



## Report to the ELCA Synod Assemblies - March 2025

Founded in 1874, the mission of St. Olaf College is to challenge students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition. St. Olaf's current student population of approximately 3050 degree-seeking undergraduates represents 49 states and 102 countries. 20% are first-generation college students, 23% identify as domestic students of color, 10% are international students, and 24% are income-eligible for Pell grants. St. Olaf continues to be one of only a handful of higher education institutions nation-wide that meets the full demonstrated need of all admitted students through a variety of financial assistance programs, including a new [Indigenous Affordability Commitment](#) to be launched in Fall 2025. Approximately half of our students indicate that they are affiliated with a Christian denomination, with 16% self-identifying as Lutheran and another 5% as members of a denomination in full communion with the ELCA.

St. Olaf's core curriculum engages students with the full array of liberal arts disciplines, including one required course examining Religion, Faith, and Values, one on Christian Theology in Dialogue, and one on Ethical Reasoning in Context. Among our Class of 2024 graduates, 94% had participated in a "high-impact educational practice," such as a mentored research experience, a learning community, study abroad/away, or an academic civic engagement course. Over the past three years, an average of 95% of our recent graduates were working, pursuing further education, or engaged in full-time military or other service program within seven months of graduation.

In Summer 2023, St. Olaf welcomed [Dr. Susan Rundell Singer](#) as its twelfth president, succeeding President David R. Anderson '74. A national leader in the improvement of undergraduate teaching and learning, Dr. Singer previously served as vice president for academic affairs and provost at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida; as the director of the Division of Undergraduate Education at the National Science Foundation (NSF); and as the Laurence McKinley Gould Professor of Biology at Carleton College. Under her leadership, the college is now implementing a new [six-year strategic plan](#), focused on elevating vocation, expanding innovation, and sustaining community. The plan includes a commitment to developing and implementing a strategy for college-wide inclusion, belonging, cultural competence, and engagement across differences, supported by a new Division of Community and Belonging. [Vice President Eduardo Pazos](#) joined President Singer's executive team on August 1 to lead this vital work, having previously served as assistant dean of student affairs for identity and culture, director of the Center for Multicultural Life, and director of the Rachel Lord Center for Religious and Spiritual Life. This year also marks the [commemoration of the college's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary](#) with a wide variety of exhibits and events, including a [two-day St. Olaf Music Festival](#) at Orchestra Hall that will feature the St. Olaf Band and the St. Olaf Jazz Band on Friday, April 18 and the St. Olaf Orchestra and St. Olaf Choir on Saturday, April 19.

St. Olaf continues to offer [daily Chapel services and Sunday worship](#) throughout the academic year, led by its two ELCA pastors and featuring members and friends of the St. Olaf community as speakers and musicians. Consistent with St. Olaf's identity as a "rooted and open" ELCA institution, the College Ministry team also includes an Associate Chaplain for Jewish Life and an Associate Chaplain for Muslim Life (currently an open position, with a search underway). The college continues its weekly streamed [Sing For Joy](#)® radio program, built around the Revised Common Lectionary for the church year, and integrating the best in sacred choral music with thoughtful commentary by the program host Rev. Alexandra Jacob '16. The biannual [St. Olaf](#)

[Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts](#) returned in July 2024, providing professional development, spiritual nourishment and networking opportunities for more than 225 pastors, church musicians, and lay leaders serving congregations from across the country. Featured speakers included Jason DeRose '97, Religion Correspondent for National Public Radio.

The [Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community](#) continues to advance a compelling vision for Lutheranism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, foster interreligious engagement, nurture vocational discernment, and provide national and global thought leadership. A key part of the Lutheran Center's work is to help all the college's constituencies [understand the role of Lutheran tradition](#) in supporting the things they value most about St. Olaf. The Center offers professional development for faculty and staff, fellowships and internships for students, and programming and events for all members and friends of the St. Olaf community on a wide range of topics, such as Lutheran values in pedagogical practice, interreligious engagement in the workplace, the intersection of Native American spirituality and Christian faith, and vocational discernment post-retirement. The Lutheran Center is also home to a new St. Olaf [Sacred Texts Initiative](#), launched in Spring 2024 with the gift of a [Saint John's Bible Heritage Edition](#), one of only 299 state-of-the-art reproductions of the original hand-written, hand-illuminated seven-volume Saint John's Bible. Through partnerships with College Ministry and other offices and academic departments across the campus, the gift will also support the acquisition of a Torah Scroll and an illuminated Qur'an to support teaching and learning, spiritual practice, and artistic enrichment in both the curriculum and co-curriculum.

Supported by two significant grants from Lilly Endowment Inc., the Lutheran Center also provides programming and resources for education, worship, and leadership development to congregations of the ELCA and other denominations. The [Nourishing Vocation Project](#) helps individuals and faith communities thrive through life-giving accompaniment and spiritual renewal that supports them in aligning their values and actions with God's call. The [Nourishing Vocation with Children Project](#) supports congregations and their leaders in integrating music, theater, movement, poetry, and visual arts into congregational worship in ways that engage children and adults alike. Both projects provide individual and congregational coaching; resources for study and reflection, prayer and meditation, and arts-enriched worship; and connection with other congregations and congregational leaders through learning communities, webinars, and other gatherings. The projects also engage St. Olaf students as interns, project Fellows, and researchers. A number of the Nourishing Vocation resources are available at no cost on the project websites linked above, such as [Sing Vocare](#), a playlist of musical selections to accompany the [Vocare Spiritual Practice](#); a [Resource Corner](#) with devotional resources, sample liturgies, and teaching materials; and the [Near and Now](#) series of biblical reflections and guided meditation for vocational discernment. To date, more than 800 congregations and 5000 rostered and lay leaders have engaged with the programming or resources of one or both of these projects.

We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities and resources St. Olaf provides for education, artistic engagement, and spiritual enrichment. We look forward to welcoming you to campus, and to welcoming the prospective students you introduce to St. Olaf.