Multiplication of the First 35

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MULTIPLICATION OF THE FIRST 35

This fall, we’ve been hosting “Defender Nation” gatherings across North America.

At these events we offered updates on the state of the college and encouraged financial support for the completion of our Science and Technology Center project. At two of these gatherings, I met Juna (Kosters) Hoekman and Donna (Rietema) Van Zanten, two of 35 students from the 1955 inaugural class of Dordt College.

I thanked these women for taking a risk on the new college. I also let them know that the 18,000-plus alumni of Dordt College owe them, their classmates, and the original faculty and staff members a debt of gratitude. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before.

One of my favorite Dordt traditions is having every first-year student for dinner each fall, in groups of 40, in the Founders Room attached to our home. I’ve told Juna’s and Donna’s stories to each of those groups, asking these new students to close their eyes and imagine an entire student body of only 35 students. It always prompts a few nervous laughs, but it also encourages a sense of history and perspective.

I find joy in hearing those stories, and I’ve gained a deep appreciation for how God’s blessings have multiplied at Dordt College. With 1,523 students taking classes this fall, we’re at our largest enrollment to date, and we praise God for each and every image-bearer who is a part of our campus community. Over the past 60-plus years, majors have been added, buildings have been built, and whiteboards and video screens have replaced chalkboards and overhead projectors. But the Reformed worldview and educational mission remains—to equip students, alumni, and the broader community to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in every aspect of contemporary life.

This semester, Dean of Chapel Aaron Baart is preaching through the book of Acts, reminding us that “we are God’s witnesses” and that the building of the church, which now reaches every corner of the world, began with 12 disciples. An apt reminder, it seems to me, of Dordt College’s small, but important, part in the Holy Spirit’s ability to take our humble efforts and multiply them for God’s glory.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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