



# Brian Hagedorn

## BA '00

### Trinity College Alumnus of the Year 2014

#### *Trinity College Alumnus of the Year Brian Hagedorn has clearly made the most of his young career.*

Though he only graduated from Trinity fourteen years ago—earning his B.A. in Philosophy in 2000—Hagedorn has quickly climbed the ranks of the Wisconsin judiciary system and currently serves as the chief legal counsel for Wisconsin governor Scott Walker, where he works closely with the governor and other staff members to manage the state government, plan the strategic direction of the administration, and design and pass key legislative initiatives.

As someone who is eager to serve the public and deeply interested in public policy, Hagedorn finds this position to be a vocational blessing.

“Few people have an opportunity in life to work somewhere that aligns their skills with their passions,” Hagedorn said. “I never dread going to work, even when it’s difficult. I love my job, and I love contributing.”

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Hagedorn—married and a father of five—chose to attend Trinity because he wanted to attend a university where he could nourish his faith, as well as play football and baseball. Ultimately, he found that his Trinity career was characterized by significant spiritual growth.

“It was a great time spiritually,” Hagedorn said. “There were lots of long prayer walks, lots of time meditating in the chapel, and great relationships built around prayer and accountability.”

Unsurprisingly, Hagedorn devoted plenty of time to his academic pursuits, focusing primarily on the areas of philosophy, theology, and history. According to Hagedorn, these subjects taught him to think critically and engage the world around him in a meaningful way. He loved to learn and think, which he notes was one of the main takeaways:

“I learned how to think well. I came to see the complexity of life and complexity of the world. I came to ask myself hard questions and ask others hard questions.”

A career in law was not initially on Hagedorn’s mind when he graduated from Trinity in 2000, but between encouragement from peers, an interest in public policy, and experience in the field thanks to an internship under Illinois Senator Peter Fitzgerald, he reconsidered the possibility.

Following graduation, Hagedorn worked for Hewitt Associates in Lincolnshire, Illinois, for three years. During this time, he began to consider the steps that would be necessary to prepare him for a lifetime of service in the legal field. He decided to pursue this passion at the Northwestern University School of Law, where, working from a Christian worldview, he found himself seeing the legal system through a lens that was different from most of his classmates.

“The big distinction was that I understood that there was truth, and I knew where it was found,” Hagedorn said. “So I learned to apply the things I had learned at Trinity and engage and challenge my classmates with truth.”

Hagedorn excelled at Northwestern. In 2004, he was awarded a Blackstone Fellowship, which allowed him to study at the Alliance Defense Fund in Phoenix, Arizona, before interning with Americans United for Life in Chicago. He also served as the president of the school’s Federalist Society chapter before graduating in 2006.

Upon graduating, he joined Milwaukee’s Foley and Lardner as a private attorney. In 2009, he became a law clerk at the Wisconsin Supreme Court for Justice Michael Gableman, and in 2010 he accepted a position as an assistant attorney general at the Wisconsin Department of Justice.

The Wisconsin gubernatorial election cycle was in full swing during Hagedorn’s first year at the Department of Justice. Upon the election of Gov. Scott Walker in January 2011, it was recommended that he try to join the administration as chief legal counsel.

“I didn’t really know Governor Walker,” Hagedorn said, “but people who knew me and thought well of me recommended me to him. I was just the right person with the right background at the right time.”

Even though this opportunity came seemingly out of nowhere, Hagedorn eagerly accepted the position of chief legal counsel in January of 2011, and has held that position since then.

One of the most notable events that has occurred during Hagedorn’s tenure in Madison is the 2011 passage of Act 10. Also known as the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, Act 10 made headlines nationally as a far-reaching proposal that restructured collective bargaining for public employees in Wisconsin, along with asking them to pay significantly more of their pension and healthcare costs. Hagedorn played a significant role in drafting the bill, which sought to correct

a massive deficit in the state budget and reform state government. Though the state’s senior management team anticipated public disapproval, they felt that they were doing the right thing.

Upon introduction, opposition to the bill was swift and substantial as tens of thousands of protestors flocked to the Capitol in Madison to voice their dissatisfaction. In a matter of days, they had occupied the State Capitol. Meanwhile, Hagedorn found himself at the nexus of one of the most intense moments in state history.

“It was a challenging time in many ways,” Hagedorn said. “I worked long hours, it was loud for twelve hours a day, people were sleeping outside my office. It was scary at times.”

Act 10 was passed in March of 2011. Almost immediately, the Walker administration was hit with lawsuits. Furthermore, a recall effort that had been launched in response to Act 10 came to fruition in March 2012. The recall election threatened to oust the entire Walker administration, including Hagedorn.

“Leading up to the recall election, my job was at stake too,” Hagedorn said, “but I will say that God gave me and my wife an incredible trust in him during that time. We held on to Matthew 6, so we weren’t worrying about tomorrow, but instead seeking his kingdom and righteousness.”

As of today, Act 10 is still in place in Wisconsin, primarily due to a perfect record from Hagedorn and his litigation team in defending the bill in both state and federal court. In the end, Hagedorn strongly believes that despite the contention the administration faced, the passage and defense of Act 10 is one of the most significant and satisfying moments in his career.

Part of Hagedorn’s role as chief legal counsel requires him to act as the chief ethics officer for the administration—a position, he says, that puts his faith into practice on a daily basis.

“My faith impacts everything I do in the workplace,” Hagedorn said, “but in that role, one of the difficult things is that I have to say ‘no’ to people, and that’s not always easy.”

Additionally, Hagedorn uses his role in political office to show others the values of integrity, humility, and honesty in a world that tends to be self-seeking. Though Hagedorn is passionate about his position as chief legal counsel, he believes that this is only the beginning of his long career in public service.

“I feel like I’m where God wants me to be right now, but I don’t feel like this is the end of a lifetime of service to people,” he said. “I would love to run for office at some point down the line. I fully intend to continue to participate in public service, whether as judge or another higher political office.”

Through God’s faithfulness, Hagedorn has been able to serve the people of Wisconsin in a way that impacts not only public policy, but embodies the core values of Trinity International University as well: Christ-centeredness, Comprehensive Education, Community, Church Connectedness, and Cultural Engagement. It is for this reason that he was selected for the Trinity College Alumnus of the Year award.



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—Brian Hagedorn