What is Student Life? What is the department’s purpose and goals? Why is it important? Is it more than a roadmap or student handbook? If you listen to Kuyper’s Director of Student Life Curt Essenburg, you soon come to realize that it is an integral and very important component of the total educational experience at Kuyper. “In Student Life we desire to provide a holistic education by seeking ways to help students thrive in their academic, spiritual, social and emotional lives,” said Essenburg. “We believe that we are distinctive in our offerings and in what we do, both of which you may not find in other schools.”

According to Essenburg, Student Life at Kuyper, or the spirit of the Student Life department, has been an integral part of the College mission since its founding in 1939. “A desire to develop a community of Christian leaders and learners in and outside the classroom was a distinction of Reformed Bible Institute, Reformed Bible College and now Kuyper College,” he said. “And the size of Kuyper allows us to do what is not possible in most other schools—to think of and interact with our student body both corporately and individually.”

Student Life Coordinator Jana Postma said that the students are known by name. “They know they’re always welcome to drop by to talk about what is going on in their lives and to discuss how we can support them and meet their individual needs,” she added. “This is one of the greatest

Reaccreditation

After an exhaustive process, which included a three-day on-campus visit by an accreditation team from The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Kuyper College’s reaccreditation was affirmed for the maximum period of time allowed—10 years. In addition, Kuyper’s status was raised to a new accreditation program called Pathways. Pathways features a ten-year cycle of assurance and improvement with reviews scheduled at the 4th and 10th year marks, and a progress report due in 2014-2015. The HLC, as part of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States, works to accredit about 1,200 colleges and universities in the 19-state North Central region.

Prior to the reaccreditation visit, Joy Milano, Kuyper’s registrar and director of assessment, chaired a steering committee which undertook the complex process of conducting a two-year-long Self-Study of the College. Composed of various members of the Kuyper community, the committee summarized areas of strengths and areas of opportunities and development. The Self-Study document cites five principles that Kuyper follows—each with several core components: Mission and Integrity; Preparing for the Future; Student Learning and Effective Teaching; Acquisition, Discovery and Application of Knowledge; and Engagement and Service.

In an announcement sent to the staff, faculty and board of trustees, Kuyper’s President, Nick Kroeze, said, “A major goal that Joy Milano and the team worked toward with the Self-Study—and which all you contributed to through the enhancements made to our academic programs and support structure—was that we would be placed squarely in the new Pathways process established by HLC/Reaccreditation.”

The 23rd Psalm

For the first two weeks in February, “Psalm 23,” a wood sculpture by Kuyper President Nick Kroeze, was on display at the Celebration of the Arts festival in Grand Rapids. Celebrating its 40th year, the festival focuses on faith expressed artistically.

“The sculpture reflects the richly complex and highly symbolic nature expressed in this psalm,” said Kroeze. “This is revealed by the 17 different types of wood as well as a variety of shapes, textures and finishes used in the sculpture.”

Psalm 23 continued on page 4

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

KUYPER COLLEGE
Bringing God’s Grace into Today’s Culture
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

“Undercurrents” can be perceived as something of a negative term, but it seems to convey a stronger meaning than does “in the background” or “behind the scenes.” The reason I will use the word here is that this edition of the Kuyper News highlights the importance of experiences or activities that don’t often come to the forefront in the everyday life of the College. However, all of these together form an undercurrent of energy and direction that significantly influence individuals and direct programs of the College. They are worth paying attention to, and I am glad we have the opportunity to point a few of them out to you.

The people who pay attention to and work with our undercurrents are not often highlighted in the general course of the school year, and yet their work is critical to our welfare. They also have a huge impact in the lives of individual students. Without them, this college could not function. I love the fact that they have such a strong impact while at the same time they maintain a quiet and humble spirit as they go about their work. They truly are fine examples of servant-leadership.

Another undercurrent that exists is seen in the lives of our students. This undercurrent is directly related to the work of the Holy Spirit as He works to change lives and as students come to see the significant roles they can play in God’s kingdom. In fact, the background students come out of and what they are discovering about themselves produce a spiritual and psychological “current” you can actually feel on campus—and this energizes us! The difference in a student’s thinking between “what I was” and “what I can be” is beautiful to see. People who have experienced God’s grace and have caught a Christ-centered vision for their lives are a daily testimony to us as to why we are privileged to have this college: Kuyper is a special place where spiritual wholeness and vocational effectiveness walk hand-in-hand.

I hope—and expect—that you too will feel energized by the accounts you read in this issue. May you be encouraged by God’s work in and through Kuyper as we see more students preparing for lives of ministry and service. Celebrate with us that another generation of graduates is now going out to engage the world fully for the sake of Christ. And, as you have—or make—opportunity, extend a word of thanks and recognition to all those who work at Kuyper in an undercurrent sort of way.

Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze
President

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Expansion of global student internships

Internships outside of the United States are an important part of the Kuyper education experience for many students, particularly those in the social work and intercultural studies programs. In recognition of this, Kuyper has been working to expand the number of available international internship opportunities.

The process of expansion involves fact-finding on-site visits by Dr. Judi Ravenhorst-Meerman, director of social work field practicum, and Professor Teresa Renkema, director of intercultural studies/ TESOL field practicum. “Our ultimate goal is to provide a greater variety of internship sites around the globe that offer quality academic and experiential learning for our students,” said Renkema.

In the past year, Ravenhorst-Meerman has visited Ecuador and Uganda, building Kuyper’s partnership with the international social services agencies there. Meanwhile, Renkema is soon to visit the Czech Republic and Romania to explore the expansion of European internship offerings.

Site visits ensure the quality of internships through an examination of the sites, in addition to the training of administrators and staff involved with the internship. It is imperative, according to Ravenhorst-Meerman, that Kuyper students are placed in a setting that not only offers a safe living and working environment, but...
The Unnoticed
Andrew Zwart
Academic Support Coordinator

Working in Academic Support, to help students achieve their fullest academic potential, I have the privilege of seeing what often goes unnoticed. When professors read over a carefully constructed paper or mark a thoughtfully written exam, they have an inkling of the work that went into such endeavors, but they don’t often experience that work firsthand. And the same is true for parents as well. Of course, every parent beams with pride when their son or daughter walks across that stage on graduation day, but if they had spent hours upon hours in the library watching their child pore through books and articles, I’m willing to bet their smiles would be even brighter.

Of course, I don’t see all the effort students expend either. While doing my best to help students, I have learned an extremely important lesson: I cannot be there every moment a student needs help, nor should I. Every student must learn to take responsibility for their own learning, and they need to learn to negotiate challenges for themselves; some just need a little extra support along the way. Even so, as students bring papers in for editing or come down to my office to take tests, I have seen my share of blood, sweat and tears. Well, maybe not blood—but certainly sweat and tears. It’s true: I have seen a student wipe perspiration from his forehead after working on a test for five straight hours. I have sat next to students in tears telling me they can’t make it through a class, only later to watch them cry tears of joy when they did indeed succeed.

Such examples leave me in awe. This is in part because, like some students at Kuyper, my own experience of school was fairly straightforward. Yes, I worked hard, but I also had many advantages. This, however, is simply not the case for many of the students I work with. Some come from schools that did not prepare them well for college. Some speak English as a second language (or even a third or fourth). Some are exceedingly bright and talented, but struggle with learning disabilities that make it hard for them to display their high intelligence. When I watch these students work and work and work—when I see what happens behind the scenes—I count myself as a witness to faith put into action. These are the students who invested their talents and who, I am confident, will receive an abundant return on their investment. They may not earn medals or honors for their accomplishments, but their work for the kingdom is certainly just as valuable.

“Making Better Choices” is adapted from “How To Make Good Decisions” by Pastor Jim Hammond.
distinctions we believe that we have.” Lynette Gruppen, a sophomore, agrees. She said that she “loves” the people in Student Life. “I feel like I can talk to them about anything at any time,” she said.

That welcoming environment is something the Student Life staff takes pride in. “If you come in to our office, you’re made to feel at home,” said Beth Bras, department assistant. “If we aren’t already sitting down in our ‘living room’ and visiting with students, you would see us get up from our desk and join you on a big, comfy couch.” According to Bras, they do this because of the importance of building relationships with each student. “We need to know each of them personally so that we can care for them and find out their needs. We want to know how to challenge, how to develop, and how to love them better.” Perhaps that explains why students are continually dropping in for free coffee and to spend time before or between classes hanging out in the “living room” that Bras mentioned. It is a very special place that looks like a typical home living room—with couches, easy chairs, strategically placed candy dishes and even a fireplace.

However, the welcoming environment students find in the living room is only one part of Student Life. And although the department stresses academic growth, it also very strongly promotes personal and social growth. “Though grades and graduation emphasize the importance of academic growth, college is much more than a pursuit of information,” said Essenburg. “It is an opportunity for both interpersonal and intrapersonal growth as students are challenged with deeper relationships, the development of life skills, and most importantly, the definition of self. While this process of maturity and growth can be encouraged through various collegiate experiences, many students experience it most intensely through Residence Life.” Residence Life Intern, Karla Kantola added that the experience allows students to build off of the foundation laid by their parents, mentors and spiritual leaders. “It is a time,” she said, “where students begin to define who they want to be. They are able to evaluate several different ways of expressing themselves and their faith, which enables them to formulate their identity as they mature into adulthood.” Or, as junior Jessica Cook put it, “It’s about getting to know people and finding yourself.”

Postma said that living with one another allows students to build deep, authentic relationships that provide them with the support, encouragement and connection needed to be successful in college and life. This fact was not lost on alumnus Benjamin Jager who, looking back on his time at Kuyper, said: “My relational skills are very good because I lived on campus. I was able to strengthen my empathetic abilities and learned how what I said and how I acted impacted those around me. This prepared me for a mature life within a larger community outside of college and the smaller community of ministry or even family life.”

Part of Residence Life is also teaching students how to appreciate and embrace the beautiful diversity of the Christian community. As Postma points out, “Each student comes to Kuyper with a unique history and understanding of the world—whether through family history, cultural identity, or something as simple as music preference. The on-campus community offers students the chance to fully experience these differences in a unique way.” According to Postma, the experience, though stretching at times, offers great potential for growth.

Summing up Residence Life at Kuyper, Essenburg said that it provides students a community that practices mutual accountability. “Here, students gather to identify issues that may inhibit their Christ like development and to develop guidelines in response. The community follows up with consequences when those guidelines are not being lived up to. This process demonstrates how invested the students at Kuyper are in the development of a positive community—one in which they feel supported and loved, stretched and built up, and safe to explore their freedom and identity,” he said. “And who can forget fun,” added Postma. “There are events and outings that are planned and scheduled, and then there are impromptu conversations, game nights, Meijer runs, stairwell worship and learning to cook in the kitchens in the residence halls—sometimes with success and sometimes resulting in impromptu fire drills—that are
“Our Student Life supervisors brought together a group of people who did not share much in common except a love for Christ and instilled in us a love for each other and a common mission.”

—Ethan Ezikian, Class of 2010

all part of on-campus living.”

Just like personal and interpersonal growth are important, so is the spiritual life of students—both individually and as a community. “It permeates everything that happens at Kuyper,” said Postma, “including the chapel program.” The Spiritual Life Committee, under the tutelage of Student Life, is responsible for the planning and implementation of the chapel program at Kuyper. “Chapel at Kuyper is a joy because the Kuyper Community comes together in worship on a regular basis,” said Postma. “It is exciting to see students who are majoring in music and students interested in reading Scripture take part in leading the campus in corporate worship.” According to Postma, chapels cover a diversity of Christian concerns and allow the Kuyper family to gather in worship on a regular basis. She added that in addition to chapel, Student Life promotes personal growth in the individual spiritual life of students through participation in Bible studies, book studies, prayer groups and accountability groups—with many of these groups being led by a student.

When asked what else Student Life does to support and promote the well-being of Kuyper students, Essenburg mentioned leadership development, counseling services and MERGE. The latter, according to him, captures the essence of Student Life. MERGE is a first-year student program overseen and implemented through a partnership between Student Life and the Academic Office. “MERGE begins with orientation and continues through the end of the student’s first year,” said Essenburg. “With core principles of worldview, identity development, intercultural competency, leadership and engaged learning, students are offered the opportunity to begin their college career at Kuyper with a unique learning experience.”

According to Postma, MERGE orientation at Kuyper offers students a unique way to become familiar with Kuyper as a college and as a community. “New students spend time in core groups of fellow new students learning about Kuyper and what it means to be a student at Kuyper College,” she said. “They participate in a variety of ‘missions’ challenging them to think about worldview, leadership, identity development and their expectations.” Postma said that through these experiences students are challenged to think about what they expect from themselves and from the Kuyper community for their academic, social, emotional and spiritual development. “In addition,” she added, “they get to know fellow classmates well, helping them to enter into the Kuyper community right at the beginning.”

Essenburg added that a very important component of MERGE is the introduction of students to the concept of Christ-modeled leadership—leading by serving. “Leadership development is a key part of Student Life,” said Essenburg. “And while there are many opportunities to develop leadership skills at the College, one of the ways we train students to be leaders is by giving them the opportunity to be involved in developing and implementing programs and activities through student clubs and committees.” According to him, if a club or committee doesn’t exist in the area students are interested in, “we help them get it started.” One example of this, according to him, is the Street Team club. “It was started by students who were passionate about getting out into the community and promoting life and service. A few months ago, The Street Team took a group of students to the March for Life in Washington, D.C.”

The College also places great emphasis on the counseling services offered by Student Life. “Guiding students through a life-planning process that includes the development of professional skills, opportunity awareness, personalized assessment, and exposure to out-of-classroom learning experiences is also part of what we, at Student Life, provide Kuyper students,” said College counselor Lisa Hosack. “Through our counseling and career services programs we help students with all aspects of career preparation, including choosing a major, planning for a vocational future, and learning the techniques of obtaining a job,” she added. “Our services include individual consultation and resume/interviewing/networking assistance. Many students report that receiving career counseling gave them the confidence they needed to successfully manage the job search process.”

So whether in the “living room,” residence halls, chapels and Bible studies, promoting leadership through service in clubs and committees, or helping new students MERGE into Kuyper life and get that prized job after graduation—Student Life is there—supporting and encouraging students throughout the year. “It is a very rewarding and exciting place to be,” said Postma. “A place all of us who are part of this team believe we’ve been called to—called to serve.”
TESOL & Roosevelt Park Ministries

Roosevelt Park Ministries (RPM), a partnership between Roosevelt Park Community Christian Reformed Church and World Renew, was created in 1996 to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the people in Roosevelt Park neighborhood on Grand Rapids’ southwest side.

While RPM work extends in many areas, a neighborhood survey revealed that one of the greatest community needs was for English classes. That’s when Vicki Vermeer, program director at Roosevelt Park Ministries, began to work closely with Kuyper Professor Teresa Renkema, director of intercultural studies and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) field practicum, to make Kuyper’s TESOL program an answer to this need.

The Kuyper TESOL program prepares students to teach ESL (English as a Second Language) in a variety of settings, including adult education programs, church sponsored ESL classes, and materials development for ESL class. The course on Curriculum and Materials Development for ESL, helps to make a difference at Roosevelt Park Ministries, but the class is also important of Kuyper’s course on Curriculum and Materials Development for ESL,” said Renkema. “By participating in the development of their own curriculum, our students plan lessons that never run dry. Other features include a rod and staff, hands cupped to receive God’s blessings, and clouds that illustrate the life, warmth and peace found in Psalm 23.

“The overall tone of the piece is one of comfort,” said Kroeze. “What I love is that a piece like this can lead people into thinking about Scripture in a deeper or more expansive way. It can open the mind, imagination, heart and soul, impacting how people see God and the way they fit into His picture.”

Psalm 23 continued from cover

The sculpture features a never-ending stream of water that falls from a jar onto a person's head and into a cup—representing God’s continual blessings that never run dry. Other features include a rod and staff, hands cupped to receive God's blessings, and clouds that illustrate the life, warmth and peace found in Psalm 23.

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Internships continued from page 2

also meets academic requirements.

Intercultural internships benefit both students and internship agencies. Working up to 40 hours a week, students learn to apply the theoretical principles learned in the classroom to real-life situations and experiences. Doing so requires a shift in thought. As students come to know the culture, they must think about their own values, priorities and expectations about life and ministry and adjust to the expectations and priorities of the different culture.

To succeed in living in a different culture through an international internship can be exhilarating, according to Renkema. The internships offer unique and valuable experiences in which students learn skills that will help them in their future career, but more importantly, students discover more about themselves and their potential for service.

Currently, Kuyper offers international internships in several countries including Romania, Guatemala, Ecuador, Uganda, the Dominican Republic and Canada.

Reaccreditation continued from cover

NCA. We are now, for the first time in our history, accredited for the full ten-Year period allowed by the HLC!”

During their visit in November of 2012, the HLC team members reviewed the Self-Study and its academic programs, processes, objectives, criteria for success, outcomes and many other areas. They also met and interviewed students, professors, administrators, community leaders and other stakeholders. The HLC congratulated Kuyper on developing a Reaccreditation which it called a model for other institutions to learn from and follow. The HLC extended an invitation to Kuyper to present the document at the NCA’s annual conference and for Milano to lead a self-study workshop session prior to the meeting.

Psalm 23 continued from cover

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**NEWS AND EVENTS**

**Births:**

**Professional Developments:**
- Karen Wiersma (2010) is now a child protection staff member at Family and Children’s Services of Niagara, Inc.

**Homegoings:**
- Marguerite Bonnema (1942) passed away on January 29, 2013. She was 99.

**Events:**
- **Honors Convocation**—
  - Friday, April 12, 2013, 9:00 a.m. in the Vos Chapel
- **Scholar Day**—
  - Friday, April 12, 2013, 11:00 a.m. Alumni and friends are invited to join us in supporting our students. For a detailed schedule visit [www.kuyper.edu/scholarday](http://www.kuyper.edu/scholarday).
- **Choir Concert**—
  - Friday, April 12, 2013, 4:00 p.m. in the Vos Chapel
- **Spring Student Recitals**—
  - Monday, April 15, 2013, 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. in the Vos Chapel
- **Spring Celebration Gala**—
  - Thursday, April 18, 2013, 6:30 p.m. at Frederik Meijer Gardens. For more information visit [www.kuyper.edu/gala](http://www.kuyper.edu/gala).
- **Commencement**—
  - Friday, April 26, 2013, 7:30 p.m. at Sunshine Community Church
- **Journey**—
  - Saturday, May 25, 2013
- **Kuyper Experience Days**—
  - For a detailed schedule visit [www.kuyper.edu/visit](http://www.kuyper.edu/visit).
- **Join Us for Chapel**—
  - Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10:10 a.m. in the Vos Chapel

**News:**
- Dr. Douglas Felch delivered a series of five presentations at Seymour Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids on successive Sunday evenings on the topic of “Principles of Worship from the First Table of the Law.”
- Professor Teresa Renkema was a presenter at the TESOL International Conference in Dallas, Texas.
- Professor Joy Milano was a presenter at the Higher Learning Commission conference on the College’s development and implementation of a digital resource room for use during the reaccreditation process.
- Dr. Kai Ton Chau, Dr. Carol Hochhalter and Kuyper communications instructor, Carrie Steenwyk made presentations at the 2013 Worship Symposium with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.
- Dr. Lisa Garvelink presented an abstract she wrote at the spring 2013 National College English Association Conference.
- Dr. Branson Parler has developed an online course in biblical interpretation. For details please visit [www.udemy.com/](http://www.udemy.com/)foundations-of-biblical-interpretation.
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**Students to Watch**

connected. It included the students, staff and faculty. Classes were small and intimate, and questions were welcomed.

I realized the journey I was on was a populated route. I was in a great company. Some were standing beside me, others beyond, all focused on one end. Where the devil had once used the mistaken reality of isolation, God now blessed me with His presence and His church.

My strong fear and apprehension gave way to a new mind immersed in consuming hunger for wisdom and understanding. The Kuyper faculty has nurtured this desire with their deep knowledge and matching passion. Daily I am pushed to learn leadership, discipline, management, commitment and diligence. When I am not in class learning in a formal setting, I am often blessed by countless opportunities in Kuyper’s community. Holiness is something that each member of this community actively seeks after. I am often blessed by loving words from fellow students, prayer on any number of occasions, and a comfortable atmosphere reminiscent of my childhood. The things that I learn in my classes translate into my life circumstances. God takes all of these conditions and uses them to continually sanctify His child.

Now, I am one credit from being a junior—and a candidate for the pre-seminary program. As an outpouring of gratitude and love, I hope to have a future which allows me to communicate to everyone the work of salvation in my life, and to share the gravity of the gospel, God’s love, His purpose, redemption and mission. I hope to use my education to understand and encourage the church in her call, mission, struggles and functions, and to encourage people to continually seek after the God who constantly seeks after them.

God is holy. His love is perfect. I am His child.
I was born in 1988, and I am the youngest of four children. Our family moved from Monroe, Washington, to the Grand Rapids area before I was born. As a covenant youth from birth, Christ was someone I knew personally from the age of 4. My parents also guided and encouraged my spiritual growth in the home, church and through a Christian education.

In every way, I had the ultimate idyllic childhood. My family, though busy, made an effort to spend time together. Sundays were filled with family time—a morning sweet roll, worship and an afternoon feast. In the summer we took vacations out west or to Mackinac Island and spent time swimming in our pool or taking bike rides in our local neighborhood. But, as childhood began to fade into the background, the idyllic lifestyle turned into a bore. Instead, I sought not who God had made me to be, but who I thought I should be. I dreamt of fortune and success, casting aside many spiritual disciplines. This vain self-service led me into a period of time which would take a toll on my relationship with God, family and friends. During this time I lost all interest in church life, spiritual growth, academics and godly relationships. My life was empty and fueled by alcohol, tobacco, nameless faces and a paralyzing sense of inadequacy. My spiritual lethargy began in an irreverence of worship and ended in utter chaos—with my dreams seeming to steer themselves.

This constant volley—bouncing between a sin-filled stupor and a pseudo-relationship with God—lasted until His light dramatically began overtaking the darkness caused by my choices. In a conversation with my mother, I realized that I had come to a point where I was unable to speak about God. I was 22 and incapable of comfortably speaking His name. This realization was the Holy Spirit stepping out of the quiet background, helping me to see my depravity, loneliness, thanklessness and hopelessness. I turned to someone and asked him for a book recommendation—a book with a little of everything, everything but a firm word from God. I still did not understand that God does not settle. I naively believed that a few well-placed sand bags would hold back the tide inside of me. I believed that it needed to be held back, to be fixed, to feel better. Culture had taught me that pain is always evil. Divinely, no book was suggested.

As the Holy Spirit continued His work, I began entertaining the idea of auditing a Bible class. The first school that I looked at was close to my work: Kuyper College. It was only a matter of days between the first time that I looked into auditing a class and opening my mind up to the possibility of more. At this time I remember praying:

Lord, all that I ask is that you show me your will and reveal to me in your Word what you want me to understand. Thank you for revealing your truth to me and please give me the strength to continue to seek you purely. Grant me a pure heart and will. Let my mind be focused on glorifying you and living a life of gratitude. My heart is sick. Please, Lord, transform my heart, mind and soul. Let me be your servant everywhere. I am angry. I am hateful, bitter. Help me to let it go! It is through no power of my own that I have come to this point. Lord, if it pleases you, help me on further, in truth, in your right path. Christ, through your work I pray this.

God answered my desperate prayer. I felt little need to search other schools; Kuyper was what I was looking for. I visited Kuyper and enrolled. The day school started was the day that my faith began growing exponentially. I could have never anticipated the way God would use this school and its people to help shred all of my previous thoughts and carefully rebuild them on the solid foundation of His Word. It began with a realization of the loving community to which I had become Students to Watch continued on page 7