

Winter 2017

# Wendt Character Initiative

UNIVERSITY of  
DUBUQUE

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## "Bruce the Spruce"

This particular tree lighting, part of the UD Advent service on November 29, is especially symbolic and one to which the Wendt Center connects. The "Bruce Spruce" draws its name fromw 1997 Acting President, Bruce Meriwether, who planted it as a symbol of UD's renewed emphasis on its Christian identity. The Mission of the Wendt Character Initiative speaks of being "centered in the University Mission and its Christian identity." As we live into Advent this year, let's focus our eyes on the Source of life, the One whose gift of life gives purpose to this University's educational Mission and to the Wendt Character Initiative.

Christmas on the Quad, the UD Advent service, and lighting of "Bruce the Spruce" tree

We invite you to an interdisciplinary conference on March 1-2, 2018, to explore the interplay between home and the development of character as it relates to justice, integrity and compassion.

Featuring J.D. Vance, author of *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* and Brian J. Walsh, Scholar in Residence, co-author of *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement*. Paper and roundtable themes include family, health, migration, space/home, education, and social justice.

Registration information available at [www.dbq.edu/Wendt/WendtConference](http://www.dbq.edu/Wendt/WendtConference).



**CHARACTER AND PLACE:**  
HOW WE SHAPE HOME AND HOME SHAPES US

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE • MARCH 1-2, 2018

UNIVERSITY of DUBUQUE  
THE DIAMOND UNIVERSITY

INTEGRITY • JUSTICE • COMPASSION

# Wendt Character Scholars

## Justice in Place

### Small Things Matter

The theme for the Wendt Character Scholars sounds overwhelming. Dr. Adam Smith began our semester by helping us situate the concept in small things. While seeking justice "out there" in the world lifts our eyes from our everyday lives, Dr. Smith reminded us that the starting place is to "do justice to the small things" within our selves and then moving outward. We need to be truthful about our own actions and attitudes. The place for justice begins in our own hearts.



On UN International Day of Peace, Scholars went to Loras College to hear Jim Bear Jacobs, an activist for indigenous rights, speak on current and historical perspectives on Americans, immigrants, refugees, and indigenous people.

Scholars also reflected on guilt, grace, and forgiveness after attending *The Kite Runner*, a one-man show based on the novel by Kahled Hosseini.

Operation: New View Community Action Agency ran a poverty simulation to give Wendt Scholars a sense of some issues facing those living in poverty. A simulation cannot truly recreate the experience of living in poverty, but it was still eye-opening for many scholars.



When Dr. Brian Hallstoos' Developing Nations of the World class presented, they also took up the theme of small things as a way to enter the large injustices occurring in Sudan. How we treat human beings in our path reflects our commitments to justice on a large scale.



### The Wealth of Nations

Our Wendt Scholars and UD community are blessed to have international perspectives from students and faculty participating in the Wendt Character Scholars Program who have lived in Georgia, Taiwan, Uganda, Haiti, Germany, Russia, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Colombia, Canada, Namibia, and Syria. Together our discussions take on a depth of meaning with a variety of perspectives.



Nick Rubiano Blanco, Joshua Nsenga, Konstantine Batonisashvili, Kahla Rosenfeld, Zac Simanski, Dr. Jon Barz, Kenzie Helgemoe, Sam Wu, Claire Stoeffler, Tyana Mumm, Dr. Beth McCaw. Not picture: Daniel Silkman, Kathleen Saleh

***Having international students in the Wendt program truly adds interesting viewpoints the program would not be complete without.***

—Natalie Dienstbach  
Wendt Character Scholar



Wendt Scholars Kenzie Helgemoe, Keith Pitts, Daniel Silkman, and Nick Rubiano Blanco at the Christmas Banquet

## Christmas Banquet



Wendt Scholars rounded out the semester with festive music, delicious food, and warm fellowship.



Dr. Chuck Barland played lovely Christmas medleys.



Lydia Kleckner, Adam Steingraeber, Olivia Walter, Jesus Rodriguez, Gabby Marchese



Logan Ellis, Sam Wu, Mary Bryant, Cassandra Berger, and Dr. Chuck Barland provided a short music program.



Stacia Burke, Tyana Mumm, Claire Stoeffler, Taylor Hamilton, Sam Wu, Jacob Day, Cody Kramschuster, Breann Tjaarda, Haley Shilts



Liz Swan and Abby Willis led the group in singing carols.



# Gratitude Week



For Gratitude Week, Wendt Character Scholars and their mentors thanked people on-campus and off.

- Ameriserve
- UD Childcare
- Library Staff and Elaine Till
- Resident Assistants
- Friends
- Pass it on/Pay it Forward notes for the UD community to share
- Dream Center
- St. Stevens Food Bank
- DHS Workers and Law Enforcement
- Dubuque Emergency Management Agency
- Surgical Floor at Mercy Hospital

***The Ameriserve workers never fail to put a smile on my face. They are kind and hard workers who deserve to feel our gratitude on a daily basis.***

—Katie Silberstein  
Wendt Character Scholar





*My favorite part of gratitude week is seeing how happy our gratitude makes other people. It's like throwing a small surprise party but for no reason at all! "Surprise, we really appreciate you and here's something to prove it."*

—Tyler Glenski  
Wendt Character Scholar



*This is exactly what I was envisioning about Wendt before I got in: a group of passionate people initiating projects to give back to Dubuque and making a difference! I love it!*

—Sam Wu  
Wendt Character Scholar



## Gratitude in the Field

Coach Chad Gunnelson, Director of Track & Field and Cross Country, makes gratitude a priority, finding daily opportunities to teach his athletes about leading a grateful life. He encourages them to keep a gratitude journal and fills Gratitude Week with inspiring emails and thankful tweets.

***Gratitude week! I'm so grateful for our student-athletes and the extra hours they put in, for themselves, for our team & for our University!***

—Tweet by Coach Chad Gunnelson



Coach Gunnelson encourages his athletes to be grateful on and off the field.

## Serving the Community

Research shows that community service forms excellent character. It is required for Wendt Character Scholars and there are programs and departments across campus that engage in community service.

Community service opens up the world for students. It helps students see with new eyes that, wherever they are, they can make a difference in the small things, which often lead to big things.

***As humans we often look at the big picture and how we are going to “fix things.” Looking inward may inspire more change than projecting outward.***

—Allison Mitchell  
Wendt Character Scholar



Wendt Character Scholars help with the Dubuque Arboretum and Botanical Gardens' Fall Cleanup.



Wendt Character Scholar Kelsey Betthauser talks with a UD student about the Initiative.

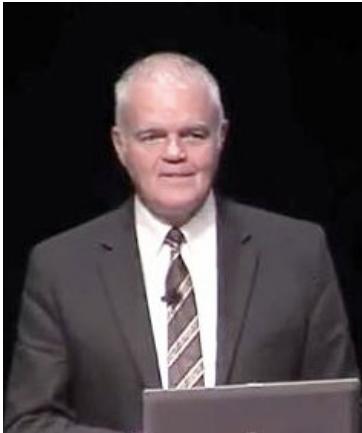
***Focus on changing things in us instead of focusing on changing the whole big picture at once.***

—Adam Steingraeber  
Wendt Character Scholar

# Character Lecture

WINTER 2017

## Bill O'Rourke talks Business Ethics



Bill O'Rourke, former president of Alcoa-Russia, visited the UD campus in October to deliver the Fall 2017 Michael Lester Wendt Character Lecture.

He shared stories of ethical dilemmas he faced during his long career in executive and leadership positions with Alcoa and Alcoa-Russia.

As Mr. O'Rourke pointed out, his consistently ethical decisions may not have made him popular, but they earned him respect. Likewise, his decisions sometimes cost Alcoa money and time, but the company emerged better for having prioritized what is *right* over what is *easy*.



***To have a value is to have something with you all the time.  
It's like breathing.***

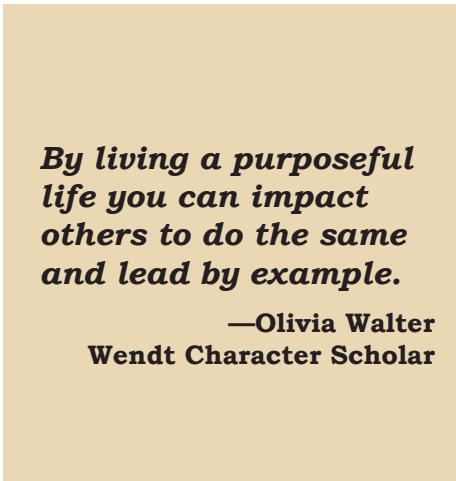
—Bill O'Rourke

Bill O'Rourke also met with UD students, faculty, and staff for lunch and conversation, as well as visited the Information and Policy Ethics class.



***A compass is a great tool to have if you are ever lost. Your moral compass works the same way. It's inside you and it's talking to you. When you get into those difficult situations, it tells you the right way to go. It's your job is to listen to it.***

—Bill O'Rourke



***By living a purposeful life you can impact others to do the same and lead by example.***

—Olivia Walter  
Wendt Character Scholar



# Character on Campus

## Faculty Grants



Liza Johnson took 10 students to the Iowa Women Lead Change Conference to encourage including the values of integrity, justice, and compassion in their own leadership roles.



Dr. Amy Baus and three students traveled to Belize for a service-learning trip to facilitate anti-bullying curriculum with school children.



Dr. Franklin Yartey presented his research on *Fearless Integrity of Helping Others* at the National Communication Association's annual conference.



Dr. Christine Darr, Dr. Jeannine Pitas, and Prof. Kim Hilby organized an immigration simulation on campus. Participants faced delays and confusing systems as they navigated a complicated path.



## A Simulating Semester

Some real-world problems you can't truly grasp without experiencing them yourself. When real-life experience isn't an option, simulations, though obviously not can help.

This semester saw several simulations occurring at UD. After taking part in a privilege circle, the Wendt Character Scholars also participated in a poverty simulation as part of the curriculum for this year's theme of *Justice in Place*.



A Wendt Faculty Grant supported an immigration simulation organized by Dr. Jeannine Pitas, Dr. Christine Darr, and Dr. Kim Hill (see above).

Dr. Darr also set up a homelessness simulation for her Christian Ethics class. "While obviously not an exact experience of what it is like to be homeless, we can nevertheless consider what it is like to be in the shoes of those in our community who live with housing insecurity," she said.

***My students learn to think ethically about ourselves, our relationships, and our society—particularly the most vulnerable in our society.***

—Dr. Christine Darr

# Character Sightings



UD sorority members provide free lunch to the campus.

**God uses our varying perspectives to broaden our capacity to empathize with each other and grow more compassionate.**

—Elizabeth Swan  
Wendt Character Scholar



Wendt Scholars Claire Stoeffler, Tyana Mumm, Breann Tjaarda have school spirit.



From maintenance to decorating, UD staff do excellent work.



R.A.s and Wendt Scholars Easton Cook, Brianna Finnegan, and Keyshawn Carr work hard to live out good character.



Coffee, "characters," and community in the Science Building



Employees of Ameriserve, UD's dining and catering service, work hard behind the scenes.

# Outreach

## Social Media

This year the Wendt Center made a priority of developing a purpose-driven social media presence. It was important to us not to use social media only because it was available, but because it had something to offer to help us carry out the Wendt Center's mission. We don't want to pursue social media unless what we do with it supports the mission of the Wendt Character Initiative. Bringing a G.A., Cassandra Berger, into the Wendt Center has made thoughtful and purposeful use of social media possible.

Cassandra first identified our social media objective: *to create captivating content on a regular basis to spread awareness of the Wendt Center's purpose and activities.* We want to share what we're doing with the community. From there, Cassandra came up with and implemented a number of ideas for translating our activities to tweets and posts.

Cassandra has continued to update and maintain the Wendt Center's social media presence throughout the fall semester. She has passionately thrown herself into this project and has made a huge impact on the activity we see on our pages!

### Recent social media activity:

- **Wendt alumni "Where are they now?" Facebook posts**
- **Wendt mentor faculty appreciation Facebook posts**
- **Gratitude Week tweets**
- **"What are you thankful for?" Facebook posts over the week of Thanksgiving**



Cassandra Berger, Wendt Center G.A.

### By the Numbers

Character Day social media impact:

- 1,900+ people viewed the videos
- 3,400+ people were reached on Facebook
- 8,000+ Tweet impressions with 600 visits to our profile

Thanksgiving Week:

- 14 "What are you thankful for?" posts
- Averaged 500+ Facebook profile reaches per day

Of course, numbers don't really tell the whole story. But they do help us see that we are reaching others and spreading the message of what we are doing to promote excellent moral character and purposeful lives. The interactions we've seen and participated in indicate that we are doing just that through Cassandra's great work!



## Wendt Character Scholars Alumni

With our effort to have an impactful social media presence, we have heard from many alumni! Catch up below with a few of the Wendt Scholar alumni we've heard from recently. We'd love to hear from you, too!



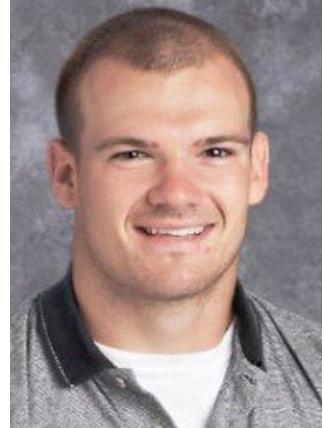
Edith Vargas (WCS 2004-2008) is currently a stay-at-home mom and has spent time working with low-income families as a Family Support Specialist.

***The Wendt Program helped me build the values that define who am I in both my professional life and personal life.***

—Hunter Brown  
WCS 2012-2015



Anna Runge (WCS 2013-2016) started in the Physical Therapy Program at St. Ambrose University this fall. Her long-term goals consist of passing the licensure exam and working in the pediatrics field of PT.



Blaine Snitker (WCS 2014-2016) is in his second year of teaching middle school math in his hometown, Waukon, IA.



Dominique Anthony (WCS 2004-2007) works in Dallas, TX, as an independent consultant for businesses.



Hunter Brown (WCS 2012-2015) is a senior audit associate at KPMG in Minneapolis, MN.



Caleb Chincoya-Velasco (WCS 2014-2016) works for Cerner, as a Systems Engineer and aspires to open his own unique coffee shop.

***The number one thing I have learned from the Wendt program is the importance of service. We must learn to serve others in order to positively impact the world.***

—Blaine Snitker  
WCS 2014-2016

***Being a part of the Wendt program in undergrad really broadened my perspectives on where people came from.***

—Anna Runge  
WCS 2013-2016



We had a visitor this fall! Ashlyn Ptasienski (WCS 2013-2016) stopped in for a chat when she was in town. We were so glad to hear that she is doing well as a nurse in Milwaukee, WI.

# A Note from the Director

## From Gratitude to Glory



I looked down from the 48th floor of Thanksgiving Tower to the Thanksgiving Plaza with the Thanksgiving Chapel where I'd snapped this picture of the Glory Window. Color and light both inspire me and make me grateful. There's a rich depth of nuance and diversity there which, for me, point to hope.

We live in hope here at UD—hope that we contribute to a world which experiences more justice. Hope—anchored in a horizon we can't quite see yet glimpse from time to time in the small things, the seemingly insignificant acts of everyday kindness, encouragement, and empathy. Justice in Place, the

Wendt Character Scholars' theme for the year, is both grandiose in its objective and abstract in concept. How do we engage it here at UD?

Of course we want to critique structures of unfairness, blatant acts of injustice, but also, we must be concerned about our own individual attitudes and behaviors, our implicit biases and unstated assumptions. Treating people fairly out of Christian love begins with me and begins with you. Together we bring our own hues of color and light that can build a beautiful work of art—a community that practices justice and love.

As we turn our eyes from the gratitude in Thanksgiving to the glory of the Christmas season, may the prism of your life shine the light of hope to those around you.

—Annalee

## APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

### Wendt Character Scholars

- December 1 through January 31
- \$3,000 conditional scholarship
- Faculty recommendations required
- [wendt.dbq.edu/Applying.cfm](http://wendt.dbq.edu/Applying.cfm).

## WENDT CENTER FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION



**Dr. Annalee Ward**  
Director



**Mary Bryant**  
Administrative  
Assistant



**Cassandra Berger**  
Graduate Assistant



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