

Shaping the Future of Kuyper College

Summary of Organizational and Program Changes

March 13, 2015

This document is designed to provide the friends and families of Kuyper College information, rationale and answers to certain questions related to a number of strategic, organizational and program changes that are being made.

INTRODUCTION

For over 76 years Kuyper College has been faithful to its mission statement: “To equip students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ’s church and His world.” Throughout, we’ve been educating, training and equipping our students to make a difference in God’s world—carefully, yet deliberately, ensuring that within the context of our professional majors, the Bible remains central through the integration of high-quality academics and a Reformed worldview. An affirmation of these truths is provided by our alumni as they live lives of service bringing the grace of God to places and cultures in more than 50 countries around the world.

The last few years have seen some major shifts and emerging trends in the educational landscape. College leadership has been analyzing these environmental developments while forming an agenda for meeting current challenges, for positioning the College well to accomplish current program opportunities and to create a framework for what we believe the future Kuyper College should look like as we continue to fulfill our mission.

THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

Kuyper College has always offered students a transformative Christian college education, one that prepares them for lives of leadership and service. Kuyper has remained true to that mission for more than 76 years and through many changes in the environment.

The current challenges facing higher education are summarized in a recent report by the University of Denver which states—“in an era of change, these are unsettling times for higher education.” The report brings to light many of the major shifts taking place in collegiate educational systems across the country—both in public and private institutions. Rising costs, declining affordability, for-profit competitors, governmental policies and other concerns are real. Cost-conscious students also have greater educational options including online distance education, adult education and a proliferation of other academic and vocational programs at the community college level. In a summary statement, the authors of the University of Denver report state:

“The forces of change affecting higher education today are far stronger and moving more swiftly than ever before and there is little doubt that much of higher education will be substantially different within a decade. A rapid confluence of forces tied to economics, demographics and technology will make it so, and colleges and universities must be prepared to respond.”

An additional concern for Christian colleges and universities is that the federal government is increasingly vying to take over accreditation of higher education and, if successful, will challenge our right to enforce policies regarding students and employees which we base on biblical standards.

The continually shifting landscape in higher education, while very challenging, reinforces our belief that Kuyper’s institutional mission, while perpetually counter-cultural, continues to increase in relevance. Equipping leaders for ministry and service vocations is becoming ever more important.

ENVISIONING A NEW AGENDA

At Kuyper we have been following these trends for some time now. Over the past year the Board of Trustees and President’s Cabinet have been thinking about our best response to the changing environment. As we look to shape and become the Kuyper College of the future, it will begin, in a general sense, within the following framework or agenda—Envisioning 2025. This new agenda provides Kuyper with a multi-faceted approach to address both the challenges and the opportunities of this new reality.

Mission, Vision and Values – The College affirms the mission, vision and values currently guiding the College.

Quality, In-Depth Education – We believe the College’s future lies in emphasizing our ministry and service programs—going deeper rather than broader with our curriculum. We have gained significant respect and recognition in recent years for the growing quality of our programs and the excellent preparedness of our graduates for their careers or for pursuing advanced degrees. Kuyper College has always had a unique niche in higher education and we believe this niche positions us particularly well to meet the challenges and opportunities going forward.

Program Focus – The College will continue to provide and further develop a high-quality Christian faith-based education primarily within the context of ministry and service-focused majors and programs.

Program Delivery – The College will provide multiple methods of program delivery including a residential campus community experience, distance education and hybrid experiences. Experiential learning through internships and other means will continue to be an integral part of a Kuyper College education.

Geographic Reach – Kuyper programs and graduates will make a global impact serving students and partners around the world.

Affordability – The College will develop a sustainable business model—providing an outstanding educational experience at the lowest possible cost per student.

Independence/Interdependence – There are growing governmental and cultural tensions to be considered by institutions of higher education. Kuyper College will position itself in the long-term to be able to operate effectively while maintaining the College’s Christian identity and purpose. The College will build financial independence to support this priority. Kuyper will continue to develop strong interdependent relationships with all stakeholders and collaborative program partners.

OUR CURRENT SITUATION

Since its founding, Kuyper College has grown in scope and in impact. We want to continue to build on the strong foundation laid as generations of students have been effectively equipped for ministry and service. To maintain our commitment to providing an exceptional education and increase investment in our core programs while developing strengths in emerging areas of study, it is essential that we exercise good stewardship to ensure our programs and initiatives align with our mission and vision as we seek to serve Christ’s church. To that end, over the past year a review of programs was conducted. Many questions were asked: What is at the core of our institutional identity? What new investments are required? Which programs are truly essential for a twenty-first century education?

PROGRAM CHANGES

As a result of this review, and based on current and projected enrollment, the Board of Trustees gave approval to discontinue three programs:

The English Professional Studies academic program as of June 30, 2015.

Considerations:

Alignment – Over the past year, the leadership of the College has been affirming that the College’s future lies

in emphasizing our key ministry and service programs by going deeper rather than broader with our curricular offerings. Given the program outcomes, the history of low enrollment, and the program cost per student of the English Professional Studies program, we do not consider this program vital to this future emphasis.

Impact on Core Course Offerings – Quality writing and literature courses are vital to the success of all Kuyper College programs. The tenured professor associated with English Professional Studies will continue to teach in these core areas with a strong recognition that this person’s contribution in this area of academics is highly valued. The need for other adjunct or part-time faculty positions to teach in this area will be determined according to existing policies.

The Intercollegiate Sports program. This program will be closed as of June 30, 2015.

Considerations:

Alignment – Over the past year, the leadership of the College has been affirming that the College’s future lies in emphasizing our key ministry and service programs by going deeper rather than broader with our curricular and co-curricular offerings. Given this emphasis, the leadership believes that the Intercollegiate Sports program does not align closely enough within this future plan.

Enrollment – A primary intent for beginning the Intercollegiate Sports program eight years ago was to increase enrollment. In spite of intentional efforts to coordinate admissions staff recruitment with the coaches, maintaining adequate participation levels in some teams continues to be a challenge. Enrollment patterns show that many student athletes actually choose to participate after enrolling at the College, not before. Although some new student enrollment decisions can be attributed to the opportunity to participate in intercollegiate sports, we do not anticipate this being a means of enrollment growth.

Student Interest – The availability of an intercollegiate sports program has not been affirmed as an important benefit for students considering Kuyper College. Data gathered through an applicant survey by the Enrollment team show that only 6.8% of prospective students rank the need for an athletic program at Kuyper College as “very important.” That compares to the Bible and theology curriculum ranked at 58.1% and student life and community at 45.9%.

Community Experience – The intercollegiate sports program has not been broadly embraced by students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends as a community event nor as a distinctive aspect of the Kuyper experience.

The Sports Ministry and Management academic program at Kuyper College as of June 30, 2015.

Considerations:

Alignment – Over the past year, the leadership of the College has been affirming that the College’s future lies in emphasizing our key ministry and service programs by going deeper rather than broader with our curricular offerings. Given the program outcomes, the history of low enrollment, and the program cost per student of the Sports Ministry and Management program, we do not consider this program vital to this future emphasis.

Demand – Students who enroll in order to participate in intercollegiate sports are the primary group enrolled in this academic program. Connecting the decision to discontinue this program to the status of the intercollegiate sports program acknowledges that there is little need for this academic program to continue without continuing both.

Parallel Opportunities – Kuyper College has a collaborative agreement with Davenport University’s Sports Management program that is available for any students wishing to pursue such a career path.

Resources – In order for this program to be credible and thrive, the College would need to more fully resource and support it. That would include hiring a full time faculty member. This is not financially feasible.

These difficult decisions which result in elimination of one full-time faculty position, various adjunct and part-time positions, will impact members of our community in a variety of ways. The faculty and staff involved in the programs affected by these changes have made important and fundamental contributions to our campus. The College will be providing various forms of assistance to students, faculty and staff during this transition. Kuyper asks that its extended community pray for those faculty and staff who are most directly affected by these changes.

MOVING FORWARD

This is a challenging time for the College, but also one of opportunity. We have faculty who are leaders in their fields. We have students who are committed to making a difference for Christ. We have alumni who are making that difference throughout the world. And we have enthusiastic donors and other supporters who are ready to help. This reallocation of resources is a step toward the aspiration that we all share—to continue to build and sustain a community of Christian scholars and students who *serve effectively Christ’s church and His world*.

In many regards, recent years have been exciting for the College—we’ve had the opportunity to welcome new faculty and administrative staff, and launch new academic

programs. We have gained significant respect and recognition for the growing quality of our programs and the excellent preparedness of our graduates for their careers or advanced degrees. Kuyper College, as a praxis institution, always has had a unique niche in higher education and we believe this niche positions us particularly well to meet the challenges and opportunities going forward including:

- Providing meaningful ways in which our students, faculty and staff can engage in, and build, our unique learning community.
- Providing multiple methods of program delivery: a residential campus community experience, distance education and hybrid experiences. Experiential learning through internships and other means will continue to be an integral part of a Kuyper College education.
- Providing an affordable education—by developing a sustainable business model that provides an outstanding educational experience at the lowest possible cost per student. Under this model, making every effort to lower student costs and debt at graduation will be high priorities.
- Maintaining our Christian identity—we must consider the growing governmental and cultural tensions faced by all higher education institutions. Therefore, Kuyper will position itself in the long-term to be able to maintain and further our Christian identity and purpose.

THIS IS YOUR COLLEGE

Finally, let us remember that this is your College. This document is one means by which we are communicating to our campus and greater community. Campus-wide, student, faculty, staff and other stakeholder forums are being planned to communicate with the Kuyper community and answer questions. Meetings will also be held with students participating in the affected programs to discuss their individual situation and help them plan a course of action.

For additional questions regarding these changes or the future plans of Kuyper:

- Students or Parents – Contact: Curt Essenburg at cessenburg@kuyper.edu or 616.988.3654.
- Faculty/Staff – Contact your immediate supervisor.
- Friends of the College – Contact Ken Capisciolto at kcapisciolto@kuyper.edu or 616.988.3676.

As we enter a new era full of challenge and promise, let us affirm the College’s faithfulness to the original ideals and needs that compelled its founding in 1939 and guided its increased capacity, influence and development in past decades. Let us also affirm the worthiness of our mission, the ambition of our vision and the timeless nature of our core values as we serve Christ’s church.

MISSION

*Kuyper College equips students with a biblical, Reformed worldview
to serve effectively Christ's church and His world.*

OUR VISION FOR THE DECADE AHEAD

With the principal goal to equip Christians to be transformational leaders who—instilled with a firm faith in God's grace and a commitment to follow His call—effectively serve His church and advance His kingdom throughout the world, the Kuyper community establishes the following vision:

As a college committed to a biblical, Reformed worldview, Kuyper College will be a unique, vital, and engaging learning community, characterized by innovation and excellence in its programs and educational partnerships.

- We will enroll increasing numbers of academically prepared and motivated ministry and service-focused students, and in the Reformed tradition, empower

each person to discern their spiritual gifts, mature in the understanding of who they are in Christ and live a vibrant and fruitful life of ministry and service to others.

- We will provide extraordinary levels of personal attention to our students.
- Our faculty will remain committed to outstanding teaching and scholarship.
- We will enhance our reputation as a leading ministry-focused Christian leadership college that prepares its graduates for successful lives of service and ministry-focused endeavors throughout the world.

CORE VALUES

Primacy of Scripture. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and must guide our teaching, philosophy, life-style, and response to our ministry or vocational calling.

Biblical Worldview. We believe history is directed and controlled by God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—toward the accomplishment of God's purposes for all creation. Education at Kuyper College is conducted within the framework of a biblical worldview from which students can assimilate, synthesize, and respond to situations of life and learning.

Reformed Doctrine. We understand and apply our faith and worldview according to the teachings of the Bible as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, the Belgic Confession, and the Westminster Standards.

Academic Excellence. We emphasize the importance of cultivating the mind as primary in providing quality, Christian higher education.

Holistic Development. We strive to form world-class citizens who are academically, spiritually, socially, and morally discerning, just, and merciful leaders in church and society.

Caring Community. We actively work toward a campus environment, denominationally and ethnically diverse in nature, where mentoring, mutual care, accountability, and encouragement are characteristic of students, faculty, and staff.

KUYPER  COLLEGE
Bringing God's Grace into Today's Culture