

## Defender Crops Sow Seeds of Growth

Bethany Van Voorst

*Dordt University*, [bethany.vanvoorst@dordt.edu](mailto:bethany.vanvoorst@dordt.edu)

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Zylstra is able to help with facilitating on-campus and community events during the last election cycle. He has been involved in Student Government all four years at Dordt, from representing his residence hall to serving as Student Government president. He's also thankful for the opportunity to get to know faculty members and other students well.

"Senator Jeff Taylor is a wonderful professor; his classes are really enjoyable," adds Zylstra.

Dordt has shaped him as a leader, he says. "If you're going to be a state representative, then you should have leadership qualities. I've been able to develop and discover those as I've been here at Dordt."

In the end, Zylstra didn't win the race; he received 2,201 votes (48 percent), whereas his opponent received 2,421 (52 percent). Still, he is grateful for the experience.

"What we accomplished was considered impossible by many, and we certainly have a lot to be proud of," he wrote in a Facebook post. "I knocked on over 3,400 doors and met with thousands of people throughout this process. I'm encouraged by the people I met and am excited about the future of Northwest Iowa."

What will he do now? He's not sure yet. As a planner, he says that "kind of freaks me out a little bit, because most of my friends have their post-graduation plans in place. But I trust that God will lead me to what's next."

SARAH MOSS ('10)



Zylstra was one of 370 students who walked across the B.J. Haan Auditorium stage on May 13 and graduated.



Dale Vos has worked as a division manager of a midsize retail agriculture business, a farmer, a consultant for Iowa State University, and a production engineer.

## DEFENDER CROPS SOW SEEDS OF GROWTH

Defender Crops, a new agriculture technology class, gives students a chance to manage 80 acres of crop land at Dordt's Agriculture Stewardship Center (ASC). This class provides students with the opportunity to make all kinds of decisions on how best to steward the land, from production to business to marketing management.

"The students decide on all inputs with the advice of the agronomy team at Hull Coop," says Dale Vos, instructor of agriculture technology.

The class pays rent for Dordt's land and custom rates for the equipment used. "This is a new approach to the class and makes it very realistic. Students will learn to manage profits and losses throughout the years," says Vos.

In the past, all decisions at the ASC were typically made by the farm steward. With this new program, students gain more responsibility and hands-on learning experiences at the ASC.

Andrew Eisenga participated in Defender Crops this year. He grew up on a family farm in McBain, Michigan, so he's very familiar with farming.

"Our main crop is potatoes, but we also grow wheat, corn, black beans, green beans, and hay," he says. "I hope to go back to my family farm and start full-time there."

Thanks to Defender Crops, he was able to continue honing his skills. This past year, he enjoyed being able to plant 20 acres of corn at the ASC.

"My favorite part about Defender Crops is that we as students get to make the decisions and do all the work that goes with it," he says.

Sophomores like Eisenga determined what seed to use, figured out the tillage plan, and picked the fertilizer. They then sent the plan to the freshmen, who—working alongside Vos—made sure the plan was ready to go for the spring.

"The students decided the crop rotation based on profitability, not popularity," says Vos. "That was a struggle for them because many of them just wanted to plant corn, but that wasn't the best management decision. They decided on tillage practices; that was another struggle because they like to run tractors in the field."

The students also had to learn about sharing equipment as well as how to adapt to weather and other challenges.

"It was a blessing to watch the students grow in their knowledge and abilities over the course of the year," says Vos. "This class helps our students gain the skills they need to succeed in the ever-changing agriculture industry."

BETHANY VAN VOORST