

KUYPER

College News

Celebrating 85 Years A Publication for Alumni & Friends

Learning OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM



Back (L-R): students Trevor Huisingh and Israel Lian;
Front (L-R): students Jia Debrey, Bailey Lewis and Addison Eckelbarger

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Kuyper professors Marc Andreas and Tim Howerzyl believe that learning happens everywhere, both inside and outside their classroom walls. Both also enjoy making what students read in their textbooks come alive.

So each professor was thrilled this summer to create exciting and immersive learning experiences for Kuyper students that saw professors and proteges travel directly to the places and people they had previously studied.

Both classes are part of a longstanding Kuyper tradition that focuses on integrating in and out-of-classroom learning through class experiences in such places as Yellowstone National Park, the Dominican Republic and Israel.

Andreas' class, called "Leadership in the National Parks," has taken place every other year since 2018.

It alternates years visiting national parks in California and the Rocky Mountains, asking students to consider what it means to lead an organization that is specifically focused on caring for God's creation.

Andreas, a Professor of Business Leadership and the program's director, teaches his business leadership students that there is more to being a Christian businessperson than simply making money.

In fact, he said, Christians in business actually have three bottom lines to be concerned with: people, planet and profit.

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JOIN THE CONVERSATION 
KUYPER.EDU

Forming Lifelong Learners

Yosemite. Sequoia. Grand Canyon. Southwest desert. Great destinations. Did you visit any of these places this summer? Our students did!

In our cover story, you can read about our student summer immersive learning experiences led by Professor Marc Andreas and Dr. Tim Howerzyl.

These summer courses provide exciting learning opportunities for our students that emphasize our value for how and where our students learn, as stated in the three themes of our Philosophy of Education.

Learning is rooted in love for God and neighbor. *As we come to understand God's love for us, expressed most fully in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit empowers us to love and serve Him in return and to love others with the same love that Jesus showed us.*

The students visiting the National Parks witnessed God's love displayed in his magnificent creation and considered how to practice servant leadership and environmental stewardship. The landscape and people groups of the Southwest provided opportunities for the students to wrestle with how to love

God within our various cultures and how to love our neighbor.

Learning is holistic. *We believe that all of life involves learning. What we do in the classroom serves and strengthens students' ability to understand and serve beyond the school.*

As we begin a new academic year, our classrooms are buzzing with learning as professors and students engage together. Can you imagine what learning happens under the canopy of giant sequoia trees staring up at Half Dome or visiting a Navajo community? In all of these contexts, our students are learning to live and serve God wherever He places them.

Learning happens in the community. *The call to love God, pursue truth, and do justice cannot be sustained apart from a community that sees God's beauty, delights in God's truth, and tastes God's goodness.*

These students knew each other before attending these off-campus



courses, but being together 24/7 strengthened their relationships and enhanced their sense of community.

Their community also expanded as they met with Kuyper alums living and serving within the Navajo nation. They blessed our campus community by sharing their experiences during a summer chapel service.

Learning in and out of the classroom propels our mission into action as we form lifelong learners who live purposeful lives of work and service to God and their neighbors.

Thanks be to God for the gift of learning!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia".


Dr. Patricia R. Harris
President



Equipping a New Generation of

Christian Leaders

This year, we invite you to support Michigan's only work college as together we prepare students to bring a Christ-centered perspective to the workplace in their chosen vocations. **Your support makes it possible for students to grow and go where God leads them.** Visit Kuyper.edu/giving or call the Advancement Office at 877.229.0940.



Marguerite Bonnema
(from left), Andrew
VanderVeer and
Mary DeBoer

Kuyper's Mission in Action

When Kuyper College President Patricia Harris looks at the lives of Mary DeBoer VandenBosch and Marguerite Bonnema, members of the College's very first group of graduates in 1942, she sees Kuyper's mission in action.

In 1944, just two years after graduation, the two founded Bethany Christian Home, now known as Bethany Christian Services, to care for children in need of loving homes.

That bold step, Harris said, is part of a Kuyper legacy that goes back to 1939 when the College began as a place to train laypeople to serve and share the Gospel.

"Marguerite and Mary truly exemplify our mission here at Kuyper, which is to form lifelong learners for purposeful lives of work and service to God and neighbor," said Harris.

Both VandenBosch and Bonnema — who passed away in 2009 and 2013, respectively — were drawn to what was then known as Reformed Bible Institute by their desire to help children in crisis.

"They knew that Kuyper could prepare them to follow the calling God had given them," Harris said.

For Bonnema, that hunger to serve began in high school, passing by an orphanage on her daily route to class. She became a registered nurse as soon as she could, knowing that a key part of opening her own children's refuge would be having one on staff.

A Shared Passion for Helping Children

Both she and VandenBosch arrived at Kuyper in January of 1940 and were assigned to be roommates. They soon discovered that they shared the same passion for helping children in need.

In a book of memories written in 1998, currently housed in Kuyper's archives, VandenBosch reflected on this moment.

"See how wonderfully God's hand is seen in this happening and what a role RBI played," she said.

After graduation, the pair worked for separate local mission organizations in

Grand Rapids while sharing a home on Sigsbee Street.

In 1944, Bonnema met a young woman who had a child outside of her marriage. Her husband had threatened the infant, so Bonnema and VandenBosch took the baby girl in. Over the next few months, they welcomed five more babies, and in November 1944, they founded Bethany as a nonprofit organization with the help of Andrew VanderVeer, a friend and Christian Reformed Church missionary.

In 1945, VandenBosch, Bonnema and VanderVeer moved their fledgling organization to a residence on 13 acres in Grand Rapids, where Bethany's headquarters still stands today. And, in 1951, the organization became a licensed adoption agency.

A Global Mission to Strengthen and Preserve Families

What began as emergency shelter for one baby girl eventually grew into one of the world's largest international adoption agencies, a global mission that partners with churches and communities to strengthen and preserve families, find families for children who need them and support refugees and immigrants who have fled danger.

"Bethany is such a great example of Abraham Kuyper's idea that God reigns over every square inch of creation," noted Harris. "They remind us that we can and should serve God in all places."

She added that the College's relationship with Bethany extends well beyond the organization's origins, with Kuyper students going there for internships and jobs after graduation, and professors and other friends of the College serving on the Board of Directors.

And Bethany is just one example of Kuyper's deep connections to the community outside its walls.

"Kuyper stands out as a Bible college because we are continuing our tradition of equipping men and women to serve and share the Gospel wherever they may be called to go," Harris said.

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This idea, known as the Triple Bottom Line, has become a key component of the Kuyper program over the years.

“In the business leadership program, we talk often about the social and environmental responsibilities, in addition to financial ones, that we have as Christians,” he said.

These discussions were what ultimately led him to create the course.

“I wanted to create a class that considers what happens when the environment itself is the product,” he said.

Howerzyl’s class, on the other hand, grew out of his unique relationship to the Navajo Nation and Pueblo peoples of the American Southwest.

“My connection to that area goes way back,” said the Assistant Professor of Theological Studies and graduate program director. “I first visited on a mission trip when I was in seventh grade, and then I pastored Bethany Christian Reformed Church in Gallup (New Mexico) for 3 ½ years before I came to Kuyper.”

His “Native American Intercultural Ministry Immersion” course ventured to Northwestern New Mexico for the first time this year, introducing participants to the Navajo and Pueblo peoples and getting them thinking about life and ministry across cultures.

“I thought it’d be a great opportunity to introduce students to that world,” he said. “Since I knew the area and a lot of people there, it made sense.”

He added that Kuyper also has its own connection to that part of the country, with 40 Kuyper alumni currently living and serving in and around the Navajo Nation.

Both courses, said Andreas and Howerzyl, involved studying the history and culture of the regions they traveled to, helping students appreciate the unique challenges of living and serving there.

And, of course, there was also plenty of time to experience God’s creation in the area firsthand by hiking and taking tours.

“The Southwest has its own sort of beauty. None of the students had been to New Mexico before, so I’m glad they got to experience that,” Howerzyl said.

“Our students definitely get impacted by the grand nature of seeing God’s incredible creation in these places. It’s really quite something,” added Andreas.

Each class also created a wealth of opportunities to meet with and learn from individuals with real-world experience.

“We met with park leaders to learn what it’s like to lead and manage a national park,” said Andreas. “We covered things like human resources, training, accounting, marketing, social media and strategic planning.”



Students Luke Karsten and Lance McDonald and Professor Marc Andreas

All this, he added, is to get students thinking about practicing servant leadership and environmental stewardship when running an organization.

One of the most memorable interactions for Howerzyl’s group, he recalled, was meeting Rev. Stanley Jim, a Navajo pastor and Kuyper grad (as is his wife Sharon) who introduced a key component of the course: contending with how the Gospel might prompt positive transformation among a group of people without erasing their cultural identity.

“I wanted students to wrestle with what it means to be Navajo and Christian, especially when your cultural identity is wrapped up in traditional spiritual beliefs,” he said.

Kuyper News and Events

Births

Stephen Eising (2014) and **Alexandra (Jones) Eising** (2015) welcomed their daughter, Esther Sage, May 26, 2024.

Alissa (Command) Griffin (2013) and Zach Griffin welcomed their son, Asher Bennett, on July 2, 2024.

Rachel (Visser) Rao (2016) and Nikhil Rao welcomed their son, Kip Naveen Rao, on July 9, 2024.

Kat (Reynhout) Brouwers (2019) and **Will Brouwers** (2021) welcomed their son, Garrett “Rhett” Brouwers, on July 22, 2024.

Education

Teresa Janzen (2006) is pursuing her Doctor of Ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Dylan O’Brien Pahman (2009) is scheduled to complete his doctoral degree at the Institute of Theology and Liberal Arts at St. Mary’s University, Twickenham, London.

Lisa (Ritzema) VanLonkhuyzen (2011) graduated from Western Theological Seminary in April 2024.

Service

Deb Huisingh (1997 & 1999) was the first Kuyper alumni to sign up for Kuyper’s new prayer portal volunteer program.



Back (L-R): students Israel Lian and Trevor Huisingh; Front (L-R): students Steven Skarina and Meika DeVries, Professor Tim Howerzyl, students Bailey Lewis, Jia Debrey and Addison Eckelbarger.

This conversation touched on one of the most important components of both courses: how to live and serve God in whatever context He places us in.

“I think that’s really something we’re all doing all the time. We’re all thinking about how to stay faithful to the message of the Gospel while still living into our own identities,” Howerzyl said.

Students also heard about Corwin Brummel, a 1961 graduate of Reformed Bible Institute who, with his wife Esther, has devoted a life of service to the Navajo Nation.

“Rev. Jim shared with the students how Cor Brummel was influential in teaching him the Gospel prior to his becoming a Christian,” Howerzyl said. “So many of the Navajo leaders were trained at Kuyper that when we met someone new on the trip, my students would say, ‘So let me guess — another Kuyper graduate?’”

Currently, there are more than 40 Kuyper alumni living and serving in and around the Navajo Nation.

“One of the great things about this trip was the opportunity to meet quite a few Kuyper alums,” Howerzyl said. “Many people don’t realize that over the years Kuyper has had a deep impact among ministry leaders in the Southwest. The school has been a key place for Navajos with a desire for kingdom ministry to be equipped and trained to minister to their people.”

He added that he hopes students came away from their experience on their trips and the questions they wrestled with having fewer answers but more humility, insight and wisdom while engaging with those who are far different from themselves.

“We thought a lot about what church is and how the church can exist in different contexts,” he said. “That meant asking what it means for the Body of Christ to be present in a particular place and what that should look like.”

Whether students traveled to the national parks of California or the mountains of northwestern New Mexico, their experiences left lasting impressions.

Freshman Emily Karsten reflected on her experience, and she said the joy and peace she felt experiencing God’s creation in the national parks took her by surprise.

“I felt the world stop in its axis and melt all of my thoughts and worries away,” she said.

“I’ve been to several national parks before, and I always get the same feeling where nothing else matters, as if I am held in God’s hands and can physically feel my fear of the Lord. He is great beyond measure, and the national parks prove that.”

A 2024 Kuyper graduate, Lance McDonald, sounded similar notes.

“It was more than just a series of trips to beautiful places; it was a transformative experience that enriched my understanding of the world and my place in it,” he said. “The natural wonders we witnessed, the cultural insights we gained, and the personal connections we made all contributed to a profound appreciation for the beauty and complexity of life.”



Students Aaron Eckelbarger, Lance McDonald and Emily Karsten, Professor Marc Andreas, and students Kenzie Feighner and Luke Karsten

Professional Development

Ann Essenburg (2006) became the Director of Admissions at Kuyper College after serving as the Interim Director of Admissions.

Matt Wohlford (2007) accepted a call as pastor at Harlem Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, after serving as pastor at Nooksack Valley Reformed Church in Washington since 2019.

Justin Christensen (2011) became a Talent Acquisition Sourcing Manager at National Heritage Academies.

Reuben Antvelink (2014) was recently ordained and accepted a role as Assistant Pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church (EPC) in Kent, Washington.

Katy Jorritsma (2018) accepted a new Data & Compliance Specialist role at Kuyper College.

Lindsey DeBoo (2021) is serving as a Capital City Fellow in Washington, D.C.

Gordon Grigg (2022) became the pastor of Menominee First UMC.

Advancing Kuyper

This past May, we were privileged to host our inaugural Van Halsema Legacy Society Lunch, a unique opportunity for our esteemed supporters.



Jim Steenbergen
Chief Advancement Officer

This Society was created to gather people committed to supporting Kuyper College who have designated a portion of their final or ultimate gift to the College. Their involvement in this Society is not just a gesture of support but symbolizes

a significant contribution to the future of Kuyper College. As a longtime planned-giving professional, I love talking to donors about their estate giving. It's especially fitting when you consider the final and ultimate gift that Jesus Christ gave to His kingdom.

His gift to us, our salvation, created a legacy so powerful that even today, His Word stands firm in the face of a world that is often deeply divided. In my short time here at Kuyper College, I've realized that this school is creating biblically literate, compassionate Christian citizens ready to engage the world and be a light in the darkest places.

This past year has been about celebration in many ways. We've looked back on an 85-year legacy of ministry for this college. But just as we honor the past, we are excited about the future. Recently, we gathered as a team and Board to look at that future and have adopted three new funds: Student Life, Academic Excellence and Athletics.

I hope to meet with many of you in the coming months to discuss our vision for Kuyper College today and 20 years from now. Your insights and support are crucial in shaping this vision. We have a great vision for tomorrow, but just as others before you made it possible through their giving, we need you as we move forward into this next exciting chapter of biblical higher education.

To learn more about other giving or estate planning options, please contact the Kuyper Advancement Office at (616) 988-3662 or email advancement@kuyper.edu.

In My Words

GOD'S GOOD GUIDANCE

I grew up surrounded by the forests and farms of northern Michigan, where I was homeschooled by my parents with my two siblings. This meant I grew up most comfortable in small, close-knit communities, so when I visited the



Katy Jorritsma
Data and Compliance
Specialist

Kuyper College campus as a high school junior, the deep and close community made me feel right at home. I was sold when I sat in on a couple of classes and saw how intelligent and caring the faculty is and how willing they were to answer my many questions. I was even more impressed as a student that they never got tired of my questions and emails!

I graduated from Kuyper in 2018 with a double major in business leadership and Bible and theology. Right after graduating, I had the opportunity to work on a temporary project with the Business Office at Kuyper while I applied to jobs in the area, mostly at Christian nonprofits. I was mainly looking for an office assistant position, so when the Advancement department started looking for an administrative assistant, I thought God was guiding me in that direction, applied and was hired. God's plan for my time at Kuyper definitely hadn't ended.

In my Advancement position, I had the chance to meet many wonderful supporters of the College, talk to alumni from almost every decade of the College's 85 years, and spent countless hours organizing and retrieving information.

This summer, I started a new position at Kuyper as the Data and Compliance Specialist. This includes supporting and facilitating registration, advising, preparing the academic catalog, issuing transcripts, assessing degree completion, and reporting on institutional data for accreditation and government surveys.

I am especially excited to work more directly with our students, providing clarity about our processes and their classes and helping them make decisions for their future. As a student, an administrative assistant, and now in this new role, I've discovered that I love organizing information and helping people. Both of these things bring me joy, and in this new position, I get to do both of these things every day.

As a visiting high school student, I was impressed by the Reformed, biblical focus of Kuyper classes. In this new role, I will be supporting the Academic Office and their plans for growth and new programs, which include providing the right information at the right time to continue making data-driven decisions. This is so exciting to me, because I believe that God shaped my life and my passions to prepare for this.

A job is something that can take so many hours of your day and week and life, so it's really important to spend that time in the right place. God's redemption of my life isn't just for my weekends and evenings, and I am so grateful to Him for guiding me to these positions at Kuyper College where I get to spend so much of my time honoring Him with the things I love to do.

Honoring Timmer as Kuyper's First President

Former Acting School Head Johanna Timmer has been officially recognized as the first president of Kuyper College, following a unanimous vote by Kuyper's Board of Trustees this past spring.

Current Kuyper President Patricia Harris announced the landmark decision at Kuyper's 2024 Spring Celebration Gala and shared her enthusiasm for the well-deserved acknowledgment.

"Looking back 85 years, we think it's important that we recognize her in this way for her great contribution to founding the College," she said to enthusiastic applause from those in attendance.

Born in Graafschap, Michigan, in 1901, Timmer initially hoped to become a missionary overseas before chronic health issues made that impossible. She was first educated at a two-room country school before attending a high school that required a daily three-mile walk.

After graduation, she taught at a Christian school in New Jersey before returning to West Michigan to become one of the first women to earn a degree from Calvin University. She then spent a year teaching.

In 1926, just six years after the United States ratified the 19th Amendment and gave women the right to vote, Timmer was hired on as Calvin's first Dean of Women, making her their very first female faculty member.

In 1939, she left that position to become the leader and spokesperson of the fledgling Reformed Bible Institute, which would eventually be known as Kuyper College.

According to Harris, this was a position Timmer was more than qualified for.

"She was chosen to lead the College because she was the best person for the job," Harris remarked.

A Dedication to God's Word, the Reformed Faith

She added that though Timmer was given the title of Acting School Head, she fulfilled all the responsibilities of a college president. Timmer served in the role for four years, leading, recruiting, raising funds and teaching, before pivoting to become a much-loved and admired Bible teacher at RBI.

"She did it with such grace," said Harris. "She clearly recognized where God was leading her and valued following that calling more than a particular title."

In a book of memories currently housed in the Kuyper archives, Katie Gunnink, later a beloved faculty member herself, reflected on her experience of being one of Timmer's very first students and recalled her dedication to God's Word and the Reformed faith.

"She taught with such conviction and enthusiasm that the doctrines of the Bible became alive and precious," said Gunnink.



In 1951, Timmer left RBI to help establish Christian schools in Ripon, California, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she also served as principal.

She died in 1978 at 77 in Holland, Michigan, having served God through Christian education for nearly 50 years.

"The things Timmer accomplished, especially as a woman in that time, are really quite remarkable," said Harris. "No one had a reason to dispute her credentials, and her colleagues clearly respected her and held her in high esteem."

And, she added, recognizing Timmer as Kuyper's first president gives proper weight to both her professional accomplishments and the legacy she left behind for the College.

"She set the tone for Kuyper as a place that gives lay women and men a solid foundation of biblical knowledge and equips them to serve and share the Gospel," Harris emphasized, and Timmer's parting words to Kuyper's very first graduating class in 1942 are a perfect example of this.

"What has the Reformed Bible Institute sought to do to prepare students? We have fed you with the precious Word of God... we have led you to grasp the centrality of the glory of God in all Christian activity and have impressed upon you the responsibility of faithful witness-bearing," she said.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STUDENTS TO WATCH

Maria Sobany

I grew up in Andorra, a little country between Spain and France. I have a younger brother, and my parents both work 9-5 jobs. Life was good growing up. I went to a small school all my life, so I had, and have, many of the same friends since I was maybe 10 years old. Growing up I loved sports. I played basketball, tennis, swimming and soccer, so every day after school I had some type of practice. When I was 12 years old, I finally decided on basketball and that was all I could think about. My parents are retired athletes, so they always cheered for me.

I grew up as a Christian and went to a Christian school, so I always learned about Jesus and the Bible. I went to high school in Andorra, my home country, then went to a community college while I played basketball, and for the last two years of my education, I chose Kuyper for the new athletic program, being able to build at Kuyper a basketball team and a winning culture, and because at Kuyper I can continue my journey as a Christian.

"I chose Kuyper for the new athletic program, being able to build at Kuyper a basketball team and a winning culture, and because at Kuyper I can continue my journey as a Christian."

I will be graduating in April 2025. My major is business leadership with a minor in sports management. After graduation I hope to keep learning and studying more, maybe

getting my master's degree, but also I want to start to figure out what profession I want to go into.

Kuyper has checked all my requirements. When I got to campus, everyone was so welcoming and knew my name. Also, my professors have been so flexible with the basketball schedule. I am so grateful for the faculty who have crossed my path so far. I appreciate their enthusiasm and dedication to teach. Everyone at Kuyper made me feel like family, and I have never had a dull moment between basketball and classes.

This last year I worked at the Advancement Office with Nathan (Slauer), and I am coming back for my last year as a senior. I feel very welcome in the office and my work is exciting. Juggling work and school can be a challenge, but Nathan is very understanding. Everyone at Kuyper is very helpful.

Kuyper is a small and very welcoming community.

This past summer, Maria had a chance to play for Andorra's national team and represent her country in several international tournaments. See kuypercougars.com for more details on her experience.



CLASS **2025**
HOME **Andorra**
MAJOR **Business Leadership**