



WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY  
COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

THE CLASS OF TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-SIX

*One Hundred Seventy-Sixth Commencement*

*Saturday, the Sixteenth of May,  
Two Thousand Twenty-Six*



“This is a lovely spot for the location of a literary institution. It requires some faith to believe that in after years it will be an academic grove, to which hundreds will drink at the pure fountains of knowledge, and go forth into the world to do good, to bless mankind.”

– Ezra Keller, Founder and First President of Wittenberg College (1845–1848)

# WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY

## *One Hundred Seventy-Sixth Commencement*

### PROCESSIONAL

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*Pomp and Circumstance, Military March No. 1* by Edward Elgar

### INVOCATION

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Vicar Don Humphreys, *Minister, Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church, Springfield Ohio*

Pastor: We gather this morning, speaking the faith of Wittenberg's historic Christian Lutheran tradition:

God of heaven and earth, before the foundation of the universe and the beginning of time you are the triune God: Author of creation, eternal Word of Salvation, life-giving Spirit of Wisdom. Guide us to all truth by your Spirit, that we may proclaim all that Christ has revealed and rejoice in the glory he shares with us. ★

Today, we gather to celebrate and joyfully sing to our God! Together, let us share our praises and thankfulness. Come, let us enter into this sacred space with praise. Bless these graduates from their diverse faith traditions and belief systems. May we feel the joy and celebration that is clearly with us on this day. ★★

Glory and praise to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

*Lesson . . . . . Proverbs 8:1-6, 10-11*

Pastor: Proverbs 8 tells us to heed Wisdom's call, to listen for her cry, and to learn from her. She demands that we "take her instruction instead of silver and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her."

*Responsive Graduation Litany*

Pastor: We are gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of our community members.

**People: We give you blessings for all that you have achieved and many more achievements yet to come.**

Pastor: As you prepare for your next journey, remember those who have loved and supported you throughout the years.

**People: We give you blessings of good will and love as you journey forth into the world.**

Pastor: We thank you for the laughter, friendship, and memories that you have shared with us. We pray you remember them always.

**People: May these memories be a beacon to guide you on your path.**

Pastor: Go forth to bless others, as you have blessed us in this community.

**People: You are blessed and beloved by God. Amen.**

\*From Evangelical Lutheran Worship

\*\*© 2011 Joan Stott, "The Timeless Psalms" RCL Psalm Year A, used with permission. Posted on the Geelong City Parish UCA website.

**WELCOME AND REMARKS**

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Dr. Christian M. M. Brady, *President of the University*  
Ms. Alyssa J. Burnside, *Senior Class Representative, Class of 2026*  
Mr. Taylor “Moose” J. Harper, *Senior Class Representative, Class of 2026*

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**REMARKS**

Mr. William D. Edwards '89, *Chair of the Wittenberg Board of Directors*

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**CONFERRING OF HONORARY DEGREE**

Mr. Rakesh Tondon '01, *Doctorate of Humane Letters*  
Presented by Dr. Ross Jackson, *Associate Professor of Business & Economics, Director of M.S. in Analytics Program*

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**ADDRESS**

Mr. Rakesh Tondon '01, *Business Leader, Author, and Motivational Speaker*

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**CONFERRING OF MASTER’S DEGREES**

**Master of Arts in Education**  
**Master of Arts in Sport Administration**  
**Master of Science in Analytics**  
Presented by Dr. Brian D. Yontz, *Provost*

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**CONFERRING OF BACCALAUREATE DEGREES**

**Bachelor of Arts**  
**Bachelor of Fine Arts**  
**Bachelor of Science**  
**Bachelor of Science in Nursing**  
Presented by Dr. Brian D. Yontz, *Provost*

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**TASSEL CEREMONY**

Dr. Christian M. M. Brady, *President of the University*

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**WELCOME FROM ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

Ms. Stephanie L. Morgan-White '92, *President of the Wittenberg University Alumni Association*

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**CLOSING REMARKS**

Dr. Christian M. M. Brady, *President of the University*

## SINGING OF THE ALMA MATER

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Mr. Neil H. Boyles,  
*Alma Lux of the Class of 2026*

Mr. Taylor “Moose” J. Harper,  
*Alma Lux of the Class of 2026*

Alma Lux is a traditional honor that was established in 2003. It is the highest honor bestowed upon a junior student who exemplifies the qualities of leadership, scholarship, and service during four years at the University.

## BENEDICTION

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Vicar Don Humphreys, *Minister, Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church, Springfield Ohio*

Pastor: Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time and now and forever. Through the power of the Spirit, seek wisdom, be salt and light, be merciful peacemakers. (Adapted from Jude 24-25)

**People: Amen.**

## RECESSIONAL

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*Please remain seated until recessional ends.*

## COMMENCEMENT MARSHALS

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Dr. Sally Brannan,  
*Chair & Professor of Education*

Dr. Alyssa M. Hoofnagle,  
*Chair and Associate Professor of Mathematics & Computer Science*

Dr. Cathy L. Pederson,  
*Elizabeth E. Powelson Professor of Biological & Environmental Sciences*

Dr. Kunal Chatterjee,  
*Assistant Professor of Biological & Environmental Sciences*

Dr. Danny R. Marous,  
*Associate Professor of Chemistry, Director of Biochemistry/ Molecular Biology*

Dr. Richard S. Phillips,  
*Associate Professor of Biological & Environmental Sciences*

Dr. Ray C. Dudek,  
*Grand Marshal, Chair and Professor of Chemistry*

Dr. Jen C. Parsons,  
*Chair and Associate Professor of Health & Sport Studies*

Dr. John Thistlethwaite,  
*Professor of Health & Sport Studies*

## TORCH, BANNER, AND FLAG BEARERS

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The Wittenberg Torch is carried by Ms. Alyssa J. Burnside, *Senior Class Representative, Class of 2026.*

The United States flag is carried by Mr. Taylor “Moose” J. Harper, *Senior Class Representative, Class of 2026.*

The Wittenberg banner is carried by Ms. Sydney M. Werner, *Student Senate President, Class of 2027.*

The City of Wittenberg banner is carried by Ms. Rebekah A. Lebold, *Alma Lux, Class of 2027.*

The banner of the Evangelical Lutheran Church is carried by Ms. Hailey I. Mulvihill, *Alma Lux, Class of 2027.*

## Alma Mater Lyrics

Wittenberg, dear Wittenberg,  
Once again to thee  
We, thy grateful children, pledge  
Love and loyalty.  
We shall always love thy groves  
And thy classic halls;  
Mem’ry, like the ivy twines  
Round thy hallowed walls.

Wittenberg, dear Wittenberg,  
Time flies fast away;  
Soon our happy college days  
Will be gone for aye;  
But in all life’s storm and stress,  
Whate’er we may do,  
To our Alma Mater dear  
We will e’er be true.

– Robert H. Hiller, Class of 1889  
and Professor of Greek

# COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

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## Rakesh Tondon

Rakesh Tondon, Wittenberg class of 2001, is a highly successful entrepreneur with 20-plus years of experience navigating hypergrowth and global expansion of startups, along with managing strategic acquisitions.

Currently working as an advisor with Entrepreneurs First, “a category-defining global investor in entrepreneurial talent” whose “portfolio companies are backed by world-leading investors,” Tondon brings decades of experience in e-commerce, retail, SaaS, AI, and healthcare.

Throughout his career, he has steered through the challenges of sophisticated supply chains, intricate logistics, and high-growth business operations and startups. An active angel investor, board member, and advisor, Tondon also provides strategic guidance on fundraising, GTM strategies, and operational scaling.

The former co-founder and CEO of Dr. Treat, a full-stack startup pioneering tech-enabled veterinary care through its AI-driven veterinary platform, Tondon helped to streamline clinical workflows, enhance pet healthcare, and optimize revenue for clinics. He also recently helped engineer the sale of the business to a large strategic acquirer. Additionally, Tondon previously co-founded and led Le Tote, a pioneering rental subscription platform in the United States and China. As a consumer-driven leader in the fashion space, Tondon helped Le Tote amass over 2.5 million members and more than 200,000 paying subscribers, leveraging proprietary AI-driven recommendation engines and sophisticated supply chain infrastructure to deliver hyper-personalized customer experiences.

With his M&A expertise, Tondon was also able to make the landmark acquisition of Lord & Taylor, the oldest department store chain in the United States, and led two other strategic acquisitions, thanks to his deep background in negotiating complex deals, fundraising, and capital structuring, honed during his tenure in investment banking at J.P. Morgan and Ridgecrest.

Tondon, who resides in San Francisco, California, earned his B.A. in economics and was a founding father of Wittenberg’s Delta Tau Delta fraternity. He also spent time as a resident advisor and was a member of the campus’ Cricket Club.

# CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES

This program contains the names of candidates for Commencement. Degree certification is subject to the completion of all degree requirements and is validated by the Office of the Registrar. All academic honors noted below are based on cumulative grade-point averages calculated at the end of the 2025 fall semester, which do not take spring semester grades into account. Honors awarded at Commencement will be determined by each student's final cumulative grade-point average, calculated at the end of the 2026 spring semester. The degrees are awarded within the fields of major concentration. The second major concentration, if any, is shown under the candidate's name.

Degrees are awarded upon successful completion of all degree requirements. Participation at Commencement or listing of student's name in the program does not guarantee degree conferral.

## **Master Of Arts In Education**

**Instructor  
Todd Rappold**  
*Director of Graduate Studies  
in Education*

Meghan Guban  
Mentor, OH

## **Master Of Arts In Sport Administration**

**Associate Professor  
Jen Parsons**  
*Health & Sport Studies  
Department Chair*

Payton Madison Cronen  
Louisville, KY

Joesiah Michael McCann  
Akron, OH

Meghan Carrie McCans  
Arcanum, OH

Daren Delano Neff  
Grove City, OH

Kara Marie Owens  
Hilliard, OH

Alexia J. Page-Boyd  
Youngstown, OH

Earl Woodie Pope III  
Miami, FL

## **Master Of Science In Analytics**

**Associate Professor  
Ross Jackson**  
*Director of the Analytics  
Program*

Travis J. Demsher  
Santa Clarita, CA

Alexander James Loree  
Kettering, OH

McKayla Ann Pickering  
Louisville, OH

Bruce Edward Thompson  
London, OH

Jalen E. Williams  
Catonsville, MD

## **Art**

**Professor Scott Dooley**  
*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Gabrielle M. Conaway  
Circleville, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Madison B. Green  
Springfield, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Molly Elizabeth Kirkpatrick  
Enon, OH  
*(Computer Science)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Lanie Louise Mersch  
Cincinnati, OH  
*(Psychology)*  
*Magna Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Samantha Grace Monnin  
Cincinnati, OH

Kristen Kendra Such  
Hermitage, PA

## **BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS**

Francesca Kay Heidinger  
Pittsburgh, PA  
*Cum Laude*

Abby Renee Rohrer  
Springfield, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

## **Biochemistry/ Molecular Biology**

**Associate Professor  
Danny Marous**

*Director of the Biochemistry/  
Molecular Biology Program*

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Andy Daniel Dozal  
West Carrollton, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude  
University Honors  
Departmental Honors*

Alexander John Nemunaitis  
Perrysburg, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Joshua Brian Putka  
Avon, OH  
*(Mathematics)  
Summa Cum Laude  
University Honors  
Departmental Honors*

Mahlon P. Spangler  
Sunbury, OH

### **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**

Olivia Ann Kuhner  
Winston-Salem, NC  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Shannon E. Morrissey  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude  
University Honors  
Departmental Honors*

Aubrey Lynne Tama  
Medina, OH

## **Biological & Environmental Sciences**

### **BIOLOGY**

**Professor Margaret  
Goodman**

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Christopher Micheal Meyer  
Toledo, OH

Haley Lynn Pitman  
Liberty Township, OH  
*(Spanish)  
Cum Laude  
University Honors  
Departmental Honors*

Faith L. Wiley  
Tipp City, OH

### **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**

Neil Howard Boyles  
Ostrander, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Alexis Noel Cruea  
West Union, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Abigail Renee Danne  
Johnstown, OH  
*(Bachelor of Arts - Spanish)  
Summa Cum Laude  
University Honors  
Departmental Honors*

Olivia M. Follick  
Vandalia, OH

Izabel Ana Giglio  
West Chester, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude  
University Honors  
Departmental Honors*

Taylor J. Hughston Harper  
Columbus, OH

Katherine Ann Lowry  
Maumee, OH  
*Cum Laude  
University Honors  
Departmental Honors*

Emily A. Owens  
Stow, OH

Grace Panchika Pantalone  
Wadsworth, OH

Lauren A. Parrett  
Springboro, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Anna Kathleen Roller  
New Albany, OH  
*Cum Laude  
University Honors  
Departmental Honors*

E. F. Shope  
Yellow Springs, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Mason D. Steen  
Leroy, OH  
*(Bachelor of Arts -  
Environmental Science)  
Magna Cum Laude*

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE**

**Associate Professor  
Richard Phillips**

*Director of the Environmental  
Science Program*

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Raymond A. Bennett  
Euclid, OH

Douglas Michael Lee McClure  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

## **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**

Cameron Christopher Casto  
Washington Court House, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Lucas A. Eisele  
West Carrollton, OH

Karlee N. Henderson  
Michigantown, IN

Jane Emily Javorek  
Chesterland, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Kilen Reed Limes  
New Albany, OH

Alexander James McGinnis  
Fostoria, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Wyatt William Poling  
Batavia, OH

Averi Lillian Wells  
Indianapolis, IN

Benjamin Colin Woxman  
Eaton, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

## **Business & Economics**

### **ACCOUNTING**

**Associate Professor**

**Tim Bode**

*Department Chair*

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Logan William Brown  
Sylvania, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Haylee Dawn Davis  
Otway, OH  
*(Information Systems)*  
*Cum Laude*

Gregory Scott Efaw  
Hilliard, OH

Logan Maureen Fitzsimmons  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Leah Michelle Green  
Grandville, MI  
*(Finance)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Jordon Allen Huff  
Strongsville, OH

Matthew John Kehlbeck  
Marysville, OH

Sophia Lynn Meek  
Lewis Center, OH

Christian M. Reyna  
Eaton, OH  
*(Marketing)*

Dawson Christopher Smith  
Grove City, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Andrew William Stamp  
Powell, OH  
*(Marketing)*

Lani Tyler Jane Wilhelm  
Mechanicsburg, OH  
*(Finance)*  
*Magna Cum Laude*

### **ECONOMICS**

**Associate Professor**

**Tim Bode**

*Department Chair*

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Jacob Michael D'Isidoro  
Twinsburg, OH  
*(Political Science)*  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Jacob K. Downs  
Cincinnati, OH  
*(Finance)*  
*Cum Laude*

Riley Thomas Duncan  
Eugene, OR

Matthew D. Gerardi  
New Carlisle, OH  
*(Marketing)*  
*Cum Laude*

Nielsen Benedict Grau  
Indianapolis, IN

Paige Elizabeth Jackson  
Tipp City, OH  
*(Finance)*  
*Cum Laude*

Dillon Francis Sanderson  
McKeigue  
Olmsted Falls, OH  
*(Accounting)*  
*Cum Laude*

Benjamin Kobel Norton  
Avon, OH  
*(Finance)*  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Maren Macey Raymond  
Louisville, KY  
*(Finance)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Collin Franklin Stover  
Oakton, VA

Emily Elizabeth Valentine  
West Chester, OH  
*Cum Laude*

### **FINANCE**

**Associate Professor**

**Tim Bode**

*Department Chair*

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Cal Michael Bavineau  
Dexter, MI  
*(Management)*  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Michael Lloyd Eickhoff  
Akron, OH  
*(Management)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Daniel J. Gladden  
Galena, OH

Keita Kiggundu Mukasa  
Kampala, Uganda

Samuel Michael Richardson  
Akron, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Andrew Joseph Rust  
Dublin, OH  
*(Data Science)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Parker Stephen Salowich III  
Plymouth, MI  
*Cum Laude*

David Alexander Short IV  
West Bloomfield, MI

Mark Anthony Sulek  
Delaware, OH

William A. Westermeyer  
Loveland, OH  
*(Biochemistry & Molecular  
Biology)*

Elizabeth Jane Wile  
Hilliard, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

## **INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS**

**Associate Professor**  
**Sunny Jeong**

*Director of the International  
Business Program*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Andrew Christopher Inks  
Akron, OH  
*(Sport Management)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*

## **MANAGEMENT**

**Associate Professor**  
**Tim Bode**

*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Peyton John Archer  
Hilliard, OH

Leroy James Dannemiller  
Columbus, OH

Nathan Tyler DePuy  
Massillon, OH

Taylor James Insyxiengmay  
Maineville, OH

James Anthony MacAuley  
Grosse Pointe Woods, MI  
*(Communication & Digital  
Media)*

Joel Keshawn Martin  
Trotwood, OH  
*(Religion)*  
*Cum Laude*

James M. McCreery IV  
Westerville, OH

Aaron Daniel Mercier  
New Philadelphia, OH

Morgan Elizabeth Myers  
York, PA

Dawson James Scott  
New Castle, IN  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Ryan C. Shindeldecker  
Findlay, OH

Colten L. Simkins  
Liberty Township, OH

Delaney R. Tackett  
Waverly, OH  
*(Finance)*

Jacob Lowell Turney  
Waynesville, OH

David A. Walterhouse  
Roswell, GA

Brandon Jamal Weller  
Sarasota, FL  
*(History)*

Devan Reece Wiford  
Sidney, OH

Kirsten Marie Wright  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Michael D. Yurk  
Indianapolis, IN  
*(Sport Management)*

## **MARKETING**

**Associate Professor**  
**Tim Bode**

*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Braeden P. Carey  
Springfield, OH

Joseph L. Cotto-Rodriguez  
Orlando, FL

Francesca Caroline DiVincenzo  
Hilliard, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Julia Marie Hall  
Powell, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Jarya D. Hassell  
Bellbrook, OH

Reese Richard Monnin  
Xenia, OH

Michael Joshua Mullinger  
Dayton, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Ethan Gregory Pac  
Greenwood, IN  
*Cum Laude*

Bryce Valdes Ray  
Tampa, FL  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Piper Lauren Ricketts  
Morrow, OH  
*(Communication & Digital Media)*  
*Cum Laude*

Quentin Michael Rudolph  
Grand Rapids, MI  
*(Communication & Digital Media)*

Elizabeth Nicole Selby  
Cincinnati, OH  
*(Finance)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Timothy Barrett Smith Jr.  
Columbus, OH  
*(Sport Management)*

Chloe K. Steiner  
Troy, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Lucas Alexander Swierk  
Cincinnati, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Nathan Ellis Walters  
Troy, MI

Allyssa Jordyn White  
Harrison, OH  
*(Communication & Digital Media)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

**Chemistry**  
**Professor Ray Dudek**  
*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**

Tasia Allen Nall  
Indianapolis, IN

Caitlyn M. Shelton  
Powell, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

**Communication & Digital Media**  
**Professor Catherine Waggoner**

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

George Kenneth Janzen  
West Chester, OH

Chase Brandon Singleton  
Springboro, OH

## **East Asian Studies**

**Associate Professor**  
**Sunny Jeong**  
*Director of the International Business Program*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Joshua Edward Kelsey Jr.  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

## **Education**

**Professor Sally Brannan**  
*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Dylan Thomas Bledsoe  
New Carlisle, OH

Annabel Rebecca Blum  
Cincinnati, OH

Lauren Elizabeth Chaney  
Tipp City, OH

Kylee Y. Cowman  
Washington Court House, OH

Emmalee Elizabeth Do  
Lancaster, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Ziciah Linnea Gibson  
Cambridge, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Evan Connor Haemmerle  
Avon, OH

Emma F. Hawk  
Marion, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Piper Jones  
DuPont, WA

Courtney S. Kettler  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Lexie Mae Minard  
Dayton, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Ashton Christopher Newton  
Medina, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Claire Kendall Patton  
Mason, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Lauren Christine Rose  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Kyra Rhian Welch  
Van Wert, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

## **EDUCATIONAL STUDIES**

**Professor of Practice**  
**Erin Hill**

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Antwan D. Terrell  
Springfield, OH  
*(Theatre & Dance)*  
*Magna Cum Laude*

## **English**

**Associate Professor**  
**Andy Graff**  
*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Levi Mykel Finney  
South Charleston, OH

Ann Elizabeth Hirshberg  
Plain City, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*  
*Departmental Honors*

Evelyn Rebecca Huspen  
Middletown, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Anna Louise Merkel  
Springfield, OH

Hanna C. Stefanik  
Port Charlotte, FL  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Sarah Leora White  
Pickerington, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Kristina M. Withem  
Tipp City, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

## **Health & Sport Studies**

**EXERCISE SCIENCE**  
**Associate Professor**  
**John Thistlethwaite**

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Quatrell D. Black  
Memphis, TN

Gage Evan Dyke  
Chillicothe, OH

Courtney E. Lindgren  
Maineville, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

## **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**

Mara Drew Briscoe  
Loveland, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Edward M. Brown III  
Lewis Center, OH

Kennedy Aja Rhiannon Clark  
Cape Coral, FL

Kayla Marie Drake  
Wilmington, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Mason Scott Duncan  
Marengo, OH

Ashley Elizabeth Green  
Lewis Center, OH

Maximilian Matthew Green  
Centerville, OH  
*(Religion)*

Tiffany Michelle Hix  
Marion, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Alyssa Michelle Kolonchuk  
Canal Winchester, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Jordyn MacKenzie Murphy  
Redford, MI  
*Cum Laude*

Taylor Shea Rausch  
Mechanicsburg, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Leah L. Rocchetta  
Fairfield, OH  
*(Marketing)*  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Zayden Cole Taylor  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Liberty F. Weisenberger  
Collins, OH  
*Cum Laude*  
*Departmental Honors*

Kaili Hannah Worcester  
Powell, OH

## **SPORT MANAGEMENT**

**Associate Professor**  
**Jennifer Parsons**  
*Department Chair*  
*of Health & Sport Studies*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Alana Isabel Bartulovic  
Chesterland, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Joseph Edward Bidwill  
Pompano Beach, FL  
*(Economics)*  
*Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Gada Ann Marie Bryant  
Westville, IL

Olivia Lucille Campbell  
Vanceburg, KY  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Madison Skye Clark  
Mentor, OH

Tymeerah Renee De'Armond  
Springfield, OH

Devyn Paige Groves  
Oldham County, KY

Kyler John Hagstrom  
Liberty Township, OH

Andraya Nicole Hall  
Dublin, OH

Elijah Lawrence Halverson  
Hamilton, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Alexa May Hill  
Powell, OH  
*(Management)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Karsen Karlblom  
Crystal Lake, IL  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Thomas Charles Kipfer  
Powell, OH

Kendall Lynn Knisely  
Springboro, OH

Trajan Clifford Kress  
Cincinnati, OH

Hayden Nicholas Olcott  
Delaware, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Adam Martin Polacko  
Cincinnati, OH

Audrey Rebecca-Anne  
Robinson  
Delaware, OH

Verselé Juanita Shaw  
St. Louis, MO

**History**  
**Provost Brian Yontz**

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Benjamin N. Bretzin  
Cuyahoga Falls, OH

Trevor Lee Chambers  
Indianapolis, IN

Aidan M. Cook  
Cincinnati, OH

Ty Mitchell Harris  
Cincinnati, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Jackson Kyle Delmer  
Higgason  
Fort Thomas, KY  
*(Religion)*  
*Cum Laude*

Jack Curtis Miller  
Rocky River, OH

Saalihah Mohave Muhammad  
Springfield, OH

Jack Johannes David Pascoal  
Liberty Township, OH

## **Mathematics & Computer Science**

**MATHEMATICS**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Alyssa Hoofnagle**  
*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Lacey Marie Boyd  
Springfield, OH

Luke Andrew Jackson  
DeGraff, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Savannah Pearl LaMar  
Springfield, OH

## **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**

McKenna Marie Clark  
Springboro, OH  
*Cum Laude*

## **COMPUTER SCIENCE**

**Associate Professor**

**Alyssa Hoofnagle**

*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Quintin C. Applegate  
Delaware, OH  
*(Data Science)*  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Trenton Michael Carter  
Carmichaels, PA

Matthew T. Cox  
Springfield, OH

LaVaughn Darnell Davis  
Douglasville, GA

Jaxin A. Johnson  
South Vienna, OH  
*(Religion)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Jackson Mitchell Miller  
Westerville, OH  
*(Finance)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Keyshon Lazon Upchurch  
Columbus, OH

## **DATA SCIENCE**

**Associate Professor**

**Alyssa Hoofnagle**

*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Zachary Charles Rust  
Dublin, OH  
*(Management)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*Departmental Honors*

## **Neuroscience**

**Professor Cathy**

**Pederson**

*Director of the Neuroscience  
Program*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Alexandra Marie Smith  
Findlay, OH

Ellen D. Tabiri  
Hilliard, OH

## **Nursing**

**Assistant Professor**

**Catherine Short**

*Director of Nursing*

## **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING**

Oluwanifemi John Babalola  
Springfield, OH

Cadence Janae Boyd  
Cincinnati, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Trey Allen Bringer  
Delaware, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Elvis L. Casanova  
Labelle, FL

Thomas Michael Chilicki Jr.  
Lewis Center, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Emily E. Doerman  
West Chester, OH  
*Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Rachel M. Hartman  
Columbus, OH

Haleigh A. Heising  
Lima, OH  
*Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Payton Lee Hildebrand  
Findlay, OH

Lillyan H. James  
Troy, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Mackenzie Rose Kelley  
Altoona, PA  
*Cum Laude*

Andrew George McFeeters  
Pickerington, OH

Katherine Ann Mizer  
Pickerington, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Andrew Zane Nemunaitis  
Toledo, OH  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Macie Noel Robinson  
Bellefontaine, OH

Molly Lynn Scott  
Centerville, OH

Brealyn Renee Steward  
Washington, VA  
*Magna Cum Laude*

Jorja Grace Williams  
Centerville, OH

Ronald M. Williams Jr.  
Cincinnati, OH

## **Physics**

**Professor Paul Voytas**

*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Dalton C. Allen  
Delaware, OH  
*(Mathematics)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Charles David Boucuvalas  
Oakwood, OH

## **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**

Leonardo Juarez  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*Departmental Honors*

## **Political Science**

**Professor James Allan**

*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Edward Reeves Denny  
Columbus, OH  
*(History)*

Fiona Jude Isbell  
Columbus, OH

Emma Claire Leckey  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Senaabil A. Muhammad  
Pickerington, OH

Oyinkansola Mary Osiwoga  
Indianapolis, IN  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Andon Bradley Peacock  
New Richmond, OH

## **Psychology**

**Associate Professor**

**Michael Anes**

*Department Chair*

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Kayleigh Marie Arnold  
Marysville, OH

Carter Wesley An Bonar  
Springfield, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*

Alyssa Jean Burnside  
Hilliard, OH

Myrah Shyanne Burton  
Springfield, OH

Taylor Wade Collins  
Carlisle, OH

Madison Paige Horton  
Cincinnati, OH

Gabriella Hilda Lillico  
Grove City, OH

Lucia Grace Ripepi  
Lakewood, OH

Rebecca Leanne Schafer  
Albuquerque, NM  
*(Art Studio)*

Shania Regine Stone  
Springdale, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

### **BACHELOR OF SCIENCE**

Jessica Nicole Neuerer  
Lorain, OH  
*(Bachelor of Arts - Sociology)*  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

**Sociology**  
Assistant Professor  
Chad Sloss

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Paige Renae Benschoter  
Orient, OH  
*(Philosophy)*

Beckham Owen Corbett  
Lewis Center, OH

Emma Carol Gearhart  
Ashland, OH  
*Summa Cum Laude*  
*University Honors*  
*Departmental Honors*

Reagan Elise Landrum  
Waynesville, OH

Kaela Jo May  
Tipp City, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Samuel Evan Nitzberg  
Cincinnati, OH

Heavahn Gabriel Thaxton-Isham  
Cincinnati, OH

## **Theatre & Dance**

Assistant Professor

Adrienne Oehlers

*Department Chair*

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Dawson G. Hudson  
Springfield, OH  
*Cum Laude*

Abigail K. Lanhart  
Jackson, OH  
*(Psychology)*

Carmen Gabriella Martinez  
Nashville, TN

Margo Noelle Spaller  
Mayfield Heights, OH

Maria Danielle Wilson  
Huber Heights, OH

## **World Languages & Cultures**

### **SPANISH**

Provost Brian Yontz

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS**

Abigail Noel Anderson  
Hamburg, NY  
*Summa Cum Laude*

# HONORARY ORGANIZATIONS

## *Class of 2026*

### **Presidential Scholars**

Named for each of Wittenberg's 15 former presidents, the Presidential Scholars are the members of the junior class who have maintained the highest academic standing in their class through the preceding five semesters at Wittenberg.

Abigail N. Anderson  
Neil H. Boyles  
Andrew C. Inks  
Jackson M. Miller  
Jessica N. Neurer  
Joshua B. Putka  
Caitlyn M. Shelton  
Andrew J. Rust  
Zachary C. Rust  
Izabel A. Giglio  
Claire K. Patton  
Alexander J. Nemunaitis

### **University Honors**

University Honors is awarded to graduating students that maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5, complete at least two honors courses, and complete and successfully defend an honors thesis in their major area of study.

Joseph E. Bidwill  
Abigail R. Danne  
Emily E. Doerman  
Andy D. Dozal  
Kayla M. Drake  
Emma C. Gearhart  
Izabel A. Giglio  
Leah M. Green

Julia M. Hall  
Haleigh A. Heising  
Jane E. Javorek  
Molly E. Kirkpatrick  
Katherine A. Lowry  
Alexander J. McGinnis  
Lanie L. Mersch  
Shannon E. Morrissey  
Jessica N. Neurer  
Claire K. Patton  
Haley L. Pitman  
Joshua B. Putka  
Anna K. Roller  
Elizabeth N. Selby  
Caitlyn M. Shelton  
Hanna C. Stefanik  
Shania R. Stone  
Allyssa J. White  
Kristina M. Withem

### **Phi Beta Kappa**

Phi Beta Kappa is an international honor society for the liberal arts and sciences founded at the College of William and Mary in 1776. Seniors – and in special cases, juniors – who are majoring in one of the liberal arts or sciences, have a high GPA, excel in courses across the liberal arts, and have demonstrated a knowledge of mathematics and foreign language are eligible.

Abigail R. Danne  
Andy D. Dozal  
Leonardo Juarez  
Jackson M. Miller  
Shannon E. Morrissey  
Maren M. Raymond

### **Alpha Alpha Alpha**

Alpha Alpha Alpha is a national honor society that recognizes scholarship and achievement of first-generation college students. The society recognizes students who have earned at least 36 credit hours, achieved an overall GPA of 3.2 or higher, and neither parents nor guardians have completed a bachelor's degree.

Dalton C. Allen  
Matthew T. Cox  
Alexis N. Cruea  
Haylee D. Davis  
Andy D. Dozal  
Haleigh A. Heising  
Andrew C. Inks  
Lillyan H. James  
Leonardo Juarez  
Olivia A. Kuhner  
Savannah P. LaMar  
Emma C. Lecky  
Senaabil A. Muhammad  
Michael J. Mullinger  
Ray V. Bryce  
Brealy R. Steward  
Shania R. Stone

## **Alpha Kappa Delta**

Alpha Kappa Delta seeks to acknowledge and promote excellence in scholarship in the study of sociology, the research of social problems, and other social and intellectual activities that will lead to improvement in the human condition. Academically accomplished sociology majors and minors are eligible.

Emma C. Gearhart  
Senaabil A. Muhammad  
McKayla Pickering  
Kirsten M. Wright

## **Alpha Lambda Delta**

Alpha Lambda Delta is a national honor society that seeks to recognize and to encourage scholarship among first-year college students. Selection is based entirely on achieving a 3.5 cumulative grade point average for fall semester of the first year.

Izabel A. Giglio  
Leah M. Green  
Mackenzie R. Kelley  
Oyinkansola Mary Osiwoga  
Antwan (AhMani) D. Terrell  
Kristina M. Withem

## **Beta Beta Beta**

Beta Beta Beta (Tri-Beta) is a society for students dedicated to improving the understanding and appreciation of biological study and extending boundaries of human knowledge through scientific research. A student must have completed a minimum of three courses in biology, have an overall GPA in biology of 3.3 or higher, an overall GPA of 3.0 or better, and be involved with biologically oriented activities.

Alexis N. Cruea  
Katherine A. Lowry  
Emily A. Owens  
Haley L. Pitman  
Joshua B. Putka  
Anna K. Roller  
E. F. Shope  
William A. Westermeyer

## **Chi Alpha Sigma**

Chi Alpha Sigma is a national college athletics honor society founded in 1996. Members must have a 3.5 or higher cumulative grade point average, be a member of at least one of Wittenberg's intercollegiate teams and in good standing with Wittenberg's Department of Athletics. Students must also be an undergraduate with junior or senior status and at least four full-time semesters of college completed; two semesters completed at Wittenberg for transfer students.

Dalton C. Allen  
Quintin C. Applegate  
Alana I. Bartulovic

Cal M. Bavineau  
Annabel R. Blum  
Carter W. Bonar  
Cadence J. Boyd  
Cameron C. Casto  
Thomas M. Chilicki  
McKenna M. Clark  
Abigail R. Danne  
Jacob K. Downs  
Kayla M. Drake  
Michael F. Eickoff  
Matthew D. Gerardi  
Ziciah L. Gibson  
Julia M. Hall  
Elijah L. Halverson  
Ty M. Harris  
Emma F. Hawk  
Alexa M. Hill  
Tiffany M. Hix  
Luke A. Jackson  
Lillyan H. James  
Karsen Karlblom  
Mackenzie R. Kelley  
Alyssa M. Kolonchuck  
Olivia A. Kuhner  
Courtney E. Lindgren  
Kaela J. May  
Dillon F. S. McKeigue  
Jackson M. Miller  
Katherine A. Mizer  
Michael J. Mullinger  
Alexander J. Nemunaitis  
Ashton C. Newton  
Hayden N. Olcott  
Ethan G. Pac  
Haley L. Pitman  
Taylor S. Rausch  
Bryce V. Ray  
Maren M. Raymond  
Piper L. Ricketts  
Leah L. Rocchetta  
Anna K. Roller  
Zachary C. Rust  
Andrew J. Rust  
Parker S. Salowich  
Dawson J. Scott  
Elizabeth N. Selby

Ryan C. Shindeldecker  
Mason D. Steen  
Shania R. Stone  
Lucas A. Swierk  
Zayden C. Taylor  
David A. Waltherhouse  
Liberty F. Weisenberger  
Allyssa J. White  
Elizabeth J. Wile  
Jalen E. Williams  
Kirsten M. Wright

## **Lambda Pi Eta**

Lambda Pi Eta is the national communication honor society. Majors who maintain outstanding grade point averages while making significant progress toward their degree are invited to join.

Leah M. Green

## **Omicron Delta Kappa**

Omicron Delta Kappa is a national senior leadership honor society recognizing leadership in scholarship, athletics, University publications, cultural life, and student affairs.

Abigail R. Danne  
Emma C. Gearhart  
Leah M. Green  
Jackson M. Miller  
Alexander J. Nemunaitis  
Oyinkansola Mary Osiwoga  
Claire K. Patton  
Joshua B. Putka  
Maren M. Raymond  
Andrew J. Rust  
Zachary C. Rust  
Shania R. Stone

## **Phi Eta Sigma**

Phi Eta Sigma is a national honor society that seeks to recognize and encourage scholarship among first-year college students. Selection is based entirely on achieving a 3.5 cumulative GPA for fall semester of the first year.

Olivia L. Campbell  
Haleigh A. Heising  
Mackenzie R. Kelley  
E. F. Shope  
Kristina M. Withem

## **Pi Mu Epsilon**

Pi Mu Epsilon, founded in 1914, is the nation's most prestigious mathematics honor society. Majors who have taken a sufficient number of classes toward the fulfillment of their degree, achieved a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 in mathematics courses, and a 3.0 GPA overall are invited to join.

McKenna M. Clark  
Luke A. Jackson  
Leonardo Juarez  
Joshua B. Putka  
Zachary C. Rust

## **Pi Sigma Alpha**

Pi Sigma Alpha is the only honor society for college and university students of government in the United States. Juniors and seniors who have completed requisite political science courses with excellence and whose overall grade point average is above 3.3 are eligible for membership.

Emma C. Leckey  
Oyinkansola (Mary) M. Osiwoga

## **Psi Chi**

Psi Chi is the international honor society in psychology. Wittenberg's Psi Chi members have a psychology grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

Mara D. Briscoe  
Shania R. Stone

## **Sigma Tau Delta**

Sigma Tau Delta is an international English honor society founded in 1924. Membership is available to any declared English major who meets the society's academic standards of a cumulative GPA of 3.2 or higher.

Sarah L. White  
Kristina M. Withem

## **Sigma Theta Tau**

Membership to this international nursing honor society is by invitation to the top 35% of the baccalaureate nursing students, who demonstrate excellence in scholarship.

Cadence J. Boyd  
Thomas M. Chilicki  
Emily E. Doerman  
Haleigh A. Heising  
Lillyan H. James  
Mackenzie R. Kelley  
Andrew Z. Nemunaitis

## **Tau Pi Phi**

Founded in 1931 on Wittenberg's campus, Tau Pi Phi is a business and economics honor society for students of high academic achievement. Students who meet certain academic criteria are initiated into the honor society.

Francesca C. DiVincenzo

Leah M. Green

Julia M. Hall

Alexa M. Hill

Paige E. Jackson

Benjamin K. Norton

Leah L Rocchetta

Andrew J. Rust

Elizabeth N. Selby

Chloe K. Steiner

Allyssa J. White

Kirsten M. Wright

# The Wittenberg Luther Cap

The cap worn by Martin Luther while teaching at Germany's Wittenberg University during the Reformation is still being worn by designated persons at what is now the only Wittenberg University in the world – the one in Springfield, Ohio. The original Wittenberg University, founded in 1502 in a little town in Saxony, provided the 16th-century setting for Martin Luther, the man whose reforming activities ultimately led to Protestantism.

Luther's Wittenberg University, for many years one of the strongest universities in the world, thrived until 1817, when Saxony became part of Prussia and the old university was absorbed by the University of Halle. In September 1959, in honor of the original Wittenberg and the man whose ideas transformed the world, Wittenberg President Clarence C. Stoughton revived the wearing of the cap worn by Martin Luther.

During the 16th century, such caps were worn by teachers as a badge of office and as protection from the cold drafts blowing through the halls. Today, complete with ear tabs and made of red velvet, the cap is

worn by the President of the University and is given as a presidential award to those receiving honorary degrees and the Medal of Honor from Wittenberg. In a memorable commencement ceremony, June 15, 1975, the late President Emeritus Stoughton, in his last public appearance, removed his cap and presented it to President William A. Kinnison, who, in turn, gave it to his successor during Dr. Baird Tipson's inauguration on November 4, 1995. President Tipson then presented it to Dr. Mark H. Erickson at his inauguration on September 24, 2005. The cap may also be worn by Wittenberg officials of vice presidential level and above, department chairs, tenured faculty, and delegates appointed by the president to represent the office at academic functions such as inaugurations and dedications. Also eligible to wear the cap are Wittenberg alumni who have earned a baccalaureate degree from Wittenberg and are either of vice presidential rank or above, department chairs, or tenured faculty at a two-, three-, or four-year, fully accredited institution of higher education.

## Symbols of Learning

The academic procession as seen today is a pageant made colorful by the dress and ceremony inherited from the medieval universities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The principal features of academic dress are three: the gown, the cap, and the hood. To preserve the dignity and the meaning of these features, American universities agreed on a definite system in 1895 and set up a code of academic dress for the colleges and universities of the United States. In 1932, the American Council on Education presented a revised code, which largely governs the style of academic dress used in our country today.

**The Gown.** The flowing gown comes from the 12th century. Some think it was worn in olden times as protection against the cold of unheated buildings. It has become symbolic of the democracy of scholarship, for it completely covers any dress of rank or social standing

underneath. Black gowns are acceptable for all institutions, but some universities have adopted optional colors for gowns; for example, Yale, Yale blue; Harvard, crimson; Columbia, light blue; Princeton, black with orange trim. The gown has pointed sleeves for the bachelor's degree; long, closed sleeves for the master's degree with a slit for the arm; and round, open sleeves for the doctor's degree. For the bachelor's or master's degree, the gown has no trimmings. For the doctor's degree, it is faced down the front with velvet and has three bars of velvet across the sleeves in the color distinctive of the faculty or discipline to which the degree pertains. Some of the colors most frequently seen and the fields they represent are: blue – philosophy; purple – law; green – medicine; yellow – science; light blue – education; red – theology; white – literature and humane letters. The official colors of the college may appear in the gown and its decorations.

**The Cap.** When Roman law freed the slave, the privilege of wearing a cap was won. And so the academic cap is a sign of the freedom of scholarship and the responsibility and dignity with which scholarship endows the wearer. Old poetry records the cap of scholarship as square to symbolize the book, although some authorities claim that the mortarboard is a symbol of the Masons, a privileged guild. The color of the tassel on the cap denotes the discipline.

**The Hood.** Heraldically the hood is an inverted shield with one or more chevrons of a secondary color on the ground of the primary color of the college. The color of the facing of the hood denotes the discipline represented by the degree; the color of the lining of the hood designates the college by which the degree was granted.

**The Cord.** The colored cord worn by today's graduates represents membership in their academic discipline's honor society.

## The Wittenberg Torch

The Wittenberg Torch is representative of the University's motto, "Having Light We Pass It On To Others." In keeping with the image depicted on the University's official Seal as shown on the Commencement program cover, Commencement marks a symbolic passing of the torch from the Class of 2026 to the Class of 2027. The passing of light from one generation to the next has defined the Wittenberg experience for more than 180 years and united alumni across all classes.

Designed and handcrafted by Kenny Lake, retired carpenter foreman from Wittenberg's Physical Plant, at the request of the Class of 2006, the Torch used in today's ceremony is made entirely of walnut with 28 coats of tung oil applied. The flame itself consists of an intricate arrangement of brass, bronze, and copper petals, which Ed Charney, professor emeritus of art, helped to create.

## The Wittenberg Municipal Coat of Arms

The municipal coat of arms of Wittenberg, City of Luther, reflects the city's historical origins and significance. The fortress rising above the blue water symbolizes the medieval walled city on the banks of the river Elbe. (The city's fortifications were removed in 1873.) The silver fish refers to the abundant fishing that was once part of the region's riches. The two shields displayed against the background of the city walls form the crest of the Elector of Saxony, whose court resided at Wittenberg. The yellow and green crest to the right, divided by a garland of heraldic lozenges, symbolic of crowns, represents the ducal house. The crest to the left with the crossed

sword represents the office of Imperial Grand Marshal of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, an office held by the Duke of Saxony in his capacity as Elector. (An Elector was one of the princes of the Holy Roman Empire granted the privilege of participating in the election of the Emperor.)

The city's coat of arms is carried in today's procession to symbolize the establishment of formal ties between the city and Wittenberg University in 1995 and as a symbol of the heritage that the city and University share.

# A Brief History of Commencement Exercises at Wittenberg

The event of Commencement is an old academic ritual but one that has undergone continuous change at Wittenberg.

Although two students completed the requirements for graduation in 1850, one headed for the California gold fields, and the other, J. F. Mitchell, elected to graduate in 1851. Mitchell's grades enabled him to be the valedictorian of his new class.

Wittenberg's first Commencement in 1851 was held not in May but in September. On Wednesday, September 10, President Samuel Sprecher delivered the baccalaureate sermon in First Lutheran Church. His subject was "The Duties of Educated Men and the Manner in Which They Should Be Performed." On Thursday, the literary societies met together in the city hall to hear the first of their annual speakers, The Rev. Edwin H. Nevin, D.D., who spoke on "Faith in God – the Foundation of Individual and National Greatness." On Friday, the Commencement exercises were held in the city hall, and each of the eight members of the class delivered an oration and received the A. B. degree. Music was provided by the Independent Sax-Horn Band of Dayton, Ohio, an aggregation that featured the newly invented and, to older listeners, strange-sounding sax-horn.

Respect was paid to students of high academic achievement by enlisting them to deliver the various orations of the Commencement. One could tell the achievements of the top scholars of the class by the assignment given each student in the exercises: the valedictorian, salutatorian, Latin orator, Greek orator, English orator, German orator, etc.

As years passed and the graduating classes grew larger, the student orations grew shorter. Eventually only a select few students spoke. Finally no student spoke at all, and an annual visiting speaker became a formal part of the Commencement exercises. The change was a pleasing one to students. The student literary societies had begun the practice of jointly sponsoring an outside speaker several years earlier in order to bring outside personalities of the students' own choosing to the campus event. The advent of a Commencement

speaker thus meant the institutionalizing of the students' desire for a speaker outside the school's normal circle and at the same time freed students from the chore of preparing Commencement addresses. With these changes, however, students became increasingly passive observers at an event in which they once performed the major tasks.

The faculty, graduating class, and student body used to meet in the First Lutheran Church, from which they were led by a band from High Street, up Main, then to Market (now Fountain), and then to the old market house, where public Commencement exercises took place. In 1869, this procession was abandoned. Exercises were held in the city hall and later in Black's Opera House and in 1879 were moved to the college grounds. The Class of 1896 sought to add dignity and fame to itself by inaugurating the custom of appearing in caps and gowns. In 1904, at the first Commencement under Dr. Charles G. Heckert, the procession was revived, and faculty, graduates, and other participants processed to the campus hillside for Commencement.

Commencement exercises were held in the Springfield city hall from 1851 to 1868; in Black's Opera House from 1869 to 1878; and in the campus grove, south of Myers Hall and east of Recitation Hall, from 1879 to 1926. Only since 1927 have Commencements been held in Commencement Hollow. In bad weather, the event is staged in the Health, Wellness & Athletics Complex.

Today the event is in many ways a collection of private family celebrations. It is yet a collective event of the academic community but one in an era when academic communities are more diverse and fragmented than in an earlier day. The validity of the exercises as a demonstration of student competence, moreover, has long since been superseded by less public measurements and criteria, and the dimensions of institutional accountability are decidedly different and more complex.

The format and significance with which Commencement will be presented in the

years ahead remain to be seen, yet one central factor remains constant. Under the charter of the institution, only the Board of Directors may grant the student the degree which he or she has earned. This is accomplished by issuing a certificate that “authenticates and perpetuates” the student’s achievements. The faculty recommends, the Board of Directors

confirms, and the President publicly awards the degree, representing the institution’s common action. That is the fundamental meaning of Commencement. As an event that focuses attention upon the primary mission of the institution, it will survive in the ritual of academia so long as it emphasizes that essential meaning.

## Senior Class Giving Tradition

Wittenberg alumni have long demonstrated a commitment to giving back, helping fellow Tigers pursue their dreams and continue their education. In the spirit of this tradition, we proudly announce the Philanthropy Cord. The Wittenberg University green and gold Philanthropy Cord recognizes the generosity of giving back to your community as you and your classmates join together to support future generations of Tigers. The cord is known as a symbol of tradition and excellence to wear proudly during the Commencement ceremony.

The Senior Class of 2026 has chosen to pass our light and support our beloved Wittenberg by making our Senior Class gifts to support scholarships.

Leave your legacy and make your Class Gift to Class of 2026: Senior Class Giving GiveCampus: <https://wittenberguniversity.givecampus.com/class-of-2026-senior-class-giving>

Learn more about how you can connect with fellow alumni at: [www.wittenberg.edu/alumni](http://www.wittenberg.edu/alumni)

# THE CLASS OF 2026

## Officers

Ms. Alyssa J. Burnside, Senior Class Representative

Mr. Taylor “Moose” J. Harper, Senior Class Representative

## Honorary Class Members

**Dr. Michael L. Anes,**  
*Associate Professor of Psychology and Chair of the Department*

**Dr. Sally Brannan,**  
*Professor of Education and Chair of the Department*

**Dr. Matthew Collier,**  
*Professor of Biology and Chair of the Department*

**Dr. Kelly Dillon,**  
*Associate Professor of Communication & Digital Media and Chair of the Department*

**Dave Ferguson,**  
*Mixologist at Founders*

**Professor Erin Hill,**  
*Senior Professor of Practice in Education*

**Coach Chris Marco,**  
*Associate Head Cross Country / Assistant Track & Field Coach*

**Dr. Richard Phillips,**  
*Associate Professor of Biology and Program Director, Environmental Sciences*

**Dr. Scott Rosenberg,**  
*Professor of History, Honorary Consul for the Kingdom of Lesotho*

**Dr. Catherine Waggoner,**  
*Professor of Communication & Digital Media*

## MISSION STATEMENT

Wittenberg University provides a liberal arts education dedicated to intellectual inquiry and wholeness of person within a diverse residential community. Reflecting its Lutheran heritage, Wittenberg challenges students to become responsible global citizens, to discover their callings, and to lead personal, professional, and civic lives of creativity, service, compassion, and integrity.







