



VALLEY CITY

STATE UNIVERSITY

NINTH WINTER
COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

December 14, 2023 ♦ Vangstad Auditorium

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

Thursday, December 14, 2023

3:30 p.m.

Vangstad Auditorium

The President Will Preside

Prelude.....VCSU University Singers
Prof. Kewen Cheng, conductor
Dr. Ozzie Johnson, piano

Academic Processional
Pomp and Circumstance Elgar
Dr. Ozzie Johnson, piano

Call to Order.....Dr. Alan LaFave
President of the University

“Star Spangled Banner” John Stafford Smith
VCSU Vocal Trio
Tara Dahl, soprano, Isabelle Haugen, soprano, Elizabeth Gazeley, alto

Opening Remarks.....Dr. Alan LaFave

GreetingsMr. Curtis Biller
North Dakota State Board of Higher Education

Undergraduate Reflection Ms. Cora Potts

Faculty ReflectionDr. Teather Sundstrom
Professor, Department of Science

Special Music
“I’ll Fly Away” Albert E. Brumley, arr. Joel Raney
Cassie Boelke, soprano, Abigail Wolter, mezzo-soprano
Dr. Ozzie Johnson, piano

Presentation of Candidates
for Master’s Degrees Mr. Larry Brooks
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Conferring of Degrees.....Dr. Alan LaFave

Introduction of the Graduates..... Ms. Kari Stricklin '92
Director of Student Activities

Presentation of Candidates
for Baccalaureate Degrees..... Mr. Larry Brooks

Conferring of Degrees.....Dr. Alan LaFave

Introduction of the Graduates..... Ms. Kari Stricklin

Alumni Welcome.....Mr. Cory Anderson
Executive Director for University Advancement

“Alma Mater” Josephine Wright Rhoades '17
VCSU University Singers
Prof. Kewen Cheng, conductor
Dr. Ozzie Johnson, piano

Academic Recessional
March from Scipio..... Handel
Dr. Ozzie Johnson, piano

Honorary Faculty Marshal Dr. Amber Ussatis Aberle
Associate Professor, Faculty Senate President

President’s Cabinet Representatives Dr. Erin Klingenberg
Vice President for Student Affairs
Ms. Erica Buchholz '10
Vice President for Business Affairs

Graduate School Representatives Dr. James Boe
Dean of Graduate Studies & Extended Learning
Dr. Jamie Wirth
Professor: Department of Mathematics, Graduate Studies

VCSU University Singers..... Myah Bolluyt
Tara Dahl
Izzy Haugen
Brooke Reister
Tedi Dimmer
Elizabeth Gazeley
Madilyn Klabo
Eve Scott
Tanner Douville
Seth Hoglund
Elijah Leik
Grady Hornung
Tucker Johnson
Sam Vonbank-Hoye
Prof. Kewen Cheng, conductor

Commencement Coordinator Ms. Kim Svenningsen-Hesch '91

Usher/Seating Coordinator Ms. Shannon Hone '15
Ms. Bridget Blunck '05
Ms. Brittany Nathan '19

Ushers..... Viking Ambassadors and VCSU Staff

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS

ALAN LAFAVE

Alan LaFave has served as president of Valley City State University since December 2018. He previously served as provost and vice president for academic affairs (2015–18) at Northern State University in Aberdeen, S.D. At Northern State, LaFave worked his way through the faculty ranks from instructor to full professor in the music department (1991–2015). He also served as music department chair (1994–97) and associate dean and dean of the School of Fine Arts (1997–15). An accomplished musician, LaFave holds doctoral and master's degrees in clarinet performance from Arizona State University along with a bachelor's degree in music education from Northern State. He is an elected member of the American Bandmasters Association. LaFave's family includes his wife, Kari; daughters Lexi and Ashley, son-in-law Logan and granddaughter Ava.

CURTIS BILLER

Curt Biller was appointed to the State Board of Higher Education in May 2023. He is a part of the Academic & Student Affairs; Budget & Finance; EPSCoR State Steering Committees. Curt grew up in Moorhead, Minnesota, where he graduated from Moorhead High School. After high school he attended Montana State University where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management. Curt has been a business consultant for Strengths, Inc. focusing on hiring, retention, strategic planning, and culture since 2000. Prior to that he spent 12 years in the restaurant business. In addition, Curt has served the Sigma Chi fraternity in a number of positions for over 30 years focusing on leadership training and development. Curt has been married for 23 years to his wife Cheryl. They reside in Fargo, N.D.

CORA POTTS

Cora Potts graduates today with a Bachelor of University Studies and an Art Minor. Potts grew up in Bertha, MN, and attended VCSU to play softball and study art. She returned this fall to complete her bachelor's degree to further her career. She currently works as a substitute teacher for Valley City Public Schools and spends most days at Washington Elementary (4-6) and the Junior/Senior High (7-12). She will be teaching 7th grade math in January and next fall plans to teach K-6 art. Potts enjoys working with, and building relationships with learners of all ages and has enjoyed the small community feeling of VCSU. Her family includes her parents, Pete and Roxy Mikkelson of Bertha, MN, her husband Mark Potts and two children, Thomas, 9, and Elaina, 7.

TEATHER SUNDSTROM

Dr. Teather Sundstrom is the lead chemistry professor at VCSU and also serves as the chair of the Curriculum Committee. Originally from Oriska, Sundstrom earned her Chemistry degree from the University of North Dakota and a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences from the University of Connecticut. She served as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Kansas in the Medicinal Chemistry program. Sundstrom received the Senior Faculty Excellence Award in 2023 for her exceptional dedication and commitment to students and the University by outstanding teaching, scholarly activities, and university service. She loves sharing her passion for chemistry with students and strives to demonstrate that it's not as intimidating a subject as its reputation suggests. Sundstrom lives near Valley City with her teenage daughter and enjoys horseback riding and spending time on Lake Ashtabula.

CANDIDATES FOR GRADUATION

December 2023

MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING

Jana Michelle Hathaway	Bismarck
Lana M. Held	Hazleton
Darce Key Holcomb *	Cooperstown
Timothy Obstar	Bozeman, Montana
Kara Lois Sharff *	Bismarck
Kurtis Lavell Walls *	Phoenix, Arizona

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Daulton Bartholomay	Sheldon
Jeremiah Lamar Bundage Jr.	Covington, Georgia
Janessa Ashley Dockter *	Medina
Mackenzie Jade Dougherty	Alexandria, Minnesota
Jessica Anne Eaton	Minot
Renee Ann Galvan	La Barge, Wyoming
Kayla Mae Grizzle	New Town
Melissa Jason *	Fargo
Renae Elizabeth Lehman *	Bismarck
Krystle Marie Leidholm	Fargo
Jeffrey Scott Moe *	Walhalla
Chanda Morgel *	Tioga
Summer Lynn Olsen	Fargo
Kennedy Olson	Park River
Kirsten Lee Perry	Eldred, Pennsylvania
Alyssa Beth Peterson *	Bismarck
Melissa Port	Fargo
Hailey Ann Strauss	Arthur
Amer Vatres	Fargo
Kadie Lynne Walls *	Linton
Jolene Daley Woodbury	Watford City

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

Hailee Altringer	Jamestown
Izabelle Beck	Gwinner
Lindsey Rae Belmonte	Cheyenne, Wyoming
Toriana Rose Berg	Valley City
Josie Kathleen Berntson	Valley City
Cassie Michelle Boelke	Wahpeton
Hannah Marie Cooper	Cheyenne, Wyoming
Dahlia Rosa Diegel	Wishek
Stephen Joseph Dora	Bismarck
Holly Ebner	Mott
Sam Erickson	Fargo
Ashley Evenson	Fargo
Dylan Dorene Frederick	Gwinner

Lindsay Joy Friend	Rock Springs, Wyoming
Andrew Michael Givler	Coatesville, Pennsylvania
Brooke Morgan Graalum	Jamestown
Samantha Graber	Valley City
Rachel A. Hoff	LaMoure
Kaytlin Ann Hoffman	Fargo
Amber Rose Hoffner	Minot
Cassidy Kay Hoyt	McHenry
Brandon Michael Jenkins	Wilton
Abigail Ashe Karoline Kramer	Bismarck
Maddison Lyn Lachtara	Moorcroft, Wyoming
Cynthia Elizabeth Lara	Rock Springs, Wyoming
Sidney Janae Leier	West Fargo
Sabine Livingston *	Denver, Colorado
Jennifer Luehring	Fargo
Amy Kathleen Marsh	Carnduff, Saskatchewan, Canada
Abigail Meyer	Valley City
Cade Morse	Olivia, Minnesota
Preston Marvin Myers	Valley City
Breanna Kay Nelson	Maxbass
Chloe Marie Nelson	Fergus Falls, Minnesota
Mikayla Ann Nelson	Valley City
Samantha Nelson	Valley City
Emma Nielsen	Barnesville, Minnesota
Mya Olin	Williston
Julia Michael Pearson	Valley City
Loren Alese Perry	Villa Park, Illinois
Kayla Roper	West Fargo
Tai Ann Ryan	Cedar Crest, New Mexico
Allison Skwira	Holdingsford, Minnesota
William Lee Tinjum	Stacy, Minnesota
Alexis Brooke Trujillo	Cheyenne, Wyoming
Taylor L. Webster	Fargo
Abigail J. Wolter	Fergus Falls, Minnesota

BACHELOR OF ARTS

Joseph Brannon Littleton	Pike Road, Alabama
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BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

Jacey Lyn Alber	Marion
Taylor Jean Arens *	Valley City
Justice Mykal Bice	Bonifay, Florida
Makayla Lillian Bopp	Forman
Bryan Patrick Delaney	Fargo
Allison Dennis	Cando
Colby Dows	Page
Cauy Jacob Ellingson	Edgeley
Kasha Efermina Fernandes	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Isabel Jain Grueneich	Ellendale
Jacob Joel Hanson	Berthold

Nicholas Gene Harberts	Buckley, Washington
Jacob Alan Harstad	Rogers
Megan Lynn Haugrud	Moorhead, Minnesota
Melissa Kathleen Holub	Valley City
Nicholas P. Horner *	Valley City
Xavier Cole Jacobson	Page
Clinton Don Jewett	Valley City
Ian Xavier Keyes	Jamestown
Grace Chiaohwa-hwa Kiang *	Moorpark, California
Shayden Luna	Towner
Russell Glenn Marker *	Valley City
Machaela Audrey Mund	Milnor
Bailey Nelson	Argusville
Sanden O'Connell	Lake Park, Minnesota
Madison Joleen Peters *	Cando
Alayna Christine Proctor	Champlin, Minnesota
Ryan Alec Reynolds *	West Fargo
Anthony John Russell	Enumclaw, Washington
Jennifer Rose Sandberg	Valley City
Mardi Lynn Scutchings	Kelvington, Saskatchewan, Canada
Dale Tyler Skalicky	Bowman
Clay Christian Sporer	Bismarck
Zachary Robin Swinbourne *	Surprise, Arizona
Adam Davane Thompson *	Menahga, Minnesota
Austyn Thornton	Valley City
Brook Lynn Tibke	Wilton
Jahidi Malik West	Stockton, California
Colton Wayne Wetch	Valley City
Austin Young	Breezy Point, Minnesota
Alexander Kazuma Zacek	Surprise, Arizona

BACHELOR OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES

Laritza Noyola Barcenas Mendoza	Gillette, Wyoming
Garrett Daniel Foss *	Casselton
Riley Michael Gerhardt	Valley City
Shane Nixon *	Markham, Ontario, Canada
Cora Marie Potts	Valley City

ASSOCIATE OF ARTS

Betsy Ann Brimhall	Tioga
Dawson Hertz	Jamestown
Charleigh Manley	Sacramento, California

* Completed requirements July 28, 2023

HONOR GRADUATES

December 2023

Undergraduate students whose overall grade point average, based on both grades earned in Valley City State University courses and transferred courses, is at least 3.50 or better can graduate with one of the following distinctions:

Summa Cum Laude

(With highest honors 3.90 to 4.00)

Cassie Michelle Boelke	Jennifer Luehring
Makayla Lillian Bopp	Bailey Nelson
Dylan Dorene Frederick	Mya Olin
Cassidy Kay Hoyt	Loren Alese Perry
Ian Xavier Keyes	Taylor L. Webster

Magna Cum Laude

(With high honors 3.75 to 3.89)

Rachel A. Hoff	Madison Joleen Peters *
Amber Rose Hoffner	Kayla Roper
Grace Chiaohwa-hwa Kiang *	Dale Tyler Skalicky
Mikayla Ann Nelson	Abigail J. Wolter
Emma Nielsen	

Cum Laude

(With honors 3.50 to 3.74)

Hailee Altringer	Amy Kathleen Marsh
Taylor Jean Arens *	Machaela Audrey Mund
Bryan Patrick Delaney	Chloe Marie Nelson
Stephen Joseph Dora	Samantha Nelson
Sam Erickson	Shane Nixon *
Ashley Evenson	Tai Ann Ryan
Kasha Efermina Fernandes	Jennifer Rose Sandberg
Lindsay Joy Friend	Mardi Lynn Scutchings
Riley Michael Gerhardt	Austyn Thornton
Nicholas P. Horner *	William Lee Tinjum
Sidney Janae Leier	

THREE-YEAR HONOREES

The following completed their first bachelor's degree in less than four years. These students are wearing a cardinal-colored stole in honor of their accomplishment.

Izabelle Beck	Cassidy Kay Hoyt
Makayla Lillian Bopp	Ian Xavier Keyes
Allison Dennis	Machaela Audrey Mund
Dahlia Rosa Diegel	Chloe Marie Nelson
Cauy Jacob Ellingson	Samantha Nelson
Ashley Evenson	Loren Alese Perry
Dylan Dorene Frederick	Madison Joleen Peters *
Riley Michael Gerhardt	Dale Tyler Skalicky
Isabel Jain Grueneich	Austyn Thornton
Kaytlin Ann Hoffman	

* Completed requirements July 28, 2023

THE ACADEMIC COSTUME

The academic costume originated in the university of the Middle Ages, when a warm gown and hood were useful to the scholar and cleric in unheated buildings.

The mortarboard cap, which replaced the skullcap, is the representative headdress of the members of the academic community. The tassel of the cap is black or the color appropriate to the subject, except that the doctor's cap may have a tassel of gold bullion.

The hood gives color and meaning to the costume. The colored lining of the inside of the hood is the official color or colors of the institution conferring the degree. The color of the velvet trimming of the hood is distinctive of the subject to which the degree pertains. The colors of some of the subjects are:

Arts, Letters, Humanities—white
Education—light blue
Fine Arts—brown
Law—purple
Library Science—lemon
Music—pink
Nursing—apricot
Philosophy—dark blue
Physical Education—sage green
Science—golden yellow
Theology—scarlet

The bachelor wears no hood, only the black cap and gown. The gown has long pointed sleeves and is worn closed. The master wears a hood and a gown with sleeves that are open at either the elbow or the wrist and are oblong in shape. The gown may be worn open or closed. The doctor wears a hood and gown that are larger than the others. The gown is trimmed with black velvet panels from the hem to neck and back. The bell-shaped sleeves are trimmed with three horizontal bars of black velvet, indicating the third and highest degree. The trim may be the color of the subject area instead of black. The gown is worn open or closed.



THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDALLION

VCSU's presidential medallion was created in 1999 by P. Richard Szeitz, professor of art at Minnesota State University Moorhead, acting on commission by then VCSU president Dr. Ellen Chaffee. The laurel leaves dividing the center into three segments symbolize the three upper grades of learning – the baccalaureate, master, and doctoral levels of acquisition of knowledge. Each segment represents one area of VCSU's academic focus. The top segment symbolizes the liberal arts and sciences, with the sun shedding light on a book representing a store of knowledge. The pen represents the creation of knowledge while the magnifying glass represents its study. Business and technology are represented in the lower-left segment of the medallion. In this area, the clasping hands represent human commerce while the bar graph represents the application of technology in business. The lower right third of the medallion represents VCSU's focus on teacher education. The candelabra represents man-made light illuminating a body of knowledge stored in the books on which it rests.

THE PRESIDENTIAL MACE

Originally a weapon used during medieval times, the mace has taken on a ceremonial character representing order and authority, and it has been used by governments, universities, and churches to signify an official event. The VCSU mace, present at all formal academic events, symbolizes the authority of the university. It is carried in these events by the president of the Faculty Senate, demonstrating the ideal of shared governance between the university president and the faculty. The VCSU mace was created in 2015 at the request of President Tisa Mason. Crafted by woodcarvers from Valley City, its black walnut body was harvested from a tree in City Park. The etching on the mace was provided by faculty from the VCSU Department of Technology.

HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY

The State Normal School at Valley City opened on October 13, 1890, and the first class of three graduates was graduated on June 7, 1894. The institution became Valley City State Teachers College on July 1, 1921, and was authorized to grant the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education. This degree was later changed to the Bachelor of Science in Education, and in 1946 the college was authorized to grant a liberal arts degree. The name of the college was changed to Valley City State College on July 1, 1963, and to Valley City State University on April 27, 1987. The university was authorized to grant a Master of Education degree on October 21, 2005. In 2008 VCSU entered an agreement with Dakota College at Bottineau through the Dakota Nursing Program that allows students to earn their Practical Nurse (PN) and Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) titles at VCSU. The university was authorized to grant a Master of Arts in Teaching degree on November 10, 2015. The total number of diplomas and degrees conferred on the graduates of Valley City State University will be 27,613 after the commencement exercise on December 14, 2023. The total number of diplomas and degrees conferred on master's graduates of Valley City State University will be 612.

PRESIDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY

James W. Sifton, 1890–1892	Ted D. DeVries, 1974–1982
George A. McFarland, 1892–1918	Charles B. House, Jr., 1982–1993
Carlos E. Allen, 1918–1936	Ellen E. Chaffee, 1993–2008
J. Frederick Weltzin, 1936–1938	Steven W. Shirley, 2008–2014
James E. Cox, 1938–1942	Tisa A. Mason, 2014–2017
Eugene H. Kleinpell, 1942–1946	M. Margaret Dahlberg (interim) 2014, 2017–2018
Roscoe L. Lokken, 1946–1970	Alan D. LaFave, 2018–
Howard C. Rose, 1970–1974	

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

We hereby acknowledge that the VCSU campus sits on traditional and ancestral lands of the Red Lake and Pembina bands of Ojibwe, and Sisseton and Wahpeton bands of Santee Dakota peoples. This land is deeply connected to the many indigenous peoples who have held and continue to hold it sacred. We pledge to work toward a strong and lasting relationship with Ojibwe and Dakota tribes as well as other indigenous peoples of our region to hold this land and community in celebration of its rich cultural history.

STATE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Tim Mihalick	Chair, Minot
John Warford, DDS	Vice Chair, Bismarck
Casey Ryan, MD	Member, Grand Forks
Danita Bye	Member, Stanley
Jeffry Volk	Member, West Fargo
Curtis Biller	Member, Fargo
Kevin Black	Member, Minot
Sadie Hanson	Member, Grand Forks
Michael Linnell	Staff Advisor, Minot
Lisa Montplaisir, Ph.D.	Faculty Advisor, Fargo

Star Spangled Banner

John Stafford Smith



Oh — say! can you see, by the dawn's ear - ly
4 light, What so proud - ly we hailed at the twi-light's last
8 gleam - ing? Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the
11 per - i - lous fight, O'er the ram - parts we watch'd, were so
15 gal - lant - ly stream - ing? And the rock - ets' red
18 glare, the bombs burst-ing in air, Gave proof thro' the
22 night that our flag was still there. O say! does that —
26 star spang - led ban - ner — yet — wave? — O'er the
29 land — of the free, and the home of the brave.

Alma Mater

Josephine Wright Rhoades '17



Al - ma Ma - ter, staunch and true
May our lives for - ev - er prove

3
With thy ban - ner red and blue. May the years that
All our gra - ti - tude and love. Let us pledge our

6
1.
pass a - way Show our loy - al - ty.

9
2.
faith al - ways in our S. C. Al - ma Ma - ter, Al - ma Ma - ter,

14
Broad as the roll - ing prai - rie, Deep as the heav - en's blue

18
Are the hopes and as - pir - a - tions held for you.

22
May ev - 'ry son and daugh - ter Serve you faith - ful - ly. Then

26
hail! All hail! Dear Al - ma Ma - ter, our S. C.

