

# Bell Tower

A 2022-23 REPORT ON PHILANTHROPY





# Greetings from Washburn University!



Dear friends,

This fall, it has been the honor of my lifetime to be inaugurated as Washburn's 15th president. Washburn is where my heart is, and for more than 30 years it has been my privilege to serve it in a variety of ways – as a professor, a parent, a dean, vice president for academic affairs, and now as the first female to hold the office of the presidency.

Apropos of this publication, I also had the pleasure of serving as president of the Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation for 15 wonderful years. What I loved so much about that role in particular is I got to hear, every day, the incredible stories of our alumni and the positive impact they have on the world around them. I got to see, first-hand, the power of philanthropy in making big things happen. You'll see examples of that throughout this magazine.

It has been a whirlwind coming home to Washburn, and my goal when I started in February was to hit the ground running from day one. As I often tell our dedicated faculty and staff, we owe it to our students to think big about what Washburn can be, and to not be satisfied with "good enough." So already in these past several months, we've been able to announce:

- An amazing 5.5% growth in full-time enrollment, a tremendous achievement far outpacing many of our peers, and the most significant year-over-year increase in at least a decade.
- The Together We Thrive scholarship program, a major investment in local students which gives Shawnee Country residents a pathway to come to Washburn and graduate debt-free.
- A campus development plan to build a true campus of the future, with the opening of our new law building in July kicking off a host of moves, changes and upgrades to best position us to serve the students of tomorrow.
- And much more in the works, including changes designed to make Washburn one of the top universities to work for, and some major upcoming initiatives and campaigns which we'll be sharing with you all soon.

You are the key partners in helping us achieve those lofty goals. Friends and alumni of Washburn, as this publication illustrates, are constantly finding new, innovative ways to have an impact. Almost every success we point to, if you look just beneath the surface, you'll find that it would not have been possible without the outstanding support of the Washburn community.

While this publication looks back on the previous fundraising year, we here at Washburn are looking ever-forward. But we couldn't do that if it weren't for the 5,000 of you who have supported us this last year through donations (and so much more). You empower us, you bolster us, you inspire us and you drive us. We could not do it without you.

So on behalf of us at Washburn, thank you for your support. And go Bods!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JuliAnn Mazachek".

JuliAnn Mazachek  
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*Bell Tower* is an annual publication of the Washburn University Foundation, committed to building a community of support to advance Washburn's mission and enhance the opportunities and experiences of our students.

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# Dear Alumni and Friends,

Some years, you just don't quite know what to expect.

That was the case with this past year in fundraising. For the first time in a quarter century, Washburn experienced a presidential transition; we wrapped up one of our biggest capital projects and campaigns ever with the dedication of Robert J. Dole Hall at the law school in July; we, like universities everywhere, have been keeping a close eye on enrollment trends; and President Mazachek came out swinging with some really ambitious new programs.

As a foundation president, you wonder if all that transition might make for a quiet fundraising year – if alumni and donors will take a “wait and see” approach.

Nope. Not at Washburn.

What we saw instead were Ichabods who were all in. They felt the momentum and wanted to be a part of it. Far from a quiet year, fiscal year 2023 was one of the busiest we've ever had, with people ready and eager to step up. People like:

- Advisors Excel founders David Callanan and Cody Foster, always committed to helping Topeka flourish, who decided a great investment they could make toward that goal is helping us renovate Henderson Learning Resources Center, giving Washburn students what they need to succeed and become a part of an outstanding local workforce.
- The Finnup Foundation, who are doing much the same for southwest Kansas, and whose major scholarship program at Washburn continues to change lives and create incredible success stories.
- The I Will for Washburn Greenwood/McPherson Legacy Challenge has led to a spike in people including Washburn in their wills or estate plans. Alumni like Michael Onushco and his wife, Deborah, and Nick and Paige Woolery are among those who wanted to give back to Washburn programs that changed their own lives.
- Jerry and Susan Farley have already left as big a mark on Washburn as anybody, up to and including Ichabod Washburn himself, and like Ichabod they have become dedicated and passionate philanthropists.
- And wonderful Washburn stories like Jeff Kready and Nikki Renée Daniels, whose dedication to vocal performance and the arts in Topeka has extended to helping build our new recital hall on campus, or Lance and Vicky Sparks, always there to give our football and basketball teams a boost.

And, of course, in these pages you'll also find our honor roll of donors, more than 5,000 of whom contributed approximately \$17.5 million to Washburn for fiscal year 2022-23.

You are the ones who create the momentum that carries us forward; you are the reason why, at Washburn, we're not slowing down anytime soon.



Marshall Meek  
President  
Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation



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David Callanan, bba '98, and Cody Foster, ba '99, in front of Henderson. Photo by Jeremy Wangler

# Anticipating the Future

David Callanan and Cody Foster Are Betting on Washburn

*By Brad Porter*

David Callanan, bba '98, and Cody Foster, ba '99, are invested in Topeka.

The co-founders of Advisors Excel have been sending that message, in both word and deed, for years now. They met as Washburn students, and along with Derek Thompson, bba '99, joined a local insurance marketing organization after graduation and eventually became independent financial advisors themselves. Unhappy with the marketing assistance available at the time, they started sketching out ideas around Foster's kitchen table for creating their own insurance marketing organization, and Advisors Excel, LLC was born.

## Meeting Unmet Demand

They founded the company in Topeka in 2005, but it was the recession of 2008 that really set them apart. While so many other markets were crashing, the bet they were making – that

there was an unmet demand out there among independent financial advisors for high-level marketing support – paid off big-time. Even, or perhaps especially in tumultuous economic times, advisors were hungry for expertise and high impact service in getting their businesses to stand out. Advisors Excel took off like a rocket.

“I think one of the things that has always set us apart – both our business model but also just how Cody and I tend to look at things – is that we think long term,” Callanan explained. “We're not just looking at last quarter or this quarter, we're really trying to anticipate demand, and to set ourselves and our clients up for consistent, sustainable growth.”

Now, the company employs nearly 900 people and manages more than \$19 billion in client assets. They also, proudly, remain committed to their hometown. They have become a premier local employer, huge investors in the economic

development of the region and a driving force behind making sure Topeka continues developing and retaining the kind of high quality, educated workforce needed to keep the community prospering.

So, they're doing what they've always done – trying to anticipate demand. And, when it comes to making bets on the future of Topeka, they're betting on Washburn.

### As Washburn Goes...

“Washburn is the fulcrum for the success of Topeka,” Callanan said. “For us, as business owners, it is far and away the most significant pipeline we have for talent.”

They estimate as many as 75% of their core leadership are Washburn graduates.

“When you start looking around at what is the single biggest key to the future growth of Topeka, it's Washburn,” elaborated Foster. “And when we started to think about what is the biggest way we could move the needle at Washburn, how could we have the biggest impact on its future success, we really started to hone in on the Henderson renovation project.”

So this April, the pair decided to make a combined lead gift to the project – their biggest philanthropic commitment to Washburn yet. Combined with other generous early donations, their investment took the project past \$10 million of the \$15 million goal, immediately vaulting the largest single building renovation project in Washburn's history to a stage where it began hiring architects and contractors.

“Advisors Excel's gift will help bring our shared vision to life to create exceptional learning environments for our students,” said Washburn University President JuliAnn Mazachek.

“Their commitment to the success of Washburn will have a profound impact on our campus, our community and our workforce in the region. We are incredibly grateful for their support.”

### Shared Visions

Callanan and Foster give Mazachek a lot of credit too.

“She was my accounting teacher!” Callanan laughed. “That was the hardest class I took in college. But I have a vivid

memory of spending 45 minutes in her office one day where she was walking me through something I wasn't getting. Which is, by the way, one of the things I appreciated about my time at Washburn, that personal kind of attention.”

Foster, who was on the presidential search committee, said Mazachek's vision was a big reason why they both felt it was time to make this kind of major investment in Washburn. He relates how they met with her in her very first week as president, and already she was ready and eager to articulate a clear vision for a Washburn that was going to immediately deepen and enrich its engagement with Shawnee county and local businesses.

In Mazachek's view – which is Foster and Callanan's view as well – the destinies of Washburn and the community that surrounds it are inexorably intertwined. And the Henderson renovation will help shape both destinies in a positive and impactful way.

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“Washburn is the fulcrum for the success of Topeka.”

— David Callanan, bba '98

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“We don't normally give to buildings,” Foster explained. “But the benefit to this project specifically is so huge. It's going to elevate the region's top business school and take it to a whole new level. It's going to impact the experience of basically every Washburn student, from helping with recruitment to modernizing many of the core curriculum classes everybody takes, to helping Washburn put out high quality young professionals ready to jump right in in the local workforce.”

“As both business leaders and just people interested in keeping our community thriving, we're making a bet on Washburn's growth,” added Callanan. “And with the people and leadership they have, the vision they're striving for, and the smart way Washburn is growing and preparing for the future with things like this project, we think it's a good bet.”

And as far as making bets on Topeka goes, nearing the 20-year anniversary of founding their company here...well, they've been right so far.



# Big Support

Finnup Scholarships Enhance Opportunities for Southwest Kansas Students

*By Annie Flachsbarth*

In 1879, German furniture manufacturer Frederick Finnup ventured west from Ohio and instantly fell in love with the vast prairie of southwest Kansas. Determined to be part of a proposed new settlement, he eagerly obtained two of the first six deeds issued in what would eventually become Garden City. From that point forward, the Finnups became synonymous with the region, as the founding family of Garden City and champions of southwest Kansas.

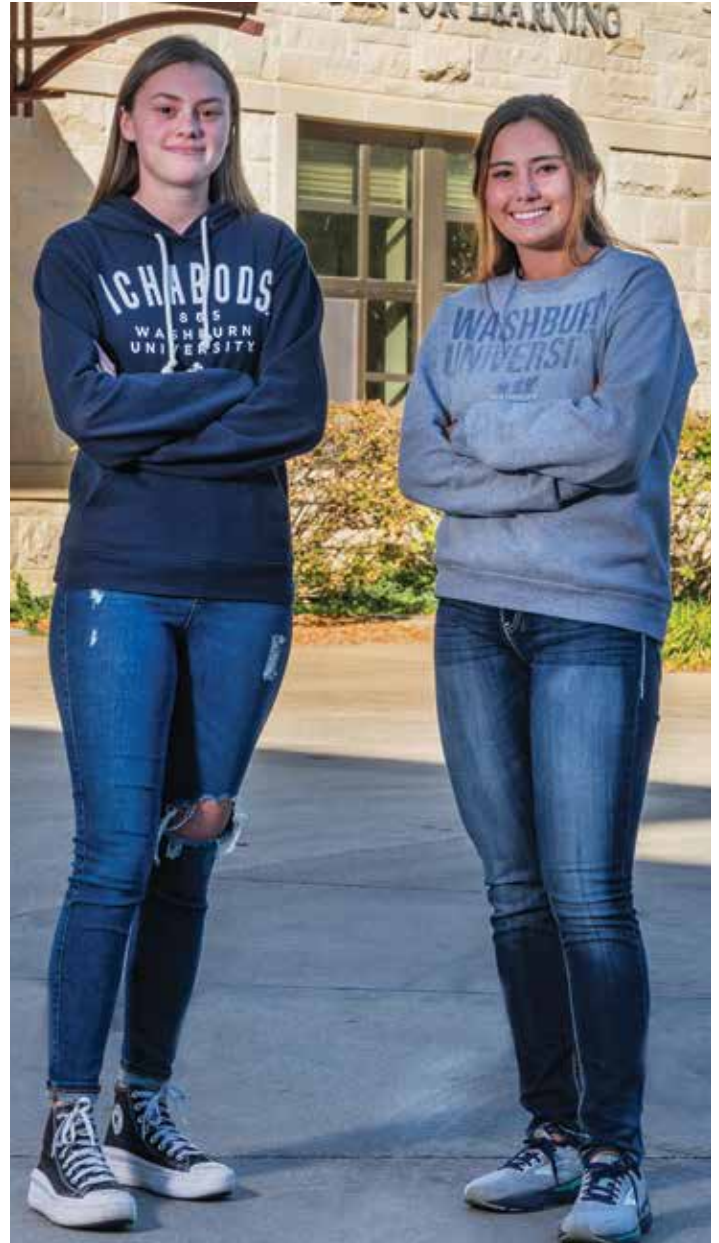
Nearly a hundred years later, in 1977 Frederick's descendants established the Finnup Foundation Family Trust to ensure Garden City's and southwest Kansas' continuing prosperity and development. The foundation has a wide range of programs and activities, and one of its priorities is helping southwest Kansas students earn college degrees. This has included, for the past 30 years, a robust scholarship program at Washburn University which has created a pipeline for students from southwest Kansas to come to Topeka to pursue their educations. Students like Kira Roth.

## Chance of a Lifetime

Roth, a freshman from Garden City, always knew college was on her roadmap. However, as the oldest of five children and first in the family to go to college, the stakes for her success are high.

"Growing up, I was always told to give my siblings somebody to look up to," Roth said. "Yes, I'm doing this for myself, but I'm also doing it so that my little brother – who's in first grade this year – sees it and says, 'Hey, Kira went to college. I want to do that, too.' The Finnup Scholarship took away the stress of how I would make that happen."

So Washburn and Finnup are busy spreading the word about this incredible opportunity for students from the southwest part of the state, with events like a gathering this spring in Garden City where prospective local students can learn more about Washburn and the Finnup Foundation's scholarships. Meeting with Washburn staff and admissions counselors and



**Current Finnup scholars Kira Roth and Kara Brakey.** *Photo by Jeremy Wangler*

finding out that high school students from the area with a GPA of 2.0 or higher who come to Washburn can receive as much as \$5,000 a year, or \$20,000 total, in additional financial aid, is a great selling point, and can be a difference-maker in a lot of people's college decision.

Alan Bearman, vice president for strategic enrollment management and dean of student success and libraries, has lauded this program as key to Washburn's recruitment.

"It is a unique opportunity for students in southwest Kansas and we want to make sure it impacts the lives of as many students as possible," he said. "We want these students on our campus next fall and walking across our commencement stage in the years to come."

Even better, the Finnup Scholarship is now stackable with Washburn's new academic scholarship plan, meaning a student with a 4.0 high school GPA will receive a full tuition award. Scholarship recipients also have the incredible opportunity to study abroad with a Finnup Foundation-funded program – making the scholarship even more desirable, and part of a holistic transformative experience.

## The Finnup Community

Finnup Scholarships are also helping to make Washburn even more attractive to prospective southwest Kansas students with a two-week residential program for new students called the Finnup Scholars Academy. As part of this program, Finnup students move into Washburn's Living Learning Center residence hall earlier than other students, which helps them acclimate to campus life and their new city before school starts.

Kara Brakey, a freshman biology major from Spearville, Kansas, toured several college campuses in the region, but ultimately chose Washburn because of this sense of belonging.

"The D1 schools felt so big and overwhelming. But Washburn wasn't like that," Brakey said. "I come from a really, really small town, so it was a big change for me. By moving in early, we got to know each other, so even before you start classes, you have some ready-made friends, your fellow Finnup scholars, which is so helpful for settling in and feeling like you belong."

"Growing up in Garden City, it was very diverse, but there was always a sense of community," Roth shared. "I was sort of nervous coming to Topeka because it always had a bigger feel. But I found that campus is just like its own little community. It reminds me a little bit of home."

## Making their Mark

Riding the waves of aspiration – and with the help of Finnup Scholarships – these impressive new students found the



**President JuliAnn Mazachek greets prospective students and families at a Finnup Foundation and Washburn University event this April in Garden City. Photo by Josh Rouse**

perfect environment in Washburn University to spread their wings and grow.

Brakey aims to attend medical school after obtaining her undergraduate degree. She hopes to become an orthopedic surgeon one day.

"Washburn's biology program is hard, but it's one of the top schools to help kids get into med school because it's so tough," Brakey said. "I like how collaborative Washburn professors are and how willing they are to help. You can tell that they care."

Roth, who hopes to go on to law school, is fueled by a passion to create change for the better.

"I want to make a positive impact on people's lives. It's interesting to see the discrepancies in justice and that it can destroy someone's life if we don't do it right," Roth said. "If I can at least make a little change in someone's life – for the better – that's what I want to do."

Many of these students who come to Washburn to earn their degrees will return to southwest Kansas to make their own marks on the region and help it continue to grow and prosper. In that way, more than 140 years later, Frederick Finnup's legacy lives on, and, with Washburn's help, the Finnup family continues providing for a thriving and educated southwest Kansas.



Nick, ba '08, and Paige, bs '07, Woolery. *Photo submitted*

# Making a Difference

The Woolerys Are Helping Students Who Want to Help Others

*By Angela Lutz*

Growing up in western Kansas, Paige Woolery, bs '07, loved the quiet streets and wide-open spaces – but she always wanted to make a broader impact beyond her hometown. While studying at Washburn University, she visited New York City for the first time and got to know a whole new way of life. She was there to volunteer at a homeless shelter as part of Washburn University's Alternative Breaks Program, and she calls the experience “eye-opening.”

“People at the shelter would share their stories, and they were just like any of us,” she said. “One of them had a really bad health issue and couldn't work, and some were escaping from abusive relationships. There's such stigma around homelessness, and it was great to have the support from Washburn to get there and learn about how to support folks in those situations.”

Paige's husband, Nick Woolery, ba '08, also participated in Alternative Breaks while he was a student at Washburn. As a sophomore, he spearheaded trips to Mississippi and Louisiana to help with cleanup efforts after Hurricane Katrina, and he went to Greensburg, Kansas, after the devastating tornado in

2007. He also visited the New York City homeless shelters with Paige, who he met at Washburn and married in 2008. He says these opportunities made a lasting impression on him and imparted values that he and Paige hope to pass on to their two children.

“Going down after a disaster and seeing people's lives torn apart was devastating – but then you see that the little impact you can make can actually make a big difference,” Nick said. “Even small things like being able to pick up debris from an elderly woman's backyard and sitting around at lunchtime and eating oranges from her tree and hearing her life story – those are experiences that can stay with you for the rest of your life.”

For both Nick and Paige, their Alternative Breaks experience was nothing short of life changing. In addition to the help they were able to give others, they also felt they benefited from the skills and leadership training the program gave them, as people and professionals. Now living in Georgetown, Texas, Nick is an assistant city manager and Paige works at accounting firm KPMG as an internal auditor. Alternative Breaks, which is



managed by Washburn's Learning in the Community, or LinC, program, is an example of how Nick said Washburn provides students with formative experiences by focusing on service away from campus over winter and spring academic breaks.

"I received a lot of incredible volunteer opportunities through LinC, and all of those experiences set me up for success," Nick said. "The Washburn faculty made a personal investment in the students. They went above and beyond to help you grow as a person and a leader."

To ensure current and future students have access to these once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, Washburn often utilizes gifts from alumni and other community members. Because of their success, the Woolerys recently decided to pledge financial support to the Alternative Breaks Program through the I Will for Washburn Greenwood/McPherson Legacy Challenge. This unique campaign encourages people to include Washburn in their will or estate plan and allows them to direct \$10,000 to any area on campus, thereby making an immediate and tangible difference in the lives of students.

Paige said she was initially intimidated by the idea of estate planning, especially since she and Nick are still relatively young. But after learning more about I Will for Washburn, Paige realized that she and Nick were perfectly positioned to make an impactful donation that will contribute to growth on campus – and even better, they can watch it unfold right away.

"Even if a gift does start small, it can add up over time and make a big change – and I Will for Washburn is a good way to do that," Paige said. "I would encourage people not to be intimidated to take the first step and find out what the options are. Don't think that any amount is too small to get started."

"We wanted to make the biggest difference and give back in the biggest way," Nick added. "It will have an immediate impact helping students grow as people and leaders. When I was organizing those trips, we received donations from alums who wanted to support students in their efforts to go help people in need. It made a huge difference and also really inspired me personally."

Going forward, Nick and Paige hope their donations can make a difference for current and future Washburn students – and inspire them to keep paying it forward to those in need.

"We have continued to be involved in the community in Texas and are always looking for ways to give back because we learned the value of that at Washburn," Paige said. "We want to make sure other Washburn students get those same opportunities."



Washburn's Alternative Breaks trip to New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. *Photo submitted*

## Learning by Serving Others

Washburn students are often passionate about service, and Washburn's Learning in the Community, or LinC, program offers them a variety of ways they can enhance their academic and college experience while improving the community with hands-on service opportunities, such as:

- *Alternative Breaks Program*, which engages Washburn students in focused service away from campus over winter and spring academic breaks, and has become a popular way for students to travel and have great experiences while having a positive impact.
- *Washburn Peace Works*, which promotes international service, support of international partners who address the needs of underserved communities around the world, and awareness of international social justice awareness.
- *Oxfam America* creates lasting solutions to poverty, hunger and injustice, and Washburn's LinC scholars often partner with them and direct an Oxfam Club on campus which organizes things like an annual Thanksgiving dinner for persons transitioning from homelessness.



Susan, H '23, and Jerry Farley, leaving the office on his final day as president. *Photo by Jeremy Wangler*

# Ichabods in All We Do

Jerry and Susan Farley Expand Legacy with Generous Gift

*By Annie Flachsbarth*

In a world where education is often seen as a privilege, Washburn University President Emeritus Jerry Farley and his wife, Susan, believe it should be a right.

With an unwavering dedication to empowering students and ensuring access to quality education, the Farleys have already made a profound impact in their 25 years at Washburn. As if their decades of service wasn't proof enough of their passion for education and steadfast belief in Washburn's mission, on the occasion of his retirement, the couple made a historic parting gesture: they are following in the footsteps of philanthropic trailblazer and university namesake Ichabod Washburn, and announced that they are personally donating more than \$2 million to student scholarships.

## A Lasting Legacy

In the early 1800's at the age of 9, Ichabod Washburn left home to serve as an indentured apprentice in a blacksmith shop in Leicester, Massachusetts. Always aiming to grow and

secure a better life, he pursued an education – one that led to a strong foundation of knowledge that he applied to a successful career in the iron and steel industry. Ultimately, the success he found allowed him to make significant contributions to causes and organizations across the country, including Washburn.

Much like Ichabod Washburn, the Farleys believe in the transformative power of a college education. But it's their own experiences that helped them arrive at that decision.

As a first-generation college student himself, Dr. Farley witnessed firsthand the impact an education made on his life. Before college, he spent time driving tractors and working on cars on the family farm in South Carolina. He also spent a few years in the military. His decision to go to school caught his family off guard.

"He barely knew what college was," said Susan. "He accidentally enrolled when he went with his friend who was



enrolling. When he went home and told his parents, they were surprised and shocked, but ultimately they helped him do it.”

Now, having spent more than 50 years in higher education, he wants to make sure others have the same opportunities he did.

“It’s important for everyone to realize that we can impact students, particularly first-generation students, through activities like this gift,” said Dr. Farley. “I know, as was the case for me, that for so many potential students all they need is the opportunity. Scholarships give people that opportunity.”

## Times of Change

While the evidence proves how advantageous a college education can be on an individual’s success, Dr. Farley expressed concerns about the diminishing value placed on formal education.

“Right now, there is a disconcerting thing occurring where many people think you don’t need a high school or college education. But that makes it hard to move up and limits growth potential,” said Dr. Farley. “Post-secondary education in the country is down, but we can change that and significantly impact students – particularly first-generation students – in a big way.”

For the Farleys, it’s no secret that the transformative power of a college education enables individuals to pursue fulfilling careers and unlock future opportunities. Their investments in the students of Washburn serve not as charity but as an investment in the future.

“Education enabled us to have very fulfilling careers,” said Susan. “We know what education can do, and we believe in what Washburn does to change lives and enable people to be wonderful citizens in the world. We want to see that keep going.”

“There are many students who see the cost of an education as a barrier,” said Dr. Farley. “They will see what these gifts can do for them – it’s a way to get into college, and a path for where they want to go.”

## Once an Ichabod, Always an Ichabod

After 25 years of service, many may wonder why the Farleys feel it’s important to give back when they have both already given so much to the university. As they put it, just because Dr. Farley is now retired doesn’t mean they’re no longer Ichabods. In fact, they’re still actively involved, planning to be of service when necessary, and planning to go on alumni trips with many of the friends they’ve met over the years.

As a lifelong learner, Susan still audits at least one class each semester. Dr. Farley, serving as president emeritus, is now officially working out of his home office instead of the university’s offices. They’ve slowed down a little to take a few vacations, a well-deserved perk of retirement. But they’ll never stop being agents of change for the power of education – mirroring the spirit of generosity exemplified by Ichabod Washburn himself.

“Ichabod Washburn gave something to every worthy cause that approached him for the last 45 years of his life,” said Susan. “When you start giving, it comes back to you tenfold.”

“And just like he knew he would probably never meet the people his giving was going to help, to him, it was an investment in the future,” said Dr. Farley. “We very much feel like we’re carrying that legacy forward.”

Added Susan: “We’re Ichabods in all we do.”

**At the end of his presidency, Farley left behind his signature bowtie – and millions in scholarships for future Ichabods.**

*Photos by Jeremy Wangler*





Jim Wempe, ba '74, Ronnie McHenry, bba '17, Michael Onushco, ba '74 and Jim Yadon, bba '77 at the Topeka Country Club. Photo by Jeremy Wangler

# Par for the Course

Michael and Debbie Onushco take a big swing at scholarships for Washburn students

*By Brad Porter*

Michael Onushco, ba '74, has made a profession out of recreation.

## Raised in a Bowling Center and on the Golf Course

His father, a single parent, was a civilian engineer for the United State Air Force whose job took him to Louisiana, Kansas (where Michael was born), Florida, and Georgia. While his father's job took them places, it was his passion for recreation that really made an impression on young Michael. It was a rare weekend when you wouldn't find Michael's father on the golf course or at the bowling lanes, and always, young Michael was in tow.

"It was a great way to grow up," Onushco remembered. And Michael picked up a thing or two along the way – by the time he was in middle school, he was competing in junior golf tournaments and even won a state bowling championship.

His father was reposted back to Forbes Field and Topeka in 1967, and Michael became a student at Washburn Rural, where he was a three-year letterer in golf, and in 1970 qualified as the Kansas representative to the All-America Youth Bowling Championship in Washington, D.C. (he finished 6th). For college, he chose the University of Houston, a Division I golf

powerhouse. However, once he got there he realized fairly quickly that his playing options would be a bit more limited at the #1 golf school in the country than they had been at Washburn Rural.

"I went and talked with their golf coach, who was nice enough, but it became very apparent that my chances of getting on the team were slim to none," Onushco recalled. He did qualify and bowl for the University of Houston bowling team, but still, he missed being a part of a golf team.

His first summer back from college, Onushco scratched his golf itch by competing in the 1971 Topeka match play city championship, finishing second. That caught the attention of legendary coach and member of the Washburn Athletics Hall of Fame Glen Cafer. A year later, Cafer ran into Onushco again, this time while he was taking golf as a summer course for PE credits at Washburn. That's when Cafer started pitching him on coming back to Topeka permanently.

"Coach Cafer told me if I came to Washburn, there would be a scholarship and a spot on the team for me," Onushco recalled. "So, that's what I did. I'll always be grateful to Coach Cafer for seeing something in me and changing the course of my life."



During Onushco's time, the golf team had success in regional and conference tournaments and placed fourth in the NAIA national championship in 1974.

"I had a phenomenal experience at Washburn and my time there really helped shape me and learn how to navigate through life," Onushco noted.

## Bowling, Awards and Imaging Technology

Onushco's father had semi-retired to Florida by then, so after graduation, in 1975 Michael and father bought into a bowling center together, the Port Charlotte Bowlerama. Michael also began teaching a bowling class at the local community college, where he met and married his wife Debbie. But it was a small facet of their work at the bowling center that became a big deal.

There's a certain amount of paraphernalia that comes along with bowling, like trophies. So, in 1976, Michael and Debbie began a small engraving and awards business. They did so at a pivotal time; in the late 70s and 80s, the world of computing, imaging, and printing exploded, with new technologies coming along faster than most people could learn them. Michael and Debbie's growing expertise made them increasingly in demand. Their awards business morphed into becoming a wholesale sublimation supplier, and by the time the 90s rolled around, the Onushcos had become leading experts in the industry. They were chosen in 1996 as one of the first four inkjet sublimation distributors in the nation, and spun out a company, ACP Technologies, to handle all the demand. Michael was giving digital technology seminars for the awards industry, and Debbie was becoming quite an organizer and accountant for their booming business.

"We got to be in on the ground floor of so many things, in terms of new technologies, making connections all around the world and being early adopters in these neat, burgeoning industries," Debbie reflected. "It's been a great ride."

## Giving Back to the Blue on the Green

Recently, Michael and Debbie started winding down some of those business holdings and doing estate planning – though they never had children, their wide and varied careers left them with a lot of assets to sort through. After making sure their families were taken care of, they were left to decide what to do with the remainder. It was Debbie who picked up some mail Michael had received from Washburn Athletics and, thinking of the key crossroads that Coach Cafer's offer had been for Michael's life, said to him "what about leaving something to Washburn golf?"

They became taken with the idea, worked with their attorney on their estate plans, and eventually contacted Washburn out of the blue to let them know that they would be leaving a multi-million-dollar gift to fund scholarships for Washburn Rural High School students attending Washburn, and up to five substantial scholarships for players on the Ichabod golf team.

"The scholarship and support Coach Cafer gave me changed my life," reflected Michael. "Now that I'm in a position to do so, I want to change someone else's life in that same way. I am thrilled to do it."

Only one thing left to do, then. Go golfing!

## Homecoming

"Once a Washburn golfer, always a Washburn golfer," is how Coach Ronnie McHenry, bba '17, puts it. "When I'm talking to potential players, one thing I talk about is how golf is a lifelong sport; joining the team, you're really joining a brotherhood forever."

As if to highlight that point, this September three of the five members of the 1974 Washburn golf team were back in town – Michael Onushco, Jim Wempe, ba '74, and Jim Yadon, bba '77 – and they asked McHenry to join them for some rounds. This was a homecoming of sorts for the Onushcos – Michael had not been back since he graduated in 1974, and Debbie had never been to Topeka at all. So they toured campus and took a walk down memory lane. The next day, Michael met up with his old college teammates at the Topeka Country Club to play a few rounds with Coach McHenry

As they played, they talked about the kinds of things you talk about when you're golfing with old friends: their memories of their years together, the facilities and support golfers have available to them today versus back then, the impact their time at Washburn had on their lives, the success Coach McHenry was eager to build on in his second year, and the lifelong fraternity of sport and recreation. And, McHenry was able to thank Michael personally for the scholarships he and Debbie would leave behind.

"Scholarships are far and away the most important recruiting tool we have," McHenry said. "And Mr. Onushco is such a great example of what I tell recruits all the time: it's more than a sport, it's a family. And you'll be a part of that Washburn golf family for the rest of your life."





# Can You Hear Me Now?

Jeff Kready and Nikki Renée Daniels Support Vocal Performance in Topeka

*By Brad Porter*

If there's one person who can speak to vocal performance in Topeka, it is Jeff Kready.

The Broadway star, a 2004 Washburn music major, has probably played every stage within a hundred miles of the capital city. He first performed at White Concert Hall when he was 6 years old and returned to it years later as a Washburn student for his senior recital.

"I can remember it like it was yesterday," Kready said. "All the hard work, preparation, knowing a repertoire backward and forward, dragging family and friends to attend, and all the support from your fellow students and Washburn faculty, who care so much and get so invested in their students' success. It was a great experience for me."

"But, it's not something that draws 1,200 people," he noted. "White is an amazing place to sing, but it is this big, cavernous concert hall. There's kind of no great middle option currently for smaller, more intimate performances." With a laugh, he added: "It can be a bit deflating to work so hard and then fill a theater to, like, one-tenth capacity."

So when Kready and his wife, acclaimed actress and concert soloist Nikki Renée Daniels, first heard about the recital hall project, they immediately understood what it would mean for Washburn vocalists and really anybody interested in music performance in Topeka.

"Nikki and I both understood the niche there right away," Kready said. "Having a new recital hall at Washburn will be such a boon; it will open up so many opportunities for future performers and audiences alike."

To Kready, it's just another example of what Topeka is doing right – he is proud of his hometown and how much it embraces music and the arts. His wife and their two girls, Lena, 10, and Louise, 6, have all become very familiar with the city as performers themselves. Last year, they organized "The Kready

Holiday Spectacular" at the Topeka Performing Arts Center, where their family led Topeka-area musicians, choral singers and special guests through a number of holiday standards new and old. They didn't quite know what to expect, but were blown away by the response – the show was a huge success, so much so that they'll be doing it again this year on Dec. 23.

"Topeka has really adopted us all as a family," Daniels noted. "We are proud to be a part of anything that will help keep the arts thriving here."

When Kready and Daniels began considering making a gift to the recital hall project, at least part of the impetus was to set an example for their own girls – to show them it's important to support the arts not only as performers, but as patrons too.

"Both of our girls are performers, so they're very immersed in music," she said. "But the arts are important whether you're going to be a performer or not, and we want our girls to be shaped not just as singers but as cultural patrons, people who care about art and music and want to preserve it."

So, Kready and Daniels were happy to make a major gift to the recital hall campaign, and are proud to be a part of the effort not just for Washburn's sake, but for the sake of Topeka and music-lovers everywhere.

"After talking about it, it just seemed like a no-brainer that we want to be a part of bringing a recital hall to Washburn," Kready noted. "For projects like this, you need all kinds of donations, not only big gifts but grassroots support from the whole community, everybody coming together to help get it done and get it across the finish line. This was such a formative place for me, that if I can help preserve that for the next generation, of course I'm going to try to do that any way I can."

"Plus," he added. "This will one more great place to sing in Topeka."

Left: Jeff Kready, ba '04, and Nikki Renée Daniels in White Concert Hall. *Photo by Jeremy Wangler*

# Teamwork Wins

Lance Sparks Pays it Forward with Major Athletic Department Contributions

By Annie Flachsbarth

"Basketball was my ticket to an education. I didn't think I would end up at Washburn, but it was the best place to play."

Following in the footsteps of his dad and three older sisters, Lance Sparks, bs '93, received a full-ride basketball scholarship to attend Washburn University. But his basketball career was just the beginning of his success.

While at Washburn, Sparks received business degrees in economics and finance, setting the stage for a successful career in the financial industry. Even after graduation he continued to put in the reps, learning everything he could from colleagues and peers. Eventually, he and his friend and mentor, Mark Heitz, ba '74, jd '77, H '01, decided to purchase a local company and started CreativeOne, an insurance marketing organization, in Overland Park, Kansas. At the same time, he began Market Synergy Group, an insurance product development company, in Topeka. Their hard work paid off, and success followed.

Today, Sparks and his wife, Vicky, are doing their part to pay it forward to Washburn through significant charitable contributions – including contributions to the Indoor Athletic Facility and Robert J. Dole Hall, the new law school building, as well as significant multiyear pledges to the Men's Basketball Program Fund and the Football Program Fund. They also have an endowed scholarship fund in his name that supports business students participating in varsity athletics.

Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation President Marshall Meek said Sparks has been an excellent teammate to Washburn Athletics.

"We've had great success the last couple of years, and the Sparks have been a big part of that," Meek said. "It's because people like him are willing to get involved, come to the games and tailgates and get others involved that we're able to create a tremendous student-athlete experience. We appreciate everything he's done."



Lance Sparks, bs '93, tailgating at a Washburn football game with his daughter Sophie. *Photo submitted*

Sparks said giving back to his alma mater feels like the right thing to do for several reasons, but community pride and growing the local workforce are at the top of the list.

"The reason I like to give to different projects at Washburn is not just about making Washburn better – it's about making Topeka better," Sparks said. "I feel like we've gotten a lot from Washburn. We've hired a lot of former athletes, and part of it is giving back to cultivate that line of recruiting."

If you ask Sparks, the teamwork you learn from college athletics is paramount to being a good co-worker and employee. In fact, many of the principles you gain from being on a team are the same things he looks for in staff.

"Athletics aren't the most important thing in university life, but it can teach you a lot about working hard, dealing with adversity and working as a team," Sparks said. "Teamwork is needed for business success. And when you win a championship, one person doesn't cut the net down; you each take your turn. That's what it's all about."

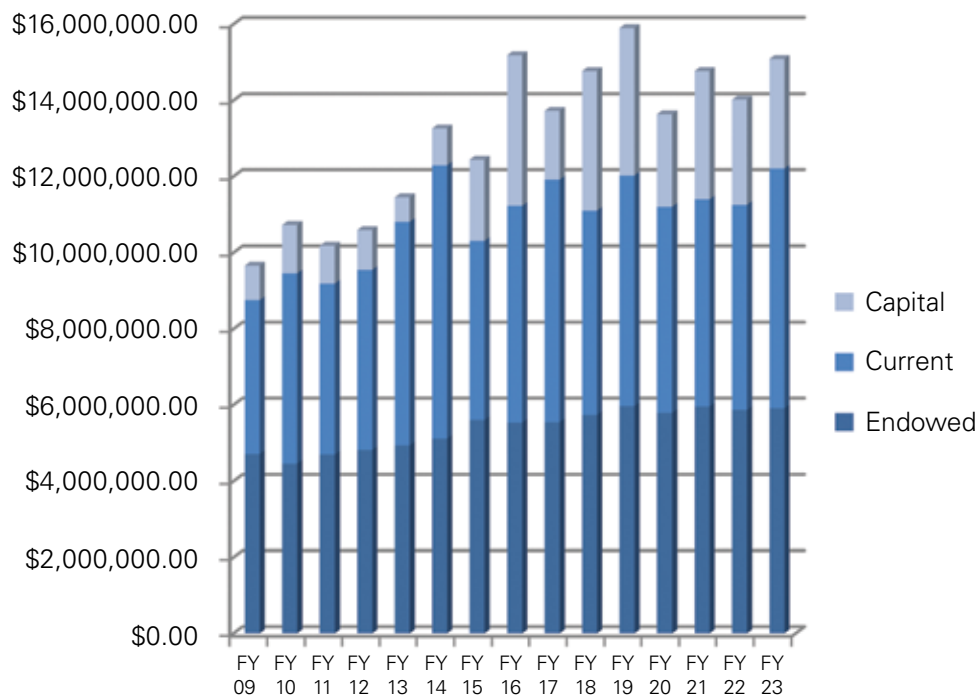




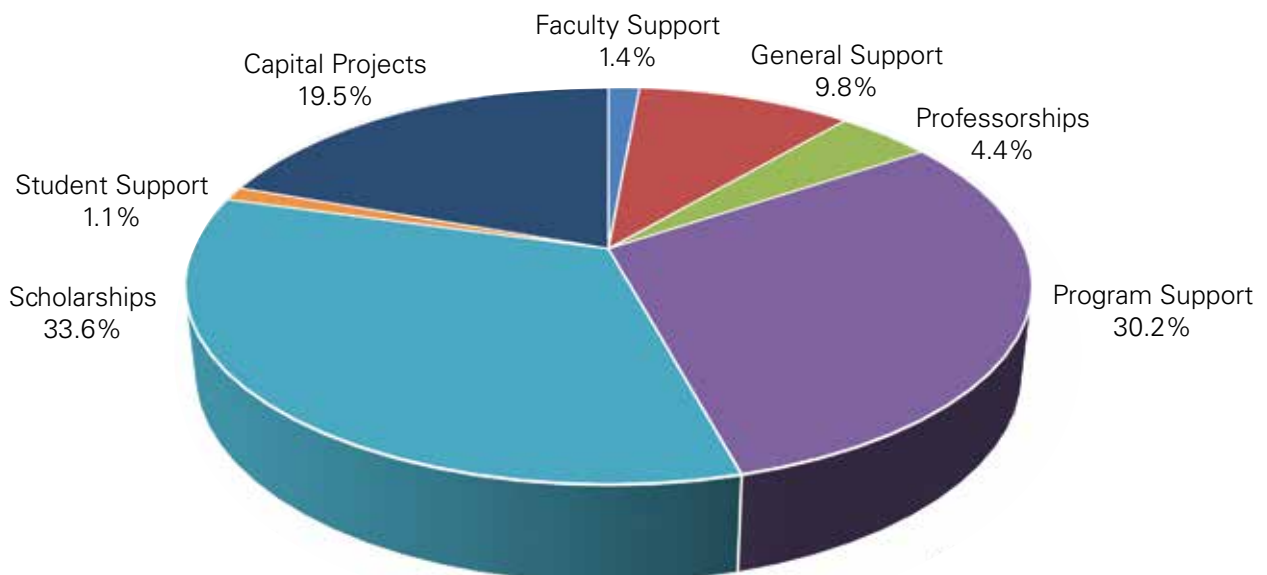
# Financial Information

The Washburn University Foundation has \$219 million in total assets as of June 30, 2023, and according to the 2022 NACUBO-Commonfund Study of Endowments, it ranks in the top 50 of public institutions for endowment per student FTE.

## Funds Made Available to the University from Private Support



## 2022-23 Fund Breakdown - \$15.1 million





# Honor Roll of Donors

The Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation extends our deepest thanks to each and every one of our donors. Every gift makes a difference, and support from friends and alumni materially advances our mission of enriching the lives of students by providing opportunities for them to develop and realize their greatest potential.

All names listed are for purposes of acknowledgment and recognition only – any other use is strictly prohibited. We make every effort to ensure the information in the Honor Roll of Donors is as complete and accurate as possible, but errors may occur. If any information needs updating, please alert us at 785.670.4483 or [contactus@wualumni.org](mailto:contactus@wualumni.org).

The Honor Roll begins by recognizing all those who made gifts to Washburn University during the fiscal year July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, whose total giving this year was \$1,000 or more (**Bell Tower Club**) or \$250 or more (**Blue and White Club**).

We then recognize those philanthropic leaders whose lifetime contributions in gifts and pledges qualify them to be members of the **Lincoln Society**, and whose estate planning earns them membership in the **Whiting Society**.

Finally, special thanks to those donors who made **significant gifts or pledges** of \$25,000 or more this fiscal year, and those who served on our **Board of Directors**.

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*Recognizing donors who made contributions of \$1,000 or more during Fiscal Year 2022-23.*

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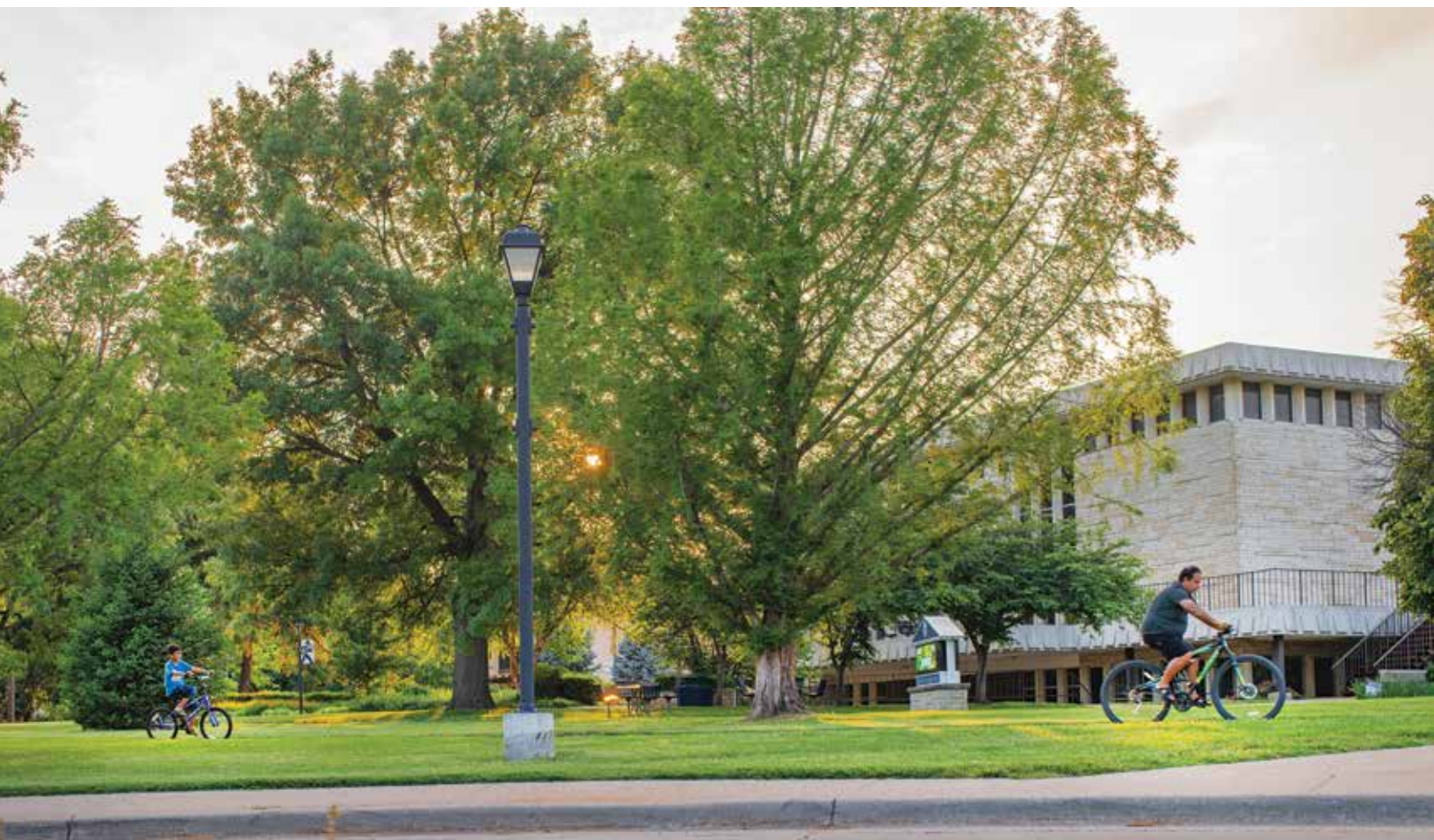


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 Sue & Greg Palmer  
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Including Washburn in your will can now earn you \$10,000 to immediately direct to any fund through the "I Will for Washburn" Greenwood McPherson legacy challenge.

Learn how you can have a direct and long-lasting impact on Washburn students far into the future, and today as well!

**Contact us**

Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation  
785.670.4483 | [contactus@wualumni.org](mailto:contactus@wualumni.org)  
[wualumni.planmylegacy.org](http://wualumni.planmylegacy.org)



## A Huge Year for New Whiting Society Members!

*30 new members joined between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023.*

Patricia L. Atley  
James E. & Mary E.\* Ward Baker  
Wayne & Kristen Basso  
Glenda L. Cafer  
Bart Chavez & Frances Bodlovich  
Randy & Debra Clayton  
Gary L. & Mary J. Eiesenbarth  
Marcella E. Fairbanks  
Brian E. Hahn  
Lowell Hahn

Janeé & David Hanzlick  
Dan C. & Julie F. Hejtmanek  
Paul & Jeanne Hoferer  
Matt & Shelia Knoll  
Garrett & Caley Love  
Kelie McIver  
Amy & Greg McLaren  
Mike & Debbie Onushko  
C. Denise Ottinger  
Martha & David Pierce

Carrie Saia  
Gary & Kathy Schmidt  
Jim & Kathy Speier  
Laura Stephenson  
Donald J. Stoeckel  
Karen & Roger Viola  
Dale & Lynn Ward  
T. Michael & Sheryl W. Wilson  
Nick & Paige Woolery  
Karen Kuhn Zeller

*Thank you for your commitment!*



# Significant Gifts

Donors who made a gift or pledge of \$25,000 or more during the 2022-23 fiscal year, or donated gifts-in-kind valued at \$5,000 or more. These names may appear in other sections; however, we wanted to make a special effort to recognize their extraordinary commitment to Washburn, and highlight just a few of the diverse programs they fund.

## Significant Gifts

Advisors Excel, LLC  
Bruce '98, '87 & Tami '87 Akin  
Art Bridges, Inc.  
Dana Backstrom\* '86  
John K. & Lynne D. Boyer  
Greg H'99, '84 & Ronda '84  
Brenneman  
Blanche Bryden Foundation  
David '98 & Karlun Callanan  
CAPITOL FEDERAL®  
Bart Chavez '85, '82 & Frances  
Bodlovich  
Judy Conklin  
Bob\* '64 & Anne\* Derstein  
Chad Earwood  
Tim\* H'07, '64 & Carole\*  
Bloomfield '63 Etzel  
Explore the Trades  
Jerry & Susan H'23 Farley  
Ferguson Enterprises

Finnup Foundation Trust  
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Dan '76 & Elaine Frickey  
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Gilbert H'21, '70 & Ann Galle  
Marilyn L. Geiger\*  
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Raymond Goldsmith\*  
Linda '78 & Bill Graves  
Dane G. Hansen Foundation  
Cynthia Heath H'22, '71  
Martha Hodgesmith & John E.  
McElroy III\* '74  
Paul '75 & Jeanne H'15, '80  
Hoferer  
Darline Jaquith-Peterson\*  
Ross Jory  
Steve H'05, '70 & Brenda '95  
Kitchen  
Jeff Kready '04 & Nikki Daniels  
Mark '99 & Erin '99 Krueger  
Mike H'07, '77 & Doreen  
Manning

Bill '67 & Kathy '68 McDonald  
Judy Olander '82  
Redbud Foundation  
Sheila Reynolds  
Dave '74 & Jane Roberts  
John H'18 & Barbara '85  
Stauffer  
Glenn Swogger\*  
Rick Taylor  
Topeka Opera Society Concert  
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Bob '65 & Karen Viets  
Bob Harvey\* '64 & Joel  
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Nick '08 & Paige '07 Woolery  
Don Yelen\*  
Jim & Sarah Young  
VisionBank  
Jeannette Wells\* '46  
Frederic B. Woellhof\*  
Gary '76 & Widge '77 Yager  
Jim & Sarah Young

## Significant Gifts-in-Kind

William Carpenter & Joan  
Sehdev  
Ernest-Spencer Metals, Inc.  
HME, Inc.  
Chris Hutton '80, '71  
Hutton Monuments  
Mullins Mechanical  
Albert & Linda Neutel  
PTMW, Inc.  
Judith Sabatini H'06, '85  
Webco Manufacturing Inc

\*Deceased

## 2023–2024 Honor Roll Changes

We are so grateful to all our donors who make gifts to Washburn University, and every year are proud to feature them in our donor honor roll.

In an effort to streamline and keep these listings meaningful and manageable, next year we are going to be tidying up the categories. This will have no impact on how gifts are counted or a person's donations are tracked, but it will change the way the information is grouped and displayed. The attached graphic gives an overview of these category changes, and can also be found at [wualumni.org/honorrollchanges](http://wualumni.org/honorrollchanges)

Our donors make an incredible difference to Washburn students and our entire university community, and we hope to continue to find ways to honor them, recognize them in meaningful ways and show the impact they have on everything we do. If you have any questions or concerns about our donor honor rolls, as always please contact us at [contactus@wualumni.org](mailto:contactus@wualumni.org).

*Thank you, Washburn donors!*

### Washburn University Donor Honor Roll

#### Bell Tower Society

**Luminaries**  
(\$50,000+)  
**Dignitaries**  
(\$25,000 - \$49,999)  
**Principals**  
(\$20,000 - \$24,999)  
**Partners**  
(\$15,000 - \$19,999)  
**Visionaries**  
(\$10,000 - \$14,999)  
**Champions**  
(\$7,500 - \$9,999)  
**Leaders**  
(\$5,000 - \$7,499)  
**Directors**  
(\$3,500 - \$4,999)  
**Ambassadors**  
(\$2,500 - \$3,499)  
**Notables**  
(\$1,500 - \$2,499)  
**Guardians**  
(\$1,000 - \$1,499)

#### Blue & White Club

**Benefactors**  
(\$500 - \$999)  
**Pacesetters**  
(\$250 - \$499)  
**Investors**  
(\$100 - \$249)  
**Patrons**  
(\$50 - \$99)  
**Sponsors**  
(\$1 - \$49)

### Honor Roll FY24 Would Become

#### Bell Tower Society

**Luminaries**  
(\$100,000+)  
**Champions**  
(\$50,000 - \$99,999)  
**Dignitaries**  
(\$25,000 - \$49,999)  
**Visionaries**  
(\$10,000 - \$24,999)  
**Leaders**  
(\$5,000 - \$9,999)  
**Ambassadors**  
(\$2,500 - \$4,999)  
**Guardians**  
(\$1,000 - \$2,499)

#### Blue & White Club

**Benefactors**  
(\$500 - \$999)  
**Pacesetters**  
(\$250 - \$499)  
**Investors**  
(\$100 - \$249)  
**Patrons**  
(\$50 - \$99)

# Washburn University Alumni Association and Foundation Board of Directors

*As of June 30, 2023*

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