

Report to Western District Conference

June 2021

BETHEL COLLEGE

There will never be another class like the class that graduated in 2021. We can say that every year, as each class is unique and special, but we all know why this year will always be thought of differently. When the college switched to virtual learning in spring of 2020 many assumed things would be back to normal, or near normal, when classes were ready to begin again in the fall. By summer it was evident that there would be another year of social distancing, masks, and virtual learning; yet, despite the pandemic, Bethel welcomed its second largest freshman class in the past 32 years. While many things had to change, this place, with the support of its alumni, donors, and affiliated organizations, continued to provide a space for students to come and flourish in their education and faith formation, preparing them for meaningful lives of work and service.

Bethel College continued to hold as many of the classes and events as possible in an effort to give our students the same opportunities experienced in other years. The annual service day took place in the fall, with nearly every student participating as usual. Students served mostly outdoors, within walking distance of the college, to minimize contact. Lecture series such as the annual Menno Simons lectures, the Staley lectures, and the Martin Luther King Day activities were presented virtually. The Fine Arts Department welcomed Pakistani sound artist Zeerak Ahmed for a virtual residency. Regular testing and flexibility allowed many athletic teams to have their best seasons in years, and the athletic department was named an NAIA Champions of Character 5-Star Gold Award program for the third consecutive year.

On the administrative level, Bethel was able to hold its largest Scholarship Day group of incoming freshmen since the event's inception. The advancement office held a successful alumni phonathon, exceeding its fundraising goal. A new Strategic Planning Committee was formed to develop a plan that will guide the college for years to come.

This spring, minimal positive COVID-19 cases on campus has meant more in-person activities are able to take place, including the commencement ceremony. We look forward to this trend continuing in the fall. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.