Leah Zuidema, Fulbright Scholar

Erika Buiter
Dordt College

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LEAH ZUIDEMA, FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR

Dr. Leah Zuidema’s passion to make Dordt a great place to learn is part of what drove her to apply to be a Fulbright scholar.

“I wanted to push the boundaries a little bit,” she says. “We haven’t had a Fulbright scholar from Dordt, and I wanted to test that so I could encourage faculty and show them that they can do this as well.”

Zuidema, who serves as Dordt’s associate provost, received a 2018-19 Fulbright U.S. Scholar grant for the International Education Administrators (IAE) seminar. The award allowed her to spend two weeks in France in October.

“I love travel, I love learning, and I love learning about education and how it works. This Fulbright opportunity brought all those things together. It was also a chance to work with bright minds, people who are top-notch learners, who are globally minded,” Zuidema says. “Applying was a challenge, too. It was kind of like competing to get into the Olympics of academia.”

While in France, Zuidema visited universities, research institutes, and government officials in Montpellier and Paris, France, as well as in Brussels, Belgium. She says she learned more about Europe’s educational systems, which are changing as a result of evolving ideas about education.

“Each day we met with leaders from universities and research institutes who are partnering on projects with global scale and impact—many of them focused on agriculture and on public health,” says Zuidema. “We also saw on a daily basis how ‘student mobility’ and international experiences are major priorities in Europe.”

She says one big takeaway from the experience is that she better understands how many opportunities there are for a place like Dordt to make a difference by emphasizing global connections for faculty and students.

“When you experience another culture it serves as both a window and a mirror—you see something that’s different from where you are, but also you see yourself in ways you hadn’t been paying attention to previously.”

—Dr. Leah Zuidema, associate provost

“The Fulbright experience was even better than I could have imagined,” says Dr. Leah Zuidema.

WHAT’S IN A TITLE?

Dr. Leah Zuidema’s titles at Dordt include associate provost and dean of curriculum and instruction. So what does the average day look like for her?

“As an associate provost, I work with the provost on things related to the academic work of the college, especially faculty hiring and faculty development,” says Zuidema.

In her role as dean of curriculum and instruction, Zuidema coaches faculty on questions related to their courses and teaching. She also oversees curriculum changes, working on the faculty’s behalf so they can focus on their students.

“I might write an accreditation report or prepare for a visit from an accreditation review team, which is fun in its own way,” Zuidema says. “I enjoy helping make Dordt a great place for students to learn in a Christ-centered way. Rather than doing that directly with students, I do it by working with faculty and on behalf of faculty.”