



# RUNNING WITH THE WOLVES

HOW NEWBERRY COLLEGE IS BUCKING  
HIGHER EDUCATION TRENDS



NEWBERRY  
COLLEGE









**Over the last decade, and particularly in the last three years, Newberry College has experienced unprecedented growth on all fronts — enrollment, academic programming, campus infrastructure, national recognition, and athletics. The small liberal arts college's apparent golden age comes amid a perfect storm of havoc for four-year colleges and universities nationwide. How has Newberry been able to launch its 100-acre, small-town campus into a new frontier in higher education?**

## **The Perfect Storm**

If you have a bird's-eye view of higher education in America, it's hard to deny that colleges and universities have been taking some licks. In the last three years alone, institutions have had to contend with a global pandemic, swelling operating costs, shifting demographics, and hard questions about the value of traditional education.

Any of these crises loom large over an institution of any size, but they can have catastrophic effects for small private colleges. Among those, the hardest hit are rural colleges and those with fewer than 2,000 students, where enrollment changes are felt with greater intensity, according to Massachusetts-based consultancy Bain & Company. In summer 2020, at the height of the pandemic, the University of Pennsylvania's Robert Zemsky estimated that about 200 private liberal arts colleges, around one-in-five, had closed or were on the verge of closing.

While the pandemic shutdowns were the death knell for many institutions, higher ed's problems didn't begin there. Rather, in many cases, the concurrent stresses of the 2020s have capitalized accruing trends and exposed existing cracks. These include debt and budget woes, leadership shifts, and falling out of step with the rapidly evolving educational, technological and financial needs of students.

In December 2019, NPR reported, "Over the past eight years, college enrollment nationwide has fallen about 11%. Every sector — public state schools, community colleges, for-profits and private liberal arts schools — has felt the decline, though it has been especially painful for small private colleges, where, in some cases, institutions have been forced to close." Amid five consecutive semesters of enrollment decline, Inside Higher Ed reported that only six states — Arizona, Montana, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Utah and West Virginia — and the District of Columbia reported growth.

Institutions nationwide will continue to face headwinds over the next decade, both from a looming demographic "cliff" and from growing skepticism among high school finishers. Declining birth rates during the Great Recession are due to come of age around 2025, expected to result in fewer high school graduates and therefore fewer traditional undergraduate students. Compounding that, confidence in higher education is at an all-time low, according to a 2023 Gallup poll: "Specifically, only 36% of Americans today have a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of trust in the institution of higher education. These numbers pale in comparison to those in 2018 (47%) and 2015 (57%)."

While media stories further devalue a college degree, 2021 Bureau of Labor Statistics data states “someone with a college degree will earn \$1 million more over a lifetime.”

In 2011-12, things were looking tenuous for Newberry College as well. Student enrollment was dropping, positions were being eliminated, operating budgets were being reduced, and in June 2012, the accrediting agency placed Newberry College on financial probation. New leadership began the turnaround task in August 2012 and the focus has been a relentless pursuit of growth, change, and improving the campus culture. With a shared vision, a revised strategic implementation plan, belief by the faculty & staff, and supportive guidance from the Board of Trustees, the journey of success began.

### Compare Newberry College to South Carolina’s leading public universities, and you’ll see that a private education is affordable and within reach.

	Lander	Coastal	Newberry	USC	Clemson	Winthrop
Tuition/ Fees	\$11,700	\$12,070	\$30,050	\$12,688	\$15,558	\$16,600
Room/ Board	\$10,600	\$12,540	\$12,850	\$13,332	\$11,850	\$11,386
Subtotal	\$22,300	\$24,610	\$42,900	\$26,020	\$27,408	\$27,986
Inst. Aid	0	0	\$13,000	0	0	0
SCTG **	0	0	\$4,000	0	0	0
PELL *	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Life	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Net Price	\$11,300	\$13,610	\$14,900	\$15,020	\$16,408	\$16,986

\* Pell grant award average. Max amount available is \$7,395.  
 \*\* SCTG award average. Max amount available is \$4,800.

## Bucking Trends

Despite dismal national trends, Newberry College, a small Lutheran liberal arts college nestled in the heart of the “City of Friendly Folks,” is doing arguably better than ever. The fall 2023 student enrollment of 1,521 is an incredible one-year increase of 15% over the previous year as the College continues to be a national leader. The College has now broken its total student enrollment record in five of the past nine years. This record student body represents 42 states and



33 countries. The top three states outside of South Carolina are Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina, and the top three foreign countries are Canada, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, Newberry’s incoming class is 582 students as compared to the incoming class of 325 students 10 years ago. Not only is Newberry one of South Carolina’s fastest growing colleges, it is also one of the most diverse. This growth can be attributed in part to revamped admission practices — spearheaded by the collaborative, team-building



## Current Campus Expansion and Renovation Projects

- Darby Nursing & Health Science Center (*opened August 2023*)
- Founders Federal Credit Union Field House (*opened September 2023*)
- MacLean Gymnasium renovation
- Kaufmann Hall renovation

## Newest Undergraduate Majors

- Nutrition
- Special Education (Multi-Categorical)
- Neuroscience
- Computer Science
- Public & Nonprofit Administration

## New Graduate-Level Programs

- Master of Science in Organizational Development & Leadership
- Master of Science in Sport Management & Leadership

leadership of Dr. Sandy Scherrens, dean of enrollment management — an energized and inspired group of admission counselors, career-relevant programs, increased accessibility, and a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Enrollment is the most significant marker of success, but not the only one. Newberry's campus infrastructure is expanding visibly. The first capital campaign project was the Center for Teacher Education in 2014. In August, the College cut the ribbon on the Darby Nursing & Health Science Center at the corner of College and Evans streets. The 11,000-square-foot facility is home to growing health care programs and a 1,200-square-foot daytime clinic. In September, the doors opened at the Founders Federal Credit Union Field House, providing much-needed space for burgeoning Wolves athletics and marking the second of three phases of renovations to the athletic stadium. Land is also being prepared for the College's ninth residence hall, to be built between Wolves Way and the Alumni Music Center. Construction is expected to be completed in fall 2024. Aside from brand-new facilities, numerous other campus spaces have undergone — or are undergoing — renovation, including the 100-year-old MacLean Gymnasium, Kaufmann Hall, and numerous technological additions to classrooms and labs. These campus improvements are not only to support the College's continued growth, but also to improve students' experiences in and out of the classroom.

## Impact on the Region

With these campus expansions, Newberry has emerged as an economic powerhouse for the region. According to a 2022 study by Lilly Consulting Group, the College has an estimated \$98.1 million impact on the Midlands of South Carolina. This includes operation expenses, construction, job creation, and spending by students, employees and visitors in Newberry and neighboring Laurens, Lexington and Richland counties. Newberry College supports over 740 jobs, brings in \$1.1 million annually from visitors, and

generates \$3.8 million in revenue for local and state governments.

## Expanding Programs

In addition to growing in quantity, Newberry College has also prioritized growth in quality. Academically, the College has overhauled its programs to meet the needs of an evolving market, as well as the needs of today's students. In 2021, Newberry received approval from its accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, to offer programs at the graduate level. The inaugural program was a Master of Science in organizational



## CAPITAL INVESTMENT BY YEAR

<b>FY 12-13</b>	\$651,000	<b>FY 18-19</b>	\$4,420,000
<b>FY 13-14</b>	\$1,191,300	<b>FY 19-20</b>	\$2,235,000
<b>FY 14-15</b>	\$1,028,000	<b>FY 20-21</b>	\$3,190,280
<b>FY 15-16</b>	\$2,830,000	<b>FY 21-22</b>	\$2,637,000
<b>FY 16-17</b>	\$661,000	<b>FY 22-23</b>	\$12,000,000
<b>FY 17-18</b>	\$1,259,000	<b>FY 23-24</b>	\$5,000,000

**TOTAL OF \$38 MILLION IN CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**



development & leadership, a versatile, online, business-oriented degree designed for practitioners in all industries and at all levels. Within 12 months, the program conferred its first degrees. The second program is an M.S. in sport management & leadership, which launched this fall, and four more are in development — criminal justice, education, public policy, and teaching.

On the undergraduate side, Newberry has added new and innovative programs across traditional and online formats. Nutrition, multi-categorical special education, neuroscience, computer science, exercise science, and public & nonprofit administration are the newest in-person offerings. Exciting new concentrations have been added, including project management and supply chain management. On top of this foundation of traditional undergraduate programs, the College is emerging as a leader in online degrees that are locally based

and personally tailored, transposing its beloved small-class feel and personal attention for the online sphere. Full online undergraduate programs include criminal justice, psychology, and the brand-new online degree in business administration. The College has been able to introduce many of these high-demand programs through the Rize partnership of 140 small colleges leveraging and sharing their academic resources.

The College also offers two 12-month degree-advancement programs for working professionals with associate degrees: RN-to-BSN — for practicing nurses — and respiratory therapy, the only program of its kind in South Carolina. Two new bachelor's programs are in development: legal studies and health leadership.

All of these programs have been designed not only to meet industries where they are and drive innovation, but also to ensure a high return on students' investment. On the front lines in this effort are a strong faculty, each with years of experience in their respective fields.



## Faculty

Many of the faculty have a wealth of experience in professional careers outside the classroom and they share their invaluable insights with students considering their post-graduation pursuits. A Newberry College education is designed to help students **succeed boldly** beyond their college careers, thanks in large part to the high caliber of faculty leading its courses and programs. Approximately 80% of Newberry faculty have earned terminal degrees in their disciplines from prestigious institutions such as Clemson, Vanderbilt, University of South Carolina, University of Florida, University of Georgia, and University of Nebraska, just to name a few. The College maintains a 13:1 student-to-faculty ratio.

## Alumni

Newberry graduates become successful business leaders and owners, teachers, doctors, lawyers, professional athletes, nurses, health care providers, coaches, performers, artists, scientists and more throughout South Carolina, the United States and internationally. They lead and work for companies and agencies such as TD Bank, Apple, the FBI, ExxonMobil, Prisma Health, and the Atlanta Braves. Hundreds teach and lead in administrative roles in school districts across the nation. Numerous student-athletes have gone on to play professionally in the NFL, the Australian Women's National Basketball League, the National Lacrosse League, and the European League of Football. Several alumni also hold elected offices at the local and state levels, including South Carolina's Secretary of State.



## Athletes

Newberry has also risen as a power in Division II across numerous sports. In just the last four years, the Wolves have secured two conference championships in football, one conference tournament and two regular-season titles in baseball, six consecutive conference championships and one national champion in men's wrestling, an academic national championship for men's golf, a NCAA statistical championship for men's lacrosse, and record seasons across Wolves athletics.

The College has also reaffirmed its commitment to affording diverse athletic opportunities, especially for female student-athletes. Seven sports have been

added since 2013, beginning with men's and women's lacrosse, field hockey, and men's and women's track & field. During its inaugural season in 2021, women's triathlon qualified two student-athletes for the Women's Collegiate Triathlon National Championships in Tempe, Arizona. In 2022, women's rugby celebrated its first season on the pitch. Two new sports will begin competition in fall 2024 — women's acrobatics & tumbling and women's wrestling.

## Extracurricular and Co-Curricular Activities

College life is not just about what goes on inside the classroom, but finding opportunities to connect with other students through shared interests. Newberry College has a large number of student clubs and organizations to satisfy a variety of interests and talents. These include Greek Life organizations, academic and professional organizations like the Newberry Education Society, special interest organizations like the Game Club, and a brand-new competitive speech & debate club. Co-curricular organizations like the Scarlet Spirit Marching Band, enjoying a renaissance of student participation under director David Santiago, and the prestigious Summerland Honor Society, provide opportunities for success in all aspects of life.



## Affordability

One of the biggest challenges for higher education in 2023 is the question of affordability, both in terms of cost and return on that investment. However, even as alternative learning modalities spread, bachelor's degrees still earn substantial greater salaries. The dividends of a college education are prolific, therefore, colleges must address the value proposition, delayed returns on investment, and the reality of upfront costs and debt. Newberry College has answered these questions strategically.

A sticking point for many when considering a private college is sticker price, which tends to be higher than that of public universities. However, as a private college, Newberry offers enhanced scholarships and guarantees no tuition increase for all incoming students. The actual cost to attend Newberry College is less than most of South Carolina's public universities.

# Front of the Pack

Since 2015, Newberry College has climbed the U.S. News & World Report's rankings as one of the best regional colleges in the South.

### Best Regional Colleges in the South



**2015-16**  
#41



**2023-24**  
#10

### Best Value Colleges in the South



**2017-18**  
#7



**2023-24**  
#3

### Best Colleges in the South for Social Mobility



**2022-23**  
#8



**2023-24**  
#4

### Best Colleges in the South for Veterans



**2015-16**  
#28



**2023-24**  
#2



**Newberry College is consistently recognized by LendEDU as No. 1 in South Carolina for least student loan debt per borrower, and No. 32 in the nation.**



**#1 - Lowest average student loan debt figure in South Carolina**



**#32- Lowest average student loan debt figure in the U.S.**

Newberry College graduates also find gainful employment in short order. According to data gathered from members of the Class of 2022, 83% are gainfully employed, serving in the military, or continuing their education. The same cohort reports an average salary of \$43,628 within a year of graduating college. Students in certain programs, such as nursing and teacher education, consistently have secured jobs in their desired fields even before graduation.

More immediately, Newberry confronts the reality of upfront costs. Each year since 2019, the Board of Trustees has renewed the Newberry Tuition Promise, which freezes incoming students' tuition rates for their four years. The policy has since been extended to online and graduate students. More than that, Newberry is consistently recognized by LendEDU as No. 1 in South Carolina for least student loan debt per borrower. The College has also been named No. 3 among best value colleges in the South by U.S. News & World Report, and one of the best colleges in the region for social mobility.

## Leadership

A large part of the College's success has been the strategic, persistent, and relentless leadership of Dr. Maurice W. Scherrens, who took office as its 22nd president in August 2012. Newberry has blazed a path of steady growth as a regional leader. Enrollment has grown by about 47%, one-third of the College's 45 undergraduate majors and both of its graduate programs have been added, and the campus' most comprehensive \$40 million campaign, Scaling the Summit, has been launched and completed. In 2016, Newberry ranked No. 41 in the region by U.S. News. Today, the College stands at No. 10 overall, adding honors for value, social mobility, and economic and ethnic diversity. Hallmarks of Scherrens' administration have been collaboration, transparency, 'radical hospitality,' student-centeredness, and a commitment to the mission of Lutheran liberal arts education.

## The Road Ahead

Newberry is planning for continued growth and expansion in the coming decade, continuing to innovate to meet the needs of students and the world beyond its historic campus. This includes leaning into the online sphere, at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and to make education more flexible, accessible, and state-of-the-art. The College will expand the student experience with internships, more clubs and organizations, and additional NCAA sports. It is also finalizing a master plan for future campus expansion, featuring a new student union, residence halls and classroom buildings, including a new home for the College's largest division, business communications and sport. The path may not be clear, but with a shared vision and a hunger for excellence, Newberry College will continue running with the wolves and leading the pack.













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