French 102 Brings Faculty and Students Together

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Sitting among the mostly 18-20-year-olds are some of Dordt’s own faculty, notecards and French textbooks spread out in front of them, studying alongside other students for a quiz they are about to take. Dr. Leah Zuidema, associate provost and dean for curriculum and instruction, is among them. She signed up for French 101 last fall to prepare for her time in France in October 2018 as a Fulbright scholar. What she learned allowed her to better understand higher education in another country and to connect with colleges in that country. As she’s continued her French studies and learned more from van Beek, her goals have widened.

“Deepening my knowledge of French is a way to love my neighbor, in the broadest sense—to be prepared for interactions or opportunities in everyday life, work, and travel, and to better understand and appreciate cultures connected with the French language,” she says.

Zuidema is joined by a business professor who plans to use French in future missionary work.

Zuidema says that learning alongside students also helps her as dean because she’s come to better understand the needs of students and the ways in which professors can navigate those challenges.

“Part of our work as professors is to help students understand that learning is about overall progress, not perfection,” Zuidema says. “We truly need to help students understand what it means that God calls us to learn, and we need to be faithful and persistent in following that calling, even when course work is difficult or schedules are busy.”

Van Beek has taught several classes that have included both faculty and community members.

“'It is more like what happens in real life, where all age groups are mixed in different situations,' he says. ‘I hope this environment creates a great learning community and that it encourages and stimulates all class participants to always put in their best effort.”

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