

ALVERNO magazine

SPRING | SUMMER | 2024

THE PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

of Christy L. Brown, JD



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— Christy L. Brown, JD



Cover Story

President Christy L. Brown, JD, shares her message of hope at her inauguration.

ALVERNO MAGAZINE | SPRING | SUMMER 2024

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Imagine, Innovate, Inspire

Three powerful words fueling one powerful Alverno vision.

These three words were chosen to be the theme of my recent installation as the new president of Alverno College in this seminal moment in Alverno's story, because they encourage us to realize a future that is relevant, impactful and consistent with our reputation as a trailblazing institution, producing the leaders and change-makers in our society. Together, we must embrace our ability to imagine what we can be, our obligation to innovate to achieve our goals, and our responsibility to inspire the community.

In this moment, I believe we can move, emboldened, into the future if we:

- **Imagine** an Alverno College where the legacy of our pioneering founders — the School Sisters of St. Francis — is buoyed by our unique approach to learning using a refreshed framework for the 8 Abilities, and where our diverse community of students gain the skills, knowledge and values needed for today. In the spirit of our founders, our students will be exemplars of student leadership in the classroom, operating room, boardroom or whichever room they desire.
- **Innovate** to convert what we imagine into a reality. To strengthen the reputation we have held locally, nationally and internationally, we must continue to change and evolve. Innovation includes challenging established traditions and dated practices as well as investing resources in new ideas. All of this is done to sustain our mission of preparing undergraduate women for lives of personal and professional distinction and meaningful engagement with the world, and extending that mission to all in our graduate programs.
- **Inspire** the College's constituents and our greater community. Alverno is known to be just such an environment and a catalyst. I believe this is because we ourselves are inspired by our Franciscan values and by our legacy of creating a transformative educational experience where all belong. As we imagine the Alverno College of the future, we understand the difficult terrain ahead and we are not deterred. Rather, we are compelled by the urge to change it and to create new paths.

I have no doubt that collectively and collaboratively, our dedicated faculty and staff, our beloved alums and community supporters, and our committed board of trustees can move from strength to sustainability by:

- Increasing financial resources
- Advancing educational innovation
- Modernizing operations and systems
- Creating transformational partnerships
- Enhancing the student experience

This moment is extraordinary, and Alverno is made for this moment. After almost one year in the role, I am honored to be here and looking forward to working with each of you to *imagine, innovate and inspire* a future that our founders envisioned and that our students deserve.

Christy L. Brown, JD
President



PERSONALIZED MENTORSHIP FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS

Alverno's innovative new three-year business degree program is not only helping undergraduate students graduate more quickly, it's also giving them a unique opportunity to learn from mentors.

Students are paired with a professional coach throughout their academic journey, giving them valuable insights, offering networking opportunities and equipping them with practical skills. The coaches, who make a three-year commitment to guide and support students, get something out of the experience as well.

"Engaging with young, aspiring professionals offers these mentors a fresh perspective and keeps them connected with the latest trends and ideas in the business world," says **Steve Glynn**, an Alverno business instructor who developed the coaching program. "Our goal was to have eight coaches. We had to cap it at 12."

For **Julissa Quevedo Aguila**, class of 2026, the experience has been rewarding. "I love how it is not only about having a coach for college, but also lifelong guidance for my career," she says. Her mentor, who works for Bader Philanthropies, has offered to stay connected long after graduation. "She has helped me with my networking skills and been a source of reassurance."

This unique initiative is bridging the gap between academic theory and practical, real-world experience. Coaches meet with their students at least once a month. Some students have even had the chance to visit their mentors' job site for tours, allowing for more networking opportunities and further enriching the students' learning and professional development.

The possibilities don't end there. **Cindy Ruiz's** mentor encouraged the sophomore to apply for an internship at Northwestern Mutual usually reserved for juniors or seniors. "I applied, I interviewed, and I am excited to start working with them this summer," she says.

Both students are grateful for the unique learning dynamic. Says Ruiz: "I know I have someone who genuinely wants the best for me and will help me succeed, someone who is always there when I need advice or help with anything."

Companies involved include Northwestern Mutual, Harley-Davidson Motor Co., PNC Bank, UKG, Greenfire, Ready Rebound and Bader Philanthropies.



If you would like to be involved with Alverno's coaching program, scan the QR code for more information.

Julissa Quevedo Aguila, class of 2026 (left) and Cindy Ruiz, class of 2026 (right).



First DEMSN Cohort Graduates from the Arizona Campus

In the spring of 2022, Alverno officially opened its new nursing education center in Mesa, Ariz., and two years later, the first cohort of nurses have graduated from the Direct Entry Master of Science in Nursing (DEMSN) program.

“We are so very proud of this incredibly resilient group of people,” says **Linda Shanta, PhD**, director of the DEMSN program in Mesa. “This group not only succeeded but exceeded all expectations through their community and professional engagement. We know our nursing profession is in great hands with these emerging leaders.”

In all, 18 students completed the program and were pinned on May 9.

“I’m feeling incredibly prepared and thrilled to embark on my journey as a registered nurse, especially aiming to specialize in pediatric intensive care,” says Raymond Sim ’24. “I can’t wait to dive in and make a positive impact!”



Forbes Recognizes EdD PROGRAM

Alverno’s EdD program was named one of the top 10 best online Doctor of Educational Leadership programs by *Forbes ADVISOR*.

The ranking is based on student outcomes, affordability, student experience and credibility.

“Alverno advisors and professors really personalize the program, and they look at us as individuals,” says **AJ Staniszewski '23, EdD**. “Since we’re in educational leadership, they’re looking at us as leaders, and that is something that I think really makes the program specialized and individualized.”

ZseTaun Washington '23, EdD, loves the connections she has made with her faculty. “The staff here is stellar,” she says. “The connections that they’ve made with us are lifelong, and there’s a magic here on this campus that I just don’t believe is anywhere else.”



Putting First-Generation Students First

Because nearly 70% of our undergraduate students are first-generation, supporting their success is vital. The College’s efforts have paid off — last summer Alverno was chosen as one of 76 new members of the First Scholars Network. To be selected, the College displayed a demonstrated commitment to improving experiences and advancing success for first-generation college students. Some of these efforts include the formation of the student organization FIRST@Alverno, recognizing first-gen students with a specially created cord at graduation, and hosting a First-Gen Week that included a multicultural food fair and first-gen T-shirts.

“This is a special opportunity to invest further in our first-generation students,” says **Danielle Gioia**, director of Student Success. “As a first-generation student myself, I know how important it is to make the college journey less complicated, more accessible, and more supportive for students and families alike. Being accepted to the First Scholars Network enables us to collaborate with other institutions as we enhance our capacity to support first-gen student learning, navigation, confidence, and success.”

Paulina Romo-Ureno, class of 2024, is a first-generation student who feels like she truly belongs at Alverno. “Transitioning to college can be intimidating and nerve-racking, but Alverno does a great job supporting first-generation students,” she says. “Everyone here wants to see you succeed in life, and they would do their best to help you out in any way they can.”

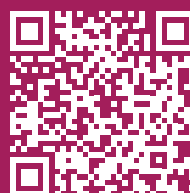
Empowering Special Ed Teachers

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Alverno a five-year, \$1.24 million grant to train diverse personnel to work at minority-serving institutions with children with disabilities, allowing the College to address a critical need for special education teachers throughout the state of Wisconsin.

“This is an exciting opportunity for Alverno to make a difference in the school districts with the greatest need,” says **Thor Stolen**, associate professor of education and project director for the grant. “The program will go a long way toward training diverse cohorts of educators, placing them in schools where their diversity mirrors that of the students they serve.”

Students who meet the diverse eligibility criteria (neuro/ability, racially, linguistically or culturally/ethnically diverse) and who receive the scholarship are committed to serving as a special education teacher for at least two years for every year they receive the scholarship, having a direct impact on students and school districts.

Students who are interested in pursuing a special ed licensure are encouraged to apply. “We have openings, and we want to fill them,” says Stolen.



To apply for this scholarship, please scan the QR code.

Abilities at Work

By Michelle Pazdernik

The first step in making a big impact in your career is gaining experience, and Alverno juniors **Clara Knitter** and **Avery Maxwell** are getting just that through the power of internships. These students are receiving valuable insight, both professionally and personally, allowing them to connect with Alverno's 8 Abilities in a deeper way.

Knitter, a public health major with a focus on health education, found exactly what she was looking for with her internship at the Wauwatosa Health Department. Working with public health specialists and strategists, she admits this internship is no small undertaking. However, Knitter's confidence in her abilities aided her in being able to shift her focus to the positive. "I quickly learned that I had to shift my perspective from worrying about not having done certain things before to being excited to learn new things and excited to practice the real-life application of concepts I had learned so far," she says.

Maxwell, a business and management major, has a similar outlook on the abilities in her role as a ticket operations intern with the Milwaukee Bucks. Her understanding of the 8 Abilities has evolved during her time in the industry, and she emphasizes how important they are in the workforce. "My specific position uses the abilities all the time and I often unknowingly apply them to my work. Alverno has instilled them to become natural and I analyze my work around them without even knowing!"

Knitter's confidence in her ability to succeed comes in part from Alverno's 8 Abilities. "When I first began at Alverno," she says, "I had thought of the 8 Abilities as different 'parts.' As I've continued my education and begun applying them in my internship, I realize how interconnected they are."

"The 8 Abilities are not just something we are graded on or a requirement needed to graduate," says Maxwell. "They are real-life skills that can be applied anywhere. I get compliments from my coworkers on how prepared and professional I always am, and honestly, Alverno built a lot of that in me. I have developed a stronger sense of resilience, adaptability and problem-solving prowess that will undoubtedly serve me well in my future endeavors."



Clara Knitter



Avery Maxwell

"I get compliments all the time from my coworkers on how prepared and professional I always am, and honestly, Alverno built a lot of that in me."

—Avery Maxwell



*Kathleen O'Brien, OSF '67
presents the presidential
medallion to Brown
during the installation.*

The Alverno College community came together on May 3 to celebrate the presidential inauguration of Christy L. Brown, JD. Students, faculty, staff, alums and community members gathered in the historic Pitman Theatre for a ceremony filled with elements reflective of the diverse student population and the college's alma mater, "Where All Belong."

During her inaugural address, Brown acknowledged the challenges facing higher education while looking to the future with a profound sense of hope and determination. "I believe we must embrace our ability to imagine our brighter future, our ability to innovate to achieve our goals, and our ability to inspire our greater community," she said.



(Top row, left to right) **President Emerita Mary Meehan H'05** gives a call to service. Rufus King International High School Chorus, where Brown attended high school, performs. (Middle row, left to right) **Ann VanEerden**, associate professor of nursing, participates in the opening procession. **Cecelia Gore '92 '08** offers a call to service on behalf of the Alverno College Board of Trustees. (Bottom row, left to right) Reverend **Stephanie Welsh Walker, DMin**, who met Brown in high school, gives the invocation. The School Sisters of St. Francis bestow a blessing upon Brown at the conclusion of the installation ceremony. Brown gives her inaugural address.

We are grateful to our sponsors who generously supported this event. To see additional photos, view the ceremony video recording online, or read the presidential address, please visit alverno.edu/inauguration.



(Clockwise from top left) Students and staff at the inauguration reception. Brown with **Patricia Contreras**, Vice President of Community Impact at Rockwell Automation. Brown with her family. **Alderman Peter Burgelis** (right) with **Trenice Ferguson**. **Kate Lundeen**, Vice President of Enrollment (left) and **Tiffany Tardy '03**, President & CEO at PEARLS for Teen Girls, Inc. Brown greets **Robert Birney**, professor emeritus and Social Interaction Ability sponsor of the event.

DONORS OFFER **\$1.5 MILLION** MATCHING GIFT TO ALVERNO

During her inaugural address, President **Christy L. Brown, JD**, announced that a group of anonymous donors who believe in the mission of Alverno College and the power of the 8 Abilities has stepped forward to challenge the community to come together in support of the College. The donors will match up to \$1.5 million in gifts made to Alverno now through December 31, 2024.

President Brown says, “We are grateful for the support of our alums, donors and friends. This generous contribution shows confidence among our donors in our collective mission to prepare women for lives of personal and professional distinction and meaningful engagement with the world, and to provide an abilities-based education. This gift will support our endeavors towards financial sustainability. It also is a call to action to all who know, love or have been impacted and touched by Alverno through education, a coworker in their workplace, or a friend. It is a challenge for us all to rally together in solidarity and determination to create a new, stronger Alverno College.”

Anyone who wishes to make a contribution and have their gift matched may donate at alverno.edu/give or reach out to the Advancement Office at advancement@alverno.edu.



MEET THE MATCH
Secure Alverno's future.

PRAYER, LATE NIGHTS

Powered 8 Abilities' Creation

By Jackie Avial

The 8 Abilities that are the hallmark of an Alverno education weren't created overnight. Instead, they were the product of years of discussion, debate, collaboration, prayer and hard work.

"We prayed day and night and worked like there was no tomorrow, all together," recalls **Sister Bernardin Deutsch '53**, (pictured far right) one of the many Alverno faculty members who helped bring the 8 Abilities to life.

The 8 Abilities were created during the early 1970s amidst a national conversation about the need for graduates to demonstrate their competence in key skills. Alverno's then-president, **Sister Joel Read '48**, empowered faculty to take up this challenge, and the result was the unique way of teaching and learning that distinguishes Alverno today.

In May 1971, faculty gathered for an annual meeting. As Deutsch remembers, one faculty member was at the podium, sharing the qualities that defined an Alverno graduate, and **Sister Georgine Loacker '47** stood up in the audience and asked: "But how do we know that they are that way? We have no evidence."

The question set off a storm, Deutsch recalls. "People just stood up from the audience, saying 'you're right!' I just sat there, stunned. It was so exciting."

The journey to creating the 8 Abilities was officially underway. Faculty began working to create a framework for competency-based learning, focused on communication, problem solving, effective citizenship and valuing in decision making. Their careful study produced the remaining four abilities: social interaction, analysis, developing a global perspective and aesthetic engagement.

Dr. Vivien DeBack '54, (pictured near right) former nursing division chair, joined the Alverno faculty in 1972 after hearing about the exciting work and discussions taking place.

"All the excitement was at Alverno, and I wanted to be part of it," she recalls.

DeBack and the nursing faculty worked to integrate the abilities into the nursing curriculum; for example, identifying nursing behaviors that represented problem solving. She knew that the abilities would capture what differentiated a great nurse from a good nurse.

"It felt like a breakthrough. This was doable!" she says.

Some faculty throughout the College questioned whether this new way of learning could destroy Alverno as a liberal arts college. But Read and other administrators met the challengers head on, allowing the faculty to focus on the work.

Late nights were typical.

The 8 Abilities debuted in 1973. While Alverno has experienced many changes in the past 50 years, Deutsch and DeBack agree that Alverno's mission — and the way in which the abilities are foundational to that mission — has held true.

"The relevance of the abilities is still very real," Deutsch says. "Whatever our next step is, I know we will continue to assist students to prepare themselves for their future in the world."





8 Reasons to Love the Abilities

By Kelly Cole

Everyone needs to be able to communicate, solve problems and work with others, but very few learn these skills as part of their formal education. Unless, of course, they're Alverno students and alums.

Fifty years ago, Alverno sought to provide students with something more than a basic understanding of the subject matter being taught. We wanted our graduates to stand out, so we needed a curriculum that would stand out. It was through this desire that the 8 Abilities were born.

But the 8 Abilities represent more than "soft skills" that employers seek out. They are tools designed to set our graduates up for a lifetime of success in their professional and personal lives.

To celebrate 50 years of the 8 Abilities, we talked to students and alums who shared how the abilities impact their daily lives.

1



Vanessa Lund

AESTHETIC ENGAGEMENT

"I had no idea how much something like aesthetic engagement mattered until I reflected on how much it plays a role in my daily life. It's not just about being open and appreciative of the arts, but also reflecting on the artistic choices you make in your life. The ability is what allows us to be appreciative of the arts and become aware of how our own choices and others' choices illustrate who we are as individuals and the world that we live in."

—Vanessa Lund
*Communication major
 Class of 2024*

ANALYSIS

"Analysis has proven to be a crucial skill of my daily life. From understanding and navigating my children's meltdowns to anticipating the needs of my students and the chemistry labs in my role at Alverno, analysis has provided me with the mental tools I need to analyze situations, understand the why and how, and the strength to plan how to proceed. While all the abilities work together, analysis has truly proven to be an ability for which I am grateful to Alverno."

—Jenna Coss '09 '15
*Physical sciences lab manager,
 instructor of physical science,
 biology and Girls' Academy*

2



Jenna Coss

3



Jassleen Herrera

COMMUNICATION

"Communication has made it easier to express myself, which helps me to connect with others. As a student, learning communication has helped me to network, which has opened new experiences and new things for me. You can always learn from others and apply that knowledge, and communication is key to that."

—Jassleen Herrera
*Media design major
 Class of 2026*

DEVELOPING A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

“Developing a global perspective at Alverno let me experience that difference is necessary and sometimes it is uncomfortable, but we each have two eyes, two ears and only one mouth for a reason. You have to observe and listen more than you speak to experience the larger world more richly. The global world is full of so much difference in race, background and experience that knowing this has helped me be brave in making bigger connections to the larger world around me.”

—Alexis B. Outlaw '09,
SHRM-CP

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Alexis Outlaw

EFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP

“Being an effective citizen is something I have grown into throughout my education in the social work program. As I venture into the professional world through my internship, I understand the need to do my civic duties and be a functioning, responsible member of society. These skills help me as I continue to learn in school and act in my personal life because I am able to think about things through the lens of empathy and growth.”

—Kat Grove
Social work major
Class of 2024

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Kat Grove

Alverno College was the first to develop an abilities-based curriculum, but it wasn't the last.

PROBLEM SOLVING

“Of all the 8 Abilities, other than communication, I find problem solving to be the one I use daily. While my family taught me the basics of being a good problem solver, I believe my education at Alverno made me an even better one. I learned to consistently see multiple sides to a situation and how to effectively choose the best solution based on the situation. I've found that because I can lay out the steps to solve a problem, I'm often asked to assist on challenging projects to move it along or to provide different vantage points for the situation. I feel empowered that I learned in a way that was right for me, but also in a way that prepared me for whatever came my way.”

—Dawn Groshek '93

6



Dawn Groshek

When Alverno first introduced competence-based learning in 1973, there were many academic critics and skeptics, but 50 years later we are acknowledged as a leader in abilities-based curricula.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

“Learning about social interaction taught me how important it is to be active on campus, whether in class, in organizations or attending events. This ability has helped me improve my social skills and made it easier to interact with others and build a community. The opportunities at Alverno are endless. By challenging myself to step out of my comfort zone, I have been able to meet amazing people and be a part of something great.”

—Lizbeth Cruz
Business and management major
Class of 2026

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Lizbeth Cruz

VALUING IN DECISION MAKING

“People are asked to make big and small decisions every day. Some decisions have little to no consequences, while others can have big impacts on you personally as well as on other people. By learning about valuing in decision making I'm able to make informed decisions that align with my core values, that are ethically sound and based in best practices.”

—Brooke Wegner '99 '03

8



Brooke Wegner

HELPING ONE HELPS MANY

By Dana McCullough

Alverno is an inclusive, vibrant community of students, faculty and staff who support and uplift each other. So when alum **Dr. Mary Ann Schwartz '62** (pictured below) learned about the opportunity to support communication access services for **Katy Hagemeyer** — a student who is deaf and relies on American Sign Language (ASL) — Schwartz didn't think twice.



"I visited Katy's website and was impressed with her accomplishments building Deaf Inspire LLC to provide mental health services and leadership empowerment for the Wisconsin Deaf community. I believe that with additional education Katy will accomplish even more for that community, thus benefiting us all," Schwartz says.

Hagemeyer (pictured at right) enrolled in Alverno's educational specialist in school psychology program in 2023. She received funding to cover her tuition, provided through a U.S. Department of Education grant Alverno received to train personnel from diverse backgrounds to serve children with disabilities. Because she relies on ASL to communicate, Hagemeyer also needed access to a team of highly skilled ASL interpreters who were trained in the language of graduate-level disciplines. Having communication access services in place for Deaf students creates equitable access and helps students achieve their educational goals. For Hagemeyer, the interpreter's presence allows her to actively participate in group discussions with peers, communicate with faculty and foster relationships that are fundamental to an abilities-based education.

"Upon reviewing Alverno's school psychology program, I realized it was an ideal fit, considering the significant need for ASL-fluent school-based providers and my passion for working with Deaf children," Hagemeyer says. "The program's emphasis on multicultural and multilingual approaches has exposed me to a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. I have not only gained a deeper understanding of my own culture and language but also learned from my amazing cohort classmates, who come from diverse backgrounds."

Hagemeyer says her experience at Alverno is much different than other universities she previously attended. "At the public state university, I encountered certain limitations within the system.

These included a limited pool of interpreters to choose from and the ongoing need to advocate for accommodations. My experience at Alverno has been the opposite. Instead of being told 'this is what you get,' Alverno asked, 'What do we need to do to make your educational experience a great one?' Having a team of skilled interpreters has given me the confidence and ability to focus on my education bilingually without worrying about the quality of the interpreters and compromising both language inputs."

As a licensed social worker currently working in private practice, Hagemeyer is one of a few Deaf mental health providers in Wisconsin. "I have observed the significant impact that the education system, particularly language deprivation, has on Deaf children and their outcomes in adulthood," Hagemeyer says.

Hagemeyer is passionate and believes that every Deaf child should have the opportunity to reach their full academic potential and that a key component of a Deaf child's education team should be a Deaf person with academic and professional training, as well as lived experience.

"It is my hope that I can be that key person for many Deaf children in the future, unlocking their academic potential," Hagemeyer adds.

For Schwartz and other donors, giving back to Alverno — whether it's supporting a single student's needs, scholarships or other academic and instructional resources — is important.



"Alverno provided me with an excellent education as well as lifelong friends, both of which contributed to a satisfying professional and personal life," Schwartz says. "I want future generations of women to experience a similar sense of empowerment, level of leadership skills and friendships that I developed at Alverno."

In addition, Schwartz encourages others to continue to support Alverno. "If you believe Alverno made a difference in your life, then pay it forward. We are living in a chaotic world where problems seem so overwhelming. Our support for Alverno will produce new leaders who will make an impact in their communities and in the world at large. Remember: 'It takes a village.' Be a generous part of that village."

Remembering JoAnn McGrath



JoAnn McGrath '57 spent her life modeling Alverno's commitment to effective citizenship and core values of leadership, service to others, stewardship and faith. McGrath and her family's Highland Street Foundation established the JoAnn McGrath Nursing Scholarship Fund in 1992 and were among the first to step forward with support for the College's Teaching, Learning & Technology Center (now called the Sister Joel Read Center). In 2012, Alverno named the JoAnn McGrath School of Nursing in honor of this cherished alumna in recognition of her many contributions to the College and its students.

McGrath passed away on February 19, leaving a legacy of unmatched impact for Alverno and our students.

Thank you for supporting first-generation students

My name is **Lizbeth**, and I am a senior in the nursing program. My goal is to complete my Bachelor of Science in Nursing, obtain my RN license and work on a labor and delivery floor. Eventually, I will go to graduate school to accomplish my ultimate career goal: a midwifery specialization.

Obtaining a scholarship allows me to put more hours into studying, rather than having to pick up more shifts at work to pay my tuition.

Alverno's 8 Abilities have helped me grow academically and personally, and they are amazing traits to carry on after college. One of the 8 Abilities that I have mastered since coming to Alverno is valuing in decision making. Before coming to Alverno, making a decision was hard for me. However, going through the rigorous Alverno nursing program and having the social interaction assessment have helped tremendously to be able to make decisions without hesitation.

Thank you very much for supporting my education as a first-generation college student.





368
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FACULTY, ALUMS AND
INDIVIDUALS HONORED

THANK YOU!

Thank you to the Alverno community for your generosity during the annual Alverno Giving Challenge in April. Gifts from alums and friends of the College unlocked more than \$50,000 in challenges. Funds raised have an immediate impact on Alverno, supporting student scholarships, the College's highest priorities and providing students the resources they need to succeed.