Social Work students study local needs

Sally Jongma

At nearly any time of the afternoon or evening one can find social work students hard at work in Room 108 of the classroom building. Funded by a grant from the Northwest Area Foundation, St. Paul, Minnesota, these students are conducting a survey to pinpoint the needs of low income and elderly people in 13 Iowa counties. According to Professor Fred De Jong, supervisor of the project, the eight social work majors who make up the core of the research team are not only providing a valuable service to local social service agencies, but they are also gaining a wealth of professional experience in their tenure at Dordt.

The project grew, says De Jong, out of a more narrowly focused study done three years ago by the Social Research class. That survey looked at the needs of elderly people in Sioux County. Although the results were helpful to local agencies, it provided them with information about only a small segment of their clientele.

Last spring, three agencies, Iowa Lakes Area Agency on Aging, Spencer, Iowa, Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc., Remsen, Iowa, and Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc., Emmetsburg, Iowa, joined De Jong in applying for a grant to do a more extensive study. By late summer, with the grant confirmed, De Jong and some of the students began laying the groundwork for the project. They met with people from each of the agencies to determine what information they would find most useful.

Laurie De Boom is one of the eight students hired with grant funds. Her enthusiasm shows as she describes the sometimes long and arduous hours she and the others have put into the project over the past five months. The first step was to compose the survey. "We used the information we received from the agencies and put together a list of 116 questions," says Laurie. After sending the survey to a pretest group of 90 households and changing questions that seemed to be confusing, the bulk of their work began. Using statistical

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Cooperating agencies appreciate students' work

According to Dick Sievers from Mid-Sioux Opportunity the presentations students made to his agency covered three or four main areas of concern and substantiated the agency's perceptions about how to target their services. "We are supposed to do a needs analysis every two or three years," says Sievers. "but there often isn't the time or money to do it." This study, he feels, will not only give needed information, but also justify future grant requests.

Greg Anliker from the Iowa Lakes Agency on Aging echoes Sievers sentiments. Although the preliminary results of the survey show no big surprises for his agency, Anliker says the survey gives credence to what they already suspected. "In the area of transportation, for example, we knew that people's needs were not being met. However, the results showed us that the situation is even worse than we thought." Another somewhat surprising result of the research was the emphasis on employment for elderly people, says Anliker. "We knew the need existed, but didn't know the extent of that need."

Anliker, too, is appreciative of the work done by both De Jong and the Dordt students. "The students are very professional in their work. When we ask a question, they go back to their statistics and back up their answer with information." He also expressed appreciation for De Jong's leadership in the project and also his willingness to cooperate so openly with agencies like his. "I'd like to see this cooperation happen more," he says.
Social work students receive grant

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methods, they determined that they had to receive at least 60 responses from each county to have an accurate picture of the needs. Expecting a response rate of five percent, they sent 800 surveys to each of the 13 counties, following up the first mailing with a second one two weeks later. "As it turned out," says Laurie, "our response rate is much higher than we expected, often reaching 30 to 40 percent. There are many days when we receive over 100 returned surveys."

Once the responses come in, each one must be coded and entered into the computer. Nearly 50 students from statistics, sociology, and computer science were given the extra credit for entering the data that comes in daily. "By Christmas, we had logged over 1300 staff hours working on the project," says Laurie. Although all of these steps take time, it is the analysis of the data that now demands the attention of the eight students working with De Jong. By the end of November, with data in from five counties, the students began pinpointing needs and analyzing relationships between different parts of the survey. These results were put into an extensive preliminary report, complete with statistics and charts, and presented to the eight agencies just before Christmas. The other eight counties are being surveyed this semester.

Although the project is far over, from the pace of the work will change slightly during the second semester. As seniors, the students must spend most of their week in a field placement assignment. In most cases, that means working in another town and coming back to Dordt on Friday for a seminar and then working on the project on Friday afternoon and Saturday. When they have learned so far will make the work on the rest of the counties go faster, says Laurie.

Although it is a busy year for the students, the experience is invaluable, says De Jong. For many, the project removed an irrational fear of machines and statistics and gave them confidence in themselves and the work they are trained to do. "At the beginning of the year there were some who could barely turn on a computer. Now they use three systems proficiently," says De Jong. The practical impact of their work is also important. Based on a question at the end of the survey which asked permission to refer specific needs to a social service agency, the students referred nearly 200 needy households to programs that can help them. The students worked as a team, developing independence and flexibility as they accomplished their task, says De Jong. Deadlines from the agencies and their regular classes created pressure but also gave a taste of the "real world." And not only did the students have good, relevant work experience under very professional conditions, but they earned a good income doing it.

De Jong is confident that by the end of May there will be hard figures that will help agencies reorient their budgets or give communication for budget requests.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

At Dordt College Reformed, Christian higher education is a matter of principle.

Those who established Dordt did so believing that the Bible is the Word of the sovereign God and that the Bible "provides the key to the understanding, interpretation, meaning, and purpose of life." Those who are presently associated with Dordt share that belief, convinced that only the Bible can unlock the door to a true insight into the nature of created reality.

Dordt was not founded as the pet project of a number of people who feel that it is desirable to have "private" education for their children. Nor was it organized simply as a negative response to the secularism of colleges and universities sponsored by the state.

Dordt's presence is not dependent upon circumstance but upon principle. Several things have demonstrated to me the need for a college with Dordt's perspective.

Once such instance occurred some weeks ago when my wife and I were in Washington D.C. attending the national conventions of the College Coalition and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. While there much of our time was spent contacting our senators and representatives to discuss with them political issues relating to higher education. The legislators with whom we spoke were very polite in receiving us and they seemed to be genuinely interested in the cause we represented.

During the course of our visit we observed that the political situation on Capitol Hill lacks direction. The people with whom we spoke were well-meaning, capable people. But the context in which they must function is governed by the principle of political pragmatism—hardly sufficient to guarantee legislation which we believe will consistently preserve and promote justice for all.

We left our nation's capital convinced of the need for political science courses at Dordt College and the importance of developing a Christian approach to politics. We must not be so naive as to suppose that such a perspective will produce all of the answers, but it will provide a place to stand in seeking those answers.

Another instance arose when I called on an agribusinessman to request a donation for the College. Because of his interest in farming we began to talk together about Dordt's agriculture program and the position of the department concerning current agricultural issues. At one point he said to me: "I hope you realize that we need help and that we are looking to Dordt College for leadership in these matters."

At the time I felt a bit troubled and threatened this statement. What he said seemed to place a tremendous responsibility upon us. But later I concluded that he was correct. He had heard our claims about the importance of an agriculture department at Dordt and was challenging us to study this aspect of God's creation in light of His Word.

Finally, as many of our constituents know, we have been advertising and interviewing candidates for our Social Work Department. It is difficult to find men and women who are qualified in this field, share our perspective, and are willing to make the financial sacrifices required to become part of a college faculty. We are pleased to be able to report that we have found such people.

However, as we talk about the field of social work with candidates, we inevitably come up against the fact that, in the field of social work, there are expected to take a so-called neutral, non-judgmental approach, leaving the counselor with the responsibility to make his or her own decision concerning the matter at hand. This raises a question as to how a Christian college establishes leadership in the field of social work, maintains the integrity of his or her faith, and still function effectively in a field in which neutrality is expected.

Obviously there is no easy answer to such a question. But just as obviously it is essential that at Dordt College we provide a biblical perspective on social work and prepare our students to enter this very important field as servants of Jesus Christ.

It's true that, as a matter of principle, we are committed to the establishment and continuing development of that perspective. It is not only desirable but also necessary.
Mr. John Maatman lives in the basement apartment of his grandchildren John and Anne (Zwaal) Maatman ('75, '76). Although he lives on his own, help is readily available should he need it.

Unfortunately, caring for aging parents is not a simple matter. Should adult children forego mobility and subsequent career progression to care for parents? Can we expect middle-aged adult children to acquire the nursing and homemaking skills to care adequately for parents? How should the young-old, those recently retired, care for their 80 or 90-year-old parents? Exactly the kind of care, the extent of sacrifice, and the amount of expense twentieth-century Christians should incur on behalf of aging parents is not explicit in Scripture.

In truth, our responsibility to our parents is a much more complicated challenge than the Christian community wants to face. When the topic arises, biblical texts are used to ensure that "honor" is given and that adult children care for their parents. To do less, after all, is to be worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8). Our practice, however, speaks louder than our words. Widespread acceptance of Social Security and government reimbursement for the long-term care of our aged parents, friends, and fellow church members represents an admission that family and church resources are unable to bear the full responsibility of meeting their needs. The care of the aged, then, appears to require a partnership of public and family resources.

Such a statement does not negate the point made by Paul in 1 Timothy. Rather, it recognizes that massive social change is putting pressure on families' ability to care for their aging members. The effects of industrialization will continue to change the function and structure of the family, shaping our social institutions such as government and social welfare agencies. Our once agrarian society based on consensus and traditional values is now a predominantly manufacturing and service economy that demands educated, skilled, and yes, mobile, young workers. Social changes such as these challenge the Christian community to discover the meaning of God's will for caring for our aging parents.

Furthermore, there is and will continue to be an explosion of population at the extremes of old age. Those age 85 and over comprise the fastest growing component of the U.S. population. The majority of the elderly still live independently and enjoy a normal range of daily activities. In fact, only about five percent of the elderly live in a long-term care institution. Yet for every disabled person who lives in a nursing home, two or more equally impaired elderly live with and are cared for by their families. The number of elderly who receive care from relatives is conservatively estimated at five million persons, which is roughly one in five persons age 65 and over. And by far the largest percent of the care is given by women.

Although these statistics show that many children are taking responsibility for caring for their parents, the relationships that result and the effect on the caregiver are only beginning to be understood. Over 20 years ago Margaret Blanken (1965) accurately predicted that middle-aged children who are caregivers would experience economic and emotional stress until they accepted the reversal of the parent-adult child roles and the amount of support they could feasibly give.

In a 1977 study, Judith Treas cited several factors that contribute to strain on families who care for their dependent parents. Declining family size means there will be fewer children to help care for parents in the future. The simultaneous trend toward longer life increases the probability of needing that help.

A second reason for strain is the changing role of women. Traditionally, sons took care of business matters and daughters maintained an emotional bond by visiting and helping with daily chores. Increasingly, women are no longer available for this traditional role. About half of middle-aged wives now take a paying job when children leave home, compared to about 11 percent who did so in 1940. This new work role often conflicts with caring for elderly parents, a task which can be time consuming.

Treas concluded that the nature of the relationship between generations is also changing. In other societies and in our own more agrarian past, children have and were expected to care for their aging parents in return for inheriting...
Caring for elderly parents

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the family farm or business. This exchange created an economic interdependence. Children in our post industrial society no longer depend on aged parents for their livelihood. Instead, they take jobs, pursue an education, or establish a career independent of their parents. Affection, gratitude, guilt, or a desire for parental approval still motivate children to “care” for their aging parents, but now in a more emotionally supportive, less concrete way. Parents seem to have nothing to give to the relationship.

What should our response be when our aged parent, friend, or church member requires assistance?

First, be aware that simplistic answers to the question of how to care for parents are not effective in providing guidance, but do induce guilt and introduce tension in family relationships. Each family has different relationships and resources which shape the kind of support it can give aging parents. A Christian family member’s motivation for caring for an elderly parent should never be based on material exchange or financial gain. Helping, in whatever form it takes, is part of the Biblical guideline for parent-child relations.

One part of a wise preparation for old age includes investing your time and energy into developing relationships with those you love. Recognizing this simple aspect of God’s truth, we live obediently before God’s command to love one another and also build an informal support network for the vicissitudes of old age.

Clearly, lifestyles and job requirements make it difficult for some families to help meet a parent’s needs. Families should consciously plan for how to provide tangible daily assistance as well as emotional support. Either approach to helping by itself will only add to the stress of the parents.

When families do provide daily physical help, they tend to heavily rely on older female spouses and adult daughters. Greater sharing of the support roles between both sons and daughters would reduce the stress on the daughters and give sons greater opportunity to honor and support their parents. The women who often provide most of the intensive care frequently need support and relief. As a result, they suffer severe curtailment of freedom and decreased privacy. Fatigue and resentment can reduce the quality of their care and interfere with their relationship, with their dependent parent.

There is more than one way to help elderly parents. It may be quite a relief for adult children to recognize their own roles as providing the care themselves or arranging to have it provided, or some combination of each of these. Which role one chooses depends on preference, availability, and skills.

Those who choose to do the physical work of taking care of their parent’s can minimize stress in several ways. Learn more about the aging process—its physical progression as well as its influence on mental abilities. Share the work with siblings, extended family, and close friends to provide regular breaks from the responsibility and prevent resentment. Schedule for yourself regular periods of extended respite. For instance, take two weeks off twice a year or as needed to refresh yourself. Respite care can be arranged with home-care agencies and many nursing homes. Utilize private-paid or agency-based help when you feel a need for more technical expertise or just to relieve the pressure on your time. Often agency-based, in-home services are on a sliding fee scale based on income. Finally, face up to your feelings and allow yourself to recognize your own love, compassion, respect, tenderness, sadness, indifference, fear, anxiety, anger, shame, hostility, and guilt.

Ask yourself if you accept your parent’s old age, if you like your aging parents, if you can accept a different role toward your parents. Are you at ease with your own aging? Remember that nursing homes are an appropriate place for severely impaired, aged parents. Families and older parents together need to sense when family resources can no longer meet a parent’s needs.

But even if we are able to care for our own parents, there is still another issue for Christians to face. Gaps in the availability of essential in-home services have put a strain on families who care for their parents: there also are elderly people in our society who are much more at risk. One in every four elderly have no children or siblings living close enough to help them with regular care. Rural communities often cannot provide essential services such as home health aids for personal care, in-home nursing, adult day care, respite care to relieve families who must be away, and homemaker services at the intensity needed and at affordable costs. Filling in these gaps is a service and satisfying unmet needs are a public justice issue requiring the commitment and compassion of Christians not only in their role as citizens but as biblical advocates for the poor and lonely.

Attempts to turn back the clock to a simpler economy and more traditional culture will not address the current needs of families and their aging parents. However, a review of these issues should prompt Christians to evaluate carefully the impact of their actions and the responsibility as an adult child. The location and type of home, the career, the option of a one versus two-wage earner household, the frequency of relocation, family size, and lifestyle commitments significantly affect the ability to support parents. When such choices reflect a communal effort among Christians to work out our roles in family, church, and community obediently, the process of caregiving is much more likely to support this fragile partnership between aging parents and their adult children.
Mark Vis, a junior from Bozeman, MT, was one of several black-tied SUB Club waiters.

SUB Club—it's non-alcoholic

Angela Struyk

On a SUB Club night, the Student Union Building coffee shop is transformed. A neatly dressed waitress greets those who step through the doors and brings them to a table. The lights are dim and candles flicker on every table. Christian contemporary music completes the atmosphere.

Shortly after seating the new arrivals, a waitress supplies them with a heaping bowl of popcorn and a menu. The deliciously described drinks sound even better after devouring a big bowl of popcorn.

Dordt alcohol policy aimed at prevention

The SUB Club is part of an effort by the college to fight pressures from our society that imply that to be "cool" in college you must drink, says Marion Van Soelen, Dordt's dean of students. Through Dordt's policies and such events as Alcohol Awareness Week, the Student Services Office is trying to make students aware of the dangers of alcohol misuse.

"We want to encourage students to live as responsible Christians in this area of their lives also and respond to those who are trapped in their dependency," says John De Jager, director of student life. People in our society, and also within our church and school communities have misused alcohol and become dependent on it. They are trapped and unable to make decisions about their use of alcohol, he says. "Alcoholism as an illness is an individual and communal problem that we must deal with," says De Jager.

Dordt's policy on use of alcohol reflects this situation. "We promote all state regulations," says Van Soelen. The new Iowa law says that any student not 21 by September 1, 1986, cannot drink alcoholic beverages until he is 21. For most students this means it is illegal to drink until they are seniors in college.

In addition, Dordt College has set a policy of no alcoholic beverages on campus whether students are 21 or not. A college handbook states, "In order to promote both the testimony of Dordt College and an educational atmosphere for all students and to remove a source of potential temptation or stumbling for students who may or may not have struggled with the abuse of or addiction to alcohol, alcohol will at no time be allowed on campus.

As in Dordt's supporting constituency, however, the use of alcohol can be a problem for some students. Policy offenders must meet with the dean of students and are held accountable for their actions. If Van Soelen finds any indication of dependency, he immediately refers the student for further counseling or assessment with the Sioux County Alcohol and Drug Rehabilitation Center. For willful offenders, a fine is levied.

Although Van Soelen says he has always dealt with students who drank on an individual basis, often referring them for further counseling, the official college policy was changed to reflect that approach three years ago.

Dordt's policy on use of alcohol willfully offenders are stiffly fined, but they will also be forced to deal with their alcohol habits through counseling. Students can be stiffly fined, but they will also be forced to deal with their alcohol habits through counseling."

Students and some professors relax together over ice cream drinks. The club is not a profit making organization—it usually makes enough money per event to break even. The club involves a group of nearly 30 students whose responsibilities include planning new events, decorating the SUB, publicizing the event, serving drinks, serving tables, shopping, or arranging entertainment. The club generally meets once a month.
"Real" Dutch spend year at Dordt

Lynn Otto

According to two freshmen on Dordt’s campus, the many students at Dordt with Dutch-sounding last names are definitely not Dutch. The people in northwest Iowa “sufficiently different” from the people they know in the Netherlands.

Kuiper and Smitt are really Dutch. Kuiper comes from Bennekom, the Netherlands, and Smitt, from Zwolle. Both came to the United States to study for a year. Why Dordt for these two?

Kuiper said he was surprised when he arrived in northwest Iowa. “I saw all the Dutch names in the phone book and thought ‘Did I get on the wrong plane?’” Kuiper jokes. “I never saw so many windmills in my life!”

But the two say that the people at Dordt and in northwest Iowa are “sufficiently different” from the people they know in the Netherlands.

Kuiper noted that American students seem more concerned about preparing for a financially stable career. Another difference, says Kuiper, is that “the American people are a little bit more open to people they don’t know.”

Both are enjoying their time here. “Dordt is nice, friendly, the profs also,” commented Smitt. He’s also pleased that “the study material is tough; I have to study hard to get by.”

Though Kuiper feels that education in the Netherlands is more demanding than in the U.S., he too thinks Dordt is “great.”

Having studied the English language since age twelve, he has no difficulty following the lectures. Kuiper is studying electrical engineering. Smitt is taking pre-medical courses. Both help teach Dutch conversation classes for Dordt students.

Kuiper and Smitt plan to return to the Netherlands this summer and continue their education at Dutch universities.

Lynn Otto works in the Dordt public relations office.

High school principals and guidance counselors will visit Dordt

Final plans for the Principal-Guidance Counselor Orientation Days are in progress. On April 23 and 24, principals and counselors from Christian high schools in Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, Colorado, Michigan, Ontario, Alberta, California, Washington, Wisconsin, and Missouri will spend two days on Dordt’s campus. They will participate in group breakfasts, lunches, and dinners; chapel, and campus tours. There will also be time for discussions with college administrators and other principals and counselors. In addition, the high school representatives will have scheduled conferences with students attending Dordt who graduated from their high schools.

In the past these days have proved worthwhile to both the college and the high schools. Dordt admissions personnel anticipate another good two days of meetings.

SCHOLARSHIPS

New scholarship for engineers

Beginning next fall the Interstates Electric and Engineering Scholarship will be awarded to a Dordt College sophomore or junior electrical engineering major. Interstates Electric is a Sioux Center, Iowa, electrical engineering and contracting firm.

Applicants for the scholarship must have a grade point average of at least 3.0 and demonstrate special aptitude and potential for a career in electrical engineering. Preference will be given to those interested in a career in power engineering.

The initial award will be $600. Financial need is not a consideration in selecting the recipient.

Geels awarded American State Bank Scholarship

Jeff Geels, a freshman from Sheldon, Iowa, is receiving $1200 toward his tuition at Dordt College. Last spring, Jeff, a senior at Western Christian High School in Hull, Iowa, was awarded the American State Bank Scholarship for Freshmen.

Jeff is currently enrolled as a business major. “I’m not sure what specific career I’d like to pursue,” he says, “but I want to go into business.” For now he is taking introductory business and general education requirement courses.
In the lower floor hallway of the science building, next to Dr. Delmar Vander Zee’s ‘66 office door, is a large map of North America. Brightly colored, round-topped pins are spread across the map in concentrated clusters where Dordt biology majors have settled and begun their careers. An accompanying display lists the variety of vocations these alumni have chosen. Included are such diverse occupations as teachers, dentists, farmers, doctors, jewelers, lawyers, hospital administrators, nurses, and ministers.

Most Dordt students take some biology as part of their liberal arts education. Some enroll for two years in the pre-nursing program. Ten to twenty students become biology majors each year.

Although they choose a variety of careers, a substantial number of them enter health-related professions.

Over the past years Dordt students, some with majors in biology, some in chemistry, and some in other areas, have established an excellent record of acceptance into medical schools. The latest statistics show nearly four out of five Dordt students who applied to medical school were accepted. “Mick’s honors standing underscores that fact.”

Several factors contribute to a strong biology program at Dordt. Students have ready access to experienced instructors who work closely with their students. “The relatively small ratio of students to professors makes teaching and learning more effective,” says Menne.

Biology faculty members are full-time professors and also carry on their own research in such areas as the development of the chloroplast, chicken anatomy, and the ecology of plants that formed coal. These interests not only keep faculty members involved in their field of expertise but also give students an opportunity to assist in research.

A number of students have spent summers at the college working with one of the professors. One summer two students carried out research under a NSF grant Vanderzee received to study chloroplasts. “They did much of the work,” says Vander Zee. Such opportunities, he feels, develop research skills and also inspire confidence as they use complex equipment and see how the research process works.

Many students also serve as lab assistants. They prepare materials for the labs and assist the professor in helping students with their lab projects. “We see students develop a sense of responsibility and commitment to their major through these experiences,” says Vander Zee.

The biology department facilities, though somewhat crowded, provide major and non-major biology students with the necessary equipment they need to do their work. “Microscopy is probably one of our strongest areas for equipment,” says Vander Zee.

A transmission electron microscope with supporting lab equipment has greatly expanded the kind of work possible for both professors and students. A light microscope video-attached to a high resolution screen and a VCR has also become a very important classroom tool for pointing out hard-to-find objects and reviewing slides observed earlier, says Professor James Mahaffy.

Dordt’s greenhouse, a large 5000 square foot facility, houses a permanent collection of exotic and tropical plants. It is used by both biology and agriculture students for class and individual projects. “We also study living things from local ecosystems,” says Vander Zee. Students make trips to the gallery forests of the Sioux River, the Iowa Lakeside Lab at Lake Okoboji, and the Missouri River Sand Dunes. And last but not least, says Vander Zee, is the prairie research plot on the college grounds, boasting native grasses and wild flowers which are becoming rare locally. An animal specimen collection, a plant herbarium of local flora, and a fossil rock collection all contribute to the learning resources available to students. “We’re basically well-equipped,” says Mahaffy.

“We watch our budget carefully and sometimes buy used equipment, but we have what we need to offer a rigorous program.”

All three of Dordt’s biology professors find the starting point for their work in the fact that the world they are studying is God’s. “This makes a fundamental difference in how we teach,” says Vander Zee. “I can approach environmental and stewardship concerns as a biblical responsibility.”

In dealing with issues such as evolution, abortion, drug use, and stewardship of our bodies, we unapologetically look to God’s Word for direction, says Menne. “One of our major concerns is to help students get a realistic, biblical understanding of the creation and their responsibility in it.”

Some biology students supplement their program at Dordt with a summer or more at AuSable Institute of Environmental Studies. AuSable, located in the north woods of Michigan, is a Christian institute committed to education in environmental stewardship. “A term spent at AuSable is a valuable extension of Dordt’s program,” says Vander Zee, who has taught at AuSable for several years.

The careers chosen by Dordt’s biology majors have changed over the past fifteen years. Initially most graduates became science teachers with a few entering other professional or medical programs. Today only a few choose teaching. Out of this year’s class of 12 biology majors, nine are hoping to enter some type of health-related career and three are training to be science teachers. Whatever their profession, biology majors leave Dordt with a strong background, challenged to be responsible Christians in their daily lives.

The biology department boasts having trained the largest number of Dordt alumni on the faculty. In addition to Mahaffy and Vanderzee, Ron Vog from the agriculture department, Paul Moes from the psychology department and John Holfland from theatre arts all graduated from Dordt with biology majors.
Beth Wissink is one of several students who combine business and computer science majors.

Computer students gain hands-on experience

Sally Jongsma

Dordt students interested in computer science have many opportunities to put their knowledge to work while they study.

According to Willis Alberda, dean of the natural sciences, each year the college employs nearly 40 students in computer-related jobs. Others participate in practicums at local businesses or institutions.

Students work in a variety of positions. Monitors supervise the computer labs. They are responsible for checking out software and manuals from the control room and helping students with questions they may have. A lab tutor holds lab sessions for Computer Science 101 students and helps them with problems they encounter in working on their assignments. Graders evaluate programs written by beginning computer science students.

For advanced students, there are other opportunities. Two students help maintain the college computer equipment. They check into programs that arise in the various offices, keep paper supplied, and replace ribbons. Another three students help with systems maintenance, investigating program problems and making changes when necessary. For example, one of the administrative offices may decide that they want the format for a report changed. If the office doesn't have the time or the staff to do it themselves, computer science students help revise the program.

Practicums also give invaluable concrete experience, says Alberda. Last semester senior Management Information Systems (MIS) majors each worked on a project with the college computer system or with an area business or organization. Dale Van Voorst, a senior MIS major from Sioux Center, Iowa, spent last semester as a systems designer at E.M.W. Groshopp, a Sioux Center business specializing in making small electric motors. Building on work done last year by Doug Wieland, from Sioux Center, Dale programmed a module to add customer ordering to the company's software package. The new program will allow Groshopp to determine more carefully what materials they need and when. Although the practicum is completed, Groshopp has hired Dale to continue his work on their system.

Alison Vander Zee, a senior accounting and MIS major from South Holland, Illinois, designed a record keeping system for Dordt's bookstore last semester. The program allows bookstore personnel to enter data on new books; course and textbook information; publisher addresses; inventory listings by titles, author, and publisher; and purchase order and textbook request forms. It also includes an accounting system that automatically updates itself when entries are made. The project is part of an ongoing plan to network all college operations.

Beth Wissink, from Sioux Center, another accounting and MIS major, based her project on her experience working at the Sioux Center Public Library. Because the library does not have the hardware necessary to implement a comprehensive system at this time, much of Beth's time was spent determining the requirements for a system that would fit the library's way of operating. As she investigated other programs, Beth found that there are commercial packages geared for small school libraries and large libraries, but there is little available for medium-sized libraries like Sioux Center's. She incorporated overdue notices, catalog entries, and circulation, ordering, and accounting modules in her design. Although some of the programming is finished, says Beth, it will take many hours to complete the package before it is usable.

Probably one of the most beneficial jobs for the student, says Alberda, is a summer workstudy position. Five or six people work throughout the summer to update and develop programs for the college's systems. Last summer three MIS students were working on an accounting system for the business office that Alberda is convinced would be saleable if marketed.

Because Dordt College uses microcomputers rather than a mainframe computer system, the business office has not been able to find a comprehensive non-profit system that will fit its needs, says Comptroller Darrel Raih. Last spring the business office contracted with MIS students Van Voorst, Dennis Beekman from Ren- ville, Minnesota, and Greg Boer from Ocheydan, Iowa, to develop a suitable program. At present, the office is running the new program with the old to make sure there are no flaws. "We hope to begin using the new system by next spring," says Raih.

"Our students are gaining excellent experience and developing some excellent programs," says Alberda. Others think so too. Beekman, who graduated in January with several years of experience at Dordt in workstudy positions, summer jobs, and practicums, is now working for a company in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The company has credited him with three years of experience for the work he did during college.

Students customize office computer systems

Dordt students have played a large role in computerizing the college's administrative offices. Five years ago when Dordt first received Title III funds to purchase computer equipment, the college opted to buy microcomputers instead of a larger mainframe. This seemed more feasible, says Alberda, since the grant came in three annual installments. But using a networked microcomputer system to handle the college operations meant that, in most cases, there were no commercial software packages available. That fact has helped both the college and the students, Alberda feels. Instead of having to adapt to another way of operating, the academic, admissions, advancement, business, and student services offices now have programs written specifically for their needs. In addition, developing the programs internally has given students experience and saved the college thousands of dollars.

Maintaining the system is also more flexible, Alberda feels. All of Dordt's programs are written in a higher level language, which means that they are more like English than the common computer languages used. This cuts down on programming time and simplifies the process of making revisions.

"Most people don't understand the computing capabilities of microcomputers," says Alberda. Dordt's students set up an everything it needs to. In addition it is customized to the offices' specifications.
GER 300 connects faith, learning, and work

Sally Jongsma

GER 300 is a new course "on trial" at Dordt College. As the final course in Dordt's required core curriculum, GER (general education requirement) 300 gives junior and senior students an opportunity to relate what they have learned in their specific disciplines to their lives after they leave college.

The idea of a course like GER 300 has been discussed at Dordt for several years. Former president Rev. B.J. Haan once remarked that Dordt needed to continue to find ways to help students carry their Christian vision into "life." In 1979, Associate Academic Dean Abraham Bos proposed a course that would look at vocations in light of the Christian's place in society. Some graduates also expressed a need for such a senior-level course.

In 1980 the curriculum committee reexamined the general education requirements and began to shape a course that would assume the Christian perspective taught in introductory courses and draw on the specific knowledge students gained in their individual disciplines. GER 300 students would confront problems, issues, and situations that make living a life of Christian discipleship difficult. "Such a course," says Dr. J.B. Hulst, professor of theology and philosophy, was appointed to outline a GER 300 course and the faculty decided to offer the course for five semesters. During that time a faculty committee would oversee an extensive evaluation.

Vander Stelt taught the first three sections of GER 300. He encouraged students to reflect on the practical issues involved in living a Christ-centered lifestyle. To do that he lectured on such topics as vocation, witness, and working out our calling, and threats to those efforts. Students read books like Idols of Our Time by C.S. Lewis, the Greenough File by Os Guinness, and At Work and Play by Frey, Ingram, McWhorter, and Romanowski.

An important part of the course, says Vander Stelt, was the group project. In each of the three classes the 70 students were divided into groups of no more than ten students representing both sexes and a variety of majors. Students worked on projects such as profiling Christians who had made a difference in the world because of their Christian commitment, interviewing people in a variety of vocations about the problems and possibilities of living covenantally in one's profession, examining whether some professions or careers are not suitable for Christians, looking at the main pressures in our modern world that make it difficult to be a responsible Christian in our vocation, and understanding how cultural patterns and historical traditions influence our perception of vocations.

Dr. Daryl Vander Kooi, professor of communication, is teaching the course this semester. Although the content of the course is basically the same, Vander Kooi is using an incubator-like atmosphere they find at college." Meyer feels that although some minor changes in implementing the course may be helpful, putting together senior students with different areas of expertise, who undoubtedly have different ideas on how to live out their faith, is good preparation for their lives after college.

Most of the students who took the course agree with Meyer. In addition to writing detailed reactions to a variety of aspects of the course, students were asked whether they felt the course should remain a required element in the curriculum. Out of 112 students who took the course last semester, 81 felt it definitely should remain a requirement, 21 were unsure, and ten felt it should be offered but not required.

Kristi Vander Kooi, a senior from Woodland Park, Colorado, says she first was unhappy about having to take the course. Because Kristi is double-majoring in business and communications, she already has little room for electives. "But some of my roommates took GER 300 the semester before and it seemed to spark good discussions. By the time I had to take the course I was no longer so opposed to it."

Overall Kristi was pleased with GER 300. She appreciated the opportunity to interact with students from different disciplines. "I met people I had never had classes with. But more importantly the course made us think. I don't know how others felt, but most of my discussions were in the apartment with my circle of friends. I think it would have been good to have more course time to talk with people you don't see every day."

"I thought the course was very worthwhile," says Kristi. "I think it's good to require the course although I can understand why people in majors that have little room for electives resent another requirement." And, as she sees it, students who hadn't really struggled with their Christian vision didn't do it in GER 300 either. "If you're not receptive, it's difficult change your attitude," she feels.

Mark Kelderman, a senior education major from Inwood, Iowa, transferred to Dordt in his junior year. "I didn't have as much exposure to the Dordt way of thinking," he says. GER 300 helped Mark think about some things he hadn't thought about before. "Idols and Greenough put into words some of the things I'd been thinking about," he says.

"The course's approach was like a practicum—putting into action the beliefs we've learned," says Mark.

Throughout the course, Mark says, he found himself reflecting on his beliefs. In some cases this reflection reinforced them, in others it helped him to see issues in a new light.

For Mark too, the course was definitely worthwhile. "In college, students are coddled," he says. "Society is different. GER 300 gave a vision of the evil but also of our part in the good creation." He continued, "I don't think a grade can reflect what I got from the course, but I learned a great deal through my reading and the course work."

There are still two and one half semesters to go before any decision will be made as to whether to include GER 300 as a permanent part of the core curriculum. Many opinions must be heard and probably many changes made. One problem that all of those involved foresee is that there may be more interest in the idea than time to teach the course. The original plan called for several faculty members to offer the course periodically. Most departments don't have extra slots in their teaching schedules. Nevertheless there is a strong commitment to continue to hone and strengthen GER 300 during the next two years.

"GER 300 gives senior students an opportunity to relate what they have learned in their specific disciplines to their lives after they leave college."
Renowned Luther scholar gives Staley lectures

Dr. Heiko A. Oberman, recognized worldwide as one of the foremost Luther scholars, delivered this year's Staley lectures. Oberman, who is currently professor of medieval, Renaissance, and Reformation history at the University of Arizona, also taught at Harvard University and at the University of Tubingen in Germany. While in Tubingen, he founded the Institute for Reformation Studies, which has since become the leading center for Reformation studies in the world. In 1984 he took a position at the University of Arizona because of his wife's arthritic condition. He continues to lecture in countries around the world.

Oberman comes from an unbroken succession of German ministers dating back to the 16th century. Born in the Netherlands, Oberman grew up in an atmosphere in which the Christian saints of the past were an important part of his family tradition. Dr. Oberman recalls that his father's library was filled with works of Augustine, Luther, Calvin and other Reformed giants of the faith.

Despite this background, Oberman did not intend to study theology. He was trained as a medical doctor, but while in Indonesia during World War II he became interested in theology and has devoted his life to studying the work of the reformers.

Both of Dr. Oberman's lectures, "Luther: Man Between God and the Devil" and "Calvin: A Challenge to Contemporary Theology" were infused with scholarly insight and practical challenge. Drawing upon his own work and reflections, Oberman presented fresh interpretations of both Luther and Calvin and did so in such a way that the spotlight was focused on his subjects and not on his own research. The ideas of Luther and Calvin and various historical developments at the time of the Reformation were brought to life and shown to be relevant to our time and situation. In the first lecture Oberman focused on the reality of the Devil for Luther and how he could rest secure while being attacked by the Devil, knowing that the Lord was at work in his life. The second lecture portrayed Calvinism not as a doctrine of fatalism, but a doctrine of joy, assurance, and faith that can electrify the life of the Christian.

Dr. Oberman is presently working on a book on John Calvin. He says that Calvin is presenting more of a challenge than Luther due to the difference in their writing styles. According to Dr. Oberman, Calvin is more subtle. In fact, Calvin has been such a challenge that Oberman recently ripped up much of what he had written and is starting over.

Dordt installs paper burner for heating

Dordt College will soon be using refuse derived fuel (RDF) to heat its campus. A burner which will use recycled cardboard and paper was installed last December, according to Bernard De Wit, vice president for business affairs at Dordt.

The alternative fuel project is being funded in part by a $97,000 grant from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Energy Bureau. The grant, which will fund both the Dordt project and a similar project at Sioux Center High School, was applied for on behalf of the schools by the city of Sioux Center. Dordt's portion of the grant will pay for approximately 70% of the project.

De Wit expects that the alternative fuel will save the college between $15,000 and $20,000 annually in heating costs. "The payback on our share of the costs for the project will be under two years," he states.

The project involves converting one of the four boilers in the college's main heating plant into an RDF burner. The boiler will then burn pellets made of compressed cardboard and paper. "We anticipate that this boiler will supply 80% of our heating needs," says De Wit.

Besides saving on heating bills, Dordt sees additional benefits in the project. "This source of fuel will decrease our dependence on natural gas and fuel oil," points out De Wit. Dordt will also recycle cardboard and paper through the company which will be supplying the pellets. This will result in some savings on refuse disposal costs and will be a better use of a resource than dumping paper and cardboard at the county landfill.

'86 graduates find work

The Dordt College Placement Office recently reported that 95.7 percent of last year's graduates were placed within six months after graduation. Of those employed 27.4 percent have teaching positions, 43.5 percent are working in business or industry, 5.4 percent work in social services, and 18.8 percent are continuing their education. Ten of the graduates found temporary jobs or work not related to their major.

"Sketching Northwest Iowa" was the title of a January show by Norman Mathies, associate professor of art. Most of the drawings were done in brown ink on colored matt boards. The thirteen sets of four drawings captured a variety of visual forms from Northwest Iowa landscapes.
Actors honored

Three students were nominated for acting awards by the American College Theatre Festival. Judges observed Dordt's fall production of Thornton Wilder's Our Town. Senior Letitia Collins, Junior Clark Huisman, and Freshman Lisa Van Dyk were nominated for the Irene Ryan Acting Award and the Outstanding Technical Design award.

The American College Theatre Festival held in Iowa City, Iowa, on January 21-24. Although none of the students received the final award, the nomination itself is an honor, says Dr. Verne Meyer, professor of theatre arts.

Dordt was one of eight schools out of 37 universities and 23 colleges in the Region 5 chapter of the American College Theatre Festival to receive the maximum number of awards allowable for one production.

Rep theatre plans tour

The Dordt College Repertory Theatre is making plans for a May tour of communities in Michigan, Michigan, and Ontario. Dr. Verne Meyer, professor of theatre arts, and nine theatre arts students are developing a series of productions and workshops to present to Christian high schools and local congregations in those areas.

For high school chapes, the troupe will use masks and mime to explore a broad pro-life theme, says Director Meyer. A comic, entertaining work using improvisation and mime will be available for high school assemblies.

In addition to the group presentations, Meyer and the students will lead workshops for high school students interested in drama. Some topics being planned are stage violence, three-dimensional make-up techniques, construction and use of masks, and adapting Scripture passages for presentations in chapels.

"We are also hoping to lead some evening workshops with church liturgy committees. These workshops will explore ways to incorporate dramatic readings of Scripture using interpretive and choral reading techniques into worship services," says Meyer.

The troupe tentatively plans to be in Chicago on May 9-11, in Michigan on May 12-17, and in Ontario on May 18-21. If your school or church is interested in hosting one of these presentations, contact Dr. Verne Meyer, Chairman, Theatre Arts Department.

Dordt College
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250.

There is no charge for the presentations.

Sports

Brook receives NAIA awards

Vonda Brook, a senior at Dordt, is a difficult person to reach these days. At 8:00 each morning she arrives at Western Christian High School in Hull, Iowa, to practice track Senior physical education. By 1:00 p.m. she is at Rock Valley Christian School in Rock Valley, Iowa, to practice track until 4:00 p.m. After she is finished there for the day, Vonda hustle back to Dordt for basketball practice or a game.

Vonda has enjoyed her practice teaching so far. She says that it has helped her to view sports differently. At Western, she says, the students are taught to enjoy fitness as well as sports. Enjoyment of physical fitness can continue for the rest of their lives. "Teaching this way has really made me look at sports in a different light. I see my time on the basketball court as my means of staying physically fit, as well as a time to socialize with others."

"In college, you can look at sports as a time to socialize because you do spend a lot of time together with your teammates. We have pre- and post-game meals together, we travel together, and we have devotions together in the locker room before games. We get to know each other, and friendships that last beyond the season can develop." Once out of college, Vonda notes, students set their own habits and perspectives on the place of sports.

Brook has been involved in many different sports since junior high. "In grade school I was unaware of how big sports were in high school. And in high school, I was clueless as to how big a business it is in college. I never realized how important recruiting was."

Vonda's freshman year was spent at Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. She has attended Dordt for the past three years, playing on the women's softball, volleyball, and basketball teams.

Participating in these sports has earned Brook many awards. This year she was awarded NAIA Academic All-American and Honorable Mention All-American for volleyball.

The Academic All-American award means much to Brook. This is the third time she has received the award—once for volleyball and twice for softball. The Academic All-American award is presented to players outstanding in their sport as well as in their academic work.

Brook has also received the NAIA All-District and All-Conference awards in volleyball and softball.

Looking at the future, Brook sees herself teaching either grade school, high school, or both. She has also considered working toward a masters degree in either motor learning or physiology of exercise.

I'm taking a few P.E. classes," she said.

Being the star center on the team has meant several awards for Van Soelen. Last year he received NAIA All-District, All-Conference, and was placed on the second NAIA All-American basketball team.

Van Soelen has one year left at Dordt, and has been thinking about how he can continue sports in the future. Presently, he is hoping to be able to play ball in Europe for his remaining years. Van Soelen explained that basketball is a growing sport in Italy, the Netherlands, and other countries. Large companies fund a team and pay their players' salaries.

Although basketball is Van Soelen's biggest sport, he also pitches and plays shortstop on Dordt's baseball team and plays on Dordt's golf team.
The professional involvements of Dordt faculty members outside of the classrooms reveal Dordt's commitment to provide educational leadership in the Christian community as well as among its own students. By sharing these activities, we hope to provide fellow Christians with further resources, ideas, and encouragement as they work to be of service in Christ's kingdom.

Ron Vos, director of the Agriculture Stewardship Center, and Chris Goethart, assistant professor of agriculture, gave a presentation on January 20 titled "Changing Values in Agriculture" as part of Dordt's Natural Science Colloquia. Included in the presentation were the results of experiments with alternative crops raised at Dordt's.

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