An evolving life

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Liberal arts education often leads to a life of service to others. Those of us in liberal education know the foundation for our studies is fostering learned individuals. Students of the liberal arts develop a world view, an understanding of democracy and, as you will read in this publication, an interest in social good.

In an essay titled, How Civic Engagement is Reframing Liberal Education, Robert A. Rhodes writes, “Liberal education focuses more on the life of the mind and citizens as critical thinkers; civic engagement often involves experience-based understandings fostered through activities such as community service. When liberal education and civic engagement are structured so that each influences the other, in a dialectical manner, the fostered through activities such as community service. When liberal education and civic engagement are structured so that each influences the other, in a dialectical manner, the true power of the undergraduate experience is realized.”

When we decided to devote this issue of Vantage Point to civic responsibility, little did I know how many of our faculty, staff, students and alumni live by Rhodes’ example and lead lives devoted to service of some kind. Terri Silver, the CLS Outstanding Senior this year, volunteers her time influencing the education of children in the republics of Macedonia and Georgia. She obtained a grant to travel there and teach school board members. Silver also trains state school board members for the Oklahoma State School Board Association.

One of our alumni has enjoyed a successful screenwriting career and initially this may not seem a civic endeavor. However, the subject of her award-winning film, Angela’s Decision, sheds light on a difficult subject – limited opportunities of young people growing up in out-of-the-way locations. Gina Ellis, a 2003 Master of Liberal Studies graduate, returned to campus this spring to screen her dramatic independent film and credits her CLS experience for her success.

James Martin, chair of the CLS executive committee, is a fine example of someone whose mission is to help others. Originally, he set out to study business and economics. A chance invitation to work and live in a residential facility for adults with disabilities changed his life. Martin tells Christine Hughes that seeing disabled adults struggle to get jobs and live independent lives compelled him to change course. Today, he is a national scholar of special education and holds the Zarrow Chair in Special Education while serving as director of the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment since its inception in 2000. Martin’s work is devoted to helping disadvantaged students succeed.

I particularly enjoyed Martin’s perception of what a liberal education is – “setting aside one’s own beliefs and biases to look fairly at an issue. How timely then, that we changed his life. Martin tells Christine Hughes that seeing disabled adults struggle to get jobs and live independent lives compelled him to change course. Today, he is a national scholar of special education and holds the Zarrow Chair in Special Education while serving as director of the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment since its inception in 2000. Martin’s work is devoted to helping disadvantaged students succeed.

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Prize winner

Robert J. Marzano named 2008 winner of Brock International Prize in Education

Hundred of Oklahoma educators gathered this spring for the Brock International Prize in Education 2008 Symposium on Excellence in Education. The 2008 recipient of the Brock prize, Robert J. Marzano, led the symposium with his presentation “Shaking the Foundations: Essential Structural Systems to Enhance Student Achievement.”

Marzano is senior scholar at Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning in Aurora, Colo.; associate professor of education at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Wis.; and president of Marzano and Associates, a company specializing in long-term school reform efforts to enhance student achievement in K-12 schools. During his 35 years in the field of education, Marzano’s work has centered on translating research and theory into clear, practical programs and tools for K-12 teachers and administrators. He has identified three areas central to school improvement reforms including fostering and sustaining effective instructional strategies system-wide, using classroom and grading practices to provide effective feedback to students, and building strong student academic vocabulary.

“Teachers’ daily classroom teaching responsibilities leave little time or energy for discerning from educational research what effective teaching strategies or best practices work for optimum student learning and achievement,” said Marilyn Bradford, superintendent of Shawnee Public Schools and member of the Brock Prize jury who nominated Marzano. “The body of Dr. Marzano’s work has been to interpret and analyze educational research and, in his own words, ‘to translate research and theory into practice.’”

Marzano received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Iona College, his master’s degree in reading and language arts from Seattle University and his doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of Washington.

Donnie Brock. It is administered by an executive committee, which includes representatives from Oklahoma State University, the University of Oklahoma and the University of Tulsa. The prize is endowed by the Brock Family Foundation of Tulsa. There have been seven recipients since its inception in 2001.

Robert J. Marzano leads the 2008 Symposium on Excellence in Education inside the Forum Building at the University of Oklahoma

Brock Jury deliberations for the 2009 Laureate

Oct. 23-25
On the campus of the University of Oklahoma, Norman
For more information visit: www.brockprize.org
University of Oklahoma College of Liberal Studies senior Gena Merrell has accomplished an amazing feat: maintaining a 4.0 GPA throughout her academic career. Merrell, who became interested in the liberal studies program due to its 100 percent online program option and the diversity of the curriculum, says the key to her success was putting forth the effort and working hard.

“I always worked as hard as I could,” Merrell said. “If there was an opportunity to improve my work to reflect the professor’s suggestions I would do it. If there was an opportunity for extra credit I would do it.”

Merrell was awarded a medallion from OU President David L. Boren at this year’s graduation ceremony and she carried the CLS banner in recognition of her dedication to excellence. In addition, she was on the President’s Honor Roll and was a member of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

“I made a conscious effort to maintain my GPA since my first semester of college,” Merrell said. “I felt that if I am paying for college … I should do my best.”

Merrell, who owes a debt of gratitude to her mother, grandmother and husband for their unwavering support, has been accepted into OU’s College of Law and will continue her academics in the fall.

Congratulations!

— Christine Hughes
Life has come full circle for Gina Ellis, a 2003 Master of Liberal Studies (MLS) graduate and film script writer. In November she came back to the University of Oklahoma campus for the screening of her dramatic independent film, Angela’s Decision. The film was shown in Meacham Auditorium, presented by her screenwriting professor, Andy Horton of OU’s Film and Video Studies program. A number of her College of Liberal Studies and OU colleagues, students and avid filmgoers gathered to hear Ellis speak about the making of her film and how she sold the script online.

“Coming back to OU with the independent film that I wrote while a student at OU was something I wanted to do all along,” Ellis said.

The universality of Ellis’ screenplay prompted Mat King, an Australian freelance director who has worked mostly in Australia and South East Asia, to produce and direct the film. King changed the setting of the film from Oklahoma to Australia where it was filmed.

“If you want to get your film made sometimes you have to be willing to make changes,” Ellis said. “Mat kept true to my story using the same dialogue. The landscape of the small towns in the Australian outback and the experience of their young people are similar to what small town life is like in Oklahoma,” Ellis said.

Ellis and King are still in touch because things keep happening with this film. King, who is actively pitching the film, recently asked Ellis how she felt about Angela’s Decision becoming a television show in London.

In 2007 she traveled around the country with Angela’s Decision garnering awards in both short and feature categories in almost every film festival the film entered.

“The beginning of the accolades was when the film received a gold award for Best Short Drama from the Australia Cinematographers,” Ellis said. “We went on to win Best in Show in Tigrelo, Miss., and Best Short in the Benny Kent film festival in Chandler, Okla. The original soundtrack was a finalist in the Garden State film festival in New Jersey. In Phoenix the film placed in the best world cinema shorts. In the George Lindsey film festival in Florence, Ala. it took second place Best Feature.”

Ellis wrote Angela’s Decision as part of her creative thesis while working on her MLS master’s degree. “The self-design option within the program drew her to OU’s College of Liberal Studies.

“Without the self-design program, I could not have done this,” she said. “Because my husband and I were in the Army, I needed a program like CLS offered. At CLS, I was able to do a creative thesis. I worked with Andy Horton, J. Madison Davis and Joanna Rapp who were all really helpful during my degree program. It’s never too late, you can enter the MLS program at any point in your life.

“Before I entered the MLS program, I read how-to screenwriting books, like Sid Field’s screenwriting book. I got a screenwriting software program, which you need, and I wrote a couple of scripts before I entered the program. When Andy Horton agreed to be my thesis chair he helped me a lot. He brought in a lot of guest speakers to the Film and Video Studies program who I learned from. Andy once said, ‘You wouldn’t write a novel without reading a novel, so how could you write a script without a complete script at that point and the program has a script library that helped me a lot. I started checking out scripts and reading them. I got an idea of the pacing of scripts and how tight they needed to be.’

Ellis worked on the 48-hour Film Project in 2007 where she made a seven-minute film, Fay in the Life of Dave, in Nashville, Tenn. Filmmakers make movies in a tight deadline of 48 hours.

“You put a film together, write it, film it and edit it in two days,” she said.

Ellis continues to write and promote her scripts and recently wrote an adaptation of Alexander Dumas’ novel, The Black Tulip, a historical period piece.

“I am getting scripts read and producers of bigger films such as Babel are reading my scripts now and that keeps me motivated,” she said. “I keep writing. You never know what is going to come up next. I take notes wherever I go. I have a lot of ideas, and I narrow them down to what would make a good script.

— Christine Hughes

Angela’s Decision

See what life is like in Australia’s rugged and timeless outback through the eyes of a 20-something woman powerfully portrayed by relatively new actress, Rhiannon Owen. Angela’s Decision is a multi-award winning, 45-minute short drama written by Gina Ellis, University of Oklahoma MLS graduate. Filmmaker Mat King shot the drama in the southern Flinders Ranges in South Australia with a cast of Australian actors. This is a story with an edge, a tale of the portrayal of the limited opportunities modern young people have who live in out-of-the-way locations. As the film begins, a young woman is seen running in the outback of Australia, introducing us to the isolation and hardships of life there.
Mary Aldridge is one of two academic advisors for the bachelor’s degree program in the College of Liberal Studies. She spends her work days setting up students’ graduation plans, mapping out what a student needs to finish their degree. Aldridge is familiar with what it takes to be an academic advisor.

“I have been an academic advisor on the OU campus since 1994. I have advised in the Price College of Business and in the athletic department as well,” she said. “I have been with the College of Liberal Studies for four years.”

Aldridge said, “The nice thing about CLS is if you have access to the Internet and you don’t have a diploma on your wall, we can help you get that diploma. You don’t have to have a master plan; you just need to have the time to devote to one class a semester. That is really all it takes.”

Aldridge earned her bachelor’s degree in teaching and a master’s degree in public administration from Northern Michigan University, her home state. She hails originally from Sterling Heights, Mich.

When not working, she enjoys grilling, camping and boating. “I like to get in trouble on the grill and play with my smoker,” she said. “I am also a big camper. We have an RV and a boat, and we like to head out and do as much camping and boating as possible during the good weather months.”

Aldridge says the wide open spaces keep her inspired. Her favorite traveling spot is Acadia National Park in Maine. She says there isn’t a place you can look that you don’t appreciate. “It is really one of the most beautiful places I have ever been. The trails go on forever with no cars and no exhaust to bother you.”

– Megan Sagowitz

Catherine Kerley

Catherine Kerley is the Web designer for the College of Liberal Studies (CLS). She has been designing the college’s Web sites full-time for the last three years. As a graduate assistant, Kerley began working with CLS in 1998 during the premier of online courses. Prior to joining the staff of CLS, Kerley worked as a graduate assistant teaching freshman composition at the Writing Center at the University of Oklahoma. Born in Oklahoma City, she has lived in Norman since 1993.

As the CLS Web designer Kerley designs the college’s general public Web sites, as well as course Web sites. She works closely with faculty who are developing the course content.

“When a new course comes along or when an old one needs to be redesigned, I review the course content to get a feel of the course’s personality,” she said. “Then, I design a Web site in accordance with our Web standards to fit that course so it is a more complete presentation for the students and the faculty. Each course is a learning journey for the students, and my designs not only help illustrate the topic and meaning involved with the course, but also help guide students through their educational journey.

“I really love my job because it is a fabulous balance between academic and creative work. Working at CLS is great and the staff is an amazing group of people. Everyone gets along beautifully. CLS is staffed with people who are both academic and creative.”

With a background in English and the classics Catherine enjoys writing and art. She also dances with an OU belly dancing performance troupe and an OU African American drumming dance class. She also enjoys spending time with her 16-year-old son.

– Christine Hughes

Trent Gabert

Trent Gabert is associate dean of the College of Liberal Studies and chair of the executive committee for the Brock International Prize in Education. Gabert graduated with bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Wisconsin. After teaching and coaching in Arizona, Gabert returned to Wisconsin and earned a doctorate in child growth and development. Following a long tenure as chair of the Department of Health and Exercise Science at the University of Oklahoma, Gabert became associate dean of the College of Liberal Studies in 2000.
Gabert: After stepping down from a long tenure with health, sport and exercise science, including 14 years as chairman, at the University of Oklahoma, Trent Gabert could have returned to the classroom and assumed a more leisurely pace of life. Instead, he accepted the job of associate dean of the College of Liberal Studies, an administrative role that has him working long days, hosting special events – he’s chair of the executive committee for the Brock International Prize in Education – and planning and overseeing phenomenal growth in the College. You won’t hear him complaining. The challenges of guiding programs devoted to serving nontraditional and adult students are what keep him coming to McCarter Hall every day. Gabert shares his learning philosophies with Vintage Point.

VP: How long have you been with the College?

Gabert: That’s a two-part answer. I have been with the university for 38 years, beginning in the health and exercise science department. In 1971 I started working for the College of Liberal Studies teaching courses and seminars in the natural and biological sciences area. In 2000 I became associate dean.

VP: Where were you before you came to OU?

Gabert: I grew up on a farm in rural northeastern Wisconsin. After I received my bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Wisconsin, I applied for jobs in large cities because I knew I did not want to teach in a small school like the one where I was from. I ended up in Phoenix where I taught high school and coached football and track. I was spending 50 percent of my time coaching, being paid $5,000. But I was being paid $5,000 to teach. I thought to myself, ‘This does not balance. I either need to become a coach or a teacher.’ I decided to work on my doctorate in child growth and development at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. That was a fun time. We lived in student housing which we called ‘rabbit hill’ because everybody had little kids. Life was good. Nobody had any money and we all got together for everything. I was also a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where I taught courses in physical and health education. And, I was a physical training coordinator for 30 Peace Corps projects.

VP: How did you end up in Oklahoma?

Gabert: I had been to Oklahoma once before for survival skills training for the Peace Corps. We did rappelling right here at Memorial Stadium, along with rock climbing and dawn proofing. I liked Oklahoma very much. It was a rural state but with a good state higher education institution. I received my doctorate June 8 and I started teaching here June 10. My wife was pregnant with our third child, we did not have a home and it was tornado weather. She said, ‘Don’t even unpack, we are not staying!’ Now she says, ‘I can leave any time I want,’ but she is staying. We like Norman. Over the years I’ve been offered other jobs out of state but we like it here.

VP: After your time in health and exercise science, what appealed to you about moving to a college that serves nontraditional students?

Gabert: My whole life has been about change and growth and programs. When I was chair of health and exercise science, we made a lot of program changes, growing that department from a very small, teacher education component to a much different health, exercise science and sport area. My department was always changing and evolving. So when I came to the College of Liberal Studies, I said, ‘Ah! We can grow and evolve and change too.’

VP: What changes did you initially make?

Gabert: When I came, I said we would be about growth and quality. That was my theme. Dr. Pappas (CLS Dean James Pappas) and I both started in July of that year and we held a workshop for staff. Everyone had to read, Who Moved My Cheese? We talked about how we were going to change CLS. This is a self-supporting college. Therefore, we talk a lot about students as customers. The bottom line is to qualify in adult education, good student services. If we work to make sure we have a good student services component. We keep working on this. Don’t ever say that you are done but keep trying to improve and do the best you can.

VP: What changes have you seen during your time as associate dean?

Gabert: We have experienced a lot of growth. When I started we had approximately 500 students in our program. Now that number is close to 1,500. In addition, we now offer a Bachelor of Science degree, along with our bachelor and Master of Arts degrees. Our staff has grown from nine to 25. Last year we added our first full time faculty members, which is a huge step forward. It took seven years to get to that point. First, we had to grow the college which caused some anguish, perhaps, but we needed to have a student base large enough to keep offering courses. We were talking about growing whole and having consistency. And we did that. Now, we have a good financial base. As we grew, had more students and financial stability, we hired two new faculty last fall. This year, a new half-time faculty member is joining us in religious studies and leadership.

A criminal justice degree is new and we hope to add one or two criminal justice faculty. Our vision is to add faculty as we develop new programs. It’s faculty that set policy and review courses and are the driving forces behind the unit. As a college, we can ask them what they think. Having faculty now means we are moving from a management-staff operation to a more traditional college where faculty is the percolating, driving force. Dr. Pappas and I understand this because we are faculty.

Our students are little bit younger now over the eight years that we have been in the administration. This group is more interested in professional studies such as leadership and criminal justice. They are getting a degree because it helps them in some way with their career. We still have our traditional group of liberal studies students but we are seeing a larger group of students in professional studies – leadership, criminal justice, etc. These are professional degrees.

VP: What is the biggest misconception about online learning?

Gabert: Who would have thought 15 years ago that I would be in a college where over 90 percent of our students are totally online? I did not grow up in that. It’s interesting to watch faculty. They did not grow up with online programs. People have the idea that online learning is easy as a student and as a faculty member but that is wrong. Good faculty members will do well whether on-site or online because they care about the student and want to help them grow.

People have really come around in accepting learning online. You get to know the students better than you do on-site – you communicate with them all the time. The disconnect between faculty and student can’t happen because students have to respond. They talk about their work and their life as they do their assignments and pretty soon you know that student pretty well. Also, today, a hybrid model of combining online and on-site is what is happening on campus. You teach a class and can cut down on on-campus stuff when you can do things online. We still have to look at our college as a business model and figure out what it will take to grow and make money it is not by having mass-produced courses.

VP: What inspires you to keep going?

Gabert: The challenge of trying to change and develop, and working on offering a good program. In order to do that, you better have a positive attitude and quite a bit of patience. I think that the challenge of getting into a new area (online) is appealing. Early on I taught some online courses so I could get a feel for it. I think that the bottom line for any faculty member is the students. It only takes a couple students to give you that. If you are in administration you not only like to plan but you like to see the results and we have had some good results. I believe in visionary leadership. The first retreat we had we laid out some ideas for the future. Three years ago we had another and laid out new plans. The five-year vision we put forward in 2005 we have already reached.

VP: What do you do when you are not working?

Gabert: I like to play golf because you can get out where it is quiet. The score does not make much difference. I’m a little competitive so I like to play with people who are a little better than me. That way, they want you to be competitive. Also, I’ve got four grandchildren. Three live in Singapore and our newest lives in Washington, D.C.

I am very interested in leadership – I took a sabbatical at West Point one year to study leadership and I try to read at least two books a month for fun.

—Interviewed by Susan Cianman
Settling in
Amelia Adams transitions from administrator to first-ever CLS full-time faculty member

Professor Amelia Adams is wrapping up her first year as a full-time professor at the College of Liberal Studies. Although the previously taught for CLS as an adjunct, becoming a full-time professor has been a big transition from her administrative role as assistant dean of the Graduate College at the University of Oklahoma.

“Both are concerned with education,” Adams said. “But on the administrative side you are slightly removed. I worked with a lot of students helping them achieve their goals, but it’s not the same as teaching.”

The first-ever full-time professor position with CLS was an exciting and rare opportunity to bring together three seemingly unrelated areas of expertise, she said. The requirements for the position fall right in line with Adams’ academic background of leadership, interdisciplinary and cultural studies.

So when Adams read the CLS faculty position posting in the Chronicle of Higher Education she knew she was the right person for the job.

“Somewhere along the way I fell in love with administration and forgot that my ultimate goal was a faculty position,” Adams said. “Several years after completing my Ph.D., I was ready for a change and through self-reflection I remembered, ‘Oh yeah, back to that!’”

Adams earned her doctorate in organizational leadership in 2006 from OU. Prior to completing her doctorate Adams earned a master’s degree in anthropology in 1993, also from OU, and a bachelor’s degree in anthropology and sociology in 1987 from Smith College in Massachusetts.

Having a doctorate, working in the Graduate College and now teaching both graduate and undergraduate students gives Adams a unique vantage point for understanding the academic process in its entirety. Adams said she believes that this “broader understanding” can only benefit her students.

“I understand more than the course knowledge alone,” she said. “I understand where they are in the process and where they are going to go.”

After two semesters on the job, Adams has gotten in sync with the 24/7 nature of an instructional role as opposed to her electronically at all times of day and night. Adams considers her position to be that of a dream keeper for these various disciplines effectively. Adams is thrilled at being there for the moment of revelation and transformation of her students – the moment when they understand how to apply ideas and theories across the various disciplines.

“The transformation of my students is part of the excitement of teaching for me. Watching people take in new ideas and realize how they are applicable or how they can use them is fulfilling.”

- Amelia Adams, Ph.D

The long road
Eckle Peabody, CLS professor

Dr. Eckle Peabody took the long road before he found his passion in teaching. The College of Liberal Studies adjunct assistant professor was recipient of the CLS Superior Teaching Award in 2007 and has quite the colorful past.

“I fell into teaching by accident really – I was homeless when the Crowder College Biology department came looking for a teacher,” said Peabody. “I didn’t think I was even qualified to teach, but my D.D.S. degree was enough for them.”

Peabody was born in Cabool, Mo., in the Ozarks. At the age of 18, he left home to work in the Springfield, Mo., hospital. Eventually, Peabody made his way to college, but his first attempt was a failure. “I was having too much fun and I was failing all my classes,” Peabody said.

His next adventure led him to Chicago where he worked in a steel mill for two years. In the end, Peabody found his way into the U.S. Navy. He served during the Vietnam War and after four years, he was ready to give college another try.

Peabody went back to Missouri and enrolled in Drury University where he double majored in biology and chemistry. This led to dental school, which eventually brought him back to the Navy for a second term.

“The Navy was looking for a dentist so I signed up,” said Peabody. “I spent four years in Puerto Rico working for the Navy. By the time I got out, I was ready to open my own practice.”

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“I had no money and no job, and after the fight ended, I decided I didn’t want to be a dentist anymore. I had no plans as to what I would do next, but luckily it wasn’t up to me to decide,” Peabody said.

It was then that Peabody took his first teaching job at Crowder College in Missouri. He is now a full-time professor for Tulsa Community College and a part-time adjunct professor for CLS.

“I love theCLS program and especially the students,” he said. “It is rewarding to see a student start a class with a closed mind and then you see that light bulb go off and suddenly a dialogue has opened and they are looking at ideas in a new light.”

Peabody went on to say he is inspired by his students. Watching them grow, learning new ideas and then putting those ideas to use is what keeps him coming back for more. Now Peabody teaches a variety of classes, anything they will let him teach, he said.

“My favorite class to teach is Interdisciplinary Inquiry,” said Peabody. “I think everything in my life, all my experience, helps me explore new ideas and look at other ways of thinking.”

“I also enjoy getting the students to look at subjects from a different discipline. Seeing a student convert a religious topic into government or natural science excites me!”

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“I have kept in touch with several of my students, even gone hunting with one student,” he said. “I followed one student from his bachelor’s degree to his master’s degree and finally his doctorate. It is amazing to see these students progress and just pursue life.”

Currently, Peabody resides in Tulsa with his wife, Linda. Together they enjoy riding their Harley Davidson motorcycles around the state, most times without a destination in mind. As a man who sometimes teaches class in his leathers, Peabody claimed most people wouldn’t guess he is really shy.

“I hate it well, but truth be told, my mouth still gets dry and I start to sweat when I am in front of a crowd.”

Life has certainly had its fun with Peabody. He has done everything, stated, from being on top and owning the biggest house on the block, to shoveling manure and living in a car. There is one thing he has learned for certain – “Take nothing for granted. No matter what the situation is, you can always learn something.”

- Megan Sageritz

FacuLty PRoFiLe

first-ever CLS full-time faculty member

Amelia Adams transitions from administrator to first-ever CLS full-time faculty member

Settling in
Amelia Adams transitions from administrator to first-ever CLS full-time faculty member

The long road
Eckle Peabody, CLS professor

Dr. Eckle Peabody took the long road before he found his passion in teaching. The College of Liberal Studies adjunct assistant professor was recipient of the CLS Superior Teaching Award in 2007 and has quite the colorful past.

“I fell into teaching by accident really – I was homeless when the Crowder College Biology department came looking for a teacher,” said Peabody. “I didn’t think I was even qualified to teach, but my D.D.S. degree was enough for them.”

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- Megan Sageritz
In the spring of 2006, Nina Livesey was living in Paris, France in a rented apartment with her husband, when an e-mail came from the University of Oklahoma’s College of Liberal Studies. Would she be willing to teach a class? She immediately replied, “Yes! And by the way, I am in Paris, France.”

Fortunately, CLS agreed to give this newer concept in distance learning a try and the French wireless connections allowed Livesey to get the work done despite the seven-hour time difference. “The time difference actually worked out well,” Livesey said. “I could work in what was the middle of the night for my students, so by the time they started their day they had answers to their questions and new assignments to work on.”

Livesey has continued teaching online classes since that spring. Her Bible as Literature class is a steady part of the CLS curriculum and starting this fall, Livesey will begin teaching a new class—Religious Leaders for Social Justice—a biographical study of individual leaders from various faith traditions. The class will be offered through CLS and the College of Arts and Sciences. Currently, Livesey teaches half-time for CLS and half-time for the College of Arts and Sciences. Her Religion and Film class in the CLS curriculum and starting this fall, Livesey will hold is the opportunity to teach and continue learning from others.

James Martin a leading authority on opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities

There is a different level of cooperation with the CLS students.”

In Livesey’s self-described first life, she taught computer programming in the Price College of Business. Her specialty was COBOL programming for Management Information Systems (MIS) students.

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Nina Livesey
College adds third faculty member

“I enjoyed the teaching experience, but I was getting tired of COBOL,” said Livesey. “I felt there was something else for me and I always knew graduate school was in my future.”

In 1996, Livesey returned to school to earn both her master’s and doctorate degrees. She completed a master in theological studies from Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa and her Ph.D. in biblical studies from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. For several years, she commuted to Dallas nearly every week, staying in an adult dorm to complete her course requirements.

Livesey said one of her favorite things about teaching is that she never stops learning. Her students help her continue to learn by opening her eyes to new ideas and ways of the thinking. “When you see students connecting with the material and putting effort and thought into their work, it’s rewarding. I learn a lot with each assignment students complete. Each student has a different perspective on a narrative section and this helps me see something new.”

Teaching online adds another level of enjoyment, Livesey added. Through e-mail correspondence and various assignments, she feels she is learning more about her students than she would in a classroom environment.

“Students tend to reveal more about themselves in an online environment as opposed to a classroom setting. I think I reveal more about myself as well. Thus, I feel I get to know my students a bit better using this mode of teaching even though we don’t see each other face-to-face,” Livesey said.

In her personal life, Livesey enjoys long walks with her dog; she often gets her best ideas while walking. She also treasures time spent with her family. She has a daughter at home who is a high school senior and a son who is a senior at OU. Her husband, Steven Livesey, is also an OU professor in the History of Science department.

Livesey has spent four nonconsecutive years in France. One of those years was for her own undergraduate study and the others during her husband’s sabbatical leaves from OU. She said France inspires her; the culture is rich and the language is stimulating. She and her husband both claim to be Francophiles, people with a strong interest in, and admiration for French language and culture. Livesey hopes to return to France again soon. One thing Livesey knows—her future will hold is the opportunity to teach and continue learning from others.

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Nina Livesey
Ph.D.

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James Martin a leading authority on opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities

James Martin is a CLS professor and tenured professor in the University of Oklahoma’s College of Education. He is a noted scholar and national contributor in special education and has contributed research and several books and writings to the field. He also holds the Zarrow Chair in Special Education and has been the director of the Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment since its inception in 2000. He is a recipient of an Outstanding Teaching Award from the College of Liberal Studies. In 2006, the Council for Exceptional Children’s Division on Career Development and Transition awarded Martin the Oliver P. Kolstoe Award for his efforts to improve the quality and access to career and transition services for people with disabilities. With a doctorate in special education from the University of Illinois, Martin has taught at Eastern Illinois University and at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs where he served as the Special Education Program Coordinator and as the Director of the Center for Self-Determination.
Some people begin college knowing that they want to do. Yet for most of us our education is an ongoing process and a career happens along the way. James Martin is one of those who didn’t set out to become a professor. Initially, he earned a bachelor’s degree in business. Then, while working on a master’s degree in economics he was invited to work and reside in a residential facility for adult students with disabilities.

“I knew how rewarding it was to see how much the disabled adults were able to achieve if they were given the opportunity to work and live together and work on their own,” Martin said. “I saw the barriers they faced because of the way society perceived them and I wanted to do something about that. I was also predisposed to working with people with disabilities because my mom had a disability.”

Another motivator was connected to an economic history course where Martin focused on disabilities, opening his eyes to the economic impact on society and those with disabilities. By the end of his second semester economics lost its appeal as part of the class and that was great fun. I also team-taught a Philosophy of Nature class with Educational Psychology Professor Rockey Robbins, where we tied in several disciplines and studied nature poets, philosophy, the scientific part of nature and native healers. We combined film, books and music.

Students were given an assignment where they went out into nature and reflected upon it, then wrote about it. I had an immense amount of fun teaching these classes. It was great because in this kind of setting we could explore so many ideas in an interdisciplinary way with people who come together from so many different walks of life.

Martin went on to obtain his doctorate from that program. Today, he is one of the nation’s leading figures and researchers in the field of transition education for youth and young adults with disabilities.

The true mark of a liberal education is when someone can set aside personal beliefs and biases to look fairly at an issue.

- James Martin, Ph.D

VP: What did you begin teaching for CLS?

Martin: I first began teaching for CLS during 2000. I initially taught courses that were offered in Ponca City and Rose State College in Midwest City. I teamed up with CLS Professor John Duncan and we developed and taught a series of inter-area courses that are very creative, drawing from the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences. I liked the idea of team-teaching and taking a concept that we had some knowledge of, but one we wanted to explore and know more about, and design the content. We put together a mini course really near the end this winter. One of the courses we taught was Environmental Thinking and contained components of environmentalism, philosophy and psychology of science. We used Frank Herbert’s Dune books as part of the class and that was great fun. I also team-taught a Philosophy of Nature class with Educational Psychology Professor Rockey Robbins, where we tied in several disciplines and studied nature poets, philosophy, the scientific part of nature and native healers. We combined film, books and music.

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VP: What are you teaching at CLS now?

Martin: For the last three years I have taught online courses in both the bachelor’s and master’s programs. For the bachelor’s program, I teach the Goal Setting and Attainment class. This is a wonderful online class to teach where we use fascinating books, The Goal: A Process of Ongoing Improvement and Amazing Achievers: Living Your Purpose while Overcoming Adversity. I also teach a sociology class, Challenges in a Changing World, where we look at both sides of arguments related to social issues. The issues we examine are crucial to our life on a global scale – globalization, drugs, crime and immigration. We debate and make decisions on these issues. We often find that both extremes of issues are closer together than students may have thought. It gives students a chance to see the other side of an issue and look at the opposite perspective and examine it and question it. Taking an opinion you have on an issue and looking at both sides and verifying if your opinion and decision making a different one is an important aspect of a Liberal Studies education. At the master’s level, I also teach an Ethics of Leadership course that John Duncan developed. Using the European and American philosophers who have guided our thoughts for hundreds of years we apply their knowledge to modern day leadership positions.

VP: What is it like teaching online students?

Martin: With online learning I have students from all over the world where 75% of the student’s life issues come up. I will get notes from students who will say, “I have to go out on patrol in Iraq and I don’t know when I’m coming back,” or, “My daughter has cancer.”

Many of these students, especially those in the military, are doing their education in bits and pieces when they can fit it into their lives. This is a very interesting aspect of online learning. The students’ writing often has more depth because of their life experiences.

VP: Do you enjoy teaching adult students?

Martin: I’ve always enjoyed working with adult learners because they bring in their life experiences and this is fascinating. Most adult students have been to college once upon a time and left college for a variety of reasons, yet adult students hold one thing in common – they come back to college to further their life in some way. And these students are great to work with.

VP: What is your purpose as an educator?

Martin: My purpose as an educator is to help students to discover. We never know what’s going to be around the comer. And we have to be ready to face whatever comes up and have the confidence to take the preparation we have developed through our education and life to work with it. Discovering opportunities in life is important.

VP: What makes for an excellent student?

Martin: No matter where they start from if they have a willingness to put the time and effort into their work that is important. It’s about what they come away with from their courses and where they end up that matters. Those who take it further and go beyond what they need to do, those are the excellent students.

VP: What do you do as the CLS executive committee chair?

Martin: As chair of the College of Liberal Studies Executive Committee I help facilitate discussions where we look at the structure, issues, plans and programs of the college.

VP: What is the work the Zarrow Center is doing?

Martin: At the Zarrow Center we look at high school individuals with disabilities and how we can assist them to make successful transitions into life outside of high school, with a particular focus being their successful entry and onto the completion of a higher education so they can become a contributing citizen to society.

VP: What can you tell us about your personal self?

Martin: My life is a single one. I spend a lot of time with my wife and daughters. My wife and I will be celebrating our 25th anniversary this summer with a trip to Maine and Canada. I enjoy symphonies and love reading novels, most recently books about the founding fathers.

- Interview by Christine Hughes

Professor Martin has authored several books, a couple dozen chapters for edited books, numerous journal articles, and several curriculum lesson packages, which include video and multimedia applications. Federal, state and local funding agencies provided him more than $7,500,000 to conduct his current and writing projects. He has conducted presentations and training workshops at sites across the U.S. Canada and Europe.

Prior to obtaining his doctorate degree, Professor Martin worked for four years with a community ARC program in Illinois where he developed and implemented community employment and living programs for youth and adults with developmental disabilities and emotional problems. His professional interests focus upon the transition of youth with disabilities from high school into postsecondary education and the workplace, and what must be done to facilitate success in high school and postsecondary environments. In particular he examines the application of self-determination methodologies to educational and workplace settings.
Presented for ongoing service to the College of Liberal Studies in areas such as student advisement, teaching, curriculum and program development or other responsibilities. In addition, the individual selected exemplifies the goals and purposes of the College, mainly in the pursuit of interdisciplinary, liberal learning.

Peter Tirrell played a major role in developing the current Master of Arts in Liberal Studies museum studies option. He has served as president of the Association of College and University Museums and Galleries and as president of the International University Museums and Collections Association. Tirrell regularly encourages students to present their research at national conferences and has promoted the CLS Museum Studies program as part of his own presentation at national and international meetings.

A student said, “His courses are extremely interesting and his presentations well thought out. He constantly provides quick and insightful feedback, is open to questions, and constantly shares new reading and materials with all museum students. More importantly, he adds the human element necessary to make the transition to respected teacher and friend.”

The faculty member selected for the Rufus Hall Achievement award provides meritorious service to the College of Liberal Studies in the areas of student advising, teaching, course development and special activities. In addition, the winner exemplifies the goals and purposes of the College, mainly in the pursuit of interdisciplinary, liberal learning.

Willie Bryan served as one of the primary faculty members in the reorganization and development of the Master of Arts interprofessional human and health services studies option. He served as the developer and teacher for both undergraduate and graduate core courses in the area of cultural diversity and learning for the challenged individual. Bryan regularly mentors students on their study in depth projects and is highly sought out as a mentor in several interdisciplinary areas of study. He teaches several courses including, Cultural Diversity in the World, and Cultural, Social and Diversity Issues in Human and Health Services.

A student said, “The assignments were challenging and very informative. I specially learned a great amount from his expertise as a working professional. He creates a problem-solving environment and he stretched our thinking to greater heights.”

The recipient of this award demonstrates superior teaching abilities and exemplifies the goals and purposes of the College in interdisciplinary and liberal learning.

Steven Gullberg regularly teaches several sections of undergraduate natural science courses including, The Dynamic Universe, Ecology and Evolution, and Physics for Poets.

A student said, “He is the most interactive teacher I have had in my three-year liberal studies career. He answers questions quickly and in-depth, responds in both a personal and academic manner, and encourages student interactions and participation at all times.

“He is an excellent communicator and although there was a great amount of challenging work, he was always providing a helping hand to allow me to succeed,” another student said.

“He is very open-minded and leads students in learning to think outside the box,” another said.

A graduate of the master’s program in liberal studies, Gullberg was the winner of the 2003 MLS Academic Achievement Award. Currently, he is completing his doctorate in astronomy and astronomy education.
Criminal justice

Bachelor’s degree candidates now have a new option in the College of Liberal Studies

Helping students complete their degrees has always been a goal for the College of Liberal Studies (CLS). Starting this fall, there will be one more way for students to make their goals happen. CLS is offering a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice degree completely online.

Criminal justice is a growing career field in Oklahoma and across the nation. The U.S. Department of Labor predicts that by 2010 there will be more than a 29 percent increase in the demand for FBI agents, police officers, private detectives, U.S. customs agents and many other related areas. In addition, the growing emphasis on homeland security has created an unprecedented demand for criminal justice and security professionals.

“We designed this program for working adults who are looking to further their education or make a positive move in their career field,” said Trent Gabert, Ph.D., associate dean of Liberal Studies, contact Frank Rodriguez, program administrator for CLS, at frankr@ou.edu. Several associate degree programs have started in Oklahoma. Our degree is different, not only is it a Bachelor of Science degree, but it is also an OJ degree and that holds value.”

The degree is aimed toward people already working in law enforcement, corrections, homeland security or people preparing for a career in those areas.

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The degree is taught 100 percent by OU faculty, no matter where the student is located. Students can earn their degree from anywhere in the world.

For more information about the degree program contact Frank Rodriguez, program administrator for CLS, at frankr@ou.edu. For information about enrollment into the College of Liberal Studies, contact Aaron Jones, recruitment coordinator, at aejn@ou.edu.

The spring issue of the national, interdisciplinary journal published by the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (AGLSP) is now available. Confluence reflects the best short stories, poetry, creative nonfiction and visual art of graduate liberal studies programs.

Contributors include students, alumni and faculty associated with graduate liberal studies programs. The association hopes to generate intellectual discussion, foster an understanding of the range of its multidisciplinary activities and stimulate research and creative endeavors among its readers with the journal.
Letter to America

OU President David Boren issues a wake-up call to fellow citizens

By David Boren

Reviewed by Carol J. Burr

Letter writing is almost a dying art—not almost, but not quite. David Boren still writes letters, and the most recent evidence of that skill is causing a bit of a stir. Boren has written A Letter to America. Yes, to the whole country. After a lifetime in every imaginable form of public service, Boren is issuing a wake-up call to his fellow citizens. In just more than 100 carefully crafted pages, he sets forth the kind of frank, clarion call to action that he used to challenge higher education—the University of Oklahoma specifically—and he stepped away from his powerful position in the U.S. Senate to become OU’s president 13 years ago.

To those who have attended the public and foreign policy symposia Boren has sponsored in the last decade, who have heard him exchange views with the national and international leaders who have visited the OU campus, there are familiar themes in this little book. The president obviously has been gathering his thoughts for this essay for a very long time.

He begins with the frightening premise that if the United States loses its position as the world’s dominant power, it will be the cynicism of its people toward the foundations of our political system that will do the job. He addresses the negative perception of the United States internationally and the need to rebuild relationships around the world, but he is most compelling in his unsparing analysis of this country’s domestic problems.

The first semester museum studies student plans to take advantage of every learning opportunity available and to continue her academic pursuits through a doctoral degree.

Congratulations!

Although Boren’s letter both sets forth challenges and suggests possible solutions, he is not as interested in having his readers agree with him as he is with starting a dialogue, “a civil and thoughtful national discussion.” As his book appears in bookstores and through bookstores across the country, he may get just his wish.

A Letter to America is available at bookstores or through its publisher, the University of Oklahoma Press.

www.oup.com
As a technology professional I find that people in all walks of life and from all socio-economic backgrounds have a fear of how fast technology is changing around us. Inevitably questions that come up are: Is technology changing our lives for the better? Is technology changing me in ways that I’m not aware of? Are things around me changing because of technology and not because it is best to change them?

I would like to share one personal technology journey that is not very frightening at all. In fact, it is one of the great stories of technological advancement that affects nearly every person I know. It is my personal journey in the evolution of word processing.

In the fall of 1979 I never thought I would ever need to know how to type. However, I was short a few credits and I thought this typing class might be easy. So I decided to enroll. I was a senior attending a small country high school and computer classes were nonexistent. My first introduction to typing was with a manual typewriter. When you got to the end of a line you were typing you had to reach up and move the manual carriage return all the way over to type at the beginning of the page again.

During Christmas break of that senior year in high school, the typing teacher totally surprised us by replacing all of our manual typewriters with IBM Selectrics! The IBM Selectric no longer had the hammer-type keys that hit the page – it had this high tech rotating ball that made letters and characters appear almost magically. In addition, there was no manual carriage return! We could’t believe it. The Selectric knew when you were at the end of a line and would automatically return to the front of the page.

But the biggest, most incredible thing of all was the erasable, built-in ribbon! With the old, manual typewriters if you made a mistake the only way to correct it was with Wite-out. Remember Wite-out? It was very messy and most of the time it didn’t look very professional. It was obvious where you had used Wite-out. Sometimes you had to get rid of the whole page if you had your fingers aligned incorrectly on the keyboard and you typed every letter wrong in an entire sentence. With the erasable, built-in ribbon you just had to hit the “erase” key and it memorized what you had typed for the previous nine characters. I remember talking with some other students in the class and I actually uttered the words, “What will they think of next?” Little did I know that we were at the very beginning of the greatest technological revolution in human history.

But the story of word processing goes far beyond the technological advancements that made it so much easier to type things out then erase them later. The power of word processing in its modern form has had an exponential impact on many areas of life that could have never been foreseen. I think there are two revolutions born out of this advancement that stand out: 1) Typing documents was something everyone could now do. 2) It changed the way we think about writing. Let me explain.

Before the PC and word processing, typing was something that support staff did if you were in an office. Or, if you were a student, you could take your papers to an office on campus and have someone type them up for you. You had to pay for it, of course. Once word processing arrived on a large scale, all of the sudden you had a world where everyone had the potential to “create” documents in a very professional way, and indeed, most of us have. This new ability to create has had an impact on everything from the writing and publishing world to the small online business that has the look and feel of a big corporation.

I’ve talked to a lot of authors over the last 20 years about the modern word processor and how it has affected writing. I wanted to see if they thought that word processing made them better writers or if they think something has been lost. Was there something critical to the creative process that required putting pen to paper and typing it up later?

Without exception, every author I’ve ever talked to has told me that word processing has made them better writers, and here is why: In the old days when you wrote everything down on paper first, the mechanics were such a big part of the process that this often got in the way. For instance, if you had a 200-page book written by hand and you wanted to make a change on page 89, you would have to re-write everything from page 89 on before you turned it in to the publisher.

That kind of stumbling block has an effect on the creative process. Writers tell me that being able to copy and paste anything anywhere enhanced the creative process exponentially. They can try things out here and there. New ideas come more readily when you have the flexibility to do anything you want and it won’t take much time. This is very liberating.

When we think of word processing we probably don’t view it as something that has changed the way we think, but in most cases it really has. That is why I see it as one of the great success stories in technology as we’ve moved forward so fast.

Back in the spring of 1980 when I first asked the question, “What will they think of next?” I had no idea that it was a question that I would be asking over and over again. The answer to that question is the same now as it was then. It looks like they’ve already thought of it.

— Robert L. Dougherty
Letters to the Editor

Kudos for the magazine!

Dear Ms. Grossman,

I am an MLS graduate from 1981 — yes, one of the early ones. I’ve been receiving CLS publications ever since I graduated, but the fall issue of Vantage Point was the very best ever. Congratulations on putting together a great publication! The articles were all interesting to read, each of them subliminally planting the “news” about CLS, sans the “advertising plug” or plea for contributions.

Vantage Point speaks well for the strides that CLS has made, constantly improving its program to satisfy the needs of the non-traditional students. As well, your readers learn about your students, graduates, and faculty. Hats off to you, and here’s to more great issues!

Carolyn Horter
Gainesville, Fla.

Back at work

After being out of the work force for 11 years to take care of my children, I have decided to return to work. I am now employed at the Upcountry History Museum in Greenville, S.C. This is a brand new museum focusing on the history of Upstate South Carolina which is the area near the North Carolina and Georgia border. It is fun to be back at work, using the skills I learned at the University of Oklahoma.

MLS/me 1994

Debra Deano Hammatt
Curator of Collections
Upcountry History Museum
Greenville, S.C.

Development and Planned Giving

With the College of Liberal Studies now in its fifth decade of providing innovative educational programs for adult learners, we look to our alumni and friends as partners in this time of growth and change. Working together, we can literally transform people’s lives through our array of degree options.

As loyal partners in our academic community, you form a vital link that enables us to effectively serve adult students whose schedules and responsibilities prevent them from participating in traditional academic programs. Your generosity helps us develop new delivery and content options and create scholarship opportunities for students who are seeking a degree of difference. Plain and simple, giving to the College of Liberal Studies changes lives.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Your gift can help CLS.

Gifts and grants help us meet important one-time and extraordinary expenses that cannot be covered by our course fees.

Current fundraising priorities include:

The Dean’s Fund: Unrestricted contributions help meet the college’s most urgent current needs.

Adult and Part-time Students Scholarships: Many scholarships are simply not available to adult and part-time students. Your gifts will help us supplement our existing scholarship programs and establish new scholarships to aid lifelong learners.

Electronic Course Development: We are proud of our leadership in developing innovative programs for adult learners and of our commitment to our students who have asked for more online program options. Funds are needed to help us remain on the cutting edge of technologically enhanced education.

Faculty Development Fund: Contributions can help us provide consistent, ongoing faculty development programs, in which we bring together national experts and our faculty to develop strategies and tactics for improved delivery of interdisciplinary courses and programs.

For more information on how you can help the College of Liberal Studies, call Jerry Jerman, director of development, at (405) 325-1254 or e-mail jjerman@ou.edu.
The College of Liberal Studies lost a member of its alumni family last spring. Marfan’s Syndrome is a genetic disorder that causes, among other things, a predisposition to cardiovascular abnormalities, particularly those affecting the heart valves and aorta.

Maher was born with Marfan’s Syndrome and her mother was told she should institutionalize Maher since it was presumed that she would never learn to walk, would go blind, become mentally disabled, and die by age 30. Her mother didn’t believe the ‘experts.’ She worked with Maher walking in the sands of Nauset Beach, Cape Cod, each summer to strengthen her legs. Laura learned to walk by age 3.

Her sight was bad, but corrective lenses did pretty well. She graduated from high school with State, National Honor Society and Who’s Who Honors. Everyone knew about her college experience, and her love of learning. She lived 46 years, three months. Rarely did you see her without a book in her hands. She could have allowed her physical limitations to be an excuse for sitting by and letting the world pass, but she never wasted a day.

Laura was diagnosed with uterine cancer shortly after graduation. It was during that surgery the doctors noticed abnormal electrocardiogram feedback and recommended a cardiologist visit. An aneurysm was discovered on her ascending aorta. It measured 4 cm. The doctor said it did not require surgery since she wasn’t having symptoms of shortness of breath and dizziness. She went yearly for CT scans and echocardiograms. She was due to go back April 3 for her annual tests.

On March 12, Maher had just carried a large box to her desk at work. She felt great pain in her throat area and began to sweat heavily. There are doctors at her facility and one was called to help her. Emergency medical technicians were called and she was transported to Integris Baptist Hospital. The aneurysm had grown to 6.5 cm. Emergency surgery was recommended but she was told the survival rate was only 30 to 40 percent. Maher waited until March 14 to have the eight-hour surgery from which she did not recover.

Maher volunteered her time and effort toward East Main Place of Norman, Second Chance of Norman, YWCA, March of Dimes, and many others. She is survived by Valencia Howell of the home, her mother Davina, brother Keith, and sister Sharon.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.”

By this measure, Laura Lee Maher was a success.

— Valencia Howell
For Alumni, Students and Friends of CLS

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Call for alumni news

Keep in touch with your fellow Liberal Studies classmates.

Life is full of changes and new directions. Share your latest achievement, publication, promotion, or other life-changing news with your CLS family.

News and photos can be sent to:

Susan Grossman, editor

VANTAGE POINT

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