

creating
FUTURES

**"There's nothing better than
serving alongside and still
being a part of the culture at
Normandale Community College."**

**Al Gorake,
Alumnus '82, '83 & Donor**

**20
24**

NORMANDALE

FROM THE PRESIDENT

To our Normandale Community College Foundation community of supporters,

Akwaaba!

Akwaaba (ak-waa-ba) is a Ghanaian greeting, in case you are wondering. You also may be wondering why I chose to use a Ghanaian greeting. At the time of this writing, I am attending the All-African Diaspora Educational Summit. This summit is designed to support, enlighten, and encourage educational professionals from the African diaspora. We met with faculty, staff, administrators, and students from the University of Ghana. We also witnessed “The Great Debate” competition between students from numerous African countries. Additionally, we had the opportunity to go into various communities to meet the students there and engage with and learn about their systems of education. At both the primary and college levels it was abundantly clear that the students saw education as a way of changing and improving their futures. Much like in the states where our tuition is low compared to universities, the ability to pay for a college education is out of reach for so many students.

You don’t have to be on another continent to appreciate the value of an education to the students who want to attend. At Normandale there are many students who come to earn degrees or certificates that will help them improve their lives and that of their families, but finances are an obstacle. Whether it is the need to take on additional jobs to pay for educational expenses or reducing the hours at work so that they can be successful in their classes, having a financial strain can hinder academic success. In recent years you may have heard about the decline in enrollments nationally, but due to the strength of our academic courses/programs, stellar services, and adaptability of course modalities, Normandale is experiencing a significant enrollment increase when comparing this year to last. We are on target to have the highest enrollment that we have had in 10 years! In August we welcomed an increased percentage of new students to the college, but I am really excited about the increase in the number of students who returned to Normandale. Those returning students are just one step closer to achieving their educational goals.

As new or current donors, I thank you for partnering with us to positively impact the lives of the students we serve.

Joyce C Ester Ph D

Joyce C. Ester, Ph.D.
College President

MEET THE TEAM

College President: **Joyce C. Ester, PhD**

Vice President of Advancement: **Telly Mamayek**

Foundation Executive Director: **Jane Fenton**

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Normandale Community College, a member of the Minnesota State system, is an equal opportunity educator and employer.



Dear Friends

It's amazing what can happen when a group of people work together to fulfill a vision. Recently, my attention was drawn to the incredible story of the Iraivan Shiva Temple of the Hindu Monastery on the Hawaiian island of Kauai. Hundreds of stonecutters worked for over 30 years to carve the white granite blocks that compose the temple. Each block was shipped from India to Kauai and carefully placed according to the vision a leader had in a dream. The result is a visually stunning artifice that is open to everyone seeking inspiration and beauty that will last for thousands of years.

Be proud of yourself for the progress we've made together at Normandale. This past fiscal year (July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024) was both challenging and rewarding, marked by resilience, growth, and an unwavering commitment to our mission of supporting student success.

One of the highlights of this fiscal year was the continuation of our free laptop program. We gave away over 900 this year, ensuring that more students—many of whom are first-generation or from underrepresented backgrounds—could access the education they deserve.

Another highlight was a successful alumni mentorship pilot program, which paired 6 STEM students from the Foundation's Academy of Math and Science with former graduates in the fields these current students aspired to be in. This year we are growing that program, with plans to scale it college-wide over the next three years.

Looking ahead, we are more committed than ever to ensuring that education becomes even more equitable, accessible, and transformative for all. We are adding staff in order to increase our fundraising capacity and become an even more essential partner to the College.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our success this year. Together, we are building a brighter future for our students and our community. Take a look at the Iraivan Temple on Kauai for some dazzling inspiration.



Jane Fenton
Executive Director, Normandale Foundation



Laptops for Lions:


A PROVEN SUCCESS

It's hard to believe it was already four years ago when our world was upended by a global pandemic and almost every social aspect of our lives was transferred online. Suddenly, access to a computer or laptop with a stable internet connection was no longer considered a luxury—it was a basic need. Since 2020 this has remained the case.

Normandale's Laptop Giving Program was introduced during the pandemic with a goal to ensure that all students, especially those from marginalized communities, have the necessary tools to succeed in their education. Thanks to a generous private donation, and a matching donation from Hennepin County, the college was able to purchase 912 laptops for students in need. Once received, laptops are inventoried, and an application process opens. Staff review applications daily and approve or deny them on a rolling basis.

Laptops are a study in equity, which we define as leveling the playing field for all students, regardless of their backgrounds, resources and degree of marginalization. Our first set of data has shown that giving a laptop to a Black student reduces the equity gap by over 1/3 when compared to low-income white students. This is our largest equity gap.

It means that their GPAs can increase from a C to a B or an A just by getting a laptop. It is an encouraging outcome as we strategize to close the equity gap at Normandale.



“I will continue to do my best as a student so that one day I can also make a donation to such a wonderful community as Normandale. I will be paying this generosity forward.”
- Juanda

“Your kindness has not only given me a tool for success but also inspired me to help others. I truly appreciate your support.”
- MaJed

Various laptop recipients shared messages of gratitude to their donors. One student writes, “I do not know who you are, but I wanted to say a big thank you for giving me the opportunity to be more successful. My life has become a lot easier because I have more freedom and choices to do schoolwork and spend time looking for job and volunteer opportunities. Thank you again for your generosity! You have helped me more than you know.”

“It has been very helpful for me to have advanced technology to navigate learning with dyslexia.” - Carly

Another student said, “With this laptop, I can study better and achieve my dreams. It will help me learn new things, do my assignments, and communicate with my teachers. I promise to use it wisely and take good care of it. Your kindness has made a big difference in my life. Thank you again for your support, I am truly grateful!”

“I will make sure to pay your generosity forward in the future.” - Emanuelle

The goal is to expand the reach of the laptop program to ensure that all students, particularly those from marginalized communities, have access to the necessary tools for their education. The program will continue to be monitored to assess its impact on educational outcomes, digital literacy skills, and overall student success. As the program grows, donations are still needed to assure that every Normandale student has the support they need to succeed. ♦

“I am currently doing online classes because of my lack of transportation so this computer was desperately needed. Thank you for giving me this privilege to continue my studies in an easier way.” - Jocelyn

LAPTOP PROGRAM STATS

Laptops donated: 912

Number of applications: 1,517

“I’ve never had the opportunity to receive such a valuable and life-changing device. I’ve always had to use borrowed and used devices in order to succeed in school.”
- Karla

“I returned to school this year to take pre-requisites to prepare to apply to vet school, and of course that made money really tight. I was using a 12-year-old, hand-me-down desktop before.” - Sienna

Snack Time to Supper Time

NORMANDALE IS FEEDING FUTURES

A granola bar. A fruit cup. A packet of oatmeal. Three shelf-stable snacks—for years, that is what a hungry student would receive at Normandale’s original Campus Cupboard. If the student had children, they would have to split the items between themselves. Fast-forward a few years and the Campus Cupboard now exists as a multi-faceted resource that offers free food and hygiene products. This transformation has turned the Cupboard into a free grocery store for students.

In addition to a small snack, student now have access to fresh food, frozen groceries, non-perishable food, grab-and-go meals, personal hygiene items, and even clothing.

Approximately 48% of Normandale students are food insecure, a 2% increase compared to students surveyed in the spring of 2023. This means that 48% of students have limited or uncertain availability of nutritional food on a daily basis.

Beyond that, there are stark disparities in the percentages of students who are food insecure based on race and ethnicity. 22% of white students identified as having very low food security, compared to 36% of Black or African American students, and 53% of Indigenous, Native American, or Alaskan Native students.

To combat these disparities, the Cupboard has partnered with Financial Aid and nonprofit Second Harvest Heartland’s SNAP outreach team, secured funding to hire two new coordinator positions, and received grant funding to expand their selection of culturally inclusive food. They were also recipients of the Cultural Equity Program from food bank partner The Food Group, which provided them with \$200 a month to invest in culturally inclusive food. ♦

Top: Basic Needs Coordinator Paige Wheeler and student workers Jazmin and Calvin

Middle: Paige Wheeler, Alumnus & Donor Al Gorake, VP of Advancement Telly Mamayek, and Director of the Tutoring Center Beena Cook

Bottom: Paige Wheeler; student workers Faiza, Calvin, and Angeles; former student workers Andy and Victoria



BASIC NEEDS STATS

Pounds of food distributed: 81,561
Number of students served: 1,378

Groceries and Growth

THE DYNAMIC DUO BEHIND NORMANDALE'S FOOD SHELF

April Martinez Swalley started taking classes at Normandale one year ago. She is a single mom of two kids and has spent the last 10 years working as a hairstylist. In addition to being a full-time mom and student, April works at the Campus Cupboard, where she helps fellow students get the resources they need.

"Working at the Campus Cupboard has impacted me as a student because I need help too," she shared. "Although college is still hard, it's definitely been easier knowing there is support here for basic needs if I do need them."

April has been able to see the impact of the Cupboard both from the perspective of a worker, and as a visitor. "There's no *one* person that needs help," she said. "Everybody needs help, and everyone's circumstances are different...Realistically everyone who comes in here looks different and has a completely different story."

It was in 2020, at the start of a global pandemic, that the Campus Cupboard started to become what it is today. The success of the current Cupboard can be traced back to one man: Al Gorake.

Al is a Normandale alumnus who started his career in business and entrepreneurship before transitioning to his current role as a pastor. In 2010 he saw the opportunity to run a food drive that quickly transformed into an actual food shelf and nonprofit organization called Hope for the Community. The organization grew and by 2020 had multiple locations in the Twin Cities metro area.

Around the time when Al was thinking about adding a new location, Normandale Foundation Executive Director Jane Fenton reached out and asked if he wanted to help elevate Normandale's existing Campus Cupboard.

"I said absolutely," Al shared. "Anything for the students at Normandale."

Establishing a food shelf at Normandale happened to fit right into Al's plans. "We

were going into colleges, and we bought the equipment, the refrigeration...the food," he said. "For us, we don't get anything out of it other than fulfilling our mission which is 'Fighting Hunger, Delivering Hope.'"

Al's generosity has had a profound impact on April, and countless other students.

"There was a group of new students getting a tour and I explained the Campus Cupboard to them...and just the excitement on their faces, seeing that they get support —each of the

students in that group ended up taking a bag of groceries home with them."

-April Martinez Swalley

Normandale's Campus Cupboard is particularly special to Al. "When your culture with the college is in step and you're in alignment, there's really nothing that you can't do," he said. "When I go to visit the food shelf, I always just feel at home...There's nothing better than when I get to serve alongside and still be a part of the culture at Normandale Community College."◆



Diversity, Determination, & Dreams

CHHAYHEANG CHEA'S NORMANDALE STORY

Sophomore Chhayheang Chea is one busy college student. Besides attending classes full-time, he is the president of the Normandale Program Board, which is the student organization responsible for coordinating academic and social campus events. Along with his presidential role, Chhayheang serves as a student worker for Normandale's Advancement Division, primarily working on the college's social media. It isn't too much of a surprise then to learn that Chhayheang is also a Foundation scholarship recipient, having earned two scholarships for the 2024-25 academic year alone.

Chhayheang is an international student from Cambodia. He decided to come to Minnesota because he had relatives here, and it wasn't long before he found himself at Normandale. Normandale appealed to him because of its size and transfer program. What he found to be most special however, was its people.

Chhayheang completed the Foundation's general scholarship application after doing research online with friends to find ways to pay for school. One of the scholarships he received, the **Chorzempa Family Foundation Scholarship**, is renewable for two years. He received it last year and was able to receive it again this academic year.

"The scholarship has provided me a chance to focus more work on how I could help this community, help this school have better events," he shared. "I was able to focus and just not worry about where I could find my next semester's tuition and fees."

Although Chhayheang has not had the chance to meet Marty Chorzempa, the donor of the Chorzempa Scholarship, he would like to thank him for the support he has received.

"If I could send a message to him, I would say thank you very much...for your donation toward the students of Normandale because you gave them opportunities in their education and also foster their futures," he said.

Chhayheang's plans for the future include finishing a master's degree and going into a corporate job.

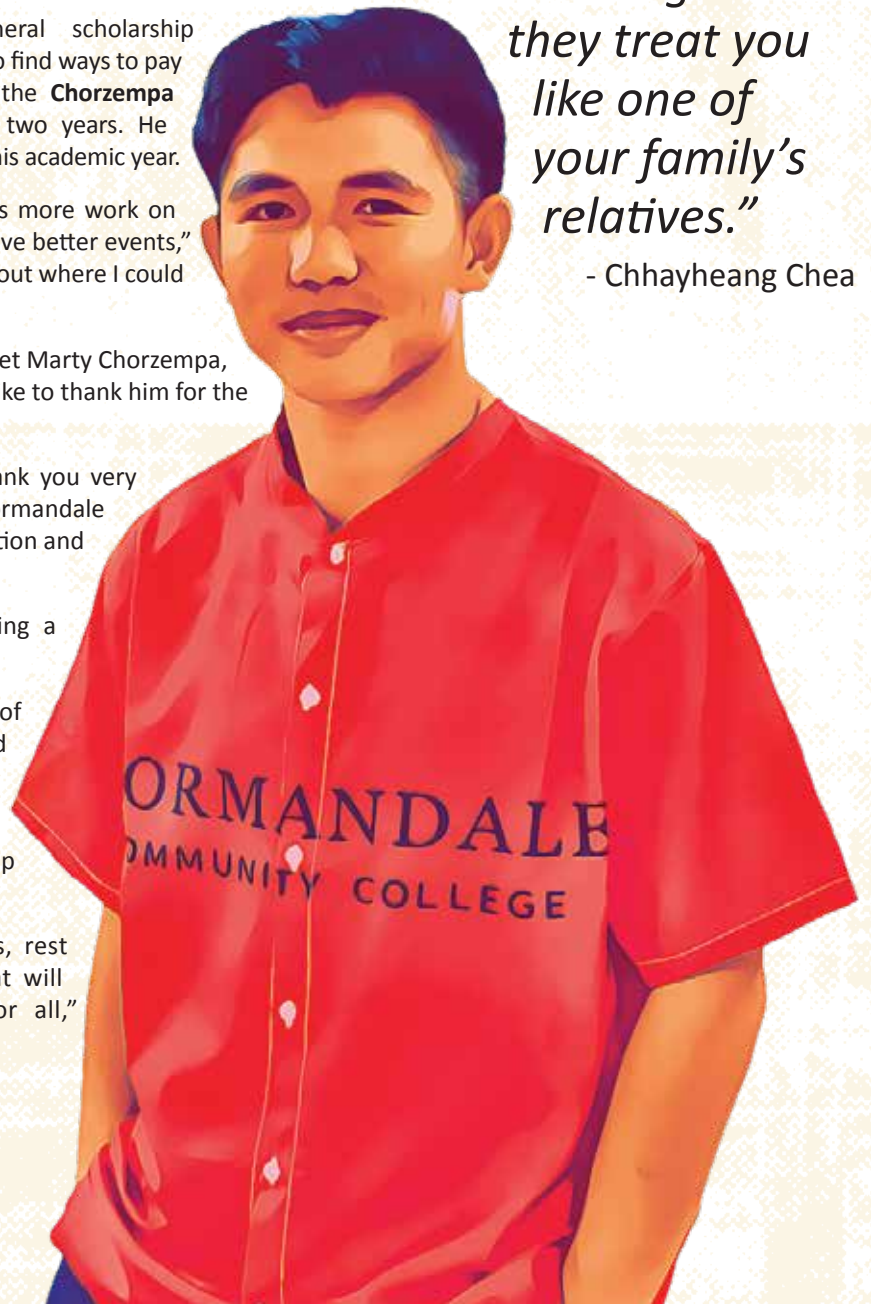
"Having this scholarship plays a part in giving a sense of achievement to my path," he shared. "I did something really good at Normandale that I leave a path behind that people can remember."

Chhayheang's message to potential scholarship donors is that they are making a global impact.

"Though you may not see the immediate results, rest assured that your support is planting seeds that will flourish in time, creating a brighter future for all," he said. ♦

"Probably one of the most important things about Normandale is the diversity that it has. Everyone on campus is welcoming and they treat you like one of your family's relatives."

- Chhayheang Chea



The Ripple Effect of Kindness

HOW ONE SCHOLARSHIP CHANGES EVERYTHING

It's been three years since he last served on Normandale Foundation's board of directors, a role he held for six years, but Mark Adkins still makes a significant impact on students every year. In fact, he's been making an impact on students since 2014, years before he would join the board.

Mark created the Adkins Family Scholarship in 2014 to support new and returning students with children. Every year, a student parent receives \$1,000 to help them pay tuition and fees. Mark's motivation behind creating the scholarship stems from his own experience as a student parent.

"I was working a full-time job and working a part-time job and going to school full-time...and I remember walking through the parking lot of school one day on my way to work when I thought: If I'm ever in a situation to help people like me financially, I want to do that," he said. "I know how much that little bit of help can mean."

One person he did help was Wendy Pekarek, who received the Adkins Family Scholarship in 2016. After 33 years, Wendy decided to return to college. She had been a single mom for several years at that point, and her three kids had graduated from college. Pursuing a lifelong dream of becoming a nurse, Wendy enrolled at Normandale.

Receiving the Adkins Family Scholarship filled Wendy not only with gratitude, but with encouragement as well.

"As a single mom, paying a mortgage while going to college was not easy," she shared. "I was taking on some student loans and working while going to school, and it was just as much of an emotional encouragement as it was financial."

Mark couldn't make it to the scholarship celebration event that year but was introduced to Wendy by Foundation Executive Director Jane Fenton at a board meeting.

"She introduced me to this person, and

"I just had not been accustomed to a lot of generosity in my life. Just to see somebody who took the time and effort to give to a random person...it was really delightful to meet him."
- Wendy Pekarek

she said 'Mark, you weren't here the other night, but I'm the recipient of your scholarship,'" Mark recalled. "She got tears in her eyes and told me how much she appreciated it, how she's struggling...and how much my scholarship meant to her and how much it helped her."

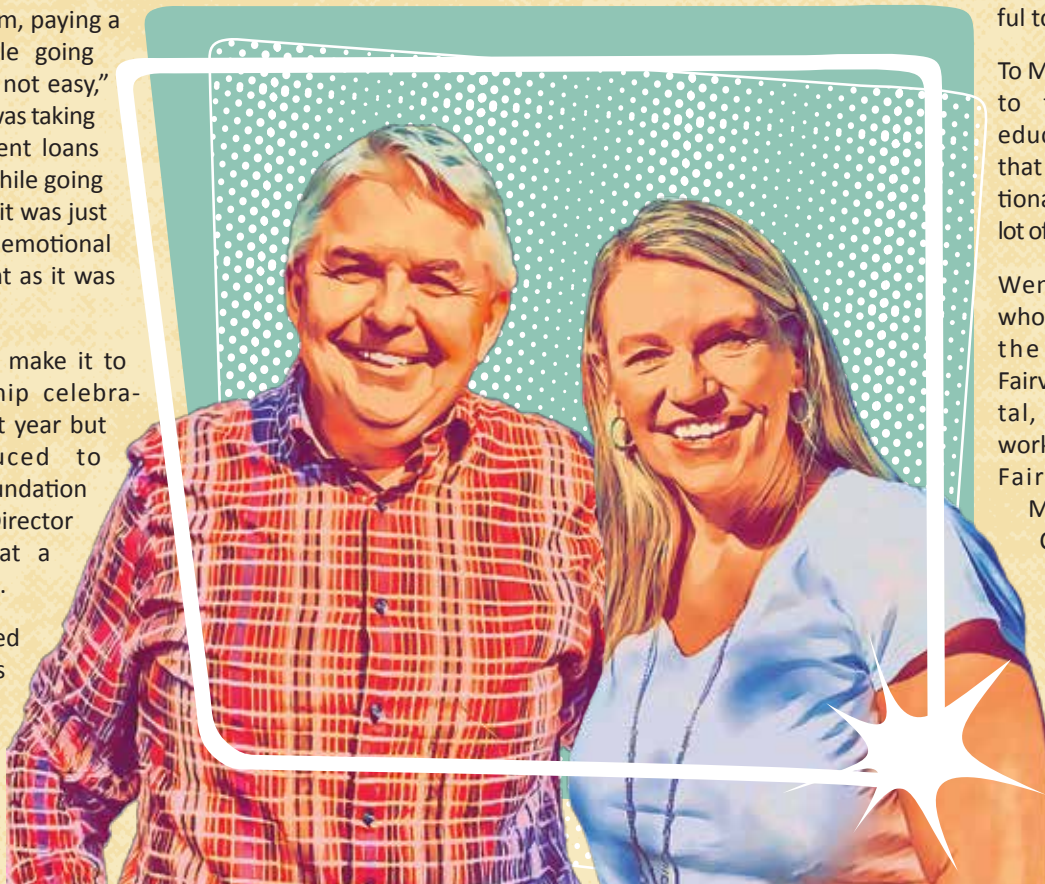
Mark thinks back on the memory with fondness. "In fact, still when I talk about it, I kind of get swelling up in the heart a little bit," he said. "That meant a lot to me."

It's a moment Wendy hasn't forgotten either. "I just remember seeing the man behind the [scholarship]...and I just had not been accustomed to a lot of generosity in my life," she said. "Just to see somebody who took the time and effort to give to a random person...it was really delightful to meet him."

To Mark, it all comes down to the importance of education. "I just think that education is foundational in success in life at a lot of different levels," he said.

Wendy is now a nurse who spent five years on the medical floor in Fairview Southdale Hospital, and now currently works in mental health at Fairview University of Minnesota Medical Center—West Bank.

The Adkins scholarship is still awarded to a student parent every year. ♦



A Scholarship

THAT SPARKED A LIFELONG CONNECTION

When Diane Wussow started her own scholarship at Normandale, she could not have predicted how fulfilling the experience would be. It wasn't until she met the recipient of her scholarship in person that everything changed.

Diane attended Normandale later in life. In 2003, she took a trip to South Africa and decided then and there that she wanted to be a nurse. Given how competitive nursing programs were, she put herself on a plan to catch up with her peers, and three years later was accepted into Normandale's nursing program.

Diane only has positive things to say about the program.

"I loved how demanding it was. I loved how supportive, compassionate, and experienced our instructors were. I am proud to call myself a Normandale graduate."

As a reluctant retiree with no children, Diane thought long and hard about where her money would go when she passed. Once she had the thought of creating a scholarship, it resonated so deeply with her that she immediately wanted to figure out how to make it happen.

When deciding on the criteria of her scholarship, Diane knew that she wanted to support nursing students. Not only nursing students, but nursing students of color. She holds a strong belief that there should be more nurses who reflect the population they're serving. When she finally met her awardee, Mohamud Mohamed, she knew that the decision she made was a significant one.

"To see and meet Mohamud has definitely been like ... like I got a gift out of it. A gift I couldn't have imagined," she shared.

Mohamud decided to study nursing after helping care for his dad when he was sick and seeing how impactful the nurses were for him and his family. After taking prerequisites at Normandale, he chose to apply to the nursing program.

"The nursing program is amazing," Mohamud said. "There are a lot of resources ...everything you can ask for in a learning environment. I really enjoyed it and always think of it fondly."

Getting the chance to know Diane has given Mohamud another resource—one he can continue to turn to now that he has graduated.

"It's really helpful to have somebody that you can talk to about your worries and fears and they're able to give you advice or just be there to listen," Mohamud shared.

After he graduated, Diane took Mohamud out to lunch and they have stayed in contact since.

"There were several times where, after graduation, some things I needed help with—like getting my nursing license or applications and things like that, when I was able to just call her and talk to her about that." Mohamud said. "Being able to talk to her and have her respond has been really helpful."

Diane recalled the lunch fondly as well. She shared that Mohamud took the time to thank her and was especially excited to hear that another student would be receiving the scholarship in the fall. "I think there's a possibility that Mohamud and I might be in touch off and on for a long, long time, which I never expected," she shared.

When asked what he would say to someone considering giving to a scholarship at Normandale, Mohamud said, "If they have the opportunity to make a scholarship or donate to one, I think they should take it. It helps build a relationship that you might not have had outside of that. Because me and Diane would never have met if it wasn't for the scholarship, and I really appreciate her."

Mohamud is now an RN at the University of Minnesota's Fairview East Bank, and he plans to go back to school to get his bachelor's of science degree. ♦



2024 Fiscal Year

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

PROVIDED IN SCHOLARSHIP,
PROGRAM AND PROJECT SUPPORT
\$1,684,145

849 SCHOLARSHIPS AND
DEPARTMENTAL
AWARDS PROVIDED

ASSETS

Current Assets: \$1,355,862

Investments: \$5,081,692

Total Assets: \$6,437,554

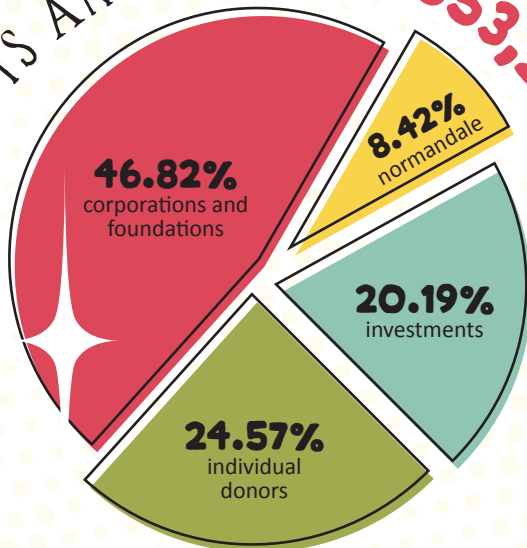
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

Total Liabilities: \$40,487

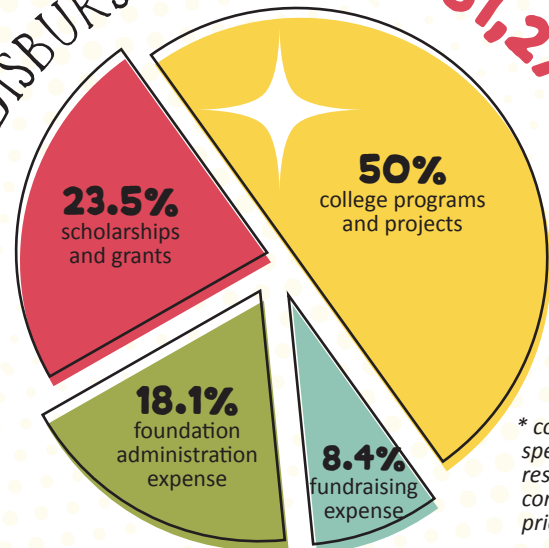
Total Net Assets: \$6,397,067

Total Liabilities & Net Assets: \$6,437,554

GIFTS AND GAINS **\$2,553,256**



DISBURSEMENTS **\$2,681,275***



* contains spending of reserved funds contributed in prior years

The Hall of Giving

WHERE GENEROSITY MEETS OPPORTUNITY

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Diane Wussow

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Kaylee and Joshua Turner
John and Linda Villas
Linda and Kent Zeigler

"Normandale is a life-changing place for thousands of students every year. It has been my honor to be part of an organization that strives to make a college education financially achievable for all students and it has been my pleasure to have worked shoulder to shoulder with board members who feel the same."

JANET FREUDENSTEIN

**Dean's List Gifts
\$100 to \$249**

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Peg Bohanon
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Melodee Carlson Chang
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"It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve on the Board these past six years. The Board has continued to make student success a focus and I continue to be inspired by the students we come in contact with. I will continue to support these efforts after I leave the Board." **AL KRUG**

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"I was honored to serve on the NCCF board and was impressed by every interaction with Foundation staff and College faculty. The genuine care and desire to improve the lives of Normandale students was always the top priority, in both words and actions. What really stood out to me during my tenure was the Foundation's strategic pivot to solve real-life student problems, including ending student hunger, providing access to laptops, introducing a mentorship program, and creating a path for Black educators to succeed. Jane is the perfect leader to take the Foundation to the next level."

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For more information or to request a copy of our Legacy Circle enrollment form, please contact Donor Relations and Scholarship Manager Tipheret Peña at 952.358.8148 or tipheret.pena@normandale.edu.

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"It has been my honor and privilege to have served the last three years on the board of Normandale Community College Foundation. The work the board continues to do will make a significant difference in the lives of students and faculty. I wish the best for them as they move forward to support the college and key initiatives." **PAT MOYNEUR**



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NORMANDALE'S HEARTFELT BRICK GARDEN EXPANSION

Six years ago, Normandale celebrated its 50th anniversary —part of which included the unveiling of a new brick garden next to the Partnership Center. The garden gave the community, both within and beyond Normandale, the opportunity to memorialize lost loved ones, commemorate friends and colleagues, and leave their stamp, literally, on campus.

Last year marked Normandale's 55th anniversary, so it was the perfect time to add to the garden and expand its footprint. The opportunity was presented to Normandale employees in August of 2023 and ran through February of 2024. By the end of the campaign, over 50 bricks were donated by employees and community members.

A couple of bricks will be notably special, as they honor two beloved employees that Normandale lost this past year. Larry Hines, former facilities worker, and Harry Palmer, former public safety officer, will both be memorialized in the updated space.

Donors had the chance to pick the size of their brick and could even include clip art. The bricks will be installed in the fall and an unveiling ceremony will be held in the spring. From names, to quotes, to dedications, the bricks will surely bring new life to the garden. ♦

