

## Dr. Melanie Wynja

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# Dr. Melanie Wynja

PROFESSOR OF NURSING





Research and scholarship at Dordt University involves collaboration, innovation, and plenty of “aha” moments. Here’s a look at some of the Dordt faculty who are doing research and scholarship in their own unique ways and in an effort to live out Dordt’s mission to “work effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life.”

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SARAH MOSS ('10)

**D**r. Melanie Wynja has a passion for simulation in nursing. “It’s such a great learning experience and truly helps students to be better prepared to go out and serve as nurses in God’s kingdom,” she says. “It helps students provide safer care as well as look more holistically at processes within the healthcare team and environment.”

In nursing, simulation often involves the use of a manikin, a full-body patient simulator that possesses human anatomy and physiology. Nursing students use manikins to safely learn clinical skills.

“Manikin-based training may be viewed as exciting and fun by some, and it can be, but doing so with best-practice pedagogy ensures a quality learning experience,” says Wynja.

Wynja has been involved in simulation scholarship through multiple collaborations, some of which are in the process of becoming formal research. She has made both state and national simulation presentations.

Her research focuses primarily on faculty development related to the pre-briefing (preparation) phase of a simulation-based experience. The goal is to promote

student psychological safety, which would hopefully increase the amount of information that a student’s memory can hold. This is an area of growth that’s needed in the simulation field, she says.

Wynja is currently working within a nursing sector of an international simulation organization to develop tools that can be used in the pre-briefing phase of the simulation-based experience. She is working closely with simulationists from Fresno State University, New York University, and Durham College in Toronto.

“The project is in the literature review phase and could go in a variety of directions,” says Wynja.

As a faculty member, Wynja is grateful to be able to engage in scholarship that can have an impact on nursing education and healthcare more broadly as she tries to improve student outcomes at Dordt.

“The simulation modality we are blessed to have integrated into our nursing curriculum as part of clinical learning here at Dordt allows a safe environment for students to practice their clinical judgment and critical thinking skills,” adds Wynja. “This better prepares them for life after graduation.”