

Richard L. Torgerson, President, Luther College

Richard (Rick) Torgerson became president of Luther College in July 1999. He was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, attended Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., and completed the masters and doctoral degrees in entomology at Washington State University.

Torgerson has served in faculty and administrative positions with six church-affiliated liberal arts colleges, all but one being a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He is the recipient of numerous education honors and awards, including the Council of Independent Colleges Academic Deans Award and the Texas Lutheran College Alumni Association's Outstanding Faculty Award. In 2000 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Concordia College.

Torgerson has been a frequent presenter and panelist on topics of higher education, including fundraising for private colleges, learning assessment, faculty development and teaching strategies, environmental sustainability in higher education, leadership development, and strategic planning. He is the author of several published articles on higher education issues.

President Torgerson and his wife, Judith, have attended three Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies in Oslo (in December 1999, 2004 and 2009) and have traveled throughout Norway with an alumni tour that accompanied Luther's Nordic Choir. They are avid fans of the Luther College "Norse" (athletic teams) and the college's music ensembles. They thrive on student interaction and whenever they can, love to travel to Kansas to be with their children and grandchildren.

Paula Meyer, Chairperson, Luther College Board of Regents (receiving line)

Meyer spent 25 years working in the mutual fund industry after completing an MBA from the Wharton School of Business. Her financial services career began at the Vanguard Group and ended at Ameriprise Financial in 2006. At that time, she was the President of the RiverSource Funds and Ameriprise Certificate Company. Since 2006, Meyer has joined the Board of Directors of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, First Command Financial Services and Mutual of Omaha.

Paula serves as Board Chair at Luther College and is the founder of a small non-profit organization whose mission is to provide education and support for AIDS orphans in Nairobi. Meyer is also co-founder of the Minnesota chapter of Women Corporate Directors. Meyer has been married to her husband Kurt for 32 years and has three grown children. She resides in north Iowa.

Michael Schmidt, Chair of the Board, Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum (receiving line)

Schmidt was born in Spring Grove, Minn., Minnesota's first Norwegian community. His mother was a Sylling whose family immigrated from Gran in 1862 and farmed in this area originally called Norwegian Ridge.

Schmidt received the bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota, worked for IBM for 20 years and then entered the Commercial Real Estate Business in New York City. Schmidt and his wife have three daughters and seven grandchildren. He is active in his church and serves on a number of non-profit boards including Boy Scouts of America, Vesterheim and Giants of the Earth Heritage Center in Spring Grove. Hobbies include golfing, fishing and hunting. He lives in New Canaan, Conn. when he is not at his Sylling grandparents' family home in Spring Grove that they recently restored.

John R. Christianson, Decorah escort to Their Majesties

Christianson is research professor of history at Luther, where he joined the faculty in 1967. He was chair of the history department from 1967-83, professor of history from 1972-96, and was named professor emeritus in 1996. A native of Mankato, Minn., he holds the doctoral degree in history from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. His paternal ancestors came to America from Nes and Ringsaker in Hedmark and Fåberg in Gudbrandsdal in 1869-75.

Christianson has written, edited or translated twelve books, 130 articles, and 50 reviews on various aspects of Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American history, including "Scandinavians in America: Literary Life" (Decorah 1985) and "On Tycho's Island: Tycho Brahe and His Assistants 1570-1601" (Cambridge 2000, paperback 2002, Danish translation 2008).

From 1981-85, Christianson was a guest lecturer on M.S. Lindblad Polaris during summer cruises in Baltic and Scandinavian waters from Svalbard to Copenhagen and Stavanger to Helsinki. In 1997, he taught in the inaugural Luther-Concordia College spring semester program in Lillehammer. He and his wife led study tours abroad to Scandinavia in 1976, 1978 and 1982 and Luther alumni tours of Scandinavia in 2000 and 2003.

Between 1968 and 1999, Christianson served on the steering committee for five visits of Norwegian royalty to Decorah, Iowa, twice as general chair, twice as protocol chair, and twice as escort to royalty. In 1995, he was made Knight of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit.

These students will be seated with Their Majesties at the luncheon:

Kakula Wandu, Luther College student

Kakula Wandu is a first-year student at Luther from Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. She hopes to double major in economics and international studies. She enjoys travelling, canoeing, dancing, reading and learning different cultures. Kakula spent the last two years studying at the Red Cross Nordic United World College in Flekke, Norway and everyday on her way to class, she says she was amazed by the beauty of the mountains and fjords. "It was such a wonderful place to live and the hospitality of the community made it even more so," she said. In the future, Kakula wishes to pursue a career in the field of development. She believes a Luther degree combined with her education at Red Cross Nordic United World College will make it possible for her to achieve this. Wandu will be seated at the Queen's table at the Royal Luncheon.

Mallory Heinzerth, Luther College student

Mallory Heinzerth is a senior from Denver, Colo., majoring in biology and business management and minoring in Spanish. With her double major she plans on a career in health care. Mallory has a passion for travel and has worked with disadvantaged populations in South Africa and Brazil. She hopes to pursue preventative medicine in the United States as well as health care improvements in more impoverished and disease-stricken areas. Mallory founded a non-profit in 2004, With Love Inc., with the mission of "people serving people, making a difference with love" that continues to thrive. A favorite hobby is photography, particularly sports and human-interest photography as a result of her travels. At Luther, she is President of the Student Activities Council, serves as a student representative on the Board of Regents, sings in Cantorei, plays for the Women's Rugby Club, volunteers with Students Helping Our Community and serves on Student Senate. Heinzerth will be seated at the King's table at the Royal Luncheon.

Ethan Schultz, Luther College student

Ethan Schultz is a senior from Waseca, Minn., a small farming community. He is majoring in elementary education and music, and hopes to be teaching in a school next year. Through his studies and travels he has experienced just how much education can empower learners around the world. Toward that end, he has recently become invested in the country of Namibia. Over the past year Ethan, along with a Luther development officer, developed an initiative called Empowering Learners. As a result of their efforts, they arranged for the safe arrival of 40 computers and 19,000 books via a sea container in Namibia. They are now developing an endowment fund for a cluster of schools that African nation. Schultz says, "This project gives me a sustaining joy that I pray continues throughout my lifetime." Schultz will be seated at the Queen's table at the Royal Luncheon.

Obi Ukabiala, Luther College student

Obi Ukabiala is a junior from Urbandale, Iowa, a suburb of Des Moines. He is majoring in biology/pre-medicine and plans to go to medical school to become a surgeon. Ukabiala is a starting defensive end on Luther's football team. He is active in the Health Science Club, LASO (Luther Athletes Serving Others) and the PALS program-which matches up Luther students with children in the community to share in hobbies and activities. In his spare time Ukabiala enjoys listening to music, watching movies, playing outdoor sports and relaxing with friends. Ukabiala will be seated at the King's Table at the Royal Luncheon.

These students will meet Their Majesties during the brief campus tour that follows the convocation. Robert Vangen will also be on stage for the convocation:

Robert Vangen, Luther College student

Robert Vangen is a sophomore from Strømmen, Skedsmo, Akershus, Norway. He is majoring in psychology and is considering a minor in management. He plays for the Luther soccer team. After graduating from college Robert hopes to work with sports or children. A sport-psychologist working with athletes of all ages would be his dream job. At the Royal Convocation, Robert will assist President Torgerson in presenting Their Majesties with a gift from Luther College.

Jonathan Grieder, Luther College student

Jonathan Grieder is a senior from Council Bluffs, Iowa majoring in political science and history. He is also president of the Luther College Student Senate. Jonathan founded and is currently serving as President of Believing and Achieving, a nonprofit aimed at helping at-risk elementary school students by pairing them with a college student to provide academic and social support. Next year he hopes to join "Teach For America" and teach on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in Pine Ridge, S.D.

Torstein Jystad, Luther College student

Torstein Clausen Jystad is a first-year student from Kolbotn, a small town outside of Oslo. He found his way to Luther because his mother also came to Luther when she was a college student. Torstein loves to play tennis and hopes to make the Luther tennis team. He also enjoys bicycling, running and traveling, which he says explains his decision to study in the United States. He has an older sister who is studying in Trondheim and a younger brother at home. He says, "Coming to the U.S. and meeting new people has always been a dream of mine. I have never regretted my decision."

Natalia V. Ophaug, Luther College student

Natalia Ophaug is a first-year student originally from Ukraine. She moved to Norway when she was 12 years of age and has been living in a small place called Tyssedal in Fjaler, Sogn og Fjordane. Before coming to Luther she studied for two years at Red Cross Nordic United World College. At Luther she plans to major in psychology and participate in competitive ballroom dance.