

KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends

Kuyper alumna Sara Keegstra de Hernandez served at-risk children and youth in Guatemala's La Limonada, one of Latin America's largest slums, where over 60,000 people subsist in a crowded one-mile long ravine.

Inside this Issue

MY STORY

SARA KEEGSTRA DE HERNANDEZ

Sara Keegstra de Hernandez grew up in Coopersville, Michigan, in a loving home. Her grandfather influenced her coming to faith and modeled a servant's spirit. During a mission trip to Guatemala after graduating from high school, she felt God's direction on her life was to be a missionary working with at-risk children. This is her story.

I had the privilege to grow up with both my parents, Kevin and Pam Keegstra, and my younger brother, Josh, in the same house for my entire childhood, and right next door to the house where my mom grew up. This meant we spent a lot of time with my grandpa and grandma.

Alumni Profile

CLASS
2008

HOME
Fruitport, Michigan

CAREER
**Lead Teacher, Bethany Christian Services
Refugee Transitional Foster Care Program**

FAMILY
Husband, Vladimir Hernandez; son Ezra

>> See **SARA KEEGSTRA DE HERNANDEZ**, Page 4

PAGE

02

President's Message

Building opportunities to prepare our students to be the next generation of Christian leaders.

PAGE

03

Vocation and Calling Formation

Ensuring vocational preparation, ability to engage culture, and ongoing faith formation of Kuyper students.

PAGE

06

Loan Repayment Assistance Program

Kuyper is the only college or university in Michigan providing this program to all incoming freshmen.

PAGE

07

Top 10 College in Michigan

Kuyper ranks among the top 10 colleges & universities in state.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



KUYPER.EDU

Helping to Build

This year I have the opportunity to be part of a faith formation group with seven other Christian college presidents led by the Director of Fuller Theological Seminary's Center for Spiritual and Missional Formation.

In our first assignment, we were asked to choose a metaphor that describes how we live out our calling as leaders of Christian colleges. I chose a builder, not only because I come from a family of builders and a building and construction supply business, but also because I see myself as a builder. I have the privilege of working with a gifted faculty and staff to build a vibrant college that provides innovative and relevant programs to prepare our students to serve within every square inch of the world.

It's interesting that the first leaders of Kuyper College (then RBI) focused on this idea of building too, as they included on their first College stationery Nehemiah 2:20, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore, we his servants, will arise and build."

Like Nehemiah, these leaders recognized their dependence on God's favor to prosper them as they established and built this new institution, and we recognize this today, too. God has favored us; your commitment to support our mission through your prayers and gifts serves as an example.

In this issue, you'll read about how we are building opportunities to prepare our students to be the next generation of Christian leaders. Our new Vocation and Calling Formation program helps students discern their calling and evaluate their spiritual development through intentional touch points during their college experience, and our new LRAP (Loan Repayment Assistance Program) provides students with a safety net to help repay their college loans after graduation.

You'll also read about how a graduate and a soon-to-be graduate are flourishing in the opportunities God has provided them. Sara has learned that "God puts the tools



and things we need in place," and Samantha is learning that she can "use business to glorify God."

These stories inspire and motivate me to keep on building—building relationships with our students and building programs that will enable them to become the next generation of Christian leaders. The church, and the world, needs such leaders.

Dr. Patricia R. Harris
President

"I have the privilege of working with a gifted faculty and staff to build a vibrant college that provides innovative and relevant programs to prepare our students to serve within every square inch of the world."

Kuyper Community Notes

Births

Robert (2013) and **Rachel (Dykstra) De Graff** (2011) and family welcomed home their third daughter, Margarethe Dawn, on June 20, 2018.

Adam and **Heather (Befus) Tichelaar** (2007) and family welcomed home their fourth son, Hadley Philip, on July 25, 2018.

Eddie (2016) and Hillary **Mercado** and family welcomed home their third son, David Cornelius, on September 28, 2018.

Tim (2005) and **Sarah (Meekhof) Albers** (2006) and family welcomed their fourth child, Jude Henry, on October 8, 2018.

Christopher and **Sarah (Dickinson) Holcomb** (2010) welcomed home Madison Joy on October 12, 2018.

Marriage

Michael and **Trisha (Avink) Wolters** (2013) were married on August 11, 2018.

Vocation and Calling Formation

What is the meaning of vocation, calling and formation? And more important, how do Kuyper students discern their calling to, and preparation for a vocation, while on their spiritual development journey? Those are good questions, and the reason for Kuyper's new program.

Kuyper College's new Vocation and Calling Formation (VCF) program is designed to help students discern their calling and evaluate their spiritual development. In coordination with peers, faculty advisors, and an analysis of metrics throughout their academic years, Kuyper will ensure the vocational preparation, ability to engage culture, and ongoing faith formation of its students.

A unique aspect of the VCF program at Kuyper is the integration of the process into every student's academic program. Starting with student service sites during Week of Welcome and ending with their internship experiences, the VCF program helps students to understand God's calling and prepares them to be faithful stewards of the gifts God has given them. Between those two experiences, students will grow to better understand and use their skills, gifts, abilities and strengths. Faculty specifically overseeing the program, and faculty in each academic program area serve as advisors to students—supervising, tracking and analyzing the spiritual development of individual students.

The VCF program is directed by the Coordinator for Vocation, Calling and Community Life who through a system of ongoing program review and assessment of outcomes, ensures students are consistently supervised, guided and evaluated.

Outcomes

At graduation, every student is expected to attain a level of proficiency in the following institutional outcomes related to their vocation and calling formation:

1. Apply biblical principles to intellectual, ethical, spiritual and social issues
2. Understand the importance of diversity of human life and culture
3. Communicate the gospel to diverse persons and groups
4. Integrate information across disciplinary boundaries to solve problems and think creatively about issues
5. Identify and effectively use their gifts and strengths as a professional or volunteer in their vocational field of service and ministry

Students will also graduate with their own VCF portfolio developed throughout their time at Kuyper. Consisting of a collection of datapoints, the portfolio includes an overview of students' internships, practicum experiences, assignments, and supervisory and self-evaluations. A valuable resource reference, the portfolio will help students after graduation during job searches, applications to graduate school, and in their work.

In addition, during their time at Kuyper, students are encouraged to participate in the weekly Ora et Labora (pray and work) campus gathering. This program features speakers that bring perspectives on pressing issues related to ministry, culture, society and work. As speakers share how their faith impacts the work they do, there is ample opportunity for students to participate during Q&A sessions.

Through the VCF program, Kuyper will continue to encourage students to understand, integrate and apply scholarship, faith and work.

Professional Development

Gary (2010) and **Rachel (Goulart) de León** (2009) are beginning a new assignment with The TAVA Project to work with the displaced community devastated from the eruption of Fuego Volcano in Guatemala.

Ashley Naghtin, Admissions Counselor at Kuyper College, was promoted to the position of Assistant Director of Admissions.

Eddie Mercado (2016), Admissions Counselor at Kuyper College, was promoted to the position of Senior Admissions Counselor/Community Ambassador.

Michelle Norquist, Assistant Director of Library Services at Kuyper College, was promoted to the position of Director of Library Services.

As a family, most summer weekends would find us camping at various campgrounds near whatever body of water was closest, whether it be a river, lake, pond or swimming pool. We would spend rainy days in the trailer playing Phase 10 or at the nearest dollar store looking for activities. In my younger years I saw going to church as an obligation. I thought we did it because my grandparents went to church and that my faith was primarily a reflection of my grandparents' faith. However, in my preteen years I made a decision to become more involved in my church's Pioneer Club, where we earned badges for learning Bible verses and service projects. As I got older, I became more involved in youth group. I believe my identity back then was wrapped around youth group and service activities.

My coming to faith is deeply rooted in the faith of my grandfather. He was someone I looked up to, and I wanted to be like him. He always welcomed the stranger into his home, would give without expecting anything in return, and fervently looked to God in his daily life. Even now, eighteen years after his death, I shed tears thinking of the legacy of faith he left behind and how his death rocked my faith.

Eventually I came to realize that my faith had to become my own. It happened during a trip to Guatemala, when our ministry leader pulled me aside and asked: "Now that you have seen all of this, what are you going to do about it?" A conversation with God



Sara, her husband, Vladimir, and their son, Ezra

ensued that went something like this: "God, I'm just a girl who doesn't know what to do with her life. I'm not super articulate. I don't speak Spanish very well. What could you want me to do about all the hurting people in this world? I'm not rich. I'm not great at really anything. Why would you want me to do something about these people in Guatemala? Why me?"

The Sunday after I arrived home from Guatemala, I was speaking with my pastor, and he said, "Well, if you are really serious about missions, you should check out Kuyper College. I'll bring you the course catalog; they have a cross-cultural studies program." I went home and prayed, "God, if I'm supposed to go to college, you are really going to have to help me out here." Then I opened the course catalog up to

the cross-cultural studies program, and it made sense. I started at Kuyper that fall. My faith during my time at Kuyper grew through a better understanding of God's Word through Bible and theology classes. I also had the desire to grow and trust God with not only the spiritual aspect of my life, but with all aspects of my life. My last semester at Kuyper I spent teaching English at Universidad Evangelica de las Americas (UNELA) in Costa Rica.

After graduating from Kuyper in 2008, I served with AmeriCorps for one year. Then I moved to Guatemala as a full-time missionary in July of 2010, working with at-risk children and youth in La Limonada, one of the largest slums in Latin America. I found myself having to trust God every day. I had to trust God for finances. I had to trust God for safety. I had

Kuyper Community Notes

Campus Events

Thursday, February 21

Inspiring Leaders

Thursday, February 28

Youth Ministry Lunch 'n Learn

Thursday, March 14

Inspiring Leaders

Thursday, March 21

Youth Ministry Lunch 'n Learn

Tuesday, March 26

Triple Bottom Line Competition

Friday, April 12

Honors Convocation and Student Scholar Day

Monday, April 15

Spring Celebration Gala

Thursday, April 18

Youth Ministry Lunch 'n Learn

Friday, April 26

Commencement

As alumni, we invite you to get involved and stay in touch by calling the Alumni Office at 877.229.0941 or sending us an email to alumni@kuyper.edu with your contact information or the most recent news about you.



"Homes" in La Limonada

to trust God for health. I had to trust God for things that, in the United States, we so often take for granted. I learned what it was to trust God in difficult situations, living a life of getting down on my knees every morning, afternoon and night. We have such a privilege to be able to communicate freely with our creator. I worked with the children at a safe house, "Mi Casita," where I had the privilege of teaching English as well as other life skills to 17 kids. During my time there, I also met my husband, Vladimir (Vlad) Hernandez, Mi Casita's administrator.

Five years after arriving in Guatemala, God made it plain that it was time to leave and

"God, I'm just a girl who doesn't know what to do with her life. I'm not super articulate. I don't speak Spanish very well. What could you want me to do about all the hurting people in this world?"

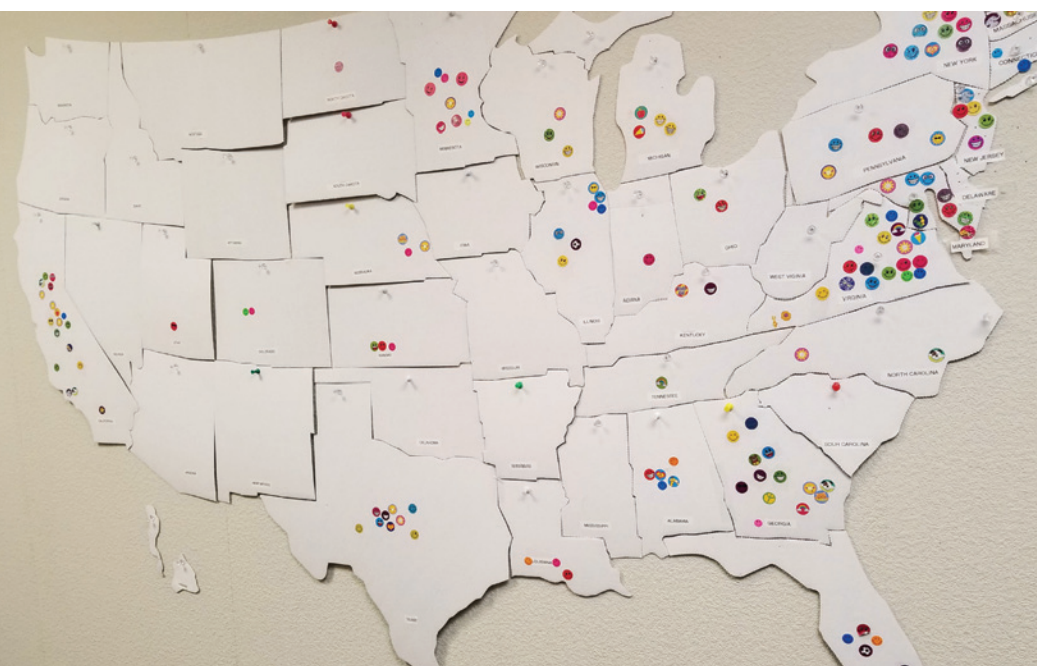
return to the United States. So, in June of 2015 Vlad and I packed up our things not knowing what the next six months would hold. God had plans to bring us to Michigan as I found temporary employment first with Sparta Public Schools as a bilingual teacher aid. We submitted paperwork to U.S. Immigration in August for a change of status to permanent resident for Vlad. Later that year I joined Bethany Christian Services in Muskegon working for the Refugee Transitional Foster Care (TFC) program as the lead teacher. I was amazed that God has sent me to a place where I serve children with great needs. On a daily basis I have interactions with children of various nations, cultures and people groups. We receive unaccompanied minors primarily from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras that have come into the United States without permission and whose parents are usually seeking asylum, and we work to reunify them with their families. My job is to create a classroom environment where 16 minors up to age 17 feel safe and loved in spite of their trauma which affects

all aspects of a minor's life, especially when it comes to learning.

Bethany's program provides a very temporary education, as our goal is to reunify the children with their families as soon as possible. In between we have the opportunity to welcome each minor to the United States teaching English, United States culture, and helping them adjust to their new living arrangement while preparing them to be incorporated into the public school educational system upon discharge. As with any one-room school house, I am challenged each day to provide multiple levels of educational services to children of different ages. This requires large amounts of flexibility and being able to make the most of very short periods of time. I love seeing minors who were scared the first day they walked into the center have mixed feelings when the time comes to be reunified with their families—while wanting to be with their family, they do not want to leave because they've become such a part of their foster families and the school.

For as long as God has me working with Bethany Christian Services in this capacity, I will continue to serve with arms wide open—welcoming frightened children into the United States, teaching and loving them, and then helping to reunite them with their loved ones.

I feel privileged and blessed that each time, wherever God has placed me, He has prepared me for the next step—Kuyper, Guatemala and now Bethany. During my spiritual journey, God has revealed to me that He can use the underdog. He puts the tools and things that we need in place. God is faithful. He never fails. This journey of faith here on earth will continue as long as I have breath in my lungs. There are ups and downs, but one thing always remains as we seek to follow God—His immense love for us.



Map at Bethany showing where minors are reunified with parents or family

The Kuyper Loan Repayment Assistance Program

Mindful of students' desire to be able to pay off incurred education loans after graduation, and to ensure student debt will not stand between students and their future goals, Kuyper College unveiled the Kuyper Loan Repayment Assistance Program (Kuyper LRAP). Starting in the fall of 2019, Kuyper is the only college or university in Michigan to provide this program at no cost to all incoming freshmen.

Providing a safety net, with substantial loan repayment assistance after graduation if students do not meet specified income thresholds, the program will continue to pay loans until the graduate's income rises to a level of financial sufficiency or until their student and Parent PLUS loans are completely paid off.

Upon enrollment at Kuyper, students will receive a Kuyper LRAP notification letter from the College, specifying the lower, and upper income thresholds that determine how much assistance they will receive after graduation.

According to Kuyper's president, Dr. Patricia Harris, the Kuyper LRAP provides Kuyper's robust response to student debt concerns. "It empowers our students to study in their desired field with more confidence that student loans will be manageable after graduation," said Dr. Harris. "Given the mission of Kuyper College, this is a way to proactively address the issue of college affordability and access."



In My Words

DEEP RELATIONSHIPS

I can remember the exact moment that God brought Kuyper College into my life. It was the summer following my senior year of high school, and just weeks before fall classes were to start, when God placed it on my heart not to attend



Kelli Hoffman

Assistant Professor
of Social Work and Director
of Field Practicum

the college I had selected. Because I had been so confident in the plans I was making, I had only applied to one college, thinking I knew exactly where I needed to be. Through what can only be described as divine intervention, I found myself accepting a late summer campus visit at Kuyper. As the tour brought me past the soccer fields, I found a peace I had never experienced before, confirming that this is where God was leading me to attend.

God knew I needed Kuyper far before I even knew I did. As a student, I thrived under the relational approach to academics and class size. I knew that my professors genuinely cared for my academic well-being, as well as my personal growth. I found a place where I could integrate my faith into my professional passions.

After graduation, I believed my story with Kuyper had come to an end, but once again, God continued to have a better plan for me, and that plan included Kuyper College. When a social work faculty position opened, I knew God was prompting me to pursue the opportunity. I was being led full circle, back to where my journey started.

It is an odd transition, going from student to faculty. Professors who graded my papers are now my peers and companions in the lunchroom. I am now much more awake at the 8:30 a.m. classes. I become excited for assignment due dates because I cannot wait to read the insights of my students. I experience much nostalgia being back on campus, because despite the natural changes that have taken place over time, Kuyper College continues to have the intangible factors that drew me in years ago. The hallway paint may have changed, but the Christ-centered discussions that take place in them are still the same. The academic options may have been realigned, but the passionate learning that takes place has not. I see intentional relationships being cultivated between professor and student, and the possibilities that stem from them are endless. At the end of the day, when I turn off my office lights—in the same office that I sat in as an advisee all those years ago—I am so grateful that a learning environment like Kuyper exists and that God saw fit to bring me back to educate and encourage students in the same way I was during my time here. I truly feel like I am back home.

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



The Top 10 Colleges and Universities in Michigan

The above headline was used by Grand Rapids TV station Fox 17 to broadcast the rankings by WalletHub* of the top 10 colleges and universities in the state of Michigan. Kuyper College was ranked at number six.

To determine the top-performing schools at the lowest possible costs to undergraduates, WalletHub compared nearly 1,000 higher education institutions in the U.S. across 30 key measures. The data set is grouped into seven categories, such as student selectivity, cost and financing, and career outcomes. The metrics range from student-faculty ratio to graduation rate to post-attendance median salary.

Recognizing the challenge of predicting future outcomes, WalletHub's best colleges ranking also analyzes post-attendance metrics—the student-loan default rate and the share of former students out-earning high school graduates—to show the value of the education students can expect to receive beyond their undergraduate studies. Finally, Wallet Hub applies each school's weighted average across all metrics to calculate its overall score and rank order among all colleges.

Top 10 Michigan Colleges and Universities

1. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor
2. Michigan Technological University
3. Michigan State University
4. University of Detroit Mercy
5. Lawrence Technological University
6. **Kuyper College**
7. Calvin College
8. Albion College
9. Hope College
10. Kettering University

In a different national ranking report by College Consensus, Kuyper was ranked as a top 10 Michigan college and as **2nd nationally in student satisfaction** among all Christian colleges and universities.

**Data used by WalletHub to create the rankings was collected from the National Center for Education Statistics, Council for Community and Economic Research, U.S. Department of Education, COLLEGEdata and PayScale.*

STEWARDSHIP

Five Secrets of Good and Faithful Servants

Do you have kids or grandkids that like to keep secrets? The dictionary defines secret as something hidden from view. That's a good description of the hearts of "good and faithful servants" that Jesus described in Matthew 25. Here are five "secrets" of good and faithful servants that we trust will be an encouragement to you as you grow in your walk with the Lord.

1. Good and Faithful Servants are Trustworthy.

What has God entrusted you with? He trusts you with the time He's given you today, relationships with your family and friends, financial resources and possessions, the creation around you, the Gospel message, and so much more.

2. Good and Faithful Servants Know Their Abilities.

God knows what your talents and abilities are because He gave them to you! There's no point in comparing your abilities to someone else—God wants you to use what He's given you!

3. Good and Faithful Servants are Action-Oriented.

Good and faithful servants make things happen. They don't put

things off until tomorrow, wait until they are less busy. Is there something God is asking you to say, do or give today?

4. Good and Faithful Servants are Self-Starters.

While no one is watching, giving them reminders or holding their hands, good and faithful servants take responsibility and get to work, day in and day out, until the task before them is completed. Has God called you to complete a particular assignment?

5. Good and Faithful Servants Maximize God's Resources.

For example, did you know you can increase your tax benefit and stretch your giving dollars to the Lord's work when you transfer appreciated assets such as stocks or mutual funds directly to a Christian charity rather than donating the proceeds after selling them? If you have owned securities for more than a year, your tax savings are significant because you receive an income tax deduction for today's fair market value, not what you paid for it, and you will not pay any capital gain tax upon the transfer.

To learn more about transferring appreciated assets to a Christian charity, please contact the Kuyper Advancement Office at 616.988.3662 or email kcapisciolto@kuyper.edu.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STUDENTS TO WATCH

Samantha Jansma

Growing up, we were a family that attended church regularly, and during fourth grade I became very involved in youth group and started volunteering during my sophomore year of high school. I'm still involved with that youth group today. One activity that I valued growing up was the once a week time my younger sister and I spent together with my dad running errands and grocery shopping. As I look back, that time with my dad was priceless as we listened to his many words of wisdom. He worked 60ish hours a week, but always made time for us. He showed up for people, and I hope I can be half the person he is.

In high school, I was involved in several activities such as the National Honor Society; Student Council; a mentoring program called A More Beautiful You; and DECA, a business organization where I learned about marketing, sales, hospitality and tourism, and many other business-related skills. Through this program I presented a "Payless Gives Back" advertising campaign that a co-worker and I took to the International Career Development Conference in Orlando, Florida. Looking back, I was implementing principles that I would later learn in the classroom at Kuyper. Through this experience, God showed me that I could use business to glorify him. Until then, I thought I had to go into ministry full time to be able to build the kingdom. This showed me that marketing and sales could be used to bring the light of the Gospel into the business world.

I came to Kuyper because I loved the small class size and campus. When I visited during my senior year, everything that my admissions counselor was saying resonated with what I wanted in a school. I also didn't feel like he was "selling" it to me. He kept saying, "If Kuyper isn't the best fit for you, we want you to be at the school that God is calling you to." I appreciated that, and it made me want to attend even more.

At Kuyper, I found a place of belonging. I met my best friends, Christianna Ransom and Elisabeth Hoogeboom, during the very first day on campus. They've seen me at my worst and my best, and I am extremely grateful to have found two lifelong friends. Here I am receiving a top-notch education from an institution that cares about

their students personally, spiritually and academically. This was all made possible by the scholarships and grants that I received. Without them, I would not have been able to afford a four-year college experience. In addition, students from other colleges are always amazed that I have personal conversations with my professors every week and that they take time to intentionally get to know each student. The professors have prayed with me, encouraged me, and cared for me deeply.

For the last 18 months I have been interning at Steelcase Inc., a furniture manufacturer in Grand Rapids. I have been working as a project management intern in new product development supporting the furniture, wood and work tools categories. This experience has been incredible. I have been leading my own cross-functional teams since May 2018, and every day continues to be such a great experience. I have learned how to lead teams, communicate more efficiently with individuals, and network with those higher "up the ladder" than myself. At Steelcase, I have never felt like "just an intern," and because I've been there so long, many people do forget that I'm one.

After graduation, I hope to begin working for Steelcase full time. If not at Steelcase, I'd like to pursue marketing elsewhere in Grand Rapids. Other than my future career, I hope to continue to volunteer in high school or college ministry in some capacity. I would like to walk with students and be a person that shows up for them and loves them right where they are. I will most likely be in Grand Rapids or the greater Lansing area after graduation, and although the thought of the unknown is somewhat frightening, I know that God has been faithful before and that He will be faithful again. To Him be all the glory forever and ever, amen.



CLASS **2019**
HOME **Caledonia, Michigan**
MAJOR **Business Leadership and Bible & Theology**