

MORNING COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

Shirley V. Hoogstra, J.D.

A visionary leader who is passionate about Christian higher education and the role it plays in the common good, Shirley V. Hoogstra became the seventh president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities in September 2014.

Having received a bachelor's degree in education at Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Michigan) and a Juris Doctor, with honors, from the University of Connecticut School of Law, Hoogstra spent more than a decade practicing law as a partner at a firm that specialized in litigation in New Haven, Connecticut. She then returned to the world of Christian higher education and became Calvin's vice president for student life in July 1999, a role she served in until she became president of the CCCU.

As CCCU president, Hoogstra combines her zeal for the rule of law and her passion for Christian higher education. The CCCU's outward-facing work at its intersection with government in Washington, D.C. calls upon Hoogstra's authentic skills of listening, respecting and influencing leaders as she shares and promotes the importance of Christian colleges and universities as a part of a diverse, pluralistic system of higher education. In an era that has seen the rise in the value of individualism and a decrease in the value of formative communities, Hoogstra delights in highlighting the value and purpose of high quality, Christ-centered liberal arts education that shapes the heart, soul, and mind.

Always an educator, Hoogstra has never lost her joy of seeing people developed to be their best selves. This is why the Council's professional development conferences for CCCU campus administrators, its promotion and encouragement of scholarship and teaching among CCCU faculty, and its innovative and immersive BestSemester student programs remain at the core of the CCCU's work.

Included in that work is a focus on expanding diversity and inclusion at CCCU campuses. The future of Christian higher education requires profound adaptability and a commitment to making education available, accessible and affordable to all students; under Hoogstra's leadership, the CCCU and its members are working to ensure that both students and faculty of color will be hosts, not guests, at their campuses.

Hoogstra and her husband, Jeff, who practices pediatric medicine, are the parents of two married children: Dave (Amy) and Mary (Adam).