

## 2023 Report to ELCA Synod Assemblies

Greetings from Augustana College.

This is my first report to your gathering, and as a relatively new president of Augustana College I am very grateful to say that all of the positive things I'd heard during my career about the transformative, purpose-based nature of Lutheran higher education are present and thriving here in Rock Island.

From interactions with students, faculty, staff, alumni and trustees, I have witnessed first-hand the meaning and power of vocation – God's calling to equip ourselves in order to be of service to our neighbors and communities. It is as much a part of life at Augustana today as it was in 1860, when immigrant pastors sought to train their successors and build up their communities.

This community is now engaged in a strategic planning process that we hope will make Augustana's excellent academic program become even more intentional about helping our students find that place where personal reward meets the needs of a world hungry for conscientious servant leaders. Although we are still early in the process, connecting with and serving our neighbors is one of our important guiding philosophies and will shape the strategies that we choose.

I invite your partnership in this process as we seek to continue enrolling outstanding students. With the Gerber Grand Challenge unlocking tens of millions of dollars in financial aid for high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds, our ability to meet students where they are financially has never been greater.

This being my first report, I would have liked for it to be entirely celebratory. But on behalf of all ELCA colleges and universities, I ask that you hold the community of Finlandia University in your hearts and minds. Their 126-year-old mission now comes to a close due to the hard financial realities facing institutions across the country.

While my colleagues and I mourn for their loss, I am grateful to report that we remain dedicated to the purpose of Augustana College, which is to offer:

“...a higher education in the liberal arts that provides for the development of all dimensions of human existence, in a manner consistent with the higher education values of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As a community dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion, Augustana prizes interfaith engagement, commitment to justice, spiritual exploration, reasoned examination and vocational discernment.”

On behalf of our students, thank you.



Andrea Kathryn Talentino, President