Kuyper College equips students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ’s church and His world.
In the beginning, God said, “Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.” Consider for a moment the attributes of light. From the flicker of a single flame to the radiant power of the sun, it pierces the darkness. In doing so, it illuminates, attracts and provides hope to all who encounter it. Since the dawn of creation, it was and always has been a sustainer of life—God’s first and inspiring display of His handiwork and the gift of His grace. Kuyper College, by virtue of what God created it to be, is a living example of His light.

Beginning 70 years ago as Reformed Bible Institute, it would start as a small illumination of inspiration committed to biblical, doctrinal and academic truth. Its mission and vision were clear. As God blessed the beginning of this endeavor, these embers of truth were fanned by the passion for outreach and rays of Christian service…and the light began to spread.

With its strong foundation built on Reformed theology, it wasn’t long until the Institute was beaming with life and effective outreach as God was strategically placing His people for His purpose. With the leadership’s unwavering passion for the gospel and with teachers and staff modeling what it looks like to be servants of Christ, this light was shining brightly. Blessed with growth, RBI began moving toward accreditation. Having received that accolade in 1964 and the right to bestow its first four-year degree, Bachelor of Religious Education, RBI would officially become Reformed Bible College. Challenged by God’s faithfulness, provision and affirmation, the College began to cast its light even further, attracting many from around the world to the work that God was doing. And they came. Individuals from many other countries, races and tongues felt the call of God to come and draw their academic and spiritual guidance from within its radiance. While RBC was attracting international students, the College’s conviction that the mission field is right where one is has never wavered nor changed.

Today, God continues to show himself strong on behalf of the College. He has providentially led through academic changes and relocations into a new millennium and a new name, as RBC would transform into a ministry-focused Christian leadership college—Kuyper College. Embracing its new name without a change of its deep Reformed roots, Kuyper College continues to shine as a magnificent and inspiring display of God’s grace.

Kuyper College is committed to bringing the Bible, in a meaningful and practical way, into every area of existence so that all life is lived unto the glory of God. Relying upon this strong Reformed worldview, Kuyper students are better able to view their relationship to the world, to other worldviews, and to their culture. Kuyper College is a place where students learn who they are in Christ, discern what God’s will is for their lives, and discover where they can best serve God with their individual gifts and talents. Upon leaving, Kuyper graduates carry with them the strength and the shining light of these truths deep within their souls to make a difference in the world around them.

Reflecting back on 70 years of God’s goodness, we are grateful for His blessings and humbled by His faithfulness. God’s work through Kuyper is a sure, deep and unshakable foundation. It is this heritage that is gifted to our students who, like a beacon of light, will begin to illuminate the world around them—bringing a bright legacy to all they encounter of the depth, width, length and height of the love and grace of God through His son, Jesus Christ.
I should like to remind you, with the day of your graduation already in sight, of the words of Scripture in Habakkuk: “the righteous shall live by His faith.”

How true this is of the life you have lived at the Reformed Bible Institute. The decision of its teachers to accept the invitation to become identified with the school by teaching its students was an act of faith.

Your enrollment in RBI was also an act of faith. You left home—most of you—you gave up your livelihood and you came to a school that had no reputation and could promise you nothing upon your graduation. Yes, a school whose legitimacy was questioned by not a few of those to whom it looked for support. All this you could do because you had faith.

By faith you remained at RBI for a period of three years. You must have had moments of discouragement, perhaps even of remorse. There may have been days when you doubted the wisdom of your choice to spend three of the precious years of your youth at a Bible school. You thought of what other young people were doing to help our country win this war and of the exceedingly high wages you might have been receiving in war production work. They had money to spend while you were living from hand to mouth.

But you gained the victory by faith. You remained at RBI. In this matter too you belonged to the righteous who live by the faith that saved them. You may comfort yourself with the words of Jesus: “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?” You are to be congratulated for having gathered a spiritual treasure while at RBI, which will never fade or perish. You have laid up God’s precious Word in your heart. And now you will also graduate by faith, in the conviction that God will use you in His service in a way which will set His seal of approval on your decision to become a student at our Reformed Bible Institute.

May you in all succeeding days live by faith and labor by faith. That faith is “the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.” If you will live by it, your name, as well as the names of the saints mentioned in Hebrews 11, will be on God’s honor roll. You will be one of the heroes of faith. You will have the power that qualifies for consecrated living and noble service.
You are the first fruits of the Reformed Bible Institute. We know that you think this both an honor and a solemn responsibility. You have experienced with the founders of the Institute the joys and pangs of getting started. You were the targets of our initial trials and errors, as well as the fruits of our initial strivings and spiritual efforts. Because you are our first graduates, you are our first love. That makes it strangely difficult to see you go forth. But go forth you must. RBI has mothered you spiritually, intellectually and morally for three years. Now it is time for you to take wings.

A call comes to each of us as God’s children to be His servants. At the Reformed Bible Institute we have been called from various types of work to spend time in the study of God’s Word, thus to equip us for greater service in His kingdom. The students of this first graduating class were called from factory work, from the nursing profession, from domestic work, and from stenographic or clerical work. A number of the students were also engaged in part-time Christian work, such as volunteer work in a mission, Sunday school teaching or a church society. It is comforting to us as students to know that the Lord is willing to use each of us whether our talents be few or many, or whether our past opportunities have been few or many.

We praise Him for His grace in giving us the privilege of being trained to be more useful in His kingdom. We are grateful to God for RBI. Our Institute has made it possible for us to receive this training.

Jessie Sytsma—Class of 1942

Many and varied were my thoughts and emotions as I stood for the first time on African soil. I saw the African traders, the little children, mothers with babies on their backs, and many evidences of paganism. There is a great work to be done here in Nigeria. I am often reminded of our own Reformed Bible Institute as I see these native evangelists being trained and sent forth. These are the men whom we trust God will use to build His church here.

Evelyn Vredevoogd—Class of 1950

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Jessie Sytsma—Class of 1942

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. In our preaching we must not only educate and inspire those who are already convinced; we must also convince the careless, awaken the indifferent, and enlighten the ignorant. Are we going to bury these talents in the ground? Are we, like many Christians, going to keep the good news to ourselves? Are we going to be content to hide ourselves away in a self-made monastery, to merely exist with a policy of live and let live? Or do we, by a burning desire to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, feel ourselves being thrust out into all the world to live and help live?

Arnold R. Diekema—Class of 1967

Note: Part of a RBI Chapel message given by Arnold while on furlough, prior to going to Vietnam. On November 25, 1968, at the age of 21, “Arnie” was killed in combat on the battlefields of Vietnam.
**RBI Years**

My life has taken me in many directions since I graduated from RBI. I have taught in a Christian school and in a school in Nepal. From teaching school, I got married and raised a family. And then, I studied law enforcement and criminal justice and worked as a detective in a police force for a number of years. Then there was another turn in the road of life when my husband became very ill, and we opened our home as a bed and breakfast. We've been doing that for the past 23 years. It's been amazing because the mission field came right to our door. Over the years we've been able to share the Lord, pray with hundreds of our guests, and encourage them to love the Lord Jesus—it truly has been our mission field.

Shirley (Zwart) Witt—Class of 1960

I feel that today, at Kuyper, the work is being carried on in the same way as it was at RBI. It's exciting to see how students continue to be trained to reach out and to go out to other places to bring the gospel. So I see the same thing going on today as when I was here, even though the school has grown much in numbers. We have talked to many high school students, including our own granddaughter, about how RBI was and how Kuyper College is a place where people are friendly and will welcome you. Once you are there you will find that the Word of God is something they are truly on fire for, and they want others to know and to share. There are also many opportunities for Christian service at Kuyper College today.

Marlene (Compagner) Bouwkamp—Class of 1962

I thought you might like to know that before I came to RBI it was my desire to someday have a Christian home for needy children. There were many questions, such as: how does one get started? And where would I find someone else who might have a similar interest?

When I heard about RBI's plan to open in January of 1940, I was interested. I prayed about it and enrolled as a member of the first class. RBI's beginning was very humble—in an upstairs apartment in the 700 block of Wealthy Street. On one side was the classroom and on the other side the living quarters for the young women. I was assigned to share a very small room with Marguerite Bonnema, an RN from Cleveland, Ohio. (I had come from Denver, Colorado.) The room had a small table, two chairs and a bunk bed. And now comes the best part!!! After we had been together for a couple of weeks, Marguerite asked me one day, “What do you plan to do when you finish here?” I replied, “I would like to start a Christian home for needy children, but don’t know if I will be able to do that.” Marguerite answered, “Why, that’s what I want to do too.” Wasn’t that wonderful? See how wonderfully God’s hand is seen in this “happening”—and what a role RBI played?

After our graduation from RBI, we both worked in city missions for about two years. Marguerite worked in the Broadway Mission and I in West Fulton. During this time we met Andrew Vander Veer. He too became interested, and as you probably already know, Bethany Christian Home (now Bethany Christian Services) was begun.

Our heavenly Father has abundantly blessed and expanded the services so that today there are 60 offices in the United States and 10 offices internationally.

To God be the Praise!

Mary Vanden Bosch

Note: Excerpts from a letter written to an RBC staff member by Mary (De Boer) Vanden Bosch, member of RBI’s first graduating class.

At RBI, we found a fantastic community of seeking people and staff who were dedicated to helping us find meaning to life in Christ—a caring group who loved and knew the Lord and showed the joy of the Lord in their personal and professional lives. They, and others, helped us understand that a Christian education has value through eternity. It was not just the subject matter that they taught so well, but the lifestyle that showed through their teaching which showed us how to live for Christ.

As we look back on our lives, we credit RBI for equipping us with the tools and worldview that made our mission ministry in Nigeria possible.

Dick and Margaret (DeVries) Seinen—Class of 1969
I learned a lot from my professors, who were quality people—Dr. George Kroeze and Dr. Paul Bremer were my favorites, along with education courses taught by Katie Gunnink and Dr. Jim Ritsema. In addition, with the quality teaching they provided all of us, the professors gave of themselves. I appreciated the fact that they took the time to develop good relationships with the students in the midst of academic study.

Today, as a member of the Bethany Christian Services advancement team, I enjoy the opportunity to be also an ambassador for the College. I believe that I am a credible spokesperson as someone who has clearly benefited from this wonderful institution.

Keith Meyering—Class of 1976

I learned a lot from my professors, who were quality people—Dr. George Kroeze and Dr. Paul Bremer were my favorites, along with education courses taught by Katie Gunnink and Dr. Jim Ritsema. In addition, with the quality teaching they provided all of us, the professors gave of themselves.

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Keith Meyering—Class of 1976

Where we live there was no electricity and no running water for years. A church in Michigan provided the funds for us to dig a well, and once we got a generator, another provided a pump. Within the last couple of years, the village finally has electricity, but still no running water. We have no Internet and no e-mail, and after eight years we can finally communicate with the outside world through a satellite phone. Yet, we are where God wants us, thanks to RBC. It was there that I was able to develop the skills and abilities that prepared me for the mission field. The Lord really used my time at the College to change my life, sanctifying it to His kingdom work. It prepared me for what I needed in missions.

Rick Lampen—Class of 1989

What I remember most about my journey through RBC was probably the life-changing effect that it had on me. Coming out of high school from a small farm in South Dakota to the big city life of Grand Rapids was a big step. My leadership skills were developed while I was at RBC through the challenges of the classroom. In keeping with the mission statement that has always been constant through RBI, RBC and Kuyper, they trained me to walk into ministry. And it wasn’t just classroom teaching.

Throughout the years the College has been faithful to God’s Word and faithful to the Jesus model of making disciples. There I was equipped to do that, and it’s been pretty much a part of my life and my career—walking with people and equipping them to be grounded in God’s Word.

What I see at Kuyper today is an expansion of academic programs that give students broader educational options and different ways to serve in Christ’s kingdom. However, what impresses me the most is that I see the same thing that brought me here in 1973—the solid foundation that does not change because it is non-negotiable—it is a constant.

Christina (Burgers) Timmer—Class of 1977
I came to RBC from Puerto Rico with my wife, Christina, shortly after we were married. Whenever we had free time, we would spend it ministering to migrant workers in Berrien Springs. We would minister there using the same methods that we were experiencing at the College—with the spiritual richness and discipline that, to this day, continues to be one of the foundational aspects of my life.

RBC prepared me for the work I do today, which is keeping teens from making the bad choices that could lead them into a life of drugs, crime, early pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases. What could be better for these kids but to come to know the Lord and then, perhaps, come to Kuyper? To receive what I received, so they can spend their lives giving what has been my privilege to give...a cup of cold water, in Jesus’ name, to these, the least of my brethren.

Angel Rodriguez—Class of 1989

Since my time at RBC, my husband—also an RBC graduate—and I have been missionaries in Africa for six years. We spent the first four years in Nigeria in a remote village where they had never heard of the name of Jesus. There we found out that the mission field is one of the hardest places on earth. It was difficult for me, yet I also realized that the hardest things come with the greatest blessings. I wouldn’t give up our time there. In four years we were blessed to see a church grow with twenty-four baptized believers who helped build a church right before we left. It was all God’s doing. It was amazing to see God use us in ways that we didn’t expect and that we didn’t know. It was good for me to learn to depend fully on God.

Now we have been in Uganda for two years. God’s grace has empowered me and encouraged me to share the gospel with others—to be able to share with them how much God loves them. So many people don’t know His free gift of grace and love, and it is exciting to share these because I know how good it feels to receive them and how good God is. What else would I want to do but share this with people who don’t know?

Mandy (Beute) Shaarda—Class of 1999

I remember laying a foundation for what kind of Christian I wanted to be as a doctor when I interviewed with potential colleagues for a private practice position in internal medicine following my residency. It was automatically assumed that I would want to preach to my patients. I explained that not all Christians are the same and that research shows patients prefer doctors who acknowledge their patients’ spirituality and are willing to pray for them. I consider it a privilege to be able to see patients at a time when they are facing critical issues of life.

Sometimes, we assume, as I once did, that to be in full-time ministry you have to be a missionary. But, we are full-time Christians, regardless of what we do in our careers.

Lisa (Heerema) Hope—Class of 1996
At Kuyper our mission statement is not a document that’s tucked away somewhere. Our mission statement is a part of what we do every day. For example, at Student Life, we ask this question when we are thinking of doing something new: “Is this going to help us to equip students?” And not just equip students, but equip them in such a way that they’re going to go out and make a difference for the kingdom, for their faith. And we on staff must live our faith. I have to live it. I can talk about a devotional life or, I can be truly developing a devotional life so every day when I meet with students I can share with them—they expect me to share what I got from my morning devotions. “What’s God teaching you?” they ask. And it’s a mutual question that goes back and forth. Kuyper is a great place to grow in faith because we’re in a place where people are looking and are asking questions about our daily walk, and it’s not just faculty and staff; students in particular want to see tangible evidence of the faith we proclaim.

Cisco Gonzalez
—Director of Student Life

The biblical worldview that Kuyper presents to us as students is preparing me to go back into the world knowing that I am justified and have been made complete by God’s grace. And knowing that, I am able to go out as His image bearer to tell others the same thing and to state it for a fact. When I graduate, I will be leaving here having learned that I can build authentic relationships with everyone by not looking at the outside of the person, but really by getting to know them.

I grew up in an urban setting, and I had kind of a rough childhood. I am looking forward to going back to my hometown of Muskegon to pursue my dream of opening up a youth center, a nonprofit agency—to go back and minister to a lot of young people—to be able to touch their lives and tell them: I made it—by God’s grace—and you can do the same.

Javonna Allen
—Class of 2010

I wanted to work with those less fortunate than I. I wanted to help and share the love of Christ. After a while I realized that teaching is what I loved most about my involvement with the kids at Clancy Street Ministries. My teaching made a difference there. Today, I teach a class of predominately African-American boys and girls in inner-city Chicago. These kids come to school tired, some come hungry, and because of how they live and what they’ve experienced, they act older than their years. But, they all respond to the love of Christ, which I try to extend to them every day—and not only to them, but to the kids’ parents as well—at the end of the day, that is what makes the difference.

Esther Gazan—Class of 2006

I was born into a Buddhist home in Mongolia. My grandfather was a Buddhist lama (priest) and my brother a Buddhist monk. When I was 14, I met a group of kids who invited me to visit their church. There, I gave my life to Christ. It wasn’t until I came to Kuyper and began to study the Bible that I realized that God wanted me to know Him more. When I leave Kuyper and go back home, I will not only have the knowledge of journalism, but also of the Bible. I want to use what I’ve learned here to be a better broadcast journalist and to reach the youth of Mongolia with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Erdenetuya (Tuyata) Tserev
—Class of 2011
After I received my associate degree from RBC, I spent two years ministering to young people in Kilkeel, Northern Ireland. While in Kilkeel, the Lord impressed on me that the theology of the younger generation is formed by what they sing. If what they are singing is not sound, their theology and their life will not be sound. So I decided to come back to Kuyper and get a degree in music and worship. I’m learning to write congregational music, to praise God in music and worship, and to lead others in doing so. I am so grateful for Professor Hochhalter. She pushed me to know the foundation of Christian worship straight from the Bible; how can I go wrong with that?

Jennifer (Smits) Policow—Class of 2008

I want to challenge my students to understand that they have a treasure in earthen vessels, as Paul says. They have the great privilege of being able to communicate the gospel to other people and to a lost world—so they need to be able to be competent leaders to communicate that well and to be able to engage others. The worldview that we teach our students at Kuyper enables them to do that—to engage the culture. It helps them to be in the world, but not of the world. They learn to carry a distinct message of God’s grace and the gospel of Jesus Christ into a culture that so badly needs it. They can know the culture, they can be aware of the culture, and they can engage the culture. In fact, they can transform the culture and take everything that’s in our world, everything that’s in our culture, and reshape it for the glory of and service to God.

Dan Kroeze—Professor of Biblical Studies

I’ve seen Kuyper’s mission play out in my life. It has definitely had an effect on me. The first time I went to Iraq, my mission was basically to hunt down terrorists—I needed to; that’s why I went. Now, after two years at Kuyper, I’m going back to Iraq. Now, I’d rather not be in a firefight; those things are scary. My personal mission will be to minister. For fourteen months I can minister in that culture, that extremely depraved culture, the subculture of the military. During my first tour, other marines would ask me questions of a spiritual nature, and I did not have the right answers. This time around—I volunteered to go because I wanted a second chance. After being equipped with the knowledge I have received from Kuyper, I am excited to have the opportunity of being able to share what I believe. Through Kuyper and its mission of preparing us for spreading the gospel throughout the world, I feel well prepared for this challenge. And when it is done, I hope to come back and continue to grow for the rest of my life. I’m excited about it.

Jonathan Stockeland—Graduation date unknown due to military service
Excerpts from yearbook letters to graduating classes by the College’s presidents

Even though the idea of the lordship of Jesus has been incorporated in the creeds, hymns, sermons and prayers of the church, altogether too often it has been applied to some future reign rather than applied to our life today. Jesus is Lord and King today. Do not forget that Jesus must be more than a “personal Savior.” He does not serve us. We are to serve him. His claims must be proclaimed. This is the gospel, “Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”

D. H. Walters—President—1943-1966

These are intensely interesting days. The war in Vietnam, the tensions in our cities, the unstable situation between Israel and the United Arab Republic—these make up contemporary headlines. But the most exciting news is of another kind. In a world which is hopelessly confused and spiritually dead, God continues to broadcast His good news! God continues to send out witnesses to convert sinners and to build His church. By this faith and in this confidence we look ahead to even more momentous days. Let us remember, even if we must suffer hardship or death, that God is sovereign, that Christ is coming, and that the Spirit is with us.

Richard L. Van Halsema—President—1966-1987

If you have learned to entrust yourself to the Potter, then you may be sure that what you have learned and experienced here has been part of the Potter’s perfect work in your life. The molding process, of course, is still far from complete. But a beginning has been made. May God graciously use all your experiences to make you increasingly like the Master you so much want to serve. May He truly “mold you and make you” according to His will. May He give you the joy of knowing that you are His and that He can use your surrendered life to be a source of wonderful blessing in the lives of many others. And may He give you the confidence and peace of knowing that you will always be secure in the blessed hands of the Master Potter who loved you and gave himself for you.

Edwin D. Roels—President—1987-1995

Increasingly, we are seeing our students as “bold and relevant”—people who are striving for an authentic, practical faith that steps in to address evil and stand up for the truth of God. You are embodying the call Abraham Kuyper issued that Christians be involved and influential in every area of life. Because you know the world resists accountability in Christ, you are being bold in confronting evil nevertheless. Because you know the world sees Christianity as old fashioned, you are bringing relevance back in by tackling hard issues. Locally and internationally you have entered threatening, dangerous and intimidating places to bring the light of Christ Jesus. You have fully engaged tough issues—homosexuality, premarital sex, drug use, social justice, diversity—so that you can understand better how to make real to those without hope the biblical messages of help and holiness. I thank you and bless you as you honor those who went before you—and Christ Jesus—as you boldly bring God’s grace into today’s culture.

Nicholas V. Kroeze—President—1995-
What will Kuyper College be like 70 years from now? As the College approaches the year 2080, an alumnus from this year’s graduating class may well be invited back—at age 92—to tell people “what it was like back then” and to remind them of how far the College has come in the 140 years since its founding. What will have changed?

Rev. H. J. Kuiper and the others who started Reformed Bible Institute back in 1939 were likely so focused on the need for and beginnings of RBI that they didn’t spend much time thinking of what the Institute might be like in 2009. They would, however, be honored that the College still has the same mission and they would be encouraged to know that over 2,400 graduates have gone on to serve in 52 countries around the world (and in three branches of our armed forces)—all with a ministry and service focus. They would also be mystified by our use of technology, the ease with which we travel around the globe, and the immense amount of information at our fingertips. This would probably cause them to think of Daniel 12:4, “But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”

And so, coming back to the first question, I think we all expect that the College will seem dramatically different—as the Lord tarries—70 years from now. The way things will be done, the environment in which ministry and service take place, and the types of professional training that will accompany the Bible and Theology major will likely be uniquely different than what we see at Kuyper today. I expect that that generation will experience an even larger and more dynamic College that will have a global reputation as THE institution for Christian leadership training!

With this thinking of past and future, what about the present? I wonder if this should be our “Ebenezer year”—a point of acknowledgement, as Samuel did in I Samuel 7:12, where we stop and formally recognize that “Thus far has the Lord helped us.” This is to say that, no matter what the future brings, we can never remove the reality of a past where God has kept and blessed us along the way. This also gives us confidence regarding that future, which is to say, “God’s purpose in us is unfailing.”

We honor the past, and we envision the future. But today, in this generation, God is expecting us to be faithful in prayer, diligent in work, and true to His calling. We are to remain mindful that we are not building a college; we are building His kingdom—bringing God’s grace into today’s culture. If this means more work for us and increasing the reach and impact of the College and our graduates in the coming decades, then may we, today, have proven faithful in preparing the way for the future God has in store for Kuyper.

Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze
President
In 1940, RBI did not charge tuition to students willing to adhere to the standards set by the Christian Reformed Church. Today, at Kuyper, tuition for one semester is $7,347—and although Kuyper's costs on the average are $6,000 less a year than those of comparable Christian colleges, 95 percent of Kuyper students receive financial aid. It is the only way possible that most students can make it.

For the last 70 years, first with the Reformed Bible Institute, then with Reformed Bible College, and now with Kuyper College, we’ve seen the continuing faithfulness and guidance of God's sovereign hand through the prayers and gifts of His people. For that we praise and thank God.