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Character and Place Conference

At our March interdisciplinary conference, *Character and Place: How We Shape Home and Home Shapes Us*, we hosted 74 attendees from 22 institutions, representing 26 different disciplines. A majority were from the Midwest and a significant number of UD faculty and staff participated, but it also included people from as far away as Florida, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and the Czech Republic.

McGraw-Hill Education and Kendall Hunt sponsored our meals, which proved to be important times of community building and networking. We were grateful for their support.

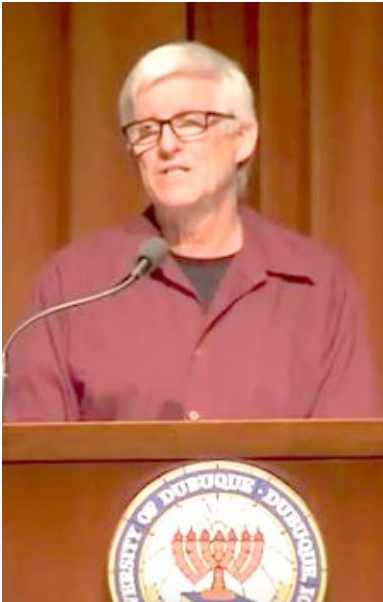
UD students also played a vital role in the conference, attending as registered participants, presenting poster sessions, and serving as session hosts—assisting with tech support and introducing each speaker.



New feature! When reading this issue online, click on the hotlinks to view Facebook posts we've shared with more details.

Character and Place

Interdisciplinary Character Conference



Dr. Brian J. Walsh served as scholar-in-residence and delivered the conference keynote, the Wendt Character Lecture. He critically examined the crisis of home and its impact on character, arguing that the normalization of moral bankruptcy and rampant “homelessness” of spirit have caused widespread de-formation of character in America. He called for healing and wholeness through homecoming to God, and rejection of our “domicidal” and consumerist way of life.

The conference ended with a closing conversation with Dr. Walsh, facilitated by Dr. Christine Darr, assistant professor of Christian Ethics at UD.

I think he really hit on something by suggesting that we are all, in one way or another, looking for a home. You don't need to be homeless per se to be longing for a home.

—Jillian Hunt
Wendt Character Scholar

The keynote speech was extremely provocative -- in the best sense of that term.

—Conference Attendee



A committed group of faculty and staff helped plan and run this conference. Many thanks to Christine Darr, Susan Forshey, Michelle Grace, Jeff Haverland, Adam Hoffman, Mary Anne Knepfel, Tracy Less, Neil MacNaughton, and Jenn Supple Bartels for all of their support!

Conference Programming



The Conference program included panel presentations, posters, and roundtables on a variety of issues related to character, place, and home.



The Wendt Research team presented their work on character and place. Their articles will appear in the Wendt Character Center journal's next issue, *Character and . . . Place* this fall.



Wendt Character Scholars were among 13 members of the UD Community who contributed personal photos and reflections on their own homes and character formation, which Professor Alan Garfield turned into an amazing [exhibit](#) for the Bisignano Gallery.



Wendt Character Scholars

Spring Banquet



Completing Wendt Character Scholars. Back row: Nathan Ross, [Trenton Grana-Curry](#), [Madeline Parker](#), [Jonathan Klaes](#), Jesus Rodriguez Jr., Logan Ellis, [Jessie Wehrle](#), [Trevor Oetting](#); middle row: Annber Breimon, [Elizabeth Swan](#), [Haley Shilts](#), [Trae Gesling Jr.](#), [Katrina Richardson](#), Kahla Rosenfeld, Janella Ceballos, [Katie Silberstein](#), [Claire Stoeffler](#), Cody Kramschuster; front row: [Breann Tjaarda](#), [Megan Ranney](#), [Tyana Mumm](#), [Stacia Burke](#), Abigail Willis; Not pictured: Allison Mitchell.

Banquet Speaker Anna Stoeffler

Referring to her sister as her “role model,” senior scholar Claire Stoeffler ably introduced our banquet speaker, alumna [Anna Stoeffler](#) (WCS 2010-13). Anna Stoeffler spoke to the Wendt Character Scholars about the value of vocation, emphasizing the importance of surrounding yourself with people who challenge you to use your abilities to the benefit of the world. She encouraged everyone to remember and express gratitude to those who have supported them.

My time in Wendt taught me that you can find examples within this program of your peers and mentors living out their own vocation.

—Anna Stoeffler
Wendt Character Scholar 2010-2013

Dr. Kathleen Saleh, Wendt Mentor

[Dr. Kathleen Saleh](#) completed her three-year Wendt mentorship this spring. Over the years Dr. Saleh has been a faithful and compassionate example for all, guiding many Wendt Character Scholars as they engage with character and reflect on what it means to live a life of purpose.

As Dr. Saleh leaves her mentorship of Wendt Character Scholars, she steps into a new role with the Wendt Character Initiative as a member of the Wendt Advisory Board. She is a welcome voice to help us forge the way ahead in the years to come.





Dr. Adam Smith's group



Traditional recitation of the Wendt Scholar pledge



Dr. Josh Thomas's group



Dr. Jonathan Barz's group



Dr. Beth McCaw's group



Dr. Kathleen Saleh's group

Senior Reflections

The Wendt program has allowed me to step out of my comfort zone, build friendships, and learn and discuss various topics that are relevant in today's society. It has also helped me to get out into the community, serve those around me.

—Stacia Burke
Wendt Character Scholar 2015-2018



Wendt has had a profound impact on my life. It has helped me to know what it means to live a just and compassionate life.

—Jonathan Klaes
Wendt Character Scholar 2015-2018



I will leave the Wendt program having a better idea of what I believe in and knowing I can impact others in a positive way.

—Tyana Mumm
Wendt Character Scholar 2015-2018



Wendt Character Scholars

Curriculum

“Justice in Place,” our theme for the year, allowed us to explore our own practices of justice and Christian love. The spring semester we considered justice in relationships, marriage commitments, justice in the arts through a play, U.S. historical practices that led to the wealth gap, issues of justice in water and food access, racism at UD, and Drug Court as Restorative justice.



Wendt Scholars participated in a service project in collaboration with Live Like Jack and Resources Unite!



Dr. Christine Darr framed the semester with a talk on justice and character.



Mr. B.J. and Ms. Sheila Weber spoke about character in marriage.



Dr. Brian Hallstoos charted the history of his family in America and the impact of White Supremacy and White Privilege through the generations.



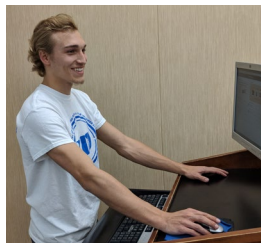
Deacon Bill Hickson talked to scholars about Drug Court and advocated for restorative justice.



Mr. Taj Suleyman shared the activities of the City of Dubuque's Human Rights Department, encouraging scholars to be involved in their communities.



Five Wendt Scholars served on a panel discussing their experiences with racism throughout their lives and at UD.



Scholars enjoyed preparing a review of the year for each other.



Scholar of the Year, Trevor Oetting

Wendt Character Scholars are required to attend the weekly meetings outlined above as well as complete assignments to prepare for and respond to each meeting, which is designed to help them process and reflect on the information presented. Seminary student and first-year scholar [Trevor Oetting](#) has an outstanding record of attendance, as well as timely completion of assignments and service hours this year (no absences, no late assignments!). Congratulations, Trevor, and thank you for your good work!

[Scholar of the Year](#) [Honorable Mention:](#)

*Jacob Day
Hope Enck
Olivia Walter
Jessie Wehrle*

Service



Wendt Character Scholars commit to 15 hours of community service each semester. This year scholars served a variety of audiences and organizations, including:

- United Methodist Church Disaster Ministries
- Dubuque Humane Society
- Dubuque Rescue Mission
- Veterans' Freedom Center
- Discovery Shop
- Dubuque Community School District
- Dubuque Fighting Saints
- La Ceiba Bilingual School
- Bethany Home
- Dream Center
- 9 Ladies Dancing
- Girl Scouts



Group Service Work

A special thank you to Logan Ellis, who arranged numerous group service projects for Wendt Character Scholars as part of his graduate assistantship practicum this year.



Wendt Character Scholars have performed 2606 hours of service (and counting) this year!

Community Service Award, Samuel Wu

First-year scholar [Samuel \(En-Yu\) Wu](#) has amazed us with his commitment to community service. This year he has logged over 140 volunteer hours! In addition to participating in numerous one-time service projects, Samuel serves as a youth leader at Westminster Presbyterian, where his energy, creativity, and sense of humor are sure to be great assets as he lives out his vocation, following the call to serve.



If it wasn't for all those passionate college students, experienced youth leaders, supportive church congregation, awesome church friends, and my caring parents in my own life, I would not be able to be who I am right now, and I am truly grateful that God put all these amazing people in my life. I will say thank you by paying it forward in terms of serving others in any way to help others in their journey of faith in the future!

—Samuel Wu
Wendt Character Scholar

Community Service Honorable Mention:

- Tyana Mumm
- Keith Pitts
- Claire Stoeffler
- Breann Tjaarda
- Olivia Walter

Character on Campus

Wendt Tea

We came together for the annual Wendt Tea to celebrate the overt character work of faculty through speakers, events, and field trips. This year the advisory board awarded 19 grants to support faculty in their endeavors in character. Faculty, staff, and students demonstrated how the experiences furthered reflection on and understanding of character, and assessed the projects.

2017-18 Wendt Faculty Grants:

- Cultural Experience and Character-Building Opportunities (Angela Brandel)
- *Black Panther* and Integrity (Franklin Yartey)
- Screen Lending and Fearless Integrity at NCA 103rd Annual Convention (Franklin Yartey)
- Immigration Simulation (Christine Darr)
- Iowa Women Lead Change Conference (Liza Johnson)
- Design Ethics Talk at Oxford Symposium (Alan Garfield)
- Illegal Immigration—Challenges and Solutions (Jeanine Pitas)
- Chicago Trip Commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Brian Hallstoos)
- Cuba and Service Learning (Kim Hilby and Ken Godwin)
- Culture of Respect Service-Learning in Belize (Amy Baus)
- DAYLC Character and Leadership Workshop (Amy Baus and Anne Funke)
- Authentic Service Learning at Fort Berthold (Angela Brandel)
- Aldo Leopold Land Ethic Conference (Jessica Schreyer)
- New York Insiders and Outsiders: Who Belongs? (Mary Anne Knefel and Jonathan Barz)
- American Counseling Association's 66th Annual Conference (Tabitha Bartelme)
- IKEA People and Planet Positive Workshop (Adam Hoffman)
- More than a Shack: Aldo Leopold and the Intersection of Character and Place (Jessica Schreyer and Adam Hoffman)
- Enhancing Student Advising with an Emphasis on Character Development (Anne Funke)
- Iowa History: Inclusive Perspectives (Angela Brandel and Brian Hallstoos)



Mary Anne Knefel Retiring

Wendt Advisory Board Member Mary Anne Knefel retires from her position as UD's director of the library at the end of May. We are grateful for her wisdom, insight, and deep concern for the well-being of UD students.



Character and . . . journal

The stats on downloads and views of our [journal](#) online continue to amaze us. Between June 2017 and March 2018, people in multiple cities within 73 distinct countries and 50 U.S. states/territories accessed the journal.



Wendt Character Athletes of the Year

Congratulations to Tyler Lewan and Abbey Meyer, [Wendt Character Athletes of the Year!](#)



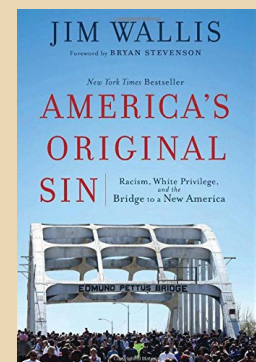
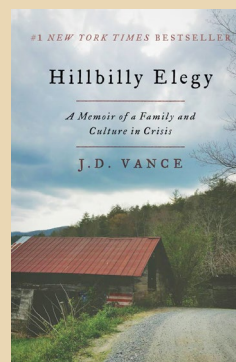
Congratulations to Character Athlete Award recipients for each sport as well!

Book Discussions

Book discussion groups for faculty and staff continue to grow our academic inquiry and build community connections.

This spring we discussed *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance and *America's Original Sin* by Jim Wallis.

Over the course of both fall and spring semesters, we had 104 participations with 23 first-timers.



Character off Campus

Wendt Character Scholar Alumni

Our alumni continue to delight us with news and updates. If you're reading this online, click on their names below for our Facebook posts detailing what they've been up to!



[Anna Yackshaw \(WCS 2013-16\)](#)



[Ashley Stackis \(2011-2014\)](#)



[Loren Shellabarger \(WCS 2010-12\)](#)



[Tyler Owen \(WCS 2007-10\)](#)



[Carter Albrecht \(WCS 2011-2014\)](#)



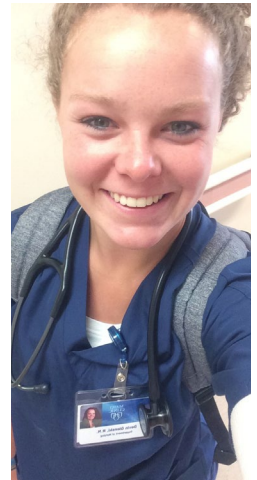
[Jacqueline Thompson \(WCS 2008-2011\)](#)



[Carol Sundberg \(WCS 2004-05\)](#)



[Sauna Schmitt \(WCS 2014-2015\)](#)



[Devin Glenski \(WCS 2013-2016\)](#)



[Joinel Vimael \(WCS 2004-05\)](#)



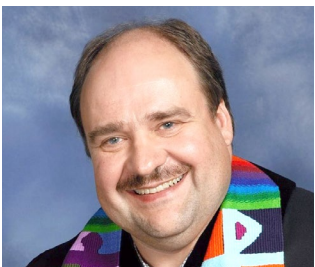
[Nicole Toro \(WCS 2015-16\)](#)



[Michael Salazar \(WCS 2013-2016\)](#)



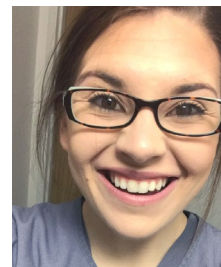
[Robyn Wittkopf \(WCS 2013-16\)](#)



[Paul Snyder \(WCS 2008-11\)](#)



[Sara Sutter \(WCS 2014-2016\)](#)



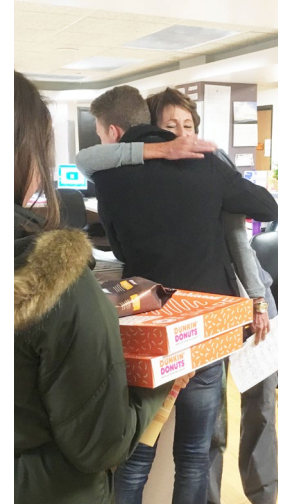
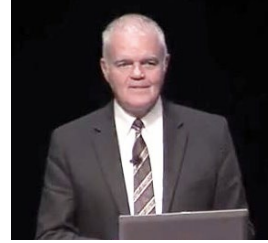
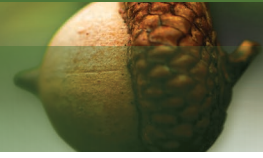
[Ashlyn Ptasinski \(WCS 2014-2016\)](#)



[Malcolm Stewart \(WCS 2011-12\)](#)

2017-18 Highlights

SPRING 2018



August 28: Kickoff Picnic

New Journal Issue Launch

Fall Book Groups: *Shaping Character*, *Business Ethics Field Guide*, and *Beyond Homelessness*

September 13: International Character Day



October 23: Fall Wendt Character Lecture, Bill O'Rourke

November 6-10: Gratitude Week

November 27: Wendt Christmas Banquet



January 29: Spring Kickoff

Spring Book Groups: *Hillbilly Elegy* and *America's Original Sin*

March 1-2: Wendt Conference and Spring Wendt Character Lecture, Brian J. Walsh

April 23: Wendt Tea

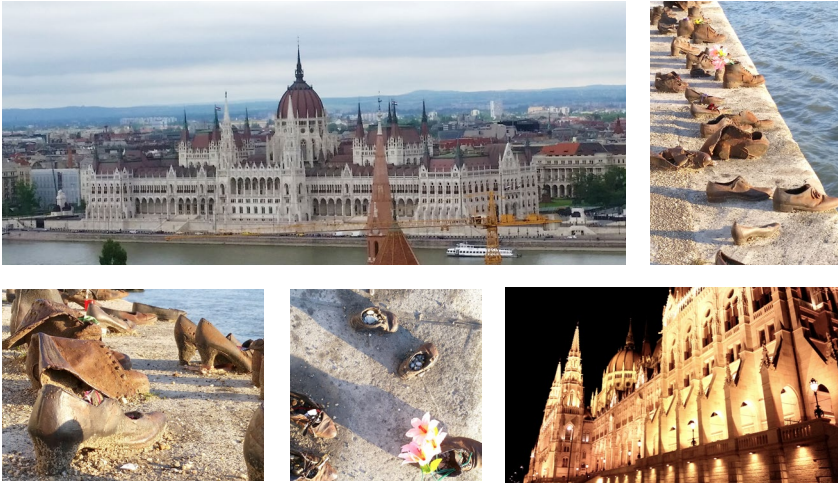
April 23: Scholars' Wrap-up and Review

April 30: Wendt Spring Banquet



A Note from the Director

Shoes and Stories



What is this place? What story is it telling? The **Shoes on the Danube Bank** in Budapest, Hungary, lies below Parliament, which houses the Ministry of Justice. This bronzed memorial honors the WWII Jews who were lined up, forced to remove their shoes, and then shot on the water's edge so that their bodies would float away.

What a sobering reminder that justice or injustice can be represented by a place. As the Wendt Character Scholars considered the role justice plays in being people of good character this year, we explored our theme, The Place of Justice, through many topics relating "to treating others fairly, respecting diversity, and practicing Christian love,"—our definition of character justice.

Two of the Character Scholars' spring sessions stand out to me and include one led by Dr. Brian Hallstoos. He took us on his personal journey through family history. This journey uncovered the ways his family benefitted from governmental programs that discriminated against non-whites, encouraging land ownership and housing purchases. It was eye-opening and painful for him and for us. The next week five of our Scholars led us in a panel discussion on racism as they've experienced it in their lives and here at UD, and they answered questions from other scholars. The power of speaking and listening to individual stories permeated the room and challenged us all to do more of that.

These stories are intricately intertwined with the places we've inhabited. UD has an institutional story made up of individuals' stories. Sometimes we're pillars of good character, and sometimes we're moral failures. That's the human condition. Our stories teach us through our failures about the need to hold justice and love together and remind us that hope, too, is a reality when we listen and learn.

—Annalee

*Pictures by A. Ward

WENDT CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION



Dr. Annalee Ward
Director



Mary Bryant
Administrative
Assistant



Cassandra Berger
Graduate Assistant



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