Iowa Secretary of Ag Forum Tackles Politics and Policy

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Faculty Notes

Professor of English Dr. Bob De Smith presented a paper titled “The best in this kind are but shadows: A Midsummer Night’s Dream at the Movies” at the Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature in Brandon, Manitoba. A member of the conference advisory board, De Smith has hosted the conference at Dordt on two occasions.

Dr. Dave Mulder, associate professor of education, presented two papers at the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE). The papers are titled “Pre-Service Teachers as Digital Natives: The Myths, The Controversy, and How They Describe Themselves” and “‘We’re Just Expected to Know How’: Unpacking Pre-Service Teachers’ Beliefs About Technology Integration.”

Rikki Heldt, instructor of language studies, co-presented “Best Practices for Integration First-Generation Latino Students: Theoretical Framework, Lessons Learned, and Theological Foundations” at the CCCU International Forum in Dallas, Texas, with professors from John Brown University, Fresno Pacific University, and George Fox University.

Associate Professor of Psychology Dr. Bruce Vermeer presented “Alzheimer’s Disease Treatment Interventions and the Soul: Moral & Ethical Considerations” at the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation (CSCA) Conference in May at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia. He also gave a presentation titled “Caregiver Stress” at a caregiver conference in Orange City, Iowa, in May.

IOWA SECRETARY OF AG FORUM TACKLES POLITICS AND POLICY

With Chinese tariffs on beef, soybeans, and other U.S. products making national headlines, it seemed timely that the Ag Club welcomed four candidates for Iowa’s secretary of agriculture position to campus for a forum.

“Having the forum at Dordt not only provided the candidates with a chance to talk with local people involved in agriculture, but it gave Dordt students a view into the process of politics and policy, even if they are not from Iowa,” says agriculture professor Dr. John Olthoff.

“Iowa is the top producing state for corn, soybeans, and hogs, and Sioux County is the top agriculture county in the state; these policies directly impact us,” says Alayna Gerhardt, a senior animal science major.

Understanding how policy and politics interact with agriculture is important, particularly for Christians and in today’s political climate.

“Agriculture does not exist on its own,” says Olthoff. “Anyone involved in agriculture—from production to support business—needs to be aware of the impact of policy. More importantly, they should be involved in educating consumers and policy makers, or they should get directly involved with the policy-making process.”

Candidates Ray Gaesser, Chad Ingels, Craig Lang, Dan Zumbach, and Mike Naig each spent 15 minutes describing their platforms before answering questions from the crowd.

“As they presented their viewpoints, it was obvious that there are common themes that are important to the state,” says Olthoff.

Two of these areas are soil health and water quality.

“Soil health and water quality are directly related and will determine environmental quality and economic value for farmers in the state,” says Olthoff. “A sustainable system that supports the economic viability of farmers, rural communities, and environmental qualities is necessary, and Iowa could be an example for other states.”

Dordt students also heard the candidates’ takes on watershed quality, subsidies, and retaining an in-state agriculture workforce.

“As a native Iowan looking to eventually take over the family farm, I appreciated how all the candidates took interest in helping set up the next generation and in addressing the labor gap on farms,” says Mitch Rozeboom, an agri-business major. “I really appreciated that because I’ve experienced it firsthand.”

The forum was valuable for students who don’t hail from Iowa, too.

“This is information we should all know,” says Rozeboom. “I think it applies even to students not from Iowa, since ag policy in Iowa affects other states.”

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