Becoming Dordt University

Sarah Moss
Dordt College, sarah.moss@dordt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice
Part of the Christianity Commons, and the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice/vol63/iss3/13

This News is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dordt Voice, 2016- by an authorized editor of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.
By the time President Erik Hoekstra took to the stage on the morning of May 3, more than 500 students, faculty, staff, and local media had gathered on the main level, the stairway, and in the balcony of the Campus Center.

"Today, I want to announce to you and to the world that this institution shall continue with the same kingdom vision, the same Christ-centered purpose, and the same student-centered mission, but will, on May 13, 2019, move forward under the name 'Dordt University,'" Hoekstra said to those gathered.

The room erupted in applause. Later, student government president Megan Van Den Berg spoke to the crowd.

"The university initiative is very exciting, and I cannot wait to see the positive effects this will have on our campus today, tomorrow, and 25 years down the road," she said. "Dordt is growing and changing in amazing ways, and this change will be reflected in our name: Dordt University."

Two weeks earlier, the Board of Trustees had approved the recommendation to move forward with the university initiative. The decision was made after much prayer, research, and conversation. A university initiative task force, comprised of faculty, staff, and students, had conducted focus groups with alumni, students, faculty, and staff to gauge their sentiments about the change before presenting their findings to the Board of Trustees.

"The board acknowledged that now is a providential time to consider this university initiative," says Hoekstra. "There is a sense of momentum. Enrollment is strong, and our graduates are finding jobs and getting into graduate school."
WHY DORDT UNIVERSITY

"Why Dordt will become Dordt University comes down to three reasons: mission fit, academic excellence, and global footprint," says Hoekstra.

Dordt's mission states that, “as an institution of higher education committed to the Reformed Christian perspective, Dordt equips students, alumni, and the broader community to work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life.”

Dordt faculty are known for living that mission through their teaching and interaction with students.

“What we do in our classes, through chapel, in co-curriculars—all of these are important for teaching students to be kingdom citizens,” says Dr. Erin Olson, associate professor of social work. “Worship can happen while you’re sitting in the classroom, serving as an RA in the dorms, or being part of a Bible study. We as faculty are dedicated and committed to the idea that Christ-centered renewal can happen in all areas of creation.”

To Hoekstra, living Dordt’s mission means, in part, being welcoming. Every fall, he and Dr. Barb Hoekstra invite small groups of freshmen to the president’s home for dinner; their goal is to know every student by name.

“When I sign diplomas in the spring, I consider it a failure on my part if I come across a name that’s a surprise to me,” says Hoekstra.

Hoekstra also values how Dordt’s alma mater uses of the word “camaraderie.”

“People often say that the community at Dordt is special, but I think of it as camaraderie—connectedness, belonging, and closeness,” says Hoekstra. “As president, I want to get to know students. I want to keep that sense of belonging and unity within Christ that’s been part of this place since Dordt started.”

To Hoekstra, becoming Dordt University is a way for the institution to continue to live its mission.

“Dordt University best describes who we are and who we are becoming,” he says. “Over the years, our mission has led us to develop academic and co-curricular programs that prepare students to serve in the professions they enter and the communities in which they live. Dordt now looks and acts more like a university than a college.”

In addition to a diverse array of traditional undergraduate programs, Dordt’s academic offerings now include online studies, graduate programs, and professional-technical associate degrees.

Becoming Dordt University opens up additional opportunities for academic excellence, Olson says. Dordt plans to launch a master of public administration program in August of 2018, and other programs are being discussed.

“Dordt’s master of education program has done so well for many years,” says Olson. “The program, which uses both online and on-campus experiences, is inspirational and could be a great model for additional master programs we are considering.”

Dordt faculty and students are also more

IMAGINING DORDT UNIVERSITY

Many changes will happen on campus over the next twelve months. The new logo will be unveiled at Defender Days, and the class of 2019 will be the final class to graduate from Dordt College. Signage, banners, and business cards will be updated. Faculty, students, and staff have started to spend time thinking about and discussing what Dordt will be like as a university—what might change and what should remain the same.

“When we imagine Dordt University and what that will be, we see a place that has community—a place that is welcoming and engaging,” says Zuidema. “It’s a place where we can continue to encourage one another and broaden who’s involved.”

“Dordt students get integrated into the Sioux Center community in a way that’s pretty unique among Christian institutions of higher education, and we don’t want that to change,” says Hoekstra.

“I think it’s exciting to put ‘university’ on as a mantle and say, ‘This is a responsibility. How do we take that forward in a way that gives glory to God?’” says Zuidema.
involved in research; agencies such as the National Science Foundation have awarded our faculty more than $6.5 million in external grants.

"Over the last decade, research opportunities and faculty scholarship have expanded; our faculty see themselves as lead learners who can model research for students," says Dr. Leah Zuidema, associate provost. "We offer more scholarships, and international students are helping us grow and see what's possible. It's an exciting time."

Dordt's global footprint has expanded. Students from 26 countries study on campus, and children of missionaries and global businesspeople bring the actual representation closer to 40 different countries.

"And if you look at our alumni network, we have alumni in more than 50 countries in the world," says Adam Adams, director for global education.

Adams travels the world talking with prospective students about why they should consider studying at Dordt.

"Students learn at Dordt that they don't have to be a pastor, missionary, or a youth pastor to actively share the gospel and love of Christ around the world," says Adams. "At Dordt, we prepare students in uniquely Reformed ways to be radically Christian as teachers, engineers, graphic designers, and more, to share Christ's love with those they work with or meet."

He feels that, by becoming a university, Dordt removes a barrier for international students and Dordt alumni who are living their calling across the globe.

"The word 'university' is the most highly regarded level of postsecondary education," says Adams. "In many countries, 'college' can be translated to mean 'school' or 'middle school.' There is no confusion anywhere when you say that you represent a university; the word 'university' represents academic rigor and a sense that students will be challenged through their education. I'm excited for Dordt and that I can now say that I represent a university."

**SARAH MOSS (10)**

As a university, Dordt will remain committed to the Founders Vision: "An education that is Christian... in the larger and deeper sense that all the class work, all of the students' intellectual, emotional, and imaginative activities shall be permeated with the spirit and teaching of Christianity."

For more information on why Dordt will become Dordt University on May 13, 2019, please visit u.dordt.edu.

### Faculty Notes

**Instructor of Nursing**

**Melanie Wynja** planned and executed the Iowa Health Educator and Iowa Simulation conference in Altoona, Iowa. The conference strives to bring together health care professionals in academia and practice in order to make connections and move healthcare forward in Iowa.

**David Versluis**, professor of art, had two sculptures included in the 22 Contemporary Gallery in Chicago. *The Briar Cliff Review* also published two of Versluis' sculptures and exhibited them at the Sioux City Art Center from April through July. Versluis served as the 3D artworks juror for ArtSplash in Sioux City, and one of his large photographs of the Dordt prairie was also selected for the permanent collection of the Hegg Memorial Health Center in Rock Valley, Iowa.

**Dr. Nathan Tintle**, professor of statistics, was selected as a fellow of the American Statistical Association by the 2018 American Statistical Association Committee on Fellows. He traveled to London to present at the CME Statistics conference. Tintle also jointly published two papers titled “Mental Health Impacts of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster” and “A Genome-Wide Association Study of Red Blood Cell Fatty Acids and Ratios Incorporating Dietary Covariates: Framingham Heart Study Offspring Cohort.” Tintle spoke at the 2018 Joint Mathematics Meetings in San Diego, California, as well as at Michigan State University’s College of Nursing in April.

**Dr. Mike Janssen**, associate professor of mathematics, spoke at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in San Diego, California. His presentation was titled “A First Experience in a Flipped Calculus II Course.”