

## *Summer 2021 Letter*

Heelloooooo Class of 1996!

Can it really be?

For real?

This year marks 25 years since we received our Augustana diplomas! Yes, 25 years!!! It doesn't seem like that long ago, until we consider the internet was just emerging as a global commercial network about the time we were graduating. (Our kids can hardly wrap their minds around that one...ha!) Here are a few other notable memories from 1996:

- “Dolly” was the first sheep to be cloned from adult cells
- The Academy Award for best picture went to Braveheart and Jerry Maguire was one of the year's most popular movies
- Janet Jackson signed an \$80 million deal, making her the highest paid musician in history at the time
- The song of the year was “Kiss From a Rose” by Seal
- The FBI arrested the alleged Unibomber
- The price of a first-class stamp was 31 cents
- South Africa adopted a new constitution and Britain was threatened by an outbreak of “mad cow disease”

We have been though a lot since then. The world has faced unprecedented challenges and incredible triumphs. Our lives have been shaped by changes we never envisioned. But through all those changes, a common thread has always united us. Our Augustana roots, nourished and tended by so many who helped us along our educational journey, will forever be part of our common story.

It has been such a gift to share your stories over the past 25 years, but an even greater gift to celebrate this milestone together in person! We hope you will be able to join us October 8-10 for a Viking Days like no other! (More information is included in the letter that follows 😊)

Joel Gackle, Senior Director of Alumni Engagement, has done a fabulous job summarizing the events of the past year, so rather than repeat them we will include his letter below. We hope you are as inspired as we were after

reading about all the ways Augie has continued to do great things -- even in the midst of a global pandemic!

Read on... and start making plans for Viking Days! We can't wait to see you this October!

Cari Eastman and Dayna Groskreutz

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Greetings from Augustana University!

What a difference a year — and a global pandemic — can make. We have been reflecting on how the world quickly changed in March of last year. COVID-19 has impacted each of us in numerous ways. Our students left for spring break and, in the blink of an eye, the world changed. Our faculty quickly pivoted to modify the curriculum for online instruction in one week's time — an unprecedented accomplishment. Our entire community rallied together to serve students and each other in a time of great uncertainty.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2020, over fifty faculty and staff members worked diligently to develop the Viking Flex Plan — designed to allow AU to safely deliver a top quality in-person living and learning experience in the 2020-21 academic year. The plan incorporated face-to-face learning with an integrated virtual learning component in many classes. Students and employees committed to a Viking Flex Health and Safety Pledge, which reinforced the need to closely follow all of the health and safety protocols established for the well-being of our campus community.

While many colleges and universities delivered education in a virtual format, Augustana was successful in providing a safe in-person living and learning experience for the entire year. Thanks be to God!

Augustana recently celebrated commencement, with the classes of 2020 and 2021, in our beautiful Kirkeby–Over Stadium. We are so grateful for the

support and prayers of our alumni, which were instrumental in helping the university navigate this unprecedented year.

The unique 2020-2021 year included some great accomplishments.

Augustana launched two new schools, the Sharon Lust School of Education and the Augustana University School of Music. In the Fall of 2021, the School of Health Professions will be launched.

#### The Sharon Lust School of Education

- Dr. Laurie Daily serves as the inaugural dean.
- A generous donation from John Lust '90 and Jeanelle (Robson) Lust '91, in honor of John's mother, allowed Augustana to establish the Sharon Lust school of Education. John's mother dedicated her life's work to teaching and he remarked, "This gift will help empower generations of future educators and lifelong learners."

#### The Augustana University School of Music

- Dr. Peter Folliard serves as the inaugural dean.
- The School of Music utilized instrumental masks, bell covers and choral masks to ensure students could learn and perform safely.
- Augustana Christmas Vespers, one of our greatest traditions, was reimaged in 2020. With tremendous innovation and dedication, recordings of instrumentalists and vocalists occurred throughout the fall semester. A concert was then produced and live streamed on YouTube, as well as South Dakota Public Broadcasting, Prairie Public Broadcasting, Ozark Public Television and Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting. We also had radio partners broadcast the performance in South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. A generous gift from Thrivent supported the endeavor and allowed the performance to be shared with its Midwest customers.
- The Augustana drumline was launched and the Augustana Marching Band will return in the fall of 2021.
- The creation of a multimedia entrepreneurship major will bring a program unique to the entire Midwest, and help our students thrive in exciting careers in music and more.

In the fall, President Stephanie Herseth Sandlin celebrated a milestone birthday. Her birthday wish was to raise funds for impact scholarships to

support current and future students. We set a goal of raising \$50,000 and blew out the candles celebrating a total of \$141,405.

Our student-athletes continued to excel under extraordinary circumstances. We had 87 student-athletes named to NSIC all-academic teams in the winter and 82 in the spring.

### Men's Track & Field

- 4 All-Americans
- Austin Miller broke the school record in the 1600m
- Mathias Kollberg broke the school record in the long jump
- Alec Kray broke the school record in the 5000m
- Tyl Woelber broke the school record in the javelin
- Tyl Woelber was named the NSIC Field Athlete of the Year

### Women's Track & Field

- 5 All-Americans
- Patty Jo English broke the school record in the 5000m
- All-America DMR Relay Team
- Placed 12th in the nation as a team

### Wrestling

- Steven Hajas – All-America and National Consolation Honors
- Two national qualifiers

### Women's Basketball

- NSIC South Division Champions
- Dave Krauth NSIC South Division Coach of the Year (1,000 lifetime victories!)
- Four Vikings named to NSIC South Division Second Team

### Men's Basketball

- Tyler Riemersma and Adam Dykman named to the NSIC South Division Second Team

### Swimming

- Taylor Beagle earned four All-America honors at the NCAA Division II Swimming & Diving Championships
- Taylor Beagle named the NSIC Swimmer of the Year for the second straight year

## Tennis

- Our women's team earned its 11th straight NSIC Regular Season Championship and 10th straight NSIC Tournament Championship

## Men's Golf

- Jacob Lee earned Second Team All-NSIC

## Women's Golf

- Won their 10th NSIC Championship of the last 11 seasons
- New head coach Coralee Jorgensen named the NSIC Coach of the Year

## Baseball

- No. 2 Regional Seed for Midwest Region
- Won 36 games

## Women's Softball – Defending National Champions

- 4 All-Americans
- Finished with a school record, 49 wins

In Fall 2021, Augustana will expand our athletic programs by adding Men's Swimming and Diving and Women's Acrobatics & Tumbling. This will bring our athletic offerings to 21 sports.

## Upcoming:

Viking Days returns to an in-person format for Fall 2021. Save the date for October 8-10, 2021.

## Friday

- Honor Guard Luncheon with class photos for milestone reunions: 1951, 1956, 1961, 1966
- Campus Tours
- 1970 and 1971 50th Reunion Celebrations with class photos for class of 1970 and 1971
- Augustana Downtown Gatherings

#### Saturday

- Parade
- Viking Tailgate
- Football Game (1:00 PM)
- Vikings Reunite: All-Alumni Gathering (7:30 PM) This event is open to all alumni, with class photos for milestone reunions from 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016

#### Sunday

- Worship
- Viking Days Brunch

Music at Augustana has left an indelible mark on countless students, alumni, and fans. We have two celebrations upcoming to mark on your calendar.

- The Choir will celebrate its centennial on April 29, 2022. All Augustana Choir alumni are invited and encouraged to join in the festivities.
- The Band will celebrate its 125th anniversary on November 11, 2022, with broader celebrations November 11-13. As with the choir centennial, alumni who participated in band are encouraged to attend and join in the celebration.

Yes, it was quite a year! I pray that you and yours have a summer of good health, recreation and renewal. All of us at Augustana hope to welcome you home to campus sometime soon!

Blessings,

Joel Gackle

Senior Director of Alumni Engagement