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AT ITS BEST, A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION equips students with a knowledge base, skills and competencies, and habits of mind and heart that prepare them to flourish both professionally and personally. St. Olaf goes a step farther by embedding a first-class liberal arts education in the Lutheran tradition, with its focus on vocational discernment and on our responsibility to use our gifts and talents for the good of the world. This issue of the *St. Olaf Magazine* shows that process at work both in today's students and in the lives of our graduates.

The article on one of St. Olaf's signature programs, American Conversations, shows how students at the College are taught to understand the complexity and ambiguity of our nation's history and culture through the study of "dense facts." Facts, dense or not, are good to know, but in the long view it's probably more important that the habits of mind learned in AmCon are transferable to the other areas of a student's life and to the development of the kind of critical, analytical intelligence that characterizes leaders in all kinds of professional and civic organizations.

Who knew that a speech and communications major would end up as a leader in our region in sustainable beef production? Those of us lucky enough to enjoy the beef served in Stav Hall from Todd Churchill's Thousand Hills Cattle Company are grateful for his belief that "the food industry is supposed to be about distributing nourishing food that makes people well," for the values that led him to a spiritual connection with his work as a food producer, and for the problem-solving skills that enabled him to find a way to produce in a sustainable fashion healthy food that tastes good.

One of the distinguishing features of St. Olaf is the college's ability to nourish students who excel both in academics and athletics. "Trail Blazers" describes the successes that our alpine and Nordic skiers have enjoyed on the snow. Winning is a good thing, and we should celebrate excellence in all of the places that we find it at our college. Winning is not, however, the only thing. This article's emphasis on the ethic of teamwork and the commitment to learning that are part of the culture of these teams at St. Olaf helps us to understand the role of athletics in preparing students for lives of worth and service.

An example of such a life is the career of retired Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Russell Anderson, profiled in this issue of the magazine. A veteran of the U.S. Navy's Judge Advocate General's Corps, a county attorney, and then a state Supreme Court justice, Russ Anderson took on tough issues — domestic violence, drug offenses, gender equity and diversity in our courts — and helped Minnesota to deliver justice both more efficiently and more broadly.

Alumni readers of the magazine will think back to faculty at the college who through both intellectual and personal example taught them how to think, how to learn and how to lead worthy lives. This issue of the magazine introduces us to some faculty who are serving that same role for today's students in economics, math, religion and music.

I hope you enjoy this look at life both on and after the Hill and that the stories told here make you proud of, and confident about the value of, the education provided today at St. Olaf College.

David R. Anderson