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THE DIAMOND

Dordt students travel to Capitol Hill for conference

Isabel Pheifer — Staff writer

Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. is full of politicians, lawyers, and interns. Men in blue suits and long gray overcoats carrying briefcases weave between people on the way to meetings. Women dressed in pencil skirts with their hair slicked into neat low buns enter buildings swiftly, ready to tackle whatever is at hand for the day. And on the week of Jan. 30 to Feb. 3, college students from across the country, including Dordt University students, joined the herd of finely dressed professionals. Capitol Hill got a small taste of northwest Iowa as eight Dordt students flew in to attend the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) Christian Leadership Conference.

The NAE hosts this conference each year for students who attend colleges in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCU). The NAE, representing nearly 40 denominations and thousands of churches, has been uniting and mobilizing evangelicals in common cause for the common good since 1942.

Typically, Dordt awards four students the opportunity to attend this conference through an all-expenses paid trip. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference took a few years off. Since this was the conference's first year back, Dordt was able to send more students this year.

Seniors Trey Engen and Ranger Mouw, juniors



President Erik Hoekstra with Dordt students in Washington D.C.

Bryce Enger and myself, and sophomores Nia Boentoro, Josiah Rosario, Sara Hofer, and Emily Zuidema were the eight students selected by various Dordt faculty.

"I was excited for the opportunity to learn more about how to engage as a Christian with

politics, while also getting a taste of what happens on Capitol Hill," Enger, Dordt's Student Body Vice President, said.

While there, the students immersed themselves in what life is like on Capitol Hill. Through the words of many state senators, representatives,

Christian and secular organization speakers, and other political spokespeople, each student learned a lot.

Topics covered throughout the week ranged from current political issues, different bills being sought or passed, research being conducted, faith-informed views of politics, and internship opportunities available through various organizations. Students heard conference speakers at the Senate Office buildings, the White House, and the U.S. Capitol buildings.

"I appreciated being able to see professionals who are leaders in their work and hearing examples of how they have made an impact," Zuidema said. "They provided tangible... examples of how I could make an impact someday, as well as currently as a student."

The same week of the NAE student conference is also when the CCU President's conference takes place in D.C. Dordt President Eric Hoekstra has attended every year since taking over the presidency in 2012. Accompanying the Dordt students for a day of talking to senators on Capitol Hill is often a highlight for Hoekstra.

"What I want to do by bringing students is to help them get involved and know that they can make an impact," Hoekstra said. "As the famous Abraham Lincoln quote goes, 'Democracy is a rule of the people, for the people and by the people' — and that includes students."

A common misconception of D.C. is that it is...

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Theatre students to nationals

Audra Kooi — Staff writer



Students performed a scene from last year's spring mainstage. From left to right Sofia Bouma, Sam Walhof, Dakota Klein, Sommer Schaap

This year, the Dordt University Theatre Arts Department took a scene from last year's spring mainstage, "The Importance of Being Earnest," to the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF), and several students returned with awards.

Besides the mainstage scene, KCACTF also invited Dordt to participate in three other portions of the festival. Judges selected senior theatre major Tommy Shin to direct a concert reading of a student-written play. Sommer Schaap, a senior theatre major, wrote a play called "Almost Lifelong," which was one of three selected from a pool of 50 plays to be performed in a rehearsed reading at the festival. Anna Janssen, a history and education senior who choreographed a tap dance for last year's spring dance concert, was also able to bring that performance to the festival.

KCACTF is a theatre program involving colleges from across the nation. Judges from the program attend theatre productions at

participating universities to determine whether to invite the program to perform at the yearly festival. In some cases, like that of Dordt's 2022 mainstage, schools perform select scenes; other times they recreate entire productions. Through this opportunity, students can be exposed to stories they might not otherwise get to see.

"I really like being immersed in theatre," Lindsay Kuiper, a senior English and secondary education major, said. "There is something to be said about the diversity of perspectives and the way in which the stories are shared."

The program is divided into eight regions. When a show or individual student wins one of the highest awards in their region, they move on to nationals, which are held in Washington D.C.

While attending regional festivals, students are encouraged to watch productions and attend a variety of available workshops.

"There were a lot of workshops for people in all sorts of areas of theatre," senior theatre arts...

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HLC accreditation achieved; ACSI accreditation pursued

Jeralyn Wessel — Staff writer

In mid-January, Dordt University received news the institution had once again been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). After a team from Dordt submitted a lengthy argument as to why the school should be reaccredited, peer reviewers visited in early October 2022 to examine evidence, meet with faculty and students, and construct a detailed report to recommend reaffirmation of Dordt's institutional accreditation. The peer reviewers' report was submitted to the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) for a final decision.

The IAC approved the recommendation and assessment of the peer reviewers, and Dordt was granted accreditation at the January meeting. Dordt met the HLC's standards so well that for all five HLC criteria, Dordt received the highest rating: "met with no concerns."

Following the previous accreditation site visit in 2012, the HLC peer reviewers' report had critiqued Dordt on how the institution needed

to do more to properly assess student learning. The past several years were subsequently spent developing and implementing processes for assessing student learning, including evaluating the effectiveness of Dordt's Core program, and several changes were made. This commitment and change in student evaluation prompted the HLC to have no concerns in this area for the recent accreditation.

As those closest to this process celebrate the reaccreditation, the cycle continues as another assurance argument must be submitted in just a few years. While the continuous process may seem wearisome, Vice President of Academic Affairs Leah Zuidema sees many benefits in the work.

"You get to really see a big picture view of the way that everything we do at Dordt is so connected... to mission," Zuidema said.

The HLC focuses most on how an institution is carrying out their mission, and the team involved in submitting an argument for accreditation was able to see how Dordt meets this requirement firsthand. To prove a successful mission across campus, various departments gave input for the argument, and Zuidema was pleased to see a consistent team across the university that is committed to equipping students to live a life for Christ.

While the HLC accreditation is granted for another ten years, several departments are undergoing similar work while pursuing other accreditations. During the first week of February, the Education Department was visited by several individuals on behalf...

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English department's search for new professor

Teresa Taylor — Staff writer

When Dordt University English Professor Bob De Smith announced his retirement at the start of the year, the department formed a search committee to fill his position.

At Dordt, faculty search committees consist of members of the searching department and an outside member from a separate department. Due to the department's size, the remaining four English professors sat on the committee, joined by Abby De Groot from the education department.

"I really love that it's a faculty-heavy process," De Groot said. "Obviously, the VPAA and the Academic Affairs Office gives input and directs some of it, but I really like how the search committee is composed – I think it's a good structure."

During the search process, applicants spend considerable time interacting with the university's professors, giving them a feel of what Dordt truly is and how being a professor here works.

"Administrators can give an idea about what it's like to work at the college," De Groot said. "But I think it's really good that they interact with the people that they will be interacting with most closely on a day-to-day basis."

The department's role in the decision making also "promotes a sense of unity," De Groot said.

The search committee does not make the final decision. Rather search teams for open faculty positions make recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the university's president. The VPAA and the president make a decision and bring the selected candidate forward to the board of trustees for an interview and for the board's final decision

on whether to offer a contract. The board's yes or no vote determines if the administration is authorized to offer the potential faculty member a contract.

The application asked for a curriculum vitae (CV), which is Latin for "course of life." The CV is a resume in an academic setting and contains education, work experience, and publications. Applicants also submitted a personal statement about their faith. Because professors must apply Dordt's four coordinates when planning syllabi and teaching, the applicants interacted with them in their personal statements.

The application also included a cover letter and letters of recommendation.

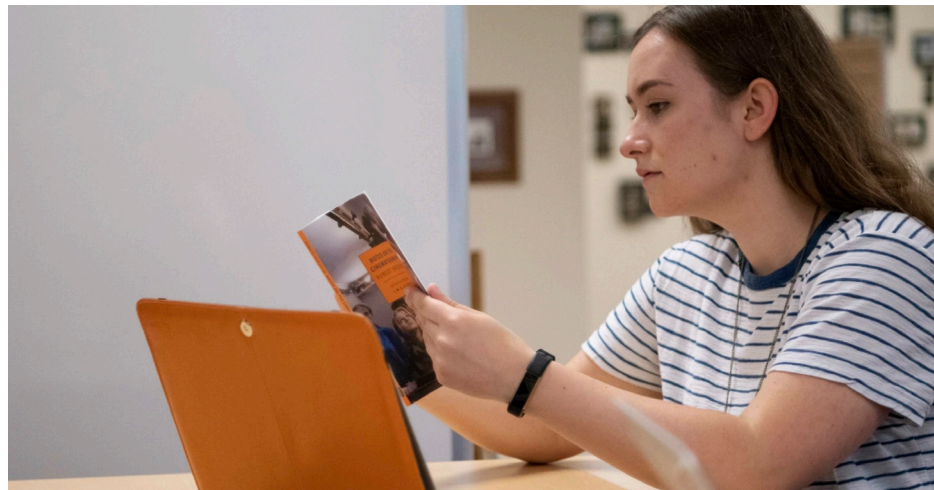
Throughout the fall semester, the committee vetted applicants. They interviewed a selection over Zoom and chose candidates to interview on campus.

Each candidate ate dinner with the search committee and another lunch with the English department. English majors and minors had the opportunity to meet the candidates at an informal lunch at the Commons.

Joya Schreurs, the English department work-study, escorted candidates to the Commons and participated in conversations throughout meals.

"At the lunches, we've just gotten to know the job candidates—both personally and what they would be like as professors," Schreurs said. "They've also gotten to know us too—what we expect, want to see different, and our perception of the department currently."

The candidates had introduction and exit interviews with Vice President for Academic Affairs Leah Zuidema, a meeting with Dordt President Erik Hoekstra, a meeting with Human



Resources, a meeting with the Center for Scholarship and Research, an interview with the search committee, and an interview with the faculty senate.

"It's as much they're interviewing us as we're interviewing them," English professor Josh Matthews said. "They get to see what things are like here. Can they envision themselves living here in Sioux Center, being here at Dordt, working with us?"

Candidates taught a section of Core 180, observed by the search committee and the Dean for Curriculum and Instruction Teresa Ter Haar.

"We're not just necessarily looking for an expertise," English professor Howard Schaap said. "We want to see you teach and see your passion come through."

The application process guaranteed qualified candidates. During the more intense interview process on campus, the department searched

kept the student population in mind.

"A candidate has to be a pretty good to excellent teacher coming in here," Matthews said. "And that's important to us – having great teachers in the department. It's good for the department; it's great for the students."

The department sought a candidate who will bring their own passions to the department and their classrooms. Just as the English language evolves, the English department has evolved over the years and will continue to do so. Regardless, the constant hope is to have knowledgeable professors who care about their subject and their students.

"Audience is important," Schaap said, "knowing your audience and being able to reach that audience."

Photo credit: Dordt University

Battle it out at NC/DC

Daniel Ketchelos — Staff writer

One of Dordt University's largest Dordt Student Activities (DSA) events is coming back to campus. NC/DC, a battle of the bands event between Northwestern College and Dordt, is returning on Feb. 11, 2023.

NC/DC used to be a yearly event, but due to COVID-19 and scheduling issues NC/DC hasn't occurred since the 2019 fall semester.

NC/DC consists of two rounds where rock bands from Dordt and Northwestern battle it out for the ultimate cash prizes. Dordt will host the semi-finals in the B.J. Haan at 9 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 11, and Northwestern will hold the final round in its Christ Chapel on Friday, Feb. 17 at 9 p.m.

"We thought it would be fun to do something with another rivaling college," Alexandra Bandstra, a junior and the student coordinator for DSA, said. "I think people are excited. People always love a good rivalry between schools, especially Northwestern since we're so close in proximity."

Up to five bands from each university will be selected for the competition. The top three bands will win cash prizes of \$650 for first place, \$250 for second place, and \$100 for third place.

"For a lot of people this [NC/DC] is a new concept," Bandstra said. "It's been kind of hard putting the word out and getting people to audition since many don't know what it really is."

Auditioning for NC/DC consists of scanning the QR code on the NC/DC poster, then filling out a short form. Bands wanting to perform also must submit a recorded video audition of their performance.

"It's really open to everyone, you just have to have a band," Bandstra said. "We love all different kinds of talents, like in our Airband competition and our upcoming talent show, we just love to see all different kinds of people participate."

Students are also excited to participate in NC/DC.

"There are a lot of talented musicians here at Dordt, and now they get to play and do what they love," Abraham Vasquez, a senior and drummer for the NC/DC band 'Paraless,'

said. "I'm excited to get to see other musicians from a different school, and there is that competitive aspect since we are playing against Northwestern."

Although NC/DC hasn't happened since 2019, in the 2021-2022 school year DSA hosted "Battle of the Bands," which is a similar event to NC/DC, but without Northwestern's participation. Now with Northwestern back in the competition, NC/DC can return.

NC/DC provides students with an opportunity to perform together, and it creates a space for Dordt and Northwestern students to meet each other through a school-sanctioned event. It also allows students to express themselves through their music.

"I get to play the drums more often and play the music that I enjoy with my friends," Vasquez said. "I just enjoy the opportunity to play in front of people, it's pretty cool."

Students are encouraged to audition, and faculty members are also allowed to participate.

"We'd love to see as many groups audition as we can, so sign up for NC/DC," Bandstra said.

Contributed Photo



Capital campaign hits the ground

Bri Gardner — Staff writer

Dordt University's campus is about to drastically change, as the Planting for the Future Capital Campaign begins laying groundwork for initial projects starting in March 2023.

The Planting for the Future Capital Campaign is a \$90 million campaign dedicated to the expansion and improvement of Dordt's campus. Some of the projects in this campaign include a new dining facility, renovations to the De Witt gymnasium, and continued development of several departments, such as nursing and agriculture.

While it's not on the campaign's webpage, Dordt also recently approved a \$6 million budget for four new two-story apartments. These buildings were recently approved for construction to start in March. Before then there was speculation regarding housing, but nothing was finalized. According to Dallas Bourdo, the Assistant Director of Admissions, prospective students were told that "new housing is on the horizon."

The buildings will be located north of the parking lot behind the BJ Haan Auditorium. Howard Wilson, Vice President of Operations, detailed the construction of these plans, stating that each of the four townhouse-like buildings will have two stories with two bedrooms located upstairs and one downstairs, along with a kitchen and bathroom. These two-story apartments will each hold six or seven upperclassmen students for a total of 96 beds added to Dordt's campus.

One of the bedrooms will be larger than the other two, with the hope that seven students can easily fit into one apartment. The bathrooms will also be larger. Wilson said they will contain two showers, two toilets, and three sinks.

Each building will also have a shared living space. Dordt is unsure of what this space will hold, but they are working with students, asking questions about what they would like to see in the new facilities. Ideas include high speed internet, a place to barbecue, room for yard games, etc.

"As a graduate of Dordt not having that, I'm a little jealous!" Assistant Director of Admissions

Dallas Bourdo said.

The housing on campus has continually shifted and changed over the years. In the beginning, Dordt had no housing on campus, with students living in Sioux Center residents' basements. In the 1980s, there were two trailer parks for student housing. Since then, the need for housing has vastly increased.

Last semester, Dordt was at 99 percent capacity, with close to 1450 students living on campus. For the past three years, Dordt has seen a trend of record enrollment, and is not expecting a break in the trend for the class of 2027. These new housing facilities are an attempt to accommodate everyone.

"Our board has told us that we don't want to be a school with restricted enrollment," Wilson said. "We want to plan for growth."

In addition to the new apartments, Dordt is also planning on renovating some of their current facilities over the summer. Dordt is constructing three new classrooms, 11 more offices, and 60 new parking spots. North Hall will also receive a carpet and paint update.

The long-awaited air conditioning for North and East, however, is on hold. Funding for the project is listed in the Capital Campaign, but it is a pricier project, which Wilson projected to be about 3.2 million dollars, up from one million before 2020.

Each of these projects is intended to create lasting spaces for students for years to come. When discussing projects with builders, Wilson said he and others ask the builders to plan their projects with a 50-year design life in mind.

Wilson partners with faculty members in Admissions and other departments to ensure the planned spaces will positively contribute to campus culture.

"To have a space that you can make homey and really feel like it's yours is really important," Bourdo said.

PLIA trips over spring

Gracie Campbell — Staff writer

Spring break is full of plans. From family and friends to trips and commitments, students are loaded with activities. Though many travel home over break or take trips with friends, some will choose to dedicate their spring break to service. That is what PLIA is all about.

PLIA stands for “Putting Love Into Action.” Every spring break, around 100 students embark to places around the Midwest, South, and Southwest United States. As soon as spring break officially begins on March 6, groups of eight to 10 students with two leaders pile into vans and head off.

The groups engage in service activities and outreach in these communities, returning to Dordt University on March 14. Some work alongside churches and summer camps, putting in hours of physical labor together. Many of the trips visit cities where they experience firsthand the difficulties of poverty.

Keely Kolbrek, a sophomore engineering student, went on a trip to Mendenhall, Mississippi last year. Mendenhall is currently trapped in a cycle of poverty and the team engaged in community outreach.

“The leader of the ministry shar[ed] his personal story with us...how he came to know Jesus and how he wanted to serve his community and just bring hope to a community that’s stuck in a hard cycle,” Kolbrek said.

Kolbrek also appreciated the time spent in community with one another as the group was able to cook in their lodging.

“I think it’s meaningful to get to serve a community that you’re with,” Kolbrek said. “Also it’s an opportunity to just grow and learn.”

Even freshman are looking forward to the trip and opportunities they give. Beatrice Shackelford, freshman environmental science major, plans on going.

“It [is] a really great opportunity and something that I want to be involved in,” Shackelford said. “[It’s] kind of what I want to do for my future... ministry and intercity. So, it [is] a good way to get my foot in the door and try some stuff out.”

Shackelford was planning to stay on campus anyway, and saw PLIA as a good opportunity.

For Emma Philips, a freshman chemistry major, it was more about the reputation.

“A bunch of people told me this was their best week of Dordt,” Philips said. She knew she would be doing more through this trip than at home.

Both freshmen are looking forward to meeting new people and building relationships with the communities they serve.

There are twelve trips in total with twenty-four leaders heading out. The twelve teams will travel to Georgia, Texas, Illinois, Ohio, Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Missouri.

Along with the work done during each trip, the teams will also enjoy time together on the road and spend one free day filled with fun activities. Many of the teams will enjoy the spring weather outside. One trip destination in Arizona is less than an hour from Zion National



Last year’s New Orleans PLIA team works on their team-building

Park and the Kentucky trip in Appalachia is primed for hiking.

Going on a PLIA trip costs \$105, and students will send out ten support letters to take care of the extra cost. Students are also encouraged to bring their own spending money for extra food. To apply, visit u.dordt.edu and type “PLIA” into the search bar. From there, the digital application allows you to pick your preferred

destination, which the officers do their best to adhere to. A PowerPoint with more details on each trip can also be found there, as well as the support letter document.

The deadline is approaching as applications are due Friday, February 17.

Photo credit: Celeste Vandermeer

Mary returns to the commons

Billy Varble — Guest writer

When someone says the name “Mary Oleson,” many students’ faces light up. Some will remark on her kindness, her sympathy, and much more. After falling sick and being out of work for about a month, Oleson returned to the Commons on Feb. 1.

While many know of her because of her cashiering position, a lot of people may not know much about her humble beginnings.

Around seven years ago, Dordt Dining hired Oleson to work in catering. Oleson eventually jumped from catering in the Commons to catering at the Grille. Two and a half years ago, she returned to the Commons -- this time as the cashier. At the beginning of her job, Food Service Director Mindi Sneller told her, “Mary, you are the face of Dordt Dining.”

“I automatically think of her soft-spokenness, plain and simple,” Sneller said. “Nobody comes close to that.”

One of Oleson’s favorite parts of the job is the experience of getting to know everyone.

“I never get to know [students] really deep and wide, but personalities come out,” Mary said. “There are some that come in quiet – some that come in a little more reserved. And by the time they leave this place, I’ve watched them taken ownership of their world – how they have claimed this place as home and embraced it wholly, and then watching them go.”

The simple greeting, “How are you doing?”

“The impact I have on you guys: that’s the impact you have on me,”
-Mary Oleson

rings differently from Oleson. She isn’t asking the question to fill silent air; instead, she is really asking, “How are you doing?” She cares about students’ days and wants to learn more about their lives, knowing many students by name.

“The impact I have on you guys: that’s the impact you have on me,” Oleson said.

Her caring for the students doesn’t stop at the commons. Oleson has attended hockey games, basketball games, volleyball games, concerts, plays. She added that, when the season comes, she’s excited to see some baseball.

At the end of the academic year when students are dressed in caps and robes ready to receive their diplomas, Oleson will be in the crowd.

“I send them off,” Oleson said, “and I say goodbye to as many as I can. It is a thrill to watch them step into life.”

There are a lot of good days, but Oleson’s best days come once a year: they are the first day of classes at the beginning of the semester. As for bad days, Oleson said there are none.

“Can’t say I’ve had one,” Oleson said. “When friends, family, or even students come over to me and tell me that they’ve had a bad day, I tell them, ‘I don’t believe in bad days.’ I have bad moments, but I will not give the Enemy my entire day.”

When the holidays come around, Mary’s hospitality doesn’t go unrewarded. Before winter break began last semester, seven students gifted Mary with Christmas cards. One student even gave her some of her favorite chocolate.

“It was about Christmas holiday spirit,” Oleson said. “[The students] gave them as a thank you for being me.”

On the second day of winter break, Oleson fell ill, leaving her in bed for a month. After taking time to recover, Oleson returned to the Commons on Feb. 1. The illness’s aftermath still clung onto her, draining her of her energy. But at 5 p.m. when the dinner rush of students came in, it felt as though a heavy weight was lifted off her and her warm smile returned.

Reactions from students ranged from “Hi Mary!” to “Good to see you back!” to “Bless the Lord!” Students close to Mary came around the counter and hugged her. A few students even exchanged some cheek kisses. Despite the variety of greetings, the message was the same: it’s good to have Mary back.

For the time being, Mary will be the cashier on the dinner shift as a part-time employee. She hopes to return as a full-time employee once she is back on her feet.

“The Lord has provided me with everything I need,” Oleson said. “There is nothing I lack. If there is a prayer I would have, it’s that I would give the students something that they can use every day of their lives and give to other people.”

HLC accreditation achieved; ACSI accreditation pursued

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...of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) to review the department for reaccreditation.

Not only does this accreditation show that students are receiving a high level of education from a Christian perspective, but the ACSI accreditation also joins Dordt with an extensive network of Christian schools across the world. For students graduating from an ACSI accredited education department, doors will be opened to teach at other ACSI accredited schools.

Similar to the HLC accreditation process, Education Department Chair David Mulder and Education Program Director Abby De Groot compiled a lengthy report providing evidence proving the department meets or exceeds all of the requirements for accreditation. A team visited to meet with faculty and students to ensure the report was an accurate representation of the department.

The review team consisted of three individuals who serve across the country in prominent roles in the educational field. This experienced group was able to assess Dordt’s Education Department from a variety of angles.

Upon reflection, Mulder considered the team’s advice and viewpoints as part of a bigger, collective effort throughout Christian education.

“[It’s] recognizing that the body of Christ is not located in northwest Iowa. It’s in northwest

Iowa, but it’s in a lot of other places too,” Mulder said. “This is just a reminder for us and our program that we are connected to the body of Christ that is global.”

As the ACSI accreditation team

“This is just a reminder for us and our program that we are connected to the body of Christ that is global.”
-David Mulder

formulated their initial report, they gave nine commendations to the Education Department and two recommendations to improve upon. Overall, the department was pleased with the visit and looks forward to hearing an official decision later this year.

Contributed photo

Dordt students travel to Capitol Hill for conference

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...all work and no play. But after fulfilling childhood dreams of exploring the various museums along the National Mall, walking along downtown D.C., fully embracing being tourists by taking pictures in front of everything, and eating Chinese food with other students at 11 p.m. each night, the group learned the falsehood of that statement.

From 550 feet above ground and through a small foggy window in the Washington National

Monument, the busy city of D.C. looks peaceful and connected intricately. This view models values of government we should strive for as discussed throughout the conference.

“I hope those who attended can infect our campus and their home communities a little bit with their newly gained knowledge,” Hoekstra said.

Contributed Photo

Into the Jungle: a boy's comic strip history of World War II

Libby Bandelin – Staff writer

With fear, trembling, and a lot of pencil shading, an unfortunate frog stands before the judgement seat of a sinister, razor-toothed toad. Restrained by two darkly sketched ruffians, the frog's eyes are drawn wide with horror as we read his condemnation.

"You're guilty of stealing a crusty piece of bread," the penciled letters read, "But since I am a kind and liberal judge, I sentence you to death in the iron maiden!"

When Phil Scorza, the Chair of the Art Department at Northwestern College, emailed history professor Mike Kugler about the date for his art reception, they decided on Jan. 19.

"I think my wife can make it that day," Kugler responded.

"I have a couple of friends who want to come too," Scorza replied.

"Well, with your two plus my one, we'll have five people there," Kugler wrote back.

On the wintry night of the reception, about thirty visitors crowded into the Te Paske Art Gallery, a far cry from the five that were expected.

Kugler, a professor at Northwestern, is not the artist but is presenting the work of his father James "Jimmy" Kugler, who passed away 50 years ago when Kugler was only eight.

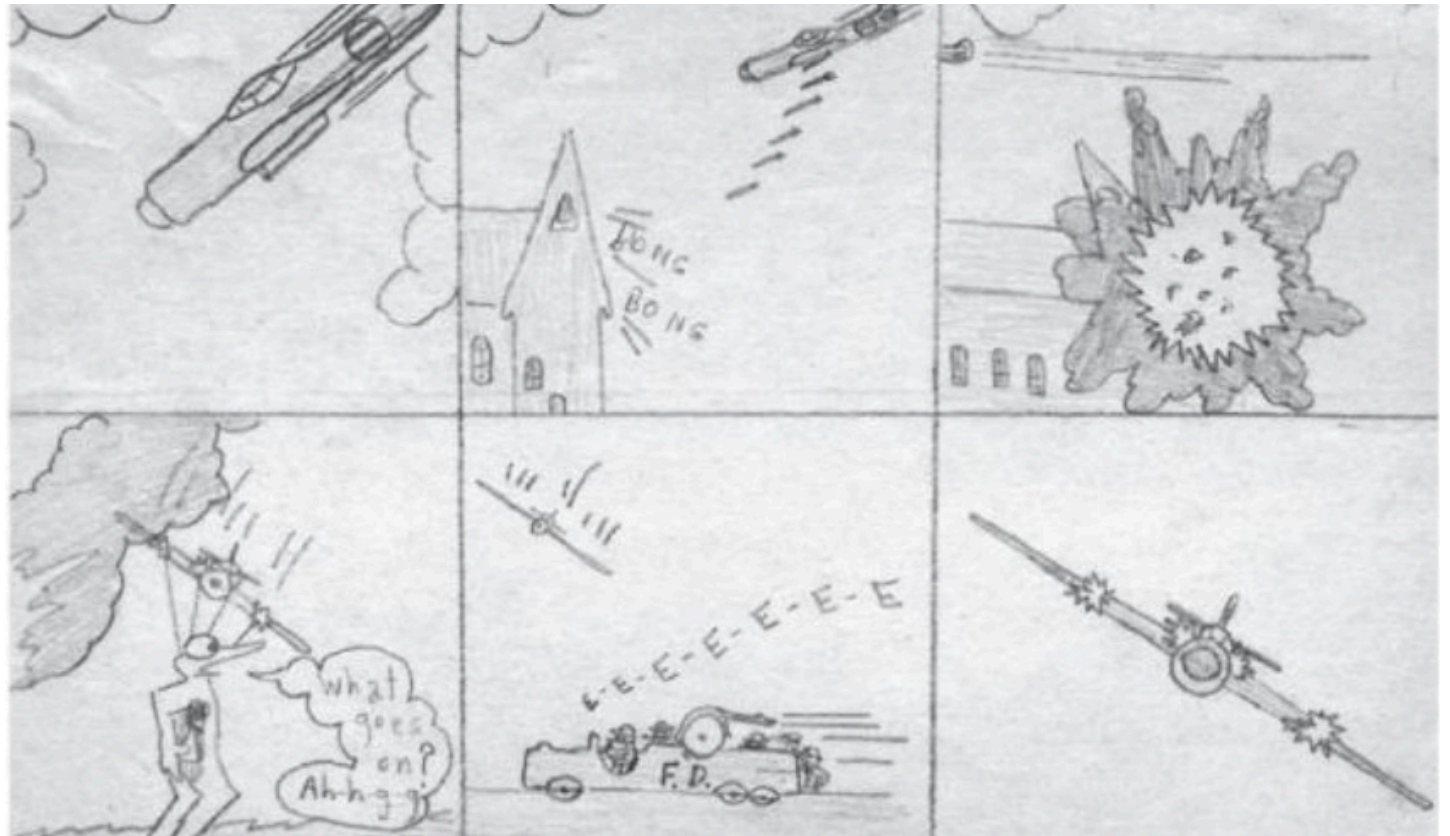
The exhibit features select works from a collection of 100 sheets of comic strips that Kugler's father drew as a student in Lexington, Nebraska, starting back in 1945. Through the illustrations of frogs and razor-toothed (or even flying) toads battling, the cartoons tell stories of war, horror, mystery, and violence. Since his father is not here to explain why he drew them, Kugler went to Jimmy's classmates to see if they remembered the frog and toad saga.

One classmate remembers Jimmy's comics always being handed around during school, particularly amongst the boys in class. Kugler speculates that the increase of violence and dark humor in Jimmy's comics was encouraged by his friends and classmates in high school -- the iron-maiden panel being one of them.

The cartoons have been in Kugler's possession for years. Stacked on top of each other and smudged with pencil lead, they were stored in a slick box bound by rubber bands. It wasn't until about 15 years ago that Kugler unearthed them and started looking at his father's artwork through the lens of a historian.

Individually, each comic is like anything an adolescent boy might doodle during class, but when you put them all together, they tell a story and share a fascinating glimpse into someone's life. Now, after embarking on a decade-long project of research and compiling his father's art into a book, Kugler sees the comics as historical documents that garner sympathy and confession.

The comics shed light on what an adolescent's understanding of World War II was, and how his creative imagination was developed and influenced around the radio and news reports of



the day.

"We're lucky we saved them," Kugler said. "There are very few artifacts that children have left behind from that time period."

Driven by curiosity, Kugler went to the comic books that Jimmy would have read growing up. This approach is what Kugler calls a "micro-history study," where historians read and speculate through the context of the times, why people think and behave the way they do.

Right before the war started, superhero comics like "Superman" were all the rage. But Jimmy didn't draw any heroes in his comics, the closest he got to a super-figure was creating super-villains. Happy endings or a man in tights swooping in to save the day were not interesting to him.

"He liked the action and the speed of a relentless enemy," Kugler said.

As for the origin of the Great War depicted in Jimmy's universe, there was no sense of fighting for any reason -- vengeance or otherwise. The frogs are first drawn as peaceful farming creatures when the toads begin an unprovoked attack from the sky by bombing the public library. The frogs arm themselves like in "The Battle of Toadajima," and begin a counterattack which lasts throughout the rest of the series. There is no end to the war in sight. This idea of fighting for the sake of fighting and a "kill or be killed" mindset was likely influenced by the wartime propaganda that was spread by the American popular press during the war effort.

"Behind the rising sun," a violent propaganda film released in 1943, portrayed the war as a war of extinction. "See why the villainous Jap

warlords have got to be exterminated" one poster for the movie read. Another trait that Jimmy adopted from these propaganda posters was the depiction of the enemies having razor-sharp teeth.

Kugler also thinks that Jimmy's comics were a push-back on his strict schooling and a way to add excitement in his small town of 4000 people. The town that the toads blow to smithereens by air-raids is very similar to Lexington. His artwork also tells of the difficult growing up years that Jimmy endured. Jimmy lived alone with his father, an alcoholic, after his parents divorced while in the eighth grade.

"It is not hard to imagine what he might have experienced when living alone with a man 40-years older in the middle of February," Kugler said.

As for the art itself, Jimmy puts his creatures in tanks or B-32 Bomber Jets and equips them with the helmets, grenades, and other weapons of mass destruction that would have been used by the Japanese, German, and American soldiers during the war.

The exhibit reminds Rein and Margo Vanderhill of how their daughter and son would entertain themselves by drawing in the car while on road trips. Rein has taught as an art professor at Northwestern since 1974.

"Kids expressing themselves visually is elemental in human expression," Rein said. "I look at his art and I see a kid I would have liked

to have as an art student."

The "Into the Jungle Exhibit" has also given him a new look at the war from a distance.

"Every time you look back on history as you get older," Rein said, "you understand more."

His wife Margo is an elementary and high school art teacher. She commends Jimmy's confident lines and the fluency in his artwork.

"I'm used to seeing boys draw swords and battles," Margo said.

While Jimmy never became an artist, art was still a part of his life long after he left Lexington. Mike remembers watching in awe as his dad would sketch out a frog or toad at the breakfast table.

"He would draw it just like that," Kugler said. "I remember him coming home from work one day and declaring we were going to make a kite 'like he used to'."

Kugler recalls his father christening their kite with a bright red fire breathing dragon.

"I don't see anything particularly Christian about his art," Kugler said. "But what I think is Christian about this is the ability to look at someone's artwork and seek to understand their life and to have better sympathy for them."

The "Into the Jungle Exhibit" will conclude on March 3.

Contributed photos

Theatre students to nationals cont.

cont. from pg. 1

...major Sofia Schaeffer said. "They highlighted technical theatre, and there were some really cool workshops."

KCACTF highlights more than productions and selected scenes. Individuals are invited to be judged on things like sound design, original works of theatre, and choreography. Sophomore Elizabeth Brouwer won first place for her work on the poster for "Our Town."

"This particular design process was unique from what I've done before," Brouwer said. "I was in direct communication with the director about the design. The poster went through a lot of drafts and revisions before we arrived at the final product."

Brouwer was not the only Dordt student to take first place at KCACTF. Senior Lindsay Kuiper won the first-place award for her sound design work in "The Importance of Being Earnest."

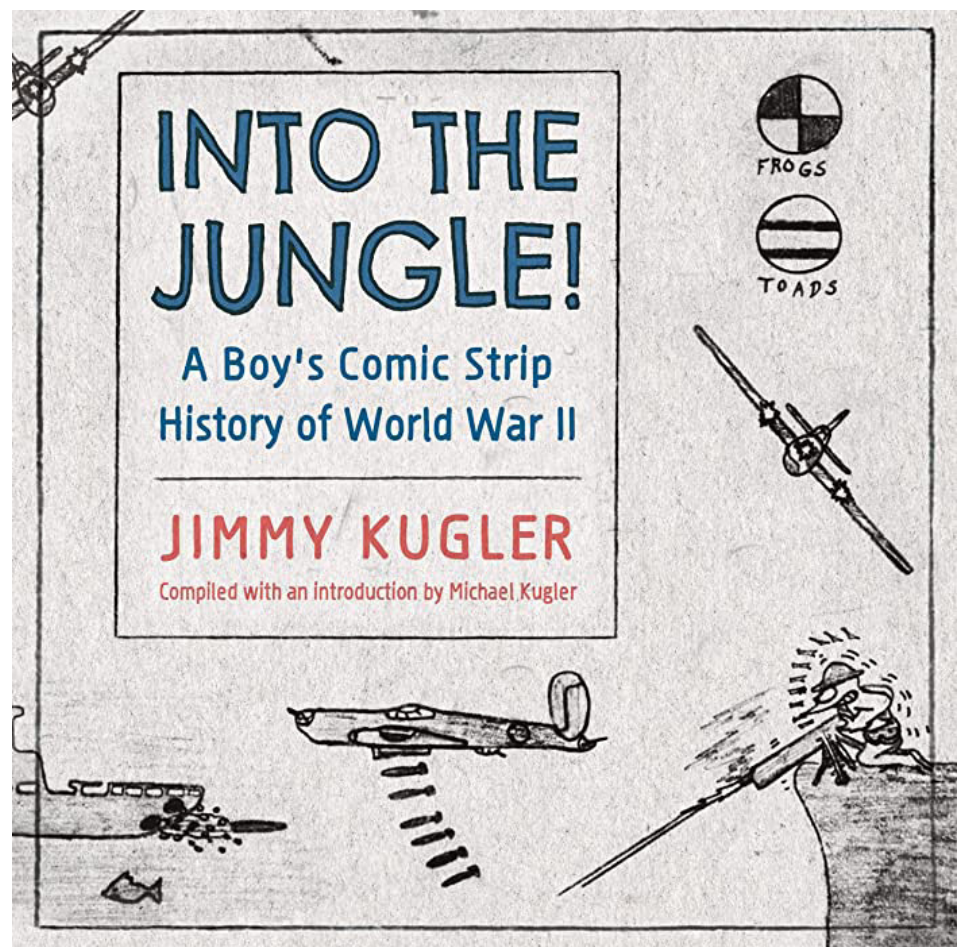
Her design included original compositions created to fit with the Victorian era piece.

"I like seeing how I can fit my composition style into the style of the play we're doing," Kuiper said. "But there is a temptation for designers to go too big and blow everyone else out of the water; using restraint can be one of your biggest tools."

Successful theatre productions require collaboration among all the parties involved. The art, costuming, sound, and lighting all must come together to tell the same story the actors are portraying on the stage. KCACTF gives theatre students an opportunity to celebrate their successes in the greater theatre community.

Lindsay Kuiper will leave for Washington, D.C. in April to present her sound design among the other regional winners.

Photo credit: Nathan Hopkins



The Weekly, or the Weak-ly?

Aleasha Hintz — Staff writer

Many students are familiar with it, fewer read it, and even fewer really depend on it: The Weekly. The premise of The Weekly is contained in the name: a dependable, weekly resource that is meant to keep students in the know about on-campus events. But lately, the Weekly has become pretty much irrelevant.

For one thing, The Weekly has been late numerous times this school year. If it is a document worth sending (and I think it can be), then it should at least be on time. The email itself is supposed to come every week on early on Tuesdays, but many issues of The Weekly, such as the Feb. 1 issue, have been sent on a Wednesday.

It may seem petty to complain about this being one day late, but the truth is that The Weekly is not performing its function if it is not arriving on time. If an event were to be scheduled on a Wednesday, and The Weekly didn't arrive until the day of, it has the potential to harm the event's participation (assuming that there are others like me, who do actually check The Weekly for events).

I also think that The Weekly could use a layout update. To help with its own readership and to

communicate student-sponsored events better, I really wish the announcements and events sections of The Weekly would be moved closer to the top of the email. The only reason I say this is because the other sections tend to become a little repetitive.

I am not trying to diminish the important role that these groups play in campus life at

Dordt, but the section in The Weekly on athletics, student government, and the AEC are pretty much exactly the same format every week. There are rarely announcements within The Weekly itself about these areas—they are just links in the email.

The Weekly has an opportunity to honor student-run events, community events, and fundraisers when they include them in the email. The writers of The Weekly could honor these events even more by keeping them at the top of the email. The Weekly could also better serve Dordt's students by being more intentional with its punctuality and arrangement.

Contributed Photo

The pros of Tinder (as a woman)

Mallory Nilles — Staff writer



Left. Left. "Oof." Left. Left. Left. *Sigh.* Left. Right!!!!

The adrenaline of your first match rushes through your veins and you instantly want more.

Created in 2012, Tinder is a dating app that allows you to go through hundreds of profiles, swiping left for "NO!" and right for "YES!" While it offers multiple paid options that allow for sneak peeks at "secret admirers" (people who like you, but whose profile you haven't seen or didn't swipe on), super likes, the ability to go back on an accidental swipe left, etc., a non-paying consumer is allowed 25 right swipes every 12 hours, encouraging you to be "picky" with your swipes.

Tinder is a popular dating app, no doubt, but it gets a lot of hate—often for valid reasons. But in honor of Valentine's Day, I'd like to propose a new perspective on Tinder, especially for those looking for that ring by spring. There are, believe it or not, pros to it.

- You can talk to people who say things no sane, healthy human being would. It really picks you up and makes you feel better about yourself. Reminds you to thank your parents.

- You can get super into someone, hang out with them, make future plans to go to a gala for his work, buy a \$100 dress, then get ghosted. Now you're stuck with a gorgeous-but-expensive dress, a couple pieces of his clothing you won't know what to do with (pro tip: donate them), and trust issues. But at least you get to enter your Reputation era, right Steven?

- You jack up your levels of dopamine. Yeah, it's true. You go through so many talking stages that your brain is just rolling in that neurotransmitter. Though there is that crushing weight that even if you did make it past the talking stage with someone, you would have to share where you met: Tinder. *deep sigh*

- You can go global when you run out of midwestern boys! If, for some reason, pictures of average-sized fish and jacked-up pickup trucks don't trip your trigger, you can always search for men who do not have mullets! Seriously though, there are a lot of men out there. It's concerning—and potentially helpful.

- You'll see people from your high school and university there! It's not awkward at all! In fact, you can pass them in the hallway and say, "Hey, your Tinder profile looks really great! Would totally swipe (if I didn't know your entire dating history and Mom's name—because let's be real: everyone knows everything about everyone around here!)."
 - You build empathy for those who have ever left you on read. You realize it's not personal (sometimes). You also become more resilient, build character, become the villain, etc.
 - Sometimes the guy has a cat. Even if he turns out to be a total loser or stops talking to you, at least you got to pet that orange cat named Oliver Twist. God rest your soul, James.

- Don't knock 'til you try it...but I pray to God you never have to. <3

Contributed photo



The Weekly

February 1, 2023

Advice for the distant valentine

Philip Shippy — Staff writer

With Valentine's Day only a few days away, it feels right to observe it through an article. There are many ways of writing a Valentine's Day-themed article, the most common being to give advice to dating/engaged/married couples, or to a give voice to those who are single and want to date.

While this opinion piece does fall under the advice category, there is a specific type of dating that many college students experience that requires a different set of advice: Long-distance relationships.

25-50 percent of college students are currently dating long-distance, with up to 75 percent having been in a long-distance relationship at some point, according to an article by the International Communication Association in 2013. I am currently among that 25-50 percent, with my girlfriend going to college in Colorado. It can be hard to stay connected with her and get to know her better.

I'm sure many of you know the struggles or at least know someone close to you who is going through the struggles of long-distance dating. So, I would like to offer to you (whether you are currently dating long-distance or know someone who is) both my own experience and the advice given to me.

But before I can do that, I should give you a quick picture on how I view dating and marriage, so that my biases are in full view. I believe dating is a temporary relationship, meant to help people figure out whether they want to spend the rest of their life with their partner. Once they know where they stand, the relationship should end in either breakup or engagement. Similarly, the main things that will allow a married couple to spend the rest of their life together are the enjoyment of each other's company/personality and agreement on the big questions: where do we put our faith, do we want our kids to be publicly or privately educated, do we want to travel around or stay in one place, and so on. If someone does not agree with their partner on these things, they will be constantly fighting with each other.

Now, here is my advice for those of you who have a friend who is dating long-distance:

- Give your friend the time and space they need to be with their significant other. It is hard enough with homework and potential time zone changes to find the time to talk; this is especially true if the significant other has come

to Dordt for a visit.

- If your friend's significant other is in town, and they both show up to hang out with your friend group, be as welcoming and inviting as you can. The significant other likely doesn't know anyone and depending on their personality might be a little intimidated.

For those of you in the long-distance relationship:

- The greatest thing you can do is find a consistent, regular time to talk about both the light and heavy things. If dating is meant to help you figure out whether you want to spend the rest of your life with someone, then you need to be with that person often. There are a lot of ways to contact your significant other, but I would recommend methods that let you speak to them face-to-face, such as FaceTime, Discord, or Zoom. I myself make time once a week to video call my girlfriend on Facebook Messenger.

- Read something together (thank you, John Copley, for this idea). If you are a Christian, try devotionals for couples or the Bible. Reading these things can bring up important questions that could help you get to know the other person better.

- Try writing each other letters. I find that letters can allow you to go into more depth about certain things (such as your classes, new friendships, and fun events) than a face-to-face conversation can, helping you get to know your partner more. Letters are also more human than texts, giving more of your personality (especially if handwritten, although not everyone has good handwriting). The slow pace of letters also helps you focus what you want to talk about, since you will be more likely to remember the important over the trivial. Finally, letters can create a record of your relationship that you can hold on to.

- Have fun together. If you are going to spend the rest of your life with someone, you should enjoy their company. Find one of your hobbies that you can do with them over the internet. Video games are the easiest, but if you are into board or card games, then you can probably find an online version to use. If you like movies, then find a way to watch a movie together.

Long-distance dating takes effort. Hopefully, this advice will give you ideas to keep your relationship healthy.

Contributed photo



Student capstone to replace mainstage in February

Sofia Bouma — Staff writer

Though the Dordt University Theatre Department's Spring Mainstage show is postponed until the end of April, *Almost Lifelong*, a one act play written and directed by senior Sommer Schaap, is set for Feb. 24 and 25 in the 4th Avenue Theater.

These performance dates are almost two months ahead of when *Almost Lifelong* was originally set to be produced. The Theatre Department asked Schaap if her one-act might be produced in February instead of April during the first week of classes.

"It's been a really, really, really quick process, and I think that was a little bit unexpected for me," Schaap said.

But fortunately, there are some pros to the expedited production process. Schaap's play had been selected to be read and workshopped in the American College Theater Festival, or ACTF, which took place from Jan. 22-28. Schaap was able to attend the week-long festival in Des Moines, an experience which contributed to the production of her play.

"In a way, I'm glad that it's this quick of a turnaround because I had a lot of good feedback from ACTF and from other people who have read [the script]," Schaap said.

The 40-minute one-act play *Almost Lifelong*, in Schaap's own words, is about two characters

named "Beck and Ezra, who become close friends despite the family issues and health problems that they each face. They lean on each other through it all, but what happens when one of them doesn't have the other?"

The production of *Almost Lifelong* serves as Schaap's senior capstone project for the Theatre Arts Department and is one example of the student work that is annually produced in the 4th Avenue Theater. These projects are a showcase of what theater majors have learned through both the academic and practicum aspects of their education throughout college.

Capstone projects are deeply valued by students and faculty of the Theatre Arts Department alike and can take any number of forms.

"We've had students write and stage original musicals. Students design [and] students direct shows in the community," theatre arts professor Theresa Ter Haar said. "If a student can come up with an idea that we can support, we'll make it happen."

The projects also turn knowledge into hands-on action.

"It's a way for us to offer our students a deep and broad experience in a way that will help them show and develop their skills in whatever their area of passion and talent lies," Ter Haar



said.

Even though not all student productions are shown in the Te Paske, they are just as valuable as on any mainstage.

"Our student projects are some of the most vital work we do here because we are all here to help the students have the best learning

experience possible," Ter Haar said. "It is absolutely something that people should come see because you're going to see students owning the work and stretching their gifts and skills."

Photo credit: Dordt University Theater

Broadway and Desserts and NC/DC collide

Emma Bennett — Staff writer



There is something so exhilarating about watching someone perform. Whether it be a band, an orchestra, or a vocal group, any philosophy professor or café owner will tell you nothing beats a live performance. That is one of the reasons why events such as Broadway and Desserts and NC/DC are so popular: some members of the Dordt community get an opportunity to show off their musical skills, while the rest get to enjoy a fun, energetic show put on by their friends. It is important that each event is respected, both for the sake of the performers and the show-goers. Typically, they are scheduled on separate nights.

Unfortunately, this year is an exception. The events are both slated for Feb. 11.

The Dordt concert choir performs Broadway and Desserts as a charity event, committing not only to singing but also to cleanup afterwards, which has taken upwards of an hour in the past. When the choir is only worried about one event, this is not an issue. However, when interim choir director Robert Hobgood made the announcement to the choir, those who had planned to participate in NC/DC immediately raised their concerns. Not wanting to deprive the students of an opportunity to participate in both events, Hobgood emailed Dean of Students Derek Buteyn about the situation that weekend, hoping to find a compromise. However, Hobgood informed the choir the following Monday that "because of the scope and scale of both events, it's really impossible to reschedule" and implored the members to make do.

Nevertheless, the denial was not given without reasons.

"Part of [the inability to move Broadway and Desserts] had to do with Dordt Dining and just making sure that we gave them ample time,"

senior Kara Jasper said. "They also have to coordinate with the music department in terms of what events are on which weekends, and the fact that we had started advertising late."

Fortunately, there is still a small window of opportunity to those who are committed to both events. Broadway and Desserts starts at 7:30 p.m., while NC/DC starts at 9 p.m., leaving an estimated thirty-minute window for students to clean up and head to the BJ Haan, barring any extended time during the event or mingling afterwards. Regardless, it is still possible.

"I know of one member who is doing both [events] and she switched which committee she was on to help to the beginning so she could leave when she needed to," Jasper said.

Despite trying to make the best of an unfortunate situation, members are understandably disappointed.

"Me and some of my friends wanted to do both, but we ended up not doing NC/DC because of the extra stress it created," senior Lael Bervig said. "I thought it was a tough situation and that maybe student's voices weren't perhaps heard in a proactive way, but again, it was a tough situation to deal with."

This year, NC/DC is especially exciting because of the return of Northwestern College to participate and compete against Dordt students, which has not happened since COVID. This adds extra complications for students rushing over from Broadway and Desserts since seating will be limited.

"I am disheartened by it, and I wish [Hobgood and Buteyn] had talked to each other about it," Kara

Jasper said. "But we recognize the importance of doing Broadway and Desserts and not wanting to fall back on that commitment."

Contributed photo

Dordt Media Network sweats with athletics

Dayna Wichhart—Staff writer

The new American State Bank Sports Complex is fully inflated and in working order for athletic teams, student intramurals, and community members. The dome can hold two regulation sized softball fields. As a result, the dome will be home to several games in the upcoming weeks.

With each hosted sporting event comes many different challenges. Score keepers, statistic recorders, gate workers, and the Dordt Media Network team all work to run these sports.

The Dordt Media Network celebrated its four-year anniversary this past January. It oversees every single Defender athletic event. These games take place across six different venues and use three different broadcasting systems.

These events are dependent on students working the hours and covering the responsibilities needed.

"The thing about the Dordt Media Network is that there is no set schedule," Rich Lodewyk, Director of the Dordt Media Network, said.

The upcoming weeks are some of those busy weeks. In the month of February, there will be three straight weekends with 16 softball games per weekend. This does not include the athletic games that happen throughout the week and the other sports that have games.

"It's difficult on the busy weeks but we get the job done," Lodewyk said, "and we can't do it without students."

Students employed by the Dordt Media Network sign up for the events that they can work. They choose games based upon their availability and take the hours that they want or

can take. Some students work more hours than others.

"The dome is a wonderful space, [but] it is going to be tricky to learn how to broadcast from the new space," senior Johnathon Carlo said.

Carlo works 12-15 hours per week and will be working most Friday afternoons and Saturdays in February.

The Dordt Media Network is run in a way that reflects a professional broadcast. Athletic events are streamed from multiple angles that provide close-up shots that allow the online audience to feel as if they were a part of the action.

"It's challenging and there are a lot of moving parts," Lodewyk said.

Students are called to live up to the challenge and prepare for these upcoming full weeks.

"Weekends will be busy but that's what is fun about it," junior Quintin Olson said. "The extra games provide a multitude of practice opportunities including directing, instant replay, camera operation and even play-by-play announcing."

As Dordt University expands the scope of athletics it has created a great opportunity for the Dordt Media Network and those working for the Dordt Media Network.

"I absolutely love the Dordt Media Network and all it does," Olson said. "It's a great thing to have on a resume for someone who wants to do this kind of thing at a professional level."

Photo credit: Dordt University



Dordt hockey team had a strong year, but it's not over yet

Jonah Hofmeyer — Staff writer

Cheers echoed throughout the Vernon Arena as the Dordt University Defenders took on the Missouri State Bears on Friday, Feb. 3. The loud cheers of the crowd and the Defender Pep Band's music echoed around the rink. The music and shouts clashed in a loud ruckus that shook the building and blended with the repeated crack of pucks hitting the wall. These violent and beautiful noises are what make up a Defender hockey game.

The Defenders played Missouri State twice that weekend, losing the first game on Friday to a winning goal in the third period. That goal put the Bears ahead 4-3 for a decisive victory.

Dordt came back with a vengeance on Saturday, Feb. 4, winning against the Bears 4-3 by a goal Jacob Petrie scored late in the third period.

Missouri State is ranked 10th in the American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA) Division III rankings, while the Defenders are ranked 23rd. Hayden Stevens, a goalie for the Defenders, was excited about the win.

“We’ve been learning and growing in an upward direction. Every weekend we could look back and say we got a little better.”

-Tyler Morgan

“That was the biggest win I’ve been a part of all my time at Dordt,” Stevens said.

The two weekend games were important for the Defenders as they look towards the conference tournament on Feb. 10. The Defenders will have to win against the University of Nebraska in order to move on in

the district tournament. Dordt played against Nebraska before Christmas break at home and drew the weekend series 1-1 with them.

The more the team wins, the better chances they have of raising their rank, and the Defenders need to be ranked within the top 16 to make the National ACHA Division III Tournament in Boston. That tournament will be played March 16-21.

Tyler Morgan is the head coach of the hockey team, and he has been with the team since 2019. Speaking on the season, Morgan said he has seen a lot of improvement for such a young team.

“The team has been just so consistent,” Morgan said. “We’ve been learning and growing in an upward direction. Every weekend we could look back and say we got a little better.”

The team met a hurdle after Christmas break. Three students left the hockey program for various personal reasons. Noah Wilmes, a sophomore on the team, said that this was a struggle at first.

“I think we made excuses. We had two losses the first weekend back [from Christmas break],” Wilmes said. “We made excuses like we didn’t have the amount players as before.”

The hockey team this year is young, consisting of over 10 freshman. Morgan says this brought some challenges.

“At the college level, you could be playing guys that are anywhere from 18-25 years old. Some of our guys struggled with getting used to playing older guys,” Morgan said, remarking also that he has seen these freshmen grow this year, becoming more comfortable in their positions.

The coach is satisfied with how the year has gone so far.

“It’s been such a fun year,” Morgan said. “It’s been fun to see the young guys grab onto the program and make it what it has become.”

While the season isn’t quite over yet, Hayden Stevens already has high hopes for next season.

“I think we can be top 16 next year. Throughout the whole year,” Stevens said. “I think that’s a good goal for next year.”

Photo Credit: Dordt University Athletics



The Dordt Hockey team shortly before playing Missouri State

Men’s volleyball team begins season

Abby Starkenburg — Staff writer

As Dordt University’s Men’s Volleyball team begins the new season, it is implementing many changes from last year. One of the main things the team has worked to improve this season is their trust in each other.

“The trust is so much higher,” Chad Hanson, Head Men’s Volleyball Coach, said. “[It is shown in] how we pass and do every other skill on the court.”

Hanson said he is most proud of his team for not backing down when the sport gets rough: specifically by trusting each other. It allows for a lot of problem-solving moments, which Hanson said are the “greatest hallelujah praise

the Lord experiences.”

While there has been improvement, the team is not done yet. The team hopes to build such great trust in each other that it becomes instinctual.

Andres Guzman, or as he calls himself, “The Pretty Face of the Team,” plays as an outside hitter.

“I think that we are in a good spot, more prepared than ever, but we are not there yet,” Guzman said.

The team has focused on character and community development as much as improving their technical volleyball skills.

“The mental shift that the team has had has been huge,” Guzman said. “It’s not all about volleyball. You need to care about your faith,

classes, and social life.”

One of the ways the team worked on their team development was by camping together in Hawarden on a team-bonding trip.

“It was brutally cold, but it was so much fun,” Carter Raiche, a defensive specialist, said.

Madilynn Scarpantonio, one of the managers for the team, said the team’s greatest strength is the community they have built.

“[They are] very uplifting, and take criticism very well,” Scarpantonio said. “They are a great team, and seeing the guys grow community is awesome.”

A large part of the effective team building they are pursuing comes through communication.

“We are expected to be loud even in drills,” Raiche said.

The team has had the opportunity to showcase their communication skills in their recent matches, with hardly a silent moment from them on the court.

Team members put in a lot of preparation before the season, with practices, lifts, and team meetings almost every day. Many returning players said the time commitment has increased since last season.

In almost every practice, the team sets goals to help challenge and unite them.

Goals are helpful because they are “numerical so that you can quantify it,” Guzman said.

The team has three official matches under their belt so far.

In their first competitive match of the season, they won all three sets against Central Christian College.

In another recent match against the Kansas Wesleyan University team, the Defenders



Caleb Kulesza attacking a ball

won 3-0 again. During this match, Dordt took time to honor the seniors on the team for their contributions and personal character.

Dordt’s most recent match, against the University of Jamestown, went to five long sets. In set four, the Defenders battled to a 30-28 set win. The team battled hard but ultimately lost 2-3.

The team will play next on Friday, February 10 in Jamestown, North Dakota at the Jamestown Classic.

Photo credit: Dordt University Athletics



Dordt’s mens volleyball team after winning a rally

The Back Page

Diamond Digs



“An economic housing solution”



The Pro Bowl

Ian MacDonald — Staff writer

One of the staples in the Superbowl era of the NFL is the Pro Bowl, where fans vote on the best performing athletes around the league and bring them to Las Vegas to play a game.

The two teams that play in the Pro Bowl are the American Football Conference (AFC) and National Football Conference (NFC). Selected athletes play in the Pro Bowl play for the team of their conference. For example, the Minnesota Vikings Pro Bowl players would play for the NFC team because that's what conference the Vikings play in.

There is a lot of history and iconic moments that happen in the Pro Bowl. However, it has regressed so much in recent years that it can't keep the average sports fan entertained.

A reason many watch the Pro Bowl is to see some of their favorite stars from around the league team up and play other huge stars. Not everyone's favorite player plays in the game, however, and one of these stars who opted out of the Pro Bowl this year was Joe Burrow.

There are also a lot of stars who don't get in or are even considered for the Pro Bowl. This is due to how the voting system is set up.

The way Pro Bowl voting works is that the league releases a list of several players who have performed the best that season by position. In 2022, Pro Bowl voting opened on Nov. 15 and closed on Dec. 15.

The issue with this type of selection is that it's essentially a popularity contest, so players could not be selected just because they aren't as well



known. Another issue is that the fans should not be the ones considering who is 'good enough' to go to the Pro Bowl and receive the accolade.

Lamar Jackson, who despite that he was playing some of his best football through a knee injury, was out picked by his backup Tyler

Huntley on the Ravens this year. Just because he missed six games, Jackson was not considered for a spot in the Pro Bowl.

Another reason fans are losing interest is a lack of an actual game. What comes to mind is the lack of tackling. Now, there is not rule specifically saying players can't hit each other, but it's essentially an unwritten rule between stars to avoid injuries.

Because of this, there is a lot less effort and a lot less enjoyment in the game. This unwritten rule has gotten so out of hand that they are doing flag football instead of a traditional football game in 2023.

Despite all of this, ratings have never been better. According to frontofficesports.com, the 2022 Pro Bowl still averages 6.7 million viewers. This is more than the Stanley Cup, which averaged 4.6 million, the NBA All-star game with 6.3 million, and only trailed to the MLB All-Star game.

The league is changing, with players only caring for money and viewership, showing little passion for the actual sport.

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