June 21, 2019

Concordia College Class of 1989 Class Letter

Thirty years, where'd they go, thirty years, I don't know…

How is it possible that thirty years have passed since May 7, 1989? I thought the four years from 1985-1989 went fast. Marriages, children, job changes, illness and lost friends. Life seems to be made up of these basic building blocks and significant events. However, I might suggest that life may be more accurately understood moment by moment. What are we contributing to our families and our communities? What is our experience. Day by day, what is our intention, what kind of person do we want to be? How are we progressing towards that goal?

Intentions aren’t what we say that they are. Intentions can best be measured by what we actually do on a daily and weekly basis. Concordia has the declared mission to “Send Forth and Influence the Affairs of the World.” A review of the work and influence of Concordia Alumni in the world suggests that Concordia has been very successful in achieving its mission.

I’ve had a couple of things on my to-do list for quite a while; learn to play the guitar and spend more time writing. A couple of weeks ago I took a step towards the goal of writing by taking a facilitated creative writing class at the Grand Marais Art Colony called “Writing as Excavation.” It was a three-hour class and I wasn’t sure what to expect but I brought an open mind and a willingness to follow instructions. After several writing exercises we were asked to create and develop a character in fifteen minutes. My mind immediately went blank. Then I thought of a person who has dedicated a great deal of time to publicly criticizing me. Then I got a clear picture of me reacting to his comments. Suddenly I found myself characterizing myself. I found myself consumed with the exercise and just put everything down on paper as it came to out. At the end of the exercise I read what I had written and though it was rough it allowed me to myself form a different point of view. I wasn’t exactly thrilled with this character. This exercise reinforced one thing that I had known, but often forget; things are not always as they seem, and I am usually limited by my past experiences and current beliefs. The exercise also taught me something brand new. I know more than I am consciously aware that I know. I thought I wanted to write because I had something to teach, but I think I will continue to write because I have much to learn.

I still haven’t learned to play the guitar, although I currently own three of them.

I continue to be grateful for the education I received at Concordia. Seeds were planted that fueled my desire to learn to learn better. As I get a bit older, I find making time for reflection becomes increasingly important. I hope each of you take time to appreciate the world and people around you and that you find time to do the things that inspire you.

One of the things that has brought a lot of inspiration into my life has been the honor of serving as a volunteer on behalf of Concordia College and the Class of 1989. I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve for four years on the National Alumni Board, and in May I was elected to another four-year term which will include two years as vice president and two years as president of the National Alumni Board. I am truly humbled and excited for this opportunity.

I have also enjoyed serving as class agent for the past several years and I am truly looking forward to Homecoming in October. I am happy to continue with this task, but I also want to take
this opportunity to let someone else have a turn. If you are interested in serving as class agent, or any other Concordia volunteer opportunity please feel free to contact me or the alumni office.

**Reunion Year/Homecoming**

As previously mentioned, this October we will be celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> reunion year. Registration is currently open, and I hope to see you all there. We still have room for additional committee members and I’m hoping that we can find a group that wants to take on the challenge of our representation in the homecoming parade. (Ah-Ke Alumni, I’m looking at you!) I hope that you all take some time between now and October to reach out to friends and roommates and encourage them to join us in October.

[https://www.concordiacollege.edu/alumni/homecoming/](https://www.concordiacollege.edu/alumni/homecoming/)

**Alumni recognition**

If you know someone from our class or another Concordia Alumni worthy of recognition, please consider nominating them for one of the colleges Alumni Awards.

The Alumni Achievement Award (AAA), the college's highest honor, is conferred upon alumni who have distinguished themselves in their careers and service to others. For graduates of 20 years or more, the AAA is reserved for alumni at the pinnacle of their vocational life.

The Sent Forth Award is conferred upon young alumni who have distinguished themselves early on in their careers and service to others. For graduates of less than 20 years, the Sent Forth Award is reserved for alumni who have shown vocational precociousness.

The Called to Serve Award is conferred upon alumni who have demonstrated notable commitment to the mission of the college through lifelong service to their faith communities, education, arts or other not-for-profit activities. Alumni of any year are eligible for this award.

To see the 2019 awardees and past awardees go to [www.concordiacollege.edu/alumniawards](http://www.concordiacollege.edu/alumniawards) here.

**Class giving**

It’s our 30th Reunion Year and we have already started planning great events for the weekend of October 11 – 13, 2019. The committee has been hard at work putting together our breakfast at Anderson Commons in the Knutson Center and our evening gathering in the Atrium of the Knutson Center. We hope to see you back to help us celebrate this important milestone!

Our reunion is also a time to come together as a class to make a difference in the life of the college. Our reunion team set a goal of $30,000 and 100 donors from our class. We're excited about the opportunity to give back and hope you can join us.

Current class challenge statistics include $22,402,66 in current giving and 14.9% participation in 2018-2019 with a class lifetime credit of $485,205.89.
Class Updates

If you have an update you would like to share, please forward it to me directly or through the Alumni Office at https://www.concordiacollege.edu/alumni/

James Cox Director of IT and Health Information for Tamarack Management, Inc. and he resides in Missoula, MT.

Kristi Hall-Jiran After 23 years as president/CEO of the Community Violence Intervention Center (28 years total with CVIC), Kristi Hall-Jiran has accepted the position of chief philanthropy officer at Altru Health System in Grand Forks, ND. In this role, she will serve on the healthcare system’s executive team as well as oversee the foundation and other philanthropic initiatives.

Rhonda Kalvig I recently accepted a position as a Program Assistant in the Continuing Education Center at Flathead Valley Community College. And, I am a member of the Leadership Flathead program with the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce. I was honored to be elected by my classmates to serve as a Class Officer for the upcoming year. Ken (’90) and I will celebrate our 29th wedding anniversary this fall and we have 3 wonderful children (2 young adults and a 14 year old).

Dr. Patricia Kubow (Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies and Curriculum & Instruction, Indiana University) is recipient of the Research Leadership Award from the Association of North America Higher Education International (ANAHEI). The award honors the contributions of an educator to research in the field of global issues and education, reflected in a lengthy commitment to the field as demonstrated by research publications in global and international education. The award recognizes international educators worldwide. Kubow was selected for her publication productivity, leadership activities in research that impact society, and mentoring of graduate students that helps them advance in their research careers in international education. The award was conferred at the Global Conference on Education and Research held May 21-24, 2019 at the University of South Florida, Sarasota-Manatee campus.

Carol (Schotzko) Sylvester is now working as a substitute teacher for ISD 196, the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan school district.

Cort Sylvester was named the Minnesota Debate Teachers Association Coach of the Year for the 2018-2019 season.
Vicky Westra, 51, of Moorhead, MN, passed away on Saturday, October 13, 2018, at home under the care of family and Hospice of the Red River Valley. Vicky was born in Moorhead on July 16, 1967, to Willard and Mary Ann (Brainerd) Held. She grew up and attended school in Moorhead before continuing her education at Concordia College. After graduating from Concordia in 1989, she pursued a master’s + specialist degree in School Psychology from Minnesota State University Moorhead where she received her degree in 1996.

https://www.wrightfuneral.com/obituary/vicky-westra/

2019 Class Letter Campus Update

Concordia Language Villages

-Summer 2018 was a busy one for Concordia Language Villages. We had over 4700 villagers and families from all over the world attend immersion programs at our Turtle River Lake sites just north of Bemidji and at other leased camps in northern Minnesota. This strong enrollment demonstrates the value families are placing on world language and culture education.

-Thanks to a generous gift of $5 million from the Simone Corporation and its CEO Kenny Park, we will soon begin the first phase of construction of Sup sogŭi Hosu, the Korean Language Village, on Turtle River Lake. The first Village to be built was Skogfjorden, the Norwegian Language Village, and that happened 50 years ago this summer. A special event to commemorate this milestone will be held on July 13. Sjölunden the Swedish Language Village, celebrates its 45th summer with a midsommar event on August 3. International Days are July 5 and August 9 where we will also celebrate 50 years of offering four-week high school credit sessions.

Music

-Dr. René Clausen announced that he will retire following the 2019-20 academic year, concluding his service as professor of music and conductor of The Concordia Choir. Clausen is a leader in choral music as both a conductor and a composer. He is the artistic director of the Concordia Christmas Concerts. In addition to composing arrangements and original pieces for Concordia ensembles, he has written dozens of commissioned compositions including “MEMORIAL” and “Crying for a Dream” for the American Choral Directors Association. Clausen was also commissioned by Concordia to create a major work in observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The work is titled “The Passion of Jesus Christ” and premiered at Orchestra Hall in 2017. President William Craft noted in an announcement to the Concordia community that throughout his work at the college Clausen has lived the mission of The
Concordia Choir “to uphold a sacred choral tradition through the uncompromising and unrelenting collaborative pursuit of musical integrity and spiritual expression.”

-The Concordia Choir completed a highly successful tour through the Pacific Northwest in March. The tour featured concerts in Washington, Oregon, Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota. The Choir also had engagements with ten high school choirs, as well as The Choir of the West at Pacific Lutheran University and a collaboration concert with The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists at the Ordway in St. Paul. Work is now being done to plan the Choir’s 2020 tour to the Southeast United States. Updates and more information can be found at www.TheConcordiaChoir.org.

-The Concordia Orchestra completed a very successful fall domestic tour with performances in Appleton, Wausau and Chippewa Falls in Wisconsin and Roseville, Sartell and Brainerd in Minnesota. Repertoire included Symphony No. 3 by Florence Price, Scheherazade by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Concerto for Trombone by Jim Pugh, which featured Concordia Professor of Low Brass Dr. Nathaniel Dickey on trombone. Also joining the tour was guest conductor Christoph Rehli-Fankhauser, professor of conducting at the Lucerne University of Music in Switzerland.

-The Concordia Band was invited to perform at both the Minnesota Music Educators Association Mid-Winter Clinic in Minneapolis and the North Dakota Music Educators Association Conference in Bismarck. In addition, the band was also invited to be the featured collegiate band at the Westman Honour Band concert at Brandon University in Brandon, Manitoba. As part of their annual domestic tour, the band performed a joint concert with the Encore Wind Ensemble in St. Paul, MN as well as concerts in St. Anthony Village, Albany and Staples-Motley, all in Minnesota. The band is in the beginning stages of planning their international tour to Spain in May of 2020.

Cobber Athletics

- In the spring of 2018, Concordia had only one team – women’s basketball – with a female head coach. Fast forward one year, and with the hiring of new volleyball head coach Faith Dooley, the Cobbers now have 5 additional female head coaches mentoring student/athletes. Dooley, who was an All-American at the University of North Dakota, joins women’s golf head coach Kari Weidner-Ceniceros, Maureen Greiner of women’s hockey, Rebecca O’Shurak from women’s soccer and NDSU All-American Laura Januszewski who coaches both the men’s and women’s cross country teams. The rise of female head coaches was recognized by University of Minnesota’s Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport in their 2018-19 coaching report card that cited Concordia as the top college in the MIAC for the increase in female head coaches over the past year.

- Concordia men’s track and field junior Matt Bye, Moorhead, won the heptathlon at this winter’s MIAC Indoor Championship Meet and went on to finish 11th in the event at the NCAA National Indoor Meet held in Boston, Mass. Bye won the MIAC title with the second highest point total in school history.

- The Cobber men’s hockey team earned its seventh consecutive berth in the MIAC playoffs this season. Concordia finished conference play with nine league wins which was the most since the 2013 season. Sophomore forward Tyler Bossert, Fargo, led the MIAC in scoring and went on to earn All-American Second Team honors to become the ninth All-American in program history.
New Hires

Concordia added two critical new leaders in the Career Center this year. Kris Olson joined the College as the new Director of the Career Center in October 2018. Jill Wenger, a Barnesville native, was hired in the role of Assistant Director of the Career Center in March 2019.

Kris began her career in Higher Education spent several years in Higher Education at NDSU and Concordia before making a career switch. She began working for Cargill, Inc as a Corporate Training Consultant, Training Curriculum Specialist, a Member of a Global Realignment Team, and a Recruiting Manager. Following her time at Cargill, Kris founded her own consulting business. Kris is an experienced professional with over 30 years of progressive experience in Higher Education, Corporate Business and Consulting.

Jill is an experienced professional with progressive experience within the City of Moorhead ranging from City Clerk, Assistant City Manager, and most recently, Human Resource Director. Jill brings great insight into public service, the local Fargo-Moorhead area, the Restorative Justice process, and recruitment best practices.

Katie Nystuen was hired as our Health Services Coordinator this year. Part of her role is to guide students in making choices regarding their healthcare needs, and connecting them to the many quality providers in our community. Though direct care is not the focus of the Health Services Office, she is First Aid, CPR and AED certified, and can assist with triage and referral to an appropriate medical facility should an urgent situation arise, as can our Public Safety Office. One of her goals is to be more proactive and holistic regarding health and wellness programming on campus.

Dallas Fossum joined Concordia as the new Director for Facilities Management in March. Dallas is an experienced director of facilities management and has, with his teams, completed more than $50 million in renovations, new constructions, infrastructure, and deferred maintenance.

Dr. Jill Abbott has been appointed Deputy to the President at Concordia College, effective June 3, 2019. Dr. Abbott holds a bachelor’s degree in literature/language arts education, a master’s in counseling and human resource development, and a doctorate in educational administration. She currently serves as the associate vice president of academics at Minnesota State Community and Technical College. Dr. Abbott will serve as a member of the college cabinet and will continue the good work of her predecessor Tracey Moorhead as liaison to our Board of Regents. As Deputy to the President, she will work with me to ensure the fulfillment of the new college plan following its affirmation by the Board of Regents, to represent the college in building strong local and regional partnerships for mutual success, and to position Concordia as mission driven institution of national significance.

Other News

Concordia’s outstanding tradition of preparing students for medical school is now available to those who have completed an undergraduate degree. This intensive, 1 year program is designed for highly motivated individuals with excellent academic records, who have earned a bachelor’s degree from an accredited four-year institution, but lack most or all of the prerequisite science courses needed for admission to medical school. Our program is ideal for career
changers, and individuals deciding later in their academic journey, to pursue a career in medicine.

Concordia sent 12 members to the American Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET) at the University of Alabama, where 60 colleges and universities from across the United States competed for top honors. Concordia was one of only a few smaller colleges that placed in the top 15, which is dominated by larger research institutions.

The Center for Student Success has a new home in the Normandy. The beautifully renovated space is open and light making for an inviting space for students. The center includes academic support, Orientation and First-Year Transition Programming, the Peer Mentor program, and the Diversity Coordinator for Student Support Services.

More than 300 students presented their posters or spoke at concurrent sessions during Concordia’s 2019 Celebration of Student Scholarship (COSS) on April 10. Some students participated in multiple presentations. New at this year’s COSS was an art display with printmaking pieces and two sessions presented in Spanish. “Our goal is to keep building on the diversity of research,” says Krys Strand, director of Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity and coordinator of the Celebration of Student Scholarship.

A dinner was held April 4 to celebrate the naming of Dr. Dan Biebighauser as holder of The Sigurd and Pauline Prestegaard Mundhjeld Endowed Chair of Mathematics. Biebighauser is a 2002 graduate of Concordia and joined the faculty in 2006. The holder of the Mundhjeld chair is to be a person who has provided exemplary service in teaching and scholarship in the field of mathematics and who is known and respected in the field. All of the past holders of the Mundhjeld Endowed Chair were present. Past holders include Dr. Bill Tomhave, Dr. James L. Forde, Dr. Alexander Sze and Dr. Gerald A. Heuer ’51.

Alumni Awards:

The National Alumni Board voted on the 2019 Alumni Achievement, Sent Forth and Called to Serve Awards. To learn more about each award, visit www.concordiacollege.edu/alumni/awards-and-recognition/.

2019 Alumni Achievement Award Recipients

- Dr. Paul Brandvik ’59, professor emeritus of music at Bemidji State University, served as director of choral activities for 31 years. Brandvik received several awards, guest conducted more than 100 festivals and workshops in 16 states and abroad, and composed, edited or arranged more than 50 works.
- Dr. Kristi Ferguson ’71, is professor emeritus of General Internal Medicine and served as director, Office of Consultation and Research in Medical Education at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. She spent her entire career at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine where she has greatly influenced the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum.
- Dr. Thomas Samuelson ’81, a board-certified ophthalmologist, is a founding partner and attending surgeon at Minnesota Eye Consultants, P.A., Minneapolis. He’s also an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota and on the faculty of Hennepin County Medical Center. He has received several awards and has been named to America’s Top
Doctors each year since 2002. He has written numerous articles and given more than 600 presentations around the world.

- A 1977 Concordia graduate, the Rev. Ann Svennungsen is the bishop of the ELCA Minneapolis Area Synod, the first female bishop to serve in any of the ELCA’s six Minnesota synods. She served as a parish pastor prior to serving as president and CEO of The Fund for Theological Education and then as president of Texas Lutheran University. Svennungsen, a well-respected theologian and speaker, is published in numerous journals, and is invited to lecture, preach, and provide keynote and commencement addresses.

2019 Sent Forth Recipients

- Betsy Grams ’98, co-founder and executive director of Cycle Health, is a 1998 Concordia graduate. CycleHealth was founded in 2014 to equip kids to power their own wellness. CycleHealth’s programs are based on adventure and self-directed goal attainment and are prescribed by pediatricians in more than 50 Twin Cities clinics through an innovative platform called Sweat Rx.

- Matthew Culloton ’98, Matthew Culloton, founding Artistic Director of The Singers – Minnesota Choral Artists, is a 1998 Concordia graduate and earned a master’s and a doctorate from the University of Minnesota. He is Choirmaster at The House of Hope Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minn., an adjunct faculty member at the University of Saint Thomas and composer. Culloton received the VocalEssence/ACDA of Minnesota Creative Programming Award (2003) and MN ACDA Outstanding Young Choral Conductor of the Year Award (2004).