

NORTH STAR



VOLUME 67
2025-2026

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS OF ROCHESTER CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

“The Best Table in the WHAC”

*Trio Helps Power
RCU Athletics*

GENERAL
ADMISSION

CRIMSON CRAZIES





Letter from the President

As I reflect on my first year at Rochester Christian University, I am grateful for the opportunity to become part of such a deeply rooted and Christ-centered community. When I first learned about the mission and opportunities here, I was excited to join an institution with such a rich history and commitment to shaping the next generation of Christian leaders.

Coming to RCU from Kansas, I entered a new environment with new people, new opportunities, and especially a new climate. Over the past year, I have worked to immerse myself in this university's culture — meeting students, faculty, alumni and supporters who have guided and encouraged me along the way. Through these experiences, I have come to appreciate even more what makes this community so special.

This edition of the *North Star* focuses on the very fabric of our university — students, alumni, faculty, staff and supporters — woven together through meaningful relationships, shared experiences and a common mission. These threads shape the story of Rochester Christian University and continue to move us forward.

As you read this issue, I hope you enjoy reflecting on the past, celebrating the present, and looking ahead to RCU's future. Within these pages, you'll hear from our students, explore the meaningful work and learning happening on campus, and see the impact of those who faithfully support the university. Each story is a reminder of the strength of our community and how the work taking place here continues to shape lives far beyond campus.

Change is not always easy, but it is often necessary for growth. As a small private Christian university in Metro Detroit, RCU holds a unique place in higher education. We remain committed to fostering an environment where our identity, mission and values shine clearly as we continue to evolve and serve future generations.



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fostering an environment
where our identity, mission
and values shine clearly as
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serve future generations.

I am excited for what lies ahead and deeply invested in the continued success of this university and its community. If you feel called to support RCU, whether through your time, your encouragement or your generosity, please know that your involvement makes a meaningful difference. It truly takes all of us, working together as one woven community, to sustain and strengthen the mission of Rochester Christian University.

Thank you for being part of this story.

With Gratitude,

Dr. Reggie Wenyika
PRESIDENT



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A Prayer for Our Community



FACULTY & STAFF

Tungate Steps in to Lead Development

Luke Flee '04, former vice president, chief development officer and executive director of the RCU Foundation, resigned from RCU in March to take a leadership role at Corewell Health Foundation.

Flee and his team achieved one of the strongest fundraising years in the university's history in 2025, including sold-out Partnership Dinner and golf outing events and record dollars raised. "Luke's leadership and dedication have had a meaningful impact on the institution and its advancement efforts," Dr. Reggie Wenyika said.

Jeff Tungate, director of development, has assumed the interim vice president of development role. Previously, he served as head coach of the women's basketball team at Oakland University for 12 years. He has long been connected to RCU, serving as assistant men's basketball coach and admissions counselor from 1994 to 1997.

Welcome New Leadership



Antonio Gaglio has been appointed as vice president and chief financial officer. Gaglio brings more than 25 years of executive experience across the healthcare, nonprofit and

government sectors. Most recently, he served as chief financial officer for Macomb County Community Mental Health, overseeing an annual budget of over \$300 million.

"Tony's extensive background in financial stewardship, large-scale budgeting, and strategic planning, combined with his deep commitment to Christian service, makes him an exceptional fit for this role," Wenyika said.



Allison Foust is RCU's new vice president of enrollment services and marketing. Her background includes recruiting at Indiana University Kokomo; serving as director of international graduate admissions

for the Maurer School of Law at Indiana University Bloomington; and working in admissions operations at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio. Most recently, she worked in medical school admissions at Oakland University.

"Allison brings a distinguished record of enrollment growth, strategic leadership and marketing innovation. Her experience, creativity and commitment to student-centered excellence make her an exceptional addition to our senior leadership team," Wenyika said.



Rellinger Retires

Tom Rellinger '80, who served as interim president and as executive vice president, retired in December 2025. Rellinger joined RCU in August 2011 as director of development, was promoted to vice president of development in 2013, and became executive vice president and chief financial officer in 2017.

"Tom provided invaluable guidance and support to me when I first started as president. I am deeply grateful for Tom's many years of dedicated service and leadership," Wenyika said.

Inauguration Celebrates 11th President

Rochester Christian University inaugurated Dr. Reggie Wenyika as its 11th president on Oct. 24, 2025. The event introduced Wenyika to the university community and special guests.

Many community leaders came out to support his inauguration, including:

- Bryan Barnett, mayor of the City of Rochester Hills
- Nancy Salvia, then mayor of the City of Rochester
- Dr. Mike Westerfield, former RCU president and current associate of substantive change for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Innocent Chikunya, vice president of Panasonic Energy Corp. of North America
- Dr. Timothy Westbrook, president of York University
- Kelly Garrett, RCU director of development and former mayor of Lathrup Village, Michigan
- Lawrence Mutenda, executive director, global head of Institutional Securities Group Compliance Testing — Morgan Stanley
- Dr. Brian Stogner, former RCU president and current president of the Michigan School of Psychology

This event featured a flag procession with RCU students carrying flags from 40 nations. The Choral Union of Rochester Christian University performed “Lord Make Me Thine Instrument” and the university alma mater. The investiture was followed by a reception, where Wenyika and community members spoke with alumni from various generations about the university.



Dr. Jaime Cuellar was appointed as the associate vice president for intercollegiate athletics and strategic enrollment in March.

Cuellar brings extensive experience in athletics and higher education. A former NAIA collegiate athlete, he has nine years of experience across various professional roles in the National Basketball Association.

He also has served at Kansas Christian College and Southwestern Christian University in various leadership positions, including head men's basketball coach, director of athletics, and vice president for student affairs.



Vance K. Jackson Jr. has been appointed the university's new dean of students, replacing Scott Samuels, vice president of student life, who resigned after 24 years with the university. Jackson is lecturer at the

University of Michigan School of Social Work. Previously, he served as the Social Impact Fund development officer for the City of Detroit.

Vance serves as an ordained elder and assistant pastor at Word of Life Christian Ministries in Detroit. He also posts spiritual encouragement on YouVersion and has over 9 million followers.

Hands-On, Heart-Driven

Nursing Program Pairs

Competence With Compassion

written by **EMILY CARROLL '24**

First envisioned in 2009, RCU's nursing program has grown over the past 15 years into a vital pathway for preparing confident, compassionate nurses to serve communities across Michigan and beyond.

The university first launched an RN to BSN program, which helped established registered nurses earn a bachelor's of science in nursing degree. In 2011, the Michigan Board of Nursing approved the university's traditional pre-licensure program. In 2014, the first class graduated 17 students, marking the beginning of a legacy that now includes 12 graduating classes, with the 13th underway.

Impressive Pass Rate

RCU's nursing program has maintained an impressive first-time pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses, reaching 91% in recent years and 86% this year. Overall, the program has averaged near 90% success since its founding, a testament to both student commitment and faculty mentorship.

Accreditation remains a key indicator of the program's success. After an initial site visit in 2011, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education awarded the school a five-year accreditation, followed by a 10-year renewal in 2016. Earning full accreditation without recommendations for improvement highlights the program's high standards. The CCNE will return for its next comprehensive visit in fall 2026.

Consistent Leadership

Having consistent leadership transitions has further strengthened the program. Former dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, Dr. John Collins retired this year, and Jennifer Robinson, assistant professor of nursing, stepped in to lead the program. Robinson, a neurosurgical critical care nurse practitioner who is pursuing her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree, brings both clinical expertise and academic vision to the role.



Personal Connections

RCU's nursing faculty are deeply invested in student success. Because of the program's intentionally smaller size, professors know their students personally. Adjunct clinical instructors, many of whom are specialists in their fields, return year after year, fostering consistency and mentorship within the program.

"It's not that we don't want to grow, but we never want to lose what makes RCU special — personal attention, mentorship and community," said Susan Griffin, nursing program coordinator.

Strong Partnerships

Located in a region rich with hospital systems, RCU maintains strong partnerships across Macomb and Oakland counties, including placements with Corewell Health, Henry Ford Health, Trinity Health, McLaren Oakland and others.

These partnerships allow students to complete six- to eight-week clinical rotations across a wide range of specialties. Also, senior students complete a 168-hour one-on-one preceptorship in their final semester, working directly alongside a registered nurse in real-world settings.

Health initiatives

Beyond hospital walls, RCU nursing students also engage in meaningful community health initiatives, such as:

- Substance use disorder mobile clinics
- Flu shot health fairs in Auburn Hills
- Detroit Marathon medic teams
- Hospice care experiences with AccentCare
- Service partnerships with Grace Centers of Hope

These opportunities reflect RCU's mission to prepare nurses who serve both hospitals and communities with excellence and compassion.

Generous Donors

The growth of the nursing program has been significantly supported by generous donors, including Ed and Joan Work, whose investment has transformed simulation and assessment labs. Recent upgrades include:

- Twelve new health assessment lab tables
- High-fidelity simulation manikins
- Specialized auscultation manikins for heart and lung sounds
- Feeding tube models
- Updated hospital beds, pumps and simulation technology

These tools ensure students are prepared before ever stepping into a hospital setting. "When our students walk into clinicals now, they walk in ready," Robinson said.

Direct Admission

The program has expanded in recent years. RCU now offers direct admission for qualified incoming freshmen, providing automatic entry into the nursing program with a 3.0 prerequisite GPA.

Enrollment capacity has increased from 24 to 40 approved students per cohort, with recent classes welcoming around 30 new students and continuing to grow.

The most significant growth has come from students entering RCU as freshmen, specifically for nursing, a shift from earlier years when many students transferred in.

Alumni Support

Many alumni return to campus to speak at White Coat Ceremonies, and they mentor current students, including Michelle Capriola, an alumna of the first graduating class who now serves as a clinical instructor.

Nursing students regularly present capstone research projects alongside Oakland University graduate students.

Sarah (Brackney) Feldman '21 earned "Best in Show" honors at Sigma research and induction events alongside graduate programs from larger universities. Feldman now works as a labor and delivery nurse at Summa Health in Ohio.

Making Their Mark

RCU nursing alumni are making a difference across healthcare. Graduates have gone on to work in:

- Nurse practitioner and DNP programs
- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist programs
- Specialized roles, such as perfusionist training at Rush University
- Military service in the United States Air Force

Transformations

Perhaps the most powerful testament to RCU's nursing program is the transformation witnessed in its students.

Griffin described watching first-year students walk in unsure of medical terminology, and later overhearing seniors confidently discussing patient care like seasoned professionals. "Hearing the growth in how they speak and the confidence in their experience is amazing," she said.

Bright Future

Now with full accreditation, technological advances and rooted in community, RCU's nursing program continues to grow, not simply in numbers, but in impact. Rochester Christian University is not just preparing nurses, it is shaping the future of healthcare.



Nursing Student Experiences

Riley Sparre
White Lake, Michigan
Senior

Direct admission is a key factor of why I chose RCU's nursing program because a lot of colleges don't have that, and attending a Christian college was an influential factor for me.

The professors at RCU help foster connection among students. Professors in the nursing program have so much empathy for their students. I feel like they actually care, whereas in other nursing programs, the graduating class has 100-200 students where it's harder to build those connections.

All of the nursing faculty are fantastic. Krupa Thomas, assistant professor of nursing, was a great help in my life, as I went through a loss during nursing school. She was there for me and highly supportive during the process.

My passion has been to apply for a pediatric position. I love kids and, as cliché as it sounds, I have been in the hospital multiple times throughout my childhood, so the way I received care is the way I want to give care. I connect well with them.



Brenden Duff
Sandusky, Michigan
Senior

After completing high school in a small county and living in an even smaller town, I felt confused about the trajectory of my life. I was working and playing baseball, yet I felt out of touch with myself, my faith and my future. Toward the end of the summer, one of my coaches arranged a campus visit to RCU, and I immediately felt at home.

I am fortunate to have an amazing mother who has supported me through life's challenges and encouraged me to be my best self. Watching her navigate her own struggles inspired me to pursue a career that allows me to care for others during their lowest points.

My goal after graduation is to take the knowledge, skills and faithfulness RCU has given me into my community and workplace. I hope to return home and provide care to the people who supported me when I needed it most.

I will always be grateful for the confidence the nursing staff instilled in me. Susan Griffin creates a sense of safety and accountability, showing up each day ready to support students. Amy Guitar embodies the belief that anyone willing to learn can succeed, meeting students where they are and helping them grow.

When I first came to RCU, I was unsure about the faith aspect. Over time, I began allowing the Lord into my life. It has strengthened my mental health and led me to explore church and scripture.

At RCU, I found my purpose and a community I will carry for life.



“I will always be grateful for the confidence the nursing staff instilled in me.”

Makayla Pasternak
North Branch, Michigan
Senior

I decided to go to RCU because the school was close enough to home that I could commute and save money. I also decided to join the cheer team while I was here, which was a bonus for me.

The program has a smaller cohort size, which allows students to get more hands-on experience. We had great opportunities and partnerships with other hospitals to provide each student a great clinical experience. With a smaller class size, you are able to get a more personalized relationship with all of your professors.

My goal after I graduate is to start in a cardiac progressive care unit and then switch to the Emergency Department. I did my preceptorship in the Emergency Department at West Bloomfield Henry Ford Hospital, and I fell in love with the atmosphere there. It feels like an adrenaline rush all the time.

Amy Guitar, assistant professor of nursing, has had a significant impact on my experience in the nursing program. I enjoyed having her for my first hospital clinical because she made us feel comfortable in a safe learning environment. She created an approachable space that allowed us to ask questions if we were confused.

Susan Griffin, nursing program coordinator, has also made my nursing school experience much more manageable. She ensures we all get a clinical placement and tries her best to work around everyone else's schedule. You can tell that she truly cares and wants us all to be successful. She approaches us all with grace and makes our concerns feel heard. She provides great tips and guidance if any of us are struggling, and makes sure our well-being is maintained.

RCU has given me the tools to build and maintain relationships with my peers and superiors. RCU has taught me resilience, time management, and the importance of fighting for what you want and believe in.



Nursing Students
Win Challenge

In partnership with Alana's Foundation, the School of Nursing hosts a free Flu Clinic each fall for the community. For the second consecutive year, RCU nursing students won the Alana's Foundation Small College Flu Vaccination Challenge. Alana's Foundation works year-round to promote influenza education and awareness, with a focus on convenient, affordable flu vaccinations for everyone.

School of Nursing
Marks Leadership
Transition

Dr. John Collins, dean of the School of Nursing and Health Studies, retired in January. "Under John's leadership, our nursing students have excelled, winning awards at research day with the Theta Psi at Large chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society, and demonstrating exemplary professional capability evidenced by a 100% first-time pass rate on the NCLEX-RN licensure exam," Dr. Remy Bruder, provost, said.

Jennifer Robinson, assistant professor of nursing, steps into leadership of the nursing program. "Jennifer has demonstrated progressive leadership and administrative activities in healthcare and higher education, including the implementation and evaluation of programs. She has been instrumental in shaping our nursing curriculum to its present level of quality," Bruder said.





RCU Warriors Score On & Off the Court

written by **ANDREW RIPKE & RACHEL WILLIAMS**

The 2025–2026 year marked a season of transformation for RCU, particularly in the growth of its athletic programs. With the addition of new sports and standout moments from its coaching staff, the year was defined by both competitive success and a deepening sense of community.

Athletes Succeed On and Off the Field

Nickolas Alayan, a senior from Macomb, won the wrestling program's first individual championship in the Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference in February. He earned a spot at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics nationals, where he won his semifinal match by an 11-3 major decision before pulling off an upset against the third-ranked wrestler. Alayan was voted the Tournament's Most Outstanding Wrestler and First-Team All-Conference.

Jacob Gonzales, a sophomore from Holly, wrestled his way to a second-place finish in the 174-pound weight class in the WHAC, qualifying for nationals and earning Second Team All-Conference honors.

Tymias Williams, junior from New Baltimore, is the Warriors' first men's basketball member to be named Defensive Player of the Year and the third to earn Newcomer of the Year honors. Williams was a defensive force all season, leading the WHAC in steals per game at 2.5 and ranking fifth in blocks per game at 1.4.

The women's basketball team earned a spot in the NAIA

Women's Basketball First Round as the #15 seed, taking on the #8 Rio Grande Red Storm. The Warriors were defeated 80-68. This was the team's first appearance in the NAIA tournament since the 2022-2023 season.

Two women bowlers finished first and second at the United States Bowling Congress Intercollegiate Singles Qualifier to advance to the Intercollegiate Singles Championships in April in Wisconsin. This is the first time in program history that RCU bowlers made it to nationals. Kenzie Nieman, a junior from Armada, took the top spot in the WHAC field of 163 bowlers, totaling 1,271 pins over six games. She bowled a high game of 274 in her third game. Sara Ritchie, a junior from Flint, finished second after bowling 1,269 pins and recording a 225 high game.

RCU had **137 students** named to the WHAC Scholar-Athlete Team. To qualify, a student-athlete must be a junior with at least a cumulative GPA of 3.25.

As of April 8, 2026, RCU had 37 athletes named WHAC Players of the Week for the 2025-2026 academic year, easily surpassing the 13 acquired in 2024-2025.



Coaches Excel

In **Jared Ocampo's** third season as coach of women's basketball, the team earned its best record since the 2022-2023 season, improving by nine wins from last year. RCU was originally picked 5th in the WHAC Preseason Poll, but jumped to the #2 seed in the tournament with a conference record of 18-4. The Warriors also won 20 games for the first time since the 2022-2023 season.

Juliana Nash led the women's volleyball team to its best record since 2016 with a 21-12 overall record. The team appeared in the WHAC quarterfinals for the first time in program history. Nash was named the WHAC Coach of the Year after leading the team to 13 more wins than in the 2025 season.

Patti Glenn, head coach of competitive cheer, was named the WHAC Coach of the Year for the first time in her seven years leading the Warriors.

Quin Rice has been named head coach of men's basketball beginning in the 2026-2027 season. Rice has served as assistant basketball coach since joining RCU in April 2019. Since Rice joined the staff, the Warriors have compiled a 131-66 record, including the 2020-2021 Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference Championship.

RCU Athletic Director Clayton Bissett said, "Having watched him on and off the court for the last seven years, there is no doubt in my mind that Quin is the right man to lead this program. I am excited to watch him continue the legacy of the men's basketball program."

Emma Fickel, head coach for men's and women's track and field, adds the title of senior women leader. The NAIA requires each of its members to designate a senior women's leader to "promote meaningful representation of women in the leadership and management of college sports." Fickel was also named the WHAC Champions of Character Coach for men's outdoor track and field for the 2025 season.

Dr. Klint Pleasant ended his tenure as head coach of the men's basketball team after 15 seasons, transitioning to serve as the ninth president of Southwestern Michigan College. Pleasant compiled a 328-116 record at RCU, including a career mark of

361-164. This milestone places him among the top 25 in NAIA wins among active coaches.

Pleasant was inducted into two hall of fames this year. First, he was inducted into the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan Hall of Fame in October 2025. Then, he was named to the United States Collegiate Athletic Association Hall of Fame Class of 2026.



Homecoming in October 2025 was jam-packed with athletic competitions, honoring donors at the President's Circle of Honor, and inaugurating Dr. Reggie Wenyika as president. Seven different athletic teams competed for the Warriors, and supporters gathered at the Garth Pleasant Arena for volleyball and basketball matches. Attendees gathered for a tailgate that featured Chick-Fil-A, a coffee bar and much reminiscing.





Passion, Perseverance, & Purpose

From the classroom to the playing field, our seniors are making their mark at RCU. They have navigated unexpected twists, pursued their passions, and grown through both challenges and opportunities.

Ifty Rana and Chad Kocsis are exploring the dynamic world of information systems and cybersecurity.

Sydney Hawks has overcome injuries to continue her soccer journey.

Jessica Cadman is finding her path through digital marketing and coaching.

They've all found support in RCU's close-knit community, demonstrating resilience, curiosity and a commitment to learning. Here are their stories.



Ifty Rana
Senior from Bangladesh
Information Systems and Cyber Security

Ifty Rana, an international transfer student from Bangladesh, chose Rochester in part because his cousin, Ahnaf Hasaan, is an alumnus. Hasaan always mentioned his professors being really helpful with a small community that is always there to support students.

"As an international student, my English is not always perfect," he said. "If I struggle with something, I've learned to ask for help. Every professor has been really helpful, and I love this place for that reason."

Rana is pursuing internships with startups and hopes to move into a full-time IT career, with plans for post-graduate education. He completed an internship last summer at Wayne County Community College, providing IT support for 200 employees.

His studies combine information systems, which focus on technical support and maintaining IT infrastructure, with cybersecurity, which focuses on threat assessment for digital systems. He appreciates RCU's integration of both fields.

One of Rana's favorite classes was Corporate and Social Responsibility, which included weekly visits to local organizations such as Leader Dogs for the Blind and Dutton Farm.

Rana, a practicing Muslim, said RCU's inclusive environment has strengthened his faith. "The best part about RCU is that they never make me feel like I am not welcome. I have God in my heart, and I strive to choose kindness and do what is right. I can share this perspective with people at RCU, and they respect it."



Sydney Hawks
Senior from Sterling Heights, Michigan
Business Management

Sydney Hawks has played soccer for most of her life, including two years at Grand Valley State University. After dealing with multiple injuries and a team culture she described as toxic, Hawks sought a fresh start both mentally and physically. Encouraged by a best friend who had played soccer at Rochester, she contacted Coach Skipper Mukhtar and transferred to RCU.

Majoring in business management with a minor in data analytics, Hawks said she plans to pursue a career in marketing analytics. "I really love the creative side of marketing, and I also love numbers and math, so I think it can be a good mix for me," she said.

Hawks praised RCU professors for their guidance

and support. She highlighted her Principles of Marketing class, her involvement with the Professional Clothes Closet, and her membership in the National Society for Leadership and Success, which offers networking opportunities, business development and resume building.

Raised in a Christian household, Hawks said her faith had waned in recent years, but attending RCU has allowed her to reconnect with her spiritual journey. Despite undergoing five knee surgeries, she cherishes the lessons in confidence, resilience and perseverance that soccer, academics and work have provided during her time at RCU.



Jessica Cadman
Senior from Rochester Hills, Michigan
Digital Marketing Major

Jessica Cadman's path to Rochester Christian University wasn't originally planned. She had been committed to another school, but when its lacrosse program fell through, she found herself unsure of where to go next.

A scholarship offer from RCU's lacrosse coach changed her plans. Already familiar with the university through friends, Cadman toured the campus and decided to enroll. RCU's digital marketing program aligned with her interests, and lacrosse was an added bonus.

This year, RCU did not have a lacrosse season, and Cadman would not have been able to play anyway due to a November car accident that shattered her right wrist. Despite the setback, she continues to coach junior varsity lacrosse at Clarkston High School, a role she describes as part of her calling.

Cadman also joined RCU's golf team last year, an experience she calls both challenging and rewarding. She said it pushed her out of her comfort zone, helping her try new things and meet new people. "The first tournament was 36 holes, and I didn't even know what that meant until I got there. I wanted to do things that were uncomfortable and scary. At first, I felt like I never wanted to golf again, but now I have my own set of clubs, and I absolutely love it."

Cadman credits RCU's faculty with helping her thrive academically. Professors such as Luke Beach, Dr. Rebekah Pinchback, and Kendra Corman provided guidance and mentorship that helped her prepare for life after college. She said Business Ethics was particularly impactful, encouraging students to reflect on personal ethics and the role of faith in professional life. "You go into this class with your own biases, and then you really get thinking about your ethics and who you want to be as a Christian on top of who you want to be in the workplace," she said.

Born in Russia and adopted at age 2, Cadman grew up in Rochester and attended Rochester Adams High School. Raised in a Christian household, she attended church regularly but said her faith wasn't as strong during college, attributing that to adjustment and some personal experiences.

"I am still a Christian and working on my faith. I think the hardest time to be a Christian is when you're in college, trying to find out who you want to be. Being at RCU is definitely the right space to be in at this time in a young person's life," she said.

“ The community at RCU is amazing. Everyone has been so welcoming — I don't feel like an outsider. People on campus are very friendly and always willing to say hello with a smile.”



Chad Kocsis
Senior from St. Clair, Michigan
Information Systems and Cybersecurity

Chad Kocsis was drawn to RCU by the small class sizes and the chance to continue his athletic career in track and field.

Once on campus, he also realized the university offered him the opportunity to grow in faith and explore a supportive community. "I feel like God had a sense in bringing me here."

RCU's religion classes helped sparked his faith. "I grew up Roman Catholic, and my family went to mass regularly until 2020. My family was high-risk during the pandemic, and we stopped attending regularly. Going through the religious classes reconnected me on my own terms. I find myself still aligning with the Roman Catholic Church. I love the tradition and familiarity with the mass."

Kocsis said he also appreciated how teachers would connect business concepts with a Christian perspective, which helped him consider different viewpoints.

He first became interested in information systems and cybersecurity through a high school program at the Technical Education Center in St. Clair County. His experiences building computers, setting up network cables, and creating databases solidified his passion for the field. He also completed an internship helping with technology systems with RCU's library. He said he hopes to pursue jobs focused on networking and hands-on IT work.

Kocsis runs cross country and track and field at RCU, transitioning from mid-distance events to 3k and 5k races.

Kocsis credits the RCU community for making him feel connected. "The community at RCU is amazing. Everyone has been so welcoming — I don't feel like an outsider. People on campus are very friendly and always willing to say hello with a smile."

MORE THAN A GAME

The Trio Behind the Scorer's Table

written by
LORA HUTSON

photos by
HANNAH MITKUS '27



IN

In the high-stakes final seconds of a Rochester Christian University basketball game, the most important people in the arena aren't always the ones wearing jerseys. They are the three volunteers behind a long table, illuminated by the glow of the scorer's table and the precise timing of the shot clock.

The referees in the Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference call the trio of Gary Turner, Vivian Turner and Susan Griffin, the "best table in the WHAC."

For this trio, this decades-long volunteer gig helps them serve student-athletes and help RCU Athletics.

Guardians of the Game

Gary Turner, assistant professor of math who has worked at RCU since 1991, anchors the table. He handles the 30-second shot clock, a role that requires split-second judgment on whether a ball grazed the rim or merely kissed the backboard.

"I've got to be pushing 30 years in this role," Gary said, recalling the days when the team played in local high school gyms and hauled a portable shot clock to every game. "I enjoy getting to know the students and helping out."

Next to him is Vivian Turner, assistant professor of health sciences, who serves as the official scorekeeper. Her job is meticulous, requiring her to manually record every point, foul and substitution in the book. One clerical error could result in a technical foul, a responsibility she doesn't take lightly.

Susan Griffin, nursing program coordinator who joined the university in 2009, rounds out the trio at the table. A former coach herself, Sue manages the game clock and points. "Basketball has always been my first love. I played it, I coached it, and I just love being around the game. We are probably the best table because we have experience and consistency. The officials are able to rely on us," she said.

Their reputation for accuracy has earned them the respect of referees and coaches alike. Gary recalls a high-pressure moment when a coach insisted a ball had hit the rim and the clock should be reset. The referee checked with Gary, who insisted it hadn't, and the referees followed his guidance. A video reviewed later proved Gary was right.

Dr. Klint Pleasant, former head men's basketball coach and now president of Southwestern Michigan College, remembers that game and said, "Gary had a major impact on us winning because he kept the clock with such precision and accuracy. We simply don't have the resources to secure paid help for gameday management, and I'm not sure what we would do without them. Not only did they step up and fill a major need, but they did it with such professionalism."

Integrity at the Table

While some scorers might get distracted and make a mistake or try to favor their own team, this trio is different. "We pride ourselves on being people of integrity at the table. We're not going to do something to intentionally help our team win. The refs know that," Sue said.

Athletic director Clayton Bissett said these three are essential for RCU's ability to host basketball and volleyball games. "It is so reassuring as an athletic director to know that we don't have to find people to cover those positions each and every home game. They are as professional as it comes when performing their duties, and all we pay them is a few slices of pizza. We would be in deep trouble without them and are so grateful they are willing to give of themselves and their time to help our athletic department," he said.

“We wouldn't be able to host games, and the games would not run smoothly without their constant support. They are exemplary examples of service and commitment to our students.”

The Crew Coaches Count On

Coaches in the program were eager to comment on the impact made by Gary, Vivian and Sue, with Pleasant calling them the "glue and backbone" of the athletic program.

Quin Rice, the new men's head basketball coach and former assistant coach, said, "Their commitment is unbelievable. In my seven years here, they have not missed a game. We wouldn't be able to host games, and the games would not run smoothly without their constant support. They are exemplary examples of service and commitment to our students."

Jared Ocampo, head women's basketball coach, said the trio is a "testament to the family-like culture we have on campus." He also said spotting them at the scorer's table helps him feel more at ease during competition. "They give me some sort of peace and comfort knowing we have support from our community and from our staff. They're very sharp. and they take their work seriously."

Beyond the Box Score

While they are technically officials during the game, their true impact is felt in the hallways and classrooms. For these volunteers, the payment isn't a paycheck but in the relationships with student-athletes.

Jordan Peterson, a sophomore pre-physician assistant major on the women's basketball team, remembers walking into Vivian's anatomy class on the first day of class. "I didn't even know if I was in the right classroom, but I walked in, and Ms. Turner goes, 'Hi Jordan, it's nice to meet you.' Before I even set foot in the classroom, she knew who I was. Right in that moment, it eased all the nervousness because I knew that I had a professor who cared about me."

Hailee Mancogna, a senior health sciences major on the women's volleyball team, said, "Both Gary and Vivian Turner have quickly become what I like to call my Rochester parents. They have shown unwavering care and love toward students and athletes, and have never made me feel like just another person attending Rochester. They constantly show up to support each sports team, putting in their time, effort and often money to support athletes. Sue Griffin has also always been so welcoming and supportive throughout my time here. She has shown what it's like to be an important leader."

James Fisher, a senior mass communication and marketing major who plays for the men's basketball team, said the trio's presence provides a "steady heartbeat" for the athletic program. "These three have missed fewer games than I have in the past five years. It's these sorts of people that RCU is known for. I think the greatest lesson to take away from their years of service is how special and powerful it is to have pride in a program. It is something that is becoming increasingly lost in our society: the idea of putting a program or brand above oneself or sacrificing for your team."

“They constantly show up to support each sports team, putting in their time, effort and often money to support athletes.”



A Legacy of Service

The trio's commitment extends beyond the court. They have participated in study abroad programs — watching quiet students transform into confident travelers. The Turners have led trips across Europe, including Scotland, England and Austria. Sue and Vivian have traveled with students on the science field study to the western U.S. for three years.

As the landscape of college athletics shifts toward the transfer portal and professionalization, the “table crew” remains a throwback to a family-oriented culture.

“I don't like graduation anymore,” Sue said. “It's not because I have to go; it's when I see the senior walking across that I've developed a relationship with, and they're not coming back.”

For Gary, the motivation remains simple: “Developing relationships with the students. I still try to put students at the top.”

From fixing scoreboard glitches to greeting referees with a quick fist bump before tip-off, Gary, Vivian and Sue show the true measure of RCU isn't kept on a stat sheet — it's built in the relationships that last long after the final buzzer.



BY THE NUMBERS

Gary and Vivian Turner and Susan Griffin have served as scorers and game managers at RCU basketball and volleyball games. These stats show the longevity and consistency of their efforts.



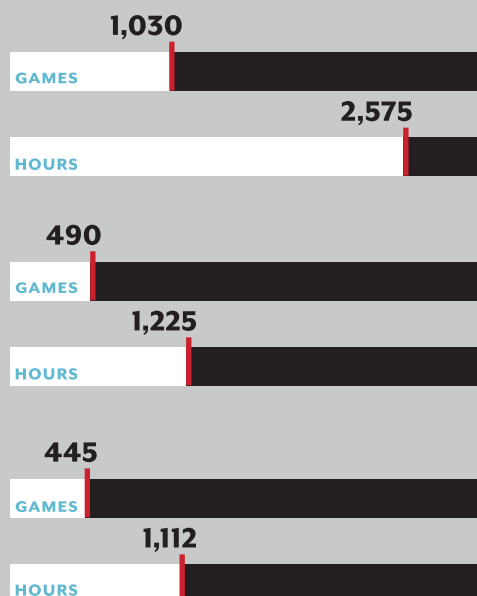
GARY



VIVIAN



SUSAN



**Numbers are approximations*



Nathan Dahlstrom '01 with Dr. Steven Eckstein & Dion Frasier '00

from **RANCH to PAGE**

S.J. Dahlstrom Writes Faith, Adventure and the Outdoors

written by **EMILY CARROLL '24**



► Explore Dahlstrom's
books at wildergood.com



Author Nathan “S.J.” Dahlstrom ('01) has built a devoted readership through his Wilder Good book series — stories that blend outdoor adventure with reflections on faith, identity and responsibility.

Dahlstrom's passion for storytelling grew out of a desire to offer young readers something different. He noticed that many children's books were filled with wizards, vampires and zombies, but he wanted to write stories rooted in nature and shaped by Christian values — two things that mattered deeply to him.

Outdoor Adventures

The result was the Wilder Good series, which follows a teenage boy growing up amid the rugged landscapes of West Texas and the Rocky Mountains. Each book invites readers into outdoor adventures while exploring deeper themes of faith and character.

“I wrote these stories about Wilder Good for kids who grew up in the outdoors and for kids who long for the outdoors,” Dahlstrom said. “Working, fishing, hunting, farms, ranches, mountains and prairies. We should not forget we have real adventure to offer kids, if we can have the courage to turn off our machines and screens and go outside.”

Dahlstrom's ninth book, “Never Curse the Rain,” was released in 2025, and he is currently working on the next installment.

Headed North

Dahlstrom came to Michigan from Texas to study with Dr. Steven Eckstein, a former professor, and to earn a bachelor's degree in religious education.

“I never had to use my biblical degree for a career, but I've always valued RCU for the deep biblical well that I still draw from,” Nathan said.

While at Rochester, Nathan formed a lasting friendship with professor and mentor Dr. David Flee. One piece of wisdom from Flee's classes has stayed with Nathan for 25 years: “Your goal is to get it heard, not said.”

Dahlstrom has also lived out another calling that began during his time at RCU. In 2011, he and three others founded Whetstone Boys Ranch in Mountain View, Missouri, a ministry devoted to mentoring troubled and at-risk youth.

Nathan met his wife, Melissa, at the Waterford Church of Christ while at Rochester. They and their children live in West Texas. You can support this RCU alumnus by exploring his books at wildergood.com.

2026 Alumnus of the Year

Ryan Koral

His Path from Student to Storyteller

written by EMILY CARROLL '24



► Check out Ryan's work at tellstudios.com

When Ryan Koral '04 first visited Rochester in 1998, he didn't expect his life to change.

A self-described "punk kid from a small-town blue-collar family," Ryan grew up largely on his own. His parents were divorced, his dad worked midnights, and independence came early. But so did leadership.

He first connected with Dr. Ken Johnson, then president, while leading a Bible study of 30 to 40 students. That conversation introduced Ryan to the college and altered his trajectory. Johnson awarded him a President's Scholarship, which covered room and board for four years. "He heard something in my story that inspired him," Ryan said.

Creating Space to Breathe

In addition to majoring in communication, Ryan was involved in shaping campus life. In 2000, he created The Offering, a worship centered on quiet reflection: candles, prayer and time to process. "At school, there were so many spiritual things to be involved in, but I felt like I was constantly consuming and never processing."

He also launched a campus concert series, bringing in Christian musicians and energizing student life. He also helped rebrand the university's summer camp into "Elevate." Even then, the pattern was clear: Ryan didn't just participate in the community — he built it.

Community Above All

Community remains the throughline of Ryan's story. He met his wife, Andrea (Bullock) '04, on campus. They married in 2003 and have three children. In 2013, the couple moved to Clarkston with two other couples — including fellow Rochester alumni Jason and Holly (Cramp) McCullough

'01. "We said, let's do this with the intention that our lives will overlap and we'll intentionally love each other and our neighbors," he said.

The result has been what Ryan calls one of the greatest blessings of his life. "We desperately need people in our corner. I didn't know growing up how much I needed that — but after experiencing it, there's nothing more important."

Falling in Love with Story

After graduating, Ryan worked in enrollment and convinced his supervisor to purchase a video camera so he could create DVDs to send to prospective students, showing the life-changing experience happening on campus.

What began as experimentation became a calling. "I started falling more and more in love with storytelling. Trying to pull out nuggets from people and piece them together in a way that's compelling and emotional."

That passion led him into wedding filmmaking and, eventually, to founding Tell Studios in 2012, where he works with founders and CEOs to tell the stories behind their businesses. As his company grew, so did his influence. He now hosts a podcast, offers digital courses and coaches entrepreneurs.

Two years ago, RCU administrators invited Ryan to produce a documentary honoring his former mentor, Garth Pleasant. He immediately said, "Yes! Why don't we tell the stories inside higher education? This is where my life changed. I'm sitting in this chair right now because of the opportunity I got 18 years ago."

An Epic Story Worth Telling

The conviction to help others understand that everyone has a story to share started at RCU, deepened behind a camera, and now fuels everything he builds.

"RCU gave me something I didn't know I needed," Ryan said. "It gave me purpose."

And in return, he has spent his life helping others discover theirs.



GENERATIONS OF FAITH & LEARNING

A Nelson Family Tradition



Mark & Sara Nelson '98 in
Alma Gatewood Hall



Sending a child to college can be difficult, but for Mark and Sara Nelson, having their son, Noah, attend their alma mater made the transition a smooth one.

"It is like I am rewalking my parents' footsteps sometimes," said Noah, a senior psychology major. "There have been times where I have the same professor as my parents or someone will come up to me on campus and ask if I am related to Mark and Sara Nelson."

Mark, a 1998 graduate, works as an executive professional recruiter with Actalent. He met his wife, Sara (Moran) '98 through mutual friends on campus, and they have been married for 25 years. "My experience at MCC was awesome. I had the best four years of my life," Mark said.

Mark was involved with Alpha Sigma TAU social club and Company, a traveling theater group. "We went all over the country, from Wisconsin to Maine to every church camp in between. It was one of the best trips of my life, and I wanted Noah to have a similar experience during his time in college," Mark said.

Noah said, "My dad was very extraverted, loved TAU and turned their dorm room into a hangout spot with games, snacks and beverages for people, sometimes up with friends until 2 a.m."

Mark said, "It makes me feel comfortable knowing that Noah is involved in a Christian education and can have deep relationships with classmates and professors."

Some of the many people who have impacted Noah and his time at RCU were also there for Mark and Sara, such as Cathy Ries, development coordinator; Gary Turner, assistant professor of mathematics; and Larry Stewart '70.

When he first visited campus, Noah said he appreciated the Christian atmosphere and fell in love with the natural landscape of Lake Norcentra Park and the Clinton River Trail.

A 2022 graduate of Cousino High School in Warren, Michigan, Noah came to RCU to study psychology and finds

connection between his studies and his faith. "A lot of people have broken hearts, and people often try to find solutions in the world. Combining what I've learned as a Christian and learning psychology helps tremendously in my personal endeavor that the real solution for all brokenness is Christ. I see a need for people who want to have Christ in their lives, and I take that as an opportunity to spread God's word."

Noah credits the faculty of the psychology department for teaching him and helping him land an internship at Applied Behavioral Analysis, where he worked with children with autism who had verbal and physical needs.

He has been involved with the student body, attending various student life events and making new friends. He is also the secretary of the National Alliance on Mental Illness club, which raises awareness through events and community education.

He said he is inspired by the Christian emphasis on campus. "The Bible classes helped me expand my knowledge of the Bible in many ways. Chapel is a great way that helps me focus on spending time with God, and to take a break from the stresses of being a student."

Just as a college trip was a highlight for his dad, Noah said going on the Natural Science Field Study trip to the western U.S. was the best part of his college experience to date. "I hate science with a passion, and I love traveling with a passion, so replacing a four-credit class to go outside with Dr. [David] Brackney was a no-brainer."

Noah said he would be proud to continue the legacy at RCU with his children one day, joking, "Hopefully, Gary Turner won't be there by then."

► *If you are an alumnus and parent of a student considering college soon, RCU offers a 50% discount to children of alumni.*

FILIP ŠUBRT

Journey from the Ice to the Front Office

written by EMILY CARROLL '24



When he left his home of Martin, Slovakia, at age 18, Filip Šubrt '22 brought a hockey stick, a dream of earning a scholarship, and a willingness to take a risk.

Today, Šubrt serves as general manager of his hometown soccer club, MSK Fomat Martin, an opportunity he never could have imagined when his journey began.

He started playing hockey at age 6, and eventually came to the United States to pursue junior hockey, hoping the sport would open doors to higher education. After one year at a university in St. Louis, Šubrt transferred to RCU to play hockey and major in sport management.

He quickly found mentors who would shape both his academic and personal growth. "Professor [Dave] Hutson had a great impact on my experience. The way he communicated and was able to talk to me about various things really stood out," he said. He also credits Garth Pleasant, a retired professor, as influencing him and making his experience special.

After Šubrt completed his bachelor's, he took a year off before enrolling in RCU's Sports Leadership master's program, from which he graduated in 2024.

"Moving to the United States at 18 and being there for eight years to earn my master's degree, play hockey, and experience life in America on my own, that's something I'm very proud of," he said.

Though he did not come from a faith background, attending a Christian university was another meaningful part of his growth.

"I was worried about going to a Christian college because it wasn't something I was raised in. But seeing the Christian perspective was something great to experience and learn about," he said.

Šubrt formed friendships that continue today through video calls and regular life updates. One family, in particular, opened their home to him when campus was closed. His best friend and former teammate, Anthony Carlier Jr. and his parents, Phyllis and Marcel, welcomed him any day of the week. "They invited me, a foreigner, over for Thanksgiving and breaks. There were always people there to help me."

Now back in Slovakia, he leads MSK Fomat Martin, a top-league soccer club and academy. For someone who grew up immersed in hockey, stepping into soccer management was once unthinkable.

"I would have never imagined this path. In Slovakia, hockey and soccer clash with each other. But once I got my degree and came back, I realized it's not about the sport itself — it's about management and how the organization works."

Today, he said his greatest joy is found off the field. He and his family live in his hometown of Martin, where he raises his 2-year-old son, Noel. "Being a father has been a huge addition to my life," he said.

From a young hockey player in central Slovakia to an international student, graduate and sports executive, Šubrt's journey reflects the power of stepping into the unknown, and the lasting impact of a community that supported him along the way.



In July 2024, Šubrt with the Sport Leadership master's program toured sports facilities in Houston, Texas, learning from leaders in the sport industry. Pictured are Dr. Wes McKinzie, Filip Šubrt, Dr. Dave Hutson, Dylan Bole, Neal Fisher, Tai Sharpley and Shane Lewandowski.

We Have Issues!

Shield Media Celebrates 25th Anniversary



Since Oct. 5, 2000, when the first newspaper was published, Shield Media has captured the moments that shaped the campus, offered a voice for student perspectives, and trained students in media and communication.

Alumni, current students, advisers and teachers gathered together for a 25th Anniversary Reunion on March 24. More than 55 alumni, students and guests attended the reunion, representing multiple generations of student journalists, photographers, designers and broadcasters.

Throughout the evening, attendees reconnected with former classmates and advisers while reflecting on the evolution of student media at RCU. Tables were filled with past issues of magazines and newspapers, along with photos of the staff over the past quarter-century.

Alumni shared stories about late-night deadlines, covering campus events and learning the craft of storytelling while they were students. Many spoke about how their experiences with Shield Media helped shape their professional paths in communication, public relations, journalism, marketing and other fields.

Shield Media has provided a voice for students, while also training students how to interview, report and communicate. Almost 300 students have worked on Shield since its inception.



Being an editor for Shield absolutely defined my career path. I started my career in journalism and then shifted to public relations using the tools I learned at Shield.

Andrea Walker-Leidy '05
Founder & President, Walker Publicity

Being a part of Shield gave me a chance to meet great people on campus and try my hand at so many things creatively. It was my first real opportunity to collaborate with and lead a creative team, and gave me a massive head start on collecting experience and portfolio work, years before officially starting my career.

Nick Simonis '16
Marketing Strategist
United Wholesale Mortgage



“

My time with Shield Media not only provided me with the technical knowledge and professional experience needed for success in the communications field, but also gave me a community and sense of belonging as a commuter student. Our Tuesday evening classes hold some of my fondest memories at RCU.

Emma Saddler '25
Assistant to the Executive Team
House of Providence

The Beginning

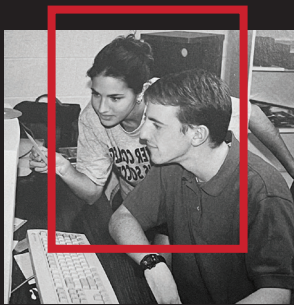
In 2000, former Dean of Students Candace Cain asked Lora Hutson to start a student publication for Rochester College. Previously, the institution produced sporadic publications by students and for students, but maintaining the effort proved difficult on a permanent basis.

Hutson, an experienced editor and writer, served as editor-in-chief of her college's newspaper and had worked as the newspaper adviser of "The Talon" at Oklahoma Christian University.

Hutson recruited students at RC to serve on the newspaper staff

and conducted a campus-wide contest to name the publication. "The Shield" was chosen as the publication's name.

A small team of seven students created the first Shield newspaper under Hutson's leadership, publishing six issues in its first year.



2000 Front page of the first Shield on Oct. 5, 2000



2004 Published the first April Fools' Day issue — then named *The Shieldy*.

2008 Young people's reading habits were changing and Shield adapted as well, transforming to a color magazine.

Shield introduced its first website with a launch party, and the team debuted the "We have issues" slogan.



2014 Shield joined YouTube and started delivering stories via video.

2015 After several years without an April Fools' Day issue, adviser Kayce McClure '13 and several editors revised the tradition and rebranded it *The ShalLOT*, a play on the national satirical publication, *The Onion*.

2018 Shield started producing podcasts, mostly about the university's sports teams.

2023 Shield Media moved from its longtime home in the AG Basement to Gallaher West, where the Media Lab, photo studio and podcast studio are in place.

“

My time on Shield was among the best pre-professional training I received at Rochester. In my career since as a writer at Bennington College, I still utilize the same skills I first cultivated as an editor on Shield: AP-style writing, journalistic organization, and, above all, an inherent curiosity about other people's stories.

Natalie Redmond Mikeska '16
Associate Writer, Bennington College

The hard and soft skills I learned from Shield and in my degree have paid dividends for me. As an intelligence analyst, it is imperative I am able to communicate with concision and clarity by both oral brief and written word.

Skye Donaldson, '18
Intelligence Analyst, U.S. Army





COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

RCU Partners in Transformation of Webster Community Center

The university community joined with long-term partner Micah 6 to celebrate the grand opening of the Webster Community Center in Pontiac on March 20.

The event marked the transformation of the historic 1920 Webster Elementary School into a vibrant, multi-use community space to serve Pontiac residents.

Webster Elementary School opened in 1921 and served as a leading school in Pontiac until closing in 2007 due to declining enrollment. After sitting vacant and deteriorating for nearly a decade, the building was purchased in 2017 by Micah 6 Community, which led efforts to restore it.

Rob Clarke, '82 and owner of CBI Design Professionals, was the lead architect on the project. Completed in 2026, the \$34 million renovation transformed the once-abandoned building into a revitalized community space, which houses local organizations, small businesses, and programs and services for residents.

RCU leases space in Webster and is the only higher education institution involved in the center. This distance learning lab will be a place where students can gain experience in the community.

RCU sent its first volunteer group to serve at Micah 6 in 2012, just months after Micah 6 began. The university community has remained engaged ever since, with students, employees and alumni helping at multiple Warriors Serve over the years.

- For more information, go to www.webstercommunity.org



Webster Community Center celebrates its grand opening, March 20, 2026.

Downtown Partnerships



- RCU hosted a Meet the First Lady dinner at Frank Rewold & Son's building in downtown Rochester, sponsored by Serra Ford of Rochester Hills, on Dec. 11, 2025, to welcome Tapiwa Wenyika, wife of Dr. Reggie Wenyika. Over 30 women were in attendance.



- The university held its first-ever Tip-Off Luncheon at Demarco's Italian Restaurant in downtown Rochester in October. Men's and women's basketball players, their families, and friends and supporters of RCU Athletics heard from Tim McCormick, former NBA player and ESPN host.



- A First Pitch Celebration was held in January at the Rochester Mills in downtown Rochester for the RCU baseball and softball teams. More than 200 people attended to support the programs. Dave Lewallen, a longtime Detroit TV news anchor and media personality, emceed the event.

55th Partnership Dinner Raises Over \$162,000 for Student Scholarships

The 55th annual Partnership Dinner, which featured keynote speaker Sean Astin on April 11 at the Royal Park Hotel, brought together more than 580 donors, alumni and friends of the university to celebrate a commitment to higher education.

The evening raised over \$162,000 for tuition assistance, the third largest amount in 20 years, with 42 sponsorships. Jeff Tungate, interim vice president of development, said many in attendance requested follow-up meetings to discuss ways of helping the university. “We anticipate many more gifts in the weeks to come.”

Astin is best known for his roles in several iconic films, including *The Goonies*, *Rudy* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Astin has appeared in more than 50 films throughout his career, along with over 100 acting credits across television, voice work and streaming projects. He was also recently elected president of the Screen Actors Guild–American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

“I was inspired by every single person I met. Thank you so much for the opportunity and the joy and beauty of the evening!” Astin said.

Tungate introduced longtime Rochester resident Marilyn Dipboye for her generous estate planning gift to RCU. Her gift will be the largest one-time gift in the 67-year history of the university!

Ryan Koral '02 was honored as the 2026 Alumnus of the Year. Caleb Carroll '25, a national recording artist, performed two songs, and student speakers Cyrus Watkins and Lilianna Tasich shared their experiences at RCU and thanked donors.

Tungate said, “This meaningful evening beautifully reflected the power of faith, family and higher education. RCU’s 55th Partnership Dinner united community leaders, generous donors and alumni from across the nation in support of the university’s mission — cultivating faithful hearts and providing vital tuition assistance for students.”

Since 1972, Partnership Dinner has raised funds for campus needs and student scholarships and is the institution’s largest annual fundraiser.





The Click Equips Students with Digital Marketing Skills

A new state-of-the-art digital marketing lab will help students learn to collaborate and work quickly in a modern marketing agency.

Named through a student competition, The Click, presented by Chief Financial Credit Union, is located in the Alumni Center lobby.

Kendra Corman, chair of the Department of Management and Marketing, said The Click will be a place where students can gain real-world experience in campaign development, data analysis, content strategy and more.

"The Click is an investment not just in equipment or space, but in giving students a professional-grade environment where they can develop the confidence and competence to thrive after graduation," she said.

Chief Financial and RCU's partnership is built on shared commitments to community empowerment, financial literacy and investing in the next generation.

New Programs at RCU

In a partnership with Lipscomb University, qualified RCU students can be admitted to Lipscomb's Doctor of Pharmacy program while completing a Health Sciences pre-pharmacy bachelor's degree at RCU.

RCU has launched a prison education program with Mott Community College to offer a behavioral science degree at the Thumb Correctional Facility. The State of Michigan has awarded \$210,000 to help support this program.



Students Gain Real-World Skills for Environmental Careers

Through a collaboration with the Clinton River Watershed Council, students participated in the Adopt-a-Stream program, gaining experience in water quality monitoring and ecosystem research.

What started as an idea last summer between Dr. Ifrodet Gorgees, assistant professor of chemistry, and Kenn Urban, adjunct professor, has grown into a partnership connecting learning with real community impact.

Over three weeks, students received professional training to identify aquatic bugs used as bioindicators of water quality, collected live samples from the Clinton River, and brought them back to campus to isolate and identify under the microscope.

"This collaboration truly brought science to life for our students," Gorgees said. "They weren't just doing a lab; they were contributing to real environmental data used at the state level."



The Adopt-a-Stream team included Kristina Carver, Meta Fleischhut, Lydia Nicholas from CRWC, Mikela Dean from CRWC, Kenn Urban, Sammie Serra and Ian Rogers.

Professional Clothes Closet Equips Students for Career Success

The Professional Clothes Closet provides students with free and equitable access to professional attire for interviews, internships, networking events, conferences and career fairs. The closet offers size-inclusive clothing at no cost and also provides guidance on professional dress and making a strong first impression.

Since its launch, the closet has served 36 students and distributed 185 items of professional clothing.

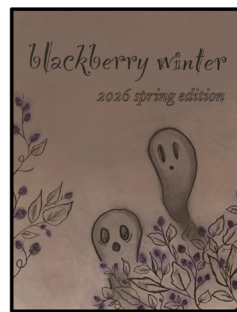
“It has become evident that not all students have access to necessary career wear. Our goal is to help our Warriors feel confident, professional and prepared when stepping into new opportunities,” said Dr. Rebekah Pinchback, dean of the School of Business.

Matt Dion ('08), owner of Closets by Design, partnered with the university to install clothing racks and shelving for the closet. Pinchback continues to accept donations of gently used professional attire, including suits, blouses, dress shirts, shoes and belts. To donate, contact her at rpinchback@rcu.edu.



Photo by Dr. Rebekah Pinchback

Trevor McMastor, a junior digital marketing major, checks out RCU's new Professional Clothes Closet.



“Blackberry Winter,” RCU’s literary arts journal, won an “Excellent” award from the National Council of Teachers of English. Congratulations to Melissa St. Pierre, assistant professor of English, and Dr. Zac Watson, associate professor of English, and their team.

Highlighted Happenings

- 1** The 5th Annual Lift Every Voice and Sing Concert, featuring Jalen Seawright and other musical guests, celebrated Black History Month with an evening of uplifting music and joy.
- 2** For “March is Reading Month,” RCU sent its mascot to interact with students and encourage literacy. Crimson visited:
 - Michigan Math and Science in Madison Heights with Kaysey Kasprisk '23
 - Stevenson Elementary in Southfield with Kelly Garrett '06, director of development, major gifts
 - Auburn Elementary in Auburn Hills with Megan Brown, education major
- 3** Students in Kendra Corman’s Corporate Social Responsibility class took their learning beyond the classroom by visiting four nonprofit organizations — Micah 6 in Pontiac, and Dutton Farm, Neighborhood House and Leader Dogs for the Blind in Rochester Hills.
- 4** Students in Dr. Erin Jurand’s Reading and Language Arts class were paired with first-grade students at Avondale Schools to administer assessments and use the data to develop lessons to improve students’ reading and writing. The RCU students also raised funds to provide Thanksgiving food for families at Auburn Elementary School.



Photo by Dr. Katelyn Brackney



Photo by Dr. Erin Jurand



2026 Philanthropist of the Year

Ann Bryan

A Life of Faithful Generosity

written by EMILY CARROLL '24

Rochester Christian University honors Ann Bryan, alongside her late husband Bert, as this year's Philanthropist of the Year.

Through their foundation, Bryan Christian Services, the Bryans have demonstrated a life marked by faith, generosity and a deep commitment to serving others, both locally and around the world.

Established in 2002, Bryan Christian Services was born from a simple but powerful conviction. "Our goal was just to be a blessing because we had been blessed," Ann said.

What began as a private nonprofit foundation intentionally set aside for giving has grown into a wide-reaching ministry supporting Christian schools, churches, camps, missionaries and individuals in need. Their generosity has funded education for students in Uganda, provided wheelchairs for amputees, supported youth programs and church ministries, and helped students access Christian schooling when finances stood in the way.

The Bryans' connection to Rochester Christian University dates back decades through their involvement with the Rochester Church of Christ. Over the years, that connection deepened into something personal and lasting. Their home became a place of welcome for students — offering home-cooked meals, laundry and encouragement to those far from home.

"We had a number of students who became our adopted kids," Ann said.

Ann's involvement with RCU expanded even further when she joined the Department of Education in 2014, coordinating field placements and teaching introductory education and educational psychology courses. Her heart for students shaped her work, she said, allowing her to place future teachers in environments where they could thrive.

"I wanted to know the students beyond what was on paper," she said, ensuring each placement reflected both personality and purpose.

Bert's journey with RCU followed an unexpected but impactful path. After an early retirement from a successful career in technology, he came to RCU to earn his master's degree in religious education, missional leadership. What followed was a season of joyful service for Bert as he worked



Dr. Reggie Weniyika, president, honors Ann Bryan at the 2025 Warriors' Homecoming basketball game.

in the development office, connected with students, and became a familiar face in chapel and athletic events. Known as the basketball team's biggest encourager, Bert had a gift for making people feel seen, valued and supported.

Together, Ann and Bert's philanthropy at RCU extended beyond formal scholarships. They became a trusted source of support for students facing unexpected needs — whether tuition gaps, travel expenses, clothing or childcare — quietly stepping in to help when assistance was needed most. Their giving was never transactional; it was relational, rooted in faith and compassion.

That legacy continues today, not only through the lives they've touched but also through family. Ann's granddaughter is now an RCU student, making her presence on campus a meaningful full-circle moment.

"I'm thrilled to see her here appreciating the things that Bert and I cared so deeply about," Ann said.

Even now, Ann's life reflects joy and resilience. A longtime competitive ballroom dancer, she continues to compete in the Michigan Senior Olympics, embodying the same grace and determination that define her philanthropy.

Through Bryan Christian Services and through a lifetime of intentional generosity, Ann Bryan exemplifies what it means to live out faith through action. Her impact, alongside Bert's enduring legacy, will continue to shape lives at Rochester Christian University for generations to come.



President's Circle of Honor Celebrates Giving

The President's Circle of Honor recognizes supporters of the university who donated \$1,000 or more in the last fiscal year, contributed to endowed scholarships, or those who have included RCU in their estate plans.

A highlight of the event is the opportunity for donors to get to know the students who received scholarships through their gifts.

Traditionally, the university announces its Philanthropist of the Year at the Circle of Honor, and this year Ann Bryan of Bryan Christian Services earned that honor for her and her late husband Bert's commitment to the university and the greater Rochester community.

Campus Remodeled

Frost Great Room

The Gallaher Center kitchen area, located next to the Mark and Niki Frost '72 Great Room, has been updated with new cabinets, counterspace, warming ovens and sink. The kitchen space is named Katie's Kitchen in honor of Niki's late daughter, Katie (Kirkpatrick) Godwin '04. The Frosts gave a \$50,000 naming gift to restore parts of the historic Gallaher estate house with more updates to come.



Fletcher Center Cafeteria and Isom Atrium

In 2025, RCU extended its contract with Elior Collegiate Dining (formerly Aladdin Campus Dining) to operate the cafeteria and atrium cafe. This new agreement led to new tables and chairs, fresh paint, new flooring, updated ceilings, and new LED lighting. Both areas were updated and refreshed for the community.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Rochester Christian University Financial Summary
June 1, 2024- May 31, 2025

REVENUE

Tuition & Fees	\$ 20,530,935
State & Federal Grants	\$ 138,536
Gifts and Grants	\$ 2,093,084
Miscellaneous & Auxillary	\$ 4,057,416

TOTAL \$ 26,819,971

EXPENSES

Scholarships	\$ 8,834,949
Instruction	\$ 7,922,247
Research & Public Services	\$ 131,283
Student Services	\$ 3,428,180
Auxiliary Services	\$ 741,423
Management & General Operations	\$ 3,735,048
Fundraising	\$ 917,708

TOTAL \$ 25,710,838

NET ASSETS \$ 1,109,133

**Includes donor gifts with and without restrictions.*

Rochester Christian University is a 501(c)(3) public charity. The University's Form 990 is available upon request through the Business Office.



ENROLLMENT DATA

Traditional	613
Online Learning	167
Early College	451
Graduate	31

TOTAL 1, 262

**AS OF DEC. 31, 2025*

**1,179 students from Michigan
40 students from 20 different states**

**1,220 students from United States
42 students from 20 countries**

Boarding Students 199

Commuter Students 1,063

**Graduates at May 2025
Commencement**

TOTAL 114

A LEGACY BUILT TOGETHER

Frank Rewold's Enduring Partnership with RCU

written by EMILY CARROLL '24



For Rochester Christian University, community has always meant more than shared space. It is about shared history, relationships and a commitment to growth. Few embody that spirit more fully than Frank Rewold, whose connection to the university spans decades, generations and nearly every role imaginable.

Rewold's story with RCU begins not as a builder, but as a boy.

"In the late 1960s, I started off playing basketball in the old gym, with the leaky roof and buckled floor," he said. Rewold was introduced to the campus through Dr. Joseph Jones, former dean of Michigan Christian College, and Garth Pleasant '69, retired coach and athletic director. Rewold spent countless hours there. "We would get in that gym and play basketball forever and ever."

That early connection grew deeper over time. Later as a father, Rewold watched his own children take part in Lake Norcentra Basketball Camp, which they still talk about today, especially the unforgettable "one more degree" speech that Pleasant coined as a hallmark of the program.

Rewold also played on a traveling men's softball team with Pleasant. "We traveled, won and had a lot of fun," he said.

Those years of friendship and camaraderie would eventually lead to a professional partnership when Frank Rewold and Sons, his family's construction company, built several facilities on campus, including Ferndale-Hoggatt Hall in 1997, Ham Library in 2002, Richardson Academic Center in 2004 and the Garth Pleasant Arena in 2017.

"I've been around the world at the college. From a 10-year-old boy playing basketball in a leaky gym, to basketball camps, to becoming good friends with both Garth and Clint Pleasant, to building many of the buildings on campus."

His involvement also goes far beyond construction. Rewold has stepped into classrooms as a guest instructor, investing in students directly and sharing his professional experience.

His connection to RCU extends deep into downtown Rochester. Rewold was the builder, owner and operator of the Royal Park Hotel, where the annual Partnership Dinner has

been hosted for almost 20 years.

"I've been a friend, a coach, a player, a teacher, a teammate, a customer, a donor, all of the above for RCU," he said.

That sense of legacy is rooted deeply in both family and community. The Rewold construction business dates back to 1918, beginning at Meadowbrook Hall with Matilda Dodge. Now in its fourth generation, the company has spent over a century shaping the Rochester landscape, completing more than 90 buildings throughout the city.

Rewold's personal life is just as grounded in longevity and connection. He and his wife, Kathy, have been married for 40 years, raising three children, Ashley, Jason and Sean, and now enjoying six grandchildren. His mother, Beverly, also supported the university, and Garth Pleasant officiated Rewold's father's funeral.

"It's a pretty deep bond with the college that is very special," Rewold said.

He continues to champion RCU's mission within the broader community. "I always tell people how blessed we are to have a gem like Rochester Christian University. I want to help RCU grow and continue to spread the word and the mission."

“The message here is the partnership we've had...We've helped each other grow, and we want to be a part of more of that in the future.”

Rewold said he remains confident in the university's foundation and is committed to building upon it. "The message here is the partnership we've had," he said. "The relationship is a two-way street. We've helped each other grow, and we want to be a part of more of that in the future."

Rewold's journey reflects what makes RCU unique — a place where relationships last and community partners support the mission — and help build it.



Lord, Lead Us

A Prayer for Our Community

written by

VANCE K. JACKSON JR.

DEAN of STUDENTS

Father God, in the Name of Jesus, I thank You for every person, student and family member reading this message.

I thank You for every prospective student, every student, and alumnus under our care.

I thank You, for every family member and person that's attached to their lives.

Lord, lead them.

Cover them.

Guide them.

Protect them.

Thank You for the opportunity to steward and shepherd Your people.

We turn to You and ask for Wisdom to lead Your people well.

Lord, let us be light in darkness.

Touch every instructor, faculty and staff to be a reflection of You in the classroom, in the boardroom, give them the strength to move forward in their purpose and in their calling.

As each student matriculates through the University, Lord, lead them.

Open up their understanding.

Open up their eyes to Your Way of doing things in character, integrity, excellence, diligence and honor.

Guide and protect every student on campus.

Cover them mentally.

Give them the power to pursue purpose, and to draw closer to You.

Lord, I ask You for Wisdom—to make the right decisions.

Give students, faculty, staff and families Wisdom to walk in clarity and understanding in every season.

Open up doors that no man can shut, and shut doors that are not of You.

Open up the windows of Heaven and release opportunities — that position Your people for growth, success, impact and for purpose.

Release resources, increase and sustain them.

Remove every barrier, burden and every lack, and replace it with Your Provision, overflow, access, and opportunity that no man can deny.

I thank You, for the leaders of this institution, that they are covering Your sheep.

For we will lead leaders who will transform nations.

We will shape leaders who will build cities.

We will cultivate leaders who will lead nations.

We will pour into change makers who will transform this generation.

Father, we turn to You.

We honor You.

We submit to You.

Heal families, and set the captive free.

*In Jesus' Name,
Amen.*

“

*Give students,
faculty, staff and
families Wisdom to
walk in clarity and
understanding in
every season.*



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Tuesday, July 28, 2026

Registration 8 a.m. | Shotgun Start 9 a.m.

Cherry Creek Golf Club | Shelby Township, MI

SINGLE & FOURSOME PACKAGES INCLUDE:

18 holes with cart

continental breakfast

lunch on patio

buffet dinner

contest holes

RCU swag



Go to rcu.edu/golf
to register or
purchase
sponsorships