

## Graduate Dinners Become Tradition

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### Recommended Citation

Moss, Sarah (2022) "Graduate Dinners Become Tradition," *The Voice*: Vol. 67: Iss. 3, Article 11.

Available at: <https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice/vol67/iss3/11>

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## FACULTY NOTES

Professor of Chemistry and Planetary Sciences  
**Dr. Channon Visscher** ('00) wrote an article titled



"Planetary Atmospheres: Chemistry and Composition" for the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Planetary Science*. He is also participating the Exoplanet Summer Program with the Other Worlds Laboratory at the University of California-Santa Cruz, where he will join a group of collaborators to study weather on brown dwarf planets and exoplanets. They have also received some funding to analyze results from the James Webb Space Telescope.

Instructor of Business Administration **Dale Zevenbergen** ('92) has been named director of the K&K Dooyema Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. He looks forward to providing students and alumni with best business practices and guidance rooted in a Reformed Christian context.



Instructor of Engineering **Dr. Ben Saarloos** ('99) earned his Ph.D. in Systems Engineering from Colorado State University. His dissertation is entitled "Renewable Energy in Community: Impacts of the Grid."



This summer, there are **eight undergraduate research projects involving nine faculty members and 15 undergraduate students**. The research, which is supported by the Kielstra Center for Research and Grants, includes developing curriculum for a study trip to Israel, completing a translation of a Christian faith and worldview book, gaining understanding of microbial species found in aquatic environments, and more.

Moss: Graduate Dinners Become Tradition

# GRADUATE DINNERS BECOME TRADITION

Every April, President Erik and Professor of Education Dr. Barb Hoekstra invite upcoming graduates to the Founders Room at their home, where they enjoy a meal, share advice, and chat with students one last time before commencement.

It's a bookend experience for students, who, as freshmen, partake in a Core 100 dinner with the Hoekstras. At the graduate dinner, students get a chance to reflect on their two or four years at Dordt and respond to a series of questions:

- Other than location and weather, if you had a magic wand and could choose to change anything about Dordt, what would you change? What would you keep the same?
- What are Dordt's top strengths that you'd share with a prospective student?
- What should Dordt look like 25 years from now? What should change, and what should never change?

President and Dr. Hoekstra as well as other faculty and staff members write down students' responses to these questions. President Hoekstra and the leadership team compile and review the notes each year and consider students' perspectives. Students' responses have led to such on-campus updates as trayless dining in the Commons, improvements to on-campus wifi, curricular changes, and parking.

"I get to hear valuable feedback from students about their experience at Dordt—both good and bad," he says. "I think it's important to hear the ways we as an institution fell short in the students' minds, as we can find ways to get better in order to seek continuous improvement."

The most common response to what shouldn't change at Dordt? The university's worldview and firm foundation in biblical truths.

Parks Brawand, a senior engineering major, says his group discussed this at



JAMIN VER VELDE ('99)

**Students also hear about resources offered in the Career Development Center and the benefits of being connected to local alumni chapters.**

length. "At our table, we talked about how the Reformed Christian identity should stay the same. Without it, Dordt wouldn't have a strong basis. We discussed how our sense of community grows from that; the relationships are so rich here because of Dordt's identity as a Christian school."

"It's encouraging that, during their final weeks at Dordt, students can clearly articulate why it's so important for Dordt to stay true to our mission and vision, and how the Core Program has brought value to the students' lives," adds Hoekstra.

In addition to asking students for their feedback, President and Dr. Hoekstra share some words of wisdom with students.

"We tell students, 'These are 10 things that we think are important or that we've learned the hard way,'" says President Hoekstra. "We're not your parents, but we do love you, and as you leave Dordt, these are things we hope you never forget."

Brawand most appreciated the last point: that he shouldn't "buy into the idea that you are the center of the universe."

"It's a reminder that, once you graduate, the world doesn't revolve around you," he says. "Life isn't meant to be lived selfishly; it's to be lived faithfully and in service to God."

Hannah Vanderhooft, a senior who double-majoring in English and theology, appreciated the encouragement to plug into good Christian community wherever she ends up after Dordt.

"They also talked about being stewards of what we have. Barb mentioned that

she thrifts a lot of her clothes, and it's important for us to be aware of the impact that our possessions have on us."

It's been over eight years since the Hoekstras began hosting graduate dinners in their home, and they plan to continue the tradition for years to come.

"Commencement has its place, and I am thankful that I get to shake students' hands at the B.J. Haan Auditorium, but I want to connect with students one on one when I can, and the graduate dinners provide a chance to do that," says President Hoekstra.

SARAH MOSS ('10)

## WORDS OF WISDOM

1. Know that God goes before you. He's the center of all, and he has called you to work with him and for him each and every day for your joy and his glory.
2. Stay in touch with God in multiple ways—prioritize personal devotions, attend church faithfully, and develop a group of Christian friends.
3. Your education never stops. Consider a master's degree in your field, read books within your discipline, join a book club, read news magazines. Become wise like a serpent.
4. Put yourself around Christians and non-Christians who don't agree with you on every point. Know that non-Christians are watching. Spread the Gospel without always needing to use words.
5. Get involved in the local community in which God calls you to live. Find a church home, serve on boards, volunteer your time, build the kingdom, and bloom where you are planted (and wear Dordt gear when you do!)
6. Financially, put yourself in a position to be able to quit your job at any time. Learn to budget, drive a used car, buy second-hand furniture.
7. Stay in touch with this place. The Career Development Center and Alumni Office are here for you for the rest of your life. We've invested in you, and we want to cheer for you, encourage you, and network with you. We hope you'll invest back in your alma mater and encourage young people to come on campus visits.
8. If you marry, focus your relationship on building up God's kingdom through mutual encouragement, support, and commitment. Consider adoption—if we're serious about being pro-life, Christians need to consider taking in children. It just might be the best evangelistic effort you can make.
9. If you remain single, connect with friends who support and encourage one another through the various stages of life. Realize that being single gives you unique opportunities to serve others.
10. Don't buy into the idea that YOU are the center of the universe and that the goal is to have as much fun as you can and die with the most money. God is the center of the universe and we are called to glorify him and testify to his great love for us in this creation and in Christ Jesus.



## GIVING FROM THE HEART

Several months ago, I spoke with a married couple who are Dordt faculty members, alumni, donors, and parents of a current student. Although our kids are similar in age, the oldest of their three children graduated from Dordt in May while the oldest of our four will begin his freshman year this fall.

As we talked about what brought each of them to Dordt as students, how they met, where they thought their careers were headed, and what brought them back, one of the many things they said stuck with me: "No matter how much fun you had as an undergrad, the challenges you sometimes face as an employee, or even how much love you think you have as a donor, everything changes when your child comes to Dordt as a student."



It's easy to lose perspective. On any given day, our enthusiasm can ebb and flow. What we once thought worth every sacrifice can lose its luster based on the current price of gas or how little sleep we got the night before. It's our uncanny ability to experience both joy and jadedness in 60 seconds that may help explain why we are drawn to stories and experiences that refresh our perspective and revive our soul—moments and seasons in life that help us realign our priorities and reestablish our goals.

It's why as I accompanied our son on a campus visit day and experienced the excitement and heartfelt enthusiasm of Dordt faculty and staff, my love and respect for my co-workers grew. And it's why, when we give not out of obligation nor only out of abundance, that our perspective is refreshed and our soul revived.

KAREN VAN SCHOUWEN ('01),  
DIRECTOR OF ANNUAL GIVING