

KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends

Journey of FAITH

The Old City of
Jerusalem, seen from
the Mount of Olives

AT A PLACE LIKE KUYPER COLLEGE, WHICH BELIEVES
IN EQUIPPING ITS STUDENTS WITH A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW,

*Creating an opportunity to experience
Israel firsthand made perfect sense.*

A long flight across the world to an ancient land. Sore feet walking in dusty sandals. A rocky path winding through a dry riverbed. A slow tread upward, a sweeping valley expanding below. Follow in the footsteps of Moses, David and Jesus as the Word of God leaps from the pages of Scripture. This is *Journey to The Land of The Text*: the Kuyper Student Israel trips.

On any given Sunday, Christians file into church and listen to words written long ago, in places most of them have never seen in person. It can be difficult to grasp the full weight of meaning contained in a Bible passage if you have never explored Hezekiah's Tunnel or sat on the steps of the temple where Jesus taught. Visiting the Holy Land of Israel helps us to understand Scripture and bring unique meaning to its words.

"Before I came to Kuyper, I spent three weeks at Jerusalem University, doing graduate work on the geography and the history of the land. That was such a valuable thing for me, personally. I loved it," said Dr. Dan Kroeze, professor of biblical studies at Kuyper College. "Then I thought,

>> See **JOURNEY**, Page 4

Inside this Issue

PAGE

02

President's Message

Life-relevant, real-word learning

PAGE

03

WorkPlace Partnership

A new Business Leadership program

PAGE

06

In My Words

Great is His faithfulness

PAGE

07

Student Reflections

Master of Ministry program

Hall of Fame

Kuyper Professor to be inducted into Coaches Hall of Fame

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



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Real-World Learning

While we may not find it easy to be living with the continued challenges of this world, the pandemic hasn't dampened our commitment to provide life-relevant, real-world learning experiences for our students.

The idea of real-world learning is rooted in various cultures, such as the ancient Chinese proverb—Tell me and I forget, teach me and I will remember, involve me and I will understand—and promoted by educational philosophers, such as John Dewey. Jesus Christ also engaged this pedagogy as He disciplined His followers by using experiences, parables, questions and real-life metaphors in order to relate His message to the everyday lives of His listeners.

This issue of the Kuyper College News provides some vivid examples of how we embrace this kind of teaching and learning that is founded on our belief that all of life involves learning. As stated in our philosophy of education, "What we do in the classroom serves and strengthens students' ability to serve beyond the classroom. Similarly, we encourage students to bring their real-life experience into the class in order to enhance the learning that takes place in that environment."

In our cover story, Dr. Dan Kroeze, professor of biblical studies, points out that

students need not visit the Holy Land in order to understand Scripture, but doing so certainly brings the meaning of the biblical text to life. As Kuyper students and other adults engage in a real-life experience in Israel, through the course, Journey to the Land of the Text, Dr. Kroeze sees that they come away not only with new knowledge, but with changed lives.

Pastor Eric VanderWall, a recent Master of Ministry graduate, applauds the real-world practice of this program, which intentionally integrates classroom learning with ministry experience. Specifically, he appreciates how he could develop a discipleship pathway curriculum to implement in his church setting.

Monica Morales Xayabout, a senior social work student, values the way in which Kuyper has made it possible for her to apply her classroom learning in a real-world environment through her internship placement at Pregnancy Resource Center. Now, she feels well-prepared to serve in a social work position in her home country of Guatemala.



Finally, our WorkPlace Partnership program aims to combine business leadership courses with real-world work experience. Marc Andreas, business leadership program director, explains, "Graduates will be able to live out the mission of Kuyper College by engaging in the world of business with a biblical framework, and, in doing so, make a positive impact for the kingdom."

At Kuyper, we believe this real-world approach to learning cultivates students who are lifelong learners and therefore always open to how they can grow in their effective service to God and their neighbors. Thanks be to God for our students and our faculty!

Grateful to serve,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patti".

Dr. Patricia R. Harris
President

Kuyper Community Notes

Births

Eric (2013) and **Chelsea (Axford) Reynhout** (2012) welcomed home Luke Axford Reynhout in April of 2020.

Bryce and **Kelsey (Bruxvoort) Wagg** (2008) welcomed home Elliot Tyler on July 10, 2020.

Jordan and **Rachel (Payne) Sall** (2009) welcomed home Halston Marion on December 12, 2020.

Ken (2007) and **Kristi (Lyman) Kruthoff** (2008) welcomed Judah Jonathon to their family by adoption on December 21, 2020.

Trevor and **Andrea (Ludwig) Farrell** (2008) welcomed home Tucker John on January 17, 2021.

Marriages

Caleb and **Samantha (Jansma) Sleeman** (2019) were married on July 10, 2020.

Brian Gray (1999) and **Fenna (Martinus) Gray** (1997) were married on August 20, 2020.

Events

Kuyper's Carnival at the Ballpark

Monday, May 24 | 5-9pm | LMCU Ballpark
Join us for an evening of community and fun for all ages. Visit www.kuyper.edu/carnival for more details.

Making College Accessible: The WorkPlace Partnership, A New Kuyper Program



Kuyper College is pleased to announce a new program that seeks to make Christian higher education more accessible and affordable: the Kuyper WorkPlace Partnership. This innovative approach teams up with workplace partners—local organizations that desire to make college a reality for all—to offer workplace learning for qualified students.

Beginning in the fall, students will enroll to earn a two or four-year degree in business leadership, while also gaining real-world work experience. Their degrees will merge classroom and workplace learning, building on a foundation of practical education and a holistic, biblical approach to work. Students will have the ability to study with a diverse cohort, rooted together in a Christian worldview.

Marc Andreas, professor of business leadership, directs the new program. “I was part of a task force in 2017,” he said, “and our goal was to brainstorm what God could possibly be calling Kuyper College to. We realized that there was a real need in West Michigan for affordable and accessible college.” The taskforce found that Paul Quinn College, a historically black college in the Dallas, Texas, area used a unique method for doing this and partnered with them to implement a similar program at Kuyper.

Like the program at Paul Quinn, the WorkPlace Partnership will join with businesses, such as Spectrum Health, Lumbermen’s and Notions Marketing, among others, in the Grand Rapids urban area to offer part-time, entry-level positions to its students. These positions will earn between \$13 and \$15 per hour, with a portion of the students’ earnings automatically applied toward their tuition. When these wages are added to federal and state aid, students will have the opportunity to graduate from Kuyper with little to no debt.

In addition, Kuyper professors will teach business leadership courses at the Center for Community Transformation, located on Madison

Avenue. The Center is already experienced in successfully building a healthy community in urban Grand Rapids. “I like to call this a win-win-win program,” said Andreas, “because it’s a win for individuals who might not think a college education is available to them. Reaching a new group of students in the community is a win for Kuyper, and it’s a win for the employers who seek to build diversity in their workforce.”

“There will also be a monthly council, where employers and Kuyper discuss students’ progress. The goals are to provide a quality education and to integrate, as much as possible, their learning in the classroom and the workplace,” Andreas said.

Upon graduation from Kuyper, participants in the WorkPlace Partnership will receive a work transcript in addition to their academic transcript. Andreas noted, “They could submit this with a job application, and it will show areas of competency, annual reviews and employer ratings. It will confirm that applicant is a dependable person, that they contribute in the workplace, and work well with others.” He believes that this is a valuable aspect of the program, one that helps them build a resume while studying at Kuyper.

But the most crucial part of the WorkPlace Partnership is that it empowers students to use their faith to impact their world. “Graduates will be able to live out the mission of Kuyper College by engaging in the world of business with a biblical framework and, in doing so, make a positive impact for the kingdom,” said Andreas.

Professional Development

Stephanie (VanderHeide) Bergman (2010) joined the staff at the Center for Counseling and Wellness at Calvin University as a counselor.

Karla Velis-Brito (2016) assumed a new role as marketing and communications manager at Partners Worldwide.

Rebekah Griffith (2019) joined the staff of Three Rivers Community Schools in Three Rivers, MI, in November 2020 as an EL specialist.

Christy (Hochhalter) Johnson (2010) joined OCEAN Programs as vice president of marketing.

Nathan Kroeze (2013) joined Bethany Christian Services as marketing director for strategic partnerships.

Samantha (Jansma) Sleeman (2019) is the new chief operating officer of Unleashed CEO.

Eric VanderWall (2010) assumed a new role as associate pastor of faith formation at Cascade Fellowship CRC.

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

if this was such an important experience for me, why shouldn't Kuyper students be able to do something like it?"

As Dr. Kroeze and the Kuyper faculty brainstormed ways to make this dream a reality, they decided to create something that went far beyond enjoyable travel. Born out of this concept was a unique learning experience. They devised a college class that studied the Bible in its historical, cultural and geographical contexts, both in the classroom and by traveling to the places where it was written.

"The first trip we did was in 2008, and it was sort of a trial. Thirteen students and a few other adults went, and it was a success. Because it went so well, we decided to do it again," Dr. Kroeze said. He led the trip alongside Rev. Evan Heerema, who was on the staff at Kuyper College for over 10 years. Together, they would continue to guide participants on a journey of growing in their faith and understanding of Scripture.

Great care and attention were given to the formation of a class that would nurture both minds and hearts. Dr. Kroeze recalled, "I spent a lot of time developing readings and assignments. The trip takes place in May, and we start meeting about twice a month, starting in January, to do teaching and orientation." Over the 12 years that the program has been in operation, the curriculum has evolved from general background into substantial lectures and research.

"We are in Israel, on the ground, for almost two weeks," said Dr. Kroeze. During this time, they are able to sample a wide variety of the terrain and visit many different locations. "Israel is about eighty or ninety miles, north to south, and about forty miles wide. We can cover pretty much everything, from desert to mountains and everything in between," he noted.

Transported to Ancient Times

A typical day out in the field might begin by visiting the Shephelah, an area of conflict between the Philistines and the Israelites in the Old Testament. The first stop might be Bet Shemesh, a site connected



Masada, the stronghold where the Zealots stood against the Roman army



Wadi Zohar, which can only be hiked during the dry season

to Samson and to the Ark of the Covenant. Then, the group may move on to Azekah, where David met Goliath. From there, they could visit Tel Maresha, the site of a Judean city at the time of the First Temple. The last stop of the day may be Tel Lachish, an important military city in Israel's history.

The next day, they might begin by exploring the Old Testament site of Tel Arad in the land of Abraham, situated on the border of the Negev and Judean Deserts. The group could then stop to rest at one of the beaches on the Dead Sea. There, they would have the unforgettable experience of floating in the buoyant, salty water. Such a day might conclude by hiking the Wadi Zohar, one of the dry riverbeds that fills with water only during heavy rain and appears often in biblical imagery.

This kind of physical strain brings a feeling of accomplishment and a renewed appreciation for the demands of living in ancient Israel. Perhaps the most challenging hike takes place at Masada, the wilderness stronghold where the Zealots made their last stand against Rome in the first century A.D. "There's this so-called 'Snake Path' that you climb, and it has all these switchbacks. It probably takes about an hour, maybe a bit more, but it's pretty grueling," Dr. Kroeze said. "Everybody, when they get to the top, thanks God for the grace He gave them to do it. Feeling your physical weakness teaches you to depend on God and rely on His provision every day."

Once they have arrived at a particular location, Dr. Kroeze often begins his lesson with the historical and geographical context. As they hear the story of the place they are visiting, his listeners are transported back to ancient times. Standing near Azekah, they can picture David strolling out to meet Goliath, slingshot in hand. On the shores of the Sea of Galilee, they can easily visualize the fish breakfast Jesus cooked His disciples. At the Mount of Beatitudes, where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, they are nearly able to catch His words in the wind.

A Shared Sense of Awe

Back at the hotel in the evening, the group splits up to debrief the day. "After the trip, people often comment that one of the best parts was their small group," Dr. Kroeze recalled. "Meeting with the same

“Before you go, it’s like you’re reading the Bible in black and white. When you come back, it’s like you’re reading the Bible in HD color.”

few individuals every night, talking and praying together, allows participants to forge relationships and learn from each other in a deeply meaningful way. Often, they will shed tears and gather for photos together once they return home.”

During his time in the Holy Land, Dr. Kroeze has formed his own unique bond. According to regulations, foreigners must be accompanied by a local guide when traveling to certain locations. On one of the first trips, the Kuyper College group began working with a man named Salah. “We just hit it off right away,” Dr. Kroeze recalled. “We’ve become friends over the years.”

Experiencing Israel firsthand, even with a good friend as your guide, can be breathtaking at times. “We all have an idea in our minds of what it’s going to look like. When people get there, I think they’re overwhelmed by what they’re seeing and where they are,” said Kroeze. The text of Scripture comes to life for them in a way they have never experienced before. At places like the Church of The Holy Sepulcher, built on the site of Jesus’ death and resurrection and considered the holiest site in Christianity, they might witness others kneeling in prayer, tears streaming down their faces. Dr. Kroeze added, “It does make a sort of overwhelming, spiritual impression on people. Often, the group feels this sense of awe alongside many others from all around the world.”

Dr. Kroeze described visiting the Western Wall, what remains of the Second Temple built by Herod the Great. It is the holiest site in Judaism and draws multitudes of people from all walks of life to its towering limestone boulders. “It’s a highlight. We try to go on a Friday night, because it’s the beginning of the Sabbath, and crowds of Jewish people come out to the Western Wall.”



The Western Wall, the remains of the Second Temple built by Herod the Great



An oasis in the Ein Gedi desert where David hid from King Saul

God's Abundance in the Desert

But the location Dr. Kroeze loves the most does not draw large crowds of jubilant visitors. It is a place of solitude and often desolation that carries a unique significance. “The southern region of Israel is almost all desert, and I really enjoy it. It has a beauty of its own, with the brown of the landscape contrasted against the blue sky. But it’s not just the scenery that I love; it’s the lessons from the desert,” he said. “God’s people were a desert people. They spent 40 years there after they came out of Egypt. That was where their faith was shaped and formed, where their trust in God was developed. It’s where God provided for them.”

After considering the historical experience the people of Israel had with the desert, Dr. Kroeze will often ask his students to reflect on what a personal, metaphoric desert might be in their own lives. It could be an illness, relational conflict, unemployment, or any kind of hardship that feels isolating and desolate. “Then, I ask them to think about how they can meet God in that desert and how He provides for them, even there,” he said.

According to him, participants embark on *Journey to the Land of the Text* expecting to grow in their understanding of the Bible in its historical, geographical and cultural contexts, but they leave having developed their knowledge of themselves and awareness of God’s presence; “They meet Him when they see His birthplace in Bethlehem or gaze out at the peak where Moses glimpsed the Promised Land. They feel Him while walking along the same roads He did and experiencing the same soreness in their muscles. They encounter Him through reading His word in the places it was written down by His faithful servants.”

After returning home, Dr. Kroeze said, “You never read the Bible in the same way again. Because all these place names and geographical names actually mean something now; they’re not just words on a page. They figure into the actual message of the Bible. Before you go, it’s like you’re reading the Bible in black and white. When you come back, it’s like you’re reading the Bible in HD color.”

A String Around the Finger

“Keep reminding them of these things.” (2 Timothy 2:14, NIV)

“Don’t forget!” These words have a way of grabbing our attention!

What did I forget? Did I leave the coffee pot on?
Did I miss a meeting?

There was a time when people used to tie strings around their fingers as reminders. Now we ask Alexa to keep us on task.



While imploring young Timothy to keep the Word of Christ, the Apostle Paul uses a surprising reminder—his own life! He knew his story pointed to the saga of saving grace

through Jesus Christ on any given day and under any circumstance. So he ties “a string” around Timothy’s finger to remind him of the Truth.

He says, “You know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings...the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.” (2 Timothy 3:10-11, NIV)

The implication here is that each of us must study life stories that point us to Jesus. Who serves as your string, calling you to hear and obey the voice of Jesus? What reminder is your life’s story providing others?

When family and friends consider your purpose, love, and even your sufferings, how are you pointing them to what matters most?

There are many ways you can provide reminders to your family about the Word of God and the impact Christ has had on your life. One way is by writing a spiritual love letter that allows you to communicate your faith and values to the next generation. It’s a meaningful way to wrap a string around their fingers, well beyond your lifetime.

When the road seems difficult, or they need a little encouragement, your life’s story will be a reminder to your loved ones, “Don’t forget!”

In My Words

GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS

When my wife Sarah and I decided to move to Grand Rapids in 2019, we were unsure what life would look like for us. Early in the year, we decided to move in August and began praying that God would open doors along the way.



Logan Presnell

Admissions Counselor

We felt called to relocate, and a big part of that was so we could share life and be close to my twin brother, Austin, and his wife, Olivia, who also happened to be Sarah’s college roommate. As we shared the news of our move with others, we were often met with the same question, “What jobs did you get there?” For months, our answer to that question was, “We don’t have them yet.” We realized that what we were doing was in some ways countercultural. We decided

to move based on community and relationships, not because of our jobs or finances. At times, it felt risky, even irresponsible. During this time, we had to trust in God and rely on His faithfulness to provide for us, and that is how I found Kuyper College.

I will always remember my first week on Kuyper’s campus as an admissions counselor. I was finishing up two years working as a dance teacher in various settings, virtually without a single co-worker. Although I loved teaching my students, it was exhausting and difficult not to have someone to relate to and feel known by at work. In my first week at Kuyper, I felt more loved and known by this community than I had in the past few years working elsewhere. I knew then that I had discovered something special. I have since found great joy in belonging to Kuyper and inviting students to come and experience this transformational community for themselves.

I share this story as a testament to God’s faithfulness. When I was scared to move and unsure of our next steps, I am grateful for how God provided. He knew exactly where we would end up.

This past year has not been what any of us had planned or expected, but God knew. Around the world, we have witnessed tremendous challenges and significant losses. Yet, in this season, we also remember God’s faithfulness and abiding presence through even the most challenging times. We have all we need in Jesus. Our blessings, large and small, are all good gifts from our loving, perfect and gracious God.

“The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, “The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!” Lamentations 3:22-24 (NLT).

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

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Master of Ministry Program

Eric VanderWall chose Kuyper College's Master of Ministry program to help him further develop his calling. He currently serves as the pastor of faith formation at Cascade Fellowship Church, where he had no trouble integrating his classroom learning into his ministry. "I learned through what I was already doing. It was more than just ideological," he said. Now that he's graduated, he encourages other ministry professionals to enhance their current abilities by enrolling.

Through the Master of Ministry program, Kuyper is taking the lead in theological education, increasing the focus on real-world practice. The program intentionally integrates the classroom with the ministry environment, recognizing that both are important learning communities. Students can personalize their education to align with their current ministry. VanderWall recalled, "In my discipleship class, I got to design a discipleship pathway specific to my current church. All of the classes had that feeling. They all pointed you back to your current setting."

Joe Gruppen echoed VanderWall's statements. He is currently enrolled in the program and also serves as the director of student ministries at Corinth Reformed Church in Byron Center. "In my class on teaching and preaching the Old Testament, we're preaching a sermon on an assigned passage. But everyone has to make sure that their passage reaches their specific audience. It's really cool because it allows you to apply what you're learning," said Gruppen.

Though the program values practical education, coursework is well-rounded, offering a variety of classes that are content-focused as well as practice-focused, providing a balance between the two.

Integrating coursework into an already busy schedule is one challenge faced by those in the Master of Ministry program. For this reason, it was designed with working professionals in mind. "They're short classes for people employed in ministry. It's a great way for me to continue my education while I'm working," Gruppen noted. Professors are also embedded in ministry contexts themselves, which enables them to empathize with their students.

"Continuing education in ministry is so important. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day and forget to grow theologically and conceptually. I really appreciated everything about the program."

The Master of Ministry program is yet another way that Kuyper College is recognizing the need for better-equipped leaders in the body of Christ and stepping up to meet it. "Continuing education in ministry is so important. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day and forget to grow theologically and conceptually. I really appreciated everything about the program," said VanderWall.

Whether graduates use their degrees as pastors or missionaries, Bible teachers or non-profit workers, they will do it equipped with the tools they need to better serve the church and the world.

Hall of Fame to Recognize Kuyper Professor Dr. Telzerow

It comes as no surprise that one of Kuyper College's beloved professors is again being recognized for his work in the local community. Dr. Brian Telzerow, Kuyper professor of youth ministry and ministry leadership program director, will be inducted into the Michigan Interscholastic Golf Coaches Association Hall of Fame this year. He is being honored alongside two other Grand Rapids area coaches and one from metro Detroit.

Dr. Telzerow has coached golf in the Forest Hills Public Schools since 1994. Presently, he serves as a junior varsity and varsity coach for Forest Hills Northern and Forest Hills Eastern. During his years of coaching, his teams have played in 181 tournaments, winning numerous titles at the conference, district, regional and state levels.



Dr. Telzerow coaching a player

The connections he makes in the coaching realm allow him to have a greater impact in the lives of his students. "That's why I got started," he said. "Being able to walk with families and talk with them about what's going on outside of golf is such a privilege," he added. "You earn the right to be heard and are brought into vulnerable situations because you're somebody who's known."

What truly matters to him is not state titles, but the opportunities for deeper relationships that coaching provides. Dr. Telzerow believes continuing to coach golf only enhances his role at Kuyper. "It makes me a better instructor for the youth ministry program because I'm so involved with kids and their families; without that, I think I would lose touch," he said.

Dr. Telzerow's philosophy for teaching, coaching and life comes from 1 Thessalonians 2:8, which says, "So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us." He recalls learning this verse in his early days of volunteering with Young Life, and it has become his life's mission statement. Since then, he says, "I've tried my best to serve Christ's purposes."

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STUDENTS TO WATCH

Monica Morales Xayabout

My childhood was a happy one. I grew up in a Christian home with a younger sister and my parents, who were always present and taught us about Jesus and the Bible. When I was young, we moved a lot—I was the new girl in a school seven times in three countries. During these years, I grew very close to my family because they were the only ones I was sure that I would never have to say goodbye to; to this day, my sister is my best friend.

The second time we moved was to El Salvador; I was in ninth grade. I had moved from a school in Guatemala I loved. Moving this many times made it hard to make friends.

After ninth grade, God answered my prayers, and He opened the doors for my sister and me to return to our beloved school, Christian Academy of Guatemala (CAG), which I had first attended in seventh grade. This move made me see that God loved me, and He wanted me to be closer to Him. One of my favorite memories at CAG is being in the cast of four musicals. I still remember all the songs and was able to learn a lot about acting on stage.

Before coming to CAG the first time, I knew there was a God; I learned about Him my whole life and understood I had a creator and a provider. I accepted Christ into my life when I was 9 years old, but I never experienced a personal relationship with Him until my return to CAG. There, my discipleship leader taught me what it meant to be close to God, and that is when I started having a relationship with Him.

CAG also opened a door for me to study in the United States. I wanted to attend a small Christian college, and someone told me about Kuyper. I looked it up online, was able to find all the information I needed very fast, and realized that Kuyper was the perfect fit for me. So, I moved to Michigan and started my college journey.

I planned to graduate in four years, then move back to Guatemala and use all the skills I learned to serve Guatemala and teach people about Christ. By my second semester, I realized God had other plans for me before moving to Guatemala. God led me to meet my "mission" partner and husband—Daniel Xayabout, also a Kuyper student. We can now serve Him as a family, which has been my dream since I was little because my parents were always a team.

At Kuyper, professors are outstanding and eager to teach us everything they know and have learned through the years. They are there for us and always willing to help us succeed. I have also acquired people skills in my social work classes, which I am looking forward to using in Guatemala. But more importantly, my time at Kuyper helped me know what it means to be a Christian.

One aspect of my social work major that I love is my internship at Pregnancy Resource Center in Grand Rapids. The PRC has given me a new perspective on how valuable life is. Being there has reinforced the social work skills I've learned since my freshman year. It has been a little challenging because of COVID, but I am still learning more than I thought I would. Through my internship there, Kuyper has made it possible for me to apply what I was taught in the classroom in a real-world environment while actually practicing my craft as I work alongside social work professionals.

If I had to go back to my senior year of high school, I would always choose Kuyper—where I've learned, met remarkable people, and have grown intellectually and spiritually. I will never forget what I was given here and cannot wait to share it with the people of Guatemala.



CLASS **2021**

HOME **Guatemala City, Guatemala**

MAJOR **Social work**