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THE PRESIDENT

Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD

Farewell to Dr. Donna Puccio (1949-2026)

On Monday, April 27, members of the DWC community and the extended family of Donna Puccio gathered to remember her life, to give thanks, and to say farewell. Donna passed away on Wednesday, April 22, five years after her retirement from Divine Word College. For more than 50 years, she served with incredible kindness, patience and dignity. Even after her retirement, she continued to help as a volunteer.

At graduation in 2022, she delivered the commencement address, reviewing how the College has been called to follow Jesus’ instructions to “put out into the deep.” At the conclusion of her reflections, the College surprised Donna with an honorary doctorate. Her daughters helped her don a doctoral hood, and the congregation applauded loud and long. The musicians played Pomp and Circumstance, and more than one attendee struggled to keep from shedding tears of joy. The family posed a proud question to their father, Charlie: what do we call her now? Is she Dr. Puccio, or Dr. Donna, maybe Dr. Mom?” At Monday’s prayer service, she was remembered with a long list of titles: mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and friend.

Donna served as the Executive Secretary for eight of nine DWC presidents, and she helped introduce seven presidents to the office, including me! In gratitude and with love, I present some of her remarks from the 2022 commencement address. Now, as she embraces eternal life, Donna is doing what Jesus instructed his followers to do – to put out into deep water (Lk 5:4).



Put Out Into the Deep



Donna
Puccio

Good morning. My name is Donna Puccio and I am honored to speak to our graduates on this special milestone occasion. Graduation is a celebration of your accomplishments and also a time when the door to your future opens wide as you pursue your vocation. Today, I celebrate this milestone with you.

I began my journey at the College in 1970 as a young mother of two. I answered an advertisement for a secretary position at the College. I was asked to fill out an application, take a typing test, and meet briefly with Fr. Fred Rudolph, SVD, National Vocation Director, for an interview... A few months later I received a call from Bro. Leonard Bauer, SVD, the Business Manager. He shared with me that the President's secretary would be out for surgery and would be off work for six weeks. He offered me this opportunity to fill in for her. I gladly accepted. That was in October of 1970. Six weeks passed and the President's secretary was unable to come back. Bro. Leonard offered me the full-time position and that was the beginning of my career at Divine Word College.

Over the next 8 years, I would have three more children. We did not have maternity leave in those days so I would quit work. When I needed to return to work for financial reasons, I called Bro. Leonard to see if there were any job openings. Except for once, the position of President's secretary remained open. During that one year, 1972-73, I assisted in the library.

I had the privilege of working for eight of the nine Presidents and witnessed the ordination of many students who would return to fulfill important leadership roles at the College, including former presidents. Is it coincidental that the President's Office always had an opening when I was ready to come back? I don't know – I believe I was meant to serve the President of Divine Word College for half a century!

I cannot share much about individual presidents because that is confidential information. I can share that former presidents Fr. Mike Hutchins, and Fr. Tim Lenchak were students at the College when I began here in 1970. Our current president, Fr. Tom Aschman, was an 18-year-old freshman in 1972 when

I was working in the library. His work-study job was to help in the library – so my job was to make sure he did it! I wonder if Fathers Mike, Tim and Tom feel as young as I do.

Today I have five children, thirteen grandchildren, and five (now seven) great-grandchildren. As my children matured, they all worked at the College at some time or other doing cleaning, teacher typing, switchboard operator, overseeing work-study.



The Divine Word College we know today has evolved over the past five decades. The most significant and memorable changes that took place in my first few years were the advances in technology and the inception of the ESL program. Today

we send email, Google chats, instant messaging, and occasionally put a stamp on a letter. During my early years as a secretary, we had manual typewriters and did not see the invention of the electric typewriter until the 1970s... I personally do not miss the manual typewriter, carbon copy paper, or the lithograph machine!

From a global perspective, the College would open its doors to international students. In 1975, under the leadership of the third president, Fr. Louis Luzbetak, SVD, Divine Word College would admit 16 Vietnamese seminarians, refugees after the fall of Saigon. Together with Bro. Pat Hogan, SVD, a linguist, the decision would lead to the development of an extensive English as Second Language (ESL) program and a student body fortified with increased numbers of international students. With the admission of international students, the makeup of the student body changed over the next 40 years and today consists of about 85% international students. Accompanying the increased number of Vietnamese students, Divine Word celebrated their first Lunar New Year in 1976. It is one of the most popular cultural celebrations – a tradition we continue honoring today.

Demographically, the biggest changes occurred within the last 20 years with the admission of women to study at the College. In 2005, President Fr. Michael Hutchins initiated a review of the mission statement. The newly revised statement allowed for women religious to

study at the College. In August 2006, the first religious Sisters were admitted to the College. They were Sisters from the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, the sister order of the SVD.

Currently there are more than 50 religious Sisters studying at DWC from approximately nine different countries. Many of the Sisters who graduated from DWC have gone on to graduate studies before returning to their native country to teach or work in administrative positions, including returning to DWC. Today we have Sr. Aprilia Untarto, SSpS, and formerly, Sr. Anna Trang Mai, IHM, who have served in formation and teaching. The graduating class of 2022 is comprised of 16 students, and 7 of them are Sisters graduating from Divine Word College!

Looking back helps us appreciate our progress, celebrate our success and plan for our future. As you graduate today, you will continue to discern your calling, some continuing with the SVD and some in other walks of life. You have chosen “*Duc in Altum*” from Luke 5:4. Remember this passage which means “Put out into the deep.” In whatever your chosen path, Jesus calls us to His sacred mission – through his grace and our faith... we shall together fulfill the salvation of souls.



I am incredibly humbled and forever blessed to have answered that newspaper ad and “put out into the deep.” My life has been flooded by His grace and that of the incredible family I have loved at Divine Word College for 50

years. Today I tip my graduation cap to all of you and those who came before you. Together we have become fishers of men, and will continue to faithfully serve the Lord our God. Graduation is only one milestone of many you will have the honor of achieving. Keep your faith in God and the sacred calling and you shall fill the boat and flood the world with His grace.

I leave Divine Word College today with a humble and grace-filled heart. I am honored to have been awarded the Verbum Award in 2014 and the most humbled to have the Donna Puccio Distinguished Service Award named in my honor. Most importantly, I am grateful for all of the opportunities, loyalty, friendship and support shown to me over the past 50 years. In many ways, I graduate today alongside the class of 2022. I

will continue to “Put out into the Deep” as I hope you do too. Divine Word College was never a job to me – it has always been an honor to serve all of you. Amen.

Annual Recognition and Awards Luncheon at DWC

On Wednesday, April 22, the College celebrated many students, faculty and staff for their achievements and service over the past year. The event concluded with three awards recognizing distinguished service and excellence in teaching. This year’s honorees are:

- **Ms. Ann Maiers** – received the Dr. Donna Puccio Distinguished Service Award for staff.
- **Dr. Cathleen Cleary** – received the Br. Anthony Kreinus SVD Distinguished Service Award for faculty.
- **Mr. Larry Udry** – received the Fr. Charles Malin SVD Excellence in Teaching Award.

Congratulations and thanks to them for their outstanding service at Divine Word College.



Top Left: Ann Maiers and Fr. Tom Ascherman

Bottom: Dr. Joshua Young and Larry Udry

Right: Br. Tony Kreinus and Dr. Cathleen Cleary



VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Dr. Joshua Young

Provincial Forum on the Future of Missionary Education

Faculty are officially notified that their presence is required on Friday, May 1, 2026 from 3pm-4pm for the final activity related to our NetVUE Professional Development Grant. During this time, we will host a panel with the three U.S.-based SVD provincials to discuss the needs of missionaries in the field and to discuss the future of missionary education at DWC. From my understanding, this will be the first time in a while all three will be on campus together. This provincials' forum will be held in room 107, and members of the Board of Trustees have been invited to participate. Faculty should come prepared to enter into prophetic dialogue with these SVD leaders as we continue to steward our various program curricula.

St. Arnold Janssen Oral Presentation Award

Thank you to all that submitted entries for the St. Arnold Janssen Oral Presentation Award. The award asks students to articulate what it means to be a missionary disciple today, based on teaching extending out of Vatican II. Congratulations to our first-place winner, Sr. Ahoefa Aguessou, OLVSM.



And now, a message from Bro. Brian McLaughlin, SVD, and Fr. Betenora Bako Liba, SVD regarding the 2026 AAC&U Class Conference.

Class Conference - Circle Processes

Bro. Brian McLaughlin, SVD

One of the sessions I attended at the CLASS conference was on the use of "circle processes" in mediating conflict in the college or university setting. A circle process can be defined as a structured, restorative method for promoting healing among groups who may be experiencing racial or structural

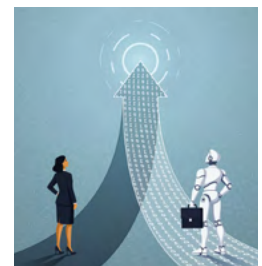
violence. Organizers of circle processes bring together people who are most affected by violence and gives them the opportunity to talk about how violence has affected them and what they can do to promote healing. Circle processes can be used in a variety of situations, including the classroom. In my trauma and healing class (ICS 450), for example, I regularly use circles as a way for students to talk about a variety of issues that affect them and those with whom they have worked. Such circles are important for bringing people together to talk about issues that matter to them.

AI Policies & The Core of Education

Fr. Betenora Bako Liba, SVD

I attended the 2026 AAC&U CLASS conference from April 15–18, where the central theme, "Courageous Care," offered a powerful framework for reflecting on Learning and Student Success in a time of rapid change. The conference emphasized the importance of combining deep kindness with honest truth-telling, especially in higher education, where institutional and societal pressures often make this balance difficult. At a personal level, what made the conference especially relevant was its focus on the growing influence of artificial intelligence in teaching, learning, student assessment, and academic life.

One of the most valuable insights I gained came from a workshop on AI policy in colleges and the need to move the conversation gradually from simply saying "no AI" to learning how to "know AI." The key idea was a two-fold invitation to academic institutions: firstly, to treat AI not merely as a threat; and secondly, to study it as a phenomenon that affects how all of us (students, faculty, administrators) think, work, and relate to one another. In the speakers' analyses, the challenge is to understand AI not only as a technical tool, but also as an educational, social, and ethical issue. This



wider reflection requires informed knowledge and ongoing dialogue not only at the administrative level but also within classrooms, where faculty and students could honestly and seriously negotiate how AI should or should not influence the learning experiences and assessment processes.

These discussions about academic integrity, institutional policy, and student learning prove that many universities are still developing careful and positive responses to AI. In short, this workshop made me realize that the question of the nature of the presence of AI in higher education touches the core of

what deep education aims at: forming honest, caring, and truth-seeking persons, ensuring that technology in education serves human, social, and environmental flourishing rather than replacing it.



ASSESSMENT LOOP

Ms. Kimberly Burnett-Hackbarth

Message from Marcus Aurelius

And now, a word from a Stoic Philosopher, Marcus Aurelius.

Marcus Aurelius was Roman emperor from 161 to 180 CE. Not only was he regarded as one of the best Roman emperors, but he was also known for his ruling style of being known as fair, just, and impartial. Some 2000 years later, his personal writings entitled, “Meditations”, are still relevant.

These daily meditations were made into time capsules of human behavior that we can take and learn from.

Marcus wanted more than just a boring daily routine; he believed everyone has a special purpose that gives them a reason to get up each morning. He felt that once you know your goals, you are much more likely to reach them.

At DWC, we use assessment in the same way. It isn't just about numbers; it is how we use the data and feedback to make sure the college is staying true to its mission, and most importantly, that the work we do actually matters.





VICE PRESIDENT FOR FORMATION/DEAN OF STUDENTS

Fr. Tuan Hoang, SVD

Religious Brothers Day

On **Friday, May 1, 2026**, we join the Catholic Church in celebrating Religious Brothers Day. Religious brothers play a vital role in the Church through their diverse ministries, serving as examples and living witnesses to the Gospel. At Divine Word College, we are especially blessed by the presence, prayer, and service of our SVD brothers, as well as the dedication of those studying here.

On this day, we give thanks for all religious brothers, especially those in our Epworth community: Br. Don Champagne, SVD, Br. Mike Decker, SVD, Br. Larry Keiffer, SVD, Br. Anthony Kreinus, SVD, and Br. Brian McLauchlin, SVD.

We will celebrate with a community Mass at 8:00 a.m. During the liturgy, Br. Ron Fratzke, SVD, a missionary in Thailand, will share a video reflection on his life and mission as a Divine Word Missionary. Let us come together in prayer and gratitude to honor our brothers.



Board of Trustees Visit

From **Friday, May 1, 2026** through **Saturday, May 2, 2026**, members of the Board of Trustees will gather at Divine Word College for their biannual meeting. The Board of Trustees is an elected body responsible for the overall governance and management of the college. As they meet to conclude the academic year, we ask that you keep them in your prayers and extend a warm welcome when you see them on campus.

A community social will be held on Friday from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the dining room. This will be a wonderful opportunity to meet and converse with members of the Board. All are invited to attend.



On **Saturday, May 2, 2026**, the college community will join the Board of Trustees for the 11:15 a.m. Mass. All students are required to attend and are asked to dress in semi-formal or religious attire.

Piano Recital

On **Tuesday, May 5, 2026**, a Student Piano Recital will be held at 1:00 p.m. During the recital, students will showcase the musical pieces they have been preparing throughout the semester. If your schedule allows, please join us in the gym after lunch to support and celebrate their hard work and talent.

Student Senate Election

For the upcoming school year, several students are running for positions on the Student Senate. Voting will take place on Wednesday, April 29, 2026, during lunchtime. I encourage all of you to participate by casting your votes. Election results will be announced later in the week.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the current Student Senate for their hard work and dedication throughout this year. You have done an excellent job organizing activities for the student body, and your time and effort have truly been appreciated.





VICE PRESIDENT FOR OPERATIONS

Steve Winger

Project Updates

As the academic year draws toward its close, many have asked about the facilities work taking place across campus and what lies ahead for the summer months. This update is intended to provide a clear snapshot of where projects currently stand and what work is planned as we move into the next phase of the year.



Several important projects are already completed or well underway. Work in Martha's Kitchen is finished, including the adjacent lounge area, following remediation related to mold and other issues. The campus dishwasher project has been completed, restoring full functionality. Parts for student dorm bathroom upgrades have been ordered, with many already on hand, and parts for the SVD bathrooms have arrived and are awaiting scheduling with East Iowa Mechanical.

Major infrastructure work continues to progress. The boiler replacement project is actively underway, with all necessary parts on site. One unit has already been started, with shutdown and transition work carefully coordinated to minimize disruption. The HVAC damper project is also moving forward, with all parts ordered and installation planned for completion during the summer. Dock repairs are scheduled with East Iowa Construction and are expected to be completed by July.

Looking ahead to the summer months, several projects are planned to improve campus safety, comfort, and long term durability. These include adding air conditioning to remaining classrooms and replacing older, louder units, completing hallway improvements near the Business Office, replacing failing urinal

valves campus wide, repairing seals in second floor women's restrooms, and reinforcing bridge beams with treated LVL materials.



Additional summer efforts will focus on rebuilding outside faucets, replacing broken windows and failed seals, completing shipping dock work, continuing dorm bathroom improvements, upgrading kitchen equipment and lighting, and repairing HVAC units damaged in recent storms, including those serving the Music Lounge and the telephone room.

None of this work happens without careful coordination, persistence, and practical problem solving. I would like to extend a sincere thank you to Randy Accola and the Maintenance Department for their steady leadership and dedication in managing these projects. I would also like to thank the Planning and Operations Committee for their thoughtful review and guidance on many of these initiatives, ensuring that work is approached with care, stewardship, and long term perspective.

While much of this work happens behind the scenes, it represents an ongoing commitment to sustaining safe, functional, and dignified spaces for learning and community life. Thank you to everyone for your patience and support as this work continues.



external affairs

Core Competency

Quest 

Week 5 Winners!

FACULTY/STAFF



Dr. Ann Lundberg

STUDENT



Sr. Cecilia Fukah

Thank you for participating!

external affairs

RAGBRAI Planning Meeting – Join the Fun!

RAGBRAI (Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa) is coming to town on **July 23**, and Divine Word College will be part of the excitement! We’re beginning preparations for our DWC booth and invite you to be part of the planning.



Join us for a **RAGBRAI Planning Meeting on Monday, May 4 at 12 Noon in the ARC**. We’ll talk through ideas, logistics, and how we can make our presence welcoming and memorable for the thousands of riders passing through our community.

This is a great opportunity to get involved, share ideas, and be part of a fun campus-wide effort. We’ll need many hands when the big day arrives—so come lend yours and help us make it a great experience for all! We hope to see you there!

PS - Click the link to learn a bit about RAGBRAI:

<https://ragbrai.com/>



12th Annual DWC Golf Outing – Save the Date!

It's never too early to register for the **12th Annual Divine Word College Golf Outing on Friday, July 10 at Timberline Golf Course!**

This fun and meaningful event supports student scholarships while bringing together friends of DWC for a great day on the course. Whether you’re an avid golfer or just looking to enjoy the evening, there’s a place for you.

Join us by:

- **Registering a team and hitting the course**, or
- **Coming for dinner and fun** after the round

Be sure to check out the **attached flyer for full details**. Registration and sponsorship opportunities are available on the college website: <https://www.dwci.edu/giving/12th-annual-benefit-golf-outing>.

Please help us make this event a success by **spreading the word** and inviting your friends to join you. The more, the merrier! For questions, please contact Sandy Wilgenbusch at wilgnebu@dwci.edu.

We hope to see you there for a great day in support of our students and mission.



 Matthew Jacoby Library

opac.dwci.edu

Submit Book Purchase Suggestions

This is your regular reminder that the library welcomes book purchase suggestions.

We currently accept suggestions for:

- Print books
- eBooks
- Audiobooks

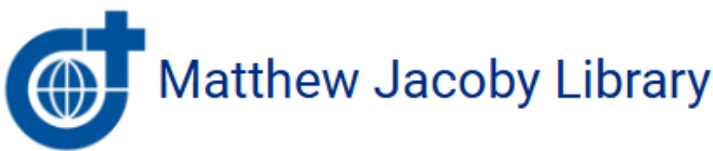
How to submit a suggestion:

1. Visit <https://opac.dwci.edu/>
2. Click **“Purchase Suggestions”**
3. Click **+ New purchase suggestion”**
4. Enter **title** and **author** (if known).
5. Click **“Submit your suggestion”**

All suggestions are reviewed by library staff before ordering. Thank you for helping shape the library’s collection.



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12TH ANNUAL BENEFIT **GOLF OUTING**

 **TIMBERLINE GOLF COURSE, PEOSTA IOWA**

FRI, JULY 10
2026

18 Hole Four Person Best Shot
1:00 PM Shotgun Start

**\$100 per person - includes golf, cart, dinner,
and prizes. \$30 for dinner only guests.**

To register your foursome, sponsor our event, or for more information, please contact Sandy Wilgenbusch at Divine Word College: 563-876-3353 x 302 / info@dwci.edu