There are 1,522 miles between Brooklyn, New York and Santo Domingo, the oldest city in the Americas and the capital of the Dominican Republic. However, according to Israel (Alex) Brito, class of 2005, culturally it seems more like a million miles. Born in Brooklyn where his father was pastor of the Hispanic Free Methodist Church, Alex moved to the Dominican Republic with his family after his father’s completion of his seminary dissertation.

“Growing up in the DR was an interesting experience, mostly because my brother, sister and I were sort of Dominicans,” said Alex. “As New York-born Dominicans, we were called ‘Dominican Yorks,’ the name given to us by our friends in New York City, and we wholeheartedly embraced it.”

Electricity is in the air—the Cougar women’s and men’s basketball teams are playing at home. As students stream into the gym with faces painted in purple and gold, there’s no doubt of the soon-to-come, nonstop, high-octane near frenzy that will pour down throughout the night from the “reserved for students” section of the bleachers. The music is loud, but louder still is the down-the-spine, shiver-sending roar of a cougar that is blared every time the home team scores.

The Kuyper College Heritage Wall—moments of grace

“If these walls could speak’ is a familiar expression that reflects on conversations, the sharing of dreams and ideas, as well as lessons learned of those who have been here before us.” Those opening words from the Heritage Wall presentation at Kuyper College help to focus the viewer on the message conveyed by the 14-minute film. The narration continues: “For us here at Kuyper College, our walls are doing more than symbolically speaking—they’re proving the timeless, unfailing sovereign hand of God as they echo the inspiration of a rich history, the celebration of an amazing present, and the motivation of a glorious tomorrow. Thus, the Heritage Wall at Kuyper College celebrates our story, which in many ways is God’s story—God reaching down with his grace.”

Through powerful visuals, insightful content and thoughtful interviews, the presentation helps unfold the history of the institution from its original founding as Reformed Bible Institute (RBI), to its accreditation as Reformed Bible College (RBC), to present day. The reactions of those who have viewed it seem uniformly the same: “It is not a promotional video,” they say, “but a praise offering to God for those who came before us and left a rich spiritual path for us to follow. At the same time the film touches a spiritual chord deep within each individual.” This sense of spiritual depth is expressed throughout the film in the words of past and present faculty.
What God has given us in describing Himself as the “Alpha and Omega” is more than setting forth His eternal nature—He is also giving us the context in which we live our lives. The way in which He frames our existence explains our past, gives meaning to our present and provides hope for our future. Many of us have experienced just how meaningful that reality is as we have tried to make sense of and find purpose for (and in) our lives. Indeed, for many, life can seem like a confused mess...until we see ourselves in the context of the One who marks the beginning and the end of our existence.

I have been doing some studying in the area of faith and science. The topic of “beginning and end” figures into almost every area I read: Scriptures, cosmology, quantum mechanics, human development, genetics, psychology, sociology, and so on. I find it intriguing how common themes seem to run through all these areas in a way that excites my faith. For example:

An itnesenig thing about the haumn biran is taht it can raed wrods taht are mexid up as lnog as the frist and lsat ltetrs raemin the smae. It desno't mtater how smacelbd tehy are because yuor barin rades the wrod as a wohle, not as idvindaiul ltertes.

And so the thought of how God makes sense of our lives when we see Him as the Alpha and Omega is richly illustrated and resonates within the normal operation of the brains He created!

How richly blessed we are to have this God-given context as part of the “lessons learned” by our students through their years at Kuyper College. It is also part of the delight faculty and staff experience as they help open the eyes of our students to the fullness of God’s presence and purpose in their lives. He gives them meaning! And, in a world where spiritual and moral confusion run rampant, how wonderful that we can help provide our students with the key that helps make sense out of—and transforms—human lives!

You will find the accounts written up in this issue of the Kuyper News to be full of testimony to how God gives direction and meaning in lives. I hope you find it as exciting as I do to read about and be part of an educational institution with a ministry and service emphasis that focuses on transformed lives. I pray that you will be greatly encouraged and enthused in your own faith as you see how the grace of God is time and again extended into this needy world. Thank you for your part in helping make that happen!

Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze
President
It is a great time to belong to Kuyper College. We have embraced God's call to be a Christ-centered community—ONE community under God. I see students, staff and faculty seeking to be unified, seeking common ground in our faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We have the privilege of serving an incredible group of students. They are “get it done” students who value involvement and participation. They are not satisfied with mediocrity; they desire the best Kuyper has to offer. Our students offer suggestions, search for solutions, and labor tirelessly to make Kuyper College a better place for us all. I am particularly grateful because of their desire to embrace and learn from each other across cultural lines and divides.

The other day I went to a friend's house. He was making stir fry. As I looked into the pan I saw many ingredients coming together, yet each ingredient maintained its individual characteristics. Carrots, peas, broccoli, cauliflower, red peppers, garlic, peanut oil, bean sprouts, ginger root, brown sugar, salt, pepper, orange juice and soy sauce were all maintaining their identities, but coming together to make a scrumptious meal.

I thought this is who we are at Kuyper College. We are becoming like a giant “stir fry.” No longer are we encouraging students to assimilate or be exactly like us. Rather, we are asking every individual in our community to be more like Jesus, and we are empowering each other to utilize our gifts to the glory of God and the benefit of Kuyper College and the broader community.

As a Christ-centered community we each have different cultures, upbringings, denominational backgrounds, styles and tastes. Some are younger and some are older. Some are spiritually more mature than others. Some are new in the faith. Yet, all of us are being stirred together in the big Kuyper College pan. God has brought us together and formed one delicious community. We are learning and growing together in God's grace. We are a dish with an aroma that glorifies God.

As our students graduate, they take the aroma of their years at Kuyper into neighborhoods, businesses, churches and communities around the world. As they live, work and engage in ministry, our graduates add their unique giftedness to a larger stir fry.

Are we perfect? No! Have we arrived? No! However, we are well on our way to becoming the community of faith that God has called and empowered us to be to his honor and glory.

"In My Words" is a feature of The Kuyper College News highlighting first-person stories by Kuyper College faculty and staff.

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God’s stir fry
Cisco Gonzalez
Director of Student Life

Requirements for qualified charitable distributions include:

- Gifts are tax-free up to $100,000 per year
- Gifts can only be made in 2008 and 2009
- IRA holders must be age 70½ or older
- Distributions must be made directly to public charities
- Distributions to donor-advised funds or support organizations are not permissible
- Distributions must be an outright gift to the charity
- Distributions may only be made from traditional IRAs or Roth IRAs

For more information on how you can save money on taxes, gift plans and other giving options, please contact Ken Capiscioltto (616.988.3676) in Kuyper’s Advancement Office.

Kuyper College is unable to provide tax advice regarding your contributions. We recommend you contact your tax consultant with any questions regarding your specific situation.
to those who, for some unexplainable reason, come back to a country where most people are aching for the chance to migrate to the U.S.” Alex speaks of growing up being known as a “third-culture kid,” or someone who is neither fully Dominican nor fully American, but a mixture of the two cultures. However, it was in his family that Alex says he found his identity. “My family has always been the strongest and safest aspect of my life,” he said. “My mother and father were always there, and since they were committed to God and ministry, the church also played a large role in my life.”

One vivid example of this commitment was what Alex simply describes as breakfast time. “Every morning,” he said, “my mother would make breakfast, and while we ate, she would read Scripture to us, and before we got up from the table, we would pray together as a family. My parents taught us by example what faith, integrity and obedience to God was all about.”

Alex shared how during his early teenage years the negative reality of being a third-culture kid weighed heavily on him. “I wanted to fit in,” he said, “but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t.” After graduating from a Christian elementary school, he entered the public school system that, by Alex’s own admission, was a very tough place. These and other situations, including the hypocrisy he perceived in the life of “supposedly mature” Christians in the church, made him rebel against all he had been taught, even coming to a point where, as he explained, “I turned my back on God.” Alex is quick to point out that he did not rebel against his father—whom he describes as the greatest and godliest man he knows—but against what he called “the whole church thing.” Yet, it was through two Young Life missionaries that attended the church where his father was a pastor that Alex came to know Christ.

The Young Life missionaries invited Alex to come to their Young Life club. Alex says that although he accepted, his heart was not in it. He explained: “At that point in my life, I only went to church out of respect for my father, and I was skeptical of anything that involved church.” However, Alex said he decided to go because it was known that many good-looking girls attended this particular Young Life club. “I was impressed with the dynamics of the club,” he said. “After that first night I kept going, and after a while I actually started to pay more attention to what was being taught about God.” With time, and through the outreach of the Young Life leaders, Alex came to accept Christ. “For the first time in my life, I was fully able to experience God,” he said. “My anger and hurts just fell away. I felt like my life mattered, that I had a purpose, I was secure in whom I was, and knew Christ accepted me and could use me for his purpose. From that time on I worked as a Young Life youth leader.”

By the summer of 2001 Alex had his life planned out. He explained: “I was going to go to APEC University (Universidad Accion Pro-Educacion y Cultura) in Santo Domingo, study computer science, work for a while at a programming company, and then start my own company. I would continue to work with the young people at the church but there was no room in those plans to study at a Christian college in the U.S. or go into ministry. Yet God had other plans for me.” That summer, at the invitation of Alex’s father, who had assumed the position of national director for Youth For Christ (YFC) in the Dominican Republic, a YFC short-term missions group from Grand Rapids, Michigan, came down to minister in Santo Domingo. Ben Boersma, one of the members of the group, felt led to ask Alex to study at Kuyper College. “Me, being always the skeptic,” said Alex, “I thought if this is God’s will, then he will allow me to apply, get accepted, get the paperwork done to renew my passport, and get money for a plane ticket—which I did not have.” The catch, according to Alex, is that all of this had to be accomplished in 30 days. “I thought it would be impossible,” he added. “Two weeks later, with plenty of time to spare, everything came together, including the money for my plane ticket. Before I knew it I was in Michigan studying at Kuyper.”

Alex says that, at first, he felt strange having to adapt, once again, to a whole new culture. “But God continued to provide assurance and help,” he said. “Nate DeJong, son of missionary parents in Santo Domingo and my best friend until he left the country, was also a student at Kuyper. Not only that, but his family lived in Grand Rapids. So, I was reunited with my best friend and with my second family.” According to
Alex, the years spent at Kuyper were a great source of comfort and love, especially during the times he was homesick. “The faculty and staff cared for me like I was their son,” he explained. However, Alex said he received far more: “First of all, I received a mind-transforming education. I was not just taught Bible. I was educated to be a Christian leader. The professors not only imparted knowledge, but modeled it by caring for me as a person. They taught out of love, and not just out of books. I didn’t just learn theory or theology, I learned about life, worldviews, culture and dependence on God.” There was one staff member who impacted Alex’s life most—Cisco Gonzalez, director of student life. “In Cisco I found someone who I considered my personal pastor and mentor for several years,” he said. “Cisco had this innate ability to see through me and call me out according to what the Bible said.” Besides the spiritual and academic gifts he received from Kuyper, Alex says the greatest blessing was meeting Allison Denk, “my wife and ministry partner.” He continued: “Through Kuyper, I found my calling in youth ministry, I found a wonderful wife and ministry life-partner, and I also made some lifetime friendships.”

Today Alex works with YFC in the Dominican Republic. He says that the principles he learned at Kuyper are the same he currently applies as he teaches young Christian leaders in the Dominican Republic. “We’ve seen life upon life changed,” said Alex. “One of them is Juan Carlos, who was living the party scene and about to join a gang when Allison and I met him. He came to know Christ and since then Allison and I have been walking alongside him as he grows in his faith. He is currently one of our top young leaders and is working alongside me helping to train youth leaders from several churches.” In addition, Alex and the YFC team have also felt the call to go to Haiti to help with that country’s fledgling YFC program. “Since both our countries share the same island, it just seemed natural to serve them,” he said. A team of Dominican YFC leaders will be going to Saint Marc, Haiti, to serve and to train youth leaders in April of 2009.

According to Alex, the best thing about he and Allison working with YFC is the relationships they have built, and continue to build, with volunteers, kids, and prayer and support partners. He explained, “The more kids I meet, the more I love my job, and my love and passion for ministry never cease to overflow.”

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**Kuyper College stage production**

In late February Kuyper College will be presenting *The Curious Savage* by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright John Patrick, a comedy about greed, insanity, hope, happiness, a teddy bear and the real meaning of love. A delightful romp through a madhouse, *The Curious Savage* is the warm-hearted tale of Mrs. Ethel Savage, a slightly eccentric, extremely wealthy widow. The recipient of her deceased husband’s estate, she wants to make the best use of it, despite her greedy stepchildren’s selfish attempts to get their hands on it. Mrs. Savage, however, has decided to use her wealth to help others realize their hopes and dreams, much to the stepchildren’s chagrin. Under the guise that their stepmother is making “unsound financial decisions,” they commit her to a sanatorium in the hopes of shocking her to her senses. There she meets a variety of social misfits, all needing exactly the kind of help Mrs. Savage can provide, and who eventually appear more sane than those outside the walls of the institution. With the help of her newfound friends, Mrs. Savage leads her stepchildren on a merry chase which eventually brings them to the pits of humiliation and despair as she obtains her freedom. This is a tale of good vs. evil, yet, there are few shades of gray in this black and white conflict. The dominant mood throughout the play is comedy with plots, plans and hijinks. However, the philosophy is far from laughable. The play shows once again that the neglected virtues of kindness and affection have not been entirely lost in a world that seems motivated at times only by greed and dishonesty!

The play will be presented in the Vos Chapel at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 26; Friday, February 27; and Saturday, February 28. For tickets, call (616) 988-3617.

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“The more kids I meet, the more I love my job, and my love and passion for ministry never cease to overflow.”

—Alex Brito
Kuyper cafeteria goes “trayless”

There are two very good reasons that the Kuyper College cafeteria has decided to do away with trays—the rising cost of food and the increasing concern about the imprint the school leaves on the environment. By doing away with trays there’s no place to pile dishes full of food some students only sample then toss. And Kuyper is not the only college cutting trays from its dining room—it’s just in the vanguard. The Association for Sustainability in Higher Education estimates than most of the nation’s 4,000 colleges and universities will follow suit within the next four years. New York University reports that its food waste has been cut almost in half from 4.03 ounces per tray to less than 2.37 ounces. “It’s a small step that has provided great results,” said Duane Bras, vice president for finance for the College. “There’s less food being wasted, less water and detergent being used to wash the trays and dishes, and less energy consumed to heat the water and run the dishwashers.”

According to Bras, dining services are doing more to avoid waste and help the environment. Spud-wear, biodegradable potato-based utensils and plates, have replaced plastic utensils; paper dinner napkins will be replaced with napkins made from recycled materials; and most condiment packets have been replaced with recyclable bottles. In addition, paper and cardboard materials are recycled, as is cooking oil which is picked up from the kitchens and recycled into biodiesel.

“It is our hope to continue to expand our program into other areas, such as purchasing many products from local companies and farms. In this way we not only help avoid waste and protect our resources, but also help our local economy,” said Bras.

Basketball continued from cover

Casey the Cougar, the Kuyper mascot, is in a state of perpetual motion as he uses every nonverbal communication means at his disposal to urge both the team and the crowd to “get it on.” This goes on the whole night whether the teams are ahead or behind. However, it is after the games when the din of the crowd and the sounds of the game are over, that something takes place that is not often seen at college basketball games. The Kuyper team gathers at midcourt for a time of prayer. They always invite the opposing team to join them. Some do and some don’t. However, the night always closes with prayer.

That is just part of what it means to play basketball for the Kuyper College Cougars. One other part, according to Camren DeWaard, a forward on the men’s team, is trying to find time to do all things well, not just basketball. The teams practice for two hours twice per week on average, while playing three times during that time span. “At times it’s tough,” he said, “to find time for practice, games, study, work and off-campus ministry—especially when we’re staying at a hotel during road games.” How do they do it? “Discipline, time management and through the support of my teammates, professors and coaches,” said Caitlyn Ouwinga, a forward on the women’s team. While they all agree that the coaches are demanding and expect a high degree of intensity while the teams are on the floor, they follow right up by saying, “we’re a family.” According to Jake Hamlet, a guard, the coaches demand a lot, but they also give a lot. “They are interested that all of us play the game the right way—hard but within biblical principles,” he said. Brandon Klomp, a center, agrees. “The coaches stress six fundamentals: leadership, sportsmanship, encouragement, perseverance, integrity and community,” he said. In addition, there are no shortcuts and no academic “passes” for the players. “The key is communication,” said Rachel Grochowalski, a guard. “I make sure my professors know my schedule. They know the time demands on the team, so they want to work with us to make sure we complete all assignments and get the most out of our classes.” Danielle Johnson, a guard, concurred with Rachel and added, “It is also great to look up in the stands at the women’s games and see so many faculty there cheering for us.”

As to what brought them to Kuyper to play basketball, the reasons are varied. Marcus DeBoer, a guard, said: “I wanted to study at a Christian college, and I love basketball. The fact that I can do both is great.” For K. J. Jones, a guard, the reason has to do with his coming to know Christ. “As a 13-year-old, while growing up in ‘s-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands, I met assistant coach Jeremiah Hamlet who was then playing pro-ball there,” he said. “He introduced me to church and to Christ. Years later, when he called asking if I wanted to attend a Christian College in the United States and play basketball to boot, I could not believe it. Like the rest of the members of the team, I am blessed.”
Internship in Indonesia

Editor’s Note: Jeremy Van Woerden, a class of 2009 youth ministry major, recently returned to the U.S. after spending a semester fulfilling an internship in Indonesia. In an interview, Jeremy shares his experiences.

KCN—Where has your internship taken you?

JVW—Papua, the largest province in Indonesia with a population of 2.5 million people who speak over 200 different tribal languages—it shares the western half of the tropical and mountainous island of New Guinea. I taught English and developed youth ministry programs at Netaiken Academy, a Christian college with a program for Indonesian students.

KCN—Why have you traveled halfway across the world to fulfill your internship?

JVW—I felt like this would be a great opportunity that perhaps I would not have at any other time in my life. I don’t see myself carrying out traditional youth ministry in a church, so I decided to get experience in something that I could actually see myself doing. Also, I definitely felt God’s leading as well.

KCN—What was required of you during your internship?

JVW—I was responsible for teaching two to three English classes a week, helping in study hall, and participating in all the activities of the students—from cooking to sports to collecting firewood, working in the sweet potato gardens, cutting grass with a machete, and fixing the roofs of the honai (huts). I also did a fair amount of teaching out of God’s Word at different churches.

KCN—What challenges did you encounter?

JVW—I would say most of my challenges would be related to culture. For example: Papuan culture values sharing; they literally share everything all the time, from food to clothes to other belongings. This is counter to western culture where everyone has their own “things.” In addition, modern conveniences are not part of Papuan life. We had no electricity except for three hours on school evenings. Our diet consisted of sweet potatoes for breakfast, rice and sweet potato leaves for lunch and dinner, and once in a while, some rabbit and some chicken, but only for special occasions. Finally, at Netaiken everything is done in community. While we Americans value personal time, that is not the case there. At times that was overwhelming. If I took time to be alone, the students would interpret that as “Hey, something is wrong with Jeremy. Let’s go and join him.”

KCN—Tell us about the places you’ve been and the people you’ve met.

JVW—For most of the time there I lived in the highlands of Papua. I met students, children, missionaries, pastors, locals and teachers. I made true friends. I am indebted to Scotty Wisely, my supervisor. He encouraged me throughout my internship and shared his knowledge of the Papuan culture with me.

KCN—What unique opportunities have you had?

JVW—I’ve had opportunities that few Americans have had—I’ve slept in a traditional honai, swam across the raging Biliem river, and hiked alone through the jungle. However, I would have to say the biggest opportunity was to form relationships with people from another culture. We became friends in every way. We shared, laughed, cried, played and worked together every day. We lived life together.

KCN—How has this internship helped to hone your worldview?

JVW—Well, I definitely give a lot more credit to living simply. I’ve never experienced the simple life to this extent. Also, my worldview now includes people from different cultures where I’ve learned to look beyond differences and be culturally sensitive. I’ve lived out “cross-cultural understanding.” I could not get that in a classroom.

KCN—Has this internship deepened your spiritual commitment, and if so, how?

JVW—I’ve become more focused on others because I’ve needed to set aside my own personal “rights” for the betterment of our community. Relationships can be difficult, but I hope God will use this experience to shape future relationships in my life. Also, it is humbling to see how God has used me for his glory and how much I’ve learned from him that has taught me to give him glory. I’ve learned that it’s not about me—it’s all about Jesus! Finally, I’ve learned what it means to be content in all circumstances. I pray that is something I never lose.

KCN—How did Kuyper prepare you for this internship?

JVW—It prepared me well. I took all the TESOL courses with Professor Renkema, which prepared me for the lesson planning and teaching that I did. Also, Professor Renkema taught me that teaching English is greater than just that; it’s also about being a witness through being a teacher.

In addition, Professors White and Telzerow taught me a lot about how to practically reach out to young people, especially through relationships. They fed my passion for reaching young people.

KCN—One last question: what do you want to accomplish as a result of your internship?

JVW—I hope that through my internship I was able to make an impact on those I served by leading and teaching people how to follow Christ, hopefully through my actions as well as my words. I do not want to leave behind what I learned there—that living a simple life allowed me to take my eyes off the circumstances that surrounded me and place them where they belong: first on God, and then on others.
What do you do after completing the first two years of medical school? Well, if you’re Edward Lumley, you pack your bags, come to America and take a year off to study Bible at Kuyper College. A medical student at the University of Bristol in Bristol, England, Lumley decided to take a break two-thirds of the way through his course of studies at one of the United Kingdom’s top five medical schools. As he put it, “I wanted to spend a whole year grounding myself in the Bible.” According to Edward, medicine is about serving, and “there’s no better place to learn about that than the Scriptures,” he said.

Born in the city of Cardiff, the capital of Wales, Edward is the oldest of three brothers. His dad is an architect and the director of Wales’ largest architectural firm. However, according to him, it is his mom who makes everything run well in the Lumsley household. “We’re all very close,” he said. But with a twinkle in his eye, he explained that he and his brothers have had their moments.

Edward grew up attending an Anglican Church—St. Denis Church of Wales. However, he says that it was not until he attended a New Wine Youth Conference shortly after turning 14 that he became serious about his faith. “After listening to a message on Mephibosheth,” he said, “I stepped outside and thought, ‘I know all about this, and it is real.’ That night I gave everything to the Lord.”

Edward says that he always wanted to be involved in medicine because, according to him, “you can meet with people at their point of need and help meet that need.” However it wasn’t until after high school when he spent 10 months working off the coast of Africa on a mercy hospital ship with Youth with a Mission that his calling was confirmed. He stated, “The time living among the people that we were serving helped confirm for me what I would be doing for the rest of my life—it was like bringing sight to blindness.”

In the British post-grad system there’s a break mid-way through the chosen course of studies called “intercalation.” It is a year that is used by most students to pursue allied studies to complement their education. It was with some trepidation that Edward approached his advisor to tell him that he wanted to take the year to study the Bible in the United States. “After I told him he looked at me and said, ‘might as well jump in the pool and swim 25 meters. It will do you the same amount of good.’ However, he said it with a smile and in the end approved my request,” said Edward.

Edward looked at attending Moody, but hoped he could find a school in West Michigan. “You see,” he said, “there was this girl that I met while we were in Africa. She was studying at Calvin.” So he also looked into Calvin, Cornerstone and Kuyper. According to him, the moment he walked onto the Kuyper campus he knew it was a place that had a mission to enable ministry. “I was not disappointed,” he continued. “The professors here are brilliant and have taught me so much. Professor Felch is a humble genius, and Professor Kroeze’s classes are full of practical, relevant points—every lesson is a sermon.”

As to what’s in his future after he returns and graduates from medical school, the first word out of Edward’s lips is Africa. He explained that he was interested in either orthopedics or cardiovascular surgery, “but Africa,” he concluded, “is my dream place—the calling from God.”