

New Faculty Seminar Focuses on What Matters

Lydia Marcus
Dordt University

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NEW FACULTY SEMINAR FOCUSES ON WHAT MATTERS

For decades, new full-time Dordt University faculty have gathered at the beginning of August to prepare for their academic service at Dordt, meeting weekly or bi-monthly during the school year to discuss teaching and the Reformed worldview, share questions and experiences, and develop relationships across disciplines and levels of teaching experience.

Today's New Faculty Seminar is led by Education Professor Dr. Dave Mulder ('98) and Dean for Curriculum and Instruction and Theatre Professor Dr. Teresa Ter Haar.

"Dordt is the third Christian university I've taught at," says Ter Haar. "The other two universities also have new faculty orientations/seminars—a lot of institutions do—but the faith-based and academic goals of the institution impact the shape of the program. I appreciate the structure of ours."

During the fall semester, the seminars focus on the nuts and bolts of managing a college course, says Mulder.

"We start with thinking about teaching, and then in the spring our focus becomes more philosophical. We lay out the contours of the Reformed perspective and use that as a lens for our teaching practice. How does the Reformed perspective shape your curriculum? And how do you help students to understand that our faith really matters to our teaching?"



JAMIN VER VELDE ('99)

In Dordt's New Faculty Seminar, new faculty learn from experienced faculty and experienced faculty find they learn from their new colleagues.

“The students are always at the center of what we do and the questions that we ask at Dordt. The desire of our heart is to do better for them all the time.”

— Dr. Teresa Ter Haar

In addition to the regular themed meetings, new faculty are paired with a faculty mentor from a different department early in the fall semester. These pairs can meet as often as they like and are encouraged to sit in on each other's classes occasionally.

"The idea is that we are all helping each other to learn and to grow in our teaching; none of us is done learning to be a better teacher. New faculty can learn from experienced faculty, and experienced faculty can learn from new faculty too," says Ter Haar.

Instructor of Social Work Leah (Reitsma, '91) Mouw, who came to teach at Dordt in 2020 after years of practicing social work, says she appreciates the opportunities to develop relationships provided through the New Faculty Seminar. "In the seminars, we got to hear what other new faculty members were dealing with and what questions they had. That was significant to

building relationships," says Mouw. "It was also really helpful to meet with my faculty mentor. We would go to lunch and brainstorm together, and I could get some direction from her. She has become a friend."

"I think this seminar is important because we want our students to have the best possible experience and to be working with faculty who feel armed and ready to jump into this pretty amazing opportunity," says Ter Haar. "The students are always at the center of what we do and the questions that we ask at Dordt. The desire of our heart is to do better for them all the time. Our students are not monolithic, and they are constantly changing over time. We want to help our new faculty feel prepared to serve them well."

LYDIA MARCUS ('17)

