

Dr. Joe Ward III

In 2015, Dr. Joseph Ward III was inaugurated as the sixteenth president because of the Ward family history and his commitment to Yankton College. Ward – the great-grandson of College founders, Rev. Dr. Joseph and Sarah Wood Ward – graduated from Yankton College in 1966 and has served on the Board of Trustees since 1983 and as Vice-Chair of the Board since 1986. Ward was a public-school Director of Human Resources and is now retired and lives in Gainesville, Florida.

In 2011, the Board of Yankton College polled the alumni in an effort to determine the future of the college. There was an overwhelming response from the alumni to maintain a permanent presence within the town of Yankton. A Legacy Committee was formed of alumni and Board members who sought to find a permanent home for the college. It was at about this time that the Yankton County Historical Society began to explore the possibility of taking over the Mead building on the site of the former State Hospital located at the north end of town.

A partnership was formed in 2013 between Yankton College and the Historical Society to jointly support the development of a Dakota Territorial Museum. Not long after the formation of the partnership, the Legacy Committee began to seek financial support of the college alumni and friends to fund the Joseph and Sarah Wood Ward Alumni and Educational Center of Yankton College on the third floor of the Mead Cultural Education Center.

Under Ward's leadership along with the Board of Trustees, the Legacy campaign proved to be very successful, due to the generous support of countless alumni and friends. Within just a few short years, the fundraising campaign amassed enough money to fulfill its financial pledge to the Historical Society, making possible a permanent home for Yankton College. The fully funded agreement, made it possible to not only house the college office, but share the legacy of the college through a museum that was eventually named the Joseph and Sarah Wood Ward Alumni & Educational Center of Yankton College.