

**Western Nebraska  
Community College**

Foundation and Alumni 2023-24 Annual Report

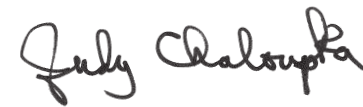
## Dear Foundation and Alumni Supporters,

The end of the year gives us a chance to review the successes of our students, our college, and our community. It is also a time to charge into preparation and plans for the next academic year. With the increased onset of technical, service, and health opportunities for students, WNCC is focused on the needs of all 13 counties. The Scottsbluff, Sidney, and Alliance campuses continue to evolve to serve each local community while seeking additional opportunities throughout the Panhandle.

In 2023, the WNCC Foundation developed a new 5-year strategic plan that aligns with and supports the college's strategic plan. The first part of our mission is to inspire investment and encourage WNCC student success by providing connections. As you'll see throughout this report, these connections are with local businesses, alumni, grant funding foundations, friends of the college, and more! These connections increase access to education, create student opportunities, and positively impact the communities we serve.

Changing needs in education and training of our workforce are made possible because of our belief that WNCC can be exactly what our greater community needs. It does not happen without vision, planning, dedication to our purpose, and generous support from you.

**Thank you!**



Judy Chaloupka  
WNCC Foundation Board President



In 2023-24,

# 1,608

gifts totaling

# \$1,225,814

were given to the WNCC Foundation through grants, scholarships, endowments, sponsorships, and unrestricted donations. Each gift helps a WNCC student succeed in their academic journey and helps us educate our Panhandle workforce for tomorrow.



## \$12,335

In Booster Club donations to support softball and baseball



## \$48,500

In Athletic Frontline Sponsorships



## \$83,190

In memorial gifts



## \$152,804

In new scholarship donations



## \$33,565

gift-in-kind donations



## \$17,335

in Employee giving



## \$106,223

to support technical education programs (Diesel Tech, CDL, Welding, Automotive, Powerline, and Aviation)



## \$266,043

Recipient Specified Scholarships

## Western Nebraska Community College Alumni, Donors, and Friends,

Thank you for being a part of the WNCC family!

Your generosity of spirit and philanthropy is inspiring. It is through your giving that we are able to keep providing such awesome experiences for our students. A group of our students just returned from their tour of Italy and their learning immersion of Italian arts & culture, our CDL program recently graduated its 100th student, and our learning opportunities are expanding in multiple areas.

It is an exciting time for WNCC! Educational opportunities and buildings are expanding for our Health Sciences Division. We are expanding our Powerline Program building in Alliance, and having additional work done at the Aviation Maintenance Program in Sidney. Construction Trades are also expanding throughout the region with more classes being scheduled around our service area.

I consider the partnership between the Foundation, Alumni, and WNCC truly dynamic. Just as the WNCC strategic plan states, "collaborations supporting dynamic partnerships inside and outside of the College," it is through your partnerships that we are successful. Thank you for all you do and your support!

**Go Cougars!**



Greg Dart  
WNCC President



## Save the Date for these upcoming events





A Gering High School student studies in class. The WNCC NMRP program currently partners with eight Panhandle high schools.

## Bridging the Math Gap: The Nebraska Math Readiness Project

By Alena Haun, WNCC Foundation Development Director

In 2016, less than one-third of Nebraska high school juniors met the benchmarks necessary to enter college ready for math. The Nebraska Math Readiness Project (NMRP) emerged as a solution to prepare students for college-level math. Taught by teachers in partnering high schools, NMRP offers personalized learning tools to help students understand math.

“In regular math classes, I found myself falling behind, not understanding the homework, failing the tests. None of that was a problem here, and I was able to slow down and figure this stuff out,” said one of the student participants. NMRP transforms a student’s

trajectory, turning math from a stumbling block into a stepping stone.

WNCC has helped Panhandle high school students succeed in math by being part of NMRP since its inception in 2018. The project is supported by grant funding from the Peter Kiewit Foundation and the Suzanne & Walter Scott Foundation, through partnerships with the WNCC Foundation. By providing a supportive learning environment and resources tailored to individual needs, NMRP has empowered students to overcome their math challenges and step confidently into their careers. The program’s success is evident in its growing enrollment numbers in the Panhandle.

Amy Winters, WNCC Math & Science Division Chair, coordinated NMRP from 2018-24. During this time, Amy built a solid program, more than doubling the annual participation from 56 students in the first year to 127 in the sixth and

growing the number of Panhandle high schools involved to eight. Amy worked closely with the WNCC CollegeNOW! dual-credit program to enroll more students and focus on raising awareness of the time and money the program can save students and their families through the completion of the program and college level Algebra while still attending high school.

Laurie Parker taught math at Gering High School until May 2024. She has a passion for the program and has seen the impact on her students. “Our students started the NMRP program not college ready but left with confidence and the knowledge to be successful.”



Laurie Parker,  
WNCC NMRP Coordinator

Students appreciate the ability to work at their own pace during the course; they benefit from being able to skip over concepts they already understand and can focus on the areas where they need extra reinforcement. We have seen how well it fits the needs of many of our students.”

“It was awesome to see my students excited to move on to college with more confidence in math! I also appreciated that my students could waive the college math placement exam at WNCC when completing the NMRP course. I am excited the number of students continuing the program and earning dual credit increased each year,” continued Laurie, who joined WNCC in June 2024 as the new WNCC Nebraska Math Readiness Coordinator. “My background as an experienced high school NMRP teacher will give me the unique ability to help others be successful. I look forward to encouraging more schools to embrace the opportunity to offer this amazing program, so that more students can benefit from NMRP.”



< 1/3 High School Students met 2016 ACT Benchmark

- 2/3 of freshmen community college students are required to take developmental coursework
- Only 20% who begin developmental courses successfully finish a college-level math course (Rutschow, Diamond, & Serna-Wallender, 2017)

\$69,376

Amount of money dual-credit students saved in 2023-24 by enrolling in NMRP through their high school

\$345,158

Six-year total amount saved

535

Total number of Panhandle students served by NMRP

# Students & Staff Get Involved!

## Courtney Medina: Leading with Heart at WNCC

Courtney Medina's journey from player to coach shows the enduring quality of WNCC's softball program. From Ft. Collins, Colorado, she was initially hesitant about attending junior college, but her time at WNCC transformed her embarrassment into gratitude. As a student-athlete, she had wonderful growth opportunities and made lifelong friendships. WNCC became the quintessential "coming of age" experience for her. After coaching and playing at other schools, Courtney returned to WNCC to become the softball head coach. Embracing the philosophy of "coaching hard and loving harder," she nurtures both skilled athletes and resilient individuals. Courtney is not just leading a team; she is shaping the current student-athletes futures and continuing the program's legacy.

*"This program and this community has always felt like a second home to me... To be the head coach here and getting to see this program and community impact these young women the way that it has impacted me, my teammates, and our alum is incredible."*

### Record Setter

As a centerfielder, Courtney holds the WNCC softball record for most singles in a season (88) and ranks among the top in career singles, hits, runs scored, and stolen bases. Courtney's prowess on the field was unmatched.

Courtney with her dog Mookie May



Coach Connor Larsen in the new Content Creation Space

## WNCC Esports: Where Talent Meets Opportunity

WNCC's Esports program has grown to over 20 students during the 2023-24 academic year. Coach Connor Larsen defines Esports as competitive video gaming. In his role as coach, he not only aids students in getting better in each game but also instills teamwork, strategic thinking, and personal growth through goal setting.

WNCC's Esports program is ready for further expansion and innovation. Thanks to a generous grant from the WNCC Foundation, the program recently converted a storage room into an innovative Content Creation

Space. Equipped with streaming equipment and editing tools, the space offers all WNCC students the opportunity to explore broadcasting, video editing, and content creation—an invaluable asset to help creativity and technical skills.

*"I am using it as a room to learn how to handle editing materials and broadcasting. I came to this school with no experience, and the coach was willing to teach as far as I wanted to learn."*

– *Philipine Andjawa, Information Technology/Cybersecurity student and Esports member*

## Gratitude and Giving: WNCC Alumnus Takes the Lead with Cougar Dance Squad

After facing initial challenges at another college, Alex Lutz found a nurturing environment at WNCC that allowed her to grow. While attending, her roles as a student ambassador and student worker provided valuable opportunities to learn leadership skills and deepen her connection to the college.

Alex returned to WNCC after working in New Mexico and now works as the bookstore operations specialist at Buddy's Books & Bistro. Inspired by the dedication she observed in the Cougar Dance Squad during her student years, she took on the role of the squad's coach, an opportunity she considers a great honor. Alex is dedicated to fostering the same supportive atmosphere instrumental in her own student success.

*"This institution genuinely cares about the well-being of their students and ensures to provide quality education and services."*  
– Alex Lutz



# Fireside Chats to Charger Ports: The Evolution of a College's Student Space

By Mary Sheffield, Alumni Relations & Stewardship Director  
Written from memories shared by Jean Ahrens, English Instructor (1969-2008)

Do you remember the cozy corner we all cherished on campus? The one where friendships flourished and memories were made? Yes, you guessed it—the iconic area fondly dubbed “The Pit.”

Getting its name from the unique set-in fireplace, The Pit quickly became the pulse of our alma mater, offering students a welcoming haven to connect, study, and unwind. Over the years, it witnessed the ebb and flow of campus life, evolving with each passing generation.

While the warmth of the fireplace may have ceased, The Pit's welcoming essence remains unchanged as does the strong railing. Today, it boasts modern comforts like booth seating and charging stations, ensuring it continues to serve as the beating heart of our college community.

As we reminisce about the days spent in its comforting embrace, let us celebrate the enduring legacy of The Pit and the countless stories it holds. Whether you're reliving old memories or creating new ones, know that The Pit awaits, ready to welcome you back with open arms.

Share your student experiences and memories.

[go.wncc.edu/alumni](http://go.wncc.edu/alumni)



Recently, we celebrated the completion of the Scottsbluff Main Building renovation, made possible in part by the generosity of our donors to the WNCC Works: Expanding the Possibilities campaign. As we continue to honor our heritage and embrace the future, we invite alumni and friends to revisit the transformed campus—a testament to the enduring legacy of the college. So, whether you're an alum from Scottsbluff Junior College, Nebraska Western College, or a recent graduate, stop by and see the transformation.

## Did you know WNCC has a rich history of names and locations?

Before becoming WNCC, it was known as Scottsbluff Junior College from 1926 to 1968 and Nebraska Western College from 1968 to 1988.



# Unlocking Opportunities: Scholarships and Student Success

Every year, we come together for a special event that unites students, donors, and supporters of WNCC. The Foundation Scholarship Luncheon features a delightful spread of food, compelling speeches from students, and most importantly, provides a platform for scholarship recipients and donors to build meaningful connections. This event is cherished by students, donors, and the dedicated Foundation staff alike!



**Anaveah Rios** Gering, NE / Pre-Radiologic Technology

Anaveah graduated from high school in 2022 and decided to take a gap year to focus on work and mentally prepare for school. Creating the time and space to prepare served Anaveah well as she completed her first year of college. "My experience at WNCC has been truly amazing. I have had opportunities to learn from faculty as well as peers, and the ideas that have surrounded me are constantly reminding me why I want to be here. Knowing I am being invested in by someone other than myself pushes me to strive and work even harder."

*"I chose WNCC because this school has reassured me that they find it most important that students know we are valued, we have resources, and we can become who we want to become as long as we set our mind to it."*



**Richard Sanders** Alliance, NE / Business - Accounting

At the Spring 2024 student appreciation lunch on the Alliance Campus, Rick told his story of spending the first half of his adult life working physically demanding jobs and the toll that can take on a person's body. With a desire to switch gears and use more brain than body, he enrolled at WNCC with a goal to complete his associate degree in Business with the Accounting option. After WNCC, Rick plans to complete his bachelor's degree at a four-year institution.

*"I believe in using local resources, so WNCC is a terrific fit for me, and I enjoy the experience greatly. I plan to use my accounting degree to eventually offer help to small towns in the area. I want to honor this investment by graduating with honors from WNCC."*



**Madison Rut** Arthur, NE / Nursing 2024 Graduate

Madison has had her sights on nursing from a very young age and started to pursue that dream with an Associate of Science degree from Northeastern Junior College. As she moved on to obtain her nursing degree, life took some unexpected turns resulting in a year off. After some "soul searching," Madison found herself at WNCC. "This program and school have been the biggest blessing to me."

*"I feel so fortunate to have been chosen to receive scholarships from the Foundation. Your help allows me to reach my goal of graduating debt free. Thank you for your generosity."*



**Emily Franklin** Scottsbluff, NE / Elementary Education 2024 Graduate

When she started planning her future, becoming a nurse was Emily's biggest goal. On her way to meeting that goal, she realized her heart was truly with teaching children and working in a classroom setting. Emily graduated this past May with an Associate of Arts degree. She will be attending Black Hills State in the fall to complete her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with an endorsement in Early Childhood. After teaching for a few years with a focus on preschool through 2nd grade, Emily's end goal is "opening my own daycare that goes from birth to kindergarten so I can help children from the ground up."

*"Scholarships have truly meant a lot to me and provided me with more opportunities than I could have ever asked for."*

# Health Sciences Renovation

Western Nebraska Community College is undertaking a significant renovation of the Health Sciences spaces in the John N. Harms Center, encompassing 34,421 square feet across two levels. This renovation aims to centralize all Health Sciences programs for enhanced integration and includes the construction of new classrooms, labs, and offices. The project, estimated at \$11.8 million, is partially funded by the LB1014 Sec. 36 ARPA Grant and underscores WNCC's commitment to advancing health science education. Construction is slated to begin Fall 2024 with classes expected to begin in the new space in 2026.



For more information, visit [go.wncc.edu/campusplanning](https://go.wncc.edu/campusplanning)

WNCC offers comprehensive nursing programs tailored to local needs, nurturing aspiring nurses into competent professionals.

# Fulfilling Careers: How Local Education Shapes Lives

Cassidy Ann Hoffmann of Alliance, NE started her college experience by completing prerequisites at the Alliance Campus and progressed to the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program in Scottsbluff. She chose WNCC because of its accessibility, affordability, and the fact that she did not need to relocate. Despite the challenges of pregnancy during nursing school, she thrived with the support of dedicated instructors, even earning membership in the prestigious international honor society Phi Theta Kappa.

After graduating with her ADN from WNCC, Cassidy completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing online from Chamberlain University in Chicago, IL, before becoming a bedside nurse and then supervisor at Western Nebraska Veterans' Home. She has now made her way home to Alliance, where she serves as an Occupational Health & Safety nurse at Box Butte General Hospital.

Looking back on her career, she values the meaningful connections she has formed with patients and colleagues. In her current role, she is enthusiastic about providing personalized support to healthcare professionals and fostering a powerful sense of community within the workplace.



*"WNCC provided me the foundation I needed to launch my nursing career locally, where I could make a meaningful impact in my community."*

*– Cassidy Ann Hoffmann,  
Class of 2013*

# Health Sciences Scholarships

2023-24 Academic Year

Over  
**\$35,993**

In funds awarded from nursing scholarships



**63** individual scholarship awards, out of...



**11** Foundation nursing scholarships



# Empowering Our Community: WNCC's Diesel Technology Program

By Jennifer Reisig, WNCC Foundation Executive Director

The Diesel, Truck & Heavy Equipment Technology program at WNCC is more than just an educational offering; it is a vital bridge connecting our community to a thriving industry. As semi-trucks, construction machinery, and heavy vehicles become increasingly complex, the demand for skilled diesel technicians and equipment specialists has surged. Our community recognizes this need and has rallied behind WNCC's program to address it.

Local businesses and industry partners play a pivotal role in supporting the program. Their collaboration ensures that students receive hands-on training, access to modern equipment, and exposure to real-world challenges.

Bob Sorok, Gering Nebraska Machinery Company (NMC) Branch Operations Manager, emphasizes the impact. "Most students who graduate from a local diesel technology program tend to stay in their home environment, promoting a talent pool for local businesses in the area." By nurturing homegrown talent, we strengthen our workforce and contribute to the region's economic growth.

Financial support from NMC and a matching grant from the Caterpillar Foundation have provided funds to purchase training equipment for the program. In addition, the local Gering NMC branch gave WNCC student Devin Reber an opportunity to work during

his education. "Most employers want a degree and experience; they gave me both," said Reber.

WNCC's Diesel Technology program offers comprehensive education, covering diesel engines, powertrain systems, electrical components, and HVAC. Students can pursue degrees or specialized certificates, equipping them for entry-level positions or more advanced roles. Currently, the maximum enrollment is 15 students, due to space constraints. As the program gains traction, WNCC recognizes the need for expansion. Investing in additional resources, faculty, and facilities will allow more students to benefit from this program, ensuring a skilled workforce for years to come.

Murphy Tractor & Equipment Company Service Manager, Tony Brown, echoed the importance of this program's local success. "Customer satisfaction depends on prompt response time and knowledgeable technicians. Each of those items then depend on technician availability. For our local economy to grow and thrive, we must have individuals qualified to fill open positions. A local program which specializes in the training and applications for our industry is imperative, for not only maintaining but growing our community."

For more information, visit [go.wncc.edu/diesel](https://go.wncc.edu/diesel).



Devin Reber graduated from Torrington High School in 2022 with no plans for college. However, after learning of a sponsorship opportunity through Nebraska Machinery Company (NMC), Devin began work at Gering NMC and enrolled in WNCC's Diesel Technology program. Devin is grateful for the support he received, including payment for tuition, tools, and valuable hands-on experience. Devin received his Associate of Arts in Diesel Technology in May 2024, and he's now working full-time at NMC. Devin complimented his instructor, Wayne Lund, saying, "Wayne is one of the best teachers I have ever had. He did a fantastic job with limited resources."



# From Migrant Worker to Mentor: Oscar Gonzalez's Dedication to Community and Education

By Mary Sheffield, Alumni Relations & Stewardship Director

Growing up in a migrant family, Oscar Gonzalez faced challenges, including limited academic influence and inconsistent living situations. Tired of moving, Oscar made the brave decision at the age of 16 to stay and settle in Scottsbluff. High school attendance limited his employment options, but Oscar's determination led him to WNCC. He attended night classes while supporting himself financially, earning his GED.

Oscar then enlisted in the army, viewing it as his way to pay for a higher education. During his time in the military, Oscar thrived, quickly rising through the ranks, and earning recognition for his leadership skills. From becoming a parachutist to serving in elite units like the 82nd Airborne Division's Global Response Team, Oscar emerged as a mentor and guide to fellow soldiers.

After leaving active duty, Oscar joined the Wyoming National Guard and started college at WNCC. He also found love and companionship in Stefanie, and together, they created a blended family of six children. In 2019, Oscar obtained his associate's degree, marking a pivotal step toward his dream of becoming a math teacher in a non-traditional educational setting.

Today, he is not only a successful entrepreneur, having opened Reverence Funeral Homes in 2021 with Stefanie, but also a devoted family man and an active community member. Oscar participates in outreach programs for veterans, engages in Catholic community initiatives, and advocates for children in need through Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

***"I think that community colleges are one of the best resources that we have for smaller communities."*** –Oscar Gonzalez



# Congratulations to the 2023 WNCC Alumni Award Recipients!



Cara Perkins Meritorious Service  
Mark Rein,  
Class of 1982



Family Pride  
Hal & Lynn Enevoldsen Family



Friend of the College  
M. Thomas Perkins, Ph.D., LCSW



Lifetime Achievement  
John Marrin



Outstanding Alumnus  
Timothy A. Alvarez, Ph.D.,  
Class of 1980



Outstanding Young Alumnus  
Christopher Niehues D.O.,  
Class of 2011

Explore pictures and brief biographies of award winners and nominate deserving businesses or individuals at [go.wncc.edu/alumni](https://go.wncc.edu/alumni)



## The Power of Planned Giving: A Benefactor's Journey with WNCC

By Alena Haun, WNCC Foundation Development Director

The journey of philanthropy often begins with a spark of inspiration. For Thom and LaRita VanBoskirk, that spark was ignited by two key events. The first was a conversation with Thom's uncle, a CPA, who emphasized the importance of giving as part of financial planning. The second was the sale of a building, which could have resulted in a significant tax liability. Their accountant suggested a charitable remainder trust as a potential solution.

This trust allowed Thom and LaRita to designate portions of the proceeds to different nonprofits, including the WNCC Foundation, while also providing them with a tax benefit. This experience opened their eyes to the advantages of planned giving, not only for themselves but also for foundations, institutions, and nonprofits.

The VanBoskirk's connection with WNCC, however, began years earlier when they were moving their young family. "We had a list of things that we were looking for in a community, and at the top of that list was an institution of higher learning. A college gives a community vibrance, exuberance, energy, and helps it to grow in lots of different ways," shared LaRita.

Over the years, Thom and LaRita have engaged with the college in many ways, from attending performing arts and athletic events to enrolling their daughter in the summer theater program. "The college offers so much to the entire community, not just to the enrolled student," said LaRita.

As an adjunct faculty member and tutor in the Writing Center at WNCC, LaRita has seen the college's impact firsthand. She appreciates that WNCC recognizes the diverse development rates of students and provides opportunities for everyone. LaRita also noted that WNCC serves both traditional and non-traditional students from the Panhandle and beyond. "I came to the scholarship luncheon and sat at a table with a young woman and her mother. I mistakenly thought the young woman was the current student, but it was the mother. The young woman had finished her associate's degree at WNCC, her bachelor's from a four-year college, and her master's. Now, it was her mother's turn at WNCC. You know, it makes me a little teary. That's a great story."

Thom shared his view that planned giving is a crucial component of an institution's economic foundation. It allows institutions like WNCC to anticipate future community needs and develop additional programs. Ultimately, they see the importance of planned giving in fostering the growth of education and helping individuals within their community to grow as people. "Planned giving is more than just benefiting from a tax break; it's about helping society grow. I think the best thing is education, and the more we can do to inspire individuals to get more education, the better," stated Thom.

Thom and LaRita's journey serves as a testament to the transformative power of planned giving, illustrating its benefits for both the giver and the recipient.

## What is "Planned Giving"?

Planned giving refers to charitable contributions that will occur in the future, often after the donor's lifetime.

## What is the Benefit of Planned Giving?

**Legacy:** By including charitable gifts in their long-term plan, donors can benefit organizations, institutions, and communities long after they are gone.

**Tax Benefits:** Planned giving can provide significant tax advantages during the donor's lifetime. Some planned gifts may result in income tax deductions, reduced capital gains taxes, or estate tax benefits. Donors can maximize their impact while minimizing tax liabilities.

**Supporting Causes Close to the Heart:** Donors can direct their planned gifts to specific causes they are passionate about. Planned giving allows individuals to align their philanthropy with their values.

*\*To learn more, visit [wnccfoundation.planmygift.org](http://wnccfoundation.planmygift.org), and consult with your tax professional.*

## 2023-24 WNCC Foundation Board of Directors

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**Ryan Reiber**  
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Bridgeport

**Dr. Daryl Wills**  
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**Patty Winkler**  
Scottsbluff

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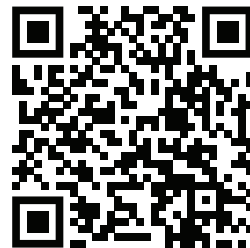
# MISSION STATEMENT

*Our mission is to  
inspire investment and  
encourage WNCC student success  
by providing connections that...*

- increase access to education,*
- create student opportunities, and*
- positively impact the communities we serve.*



Western Nebraska Community College  
**FOUNDATION**



[wnccfoundation.org](http://wnccfoundation.org)

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