



New Employee Biographies 2025-2026

Cynthia Carr '22

A 2022 Wheaton Academy graduate, Cynthia Carr, is thrilled to be stepping more fully into the WA community in a year-round role after serving in a part-time capacity for the past three summers. This fall, she is especially looking forward to building deeper relationships with students and staff and putting names to familiar faces. Cynthia is a film buff with a deep love for analyzing movies across genres (and is always open to recommendations!). She's also a self-taught DIY nail artist and a former gymnast who has found a new passion for weightlifting. Currently enrolled at the College of DuPage, she is pursuing an Associate's degree in American Sign Language Interpreting, with plans to graduate in Spring 2026. Cynthia is also joyfully preparing for her wedding next year to her high school sweetheart, Micah Giesen.

Jill Chapman (Gurak) '02

A proud WA alum, Jill Chapman, is eager to support school leadership and build daily connections with students and staff. Before joining WA, she served in an administrative role at Wheaton College. She previously worked in the microbiology lab at Central DuPage Hospital after earning her degree in Clinical Laboratory Sciences from Northern Illinois University. Outside of work, Jill enjoys spending time outdoors with her family, whether exploring local forest preserves, hiking out West, or walking their dog. She and her husband also love discovering new restaurants together. Much of her free time is joyfully spent at the baseball field, cheering on her three sons.

Laura Erickson

Laura Erickson is excited to join Wheaton Academy and support the Development Team in its mission to connect with and serve WA families. She looks forward to assisting with event planning, managing administrative tasks, and collaborating with faculty and staff across campus. With a heart for service and community, Laura is especially eager to build relationships that help advance the school's mission. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her husband, Dave, and their three kids, Jacob, Audrey, and Mason, along with their energetic goldendoodle, Sandy. She loves being outdoors, exercising, catching up with friends over coffee, and serving at Gospelife Church.



Steve Hoogerheide

Steve Hoogerheide brings more than three decades of teaching experience to Wheaton Academy, having served as a math teacher at Glenbard East for 33 years. During his time there, he also coached basketball, tennis, and the math team, and led both student and faculty Bible studies. Now, he's excited to work in an environment where faith is celebrated and integrated into learning. Steve enjoys outdoor activities like fishing and disc golf, and you might catch him on the pickleball court when his knees allow it! He and his wife, Stacey, have three children, all of whom have graduated from Wheaton Academy (classes of 2018, 2018, and 2025).

Xander Park

Xander Park is excited to join the English Department, bringing his licensure in both Spanish and English to the classroom. He's especially looking forward to building meaningful conversations with students, teachers, and staff as he enters the Wheaton Academy community. Before coming to WA, Xander taught at Glenbard East, and he's looking forward to the transition from Ram to Warrior! Outside of school, you can find Xander hiking quiet trails with his wife, reading in a hammock, lifting weights at the gym, or grilling up a feast. He also enjoys playing games with friends; favorites include Here to Slay, Smash Bros, and Boomerang Fu. Students in his classes should also be on the lookout for potential baked goods surprises!

Ben Thorson '19

A 2019 Wheaton Academy graduate, Ben Thorson, is excited to return to campus, this time as a staff member and coach. He looks forward to stepping into a student-facing role where he can build intentional relationships through classes, student activities, and coaching football and lacrosse. After graduating from Wheaton College, where he played on the football team, Ben spent time working in private equity real estate, gaining valuable experience in a completely different industry. Outside of work, Ben enjoys spending time with his wife, Anne, their daughter, Elsie, and their dog, Thor. The family loves walking together and staying active. He's also a big fan of C.S. Lewis and loves diving into books that challenge and inspire. Ben is grateful to be back at WA, where the meaningful relationships he formed as a student helped shape his desire to serve and lead in this community.



Grant Tillotson

Grant Tillotson joins the Math faculty, eager for the opportunity to fully integrate his faith both in the classroom and on the football field. As a former public school teacher, he looks forward to pointing students to Christ in every aspect of his work. He is especially passionate about forming relationships with students and looks forward to opportunities like Winterim and student trips. His own experience traveling to Senegal with the Wheaton College football team significantly influenced his faith and worldview, and he is eager to share that passion with others. Grant holds an M.Div. and brings a rich background as a teacher, coach, pastor, and former EMT. Over the past seven years, he has taught subjects ranging from Physics and Anatomy to Chemistry, Biology, and Geometry. In his free time, Grant enjoys reading across various topics, including theology, science, and history, exploring Chicago with his family, trying new fermentation projects (like sauerkraut and kombucha), and recently took piano lessons with his daughter, Liv. He's thrilled to serve in the WA community. Go Cubs!

Hannah White

Hannah White is excited to join Wheaton Academy and looks forward to building meaningful relationships with students as she helps them explore their post-secondary hopes and dreams. With a passion for connecting students to real-world opportunities, she brings both creativity and experience to her role. Before coming to WA, Hannah worked in a large Georgia school district, where she launched a successful student-run print business through her graphic design program, generating over \$30,000 annually in revenue. In 2023, she was honored as her school's Teacher of the Year and was a finalist for County-wide Teacher of the Year. That same year, she helped lead the redesign of the district's graphic design standards, which were unanimously approved for adoption. Outside of school, Hannah enjoys reading, playing cards, and board games. She and her husband have been keeping score in their ongoing game of Gin Rummy for over a decade!

Annika Yoder

Annika Yoder is excited to join Wheaton Academy's English Department and to invest in students both in the classroom and on the volleyball court. She looks forward to reading great books alongside her students and getting to



know them throughout the year. A lover of both language and movement, Annika enjoys long-distance running. She has several half-marathons under her belt, with plans to complete a full marathon in the near future. She also follows Premier League soccer and has recently picked up watercolor painting as a creative outlet. One highlight of her academic journey was studying abroad in England through her English Department—an experience that deepened her love for literature. Annika is grateful to return to Wheaton Academy, where she previously student taught during graduate school.