



Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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What do Professors do all Summer?

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Abstract

"It's a time to take a breath, re-energize, and re-center while also reconnecting with friends and family."

Posting about the summer rhythm of life for five professors from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<https://inallthings.org/what-do-educators-do-all-summer/>

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Comments

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A few snapshots from professors regarding how they spend their summer months.

Dave Mulder, a professor of education at Dordt U.

All the frenetic energy that the last weeks of the semester bring always makes me long for a much-needed change-of-pace. And truthfully, that's the way I think of summers as a professor; it isn't really time "off." It's a different rhythm that I think is essential for those of us who teach! Speaking only for myself, I not only *desire* the different rhythm that summer brings, I *require* that different rhythm. The reality is that as passionate teachers who love our work, many of us can find it challenging to step away from the classroom—and this is the truth for me too: I'm teaching two courses online for our Master of Education program this summer. I am still busy "enough" with teaching during the summer months, but because my courses are online there is a different kind of flexibility for me. I still usually go into the office most days, but I also have the opportunities to strike a balance between learning, and rest & recreation during my summer change-of-pace. Each summer I usually read at least 4 or 5 professional books that relate to my teaching or research, so that's the "learning" piece.

For the rest and recreation aspects, I do a variety of different things. I set a goal each year to pedal at least 2000 miles on my bicycle, and I'm close to 750 miles for this year as I am writing this. I try to get outdoors to hike or paddle my kayak regularly throughout the summer. And in contrast the heavier, academic reading I do, I always try to read some things that are just fluffy, escapist fiction—I love spy thrillers, so I usually read at least half a dozen of them during the summer months. So while summers are often still plenty full for me between teaching, professional reading, and outdoor adventures, it's much more at my own pace. My life is rich and full!

Mike Janssen, professor of mathematics at Dordt U.

The academic year is neatly divided into three parts: fall, spring, and summer. While the focus of fall and spring is teaching courses, the summer is more flexible. In recent years, I've

supervised several summer undergraduate research projects and taught a summer course. This year, in keeping with my finitude, I opted to slow down. Aside from one conference in August and prep for a couple of fall courses which are still fairly new, I am taking time to reflect on various aspects of my work. This includes practical reflection on organizational/workflow choices to—hopefully!—enable more efficient year-round work (perhaps the Johnny.Decimal system could be a useful to organize my things?). It also means time spent reflecting on ideas and documents foundational to our work at Dordt—the *Educational Task, Framework*, and the Reformed creeds and confessions.

Kayt Frisch, professor of biomedical engineering at George Fox University

I really appreciate the change in rhythm that comes with the summer season of the academic calendar. I'm still working, but at a slower pace and with more self-determination. During the summer I get to focus my work time on professional development activities – right now I'm doing a self-study course in python programming – and the research activities that get squeezed to the margins during the school year. As part of the research, I usually supervise 1-3 student workers, meeting with them regularly to help them develop their skills while they help me move my research program forward. It's not all work though. The slower pace of the summer in academia gives me time to take on more of the day-to-day parenting of my school-age kids, disabusing me of my school-year fantasy that I might like to be a stay-at-home-parent. Along the way, my family and I also enjoy taking advantage of our flexible schedules to spend lots of time outdoors – hiking and camping in the beautiful Pacific Northwest.

Joshua Hollinger, professor of economics at Dordt U.

After finishing my first year teaching at Dordt, I'm excited to take a step back and get ready for year two. Last summer I defended my PhD. dissertation, we moved halfway across the country to Sioux Center, and over winter break we had our first child. I am looking forward to having more time to prepare for the fall semester. It will be my first time teaching two of my fall classes, and I'm revamping the two courses I've taught before, so I'm hoping to do a lot of course preparation this summer. Additionally, this summer provides a chance to focus more on work outside of my normal classes. I'm continuing my work on developing some online courses, getting back into some research related to my dissertation, and making plans for what the economics program at Dordt could look like over the next few years. Lastly, it's nice to have some flexibility to travel while working remotely and taking some time off. We'll be out of state for most of June on a long road trip, visiting my wife's family in upstate New York and meeting with my family in Tennessee where my grandpa lives.

Erin Olson, a professor of social work at Dordt U.

I've been teaching at Dordt since 2007 and I've always appreciated the rhythm of the academic year. When my kids were younger, I relished the more relaxed summer schedule so I could be home more with them, especially during their school breaks. Now that my kids are older (three teenagers), I continue to appreciate more time with them. Summer is also a time for me to read, relax, and be outside. I run or walk with my dogs every day and love to sit outside and read whenever I get the chance. Our family enjoys camping and usually takes one vacation each summer so the five of us, who are typically quite busy, can reconnect with each other while exploring a new city or landscape.

The pace of my summers has picked up as my work responsibilities have changed from mostly face-to-face teaching to mostly online teaching (that runs year-round). I typically teach a course or two every summer, help at a couple camps for kids, and start to consider changes or updates to my fall courses. Summer allows me to do these things that would otherwise be difficult in the rhythm of the fall/spring academic semesters. Summer is a great reset for me. It's a time to take a breath, re-energize, and re-center while also reconnecting with friends and family.