 Peszko (Dahl), Jean; Houston, Texas
'65 Schlak (Johnson), Judith; Ada, Minn.
'66 Fleck, Robert "Bob"; Tucson, Ariz.
'68 Mattern (White), Kay; Minot
'69 Axvig, Dale; Cando
'69 Reynolds (Berube), Cecilia; Minot
'70 Harmel (Belgen), Mary Jo; Rugby
'72 Aull (Johnson), Dianne; Bismarck
'72 Braaten (Ahlgren), Carol;
Spring Park, Minn.
'72 Haugeberg, Gerald "Jerry";
Fairbanks, Alaska

'73 Henegar, Darcie; Spearfish, S.D.
'73 Morrison, Mark; Fargo
'73 Ressler (Quarve), Barbara; Minot
'74 Edwards, Craig; Williston
'75 Burckhard, John; Minot
'75 Schepp (Henderson), Janice; Newburg
'76 Hauf, David; South Sioux City, Neb.
'78 Elm, Terry "Butch"; Auburn, Wash.
'78 Stevens, William "Rick";
Lakeville, Minn.
'84 Koble, Laurie; Rugby
'84 O'Malley, Randy; Aurora, Colo.
'86 Sherlock (Hoggarth), Ferne;
Peoria, Ariz.
'87 Johnson (Kostenko), Tenley; Max
'88 Kulland (Kellel), Ellen;
East Grand Forks, Minn.
'91 Samuelson (Sund), Cheryl; Bottineau
'92 Parisien, Gregory "Sonny"; Minot
'92 Sparrow (Westerlind) Deborah;
McClusky
'95 Soules, Leslie; Bismarck
'96 Welstad (Donnelly), Kimberly; Minot
'97 McLeod, Matthew; Minot
'00 Moran, Stanley; Wolf Point, Mont.
'01 Springer (Ondricek), Shirley; Carpio
'01 Steinwand, Dana; West Fargo
'13 Dion, Chad; Minot

Attended

Benson, Carl; Wolford
Fay, Jerome "Bill"; Bowbells
File (Olson), Gaye; Cheyenne, Wyo.
Grindberg, Barry; Velva
Heskin, Brian; Minot
Hubbell, Jeffrey; Columbia, S.C.
Lahlum (Holte), Audrey; Marion
Leischner, Raymond; Bismarck
Michelson (Eckart), Mary Ann; Harvey
Morsette, Darian; New Town
Mosser (Spicer), Susan; Minot
Nelson, Byron; West St. Paul, Minn.
Nelson, Robert "Binks"; Fargo
Robbins (Hubsy), JoAnn; Minot
Thorson (Simonson), Dorothy;
Olympia, Wash.
Williams (Joyer), Constance "Connie";
Minot

Friends

Arstein, Alvin; Rolette
Bearman, John; Minot
Bertsch (Helgeson), Mary Lou; Minot
Braaflat, Elliot; Plaza
Brossart, Edward; Rugby
Dokken, Bernard "Bernie"; Crosby
Eitel (Heinze), Donna; Scott City, Kan.
Freund (Buchl), Marguerite; Cando
Frost, Lyle; Minot
Hovey, John; New Rockford
Howey (Mosbrucker), Dorothea; Minot
Joyce, Mary Lou; White Bear Lake, Minn.
Kersten, Larry; Newburg
Kjelson, Keith; Minot
Landsiedel, Glen; Parshall
Lane (Blom), Maxine; Minot
Lehmann (Larson), Leila; Rugby
Moldenhauer, Vernon; Velva
Myre (Tkachenko), Billie; Lake Metigoshe
Nelson (Lausch), Virginia "Ginny"; Minot
Nelson, Wayne; Minot
Nething, David; Jamestown
Painter, Ronald; Minot
Schempp, Robert "Bob"; Minot
Springer, Gary; Carpio
Urban (Heinze), Jeannette; Denver, Colo.
Wilson, Bob; Bullhead City, Ariz.
Wurtz (Arneson), Ruth; Minot

Faculty and Staff

Klein (Roehrich), Isabell; former staff;
Bismarck
Sand, Roger; former staff; Minot
Ward, John; former faculty; Tyler, Texas
Wittmayer, Nancy; former staff;
Lake Metigoshe
Wullweber, Kirk; former staff; Minot

BABY BEAVERS

Look who's

Averie Jean was born to Connor and Mandi Arneson on Oct. 30, 2024. Proud grandparents are **Ken '90 and Bobbi (Dunkel) '90 Arneson.**



Arneson

Daniel and Marissa (Dyke) '18 Connor welcomed their first child, Addison, in Oct. 2024.



Connor

Charles James entered the world Jan. 2025. Proud parents are Ben and Thea (Grieb) '17 Habig.



Habig

Nota Marie was born Dec. 4, 2023 to Marion '13 and Brittany (Diegel) '13/'15 Hernandez. She joins big sister, Leni, and big brother, Wynn.



Hernandez

John and Jessilyn (Joyner) '23 Hudson welcomed Elias on Feb. 9, 2024.



Hudson

Eli was born Aug. 18, 2024. Proud parents are Alan '16 and Alyssa (Tonneson) '16 Jermiason.



Jermiason

NEW!

Mylo was born May 7, 2024, to Chris and **Sarah (Waldera) '12/'18 McDonald.**



Roger '11 and MaKayla (Sandvold) '15 Neuhalfen welcomed Mia on Feb. 29, 2024. She joins her big sister, Ruby.



Levi Walker entered the world May 15, 2024. Proud parents are Phillip and **Madi (Geer) '17 Nichols.**

Jarrett '15 and Calli (Tweten) '16 Peskey had River David on May 24, 2024.



Klete George was born May 31, 2023, to Jason and **Alyssa (Kallias) '04 Proper.**



Forrest '21 and Caytee (McDonald) '20 Weigel welcomed their first child, Mateo Leif, on May 7, 2024.

»»» Have you had an addition to your family recently?

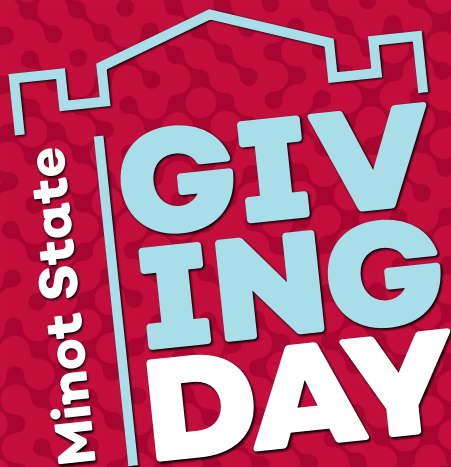
We want to know! Contact Kate Marshall, director of foundation operations, at kate.marshall@minotstateu.edu to receive a free T-shirt for your new little Beaver. Please be sure to tell us your baby's name and date of birth. Also please provide your graduation year, spouse's name, and contact information. After you receive your T-shirt, email your baby's photo to Kate.



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