

# UNIVERSITY OF SIOUX FALLS

MAGAZINE | FALL 2023



Wrestling

**HELPING STUDENTS SUCCEED**

People of Impact



# Hello & Welcome

Greetings USF Alumni and Friends:

As we launched the 2023-24 academic year, the University of Sioux Falls celebrated a landmark birthday on September 8 marking its 140th year of existence in central Sioux Falls. Amidst this celebration recognizing our institution's rich history of integrating faith and learning to generations of students, USF also achieved historical milestones in welcoming both its largest first-time, full-time freshman class and largest traditional full-time student population in history. This represents the second time within five years that the University has broken such a record. Additionally, we are experiencing the highest-ever number of students choosing to live on campus. This large student presence creates an enjoyable and lively campus community full of opportunities to build healthy and productive relationships.

The University has invested much time and resources into enhancing the college experience for our students. USF remains steadfastly committed to providing unparalleled services to students through major investments in advising, retention efforts and other programming opportunities leading to engagement with faculty and staff fully committed to their success. We know that effective learning must consider all factors contributing to overall student welfare. This edition of our alumni magazine highlights many examples of exemplary work performed by our faculty and staff contributing to student welfare through various University programming.

In alignment with our traditional University motto of Culture for Service, USF Student Life conducted a campus service day in which USF students, faculty and staff engaged with various community organizations in assisting with special projects and spreading goodwill. Such programming represents essential learning in alignment with our mission-centric purpose of sending our graduates into the world to serve God and humankind.

On October 13, the University hosted a press conference introducing its new director of athletics, Jon Hart. As a proud member of the NCAA-II and the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC) encompassing four states in the region, we knew that it was important to have strong leadership guide these programs to ensure success in all the manners it is measured within collegiate athletic programs. With the addition of our new men and women's wrestling programs this fall, the University now has approximately 450 student-athletes within its athletic profile of 19 sports.

The times call upon higher learning institutions such as USF to assertively step forward in educating our future leaders that will serve the greater good as parents, community and business leaders and extraordinary disciples for our Christian faith. Best wishes!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brett Bradfield".

Dr. Brett Bradfield

President, University of Sioux Falls



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The COOmmunity came together to celebrate homecoming, family weekend and alumni reunions with a variety of events.

**TAKE OUR READER'S SURVEY: [USIOXFALLS.EDU/MAGSURVEY](https://usioxfordfalls.edu/magsurvey)**



# CAMPUS UPDATES

## CELEBRATING 140 YEARS

*USF has come far since 1883 and continues to remain faithful to the vision of its founders. USF has held fast to its heritage as a distinctively Christian college in the liberal arts tradition, fostering academic excellence and preparing students to serve God and humankind in the world.*

The campus community celebrated USF's 140th anniversary on Friday, September 8. The significant occasion was commemorated with the planting of a tree in central campus. Additionally, donations were collected for Cougar Cupboard and students took part in a mural contest, with the winning mural to be painted outside Kroske Hall.

## SUPPORTING FIRST- GENERATION STUDENTS

The Center for First-generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA and The Suder Foundation, recently announced the University of Sioux Falls as one of 76 new members of the First Scholars Network for 2023-24. To be selected as a First Scholars Network member, the University of Sioux Falls displayed a demonstrated commitment to improving experiences and advancing success for first-generation college students. The First Scholars Network is a four-phase approach that allows institutions of higher education to advance student success through establishing communities of practice, gaining knowledge of resources and establishing peer networks.



## FACULTY RECOGNITION

Voted on by the Board of Trustees at the spring 2023 meeting.

### Tenure and Promotion:

Dr. Andrew Beck  
– Associate Professor of Psychology  
Dr. Victor Larsen  
– Associate Professor of Mathematics  
Dr. Brooke Murphy  
– Associate Professor of Education  
Dr. Nick Poppens  
– Associate Professor of Media Studies

### Promotion:

Dr. Jenny Bangsund  
– Professor of English  
Dr. Gretchen Hoffman  
– Professor of Psychology  
Dr. Cheri Kovalenko  
– Professor of Family and Pediatric Nursing/  
Assistant Program Director  
Dr. Jonathan Neiderhiser  
– Professor of Music/Director  
of Instrumental Music





## D O N O R *Spotlight*

Bob and Karen Veninga

Karen (Smit) and Robert Veninga met in Sioux Falls at First Baptist Church. Karen was a sophomore at Sioux Falls College and Bob was attending the North American Baptist Seminary. The two have been happily married for 55 years and share a common faith, a passion for theatre and a deep love of their alma mater.

"USF is a very special place. We are incredibly thankful to the University for helping lay the spiritual foundation for our lives and shaping our careers," says Bob.

After graduating from Sioux Falls College in 1967, Karen received her Master of Public Health degree from the University of Minnesota and taught nursing students at various Minnesota colleges. She concluded her career as director of human resources for the Minnesota State Senate before retiring in 2006.

Bob attended Sioux Falls College from 1959-1962 and received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Minnesota. He taught at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health for 34 years before retiring as professor emeritus in 2007. During that time, Bob published four books and over 100 articles in professional and scientific literature. His research has been featured in national publications and his clients include some of the largest corporations in America.

When Bob was asked whether he would be interested in serving on the USF Board of Trustees,

he responded with an enthusiastic "Yes!" Bob served 26 years on the board of trustees, four as chair. He also chaired the search committee for USF's current president, Dr. Brett Bradfield.

The Veningas find great joy in supporting USF students. They are particularly proud of their support for the USF Theatre Department.

Each spring the theatre department gives the "Bob and Karen Veninga Excellence in Theatre Arts Award" to a senior student. The Veningas also created an endowed scholarship designed for students entering a health-related field. In recognition of their professional achievements, Bob and Karen received the A.O. Larson Distinguished Alumni Award (2000) and the Perisho Award (2023). They traveled from their home in St. Paul, Minnesota, to Sioux Falls in late September to receive the Perisho Award.

"We are so grateful to the USF professors who took a personal interest in us. At the top of the list would be Dr. John Butler who helped Karen develop a love for biology and Professor Walter Nickel, who invited me to become a part of the debate team," says Bob. "We also appreciate faculty who continue to love USF and show their amazing support for today's students, as well as alumni whose gifts are often the deciding factor as to whether a high school graduate can experience the joys and benefits of having a USF education." ■



# FROM USF TO NYC

A L U M N I   S P O T L I G H T   F E A T U R I N G

## H A L E Y   W A R D   ' 1 0

Haley Ward is proof that a liberal arts education will take you places.

Ward grew up just a few blocks from USF. Her family enjoyed attending nearby campus activities and her older sister enrolled when Ward was in high school. Her decision to attend USF and stay close to home was easy.

But she wouldn't stay close for long.

While at USF, Ward attended the University of Oxford as part of USF's study abroad program. The opportunity ignited her spirit of adventure and an even deeper love of theatre. She made the decision to pursue an internship in New York City after graduation and never looked back.

"I always loved theatre. The more I learned about it at USF, the more I knew NYC was where I wanted to be," she says.

Ward used her background and degrees in English, theatre and communications to work with WICKED the Musical on Broadway. She then shifted gears to become head of international marketing for The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Today she is the vice president of sales for Hudson Yards Experiences, working for the most prominent privately-owned real estate firm in the country.

Ward has been with Hudson Yards since 2018 and was part of creating and launching the incredible new neighborhood on the west side of Manhattan. The urban development

features three unique experiences: The Edge, City Climb and Vessel.

"I lead a team that focuses on bringing global tourism to Hudson Yards to enjoy our experiences while they are here," she explains. "As someone who grew up in South Dakota dreaming about NYC, I can now make that dream a reality for millions of visitors from around the world. My role allows me to travel the world for business. Getting to experience 37 countries (and counting!) has been the gift of a lifetime."

Her successful career was recently recognized in City Guide New York, where Ward received the Women in Tourism Award for the "Attractions" category.

"It was such an honor to show that hard work, dedication and a commitment to being a strong woman leader are making an impact in the industry," she says.

She credits USF and her liberal arts education for allowing her to think outside the box and explore a variety of different interests at once.

"Being in an environment like USF prepared me for a multi-faceted career in various fields," she says. "Because I came from a background that encouraged exploration, I've been able to work with diverse institutions and explore different sides of my career with familiarity and confidence." ■







# FAITH + SERVICE

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT FEATURING

## KENJI SCALES

Kenji Scales fell in love with the USF campus his senior year in high school during a recruiting tour for USF Men's Basketball. The sophomore from Richfield, Minnesota, was recruited by the Cougars in his junior year and visited campus in October.

"I immediately knew this was the place for me," he says. "It's the right size, they have a great basketball program and it's a faith-based community. I signed the day I got back home."

While Kenji excels as a student and an athlete, he credits USF for giving him something even more valuable—a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God. He says faith was always part of his life, but before USF he didn't treat it like a priority.

"Faith is a huge piece of this school. It's everywhere you go. Denny T. (Dennis Thum) has been such an important part of my journey. Through my growth as a Christian, I realized service is something I want to be more intentional about. I am really working on putting others before myself," he says.

While looking for ways to give back, Kenji was recruited by a friend to be an orientation leader on campus. The leadership role allows him to help freshmen and new transfers navigate an unfamiliar campus by attending events with them and getting them familiar with life at USF.

"Being an orientation leader has taught me a lot about valuing others," he says. "I also take the opportunity to talk to them about finding balance, especially if they are student-athletes."

Kenji's advice to new students is to put school first, don't procrastinate homework and to just "put your head down and do the work."

He is hoping his own hard work pays off on the basketball court as well as the classroom.

"My dream is to play professional basketball overseas, maybe in Europe or Japan," he says. "If that is not in my picture, I can see myself as a high school teacher. Right now I am seeking a degree in secondary education, and I would enjoy teaching history."

Kenji experienced a successful freshman season as a guard for the Cougars, playing in 30 games and finishing with 187 points (averaging 6.2 per game). His season highlights included scoring 20 points against Upper Iowa and hitting 10-for-10 from the free throw line against Minnesota State.

Whether Kenji's path leads him to a professional basketball career, the front of a classroom or something unexpected, he knows it's part of God's plan for him.

"God led me to USF. We will just see where He takes me from here." ■





# PREACHING AND TEACHING

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT FEATURING

## DR. JOHN HIIGEL

For theology professor Dr. John Hiigel, the third time was the charm.

Prior to his 26 years at USF, Dr. Hiigel enjoyed a rewarding career as a professional musician, performing for over a decade as a trombonist and singer. That opened doors as a church musician, and he felt called to a career in ministry. He received his Master of Divinity degree and served as a pastoral minister in Southern California for 23 years.

Then God led him to USF.

"I was having success as a pastor but was becoming exhausted," he says. "While cleaning I came across two articles that caught my attention. One was about earning a doctorate degree to become a theology teacher. The other was about American Baptist colleges and had the words 'Your Future' at the top. I was intrigued and started praying."

When he talked with his wife, she affirmed the idea of teaching the Bible in the world of higher education.

"There were only a handful of Christian universities on my radar," he remembers. "One of them was USF, and they happened to have an opening for a Bible professor. I interviewed and was thrilled when they invited me to join the faculty."

Two and a half decades later, Dr. Hiigel is preparing for retirement. While he admits

leaving USF will be hard, he is looking forward to "preaching, teaching and writing." He also hopes to get reacquainted with music.

As he looks back at his time at USF, he is grateful to be at a place that puts Jesus at the heart of its mission. He admits he has a soft spot for freshmen and a special devotion to teaching Intro to Bible.

"Getting on track with the Lord my first year of college was so important to me," he explains. "I try to connect with our first-year students about the Lord Jesus right away by telling stories of my own life and how real and good He has been for me."

Over the course of his time at USF, Dr. Hiigel led five trips to Israel and wrote two books, *Partnering with the King* and *The Good Wine: Experiencing Jesus' New Life*.

In addition to helping students, Dr. Hiigel hopes he made a positive contribution to his colleagues and the school he loves.

"I strive to help USF stay focused on our mission," he says. "I have seen Christian colleges lose their way, but I am convinced God continues to do good work here. We have such a fine, devoted faculty, and it's exciting to see student enrollment at an all-time high this year." ■

# Helping Students Succeed

THOMAS KILIAN ACADEMIC  
SUCCESS CENTER IS A VALUABLE  
PART OF THE USF EXPERIENCE

**Challenging classes. A personal crisis. Financial stress.  
Poor time management.**

These are just a few of the reasons students reach out to the Thomas Kilian Academic Success Center (ASC) during their time at USF. The staff at the ASC is trained to listen to, assist and guide students through college and beyond with free resources ranging from academic coaching and tutoring to career services.

“Our first priority is to make sure students feel heard,” says Nicole Dulaney, director of the Academic Success Center. “Students are dealing with a lot of issues, and some of them can be very difficult. We do our best to answer questions, connect them to resources and develop an action plan.”

Connecting with students happens before classes even start. The staff at the ASC is integrated into accepted student day and new student registration, and Student Life includes them in orientation. All freshmen are required to take SDV 100, a first-year experience class that helps them understand how to utilize all the free services available to them.





ACADEMIC SUCCESS  
CENTER SERVICES  
INCLUDE:

- *Academic Coaching*
- *Navigate Student Mobile App*
- *Counseling Services*
- *Learning Accessibility Services*
- *Math Placement Exam*
- *SDV 100*
- *Tutoring*
- *Writing Center*

“WE’RE HERE TO MAKE SURE  
ALL STUDENTS HAVE THE  
TOOLS, ACCOMMODATIONS  
AND SUPPORT SERVICES  
NECESSARY TO HELP THEM  
FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE  
ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE  
AND GET THE MOST OUT  
OF THEIR EDUCATION.”

Dr. Brett Bradfield, president of USF, brought the Academic Success Center to campus in 2008 with a vision of offering free support services to students. Since then, the ASC has evolved to meet the changing needs of today’s students and alumni—including a name change in 2018 to honor Thomas Kilian and his vision for academic

success at the former Kilian Community College in Sioux Falls.

“So many services have been added. This year we are collaborating with faculty to offer professional first-year advising to all freshmen through the Academic Success Center. We have the

Navigate Student mobile app to help students stay organized through their smart phones. USF also partners with Avera Health to offer free counseling services through the Avera Student Assistance Program,” says Dulaney.

She goes on to explain that professional counseling through Avera is “one of the most important initiatives USF has ever done.” The free service gives students access to a variety of counselors for up to eight sessions per issue, per semester. USF’s Early Alert program is one way the University strives to identify students of concern.

“If a professor notices a sudden drop in grades or attendance, they can flag that student through our private early alert system and our office will reach out to see how we can help.”

The Academic Success Center has valuable relationships with businesses, alumni and community development organizations.

“Career services is a big part of what we do,” explains Dulaney. “Helping students find jobs and internships is important. We try to connect students through career fairs and job postings, and we have built relationships with industry leaders who offer internships, mentoring and professional insight to USF students.”

A recent survey revealed that 99% of graduates were either employed or continued on to graduate or professional school within six months of graduation.

Additionally, career services and assistance are available to alumni for life to help with career changes, resume updates and more.

“The ASC has helped in many different ways in order for me to be successful,” says Domenica Solano Ocampo, a senior double majoring in exercise science and psychology. “From editing, reviewing and approving my resume, writing cover letters, giving me tips for meetings with potential supervisors and much more. Career services, through the ASC, has encouraged me to become an independent and confident student. I am very thankful for all the support, and I am excited for what the future holds!”

According to Dulaney, no two days at the ASC are ever the same. Services like academic coaching and academic advising are very individualized because students are so different and have so many unique needs.







// **ABOVE** Back row (L to R): Michelle DeHoogh-Kliwer, university counselor; Sarah Lems, academic success advisor  
Front row (L to R): Jessica Carlson, assistant director of Thomas Kilian Academic Success Center; Crystal Carlson-Pennington, academic advisor; Nicole Dulaney, director of Thomas Kilian Academic Success Center

"There is not enough time in the day," she says. "I started in 2015 and it just feels like students today have so many more responsibilities and obligations. Stress levels are higher, and life is just more overwhelming for college students. Many students are not prepared for the transition and that's where we can help."

Tutoring is another valuable service provided through the Academic Success Center. Each year, over 3,500 hours of free tutoring are provided to USF students in subjects like math, physics and computer science. Tutors are paid positions on campus and are provided by well-qualified students majoring in relevant subjects.

"I have used USF's free tutoring for various subjects, including chemistry and pathophysiology," says Isabella Barker, a sophomore pre-nursing major. "I attended tutoring to get assistance with questions on my homework and to better prepare for upcoming exams. Through utilizing tutoring, I not only improved my academic performance, but I also made valuable connections with other students in my classes and within my major."

Tutoring has played an important role in my academic success at USF."

The Writing Center is also available to help students develop as writers and benefit from the training and assistance of the highly qualified English majors that are paid to assist at the center.

Learning accessibilities services is another significant part of the ASC. USF is dedicated to serving a diverse student population, collaborating with students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members to create usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable learning environments.

"We're here to make sure all students have the tools, accommodations and support services necessary to help them fully participate in the academic experience and get the most out of their education," says Dulaney. "They can just make an appointment at our office or even just walk in, and we will see what we can do. They need to know they are never alone—we are here, and we can help." ■







# REAL-WORLD RESILIENCE

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT FEATURING

## OLIVIA SHEETS

"Life may have dealt me cards from the bottom of the deck, but my experiences helped propel me forward," explains Olivia Sheets. "My parents are both addicts, and I knew my only way out was through education. I work hard in the classroom and do my best to help others along the way."

Olivia will graduate from USF in May 2024 with degrees in psychology and biology. She plans to pursue her master's degree in clinical mental health with dreams of attending graduate school in Wisconsin, where she spent summers as a child.

An academic standout, Oliva was recently selected to receive the prestigious Horatio Alger Scholarship. The scholarship seeks students who have exhibited determination, integrity and perseverance in overcoming adversity, as well as demonstrating critical financial need.

"My USF advisor recommended I apply for the scholarship," she explains. "I can't say enough about the program. The Horatio Alger Association is beyond anything I expected, offering free counseling, ongoing support and assistance in applying to grad school. Financial assistance is just part of what they do. I don't think people realize the value of this opportunity, but I talk about it every chance I get!"

During her time at USF, Olivia has been part of the Honors Program and works in the

Admissions Office providing campus tours to prospective students.

"I am very passionate about USF and enjoy sharing my perspective with incoming students," she says. "I think of USF as home. The Culture for Service motto is felt everywhere on this campus and people are so helpful, friendly and kind."

Olivia also participates in valuable research opportunities through BRIN research on campus, the USF Undergrad Research Symposium and the Biennial IDeA Symposium of Biomedical Research Excellence.

"Research has taught me to think on my feet, to work as a team and to understand the processes and standards required when working through an experiment. I have the confidence to take on grad school because I know USF has prepared me well," she says.

This confidence is apparent when hearing Olivia talk about her future goals and plans as a mental health counselor.

"I want to dedicate my life to the art of helping people feel seen and loved," she says. "I want to create a safe space for them to feel comfortable so they can find their inner strength. The tough lessons I have learned in my own life provide me with a better perspective and the ability to have true compassion for others. This is how I know USF is where I'm meant to be." ■



# CROSS-COUNTRY CONNECTIONS

A L U M N I   S P O T L I G H T   F E A T U R I N G

## D A N   B E A M A N   ' 8 0

Dan Beaman left San Francisco in June of 2023 and began a trek across America on his Surly LHT touring bike, pulling a trailer he named Beast. He embarked on his journey alone without any assistance.

His daily plans were loose and changed according to the weather and the terrain. Over the course of four months and approximately 5,000 miles, Beaman rode through cold rain, stifling heat, blowing winds, rugged mountain passes, rolling plains and crazy city traffic. He ended his adventure in Washington, D.C. on September 17.

The big question: why?

"I joke that I was on a quest for the best cookie in America. In all honesty, I got into cycling about 30 years ago and read an article about cross-country biking. It became a bucket list item for me," he says.

Experiencing spectacular scenery and meeting new people were highlights of Beaman's journey. Along the way, he found a scattered network of old friends and former Sioux Falls College classmates, many of whom provided him with a warm bed, a homemade meal and a hot shower. Prior to his trip, he posted on the USF alumni Facebook group about his plans and several people reached out with invitations for food and lodging.

"Some of the alumni I stayed with were old friends, and some were people I didn't know very well, but we had our alma mater in common," he says. "I met some of them for the first time on this trip, all good people and very welcoming."

When he reached Sioux Falls on August 16, his wife, Penny (Atkins) '80, met him to celebrate their 44th wedding anniversary. They caught up with several college friends and enjoyed a small reception hosted by USF. He says the visit left him feeling "like I could conquer the world." Or at least another couple thousand miles.

Beaman says the human connections often kept him going when he hit a low point on his trip. Strangers were happy to supply him with cold water, free food, companionship around the campfire and advice about the road ahead.

As he reflects on his once-in-a-lifetime journey, there are no regrets.

"I didn't consider myself an adventurer before this trip, but I do now," he says. "I have traveled the country by bike and now I want to do it again with my wife—this time by motorcycle. I can't wait to share it with her."

And so the quest for the ultimate cookie continues... ■





# MAKING HER MARK

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT FEATURING

## C E C A C O O P E R

This fall, the art program at USF exploded to an all-time high of 51 students.

The program has been steadily growing over the past few years thanks in part to the dedicated efforts of Ceca Cooper, associate professor of art. Cooper has been a valuable part of the USF faculty for two decades and is instrumental in creating an art program that's appealing, relevant and prepared for the future.

In 2019, she helped bring a full-time graphic design professor to campus, allowing USF students to earn an Associate of Arts in Graphic Design degree. She also initiated the pre-architecture and pre-art therapy programs, opening new opportunities for students seeking pre-professional degrees.

"Art is always changing," she explains. "My goal is to make sure USF has the strongest art curriculum possible."

Cooper's strengths are drawing and painting, and her love of the liberal arts campus shines through in everything she does. She team teaches LAR 212: Honors Humanities with Dr. Jenny Bangsund, a course they began over 10 years ago, and it has become one of her favorite courses to teach.

"This is who I am. I love my job, but I also love travel and exploring other cultures," she

explains. "I have organized trips abroad with students for years, and it blows me away how profoundly these trips change lives."

Groups of USF students, faculty and alumni often travel to Western Europe with the art and media departments. Cooper feels the history, culture and art of places like Berlin, London and Paris are especially important. This past January, she led a trip to Japan. In May of 2025, she plans to take students to Sicily and Greece.

In addition to bringing new programs and people to campus, Cooper was also the force behind the USF SculptureWalk.

"The SculptureWalk is a plus for the University and the city, and it's something that makes USF unique," she says.

Cooper's artwork can be viewed all over the city, as she has been commissioned to create pieces for organizations like Sanford Health, Raven Industries and Sioux Falls Regional Airport.

Cooper says USF is like a big family, where everyone looks out for one another. To her, the campus is home. While she is not yet ready to leave teaching for retirement, she is looking forward to days filled with travel, gardening and painting when she does.

"It's been a wonderful career so far. I am grateful every day that I get to do what I do." ■



// **CLOCKWISE (L TO R):** 1) Beau Klingensmith;  
2) Paul Garcia; 3) Rei Ogden; 4) Daevon Vereen;  
5) McKenna Hendrickson; 6) Zoe Adam

# USF ADDS WRESTLING TO THE ROSTER

A R E A   W R E S T L I N G   F A N S   H A V E  
A   R E A S O N   T O   C H E E R

USF announced the return of men's wrestling and the debut of women's wrestling to the sports program in 2022 and both teams begin competition this fall. Head coaches were recruited last fall and have been busy scouting, recruiting and building their programs. Each one brings high-caliber experience and personal character to campus and are fantastic additions to the USF coaching staff. Get to know **Toby Bryant** and **Matt Meuleners**, and make sure to catch your USF Wrestling Teams in action this season!



2023/24  
USF  
WOMEN'S  
WRESTLING  
TEAM



## TOBY BRYANT

As USF's first-ever head women's wrestling coach, Coach Bryant brings a solid resume of experience on and off the mat:

- Wrestled at SDSU from 1997-2000 and lettered all three years
- Grad assistant for Northern State wrestling program 2003
- Head coach for Aberdeen Central High School wrestling program 2003-2010
- Region 3A Wrestling Coach of the Year 2009, 2010
- Owner and director of Metro Wrestling Academy since 2015

Here are a few questions we asked Coach Bryant:

### Why did you want to pursue a coaching career at USF?

As someone who has a passion for the sport, I had been talking with USF over the last three years about the popularity of wrestling and the fact that USF didn't have a team. I mentioned how cool it would be to have the first collegiate women's wrestling program in the state. Last August, they let me know they were serious about bringing the program to USF and asked me to apply for the head coach position.

### How did you recruit your first class of wrestlers?

I had the luxury of technology, and I was up late doing my research. I didn't look at anyone with less than a 3.5 GPA. I figure they need to be champions in the classroom to be

champions on the mat. I ended up filling every weight class and have 14 student-athletes on our roster including eight state champions, with wrestlers representing eight different states.

### Why is women's wrestling a good fit for you as a coach?

For starters, I have four daughters. I know women communicate differently than men and I feel I have experience in that area. I also have a heart for wrestling and it's exciting to be on the forefront of a sport that is already blowing up, with huge promise for the future.

### What can your student-athletes expect from you as a coach/mentor?

My goal was to recruit high character student-athletes and I believe we have them. The most important thing now is to build our wrestling family. We are Cougars and no one is in this alone. As a coach, I expect the team to be committed to each other and themselves, to do well in class, to be leaders and to have accountability. We also have a talented full-time assistant coach, Griffen Osing, who brings a lot of influence to the team.

### How is this first season going to look?

We're going to have some challenges and we're going to have some success, but I feel good about the team we have in place. I think the most important thing is to have support from the Cougar community. Come out to these home events, cheer loud and stand behind these ladies! ■



## 2023/24 USF MEN'S WRESTLING TEAM



### MATT MEULENERS

Coach Meuleners will lead as USF's first head men's wrestling coach in the DII era. His depth of experience is impressive at any level:

- *Wrestled four years at Northern State University in Aberdeen, earning NCAA DII Championships in 2011 and 2012*
- *2012 NSIC Wrestler of the Year*
- *Four-time NCAA All-American*
- *Qualified for US World Team Trials in 2013 and 2014 and US Olympic Trials in 2016*
- *Named US Open Freestyle All-American in 2013, 2014 and 2015*
- *Head assistant coach at California State University, Bakersfield*
- *Head assistant coach at Brown University*
- *Head assistant coach at University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

Here are a few questions we asked Coach Meuleners:

#### Why did you want to coach wrestling at USF?

USF is close to home and it's the right size campus in the right size city. The DII level is important to me. I like that we can openly talk about faith at USF. I also liked that my wife didn't have to sacrifice her career for my coaching career in Sioux Falls. It's good to be back in South Dakota.

#### How did you go about recruiting this class of wrestlers?

I felt there was enough solid talent within a four-hour radius of Sioux Falls, so I started there and expanded. I was looking for student-athletes who wanted to work hard and give their best effort with a great attitude. We have 22 men on the roster this year that fit that mold, with someone in every weight class.

#### What are your expectations for this first season?

I won't know where we truly sit until things get started but I know we have the talent it takes to be successful. We are going to be the youngest team in the conference this year, but our young program is only going to grow and get better. It's going to be exciting to see.

#### What can your team expect from you as a coach/mentor?

I'm fairly laid back and reasonable, focusing on the positives. I do tend to get a little intense during matches because I'm competitive, but so are the guys we recruited. Wrestlers will have individualized training every week. We're going to work hard, but we'll also have some fun along the way.

#### How has the USF experience been for you so far?

Everyone here is willing to help me out and make sure I get what I need to be successful. It feels really good here, I'm where I belong. ■



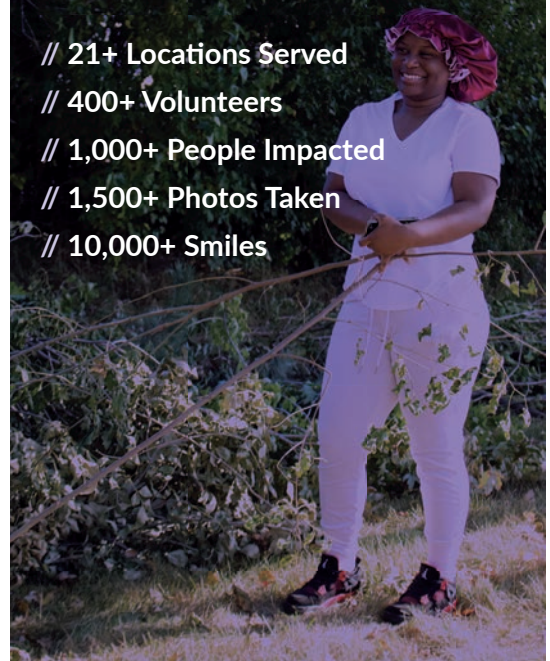
# Culture for Service Day

Faithful to USF's mission of serving God and humankind in the world, the University has a long-standing tradition of encouraging students to integrate service into their everyday lives. To exemplify this spirit of service, USF devotes one day during the academic year—dubbed 'Culture for Service Day'—to serving in the community.



## Culture For Service Day 2023 By The Numbers

- // 21+ Locations Served
- // 400+ Volunteers
- // 1,000+ People Impacted
- // 1,500+ Photos Taken
- // 10,000+ Smiles





# CLASS NOTES

All notes are based on information received between March 1 and September 30, 2023. Send us your update today at [usioxfalls.edu/keepintouch](http://usioxfalls.edu/keepintouch).

## // CELEBRATIONS

### Alumni

**Lenora Mae (Mullen) Mahan '42** celebrated her 100th birthday on Aug. 17, 2023.

**Janna (Thorson) '03** married Adam Hub on July 10, 2021.

**Rebecca (Berendsen) '06** married Andrew Failla on Oct. 2, 2021 and welcomed Violet on July 22, 2022.

**Ty Severson '08** and Tanya welcomed Edie Caroline on March 25, 2023.

**Kelsey (Tiede) '10** and **Joe Moen '10** welcomed George Louis on July 29, 2023.

**Taya '11** and **Alan Sazama '10** welcomed Jordy Scott on Sept. 18, 2023.

**Alex Bahney '12** and Jenna welcomed Jade on Dec. 18, 2022.

**Rashelle (Smith) '12** and Andrew Hoffman welcomed Rose Shirley on March 27, 2023.

**Kendra (Kooiker) '12** and Ross Leonhardt welcomed Nolan Alan on May 2, 2023.

**Hannah (Olsen) '13** and Kale Foster welcomed Izaak on April 30, 2023.

**Tori (Zalaznik) '13** and Adam Guerrero welcomed Charlie on Feb. 16, 2021, and Lucas on Aug. 7, 2023.

**Hillary McQuade '13** and Aaron Puckett welcomed Klark Harrison on March 11, 2023.

**Norma (Dalen) '14** married Robert Spanton on Sept. 29, 2018.

**Kelli (Hoff) '14** and Andrew Pillatzki welcomed Pierce Clarence on June 14, 2023.

**London (Avery) '14** and **Grant Schouten '13** welcomed Grayson Mark on May 16, 2023.

**Blake Stevenson '14** and Mackenzie welcomed Trey Josiah on May 27, 2023.

**Claire (Haubrich) '16** and **Eric Brothers '16** welcomed Thaddeus Donald on July 2, 2023.

**Rachel (Thornton) '16** and **Luke DeBoer '17** welcomed Rosemary Mae on Feb. 26, 2023.

**Tanner Mans '16** and Katie welcomed Theodore Harvey on June 22, 2023.

**Lisa (Stahl) '16** married Joe Gossett on March 25, 2023.

**Grace (Bootsma) '17** and **Alex Collins '17** welcomed Eliza Jo on May 8, 2023.

**Devon Comp '18** and Lexi welcomed Everhett James on Feb. 26, 2023.

**Haley (Boyer) '18** married Patrick Gillespie on June 10, 2023.

**Brynn (Flakus) '18** married Russell Johnson on May 6, 2022.

**Amy (Hanson) '18** married Joshua Wolf on May 20, 2023.

**Addie (Oliver) '18** and Caleb Havekost welcomed Katherine Joy on March 24, 2023.

**Haley (Gurtler) '19** married Josh Jager on April 23, 2023.

**Kendra (Doerr) '19** and Trevor Paulsen welcomed Eden Faith on Feb. 6, 2023.

**Luke Rysavy '19** married Abby Bushar on Oct. 29, 2022.

**Clara (Koerner) '20** and **Billy Beseman '18** welcomed Bella Grace on March 7, 2023.

**Charlotte (Lena) '20** and **Ben Heckmann '20** welcomed Levi Charles on March 30, 2023.

**Chloe (Jefferies) '20** married Nolan Kern '20 on Aug. 27, 2023.

**Haley (Seeba) '20** married Grayden Thompson on May 12, 2023.

**Kira Ireta-Ramirez '21** and Luis Ireta welcomed Dante James on June 3, 2023.

**Stephanie (Rosburg) '21** married Mike Meinders on June 16, 2023.

**Grace (Trautman) '21** married **Dayne Versteeg '20** on April 29, 2023.

**Hannah (Reynolds) '23** married Logan Erickson on July 30, 2022, and welcomed Sailer Sandie-Joy on July 25, 2023.

## // IN MEMORIAM

### Alumni

**Ruth (Pendleton) Perdue '48**, March 13, 2023, Vero Beach, FL

**Donna (Boese) Anderson '50**, April 2, 2023, Sartell, MN

**Harold Sampson '50**, March 6, 2023, Warrensburg, MO

**Marian (Peterson) Sullivan '50**, May 24, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Willis Potratz '51**, May 5, 2023, Bismarck, ND

**Les Hash '53**, Dec. 8, 2022, Houston, TX

**Gladyth Hochstetter '60**, June 3, 2023, Colorado Springs, CO

**Tom Jeschke '64**, March 20, 2023, Panora, IA

**Eric Eicher '66**, July 6, 2023, Leawood, KS

**Dianna (Knoepfle) Johnson '66**, March 6, 2023, Shoreview, MN

**Margaret Larson '66**, June 21, 2023, Slayton, MN

**Ted Lawrence '66**, March 2, 2023, O Fallon, IL

**Diane (Kindler) Eggebraaten '67**, June 6, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Willis Dreesman '69**, June 7, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Ronald Rauk '69**, March 10, 2023, Beaver Creek, MN

**David Biever '70**, July 14, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Ellen (Ratzlaff) Pudwill '72**, April 17, 2023, Springfield, SD

**Lynn (Pier) Thomas '75**, April 13, 2023, Rapid City, SD

**Sandra (Jarchow) Lange '77**, April 1, 2023, Sharon Springs, NY

**Doug Barber '78**, July 8, 2023, Blair, NE

**Marlys (Jongeling) Bergjord '78**, March 29, 2023, Tea, SD

**Donna (Watne) Webster '80**, May 30, 2023, Brandon, SD

**Jay Bentz '82**, March 7, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Timothy Fox '84**, Aug. 11, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Mary Kruse '87**, July 26, 2023, Inwood, IA

**Julie Schmidt '87**, July 29, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Tanya Vollan '94**, July 4, 2023, Garretson, SD

**Sandra Ahrendt '95**, March 29, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Ryan Reitzel '95**, May 27, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Lindsey (Grevengoed) Van Roekel '00**, June 24, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Andrew Christensen '12**, June 11, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

### Friends

**Bert Budd**, May 1, 2023, Cheyenne, WY

**Jim Collier**, Aug. 24, 2023, Medford, OR

**Cara Lee Davis**, May 8, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Pearl DeKramer**, July 28, 2023, Yankton, SD

**Lois Merritt**, July 27, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

**Amy Morrison**, Aug. 5, 2023, Sioux Falls, SD

# COUGAR FAMILY MEMORIES



The USF family celebrated tradition and long-standing relationships at this year's Cougar Days, September 29 – October 1. Each year alumni return and reunite with friends and old classmates, and parents join their students to celebrate homecoming with special family weekend events.

## 1 CLASS REUNION LUNCH

Alumni from the classes ending in '3' reunited and shared laughs over wonderful memories made during their time at "the COO."



## 2 FAMILY WEEKEND

Families spent quality time with their USF students in a full weekend packed with activities including a talent show, fall festival, cornhole tournament and much more.



## 3 TAILGATE FAMILY CARNIVAL AND FOOTBALL

Cougar fans gathered before the football game to enjoy good food, inflatables and lawn games.



## 5 COUGAR ROYALTY

**King:** Cooper Dixon  
**Queen:** Khot Juac



## 6 ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS & HALL OF FAME

USF family gathered for two events to celebrate the excellence and accomplishments of alumni and friends and to honor the newest inductees of the USF Athletic Hall of Fame.

*Save the date!*

**GIVE2COO**

USF'S GIVING DAYS MARCH 19-21



**SHOP IN-STORE OR ONLINE**

Not in Sioux Falls? You can get all your USF gear through Cougar Central's online store!



*Connect with us!*

— @usiouxfalls —



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