

Iowa Christian College President Responds to Donald Trump Speech

Among the subplots missed in the most recent headline-grabbing statement from Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump—who, in speaking about the loyalty of his supporters, suggested he could shoot someone and not lose support—is that they were made at a Christian college.

In the chapel of the Christian college. A Christian college located in Northwest Iowa. The same Northwest Iowa that is often referred to as the “Bible Belt of Iowa.” A Christian college that invited him to be there to speak.

Dordt College President Erik Hoekstra has gotten a lot of feedback, and questions, from students, alumni and media following the outrageous comment. So much so, he issued a statement Saturday evening about Trump’s comment and the invitation that brought the GOP presidential front-runner to Sioux County, Iowa.

“Prior to Mr. Trump’s visit to Dordt College, I wrote an open letter to explain Dordt College’s reasons and rationale behind inviting candidates of both parties to our campus. I continue to stand behind the decision to allow our students and the broader community to have firsthand access to the American political process and capture the unique opportunities we have in Iowa as the first state to cast actual votes each presidential cycle.

“In that statement, I said, ‘Each time a candidate comes to campus, I have a certain sense of cringe for what it says to our students—political speeches are always full of broad-brush promises about what the candidate will do. There isn’t a candidate or party that can be 100 percent biblical or

reformational—at least it seems that way to me. Opening our facilities to political candidates in no way implies an endorsement of their views.’ I continue to stand by that statement.

“Today’s comment by Mr. Trump regarding the loyalty of his followers, namely that ‘I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn’t lose any voters,’ went far beyond a broad-brush promise about his policies or plans for our country. In no way do I, nor does the college, support such an odd and inappropriate comment. I have no concept of why Mr. Trump thought that was an apt example to highlight the loyalty of his followers.

“However, we will continue to invite candidates to our campus. Our students can handle such comments and they are wise enough to discern what Christlike leadership looks like. I also trust our faculty and staff to walk with students through the important process of putting their faith into action in every area of life. I’ve talked with many students about the various candidate visits, including conversations with students today after Mr. Trump’s visit, and our students are all more discerning about how to vote in the upcoming caucus because of this first-hand access.

“If people are wondering about Dordt College and our application of Scripture to everyday challenges, I’d say: Come study with us. We won’t spoon-feed you the answers to every question, but you’ll grow in your faith in Jesus Christ and be challenged to put real-world decisions into the context of Scripture—and we’ll walk with you through that process.”

Dordt College is a four-year liberal arts college affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church. It was founded in 1955 with a mission to “welcome all students who are interested in a biblical, Christ-centered education.”

Located in Sioux Center, Iowa, it has a student population of

about 1,400, plus a faculty of 80 full-time educators.