

# Here I Study

What it Means to Attend Concordia University Portland:

An Excellent Liberal Arts Education  
Through a Lutheran Lens



CONCORDIA  
UNIVERSITY

Adapted by: Rev. James Pressnell, Director of Church Relations, Concordia University Portland



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## Concordia University's Vision Statement includes eight components, one of which is:

... in the year 2020 Concordia University will be known for and characterized throughout the region by the attributes of "Lutheran." To that end, Concordia engages diverse perspectives in an environment of open discourse and academic freedom while bringing a distinctive voice and lens, rooted in the Christian faith, Lutheran understanding and heritage, and liberal arts tradition.

### Introduction

Welcome to Concordia University Portland! You've chosen to attend a university with a long and rich history of educating students, preparing them to make meaningful contributions to their communities. This long and rich history is even older than the university itself, which began in 1905. Our history can really be traced all the way back to Martin Luther and the Reformation in the 16th century. Luther was a professor of religion at Wittenberg University in Germany. He also served as the campus pastor. The Reformation really began as a university movement. When Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the church door in Wittenberg, he was inviting professors and theologians to participate in an academic debate on religious issues important to him. Given this academic beginning, Lutherans have always had a deep commitment to education at all levels, including colleges and universities. In fact, Lutherans operate the second largest system of faith-based elementary, high school, and university education in the United States, next to the Roman Catholic Church. And Lutheran theology provides a dynamic lens that makes education at a Lutheran liberal arts university a powerful and rich experience. So, we're glad you're here. We're excited that you've chosen Concordia University Portland for your university education. And we want you to know the key concepts that will shape your educational experience here at Concordia in ways that are truly transformative.



## Why a Liberal Arts Education?

In the Winter 2009 issue of the Concordia Connection, Dr. Michael Thomas, associate professor of Humanities at Concordia University Portland, writes: “Concordia is a Lutheran liberal arts university whose mission is to prepare leaders for the transformation of society. . . What is a Lutheran liberal arts university? And how does it prepare leaders for the transformation of society? *Artes liberales* are rooted in classical antiquity. Originally, this phrase referred to the general skills (=artes) a free person (=liberales) needed to contribute meaningfully to society, including the knowledge of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. By the Middle Ages, this was amended to include mathematics, astronomy, geometry, and music. In the wake of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, natural and social sciences, as well as Greek and Latin, were added to the liberal arts curriculum. Concordia is a Lutheran *liberal arts* university. The liberal arts curriculum assists Concordia students in acquiring the skills necessary to become life-long, self-motivated learners who can flourish in and even transform an ever-changing world. For students who can incorporate new knowledge, cultivate independent thoughts, wrestle with complex dichotomies, and do so across continental and cultural divides, the new world poses both intriguing challenges and a wealth of opportunities. The *artes liberales* provide the requisite analytical foundation necessary to flourish in this global environment.”



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## a free person needs to contribute meaningfully to society

Dr. Thomas goes on to say, “Concordia University is a *Lutheran* liberal arts university. This descriptor is important, for it indicates that the *artes liberales* are incomplete without the self-disclosing revelation of the Triune God. As Lutherans, we proclaim that God’s Truth has been fully revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ; however, we confess simultaneously that humans are unable, as a result of sin, to comprehend clearly and fully His perfect revelation. All our endeavors to understand ourselves and our world must, therefore, begin with humility and a willingness to learn from all areas of knowledge. Because of the assurance of God’s grace and promises, we are free to think critically, seek new solutions boldly, and risk failure. Concordia is a Lutheran liberal arts university *preparing leaders for the transformation of society*. Lutheran higher education introduces students not only to the intellectual tradition of Christianity, but also to the transformative nature of the Christian calling. The goal of the Christian life is to become more like Christ and to serve the world. Knowing the Truth is more than an intellectual pursuit; to know God is to be like Him and to be like Him is to love as He loves and to serve others as He serves us. As servant leaders animated by Christ, the students, alumni, faculty, and staff of Concordia University transform society through Christian love. Our Lutheran theological tradition has transmitted the vision and confidence that by God’s grace we are able to participate in the transformation of society. Our grounding in the liberal arts provides us the necessary and requisite analytical tools for the world of today. Our professional programs build upon these two rich traditions to offer the practical skills to secure careers in healthcare, law, business, education, international affairs, etc., for the 21st century.”





## Six Key Concepts


### Shaping Lutheran Liberal Arts Education

#### Academic Freedom:

**“God Created...God Said, ‘It is Good.’”**

Lutherans take life and the world seriously because God created the world and all life. Lutherans celebrate life and rejoice in the world because God declares it to be “good.” What that means is that all creation is open to our study and exploration. All disciplines – geology, biology, philosophy, languages, nursing, anthropology, psychology, sociology, exercise and sports science, business, music, religion, law, and all others – are to be freely studied on their own terms. Lutherans believe in academic freedom. In fact, Luther himself said, “No science should stand in the way of another science, but each should continue to have its own mode of procedure in its own terms. Every science should make use of its own terminology, and one should not for any reason condemn the other or ridicule it; but one should rather be of use to the other, and they should put their achievements at one another’s disposal.” (Luther’s Works, Volume 1, pp. 47-48.) Thus from a Lutheran perspective, we embrace the fact that the natural sciences tell us more about the intricacies of the world than the Bible and the social sciences inform our understanding of what it means to be a human person.

We may not all agree on theories, evidence, and conclusions, but we gladly and freely enter the discussion. We enter into a search for truth that is exciting and intellectually stimulating. You will be challenged in what you believe about the world and human life. You will learn how to think critically while respecting others’ opinions. You will also learn how to present your values, opinions, beliefs, and ideas clearly. All the while you will grow as a beloved child of God!

A photograph of a person's hands raised in prayer, with a bulletin board in the background. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

As creatures of God  
we are never going to be perfect  
in thought, word, or deed.

## Freedom to Doubt and Wrestle:

### **“Lord I Believe, Help My Unbelief!”**

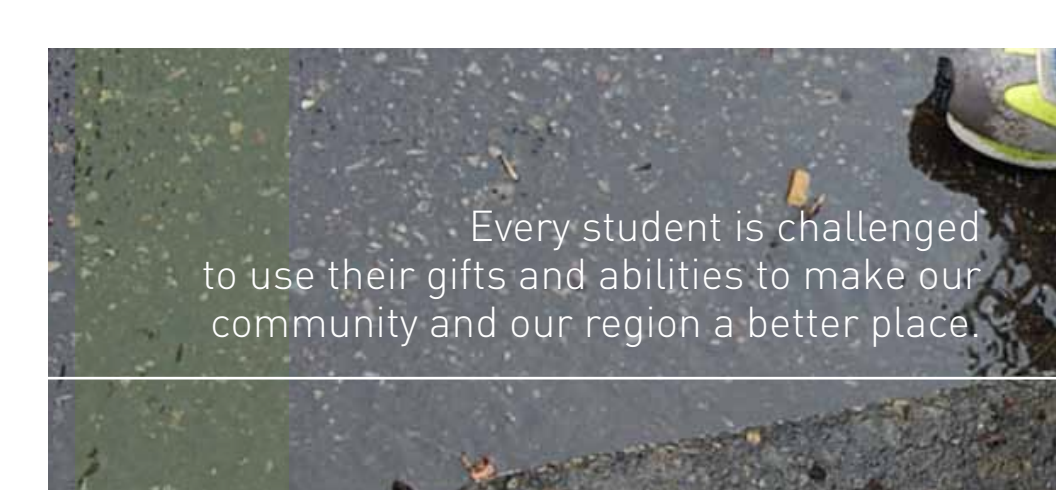
Lutherans believe that faith is large enough to embrace doubt and questions. This means that doubt is not something to be feared or something that makes our belief less sincere; nor are questions to be avoided. In fact, doubt and questions are normal and valuable tools in a university education, often challenging us, enriching our faith and leading us to spiritual growth. On our journey through life with God sometimes we are very sure and secure but at other times things are called into question. We wrestle with the big questions of life like: Who is God? Why is life so fragile? Why do people have to suffer? What am I doing here? Is there a purpose to life and to my life? Lutherans are not afraid to ask the tough questions. We're not afraid to wrestle with faith and doubt because we believe that God is present in the midst of those questions and struggles. As creatures of God we are never going to be perfect in thought, word, or deed. We remain faithful not through our perfection in daily life, but through our trust in God's presence and in God's care – even during those times of doubt.

## Dialectic Tension:

### “My Ways Are Not Your Ways, My Thoughts Are Not Your Thoughts”

Lutherans have an acute awareness that God is God, the sovereign Creator, and that we are God’s creatures. Because of that, Lutherans believe we must approach academic learning and religious learning with great humility. Lutherans believe that God does reveal truth about Himself, the world and life. God reveals that truth to us in the Bible. God has also given us as human beings the gift of reason to study and learn about our world. We believe that humans can understand truth revealed by God in the Bible and truth learned from our world. In Christ, we can know all things. However, when Lutherans proclaim the truth, we are always aware that we do so as creatures with a limited mind. In the words of St. Paul, “Now we see as through a dark glass.” (I Corinthians 13:12) As human beings, we are not God and therefore we are not perfect or all-knowing. There is always the chance we could be wrong in our understanding. Therefore the opinions of others are important because they might lead us to an even greater understanding of truth. God and the world are greater than us and will always remain a mystery. The Bible, God’s Word, is sure and true; but life and learning is still in so many ways ambiguous and full of paradoxes. Things change, new evidence is found. The world is not static; God, though unchanging, is not static either. He is present and active in our world even in the midst of ambiguity and paradox. Therefore, we approach learning with great humility, opening ourselves to new ideas and new understanding. We learn to live with eager contentment in the tension between “knowing all things” and “seeing through a glass darkly.”

In addition to the dialectic tension between “knowing all things” and “seeing through a glass darkly,” Lutherans also embrace the dialectic tension in several other aspects of life. Lutherans see all believers as simultaneously sinner and saint. As sinners, we need both God’s law (which shows us our sin) and the Gospel (which shows us our Savior). Lutherans also affirm that we live simultaneously in two kingdom’s –the spiritual kingdom where God rules in mercy and grace AND in the earthly kingdom of neighborhoods, communities, nations and the world. These two kingdoms are and must remain distinct; yet we live in both at the same time. Life is never neat; never black or white. Life is messy, full of tensions. Lutheran theology and Lutheran education help us learn to live well in the midst of the messiness of life, to live well within the tensions.



Every student is challenged to use their gifts and abilities to make our community and our region a better place.

## Vocation:

### **“You Did Not Choose Me, I Chose You!”**

Lutherans believe strongly in “vocation” – which comes from the Latin word meaning “to call.” We believe that God calls us into certain roles, relationships, and occupations so that we can serve God and serve other people. We believe that right now God is calling you to be a student. As a student at a Lutheran college or university you will not only go to class, study, and receive grades! You will also explore how your academic studies intersect with your beliefs, your faith, your passion, and your values. No one will tell you what to believe or how to believe, what to study or what career to pursue; but many people will assist you on this journey of faith and learning. The ultimate goal of a Lutheran university education is for you to discover the intersection between your beliefs, your passion, and your career options.

As this dialog between faith and reason, between faith and learning, takes place, you will be challenged to develop a world view and a lifestyle that includes thoughtful inquiry, service and care for the earth and for your neighbor. God has called you by name to be the best student you can be, for by so doing you honor and serve God.

As a part of your vocation as a student, you will have opportunities to serve others through community service, religious activities, as a leader in one of the many clubs and organizations on campus or as a member of student government. In fact, God may call you to serve in ways you may not even know yet. That is part of the excitement of this part of your life’s journey with God called a university education. There is never a dull moment. That is not to say life is always easy, it’s not. However, the journey is worth the struggle.



## Community Engagement:

### **“God Has Given Gifts to All to Build Up the Community”**

Again, we live simultaneously in two kingdoms – the spiritual kingdom where God rules in mercy and grace AND in the earthly kingdom of neighborhoods, communities, nations, and the world. Because of this dual citizenship we are called to be actively involved in our communities, defending our neighbor, working for justice, and seeking to transform society. You will hear a lot about community engagement here at Concordia University Portland. We see our mission as preparing servant leaders who will transform their communities through their words and actions. We take seriously our responsibility to be the transforming presence of Christ here in Portland and throughout the Northwest. Every student is challenged to use their gifts and abilities to make our community and our region a better place. You will be given a multitude of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom to make a difference in our community. And what you learn to do here at Concordia we fully expect you to do in whatever community the Lord takes you to next.

## Dialog, Diversity, and Inclusivity:

### **“Rejoice Always! Again, I Say Rejoice!”**

Lutherans embrace life with a great deal of joy because we have faith; we trust that God is faithful to us. We don't fear the world because we know that the world cannot overcome us. We rejoice in human culture while at times being very critical of aspects of culture that are oppressive or exploitative or dehumanizing. We don't fear ideas, even the controversial ones, because we trust that in our struggle to understand ideas and face them critically with faith, reason, the Bible, and our Christian tradition, God will lead us to a measure of truth. And so we rejoice as we discuss and debate a number of issues.

We don't fear those who are not like us because we know that others have a perspective we might need to hear. We embrace diversity with great joy. On our campus we have professors, staff, and students of every race, many nationalities, different Christian traditions, different faiths, and no faith. We do not see this as a weakness, but as a great strength because it is in the interchange of differing perspectives and ideas that most often truth is found. We embrace this diversity as a gift from God to be treasured.

Arising out of our diversity comes a strong community. A community in which we come together because we know that we need other people and they need us. Part of the rhythm of life at Concordia University Portland is our care and concern for one another. We may passionately debate ideas until 2:00 am in the morning and compete against each other in intramural sports, but we never stop caring about one another. We never stop looking for ways to support one another, pray for one another and work side-by-side to serve the greater community advocating for justice and mercy in our world.

Finally, Lutherans like to have fun. We laugh a lot because laughter is a gift of God. This world and our very lives are joyfully given to us by God as precious gifts that are to be celebrated with joy and thanksgiving. Our joy honors God and it is with a joyful heart that we serve God, looking for any opportunity to assist a neighbor in need.

God's blessing on you and your vocation as a student here at Concordia University. Embrace your university education with seriousness and joy. Hang on to your hat and fasten your seat belt. It will be the time of your life. Enjoy your experience here; know that we will enjoy teaching and mentoring you. And we pray that, by God's grace, this time together called a university education will be a time of mutual blessing for you as a student and for those of us who are Concordia faculty and staff.





## Colleges and Universities affiliated with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS)

Concordia University Ann Arbor  
Ann Arbor, MI 48105  
[www.cuaa.edu](http://www.cuaa.edu)

Concordia University Portland  
Portland, OR 97211  
[www.cu-portland.edu](http://www.cu-portland.edu)

Concordia University Texas  
Austin, TX 78726  
[www.concordia.edu](http://www.concordia.edu)

Concordia University Chicago  
River Forest, IL 60305  
[www.cuchicago.edu](http://www.cuchicago.edu)

Concordia College Bronxville  
Bronxville, NY 10708  
[www.concordia-ny.edu](http://www.concordia-ny.edu)

Concordia University St. Paul  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
[www.concordia.csp.edu](http://www.concordia.csp.edu)

Concordia University Irvine  
Irvine, CA 92612  
[www.cui.edu](http://www.cui.edu)

Concordia College Selma  
Selma, AL 36702  
[www.concordiaselma.edu](http://www.concordiaselma.edu)

Concordia University Wisconsin  
Mequon, WI 53097  
[www.cuw.edu](http://www.cuw.edu)

Concordia University Nebraska  
Seward, NE 68434  
[www.cune.edu](http://www.cune.edu)

## Independent Lutheran Colleges and Universities

Valparaiso University  
Valparaiso, IN 46383  
[www.valpo.edu](http://www.valpo.edu)

Trinity Lutheran College  
Everett, WA 98201  
[www.tlc.edu](http://www.tlc.edu)

## Colleges and Universities affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

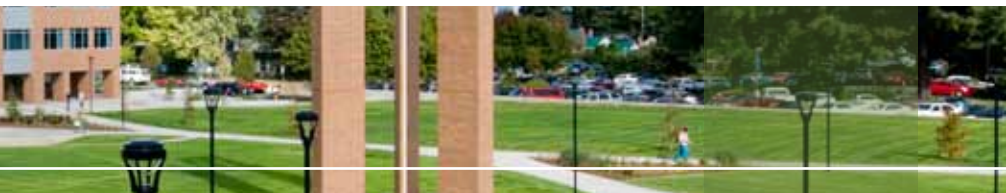
Augsburg College  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
[www.augsburg.edu](http://www.augsburg.edu)

Bethany College  
Lindsborg, KS 67456  
[www.bethanylb.edu](http://www.bethanylb.edu)

Augustana College  
Sioux Falls, SD 57197  
[www.augie.edu](http://www.augie.edu)

California Lutheran University  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360  
[www.clunet.edu](http://www.clunet.edu)





Capital University  
Columbus, OH 43209  
[www.capital.edu](http://www.capital.edu)

Carthage College  
Kenosha, WI 53140  
[www.carthage.edu](http://www.carthage.edu)

Concordia College  
Moorhead, MN 56562  
[www.ord.edu](http://www.ord.edu)

Finlandia University  
Hancock, MI 49930  
[www.finlandia.edu](http://www.finlandia.edu)

Gettysburg College  
Gettysburg, PA 17325  
[www.gettysburg.edu](http://www.gettysburg.edu)

Grand View College  
Des Moines, IA 50316  
[www.gvc.edu](http://www.gvc.edu)

Gustavus Adolphus College  
Saint Peter, MN 56082  
[www.gustavus.edu](http://www.gustavus.edu)

Lenoir-Rhyne College  
Hickory, NC 28603  
[www.lrc.edu](http://www.lrc.edu)

Luther College  
Decorah, IA 52101  
[www.luther.edu](http://www.luther.edu)

Midland Lutheran College  
Fremont, NE 68025  
[www.mlc.edu](http://www.mlc.edu)

Muhlenberg College  
Allentown, PA 18104  
[www.muhlenberg.edu](http://www.muhlenberg.edu)

Newberry College  
Newberry, SC 29108  
[www.newberry.edu](http://www.newberry.edu)

Pacific Lutheran University  
Tacoma, WA 98447  
[www.plu.edu](http://www.plu.edu)

Roanoke College  
Salem, VA 24153  
[www.roanoke.edu](http://www.roanoke.edu)

St. Olaf College  
Northfield, MN 55057  
[www.stolaf.edu](http://www.stolaf.edu)

Susquehanna University  
Selinsgrove, PA 17870  
[www.susqu.edu](http://www.susqu.edu)

Texas Lutheran University  
Seguin, TX 78155  
[www.tlu.edu](http://www.tlu.edu)

Thiel College  
Greenville, PA 16125  
[www.theil.edu](http://www.theil.edu)

Wagner College  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
[www.wagner.edu](http://www.wagner.edu)

Waldorf College  
Forest City, IA 50436  
[www.waldorf.edu](http://www.waldorf.edu)

Wartburg College  
Waverly, IA 50677  
[www.wartburg.edu](http://www.wartburg.edu)

Wittenberg University  
Springfield, OH 45501  
[www.wittenberg.edu](http://www.wittenberg.edu)



## Colleges and Universities affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS)

Martin Luther College  
New Ulm, MN 56073  
[www.mlc-wels.edu](http://www.mlc-wels.edu)

Wisconsin Lutheran College  
Milwaukee, WI 53226  
[www.wlc.edu](http://www.wlc.edu)

## Colleges and Universities affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS)

Bethany Lutheran College  
Mankato, MN 56001  
[www.blc.edu](http://www.blc.edu)

For more information:

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod  
[www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
[www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)

Lutheran universities  
[www.lutherancolleges.org](http://www.lutherancolleges.org)

The value and values of Lutheran college education  
[www.collegevalue.com](http://www.collegevalue.com)

For more information about  
Concordia University Portland visit:  
[www.cu-portland.edu](http://www.cu-portland.edu)



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-PORTLAND, OREGON-

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