



Report to the ELCA Synod Assemblies 2021

In a year that was like no other, St. Olaf College has sustained its mission of challenging students to excel in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition. After pivoting to a fully-online program halfway through the Spring 2020 semester, we successfully re-opened the campus in Fall 2020 with a combination of in-person, hybrid, and remote learning. Following guidance from the CDC and the State of Minnesota, we implemented community standards for prevention, health reporting, testing, contact tracing, isolation, and quarantining, which enabled us to remain open throughout the fall as well as during the current spring term.

St. Olaf also has sustained its commitment to meeting the full demonstrated financial need of all admitted students. At present, our 2,909 undergraduates hail from all 50 states and 83 countries, with 21% self-identifying as Lutheran and another 8% as members of denominations in full communion with the ELCA. 24% of the entering class are domestic students of color, 7% are international students, and 20% are first-generation college students. Among our Class of 2020 graduates, 94% participated in an internship, mentored research experience, practicum, or other vocation-related opportunity, and 73% studied off-campus. Pandemic notwithstanding, 95% of our Class of 2020 alumni were employed, working in full-time service projects, or attending graduate school within six months of graduation, consistent with prior years.

Throughout the pandemic, St. Olaf has continued to provide live weekday chapel and Sunday worship (stolaf.edu/multimedia/streams/archive/chapel), shifting from in-person to virtual services during periods of remote learning. The College Ministry team includes two rostered ELCA pastors, an Associate Chaplain for Jewish Life, and an Associate Chaplain for Muslim Life, engaging with students of all backgrounds – including St. Olaf's ELCA Student Congregation – about faith and life. The college's weekly *Sing For Joy* radio program (stolaf.edu/singforjoy/), featuring sacred choral music for the church year, continues to be broadcast on 150 U.S., U.K., and African stations, and expanded its online audience as COVID kept so many church doors closed.

St. Olaf's new Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community (stolaf.edu/lutherancenter/), now in its second year, advances understanding of global Lutheranism in the 21st century, fosters interfaith engagement, and nourishes vocational discernment at every stage of life. Its robust programming features nationally known speakers, symposia, student internships, book reads, workshops, and seminars; many events bring alumni and friends of the college together with current students, faculty, and staff. The Center's director, Dr. Deanna Thompson '89, is a nationally recognized expert in Lutheran theology and the church in the digital age, and has emerged as a thought leader on church life in this time of pandemic; her blog posts on topics ranging from virtual communion to racial justice have reached thousands of national and international readers. We invite you to sign up on the Center's website for periodic updates on its activities and upcoming programs, and to visit the college's streaming site (stolaf.edu/multimedia/) for live and archived events.

The Lutheran Center now serves as the administrative home of the St. Olaf Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts. The Summer 2020 CWTA conference "Scatter the Imagination of Our Hearts" was rescheduled for July 25-28, 2022, keynoted by theologian Willie James Jennings (Yale University Divinity School) and Professor of Homiletics and Liturgics Eunjoo Mary Kim (Iliff School of Theology). A virtual mini-conference introducing selected CWTA themes and speakers will be offered on July 20, 2021 (stolaf.edu/cwta/). The Lutheran Center is also home to the new initiative "Nourishing Vocation: Re-Imagining Congregational Callings in Unimaginable Times," supported by a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. A search is underway for the director of this exciting new program, which will convene regional and national learning communities of congregational leaders to help congregations gain clarity about their values and missions, explore and better understand the communities that they serve, and draw upon their theological traditions as they adapt ministries to meet changing needs.

We join our prayers with yours as we all consider our callings during and beyond this "unimaginable time."

David R. Anderson '74, President