

SOUTHERN WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2025-2026



Mission Statement

Southern Wesleyan University is a Christ-centered, student-focused learning community devoted to transforming lives by challenging students to be dedicated scholars and servant-leaders who impact the world for Christ.



**Biblically
Faithful**



**Academically
Rigorous**



**Vocationally
Effective**



**Financially
Affordable**

President's Letter

This year, as in the past 120 years that preceded it, we have seen the Lord work through continued growth and challenge at Southern Wesleyan. Our vision is to be a Stronghold and an Oasis for God's Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. This vision is more fully shaping our future through The Fidelitas Strategic Plan. The plan is named for the Latin term, Fidelitas, meaning "faithfulness". It was a term often used by the earliest Christian universities to signify that the pursuit of all knowledge, in every field, was rooted in faithfulness to Christ and the Scriptures. Even now, 120 years into our own university's history, we are still pursuing Fidelitas – faithfulness to God and His Word in every facet of university life, study, and community. This includes the multi-year process of prayer and collaboration from the university community that produced The Fidelitas Strategic Plan. Of course, most of all, this includes celebrating God's enduring faithfulness to us (Psalm 36:5; 1 Cor. 1:9)!

We have already seen Christ's faithfulness in many ways this past academic year. We celebrated the largest single private gift the university has ever received. We celebrated the coming launch of a School of Nursing. We celebrated significant increases in enrollment. We celebrated a major gift to the Benson School of Business. Most of all, though, we have celebrated, and continue to celebrate, the Lord's work in our midst. For example, faculty are at work shaping students' lives as critical-thinking agents of Kingdom work. Students are making new commitments to God as a result of the integration of Faith and learning in our classrooms, chapel, dorms, sports fields, and laboratories. Graduates across all degree fields are being placed in positions of influence as "marketplace multipliers."

None of this happens without God's faithfulness...and His faithfulness at work through you! Your support is not merely a contribution of time, prayer, and monetary resources – it is a tangible expression of shared mission and Kingdom partnership. Because of Trustees and Donors like you, we are able to pursue our vision with greater faithfulness, offering our students the formation they need to go out and make a lasting difference in the world. Truly, the Lord is good and His faithfulness endures forever!

We are profoundly grateful for your continued partnership, and we look forward to all that God has in store for Southern Wesleyan University in the year ahead.

In His Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'William D. Barker'.

William D. Barker, Ph.D.
Southern Wesleyan University

Launch of the SWU School of Nursing

Following extensive research and a feasibility study in the previous year, Southern Wesleyan University has been laying the groundwork for a new School of Nursing throughout the 2025-2026 academic year. “God has called us to train students who are able to provide the highest and best care for the moments of a person’s greatest medical needs and vulnerabilities,” Dr. William Barker, President of Southern Wesleyan University, said. “We believe God’s calling in the health care industry is to serve others with competence, care, and dignity.”

South Carolina is projected to have the seventh-largest national nursing shortage of registered nurses by 2036, equating to one in five position vacancies statewide. Upon approval from the South Carolina Board of Nursing, Southern Wesleyan University will do its part to begin filling those vacancies in the Upstate and beyond, forming Christ-centered nurses with a deep commitment to quality care.

At the March 27th ribbon cutting for Terry Hall, President Barker introduced Dr. Tiffany Stewart, the inaugural Dean of the School of Nursing, to the crowd. He emphasized her close ties to the community and depth of experience in both clinical settings and classrooms. “At Southern Wesleyan University, we believe nursing is a calling — one that brings together clinical skill, leadership, and Christ-centered service,” Stewart said. “We want to be intentional about shaping students who have a desire to be the hands and feet of Jesus in their communities.”

Former university chaplain and current Mayor of Central Ken Dill prayed a blessing over the building, providing a bookend to the stud-signing ceremony he led in October with the Board of Trustees. Terry Hall, the nursing faculty, future students, and those for whom they will eventually care are all wrapped in prayer, Dill said.

The School of Nursing expects to enroll its first cohort for Fall 2026. The program will be eligible for CCNE accreditation and fully on track for final approval for our first class of graduating nurses in Spring 2029.

“What is about to take place over the next several years and decades in this hallowed nursing facility is a new paradigm of education,” President Barker said. “This is a place where the virtues our society so desperately needs are united with the technical skills the workforce demands – and the result, I dare say, will be beautiful.”



2025-2026 Professor of the Year Dr. Michele Eller

Dr. Eller is the 2025-2026 SWU Professor of the Year, named for her dedication to outstanding teaching and student mentorship. She is also the recipient of the 2025 South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) Excellence in Teaching Award.



SWU Receives Largest Gift in Institutional History

Southern Wesleyan University has received the largest gift in its history, marking a significant moment of transformational support for the institution’s future.

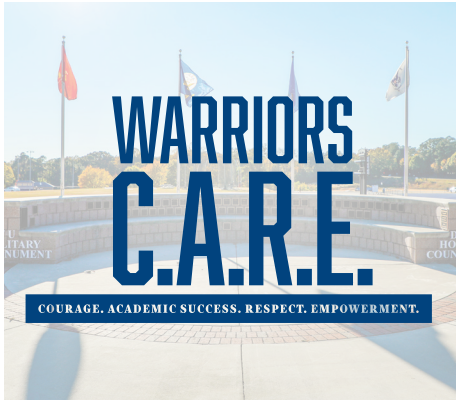
The gift came through the sale of a Christian camp property in North Carolina that had been donated to Southern Wesleyan University in 2025. Following prayerful consideration, the property was sold for \$2.125 million to a Christian organization that will continue using the property to advance the cause of Christ.

“We give thanks to God for His remarkable provision,” said Dr. Todd Wilson, Senior Vice President of Advancement and Marketing and Senior Advisor to the President.

Military Friendly Gold Designation for 2026-2027

Southern Wesleyan University has once again been recognized for its commitment to military students by earning the Military Friendly® gold designation for the 2026-2027 academic year.

This distinction places SWU among the top-performing institutions nationwide, with gold status awarded to schools ranking within the top 10 percent of institutions in their category. The designation reflects the university's continued investment in creating a supportive, flexible, and mission-driven environment for veterans, active-duty service members, and their families.



By The Numbers

100%

**OF STUDENTS
RECEIVE
FINANCIAL AID**

(undergraduate)

\$19,642

**AVERAGE
INSTITUTIONAL AID**

given to all
incoming freshmen.
(2024-2025)

Phaup Holiness Lecturer



Southern Wesleyan University welcomed Dr. John Oswalt, Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, as the featured speaker for the University's Phaup Holiness Lecture Series in March 2026. A respected Old Testament scholar and ordained United Methodist minister, Dr. Oswalt is the author of 16 books, including the acclaimed two-volume Isaiah commentary in the New International Commentary on the Old Testament. His sermons at SWU as part of the Phaup Holiness Lecture Series highlighted specific themes central to Southern Wesleyan University's heritage and commitment to spiritual formation and were well-attended by students, faculty, staff and local community members.

**3 Overseas
Mission Trips**
Panama, Cambodia,
& Romania



3 Student Missionaries
Serving as NEXT interns
in various locations in the
US and globally.

3.27
AVERAGE
GPA

280
DEAN'S LIST
STUDENTS

2
SENIOR HONORS
PROJECTS

133
MAY 2026
GRADUATES

122
DONOR-FUNDED
SCHOLARSHIPS

Athletics

16
NCAA Division II
Athletic Teams



SOFTBALL CLAIMS TITLE SECOND YEAR STRAIGHT!
Following last year's historic win, SWU Women's Softball was once again named Southwest Division Champion. The Warriors will be competing in the Conference Carolinas tournament as the #3 seed, the highest they have ever advanced.

BASEBALL MAKES TOURNAMENT

After five years, SWU Baseball has advanced to the conference tournament again. The Warriors will continue their dominant season and compete in the tournament this spring.

VOLLEYBALL SUCCESS

After a stellar season, SWU Women's Volleyball advanced to the Conference Carolinas Quarterfinals.

GOLF RETURNS WITH STRENGTH

In only their first season after being restored as a university athletic team, Women's Golf finished 4th in the Conference Carolinas Tournament.



Student - Senior

When asked where he sees himself in five years, Grady Clark's answer is, "wherever God wants me." The History & Public Policy major and driven cross-country athlete is completing his final semester at Southern Wesleyan and recognizes the university's Christ-centered atmosphere and Godly community as transformative to his season as a student. Drawing from the academically rigorous education in a biblically faithful university setting, Grady is open to where the Lord will direct his steps in a new season of life following commencement.



Alumna

Emma Lancaster graduated from Southern Wesleyan University in December 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. Embarking on her career close to her alma mater, she began teaching at Crosswell Elementary School in Pickens County. In 2023, she was awarded the 2022-2023 Pickens County Outstanding First Year Teacher of the Year in recognition of her excellence in the field and her heartfelt investment in her young students. Emma credits the mentors and relationships she encountered at SWU with equipping her for vocational success, pouring into her the way she seeks daily to pour into her students.



Student - Senior

Dating back to sitting in a sheriff's patrol car at his three-year-old birthday party, Louis Trapnell cites an early sense of his calling to law enforcement. As part of vocational preparedness through his studies at SWU, Louis became vice president of the CJ Club, worked to establish a Criminal Justice Honor Society, and served as a student security officer beloved by his peers. He hopes to complete police academy following graduation with the goal of moving into investigations. For now, he continues to embrace the opportunities he has to combine his faith and vocation saying, "I'm praying with people on campus. I want to be a servant for other people."

Save the Dates

2026

NOV 06 Fall Musical: Mary Poppins

NOV 11 Military Appreciation Event

DEC 05 Lessons & Carols

DEC 11 Winter Commencement

2027

MAR 19-20 Showstopper Spectacular: Movie Musicals

MAY 07 Spring Commencement

THE Faith & FUTURE FUND

Southern Wesleyan University

Southern Wesleyan University's Faith and Future Fund is your opportunity to change a life and leave a legacy. Every contribution to the Faith and Future Fund has an immediate impact on SWU students and supports our mission to provide a Biblically faithful, academically rigorous, vocationally effective, and financially affordable education.

Your contribution of unrestricted funds enables SWU to direct money to where it will have the most significant impact on academic excellence, student life, and areas of need. A gift of any size enables you to create a campus-wide legacy.

Are you ready to change a life & leave a legacy?

Southern Wesleyan
UNIVERSITY

www.swu.edu
864.644.5000

Give Today!
swu.edu/giving

