



Circle

As global fan bases surge for women's sports, Vikings women's athletes are reimagining what it means to win.

Changing the Game



Greetings from Augustana Campus!

WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION of our *Circle* impact magazine, filled with new stories and updates about life at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus.

Our Vikings have had a stand-out year where teams have shared their passion, commitment, connection and athletic excellence with our community. To mention a few, our men's hockey team competed in the Viking Cup (hosted by the Augustana Vikings Hockey Alumni Association after a 20-year hiatus), our women's basketball team frequently ranked in the Top 10 nationally and our women's volleyball team placed fourth at the national championships.

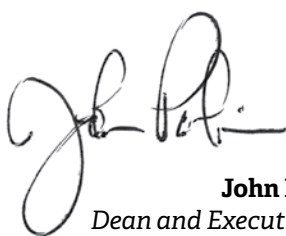
At the same time, the fanbase for women's sports has been growing across the globe. In our first feature story, we speak with Vikings women's athletes and associate professor Dr. Judy Liao, '14 PhD, to learn more about this growth and what sport means to them.

Our second feature story highlights students who have partnered with a local business as part of their Augustana studies. This story, which shows how these partnerships benefit both community members and students, is just one example of the many ways our campus connects with the community each year.

This summer, our campus will come alive with the presence of young learners. In addition to

the regular camps for kids, we welcome Reading University back to Augustana this July in partnership with the Battle River Community Foundation and the Battle River School Division. We are also excited to host the first annual Shad Canada Program at Augustana. This month-long summer science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics and entrepreneurship program will bring 80 high school students from across Canada to campus, empowering them to explore, collaborate and create change.

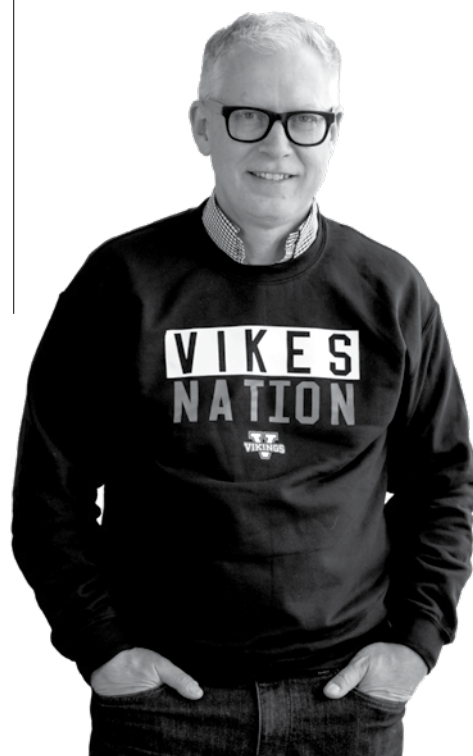
Looking ahead, new developments are coming to our campus, including renovations to our gymnasium, the lounge space next to Monica's Café in the Forum and more. These projects will refresh our spaces and create new opportunities to connect and welcome our community. New academic programming is also underway, with final approvals for work-integrated learning opportunities and more program offerings, in partnership with U of A faculties in Edmonton, coming soon.



John R. Parkins
Dean and Executive Officer,
Augustana Campus

Finally, we have just launched our Augustana strategic plan for 2025-2030: *Collaborative Futures*. This plan offers a roadmap for the near future at Augustana, where we look to support a place where people thrive, an education that serves students, research that leads us forward, and engagement that builds community success. We look forward to working with our community members to realize these goals. The full plan can be found at uab.ca/AugPlan.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Circle*, and we look forward to seeing you on campus for many exciting events and programs in the months ahead.



Contents

8

Changing the Game

As global fan bases surge for women's sports, Vikings women's athletes are reimagining what it means to win.



14

Community Collaboration

Students build career skills and transform a local business' digital reach in a required course.

2 The Lane

An academic look at Taylor Swift's catchy tunes; transformative learning in Kenya; weaving history; Camrose's canopy; and mental health in the agricultural community.

16 The Common

Learn about alumni award recipients; meet new faculty and scholars; read some class notes; reminisce with recently digitized campus history.

19 By the Numbers

Stand-out figures from the past year on campus.



Augustana's 2025 Alumni Award celebration.

Circle

The University of Alberta's **Augustana Campus** does things a little differently. As a small arts and sciences campus, we focus on educating the whole person in the classroom, laboratory and field. Students find their passion at Augustana while earning a University of Alberta degree with Top 5 teaching, learning and research opportunities. *Circle* is dedicated to highlighting the achievements of the Augustana community, distributing to alumni and friends of the campus.

Editor

Sydney Tancowny

Editorial Advisors

Debbie McIntosh, John Parkins, Kim Wiebe

Contributors

Adrianna MacPherson, Sasha Roeder Mah, Sydney Tancowny

Illustrator

Serena Tang

Copy Editing and Proofreading

Sasha Roeder Mah

Design

Chandra Vermeulen

Contact Us

The editor, *Circle* magazine
Augustana Campus, University of Alberta
4901 46 Ave., Camrose, AB, T4V 2R3
augalum@ualberta.ca
780-679-1133

The views and opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the University of Alberta, Augustana Campus or its alumni community. All material is © The University of Alberta, except where indicated. If undeliverable in Canada, please return to: Augustana Campus, University of Alberta, 4901 46 Ave., Camrose, AB, T4V 2R3.

Augustana Campus and the University of Alberta respectfully acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 6 territory.



**UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA**



GRASSLANDS

National Hub Calls Augustana Home

RESEARCH
INITIATIVE LOOKS
TO HELP CONSERVE
VITAL ECOSYSTEM

THE GRASSLAND LEARNING AND Knowledge Hub, supported by a \$4-million grant from Environment and Climate Change Canada's Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, aims to understand what motivates — or hinders — the conservation of Canada's endangered grasslands.

"Globally, about 30 to 50 per cent of the Earth's surface is grasslands," says lead researcher **Dr. John Pattison-Williams**, '06 BSc, '09 MSc, an adjunct professor at Augustana Campus. "In North America, about 60 per cent have been lost to cropping or development." These landscapes are crucial for carbon sequestration, biodiversity and cattle grazing.

Over five years, the hub will see U of A researchers from various faculties,

including Augustana Campus, Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation and Faculty of Native Studies collaborating with three partner groups: the Canadian Forage and Grassland Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the RAD Network (an Indigenous-led organization).

This community-based approach allows various groups to "share their knowledge and perspectives about what has or hasn't worked," Pattison-Williams notes. The initiative will also help Canada meet its climate plans and targets.

The hub will investigate the economic, social and cultural drivers influencing landowners. "Understanding the financial motivations can help guide policy decisions that blend financial incentives and regulation," he says. The team will also explore how family succession, spiritual beliefs and existing government policies impact land-use decisions.

A central goal is co-creating an Indigenous research approach rooted in "two-eyed seeing," which integrates Indigenous and western worldviews. "We want to highlight how these two worldviews can work together," Pattison-Williams explains.

Acting as a "gathering place," the hub will provide public education through webinars and podcasts while building a community of practice. By establishing relationships between researchers, farmers, ranchers and Indigenous communities, the hub seeks to shape effective conservation policy.

"It's collaborative; it allows for local perspectives to be heard and to come together to consider the financial, cultural, spiritual and policy aspects of grasslands conservation," Pattison-Williams says. "That allows people in different spaces to get involved in protecting what we have left."

— BEV BETKOWSKI

Transformative Learning in Kenya

Three-week tour teaches valuable sustainability lessons

HOME TO ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES, a dynamic youthful population and sustainable practices in everything from agriculture and reforestation to water treatment, Kenya can offer a “transformative experience” for students, says science professor and Kenyan Dr. James Kariuki, ’01 PhD.

His new course — AUIDS 200: Kenya Study Tour: Bridging Sustainability, Science, and Society — provides learners with activities that reflect the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nairobi and surrounding areas.

Kariuki hopes that by seeing how Kenyans make the most of limited resources, students “will understand that they don’t have to have a lot to survive and be happy; there’s the possibility of living with warmth, joy and generosity even without material wealth.

“I hope they return with a renewed sense of purpose and can contribute meaningfully to their communities, from something uplifting that they saw in Kenya.” — BEV BETKOWSKI

QUOTED

“The [International Olympic Committee] twists itself into knots denying that the Olympics are political, despite all the nationalism: the medal standings, the flags, the anthems — it’s really being built, in terms of audiences and popularity, on the back of national rivalry and Cold War rivalries, etc. The Olympics are also supposed to be this instrument of peace and international cooperation — those are pretty explicit political goals.”

Dr. Stacy Lorenz, ’91 BA, ’12 PhD, professor and vice-dean, on a *WBUR* segment



POPULAR MUSIC

The Secret of Her Success

Analyzing Taylor Swift’s global dominance

With the highest-grossing concert tour ever, 12 studio albums and a high-profile engagement, Taylor Swift’s phenomenal popularity lies in a careful balancing of approachability, musical skill and shrewd business sense. This is what Dr. Alexander Carpenter, a musicologist and musician at Augustana Campus, argues as he dissects her huge hit, *Shake it Off* — finding a deep sophistication in her approach to songwriting and to her relationship with her legions of fans.

Shake it Off is just three chords and the lyrics have

“little in the way of poetry,” says Carpenter. “She’s not aiming at anything deep. So I was curious about how you make a song like that work.”

The answer, he says, is in the layering of the music and the words. “It’s a compositional strategy that pulls you through the song. It builds and builds in a very subtle and sophisticated way.” This kind of very “carefully constructed” production is what allows the song to feel so carefree — and an enormous feat like the Eras tour to come across as effortless.

The same can be said for Swift’s relationship with her fans, says Carpenter — she manages to feel like a friend while maintaining a massive business enterprise. “There is the [Swift] who is inviting you into her life. And then there is the [Swift] who is creating very sophisticated, very sellable pop music.”

— SEAN TOWNSEND, ’04 BA

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Debugging Popular Science Software

Researchers hope study leads to improved support tools for users of platforms like Jupyter Notebook

A U of A team led by Dr. Thibaud Lutellier, assistant professor of computing science and mathematics at Augustana Campus, has discovered the most common bugs in Jupyter Notebook, an open-source web application researchers use to explore and analyze their data.

Widely used in data science and machine learning, Jupyter Notebook is “an interactive way to do programming, to explore and interpret data, without having to reload everything, which makes it very convenient,” Lutellier says. But that unique feature also makes it vulnerable to bugs as many users also increases the likelihood of defects. That can result in data loss or inaccurate interpretation of results, even leading to ransomware attacks, says Lutellier.

The researchers — including Augustana student Harsh Darji — analyzed almost 9,000 Jupyter Notebooks and found that multiple people working together on the same notebook was more likely to produce bugs — and that there were two main types of bugs, those introduced when users improperly set up their notebooks, and incorrect use of built-in features.

The study highlights the need for providers to improve support tools to help large teams use notebooks safely, and for data scientists to make better use of existing bug detection systems, says Lutellier. — BEV BETKOWSKI



HANDMADE LEARNING

Weaving Lessons from the Past

Traditional crafting bridges the gap between Victorian industrialization and today’s “fast fashion” crisis

RAG RUGS MAY SEEM LIKE RELICS from a bygone era, but they hold valuable modern-day lessons.

Woven into the curriculum of a modern art course at Augustana, the act of crafting the humble household article has plenty to teach anyone who cares about sustainability, says instructor Dr. Andrea Korda, art history professor and associate dean of research.

“The idea of working with your hands, making things yourself, is like an antidote to industrialization, commercialization, alienation — the things we continue to lament and be concerned about.”

As co-author of a recent paper on the value of crafting as a teaching method, Korda worked the activity

into her class as a way for students to reflect on the mass production of textiles during the Victorian era in the 19th century, at the height of Britain’s Industrial Revolution.

As part of the course, students learn about the high costs of that technology, as machinery began to displace human labour, resulting in lower wages, poor working conditions and inferior goods. They also study societal responses like the British Arts and Crafts movement, which championed the value of handcrafted workmanship.

Crafting their own rugs gives students a tangible way to think about that historical shift and contemporary issues with textile waste, fast fashion and related environmental costs, Korda says.

“When we talk about the history of the textile industry, we’re all implicated in it — we all wear clothes.

“People have been talking about these issues for more than a hundred years, and that this is an ongoing problem. We are not the first to be grappling with it, and there have always been critical responses to it.” — BEV BETKOWSKI

Did You Know?

Anyone can join a course at Augustana as an auditor, as long as there are open spots after the first two weeks and the instructor gives permission. Auditors attend classes and join in class discussion but do not complete assignments or exams.

Learn more at uab.ca/Anyone

Young Learners on Campus

Reading University returns to Augustana Campus! In July 2026, program students will work to strengthen their reading, writing and literacy skills.

In the same month, students entering Grade 11 and 12 from across Canada will come to campus as part of the Shad Program — offering immersive, hands-on programming in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.

COURSE HIGHLIGHT

Funny Women: A Hidden History

New course brings femme comedians out of the shadows

A FEW YEARS AGO, when Dr. Willow White, '15 MA, saw a university course syllabus on comedy that didn't include any works by women, she was not amused — but she was inspired to create a course of her own.

"Despite women and queer people being relegated to the edge of the comedy industry — historically and today — they have been making comedy professionally for centuries," notes White, a theatre historian and assistant professor at Augustana Campus who wrote a book on the subject in 2024.

The course — AUDRA 398: Women and Comedy — covers more than 1,000 years, starting back in ancient Greece, all the way up to some of the biggest recent Netflix specials written by comics such as Hannah Gadsby and Ali Wong. Looking at a variety of comedic performances from standup to plays and podcasts, White illuminates the often hidden history of funny females and queer

people. The course also highlights the ways marginalized comics have used mirth as a subversive form of activism.

"There is a lot of power in comedy. Women and gender-diverse folks have always known that," says White, adding that the need for those voices is as relevant today as it ever was, with women still being sidelined in the funny business.

"If you Google 'famous comedians,' almost all of the top search results are guys. But comedy isn't just a genre for men; it has always been for everyone. I want students to know there are long traditions of comedy they can build on and experiment with."

— SEAN TOWNSEND, '04 BA,
AND SARAH VERNON

CAMROSE TREES

Rooting for Green

How resident tree-planting sustains healthy urban forests

A new study co-authored by **Luke Beattie**, '25 BA, Dr. Greg King and Dr. Glen Hvenegaard, '87 BSc(Forest), '89 MSc, helps get at the root of why residents in Camrose plant and maintain trees on their property. The survey — one of the first to explore what influences small-city residents in Canada to plant or remove trees on their property — asked 548 Camrose residents their attitudes, knowledge and personal backgrounds.

The aim was to understand how these factors affected Camrose's tree canopy.

Results revealed that across the city, respondents had planted an average of six trees and removed three in their yards, for a net gain of three trees, since moving into their current home. The survey also revealed that residents being older, living at their property longer and owning their home were positively linked to tree net gain — an indication that municipal public awareness campaigns could target younger residents to help bring them along, says Beattie.

Planting trees was also more about beauty and the bottom line than environmental benefits, with 75 per cent of respondents



saying trees increase the appeal of their yards and 60 per cent saying trees increased their property value.

The study could aid other small municipalities in shaping future management

for sustaining their urban forests, King suggests.

"By aligning city policies with the attitudes and behaviours of residents, we can achieve better outcomes."

— BEV BETKOWSKI



ART AND CULTURE

Arts Students Receive Undergraduate Research Award for Collaborative Exhibit

IN EARLY 2025, a group of four Augustana art students launched a collaboration that will culminate in fall 2026 with an exhibit in the

Augustana Forum. *Women and Machines* is the product of nearly two years of work by artists Isabelle R. Spohn, Evelyn Cheung, Annie Arciniegas and Darius Polishchuk, with the supervision of art history professor Dr. Andrea Korda and mentorship from art professor Julian Forrest, '05 MFA.

The group, whose exhibit explores the dynamics of gender and technology as both uniquely human expressions, was awarded Augustana's Dr. Roger Epp Award for Team-Based Undergraduate Research for this work.

— SASHA ROEDER MAH, '91 BA

QUOTED

“Bridget of Sweden reminds us of the role women played in intervening in public affairs and religious life — women who were extremely savvy and skilled at navigating authority structures to acquire spiritual agency. Women like Bridget also remind us that there were other visions of religious reformation before Luther wrote his 95 Theses in 1517, and that reformation need not always come from where we might expect.”

Dr. Brandon Alakas, professor, during his Distinguished Professorial Lecture “Redefining Holiness: Bridget of Sweden's Religious Reformation”



COACHING AWARD

The Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC) named Vikings' Steve Enright, '11 BEd, the 2025-2026 Overall Coaching Excellence Award recipient. Since 2019, Enright has led the women's volleyball team to three national championships, including a record-breaking fourth-place national finish in 2026.

A four-time Coach of the Year, Enright is celebrated for a culture

rooted in accountability, continual growth and well-rounded student-athlete development.

“As a former player, I've experienced firsthand the culture he builds and the standard he sets,” says Vikings athletic coordinator, **Emily Peterson**, '24 BA. “His genuine investment in his players is a big reason why this women's volleyball team continues to be one of the best in the country.”

— **EMILY PETERSON**, '24 BA

Agricultural Speaker Series Launches

Dr. Rebecca Purc-Stephenson was one of the featured experts at Augustana's Agricultural Speaker Series, launched this past year. Aiming to foster meaningful discussions on today's agricultural challenges and opportunities, the free talks connect the local agricultural community to researchers, highlighting insights and innovations that are shaping the future of agriculture, rural communities and sustainability.

Learn more at uab.ca/AgSeries



CONSERVATION

Tree Cuttings Can Restore Sensitive Natural Areas

Research rooted in balsam poplars can help get sensitive, flood-prone natural areas back on track after damage from off-highway vehicles.

Researcher Dr. Raiany Dias de Andrade Silva, '19 MSc, '24 PhD, co-led the study with Augustana's Dr. Anne McIntosh, '13 PhD, and Dr. Ellen Macdonald from the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences. Using trails that had been restored in Alberta's Blue Rapids Provincial Recreation Area in 2017, these forest ecologists compared three types of cuttings that had been planted in this region from native tree species. All three were growing, with varying degrees of success.

"This gives a mix of cost-effective and practical options for restoration projects, which, ultimately, helps return native plants to these damaged areas," says Dias de Andrade Silva. — BEV BETKOWSKI

PSYCHOLOGY

Livestock Diseases Take Psychological Toll on Agricultural Community

Research suggests need for better federal mental health support during cull times

CULLING LIVESTOCK WHEN SERIOUS disease strikes is devastating for farmers, and University of Alberta research suggests ways to better help them cope with the stress.

A group of 20 farmers, veterinarians and industry workers who had experienced such outbreaks were asked by study lead Dr. Rebecca Purc-Stephenson, psychology professor at Augustana Campus, to describe the impact on their mental health, to find out how to strengthen their resilience.

The analysis revealed five big

challenges: emotional distress, threats to farmers' identity as competent producers, economic burdens, distrust and frustration with authorities, and issues related to adaptation.

To address those issues, the study recommends changes to the federal agricultural emergency management framework to integrate mental health supports during animal disease management.

More effective mental health support in emergency management for the farming community is vital, says Purc-Stephenson.

"With major outbreaks such as avian flu, these crises affect farms far beyond economic concerns." — BEV BETKOWSKI



As the spotlight on women in sport shines brighter than ever, athletes are redefining what it means to win



BEYOND THE SCOREBOARD

BY ADRIANNA MACPHERSON | ILLUSTRATION BY SERENA TANG, '14 BA



There's something undeniably electric about the experience of playing in front of a cheering crowd. The tingle of anticipation that hums through your body as you prepare to receive the ball, the fluorescent glow of gym lights illuminating the playing area, the shouts of your name and number coming from all around you.

"It gives me goosebumps just thinking about it," says **Shae Boyes**, '24 BA, a former Vikings women's volleyball player at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus. Augustana in particular, she notes, is known as one of the loudest gyms in the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference (ACAC). She fondly recalls the sounds of Vikings fans yelling their encouragement, hitting pots and pans, unleashing their infectious enthusiasm at peak volume to energize the players on the court.

"I love it," says Boyes. "I don't know how to explain it — it's just a special feeling."

For Boyes, it's never been about the scoreboard, the stats, nor the awards and accolades lining the shelves. What the court gives is something so much more.

Boyes grew up in Rimbey, Alta., and dabbled in countless different sports as part of an active family. It was volleyball, though, that rose to the top as she got older and began playing more competitively. "It's such a unique game," says Boyes. "There's such a technical aspect to it, you have to be very refined."

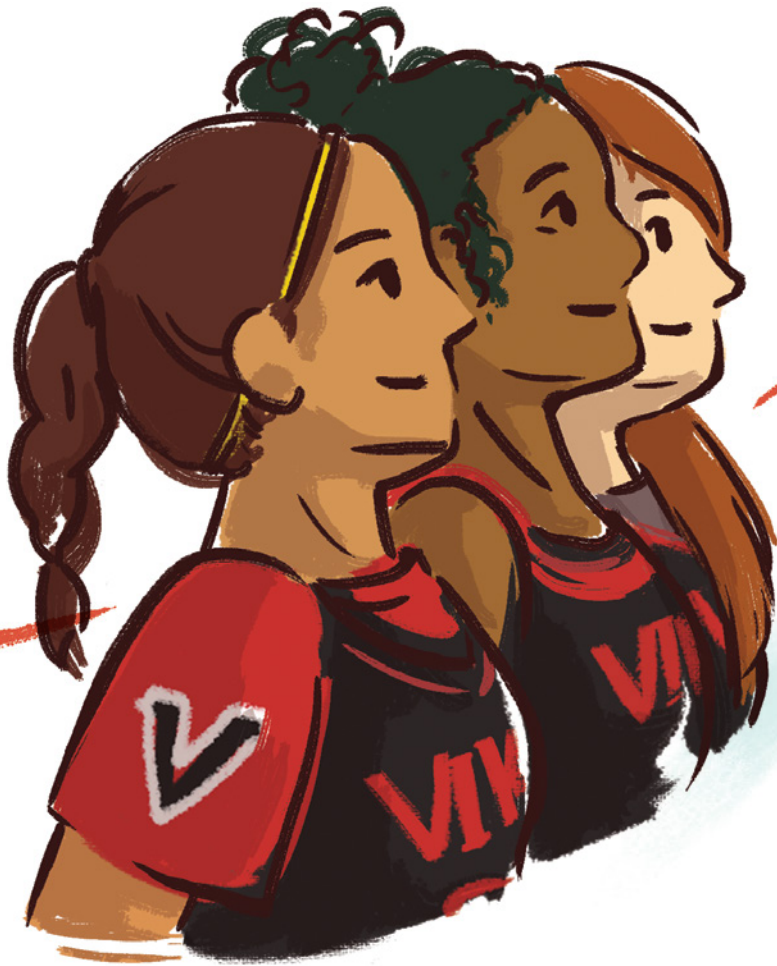
She joined the Vikings her first year at Augustana, winning the ACAC Women's Volleyball Rookie of the Year title after her debut collegiate season, and played five years for the team. To wrap up her varsity career, she was named 2024 Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) Women's Volleyball Player of the Year — the first Viking in history to snag that title, regardless of team or sport.

While her many accolades pay tribute to the hard work she put in refining her skills on the court, those aren't what stick in her memory when reflecting back on her time in collegiate athletics. Instead, it's the resilience and strength that she honed on the court and carried into the world outside the gym.

Current Vikings women's basketball player Mackenzie Mrazik, who grew up in Edmonton playing sports alongside her older sister, got her start as a gymnast. In Grade 3, her parents encouraged her to branch out and try a team sport, so Mrazik joined her community basketball team. "From then on, basketball became a big part of my life."

In high school, when she realized that competing at a higher level would require her to narrow down the amount of sports she was playing, basketball emerged as the one she most enjoyed. It also didn't hurt that she shot up eight inches in height during Grade 11. "Not prime for a gymnast, but works out pretty well for a basketball player," Mrazik laughs.

Still, she always assumed she'd hang up her sneakers after high school to focus on academics. A chance encounter with an Augustana coach, who saw her play during a pre-pandemic scrimmage and was impressed by her potential, led to a spot on the Vikings women's basketball team as a guard/forward — and she was hooked. Like Boyes, Mrazik has been a student-athlete throughout her entire Augustana experience, and was recognized as Athlete of the Year across all Vikings women's teams at the 2025 Student Life Awards. Mrazik is set to graduate this year with a degree in physical education after a stand-out season where she scored her 1,000th career point and the team has been frequently ranked in the Top 10 in the CCAA.



“The biggest benefit and thing that I’m so grateful for has been the opportunity to connect with teammates and be in an environment of women athletes supporting each other to reach their goals.”

— MACKENZIE MRAZIK

Yet, it wasn’t just the thrill of the game that kept both Boyes and Mrazik on the roster year after year, balancing the many demands of an athlete’s schedule with their academic course load and volunteer commitments. It was the fact that they were growing stronger as people, not just as players.

“As an athlete, you have to be really resilient,” says Boyes. “It forced me to work through things on the fly, under pressure. It really gave me the tools to just put my head down and work. Even if I didn’t always get the outcome I desired, I had an attitude that I wanted to do better the next time.”

“For me specifically, leadership has been a huge aspect of how I’ve been able to benefit from college athletics,” says Mrazik, who became captain of the women’s basketball team in her third year. “There are so many opportunities to lead in sport.”

On a practical level, time management was another crucial skill they developed as Vikings, often squeezing in studying or assignments on the way home from away games.

And, in addition to all the benefits they experienced on a personal level, Boyes and Mrazik also note that the sense of community and camaraderie was one of the biggest draws of sport, from the early days to their competitive college years.

“I have teammates from childhood that I’m still friends with 14 years later,” says Boyes with a smile. “Sport just brings people together in a really unique way.”

“Joining a team gives you an opportunity to make connections, to get so much support and love from a community immediately,” she adds. “It really helps you navigate early adulthood, which can be very challenging.”

Mrazik adds that she recalls always being surrounded by players and coaches that truly cared. “And not just for what I could produce on the court, but who wanted me to find out who I was through sport and grow as a person,” she says.

“For me, the biggest benefit and thing that I’m so grateful for has been the opportunity to connect with teammates and be in an environment of women athletes supporting each other to reach their goals,” adds Mrazik.



The internal growth and unshakable support system that comes along with being an athlete can be a driver for women in sport, motivating them to push themselves even when no one else is looking. Now, though, the world outside gymnasiums and arenas is beginning to pay attention — and the shift hasn't gone unnoticed by the experts, who are tracking the changing perception of women's sport with fascination.

Dr. Judy Liao, '14 PhD, an associate professor at Augustana who studies gender in sport, has been a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) fan since the league was launched in 1997. She began teaching at Augustana a decade ago, and noticed something unique in her classes over the past few years. The women's sports examples she uses, once met by blank stares, are now familiar to the students. They can rattle off the names of their favourite athletes, they wax poetic about a recent victory for a league they once would have never dreamt of watching. They're tuning in to women's sports in a way that Liao hasn't seen before.

And the phenomena Liao observed in her own students is merely a microcosm of the surge in public interest in women's sport on an international scale. "While it's hard to really pinpoint what exactly happened to spark that surge, there are a couple

big breakthroughs you can clearly identify," Liao explains.

The first is that during the pandemic, Liao's beloved WNBA was one of the few professional sports leagues that managed to pivot and create a quarantine bubble. This allowed WNBA games to proceed as usual while most others had been paused indefinitely. Many sport-hungry viewers stuck at home tuned into the WNBA for the first time, simply because there weren't many other options. They found themselves intrigued enough to continue watching — and they haven't stopped since. The 2024 season was the most-watched WNBA regular season on ESPN platforms, and also saw the highest total game attendance in 22 years.

The swell of interest isn't exclusive to the WNBA, either. At the college level, the 2024 Women's National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Championship game boasted 18.9 million viewers, pulling in more fans than the men's final while also setting a record for the most-watched basketball game, either college or professional, in five years.

2024 also saw the launch of the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL), giving women hockey players a whole new tier of competition to shoot for. A year later came the inaugural season for the Northern Super League (NSL), Canada's first professional women's soccer league.

"I think the recent rise in popularity has been a long time coming," says Mrazik. "There's always been great teams; it's just that how they were recognized and treated was different."

Then, there was the emergence of several big personalities over the past few years that have dominated sports media, sparking conversations and garnering new viewers. After all, who could forget the fervour with which basketball fans tracked Caitlin Clark's NCAA stats, the way they were on the edge of their seats as she decided which WNBA team she'd be bringing her talents to after graduation? Forget "Be Like Mike" — young girls finally had their own basketball hero to emulate.

"Everyone knew her name, and then somehow everyone knew about women's basketball," says Liao. "With that kind of popularity, many women athletes start to use their platform to say, 'Everyone should watch women's sport.'"

"The popularity and visibility of those handful of big stars definitely helped trigger everyone to begin paying attention," she adds.

Then, of course, there's the role of social media, which Liao notes has been able to fill gaps in mainstream sports media's coverage. "Social channels allow women's sport and women athletes to be represented in a way not confined to what mainstream media wants them to be," says Liao. Through social media, women athletes can present themselves to the public as they want and forge their own narratives. And that's a powerful thing.

"The popularity and visibility of those handful of big stars definitely helped trigger everyone to begin paying attention."

— JUDY LIAO

For the next generation of athletes, the landscape of sport is beginning to look a whole lot different. In addition to engaging with their favourite players and teams on social media, they just might get the chance to see women sharing the screen with the men on major sports channels as mainstream media shifts to satisfy the surge in interest (and chase the potential billions in revenue that come along with it).

From the rapidly rising viewership stats to the revenue numbers of professional women's sports — projected to more than double from a milestone \$1 billion in 2024 to \$2.5 billion by 2030, according to McKinsey & Company — it's clear that the surge in interest isn't just a passing trend. Finally, the spotlight is shining full force on women athletes and it shows no signs of dimming.

"Hearing all the success stories of these athletes really gives me a lot of hope that we're going to see an upswing not just in terms of support, but in terms of respect," adds Boyes.

Boyes, who played professionally in Macedonia for a year before being sidelined by an injury, now works as a student recruiter for Augustana. And, while she's no longer taking the court in front of a roaring Vikings fan base as a player, she's eager to pass the torch, leading individual coaching sessions and staying involved however she can.

"There's so much that you get from being an athlete, so much that builds you in so many ways," says Boyes.

"To be a woman athlete at a time where things are starting to change, where women's sports are starting to be recognized for their value, has been really cool," says Mrazik, who likewise plans to shift her focus in sport to coaching once she graduates.

"Sport can teach you so much about your value, your ability, your capacity," she adds. "I think just to be a part of that environment and help spark that growth for young girls is something I'm really excited about." ●

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Core Course Brings Students, Local Business Together for Success

Students build invaluable career skills helping local alpaca-yarn business dress up its digital presence

By Bev Betkowski | Photos by Ella Begg, Ajwa Niaz and Sydney Tancowny, '16 BA

LAUNCHED BY LEANNE SEPT AND HER TWO SISTERS 24 YEARS AGO, Twisted Sisters & Company Fiber Mill has been creating yarn and goods such as hats, mitts and socks ever since, using shorn fleece from the alpaca operation she and her husband run.

The small rural Alberta business, located in Leduc County, makes those sales through its website and at farmers markets, but Sept wanted to connect more meaningfully online to draw in potential customers — and wasn't sure how to do it.

Now, working with a team of third-year Augustana Campus students to refresh the company's website and create a social media campaign plan to reach more clients, she's learning how to craft a story "to create excitement, to engage people, to get to that next level. And I hope that's where the students can take me."

Their work stems from the Community Partnership Project course, one of a series of core courses for Augustana students. The senior-level course sees students working in small groups on projects brought forward by community organizations and businesses. The focus this year included working with farmers and food-related producers in the Camrose, Pigeon Lake and Leduc areas. Students also partnered with an education authority and with organizations developing arts-based approaches to community health.

The course gives students the opportunity to apply what they've learned in the classroom to help address real-world challenges, and at the same time strengthen their own capacity, says instructor Dr. Stephen Cruikshank, '11 BEd, '18 PhD, who oversaw their work.

"It teaches them to start thinking critically about their professional skills and then gives them a very practical example of how to apply those skills by engaging with a community partner outside the university."

Working with Sept to boost the business' online presence, student Patrick Dunn and his teammates visited the mill and alpaca farm to get a feel for the operation and then set to work.

As well as updating the website's product inventory and tweaking its design, the team is providing a step-by-step guide Sept can use to craft social media posts "so the audience feels connected to the business," Dunn says.

"We're suggesting techniques and different styles of photos, for example, to show the alpacas, because we know people love cute animals."

The students brought a fresh angle of creating a sense of fun, rather than just trying to sell a product, Sept notes.

"They said, 'Just get people to come to you, and then they'll look at the rest of the website.'"

Along the way, the students drew on their degree programs in computing science and mathematics, environmental science and integrative biology to power their research efforts.

Dunn and one of his teammates, both environmental science students, used their knowledge to help identify sustainable practices Twisted Sisters was using in its everyday operations, for possible mention in a marketing plan.

The team also used their computing science know-how. "We researched questions like web design, the times of the week to post content, how to write an effective caption, using hashtags and emojis, and specific ways to engage social media audiences, such as through polls," Dunn notes.

"We were able to draw on our different backgrounds, interests and specialties to really create what we hope to be a good project that will ultimately help the business."

The team, along with the rest of their classmates, got an extra boost in their projects through guest speakers from firms such as YEG Digital, who provided seasoned advice Dunn and his teammates relied on to guide their work.

“It teaches them to start thinking critically about their professional skills and then gives them a very practical example of how to apply those skills by engaging with a community partner outside the university.”

— STEPHEN CRUIKSHANK

“Learning first-hand from a professional about good marketing strategies, paired with our in-depth research, was really to our advantage.”

The team’s work gives her family’s operation a valuable voice as a small business, Sept notes.

“We want to really promote the ideas of being local, having quality products, and that we’re not a factory — everything is made here on our farm. Nowadays, it’s very important to let people know where their products are coming from.

“It would take me years to do the research the students have done and come up with these ideas, so it was a really good fit,” she adds.

The students feel they gained just as much from working on the project, Dunn says.

“We were able to really develop skills like communication, time management and collaboration, and then apply that in a real-world setting with a community partner, where that professionalism, respect and good hard work is really important,” he notes. “That’s going to translate into future careers and future jobs.”

The course ultimately helps students move beyond their classroom credentials and resumes to meaningfully connect during job interviews, Cruikshank adds.

“At that point, what the employer wants to see is the application of their skills, the character of who they are, and how that’s going to apply for the organization they want to work for.”

Meanwhile, Dunn and his fellow teammates feel good about how their work contributes and connects to the community.

“It’s rewarding to engage with these businesses that came to us with real questions, real concerns and real needs. You’re having a real impact and hopefully a positive effect.” 🍷



▲ Top: Leanne Sept visited Augustana Campus to watch the students’ final presentation in April.

Bottom left to right: Augustana students Ella Begg, Patrick Dunn, Pranav Sabapathy Kantha, Ajwa Niaz, and Ope Olaleru visited Twisted Sisters & Company Fiber Mill.

The Common

GET TO KNOW US BETTER

NEW FACULTY AND SCHOLARS

Fresh Perspectives

Augustana welcomes five visionary scholars to our community

Bridging history with sociology, fostering unlikely connections, and tackling the climate crisis, these experts redefine the boundaries of research. Their diverse perspectives will challenge our learners to think deeper and reach higher.

Their research and teaching are grounded in a blend of intellectual curiosity and unique personal journeys and passions that truly enrich our campus.

— DONNA MCKINNON, '87 BFA, AND SASHA ROEDER MAH, '91 BA



BRAD GEDDES

"To lead and to serve"

Brad Geddes, '98 BA, '11 MBA, completed his bachelor of arts with concentrations in economics and rural development at Augustana before going on to graduate studies. He has taught at Augustana over the years, now entering a full-time role as assistant lecturer in management. With more than 25 years of public service leadership experience, Geddes' background includes modernizing major contact-centre operations and coordinating disaster recovery.

For Geddes, leadership is about showing up for community, and his career in public service, executive leadership and higher education have given him a way to live that value every day.



DOUGLAS MUGABE

"Shaping future systems"

Growing up in rural Zimbabwe, assistant professor of economics and business management Dr. Douglas Mugabe was taught each of us has the responsibility and ability to shape the future we wish to see — a belief that he now passes on to his students.

A Fullbright Scholar, Mugabe's research uses applied economics to address global challenges such as energy transitions, environmental sustainability, resource use, agriculture and climate change — with particular focus on orphaned and abandoned wells across Canada and the United States, and the broader economics of unconventional oil and gas development.



LATICIA CHAPMAN-RAINWAY

"Championing rural life"

Dr. Laticia Chapman-Rainway, '26 PhD, is a postdoctoral scholar at the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (ACSRC).

During her PhD, Chapman-Rainway examined the history of rural-serving library systems, focusing on their role as a public place. She is now drawing on that experience to support co-lead and ACSRC director **Dr. Clark Banack**, AUC '01, in a Canada-wide ethnography project exploring political opinions in rural spaces. Emerging from this work is her strong interest in how communities define themselves as political spaces and what that means to their survival.



SUDDHA DEB ROY

"Don't settle for simple answers"

Raised in a trade unionist household in northeast India, Dr. Suddhabrata (Suddha) Deb Roy's journey as a writer, sociologist and global citizen

was rooted in principles of social justice.

During his PhD, Deb Roy became interested in the sociological and political undercurrents of India's pre-Independence era. Augustana's first Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Postdoctoral Fellow, he analyzes the humanist roots of the social justice and activist discourses in South Asia. His work is based on the strong belief in the importance of understanding history and politics through a sociological lens, and vice versa.



LAUREN STRUMOS

"What is our place in the world?"

A love of nature imbues the work of postdoctoral scholar Dr. Lauren Strumos, who investigates how religious and nonreligious affiliations shape our relationship with the natural world. The sociologist with the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life began her undergrad interested in the intersections of religion and ecology, and has become increasingly curious about the views of people who are not religious.

Now, she's turning her attention from human responses to climate change to the values and concerns that connect people across diverse (non)religious identities.

A Campus by Many Other Names

Since being founded in 1910, our campus has changed names multiple times:

CLC

first known as Camrose Lutheran College,

CLUC

a brief stint as Camrose Lutheran University College,

AUC

then later Augustana University College,

AUG

and finally the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta.



STUDENT PAPERS

Unlocking the Past

Students, library digitization experts collaborate to bring Augustana history online

BREAKING NEWS FROM THE PAST:

The Dagligtale, Augustana's student newspaper, is now available online!

The newly digitized *Dagligtale* collection ("everyday language" in Norwegian) includes issues from 1978 to 2020, capturing student perspectives, photos and coverage of events on Augustana Campus.

The project came about when a group of students researching campus history had trouble finding information about the lives of

past students. The alumni office, Augustana Students' Association and faculty engagement librarian **Kara Blizzard**, '10 BA, came to the rescue — rounding up more than 150 issues of the paper, which the library's digitization team then scanned and uploaded to the Internet Archive.

The digitized collection inspired students Jacob Griffith and Devyn Waldie to complete a directed reading course with

Dr. Andrea Korda, where this "hands-on curatorial experience" included learning how to design a website to host an online exhibition about *The Dagligtale*.

Browsing the newly digitized *Dagligtale*, the students noticed how it had evolved over time. Early issues resemble newsletters — short and straightforward — while later issues feature more creative submissions, photos and interactive content such as word games. "When you read some of the articles, it really felt like you were there," says Waldie. In December 2025, Griffith and Waldie launched their exhibition and presented their work at the Augustana Student Academic Conference.

— **KARA BLIZZARD**, '10 BA

INSPIRING ALUMNI

Community Builders

Grads enrich Augustana life with passion, wisdom

— SHIRLEY WILFONG-PRITCHARD, '04 BA



▲ Bob Bailey



▲ Craig Wentland

BOB BAILEY

Distinguished Alumni Award for outstanding achievement in his vocation

Bob Bailey, CLC '80, '83 BEd, began his journey in the very city where he would later shape generations of young musicians. Born and raised in Camrose, his father was a trumpet player and member of a local dance band, while his grandmother served as a church organist and choir director. Music was not just a pastime — it was a way of life.

As a junior-high student, Bailey attended Charlie Killam School — the same school where he would eventually teach for over 37 years — and his passion for music education blossomed further during high school. Eventually, after completing an education degree at the University of Alberta, he returned to his hometown to develop a thriving music program at his old junior high.

A much-loved teacher and mentor, Bailey was a national finalist for the 2024 MusiCounts Music Teacher of the Year.

"I've been blessed to have a career in something I enjoy and have a passion for."

CRAIG WENTLAND

Lois Aspenes Award for significant contributions to the Alumni Association or to the life of Augustana

When **Craig Wentland**, CLC '86, attended Camrose Lutheran College (CLC), he never imagined that 40 years later, he would receive an award named in honour of his friend and mentor, Lois Aspenes.

Wentland's career has been guided by his philosophy — and Aspenes' example, as secretary for the director of College and Church Relations — that life is about relationships and community.

After completing his training and ordination, Wentland served as a pastor in the Camrose area for 11 years until Augustana University College (previously named CLC) merged with the University of Alberta in 2005. He was the perfect fit for the redesigned role of campus chaplain, where he could provide a "whole person education."

"Students look to faculty and staff for models of what it means to be whole people," explains Wentland. "With wisdom,

faculty and staff need to reveal to students who they are — their passions, their struggles and how they're involved in community and family life."



▲ Petra Cegielly

PETRA CEGIELNY

Alumni Citation Award for non-Augustana alumni in recognition of significant contributions to the life of Augustana

When Petra Cegielly, '01 BA, started in the position of Aboriginal student advisor in 2007, she wanted to act as

a facilitator of relationships and connection.

Cegielly — who is not Indigenous herself — began by working with allies to collect data on the number of

Indigenous students who had attended Augustana or were currently on campus and identifying their needs.

What followed were years of hosting more and more popular events and programming, with Cegielly's small office beginning to feel crowded. So, after consultations with community and with the help of \$1 million from the U of A, wahkohtowin Lodge was opened in 2016. In this dedicated space Indigenous students gather with each

other, Elders and community members and share their gifts through educational programs and workshops.

"My time at Augustana ended, but the students who entrusted me for support during those nine years are the ones making a difference now. They have become the change."

BY THE NUMBERS

A NUMERICAL GLIMPSE AT OUR
CAMPUS OVER THE PAST YEAR

Learn more about what
future years could look like at
uab.ca/AugPlan

OVER 1,400

donations made by

566

donors

37%

of total donors from Camrose
and area in fiscal year 2026

OVER
\$1 MILLION

in grant funding received to
support Augustana research
projects in fiscal year 2026

211

student research
presentations given at
the Student Academic
Conference

10%

international
students

12%

from Camrose and
Camrose County

15%

student-
athletes

940+

students on campus
across Augustana Faculty
and Faculty of Rehabilitation
Medicine programs

76%

from
Alberta

10%

Approximate increase
from 2024/25

TOP GIVING AREAS:

STUDENT AWARDS



VIKINGS ATHLETICS

RESEARCH



150

students received
a total of

\$399,000

from donor-funded awards
to support their education

8

new donor-funded
student awards
created

\$100,000+

raised to support Vikings
student-athletes during
U of A Giving Day 2026

20,000+

attendees across public
campus events from
April 2025 - March 2026.
Won't you join us?
uab.ca/Anyone

Read and submit Class Notes
and In Memoriam at
uab.ca/AugNote

TALK TO US

Class Notes

We'd love to hear how our alumni are doing! Tell us about your job, volunteer activities, vacation or new pet. Celebrate a personal accomplishment or share a memory. Submit your class note, which we'll edit for length and clarity.

— SYDNEY TANCOWNY, '16 BA

1960s

'61 **Dr. Fay Martin** is an author, community organizer, researcher and retired social worker. Martin recently published the book *Dementia Widow* — a deeply honest memoir about caregiving, grieving and surviving her husband's dementia.

'68 **Garth Griffiths**, '70 BA, expanded his hospitality portfolio with the addition of Folding Mountain Brewery, nestled just west of Hinton near the Overlander Mountain Lodge and Jasper East Cabins, where he has served as president for more than a decade. This expansion marks a successful new chapter, highlighted by the brewery's award-winning craft beer.

2000s

'05 **Matthew Hebert**, BA, started a new role as the chief operating officer at the Ministry of Primary and Preventative Health Services in the Government of Alberta. In this role, Hebert is responsible for the strategy, support, integrated services and rural health, and the Health and Well-being Systems Transformation divisions.



▲ Anurika Onyenso

2010s

'16 **Heather Marshall**, BA, co-authored the book *Frank Farley and the Birds of Alberta*, alongside Dr. Glen Hvenegaard, '87 BSc(Forest), '89 MSc, and Dr. Jeremy Mouat. The book received the 2026 Alberta Wildlife Publication Award (popular category) from the Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society.

2020s

'23 **Anurika Onyenso**, BMgt, stood alongside young leaders from across Canada on Parliament Hill in February to release the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights' Youth Digital Rights Blueprint, a framework for online safety, accountability and digital well-being. She has held leadership roles across non-profit, public and grassroots spaces, and is a recipient of the 2025 Daughters Day Award and the 2026 UBORA Leadership Award.

'23 **Kyra (Gusdal) Thompson**, BA, alongside Dave McDougall, '86 BEd, from the Camrose Churchmice Players, received the Best Director award at the Alberta Drama Festival Association's 2025 Provincial One-Act Festival for their show *The Price*, by Don Zolidis.

CAMPUS MEMORY:

"Prior to Augustana being on my radar, my aunt and uncle were Viking Cup host families for two Russian players who ended up having respectable NHL careers. I had the pleasure of spending family Christmas at my parents' house in 1992 with Boris Mironov and Darius Kasparitis! Quite fond memories of that Christmas dinner and evening."

— '00 **Kris Nelson**, BA, '03 BSc(OT)

Did You Know?

The Augustana Vikings Hockey Alumni Association hosted the Viking Cup in December 2025, welcoming teams from Canada, the United States and Czechia. This international hockey tournament was last held in 2006.

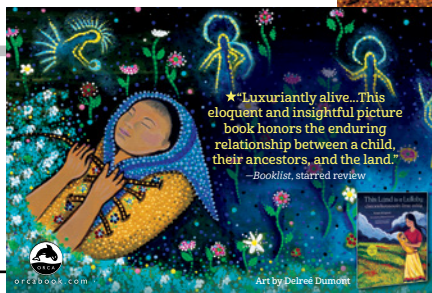


Viking Cup Committee members. Top row, left to right: ▲ Lucas Hudec, Tim Green, Joren Johnson, Reid Lansing, David Sheets, Bob Mingo, Lee Katchur, Scott Sitrler. Bottom row, left to right: Lara Birkill, Lorraine Bell, Kathy Warren, LeRoy Johnson, Verlyn Olson, Randy Haugen, Jon Hironaka. Missing: Bryan Schultz, Aaron Stavne.



ALUMNI ACCOLADES

From her research to her participation in community reburial initiatives, **Tonya Simpson**, '16 BSc, '21 MA, champions reconciliation and transformative change. A U of A researcher, educator and curator, the Alumni Horizon Award recipient is also a forensic anthropologist who contributes to unidentified-remains and missing-persons cases across Alberta. As an instructor, Simpson inspires her students to explore the intersections of anthropology, ethics and social responsibility. Also an acclaimed children's author, her *This Land is a Lullaby* won the Governor General's Literary Award in the category of Young People's Literature – Illustrated Books in 2025.



NEW AWARD

James and Kalissa Vy's Engagement Award

For **James and Kalissa Vy**, both '14 BSc, Augustana isn't just where they earned their degrees — it's where they found each other and laid the foundation for a life of service and community. Now, they're helping other students build their futures through the Vy Engagement Award.

"We wanted to give back to the place that gave so much to us," says James, who proposed to Kalissa in front of Founders' Hall (Old Main). "Augustana shaped our paths. Cooper — our son — wouldn't even be here if not for this campus."

The Vy Engagement Award supports upper-year

undergraduates who demonstrate leadership, volunteerism and extracurricular involvement. James and Kalissa were deeply involved in student life: James as president of the Augustana Students' Association and a residence hall coordinator, Kalissa leading campus tours as an ambassador, helping organize science outreach events and performing with the community band.

James began donating the year after graduating in 2014 — a rare move for such a young alumnus. "We benefited so much from scholarships ourselves. We felt it was our responsibility to start paying that forward as soon as we could, even if it was only \$100 a month."

The Vys regularly return to campus for donor events and have volunteered at student welcome weekends and community banquets. James also recently joined the University of Alberta Senate, further strengthening their connection to the university.

— ERIK EINSIEDEL, '00 BA



SEE BEYOND

Not a student, but always included

From stargazing and public library cards to summer camps, we have something for all of Camrose and surrounding community. Bring your friends, family and curiosity to explore Augustana — no student ID required!

uab.ca/anyone

ON CAMPUS,

**ANY
ONE
CAN**