

# KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends

## COMMON THREADS

*Student Development Helps Students Succeed*

Emily Perton, Travis Jones, Alyssa Patton and Al Moss (with Rico, Patton's Paws With A Cause dog in training).

**W**hen it comes to helping his fellow Kuyper students succeed, Travis Jones is all-in.

After transferring to Kuyper as a sophomore last year, he said the Student Development Office—particularly its Student Success Coaches—made a huge difference in his college experience, so much so that he decided to become a Student Success Coach himself this year.

“It was hard to get back into the swing of being a student, but they helped me get on track, so I wanted to take my experience and use it to help other people,” he said.

Emily Perton, Director of Student Success and Work, isn't surprised. In the Student

Development Office, she said, going above and beyond is standard practice.

“Just this morning, I was helping two students sew up holes in their coats,” she said with a hearty laugh. “I often find myself being the resource liaison and guiding them to who they need to be reaching out to, if it's not me.”

The Student Development Office, which is led by Dean of Students and Work Curt Essenburg, exists to support,

>> See **COMMON THREADS**, Page 4

### Inside this Issue

**PAGE 02** **Going Above and Beyond**  
Our staff and faculty exemplify our institutional core values and live out our mission, day in and day out.

**PAGE 03** **Basketball and Virtues**  
A new class and old basketball rules.

**PAGE 06** **In My Words**  
Sophie Hogan and her long road to a nearby Kuyper.

**PAGE 07** **Homecoming Recap**  
A great turnout for what will become an annual event.

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# Going Above and Beyond

**Dr. Laurie Schreiner, professor of higher education at Azusa Pacific University, has spent 30-plus years researching how to help students thrive in college.**



She defines student success as being “fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally in the college experience.” She adds, “It’s really about what the institution is doing to help students engage in the learning process and be able to come alive to all their potential.”<sup>1</sup>

A few years ago, I heard Dr. Schreiner speak at a conference, but she’s never visited our campus. Even so, if she were to come to campus, I’m convinced that she’d give us two thumbs-up for all the ways in which we are helping our students succeed inside and outside of the classroom.

Our cover story highlights the important work of our Student Development staff in building relationships and providing our students with a whole host of services. Each of these staff members brings specific skills and experiences in the areas of student success, residential life, KuyperWorks, counseling, campus activities and spiritual formation.

On any given day, if you pass by the “living room” of the Student Development Office, you’ll see that it’s buzzing with students engaged in conversations, working on projects, planning the next chapel service, loving on Rico (our Paws dog) and meeting

## Committed to Helping Our Students Thrive

### Educational Excellence

We provide a quality, comprehensive learning experience, in and out of the classroom, as we fulfill our end goal of education to live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God’s good world.

### Holistic Development

We strive to form lifelong learners who are academically, spiritually, socially and morally discerning, just and merciful leaders in church and society.

with staff members. Students know that the Student Development staff is in their corner when they need anything, from sewing up holes in their coats to talking about Jesus and why knowing Him matters.

What are the common threads woven through all of these student services? Going above and beyond is standard practice at Kuyper College, for we are committed to helping our students succeed.

Our incredibly dedicated, capable and caring staff and faculty exemplify our institutional core values of “Educational Excellence” and “Holistic Development” and live out our mission, day in and day out, as they “form lifelong learners for purposeful lives of work and service to God and neighbor.”

Richard Major, our “Student to Watch,” sums it up this way: Kuyper College is a place that “helps you grow in areas that you may not even have known you needed to grow in. . . and I am grateful to Kuyper for its role in deepening my faith.”

Whether you are an alumni or friend of the College, you also are part of the common threads that make up the Kuyper College community. Thank you for your support, through gifts, prayers and encouragement, so we can continue to help our students thrive!

Grateful to serve,

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

**Dr. Patricia R. Harris**  
President

<sup>1</sup> Flattery, C. (2023, July, 13). *Measuring and promoting thriving in college*. Inside HigherEd. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/college-experience/2023/07/13/five-components-college-student-thriving>

# Sports Management Students Play It Old School

Kuyper students were able to experience a beloved sport in a new way when they played a game of basketball according to the original 13 rules drafted by creator James Naismith in 1891.

The event was part of a brand-new class in Kuyper's equally new sports management minor, a program which aims to get students thinking about embodying Christian virtues in sports leadership, coaching and officiating, said Ray Thomas, Director of Campus Operations.

"It's really about bringing your Christian worldview into any of those areas," he said.

Thomas teaches the class alongside Marc Andreas, Business Leadership Professor and Program Director, and Tyler Whitcomb, a men's basketball coach, athletics liaison and admissions counselor.

Together the trio brings a wealth of pertinent experience to the classroom.

Whitcomb and Andreas both have many years of coaching and sports leadership on their resumes, and Thomas has been a referee for decades.

They decided that the recent 1891 version of basketball was a perfect way to put their lessons into practice, explained Andreas.

"Given that our Business Leadership program is very practically oriented, we thought that it would be great to take the principles students are learning about in class onto a court and play them out," he said.

The trio all agreed that by playing the game in its original form, instead of according to modern rules, they hoped to get the players out of their comfort zones.



Marc Andreas reacts as Kyle Jarosch passes the ball to a teammate.



Above, Kuyper students and staff watch as Malenga Musa weighs his options. At right, Laia Vidallier attempts to distract her opponent.



And their plan worked perfectly, with students' initial hesitation quickly giving way to hilarity as they attempted to adhere to some of the more antiquated rules, like prohibitions on dribbling and physical contact.

Andreas donned an official's uniform and whistle, while Whitcomb took to the bench as a coach, and Thomas shouted encouragement from the sidelines, arms folded and a wide smile on his face.

"We initially had 25 students, which is usually a full class, but there were so many people who wanted to take it that we opened the capacity to 35," he said as he watched the spectacle.

One of those students is Maria Sobany-Bosch, who loves the camaraderie the

class and game has created.

"We all have strong opinions about players and teams, and it's been fun to debate that," she said. "The game was challenging at first, but it was really fun to play with classmates who aren't basketball players."

Bosch added that she is looking forward to the rest of the semester.

"I think I will be able to gain a more holistic perspective of sports in general, instead of just focusing on my point of view as a player," she said.

Thomas hopes the class might even inspire some students to follow in his, Whitcomb's and Andreas' footsteps and venture into the world of sports leadership, or at least to view sports through a different lens.

"We need more Christian men and women in sports officiating and coaching," he explained. "And we wanted students to be able to see things from that perspective, not just through the eyes of a player or fan."



>>COMMON THREADS from Page 1

encourage and challenge students to become who God created them to be while fostering a close, tight-knit community that serves each other.

This means there's never a dull moment in the office.

Alyssa Patton, Kuyper's Student Development Specialist, coordinates many of the outside-the-classroom aspects of student life on the Kuyper campus.

Depending on the season, she might be found orchestrating move-in day at the dorms, overseeing plans for the Christmas banquet or organizing student activities like the Variety Show.

"A lot of my work centers around housing and community-building, so it's a lot of planning and working with students," Patton said.

One of the most visible aspects of the job for both women, and for Essenburg, is KuyperWorks, part of Kuyper's Work College initiative, which integrates classroom learning with the learning students experience in the workplace.

Student Development staff frequently meet with student staff workers, formally and informally, to offer support and encouragement, and Perton handles many of the behind-the-scenes things that keep KuyperWorks running on a day-to-day basis.



Above, Al Moss speaks at chapel in January. At right, Curt Essenburg, Dean of Students and Work.

This includes job placements, crafting contracts, keeping track of work hours and liaising with supervisors, as well as providing guidance to student staff workers, when necessary, though she is quick to point out that running KuyperWorks takes a village.

"It's a joint effort because it takes the Financial Aid Office, it takes Human Resources, it takes supervisors, but I'm the go-to to handle everything else," she said.

She also teaches Kuyper Seminar, a class designed to prepare students for life on a

college campus, which is required for all incoming students.

"The first section of the class is about navigating the learning systems we use and communicating with professors, just having your head on straight in college," she explained. "The second part is being physically, spiritually and mentally healthy. The last part is all about the Reformed worldview: what that is and how it's integrated into everything at Kuyper."

The capstone piece of the class is known as the Soul Project, which gets students

## Kuyper News and Events

### Professional Development

**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.

**Alyssa Blom** (2013) took a position at her church, Providence CRC, as the Director of Youth Ministries.

**Alyssa (Baar) Patton** (2018) is continuing her education at Grand Canyon University, pursuing her master's degree in counseling.

**Julianna Kempema** (2019) accepted a position as a Hospice Chaplain for Gentiva Hospice in Spirit Lake, Iowa.

**Lucas Walters** (2024) married Madelyn (Hendriksen) Walters in July 2024. He also started a new job at Vriesland Growers Co-Op in Hudsonville.

**Joseph Dankolie Marah** works to provide essential services to poor churches in Sierra Leone, ranging from church sound systems and church instruments to Bibles, food and clothing. He is also working to build a gospel recording studio so that Christian artists can record Christian songs in the local languages to be played on the existing Christian radio stations in Sierra Leone.

thinking about everything they've learned and how it has played out over their first semester at Kuyper.

"They can write a traditional paper, or they can do a podcast, a YouTube video, anything," she said. "I once even had one student write a rap, and it was so well done."

The Student Development Office further supports students' academic growth through things like proctoring make-up tests, handling accommodations for disabilities and grade checks.

Academics is also where Jones and his fellow Student Success Coaches come in, hosting study groups and tutoring sessions, although he emphasizes that there is much more to the role.

"It's your day-to-day life stuff. We're there in your corner when you need anything," he said. "The whole Student Development team is really taking a big role in a lot of things on campus."

As Director of Spiritual Formation, Al Moss has a window into a different side of student life at Kuyper. He oversees many of the things that help the Kuyper community deepen their spiritual life and relationship with Jesus, like chapel services and chapel groups, the Holy Grounds coffee hour, the Spiritual Life team and more.

But, he says, the personal connections he makes are the best part of the job. "I get to talk about Jesus and why knowing



(From left) Zay Talley, Emily Perton, Alyssa Patton, and Aniya Fisher celebrate at Orientation 2024.

Him matters! I get the privilege of helping students in their faith journeys," he said.

Sometimes, this means helping them face big questions about calling and purpose. Moss enjoys serving as a guide and advocate.

"I help them see how their spiritual life informs their vocation and integrate faith into every area of their lives," he said. "There's something incredibly rewarding about seeing someone discover God's purpose for their life or experiencing a breakthrough in their relationship with Christ."

This love for deep, meaningful connections with students is a common thread running through the Student Development Office. When asked, Patton, Jones and Perton all agreed with Moss that this is what makes their jobs worthwhile.

"I really enjoy it when students come into my office and want to talk about things. It's what led me to want to pursue a master's degree in counseling," said Patton.

"I see a lot of relationships being built with students," Jones echoed. "We're kind of like the glue between different areas of Kuyper."

Perton agreed with his sentiments, saying that even the office's location, in the heart of the Kuyper campus, highlights what Student Development is all about.

"We're like the bridge between their social life and their academic life. We're a support system bringing everything together for them. When they get in a car accident, they call us," she said. "It's little things like that that make their Kuyper experience different from another college."

# SPRING CELEBRATION GALA

Monday, April 14, 2025

Kindly RSVP by  
Tuesday, April 1, 2025  
at [www.kuyper.edu/gala](http://www.kuyper.edu/gala)  
or [events@kuyper.edu](mailto:events@kuyper.edu).

*On-site childcare  
will be available.*

Please join us for an evening of food and fellowship as we celebrate God's faithfulness to Kuyper College.

## Living in the Now

It's hard these days to look at our world and not see the many fractures. Divides of race, income and politics, plus heavy societal issues, make it tempting to want to live in and glorify the past.



Jim Steenberg  
Chief Advancement Officer

But our current story is not new. Pick up a Bible and read the Old Testament account of Babel, a fractured moment in history where suddenly everyone spoke a different language, but, more importantly, a moment where God reset the world and put it on a new path.

In the New Testament, we read of Jesus resetting the order of things. "You have heard it said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, 'Love your enemies'" (Matt 5:43-44).

While we can and should learn from the past, working on a college campus daily reminds me of the obligations we have to also look forward. The next generation of Christian leaders is eager to nurture their God-given gifts in His service as they seek to make valuable and necessary contributions to His kingdom.

I read something recently by C.S. Lewis that encapsulates this idea: "Leave the bulbs alone, and the new flowers will come up. Grub them up and hope, by fondling and sniffing, to get last year's blooms, and you will get nothing."

God's mercies are new every morning, and we need to be open to them by living in the present. Each day at Kuyper, I see so much worth celebrating. A growing community of international students. An expanding athletics program. Educational offerings that provide students with the relevant skills to succeed globally. Most importantly, we are a community that remains biblically rooted and intentional about learning His Word and applying it to the stories of our lives.

At Kuyper, we are living out the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

In a world that often seems chaotic, we are trusting in that promise. I invite you to join us on the journey through your gifts of time, talent and treasure.

## In My Words

### NO PLACE LIKE KUYPER

I'm a Grand Rapids native, grew up close to Kuyper and went to a high school, Forest Hills Eastern, that's only about six miles southeast of where I now work as a Kuyper admissions counselor.

But the road I took to get to Kuyper was a lot longer than six miles! After high school, I knew I was ready to get out and experience the world a little bit before going to college. My path would not be traditional, and though some people questioned that, I trusted it would be right for me, so I chose to take a gap year.



Sophie Hogan  
Admissions Counselor

First, I did a Youth With A Mission Discipleship Training School, a six-month program blending classroom learning, small group activities, personal reflection, practical service and community living. In fact, Kuyper is now home to a YWAM DTS, though it was not yet in existence when I took my gap year.

As part of my DTS, I traveled to France, Japan and Taiwan. More importantly, I was able to dedicate six months of my life solely to learning about God, the Bible and mission work. I knew that this was the perfect time in my life to build my foundation in Christ as an adult before entering college and the workforce. I was able to live with and learn from people from completely different backgrounds and faith journeys from all over the world. My faith was greatly tested, and I was able to see how challenging cross cultural ministry can be. But I learned many lessons during this season which will stick with me for the rest of my life.

I then went to Liberty University, a time filled with hard work, a busy schedule and very rich relationships. I used my time at Liberty to soak up as much knowledge and wisdom as I possibly could, and I truly enjoyed it so much. I loved all of my classes and fell in love with learning in a whole new way. And I thoroughly enjoyed mentoring and advising the ladies in my hall while I was a resident assistant.

When I began looking for a new career, I was reminded about my time as a recent high school grad during my gap year and then my time at the university. I realized that I could use my experience and my passions to be a part of that journey for other young adults. I strongly value Christian higher education, and I love how diverse and unique Kuyper College is.

Students come from all over the world, and from all different walks of life, to study and join the Kuyper community. I love being a part of that important time of a student's life and working with other like-minded adults who inspire me and teach me something new every day. There is no place like Kuyper, and I am so blessed to be a part of what Kuyper is doing.

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





Students, alumni and community members enjoyed outdoor coffee and hot chocolate stations, as well as other activities like pumpkin carving and face painting.

**There are 85 years of Kuyper College graduates living and serving all over the world, and in early November a first-time event drew many of them back to campus.**

“Homecoming: Falling for Kuyper” combined Kuyper’s annual Fall Fest with a Homecoming celebration to create a first-of-its-kind event honoring Kuyper’s 85th anniversary. It was attended by students, faculty, staff and alumni, some from as far back as the 1970s.

“It was a great way to recognize Kuyper’s history, while looking forward to what God has in store for the College in the years to come,” said Nathan Slauer, formerly Kuyper’s Manager of the Annual Fund and Alumni Relations.

A gorgeous, sunny fall day created an ideal backdrop for the event, which began with registration, after which guests could take part in a whole host of fun activities, including capturing memories with a photo line in the student development lobby, enjoying donuts and cider in the Walters Dining Hall and outdoor games on the soccer field.



Kuyper Student Development Specialist Alyssa (Baar) Patton (2018) enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere.



**Falling for Kuyper**

Maria Sobany-Bosch was one of the first to enjoy the inflatable obstacle course as one of the many activities available at Homecoming.

“It was so much fun to see Kuyper students, alumni, staff members and supporters all gather together and build community. One of the best parts of the day was seeing guests share their favorite Kuyper memories with one another via sticky notes,” Slauer said.

All this created the perfect opportunity for alumni like Eric and Kristeen VanderWall to relive some of their time at Kuyper. The VanderWalls, both 2010 Kuyper graduates, were eager to attend the inaugural Homecoming celebration

and introduce their young children to their alma mater.

“We were excited for them to experience a little bit of Kuyper life,” Eric said. “When we arrived, we were greeted by President Harris and others that we knew from our time at Kuyper. It was like a blast from the past!”

Because no Homecoming celebration is complete without a homecoming game, the Kuyper women’s basketball team took on Calumet College of St. Joseph at 1 p.m. in the Boonstra Gymnasium, securing a 62-56 victory over the Crimson Wave.

At halftime of the game, President Harris took the microphone to address attendees in the stands.

“85 years ago, Kuyper College began. We didn’t look like this, but we had the same kind of dedication,” said Harris, to sounds of applause from the audience. “Alumni, students, staff, friends of the College, we are so glad you are all here for this first-ever Kuyper College Homecoming!”



Alumni (from left) Rev. Gary Schipper, Rose Schipper, Dr. Gary Teja and Dr. Jeff Stam, all former RBC classmates, pictured with Kuyper President Patricia Harris (far left).

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## STUDENTS TO WATCH

# Richard Major

I am from Grand Rapids and went to Godwin Heights High School. I have nine siblings and am one of the youngest. My mother was a registrar at a high school for 21 years and my father did a lot of things before he passed away. Neither went to Kuyper, and I actually went to two other colleges before landing at Kuyper. What sold me on Kuyper was the visit I made to campus. Seeing how tight-knit the community is here was important to me, especially coming from bigger colleges.

I expect to graduate from Kuyper next month (April 2025), and I think that my business leadership degree will set me up really well for future success. I do not have a specific way I want to go career-wise, but I am just hoping to land in a position I can grow in and where I can flourish. Also, being a clothing-brand owner, a lot of the things I have learned at Kuyper I know I can apply to my own brand.

After being at two other colleges before Kuyper, I can say that my experience here has been amazing. It has surpassed my expectations, and I have grown so much in so many different ways. I have met people I see myself interacting with for the rest of my life. That includes my professors. They have been great. I have not come across a professor that I did not like nor appreciate. These professors go out of their way to get to know each of us and create relationships with us. I would recommend Kuyper to anyone I could.

Some of my favorites have been Professor Richelle White, Professor Marc Andreas and Professor Dan Kroeze. I chose Dr. White for many reasons. She is the epitome of what they tell you a college professor will be coming out of high school while

also being someone you need to experience within your life. I chose Professor Andreas because of his business background prior to becoming a professor. I have been able to engage with him and learn while building a relationship for my future. Lastly, I chose Dr. Kroeze because of his love for his job. I have never met a professor who is so passionate about their job prior to meeting him.

I also have appreciated my work placement as part of the KuyperWorks program. My current on-campus internship has me in the Kuyper Business Office with payroll and human resources. Between playing a sport (basketball), my academics and KuyperWorks, there is a lot to juggle, but being who I am, it has felt normal. All throughout my time in college I have worked, played a sport and done school. Just a part of my natural order of things.

As I get ready to graduate, I look back at my time at Kuyper, and I would describe it as a family. An extended family that takes you in and helps you grow in areas that you may not even have known you needed to grow in. I also am grateful to Kuyper for its role in deepening my faith. I have not always been a Christian per se. I went to church at times as a kid, but never consistently. Coming here definitely helped me grow more in my faith.



CLASS **2025**  
HOME **Grand Rapids**  
MAJOR **Business Leadership**