

Character Catches On

Concern for character development is catching on at more universities. While the Wendt Center has been working on character for 20 years, bigger universities are now catching the vision. Wake Forest University and Oxford University have joined together to do more intentional work through The Character Project, doing research, working to integrate character into their universities, and hosting conferences. Because of their high profile, they have attracted the attention of the Lilly Foundation. Wake Forest received a large grant that they will be distributing to other institutions to further work on character.



WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY



Recently, Wendt Advisory Board member Beth McCaw and Director Annalee Ward attended a conference at Wake Forest, deepening connections and sharing insights. Annalee Ward met with Wake Forest's character and athletics facilitator and connected her with Anne Funke to help us develop our approach to encouraging and empowering athletics to focus more deeply on character (see story on p. 7).

Through their research, Wake Forest and Oxford have identified best practices for character education. We were encouraged and affirmed to see those best practices reflected in much of the work we have already been doing.

It was enormously heartening to gather with scholars and higher education professionals from diverse circles around scholarship and practices representing a common hope and commitment of nurturing character in universities.

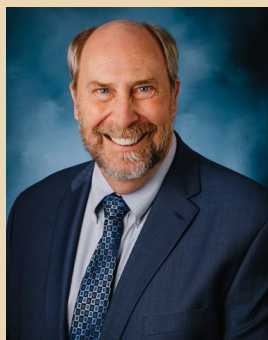
—Beth McCaw
Pastor to Students and Assoc. Prof. of Ministry
Wendt Advisory Board Member

Adam Hoffman and John Shook Receive Faculty Character Advancement Awards

We celebrated faculty character advancement nominees with posters of student comments, and Adam Smith spoke about his new resource for teaching good character. Faculty can access it on Moodle's UD Teaching Center.



Adam Hoffman



John Shook

Adam Hoffman "is always willing to be available to his students and is a constant uplifter in the science department. He takes time to get to know every student and talk to everyone he comes across," reported one student.

Another shared that John Shook is "one of the most passionate teachers, and made the class content exciting. His credibility and real life job experiences and stories added so much value, and made class something to look forward to."



Global Connections

Global connections enrich our perspectives and open our minds. With the World Wide Web, the *Character and . . .* journal reaches around the globe. Because of UD's hospitable encouragement, we attract students, faculty, and speakers from beyond the tri-states.

Wendt Scholar Miguel Vega noted that, as a Hispanic man, he has "different perspectives and outlooks that were hopefully able to open my peers to those different ideas."

Similarly, Scholar Sydney Killeen appreciated the variety of viewpoints she heard, saying "I tried to share my honest opinion during discussions so we could have a real conversation, and listened and understood other viewpoints even when I may not agree."

We love having scholars with diverse experiences and backgrounds. They bring their whole selves into the weekly discussions.

A Variety of Perspectives

- Chris Norton (advocate for people with disabilities)
- Photojournalist Joel Carillet reported to Wendt Character Scholars on his experiences in war-ravaged Ukraine
- *Warriors Don't Cry* (civil rights experience)
- *Wiesenthal* (Holocaust)



As a cross-cultural student at University of Dubuque, I take pride in engaging with a variety

of organizations and activities on campus to promote a deeper understanding of the unique student body we are gifted with.

—Vladimir Hudson

At UD I have built connections with different people across the world, which has given me a different outlook on life.



—Alex Arango



With the influence of the Filipino community and the knowledge I have gained from being surrounded

by multiple perspectives, I am able to look at experiences and problems within my life with more gratitude and understanding.

—Molly McMurrin

Character Journal Expands Global Reach

- After Annalee Ward shared the journal links at two conferences, readership jumped for online character journal articles
- Some universities have included articles from the Wendt journal, *Character and . . .*, in classroom assignments and sent feedback that students find it engaging
- A student from Santa Clara University interviewed Molly Hein about her article, "Social Influencers: FOMO and Identity Crisis," from the journal issue *Character and Crisis*
- The Dubuque Police Department invited Michelle Grace to visit with department leadership and present her article, "Character and Crisis: Toxic Workplaces and Culture Change," from the journal issue *Character and Crisis*
- *Character Explorations* podcast episodes continue to gain listeners (more new episodes are out this spring!)

The students read . . . the character journal and it spurred SUCH excellent discussion. A few of them have chosen one of the articles to use as a springboard for their midterm papers. It's an excellent resource.

—Dr. Stephanie Bennett
Palm Beach Atlantic
University

Character Lecture

SPRING 2023

“We’ve Been Sneaking Into Your Brains”

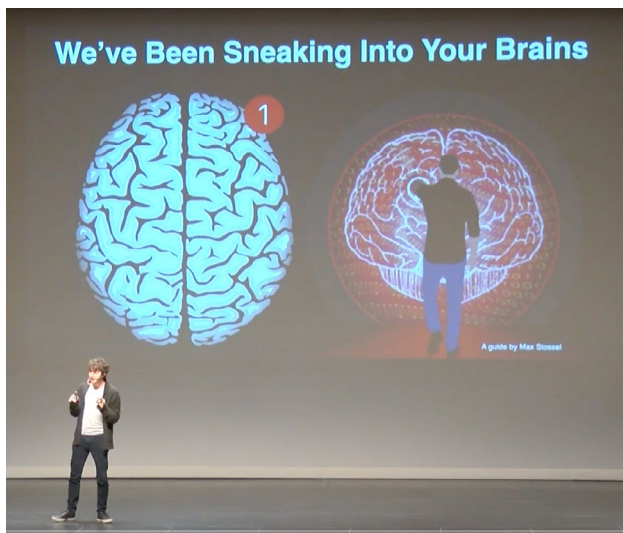


Max Stossel, the Spring 2023 Wendt Character Lecturer, engaged the audience with his insights on social media. In “We’ve Been Sneaking Into Your Brains,” Stossel helps us see the need to realign humanity with technology.

He asked us to consider, “Are you using technology or is technology using you?” When he questioned the audience about their use of apps such as SnapChat, it was apparent that many people keep streaks going even though they do not want to. This digitally driven compulsion prompts the question: “Are you using technology or is technology using you?”

Stossel suggested multiple ways to take back control of our relationship with technology but reminded us that it takes more than will power. He said that so much technology, especially social media, is designed to be a sophisticated slot machine. It's designed to be addictive.

During his time at UD, Stossel met with many students, faculty, and staff over lunch and coffee time. He answered questions and shared deep and thoughtful conversation.



Max Stossel, Michael Lester Wendt Character Lecturer



Max Stossel (right) at lunch with Wendt Character Scholars Brady Harnung, Matthew Wolverton, AC Hardin, and Heath Huschitt



Meet-and-greet with UD faculty and staff

By using technology to positively impact your life and the life of the people around you, you are promoting good character. By limiting yourself and motivating your friends to make better habits and decisions, you are promoting good character. You must put in what you wish to get out when it comes to character and technology.

—Vladimir Hudson

After Max's talk I deleted TikTok and Instagram. Those are the two social media apps of our world and I did not want to fall into the same trap I have been for years where these apps consume most of my free time.

—Madelyn Huschitt

Character in the Disciplines

Communication



The way that we communicate offline / online and represent others in our conversations, in our writing or in the work that we produce is a reflection of our character.

—Franklin Yartey
Communication Department Chair
Assoc. Prof. of Communication

Good character is essential in our communication with each other. The Communication Department at UD integrates the development of good character into its curriculum and learning outcomes, so that every communication department graduate will be able to apply excellent moral character and professional ethics to their discipline.

Intro to Mass Media brings out issues such as the toxic effects of some digital platforms and introduces ethical principles and

their application to Communication. “Bullying, misinformation, and toxicity sometimes seem to dominate social media and other digital technologies. Users increasingly question whether ethics or character are even applicable in those contexts,” says John Haman. “By gaining a sense of their own independence, students are empowered to pursue the development of character in a digital world.”

Multiple classes use case studies to work through ethical issues. Sue Ann Marino finds them “to be helpful in fostering brave discussions and expanding the realistic cultural empathy of students.” The Critical Digital & Social Media Class uses Stephen L. Carter’s treatment of integrity to analyze the integrity and character of online activists.

The Public Relations and Stakeholder Engagement courses examine corporate social responsibility (CSR). Michelle Grace notes that this new interest in CSR has arisen because “many businesses have changed their focus from Shareholders to Stakeholders. . . . Because of this shift we see more inclusive organizations as they focus on CSR.”

To cap off the experience, Senior Seminar students each interview a professional in their field using the framework of Howard Gardner’s elements of “good work”—being an excellent, engaged, and ethical contributor in their work. “Their subsequent discussions on what it means to have good character in their work life are always spirited and enlightening,” says Jenn Supple.

The good work of the Communication Department has prepared its graduates for both the practical skills and knowledge they’ll need as well as the moral and character questions they will face as they strive to pursue their vocations with purpose and excellence.



John Haman
Asst. Prof. of
Communication



Michelle Grace
Asst. Prof. of
Communication



Sue Ann Marino
Asst. Prof. of
Communication



Jenn Supple
Assoc. Prof. of
Communication

I believe good character helps in the communication field by establishing credibility, and making honest interpersonal connections.

Otis Patterson
Communication major, Wendt Character Scholar

In the Communication department at UD, the professors have helped us become not just better students, but better people. We learn about ourselves, as well as how our actions or voice can impact others for better or worse.

—Emma Powell
Communication major, Wendt Character Scholar

Character Sightings

SPRING 2023



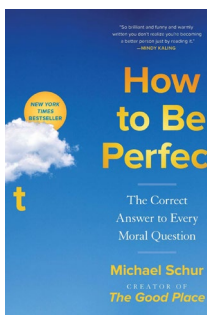
Congratulations to Mike Durnin on his retirement as Dean of Student Formation!

Dean Durnin's service to UD included many long hours and caring guidance of students and staff. He also served on the Wendt Advisory Board. We are grateful to him for his dedication and wish him continued joy as he turns his focus to time with his wife, Karen, and their family. He will also continue his work with the Chris Norton Foundation.



Two Wendt book discussion groups read *How to Be Perfect: The Correct Answer to Every Moral Question*, by Michael Schur. Participants enjoyed the humorous tone as they considered various philosophies proposed by great thinkers over the ages to help us as we seek to be good people, living the good life.

This year, 52 participated in one of the four groups (two groups met in the fall to discuss *Restless Devices* by Felicia Wu Song). Our hope is that community ties will grow across what might have been disciplinary or positional silos. Together we learn and grow as we consider character from a variety of perspectives.



Scholar Service Spotlight

“Volunteering creates a connection and a memory that will last forever. Being able to communicate, help, and be out of my comfort zone makes me feel like I am making an impact on their lives.”

EMILY GROSS

Served at Dubuque Mississippi River Museum, Dubuque Youth Soccer Complex, and Soccer Clinic in Costa Rica



“I gained a whole new perspective on how to be grateful, but also how to enjoy the little things in life.”

GARRETT JOHNSON

Served with the people from Cozy Corner and Hometown Elementary school.



“Volunteering was extremely special to me because it fit well with my major and allowed me to gain experience while benefiting the kids who chose to participate.”

KAITLYN POWELL

Served at Fast Kidz, UD Food Pantry, and Dubuque YMCA.



Athletics

Congratulations, Character Athletes!

Wendt Character Athletes of the Year



Lucas leads by example in everything he does and is a great leader on and off the field. His work ethic shows that it's possible to be successful on the field and in the classroom.

— Coach Lennon

Watching Grace be able to persevere through and overcome the struggles and obstacles she has encountered has been an absolute pleasure. Her teammates love her attitude.

—Coach Keener



Lucas Von Braun

Grace Lagerhausen

Every year, the Wendt Center asks UD coaches which athlete on their team best embodies the Wendt Character attributes of integrity, justice, and compassion. From these Wendt Character Athletes, UD Athletics staff select the Wendt Character Athletes of the Year. This year, Grace Lagerhausen and Lucas Von Braun earned that honored distinction. Below is a list of all of the Wendt Character Athletes on each of UD's sports teams. They received their awards at the Sparty Awards Ceremony on April 5th.

Wendt Character Athletes of Each Sport

- Edward Rosas, Baseball
- Dylan Anderson, Men's Basketball
- Makenzie Knapp, Women's Basketball
- Morgan McBride, Cheer & Stunt
- Joey Wohlers, Men's Cross Country
- Kate Pfaltzgraff, Women's Cross Country
- Colton Pedersen, Football
- Colin Schmit, Men's Golf
- Leah Balsbaugh, Women's Golf
- Logan Farley, Men's Lacrosse
- Lucas Von Braun, Men's Soccer
- Shaye Smith, Women's Soccer
- Grace Lagerhausen, Softball
- Ryan Kiddle, Men's Tennis
- Qi Zhang, Women's Tennis
- Noah Gabrys, Men's Indoor Track & Field
- Victoria Zoltowska, Women's Indoor Track & Field
- Garrett Byrd, Men's Outdoor Track & Field
- Alivia Auer, Women's Outdoor Track & Field
- Emma Fitzgibbons, Volleyball
- Tyler Thurston, Wrestling



Volleyball Athletes CARE

Ideally, athletics and good character go hand in hand. We talk about good sportsmanship, healthy conflict resolution, and striving to be excellent on and off the field.

This semester the Wendt Center engaged Anne Funke to develop and lead a pilot program with the volleyball team to support good character growth in their team experience. The goal is to develop a team that performs with CARE.

- **Compassion**
- **Accountability**
- **Respect**
- **Excellence**



Volleyball teammates talked about the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth in their own character as individuals and as a team.



This spring the team had three meetings. It is our hope that the “pilot program” will expand both in number of sessions in the fall as well as to other teams. Volleyball athletes responded positively, with one teammate exclaiming that she wished the hour-long sessions could go on much longer!

These qualities really encompass what we want to see in student athletes on our campus. They align well with UD's mission and with the Wendt Center's mission.

—Anne Funke
Adjunct Professor



Anne Funke, adjunct professor and April Elsbernd, volleyball coach

The last couple of years I've seen the need for some sort of training . . . to help our culture to be as strong as it possibly can.

—April Elsbernd
Volleyball Coach

Playing with Character

The Women's Soccer team received the Silver Award for the United Soccer Coaches' 2022 College Team Ethics and Sportsmanship. The Silver Award status recognizes the team for exhibiting fair play, sporting behavior, and adherence to the laws of the game.

Congratulations, Coach Berna and athletes! Keep up the excellent work in representing UD's culture of good character on and off the field.



Character Scholars

Gratitude Week

Scholars showed gratitude by delivering cards and goodies on-campus to Campus Security, Resident Life, the Bookstore, the Multicultural Center, Admissions, custodial staff and off-campus to local police and firefighters, Resources Unite, Open Closet, and the Humane Society.



Christmas Banquet

Everyone joined in celebration at the annual Christmas Banquet, where we shared a meal, sang carols, and enjoyed one another's company.



Spring Kick-off

Character Scholars learned from representatives of Resources Unite about the purpose of this wonderful organization—connecting volunteers to community members in need. After hearing about the tools Resource Unite offers, our Scholars assembled small goodie bags full of candy canes along with information for both volunteers and those in need to get into contact with Resources Unite. Then they hit the streets to leave the goodie bags on car windshields all around town.



After our Spring Kick-off service project, we heard from Josh Jasper, Director of Resources Unite, that a woman came in to his office after the candy cane dispersal. She shared that she had been in deep crisis, not knowing how she would get through the coming days, when she went out to her car and saw the bag on the dashboard, letting her know about Resource's Unite's services. "God answered my prayers," she said. Wendt Scholars shared a little time and effort, but the impact was dramatic.

Curriculum

Screening of *The Social Dilemma*

The Social Dilemma is a must watch, whether you are concerned about the power our devices have on us or not. It opened our eyes to the threat that our devices carry when used improperly.

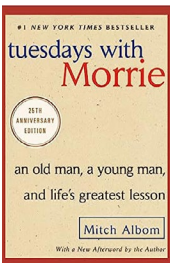
Warriors Don't Cry

Inspired by the similarly-titled memoir of Dr. Melba Patillo, a member of the Little Rock Nine, this one-women production takes us through her battle for equality and justice.



Discussion of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, *Warriors Don't Cry*, and *The Social Dilemma*

The Wendt scholars returned to their respective small groups led by Wendt mentors to reflect on previous weeks' programs as well as our annual winter break reading. This year we read *Tuesdays with Morrie*, discussing topics of religion, culture, relationships, and death.



Convergent Media and Integrity

Nathan Carpenter, Director of Convergent Media at Illinois State University, discussed with us how his students use media for good.



Well-being: Integrity of Stewarding Oneself

Natalie Weber spoke about mindsets and cognitive distortions that can work against well-being and provided tools for addressing harmful habits of mind.

Stewardship of Relationships

Christine Darr moderated a discussion among scholars about integrity, justice, and compassion in our relationships. Six scholars shared their own experiences.



Scholar panel on stewardship of relationships, facilitated by Christine Darr

Financial Stewardship and Stewardship \$5 Challenge

Molly Hein helped us consider how to align the ways we spend our resources with our values. To challenge ourselves in this pursuit, each Scholar received \$5 to spend with good financial stewardship in mind and reported back on how they had used the money to do some good.



Integrity for Life

Beth McCaw illustrated for scholars how being fully present for others is an essential part of good character.



Video Review

Scholars paired up to create videos reviewing what they learned this year as they studied *Living Integrity*. Their work was at times thoughtful, at times entertaining, and ever centered in exploring and living with integrity.



Celebrating Character

Completing Scholars



Completing Scholars and Mentor. First row: Logan Loitz, Katie Boyer (mentor), Riley Roman, Sammi Tolnai, Emily Gross, Ashley Viveros, Jenna Bidlingmaier, Sidney Killeen, Madelyn Huschitt; Second row: Abby Scroggs, Emma Powell, Sharon Moscoso, Aaliyah Cooper, Miguel Vega, Luke Weber, Otis Patterson, Caden Swoboda, Noah Forcier

Service Awards

Isaac Hays and Jenna Bidlingmaier each logged more than 100 hours of service this year! Over the summer, Isaac helped children with limb differences and returned to Europe to assist Ukrainian refugees. During the school year, he volunteered at churches and the Dream Center. Jenna helped out on campus (in the ASC, the science labs, and as a Spartan Start leader), as well as at the humane society. Six other scholars each completed 50 or more service hours as well.



Service Award Recipients: Isaac Hays and Jenna Bidlingmaier



Service Honorable Mention: Lilly Duff, Sydney Killeen, Otis Patterson, Emily Gross, Sammi Tolnai, Reese Gottman

Scholar of the Year

This award is given to Scholars who turned in every assignment on time, never missed a meeting, and recorded their service on time.



Scholars of the Year: (Top) Jenna Bidlingmaier, Kailey Tyburski, Lilly Duff, Noah Forcier, Elise Kehoe, Sammi Tolnai, Otis Patterson; (Bottom) Ben Bathje, Alex Arango, Nic Hubbard, Sharon Moscoso, Kaitlyn Powell, Emily Gross

Mentor Appreciation



Katie Boyer, Assistant Professor of Education, brought an energetic spirit and creative mind as a Wendt Mentor to our Character Scholar meetings. She has now completed her three-year term, and we are grateful for the dedication and care she gave our scholars. Thank you, Katie!

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Service: More Than a Box to Check

Icle Freeland, Character Scholar alumnus and former GA in the Wendt Center, delivered our awards banquet keynote. He encouraged scholars to think of service as more than "a box to check" and to remain open, especially to possibilities that may arise through their service.



Mary Bryant, Vanessa Espinosa, Annalee Ward, Icle Freeland

Farewell, Vanessa

Vanessa Espinosa, our faithful Administrative Assistant of three years, is moving to Ohio with her family after the semester is over. There she will teach Latin and Classical Mythology at the University of Dayton. Be sure to stop by to say goodbye to her before May!

We will miss you (terribly), Vanessa, and wish you all the best!

Next Year: 20 Years!



During the 2023-24 academic year we have numerous events planned to celebrate the Wendt Character Initiative's 20th anniversary.

Make sure to sign up to attend the alumni reunion when you register for Homecoming!

Character and . . . Play, issue 9 of the Wendt journal, also comes out this fall.

Watch for more announcements about our upcoming events. Visit us on social media or at dbq.edu/wendt for updates.



2023-24 Wendt Character Lectures



Rev. Gregory B. Drumwright **Monday, October 2, 2023—7:00 P.M.**

Public theologian Rev. Gregory B. Drumwright is founder of Justice 4 the Next Generation, an advocacy organization against racial injustice. The Netflix Documentary *Civil* features Rev. Drumwright's work as minister to the family of George Floyd throughout the trial. Rev. Drumwright promotes non-violence and reconciliatory practice, sharing his message of education, empowerment, and encouragement to multigenerational audiences, corporate entities, and public institutions.



Freshta Tori Jan **Monday, March 25, 2024—7:00 P.M.**

As a female Hazara and Shia Muslim—a member of both ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan— Freshta Tori Jan endured persecution even as she continued to pursue an education until the Taliban closed her school. Here in the U.S., she advocates for her people as a human rights crisis plagues the world. She founded Hazara Advocates USA to inform the global community about the Hazara Genocide in Afghanistan. She works to create a world where no child grows up believing a graveyard is both a home and playground.

The Michael Lester Wendt Character Lectures take place in John and Alice Butler Hall, and are open to the public.

Director's Note

An Endeavor of Hope

What keeps you going? As I write this, it's a dreary, cold, wet, March day—the kind that looks like brighter days are only mis-remembered memories. And yet the people I see hold on to hope. The calendar tells us better weather should be arriving soon. The darkest days of winter are behind us. Last year's saved tomato seeds are showing promise! The school year runs downhill, and possibilities of vacations or changes of pace dangle the rewards of hope.



When parents send their kids off to college, they experience many emotions but one of them is hope. They hope this experience will provide the necessary knowledge and maturity to shape their kids into adults with flourishing lives.

Good education is the herald of hope. Education provides pathways out of poverty. Education suggests enjoyment of future jobs. Education enlightens hearts and minds. Education deepens knowledge. Education champions citizenship. Education hones character.

We all, the University of Dubuque community, get to participate in the realization of these hopes. But it's not in our own strength and wisdom that we work. As an institution we stand in the Christian faith that points to transcendent reality, the reality we just celebrated at Easter, the reality that Jesus' death and resurrection means we have hope that outlives us. And so we study, teach, and learn together to work toward renewed, redeemed, and recreated lives.

The Wendt Center for Character Education's Mission calls it to be centered in the University's Mission and Christian identity. That helps us define what we mean by good character—striving to become the excellent people God made us to be. We live into that hope as together this campus learns and grows.

And we see signs of hope all around. Despite gloomy days, faculty, staff, and students persevere in this common educational endeavor. Students nominated thirty faculty members for their work in advancing good character. We'll be giving out 21 awards to athletes for their character leadership in their sport. Character Scholars have completed over 1800 hours of community service this semester. And one of our Wendt Scholars, Emma Powell, reminds all of us of hope realized: "Wendt has shaped me into a person who shows compassion in everyday life, strives for justice, and lives a life of integrity."

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Heb 1:1

—Annalee

WENDT CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION



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