

Spring 2023

Dear Friends,

Our Augsburg University archivist recently discovered the original program from the January 1902 dedication of the “new seminary building” on Augsburg’s campus—what we now know as Old Main. Speeches given in English and Norwegian that day included “The Future of the Lutheran Church in America” and “Augsburg and Lutheranism.” What a privilege it is to reflect on our enduring connection more than 120 years later!

The faith and values of the church continue to shape our work to deepen equity and inclusion in higher education. As reported by the Wall Street Journal and Inside Higher Ed, this fall marked the launch of our new “direct admissions” enrollment approach called Augsburg Applies to You, which offers guaranteed admission to students based on their high school GPA. In so doing, it moves from a gatekeeping model to one focused on building relationships and investing earlier in student success. Augsburg Applies to You is the latest in a series of initiatives to lower barriers in admissions. Countering national enrollment trends, these moves have accompanied historically large and diverse entering classes in recent years.

Elsewhere on campus, a new pilot program to provide comprehensive academic, financial, and community support to students from foster care backgrounds has had a remarkable impact in its first year. In 2022, we also celebrated the 25th anniversary of our StepUP® collegiate recovery program. One of just a handful of similar programs at its founding in 1997, StepUP is still one of the nation’s largest and most comprehensive, with more than 800 alumni.

Augsburg continues to be blessed with outstanding faculty leadership in key roles. In 2022, Jeremy Myers, executive director of the Christensen Center for Vocation, was appointed to serve as the Bernhard M. Christensen professor of religion and vocation, succeeding Martha Stortz. In August, Najeeba Syeed joined Augsburg as the inaugural El-Hibri endowed chair and executive director of Interfaith at Augsburg. Together, Jeremy and Najeeba are deepening Augsburg’s engagement with our students around questions of discernment, vocation, and peacebuilding in a multicultural world, and elevating Augsburg’s public leadership on these issues at the local and national levels.

In recognition of our common heritage and commitments to global citizenship, as well as his support of Augsburg and our sister Norwegian-American colleges, Augsburg conferred upon King Harald V of Norway an honorary degree in a December ceremony in Oslo. This recognition—originally scheduled for 2020 but delayed by the pandemic—was a meaningful part of our sesquicentennial anniversary celebration. Closer to home, we continue to nurture a mutually supportive relationship with Luther Seminary through a shared services arrangement for marketing, IT, and finance. Our associate vice president and chief financial officer, John Coskran, was named the seminary’s chief financial officer earlier this spring.

These are challenging times for higher education in many ways. Yet, with your prayerful support, Augsburg continues to meet the needs of this moment, living into our vision to be a new kind of student-centered, urban university, small to our students and big for the world. We are grateful for your continued partnership and for the deep roots that anchor us in a shared history and identity.

Faithfully yours,

Paul C. Pribbenow, Ph.D.
President

Rev. Babette Chatman
University Pastor
Director of Campus Ministry

Rev. John Schwehn
University Pastor