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## Alumni Couple Establishes Scholarship to Benefit Student Veterans

Winthrop University

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# Alumni Couple Establishes Scholarship to Benefit Student Veterans

## Quick Facts

- The Charles and Kristen Thoennes Scholarship will support political science majors, with first preference to student veterans.
- Capt. Charles Thoennes '06 and his wife, Kristen '08, live in Sumter, South Carolina.

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*Charles '06 and Kristen Thoennes '08*

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – **Capt. Charles Thoennes '06, United States Air Force**, and his wife, **Kristen '08**, understand the challenges involved with active duty military service. To honor Winthrop students who are military veterans for their service, the couple has established a new **annual restricted scholarship**.

The **Charles and Kristen Thoennes Scholarship** will provide financial assistance for **political science** majors, with first preference given to student veterans. **Charles** noted that assimilation into the civilian world can be difficult, and students who are military veterans often face the added stress of securing the funds needed for a college degree.

“Whether someone served four years or 20+, they’ve made sacrifices for our country that less than 1 percent of the population ever does,” said **Charles**. “This scholarship **recognizes and rewards their**

**service.**”

**Kristen** described the military as “a lifelong community,” adding that the scholarship offers an important way to support student veterans, who are vital community members. The couple hopes to build the scholarship to the **endowment level**—\$25,000 or above—in the next five to seven years.

The Thoennes’ gift illustrates the university’s increased emphasis on **creating a flourishing culture of philanthropy**, with fundraising defined as an essential priority in the **Winthrop Plan**, the university’s strategic plan through 2025.

**Charles** works as Support Flight Commander for the 337th Recruiting Squadron at Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter, South Carolina. He earned his B.A. in **mass communication** and political science with a minor in German, while **Kristen** earned a B.A. in political science with a minor in history.

The couple, who met at Winthrop, encourages other alumni—particularly young alumni—to **give back** to the university to assist future students and enhance their **Winthrop experience**.

“Giving back, regardless of the amount, helps keep you connected while ensuring the resources are available for future students to have a positive Winthrop experience,” said Charles.

For more information, contact Meredith Carter, communications coordinator, at 803/323-2236 or [carterm@winthrop.edu](mailto:carterm@winthrop.edu).

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