

Vicky L. Carwein, Chancellor

TRI-CITY HERALD COLUMN



WSU Tri-Cities' Liberal Arts program goes beyond textbooks

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The value of a liberal arts education "is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks," Albert Einstein said.

All baccalaureate education is built upon a strong liberal arts foundation. A liberal arts education is the basis for every degree, regardless of the discipline, because it teaches students to understand humanity and its place in the world and also educates students to think creatively about their futures and roles in a complex society. The liberal arts curriculum is designed to provide a solid groundwork in critical thinking and communication skills through social science research, artistic creativity and inquiry.

Currently Liberal Arts is the largest academic program at Washington State University Tri-Cities, with 29 percent of our students majoring in the degree programs digital technology and culture, English, fine arts, history, psychology, general social sciences and general humanities.

Through reading, writing, research and engagement in cultural events, WSU Tri-Cities students improve their comprehension of the human condition while developing marketable skills that prepare them for a wide range of careers.

Students in Dr. Jason Farman's Digital Diversity course are creating web sites based on their experiences in online communities such as Second Life, networked video games, and Google Earth Community. Students explore how problems surrounding racial, gender, or sexual bias carry over into the online realm. Through their study, they examine the interconnectedness of online and real-world issues while acquiring practical experience in web design, multiculturalism, collaboration, and project management.

Internship and research experiences are an important aspect of the Liberal Arts program and many students are involved in work that enriches the community. Dr. Paul Strand, associate professor of psychology, has a long relationship with Benton Franklin Head Start. He mentors psychology and social science majors who work up to six hours a week assessing the academic and social behavior of preschool students. Their research has improved how Head Start connects teachers and parents with students' learning, so together they ensure that children are better prepared for kindergarten. (cont.)



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Graduates of the Liberal Arts program put their skills into practice in careers that not only impact the region but also improve the world. Jeff Adamson, a recent graduate of our digital technology and culture program, is applying his studies on human factors and computer interactions to his job with the Gloria Meek-Garlick Foundation. Jeff is helping develop ultrasound imaging technologies that will be used in breast cancer detection in developing countries.

Liberal Arts faculty incorporate their research into their teaching.

Dr. Robert Bauman, assistant professor of history, focuses on the migration of African-Americans to the Tri-Cities during World War II and the early years of the Cold War, along with that era's system of segregation set up by federal, state and local government agencies and the DuPont company. His research highlights efforts by local African-Americans and national civil rights organizations to challenge segregation. Dr. Bauman's research augments what he teaches in classes such as The History of Social Movements and Black Freedom Struggle.

The Liberal Arts mission of teaching, scholarship and service is realized in diverse ways. This includes enriching the cultural environment of WSU Tri-Cities and the community by holding lectures, musical performances, poetry readings, art exhibits, and other cultural events — all of which are open to the public and are usually free of charge.

This semester, Dr. Susan Armitage delivered a lecture on “Pioneer Women: Then and Now” comparing today's migrants to the women of The Oregon Trail. Poets Amalio Madueño and Paul Everett Nelson offered poetry writing workshops as well as a poetry reading and jazz performance accompanied by saxophonist Dan Blunck. The current exhibition in the campus art gallery is The New Patriots by Tri-City Herald photographer Rajah Bose, featuring photos that portray how society chooses to champion patriotic symbols.

The Liberal Arts program at WSU Tri-Cities is a community of faculty and staff committed to teaching all students how to build a thoughtful understanding of our world and to make productive contributions to society. Our professors guide students in all majors — from English to engineering and from fine arts to sciences — in developing their intellectual curiosity, and the critical-thinking, communication and problem-solving skills that will prepare them to succeed in any career.

- Chancellor Vicky L. Carwein may be contacted at chancellor@tricity.wsu.edu. WSU Tri-Cities offers 17 baccalaureate, 14 graduate, and five doctoral degree programs as part of the Washington State University system. The campus is located at 2710 University Drive in Richland, one block north of Hanford High. For more information, call 509-372-7250 or go to www.tricity.wsu.edu.