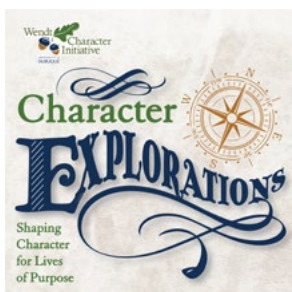


Wendt Center Podcasts Debut



Thank you, Sheila Sabers, for the excellent podcast artwork!



Annalee Ward and Jeff Haverland recording a podcast episode about Jeff's recently published article, "Life in Transition"

Access the *Character and . . .* journal essays with our new *Character Explorations* podcast. Author interviews make the essays come alive.

Episodes of *Character Exploration* cover articles published in our *Character and . . .* journal as well as current events involving questions of character. Interviews have already dropped for the complete set of articles from *Character and . . . the Places of Home* and most of *Character and . . . Transitions*. Watch for more podcasts to come.

To listen, visit www.dbq.edu/Wendt/Publications/ or search for *Character Explorations* on your favorite podcast app!

Indigenous Peoples: What We Didn't Learn in School

"I was surprised to learn that Hitler modeled his ideas for the Holocaust after the genocide of Native people in the United States," said Sammi Tolnai, Wendt Scholar. Bringing years of research on Indigenous Peoples, Angela Brandel, Associate Professor of Education, spoke



Angela Brandel

at a Wendt Scholars meeting in preparation for the Lecture from Kaitlin Curtice. She impacted us in deep and meaningful ways, startling us with details we didn't learn in school.

Scholar Logan Loitz also commented on how much information was new to him: "It surprised me to learn that the U.S. practiced genocide by not only setting bounties on Native peoples, but also by limiting Native reproduction and forced assimilation of children."

Marcus Eriksen to Speak on Character and Environment

Environmental scientist and educator Marcus Eriksen will appear in Dubuque in March, co-sponsored by the Wendt Center and the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium. Eriksen is committed to building stronger communities through art, science, adventure, and activism. Because of his passion to serve, he's agreed to speak at multiple venues, including the Iowa Naturalists Conference in Maquoketa, Roosevelt Middle School, and the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium.

MONDAY, MARCH 14, 7PM, OPEN TO PUBLIC

2022 Spring Michael Lester Wendt Character Lecture
John & Alice Butler Hall, Heritage Center, University of Dubuque



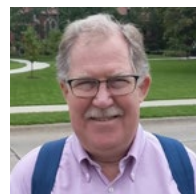
Marcus Eriksen

Character in the Disciplines

Philosophy, Politics, and History

Character and ethics play essential roles in the Philosophy, Politics, and History Department. Department Head Christine Darr notes that “First, we engage in activities intended to help students cultivate intellectual virtues such as curiosity, humility, and courage. Second, we challenge students to consider the roots of their conception of ‘the good life’ and evaluate how they can pursue that life with intellectual and moral integrity.” Through lessons both theoretical and historical, the Philosophy, Politics, and History department teaches students critical thinking, a necessary skill for the discernment called for by moral virtues such as integrity.

Roger Ebertz, Professor of Philosophy, notes, “According to Aristotle, character is formed as one observes virtuous people (role models) and then practices being virtuous. None of us are perfect of course, but I hope that in our department, and in all departments across campus, we on the faculty are serving as good role models for students and giving them opportunities to practice virtue.”



Roger Ebertz



Christine Darr (above, foreground left) has organized a variety of experiences (such as the 2017 immigration simulation pictured) to help students gain understanding of challenging situations and encourage ethical thinking about society’s most vulnerable.

Politics

Politics is now in a state of incredible flux. New media networks are destroying old institutions; new issues are dividing old allies; old words like “left” and “right” are less and less meaningful. Confusion reigns.

In times like this, when people can no longer rely on familiar categories, core principles take on new importance. And that means character takes on new importance. Only people of character have what it takes to discern and stand on principles when all the rules stop making sense.

—Adam Smith
Associate Professor of
Political Science

Philosophy

Philosophy is, in one sense, a practice of slowing down our thinking so we can arrive at a clearer understanding of the truth. We can learn from the wisdom of thinkers who have gone before us about truth and the good life in order to test those ideas against our own intuition. This process of philosophical reflection can help us come to a better understanding of what it means to live well in the world and what sorts of persons we ought to become.

—Christine Darr
Associate Professor of Philosophy



Adam Smith supports students’ growth and well-being with diverse events. Above, he reports on his 2018 Philosophers Against Anxiety and Depression project, at a Wendt Tea.

Good character is strengthened and refined through brave and responsible journeys through adversity. Studying the heroic paths of others (like civil rights leaders) provides ethical roadmaps that embolden us to face our own challenging journeys in conscientious and compassionate ways.

—Brian Hallstoos
Associate Professor of History

[illegible]

Students learn to think critically about the lessons history offers and take action. For example, during her time at UD, alumna Savannah Jones researched the lynching of Nathaniel Morgan in Dubuque by a group of white men in 1840, and joined the effort to create a memorial for him (Savannah's APEX 2021 poster pictured left).

Faculty, are you interested in more resources to help you integrate character in your courses? Visit www.dbq.edu/Wendt/Resources/ for a variety of character resources, including books, websites, and videos.

Brooks, David. *The Road to Character*. Reprint edition, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2016.

Connors, Jr., Russell B., and Patrick T. McCormick. *Character, Choices & Community: The Three Faces of Christian Ethics*. Paulist Press, 1998.

Holmes, Arthur F. *Shaping Character: Moral Education in the Christian College*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990.

Miller, Christian B. *The Character Gap: How Good Are We?* Oxford UP, 2017.

Character On Campus

Character Sightings

The busyness of life can interfere with our ability to see good character at work right here on campus. This semester we saw UD organizations and individuals serving and supporting each other with cooperative spirits and helpful activities.

-  The Office of Student Activities hosted a weekly Stress-Relief series that included Stress-Relief Mondays, Board Games & Cocoa, Paw for Pause Stress Relief, Faculty & Staff Appreciation Days, Mindful Meditation, Wind Down with Yoga, Canvas & Cocoa, and Finals Stress Relief;
-  The Black Student Union shared soul food and stress-free goodie bags to encourage fellow students during finals week;
-  Human Resources started a lunch-and-learn series for faculty and staff on topics of wellness—thanks to Regan Wolbers, Clinical Education Director and Assistant Professor for the Physician Assistant Program, for her December presentation on staying healthy with mindfulness and stress reduction;
-  The International Student Services Office hosted weekly international coffee hours and a tea with President Bullock for international students, providing a hospitable environment to develop friendship and intercultural understanding;
-  Many faculty and staff graciously moved to temporary office locations across campus while Van Vleet was being remodeled and received kind hospitality in their new surroundings;
-  During Homecoming, the Office of Student Activities provided materials for students to make tie-blankets, which they then donated to the Theresa Shelter in downtown Dubuque;
-  The UD Food Share Co-op ran a “Donate Don’t Dump” drive to encourage students leaving campus for break to donate unopened food items rather than let them go to waste;
-  UD’s singers and instrumentalists provided beautiful music at numerous events, including the Advent Worship Service and Tree Lighting, Christmas at Heritage, organ recitals, Convocation, and Homecoming;
-  The Vocation, Career Services, and Community Engagement Office has increased its emphasis on service with the work of Graduate Assistant Carissa Brown. Carissa has spent the fall semester connecting with local non-profits to develop a database of service opportunities for the UD community.



UD ensembles at Christmas at Heritage



DNAS work study student Jenna Bidlingmeier helping with donation drive



UD student Amaya Locke with blankets to be donated



International Students at the tea with President Bullock



English faculty Andrew Jones, Jon Barz, and Jessica Schreyer in temporary office spaces in the library



UD Concert band playing for Homecoming festivities



April Elsbernd Coaches for Character

Head Volleyball Coach April Elsbernd sat down with us to answer some of our burning questions about character and athletics.

Q: What is good character in athletics?

A: Good character in athletics is putting the team's success above your own individual success; it's working to build trust and love between the coaches and players; it's contributing to a positive team culture through honesty, vulnerability, reliability and inclusion.

Q: Would you share an ethical dilemma an athlete might face? What advice would you give to deal with it?

A: Consider a situation where a player on the team is doing something detrimental to themselves and/or the team culture and the captain isn't sure if they should intervene.

My advice to the captain would be to think about the big picture and how these actions might put their teammate in harm's way, how it might erode the trust built within the team, and how it could destroy the culture of the program.

A strong leader would approach the individual or inform the coaches in order to seek help.



Coach April Elsbernd (far left) with volleyball team members

What the World Needs Now

"Stay in the fire and let it burn you," was the message Wendt mentor Katie Boyer took away from Kaitlin Curtice's talk in October. Curtice, the fall 2021 Michael Lester Wendt Virtual Character Lecturer, encouraged and challenged us. As someone who is wrestling with Native and Christian identities, she shared her search for self with an engaged audience.



Kaitlin Curtice

Kaitlin talked candidly about her re-exploration in her personal life which inspired me to reconsider joys in my own life.

—Kira Finifrock
Wendt Character Scholar

Curtice's "inspiring words to channel our curiosity toward asking questions of ourselves, the land, and God," especially resonated with Adam Kleinschmit, also a Wendt mentor. He intends to follow her call to reconnect with community and restore relationships.



Franklin Yartey presenting on "Snapchat, Eavesdropping, and the Surgical Practices of Dr. Miami"

(Photo by Kenny Embry; edited)

Wendt Character Grant Leads to Publication

Franklin Yartey's article, "Snapchat, Eavesdropping, and the Surgical Practices of Dr. Miami: a Resurrection of the Anatomical Theatre" was published in the journal *Visual Studies* in November 2021.

Franklin previously received a Wendt Faculty Character Grant to present this article in unpublished form at the 2019 Florida Communication Association Annual Convention. He then created coursework for his Health Communication class to engage with the article and critically consider ethical implications of current media practices in medicine.

Congratulations, Franklin! Thank you for your continued work in bringing questions of ethics and character into the classroom.

Character Off Campus

Community Service

Scholar Service Spotlight

As service is essential to the Wendt Character Initiative, we continue to highlight the efforts of our scholars!



Jenna Bidlingmaier volunteers at the Dubuque Regional Humane Society, socializing and playing with the animals and helping run events. She also tutors undergraduates in chemistry and participates in high school outreach programs. She says, "Being able to say that I taught or helped a student understand a concept is fulfilling."

Educating the public about the animals, especially at outreach programs . . . is fulfilling. Last weekend there were 54 adoptions. It almost cleared the shelter!

—Jenna Bidlingmaier
Wendt Character Scholar



Olivia Miller served as a Spartan Start Peer Leader, mentoring freshmen through orientation and their first days on campus.

A lot of people say they don't have time, but it's what you prioritize. And [volunteering] is my priority. . . . I want to leave a legacy of being someone that is known for helping others and for being part of many things and being impactful within those things.

—Olivia Miller
Wendt Character Scholar

Faculty Serve Off Campus

Faculty and staff model good character as they serve the broader community. Associate Professor Emeritus Dick Smith and his wife Joyce have served for years in mentoring felons in the drug court program who are trying to turn their lives away from drugs.

Dick notes that their mentees "simply become our friends. We journey with them as they rebuild relationships with family members and coworkers. We journey with them as they develop a sober lifestyle. We journey with them when they make mistakes. The journey can be a roller coaster. But the destination is peace, sobriety, and happiness!!! If we do not help, who will? God forgives. Humans can also forgive."



Joyce and Dick Smith



Adam Kleinschmit and his son,
ready for a BSA event

Adam Kleinschmit, Associate Professor of Biology, serves as den leader for his son's Cub Scout troop, a youth-service organization that emphasizes character development and values-based leadership and encourages life-long service.

"The mission of Scouts BSA is to prepare young people with the tools to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetime," Adam notes. "I serve as a volunteer leader as part of my son's cub scout pack as a means to give back to scouting. As an Eagle Scout myself, Scouts BSA has transformed my world view as a youth and has helped mold my character."

Character and Success

In *The Road to Character*, David Brooks argues that moral virtues are key elements to achieving external success. Put another way, so-called “resume virtues,” without the backing of “eulogy virtues,” lead to empty, temporary victories.



Chris James

Striving for success is natural. “The search for the good life is a basic part of the human experience. Many of us set our initial trajectories for that pursuit during the formative college years,” notes Chris James, Assistant Professor of Evangelism & Missional Christianity. “This means that we who teach undergraduates have the serious responsibility of presenting to them in as compelling a way as we can, the consensus of the great wisdom traditions: a successful life is not measured in possessions but in virtue. Ultimately, what endures is the kind of person we become.”

We in the Wendt Center look forward to helping students, faculty, and staff continue to develop their moral virtues alongside their academic and technical skills as we strive together for excellence.

You won’t even achieve enduring external success unless you build a solid moral core. If you don’t have some inner integrity, eventually your Watergate, your scandal, your betrayal, will happen.

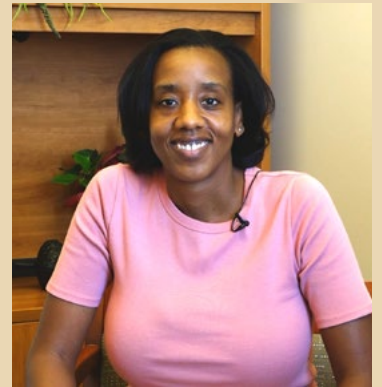
—David Brooks
The Road to Character

Success is tied up in the idea of faithfulness. . . . I really can rest in the knowledge that if I’ve been faithful, then I can let the outcome go wherever it goes.

—Mark Ward
Vice President for Academic Affairs

One has to choose the difference and impact they want to make in their community and society as a whole. I do not look for that gratification in my job. . . . My service to my community, people, organizations, community work, family, etc, is where I look for successful outcomes.

—Dominique Anthony
Wendt Character Scholar Alumna and UD Board of Trustees member



Jack Lindsay (right) with co-pilot Cory Kramschuster, another Wendt Character Scholar alumnus

I believe that most “eulogy virtues” must be built on when no one is watching. . . . Practice having good character and integrity each and every day even if you are stuck in a rut at work. And finally, be nice to others, life is far too short to have tarnished relationships. And when things get bad with a friend or co-worker, fix it with your words because you’ll be glad you did. People will remember you for who you were as a person, not what you had.

—Jack Lindsay
Wendt Character Scholar Alumnus

Gratitude Week

Gratitude builds community and relationships. Gratitude is a part of practicing good character but it's also a part of creating life-long habits that benefit others. While research tells us that practicing gratitude is good for our mental health and success, we are often more motivated by making a difference in the wider world.



On-campus communities thanked:

- Maintenance
- Heritage Center Staff
- Rec Center Staff
- Vocation & Advising
- UD academic departments and professors

To have gratitude is to be able to look beyond yourself and your own situation to appreciate the people around you. This level of humility, and often wisdom, is what character is all about.

—Kira Finifrock



I think gratitude builds good character and cultivates it. Without gratitude, your character can become complacent and you can forget why it is important to have good character. Also gratitude is a way to express and appreciate character.

—Isaac Hays



Expressing gratitude and being a grateful person overall shapes your character into someone who is selfless and humble. Reflecting on all the things in your life that you have to be grateful for also makes you a happier person because you really do realize just how much good you have.

—Kathleen Mathias



Off-campus communities thanked:

- Cozy Corner
- Convivium
- Dream Center
- UD Daycare
- Veterans Freedom Center



Gratitude can be practiced out of compassion. Compassion might call one to express gratitude to others. Likewise, expressing gratitude could encourage others to be compassionate.

—Luke Weber



Gratitude among the Nursing Faculty

Being grateful in one's life is such a powerful emotion! However, it takes conscious thought and action.

During our nursing retreat we completed a gratitude exercise and have continued the exercise during our monthly meetings. This has set the cornerstone of thought within our department. Having the mindset of being grateful changes one's perspective of inevitable life/work challenges. It allows for constructive problem solving without entering the slippery slope of blaming or complaining.



Life is short. Our time here on earth is a gift. Grab each moment (even the very small ones) with gratitude. . . . Yes, problems arise—learn from them and be grateful for the lessons they provide!

—Linda Hanson
Associate Professor of Nursing

[Our gratitude huddle] is a moment of reflection where we express what we are grateful for to each other.



It only takes a moment or two, but does center us on what is important.

—Neil MacNaughton
Professor of Nursing
and Department Head

Character Scholars

Cultivating Compassion

Curriculum

The theme “Cultivating Compassion” linked discussions from visiting speakers on topics ranging from a broad overview of compassion to its application to focused subjects.

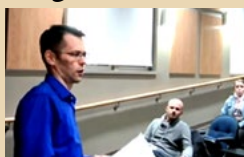
[Dr. McCaw’s] main two points were if we see pain or someone who is suffering we need to “be moved” to allow it to touch you to the point that you have to make a move. The second was to “be with,” bear their suffering with them and be present in their pain like Jesus did when he saw the suffering of the world. I liked this message because it was simple and attainable.



Beth McCaw

– Isaac Hays

Learning [from Jeff Bilbro] about changing social dynamics as a result of social media and online forum usage really opened my eyes to both the dangers and benefits of the social media platforms we use everyday.



Jeff Bilbro

– Logan Loitz



Adam Smith

I liked [Dr. Smith’s discussion about] cultivating compassion. It helped me realized that there’s more I can do to please others and please God.

– Trevor Trepte

[Judy Wolf] was so inspiring, and she made me want to go out and do even more service. One thing that she said that really stuck with me was that a lot of people say that they don’t have time to volunteer and provide service to others, but everyone has time, it



Judy Wolf

is just what you prioritize. If you prioritize volunteering and helping others then you will have time to be impactful.

– Olivia Miller

I really loved [Black Boy] because it was really moving, and the actor was so impactful with his performance. . . . I was blown away by this performance, and really changed some deep thoughts of mine.



– Brady McIntyre

Tarantino Smith as Richard Wright



Angela Brandel

It surprised me learning [from Dr. Brandel] about how much grief, suffering and inequality the indigenous people in America have faced in history. I feel like we aren’t taught growing up that this persecution exists and I think this is wrong.

– Makenzie Knapp



Kaitlin Curtice, virtual

[Kaitlin Curtice’s lecture] was an amazing way to learn about Indigenous Peoples and understand who they are and how they are/have been mistreated. I liked that she discussed fully getting to know her heritage and being connected with her culture after her grandma passed.

– Kaitlyn Wilder

Christmas Banquet

In the midst of a dark night, Blades Chapel twinkled with the lights of Christmas and the joy of Wendt Character Scholars. Celebrating a full semester of studying compassion and how to cultivate it, Scholars and Mentors enjoyed good food and music. Mary Bryant, Assistant Director of the Wendt Center, surprised many with her gorgeous rendition of "O Holy Night," accompanied by Vanessa Espinosa, Administrative Assistant in the Wendt Center, on violin, and Charles Barland, Professor of Music and University Organist, on piano.



Annalee Ward, Director, reading the Christmas story



Chuck Barland, Vanessa Espinosa, and Mary Bryant



Wendt Mentor Katie Boyer with Scholars Bailey Iverson and Sharon Moscoso enjoying community time

Spring Kick-off

Scholars kicked off the new year with a large group service project to help Resources Unite get the word out about their services (connecting people in need with the people/organizations that can help them). Scholars assembled candy cane bags complete with information about the services provided by Resources Unite, plus gift cards and coupons. They then spread the word by leaving the candy canes on car windshields across Dubuque. Learn more about the good work of Resources Unite at www.resourcesunite.com/ and tell your friends!



Pictured: (left) Emily Swanson; (center foreground) Brad Buechel, Jenna Bidlingmaier, Will Kowalewski, Katie Boyer, Brady McIntyre; (right) scholars sharing a meal before the service project

Director's Note

"You were worth serving for"

On December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese military attacked the United States Naval Base at Pearl Harbor. That attack killed over 2,300 Americans, destroyed or damaged 21 ships and 310 aircraft, and led to the U.S.'s involvement in World War II.

Our country worked hard to marshal its resources for the war effort. It required sacrifices at home and abroad, both seemingly small and arguably the greatest sacrifice of all—one's life.

This past December 7 marked 80 years since the war. Tributes abounded. Few Veterans remain alive, but in a CBS interview with one elderly gentleman, I heard something I can't stop thinking about. He said that after returning home, whenever someone approached him to thank him for his service, he responds: "You were worth serving for."



In the current days of divisiveness and selfishness, a statement like that stands out. Someone believed deeply that what he did mattered for the good of others. Increasingly, that idea of looking out for others grows obsolete. Silas House explores this problem in an *Atlantic* article, "Some Americans No Longer Believe in the Common Good." He writes, "refusing to sacrifice for the common good is an American problem . . ." and cites many examples of people unwilling to sacrifice their rights or independence out of concern for a larger community.¹

This year the Wendt Scholars are exploring what it means to cultivate compassion. True compassion runs deeper than feeling for someone. Compassion calls for action. Compassionate action requires sacrifice of comfort, money, time, resources, or even life for another.

Some might question why anyone would put self-interest behind communal care. The answer lies in our understanding of human life, of its preciousness. Each human carries the image of our Creator God who loves us . . . despite our failings. And God's love empowers us to love others, to be compassionate, to sacrifice what it takes to say to another human being, "You matter. You are worth serving for." You and I have the power to live out of our knowledge of worthiness and communicate our compassion to others. Never forget, you matter, and you can help someone else see that they matter.

—Annalee

Photo credit: [WindowsObserver, Pixabay.com](https://www.pixabay.com/user/?from_view=profile&from_view_from=profile&from_view_type=author&from_view_type=author&from_view_type=author).

¹ House, Silas. "Some Americans No Longer Believe in the Common Good." *The Atlantic*, 22 Aug. 2021, www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/08/some-americans-no-longer-believe-in-the-common-good/619856/?utm_campaign=the-atlantic&utm_medium=social&utm_source=social.

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