

# College of Arts & Sciences NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2019



*A message from:*

## Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak

Dean of the College  
of Arts & Sciences



Gonzaga University provides an exemplary liberal arts education, and the College of Arts & Sciences serves as the educational unit that supplies that foundation to all undergraduate students, no matter what their major.

Translated from the Latin *artes liberales*, and referring to the education of those with a mind free from parochialism, liberal arts education traces back to classical antiquity. The scope of the liberal arts originally comprised the *trivium* of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and later grew to include arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music—the *quadrivium*.

Today's manifestation is even more comprehensive and includes the social sciences (political science, sociology, psychology, and others), the humanities (art, philosophy, language, religion, etc.), and the natural and formal sciences (mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics).

These disciplines instill in students not only the knowledge intrinsic to each area, but also qualities and skills not always gained through technical training. Courses in international studies foster global competency by introducing students to different political structures, cultures, economic systems, and more; themes examining ethical responsibility are woven into

disciplines throughout the College, leading to self-reflection and the respect of human dignity; and creativity is sparked not only by practicing the fine arts, but also by research—in the sciences, the humanities, and social science.

The classroom environment in the College encourages candid dialogue, a culture of acceptance and inclusivity, a free exchange of ideas, and the critical analysis essential to success in today's workforce. We are proud to offer these ideals to our students.

This edition of the College of Arts & Sciences newsletter is a celebration of the liberal arts. We share with you how the Computer Science & Computational Thinking major integrates the technical foundations of computer science with the liberal arts, the story of how one student is maximizing her time at Gonzaga with two majors and three minors, why it's wrong to underestimate the value of a liberal arts degree, and how the College responds to some of the more erroneous myths about the liberal arts.

Thank you for playing your role in the College of Arts & Sciences' story.

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# Why it's **WRONG** to DEVALUE *the* LIBERAL ARTS

by Kevin O'Toole ('11), Head of International Growth, Google Launchpad

I take semi-regular calls with Gonzaga seniors who are applying for jobs in the Silicon Valley and liberal arts majors trying to navigate the business world. On those calls, many of the liberal arts majors I speak with share that they believe or have been told by others that majoring in a liberal art is not valuable, practical, or employable in “the real world.” With respect to those students and their confidants—and despite the fact that I was a liberal arts major and consider the topic with some pretty implicit bias—they’re wrong. That said, the false incongruence between academic major and job viability is something I think that Gonzaga and its Catholic, Jesuit, liberal arts tradition is uniquely well-suited to help address. Simply put, I’m writing this to tell you emphatically that majoring in a liberal art is one of the most practical things a student can do.

Stepping back (dramatically): Since the beginning of time, the purest goal of academia has been not to create high-paying jobs, but to advance knowledge. The goal of a liberal arts education—a banal platitude but true—is to teach students how to think, and help them choose what to think about. The goal of a Catholic, Jesuit, liberal arts education is to go further, and show students how Transcendental Truth (plainly, God) is central to what they think and choose to think about in the world. This is distinct from the value proposition offered by a school like Caltech, where the emphasis is less on holistic education and more on

specialized training. As one such Catholic, Jesuit, liberal arts university, the goal at Gonzaga ought to be helping students construct meaning in life through reason and critical discernment. Students who can do this well will be categorically better equipped to consider and thrive in major life decisions, like jobs.

Stepping sideways (anecdotally): A fun thing to consider about our very near future is that as technology progresses, a major provision and value of the university—the supply of knowledge—will be fundamentally undermined. Already, the ubiquity of access to the world’s information and the democratization of every data point imaginable makes the challenge not memorizing or accessing material—dates, facts, figures—but rather comprehending vast quantities of it.

Stepping back in (specifically): The competencies that a liberal arts education emphasizes—writing, synthesis, research, problem solving, argumentation, critical thinking—are the exact competencies all employers want. It is also what they need. Liberal arts majors are forced to deal with a lot of gray areas in their studies, and they do not have the luxury of dealing with black and white truths (as accounting and engineering do, for example). Moreover, the pursuit of knowledge within the liberal arts also requires a certain degree of humility, as the honest pursuit of these studies tends to make it quite obvious to students that

the more one learns, the less one knows. People who can navigate ambiguity with strong critical thinking skills and humility tend to do pretty well in the business world. A recent Harvard economic study found that jobs requiring both soft skills and thinking skills have had the largest growth in employment and pay in the last three decades. However, puzzlingly, a common knock on liberal arts (which buttresses both skill types) is that it is hard to find a first job and that some majors are unemployable.

“The Unemployable Argument” is one that I have become familiar with on those calls with Gonzaga seniors. I have been told variations of “My parents won’t help me with tuition if I major in [fill-in-the-blank-liberal-art], which is why I’m majoring in [fill-in-the-blank-business-or-engineering],” or “I love [fill-in-the-blank-liberal-art], but have taken out too many loans to major in something that’s not practical” countless times. These have to be some of the least compelling things a possible employer can hear from an applicant, and they reek of a lack of agency. Moreover, sentiments like these are not grounded in data or logic; they are emblematic of plain wrong-thinking (which, ironically, liberal arts combats).

At Gonzaga, “The Unemployable Argument” provides a narrative opportunity to begin a campaign against “The Unemployable Fallacy”; the Gonzaga community can—and must—do a better job of addressing this for parents and students who believe that liberal arts majors are unemployable. That notion ignores:

1. Modern economic realities: Jobs require a mix of skills not easily packaged in any one major.
2. Pending technological realities: Many technical skills that degrees confer can be learned open source; some majors will become obsolete over time (e.g., computers can be programmed to replace accountants; artificial intelligence will program computers), while other majors—irrespective of university—already lag behind changes in the workplace (e.g., human resources).

Employment data shows that less than one-third of college graduates work in jobs directly related to their majors; this should be justification enough for both a strong core curriculum and a liberal arts education. Good employers know that the most important investment any business can make is an investment in good people. Accordingly, they hire new employees not just for one job but for any number of future roles (hence the benefits of being well rounded). Moreover, those same employers will teach

their employees what they need to do to be successful functionally, but they will not have the time or inclination to teach what only a liberal arts education can provide but what all employers acutely need (e.g., with history and psychology and biology, research and evidence-based argumentation; with philosophy and religion and literature, insights into the human condition). College students should study widely while they can afford the luxury; the workplace will force them to narrow and specialize. The value of a liberal arts education is that it allows students to become acquainted with bodies of knowledge without concern for the bottom line.

In my world of technology and venture capital investing, where reading people matters much more than reading algorithms or income statements, we know that picking the right entrepreneur has an outsized impact on a business’ future success, much more so than the specific technology, product, market, or business model. The characteristic we care about most when it comes to picking those entrepreneurs is adaptability (as a subset of creativity). So far as I can tell, a liberal arts education—specifically a Catholic, Jesuit, liberal arts education—stands the best chance of enabling adaptability for the next wave of new grads who enter the workforce.

Again, the goal of academia is not to create high-paying jobs, it is to advance knowledge and empower students with the critical thinking skills they will need to navigate the ups, downs, and side-steps of life. With so much uncertainty in the world, we need good thinkers—classically trained, critical thinkers—now more than ever. How to think, write, form an opinion, back it up, present it compellingly, and how to yield and learn and examine the world with bright eyes and optimism, despite all the facts, are baseline side effects of study in the liberal arts and what Gonzaga’s academic tradition offers in abundance.

For its long-term viability as an authentically Catholic, Jesuit, liberal arts university, the Gonzaga community must deepen its commitment to empowering liberal arts majors and supporting more students in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. And don’t worry: there are plenty of tangential positive effects that approach will have for entering—and long-term success within—a modern and evolving global workforce.

*The opinions expressed here are Kevin O’Toole’s alone and do not reflect those of his employer.*



# HOW THE LIBERAL ARTS ENHANCE THE TECH SECTOR

“Computational thinking extends to your ability to be well rounded and think beyond the computer science aspect—beyond the computer programming language—and really think about the human user interaction.”

So says Kate Gibson ('20), a Bachelor of Arts major in Computer Science & Computational Thinking (CSCT) with a biology concentration and a minor in mathematics.

Gibson will be in the first graduating class to have declared CSCT as freshmen, and the major was one of the reasons why she was initially attracted to Gonzaga. She wanted to pursue a degree that would facilitate her ability to pursue multiple interests while still gaining a strong foundation in computer programming, and the differing credit requirements between schools makes pursuing dual degrees prohibitive for B.S. majors. Though the B.A. requires fewer mathematics and technical science electives, students are required to choose a concentration (art, biology, communication studies, economics, English, environmental studies, philosophy, sociology, or theatre arts) from which they must take a minimum of 12 credits.

“I didn’t want to commit fully to a B.S. where I wouldn’t be able to explore any other interests,” says Gibson, “and I knew I didn’t want to major in biology because I didn’t want to end up doing research or becoming a nurse or anything medical like that. What really interested me about the

B.A. is that I was still getting a computer science degree and learning something new and fascinating, but also still able to explore biology, which is my concentration, and to have a more well-rounded education.”

When offered the opportunity to help develop the new major that would reside in the College of Arts & Sciences, program director Rob Bryant hoped to inspire this very perspective. Before the computer science major moved from the College of Arts & Sciences to the School of Engineering & Applied Science and gained extensive math requirements, the program attracted double majors from a variety of disciplines.

“We used to get double majors in mathematics, or in music—a whole host of different majors. And a lot of students gave us feedback when they got out that it was important for their careers to be able to mix disciplines,” Bryant reflects. “When we moved the program, we lost them.”

“But bringing the B.A. back, you can actually go get another major or another minor in addition to your concentration. We really wanted to keep the credit load at a level in the college so that students have the ability to pursue those other areas. I kind of think that’s the core of what Gonzaga’s about.”

And even though not all CSCT majors pursue multiple disciplines, the addition of strategically selected concentrations makes graduates just as attractive to future employers as those who have pursued more technical degrees. The steady growth of the tech industry is, after all, dictated by the addition of digital components to disciplines across the board, and the liberal arts concentrations contribute additional knowledge and aptitudes.

For Holly Schwartz ('18), now an application support engineer for a Spokane-area online marketplace retailer, the computational thinking component of her degree has helped her to approach complex problems from various perspectives. "I've noticed that engineers view that there is only one solution to each particular problem and that solution cannot be changed, but liberal arts students see that solutions can evolve and change depending on the situation at hand," she says. "There are situations that need more of an engineering perspective and others that need a liberal arts perspective. My major has allowed me to find a balance between both so that I can use the right perspective for the right situation."

In her liberal arts classes, Emma Woodburn ('19) has noticed some important distinctions, not just in the presentation style of the course content, but also in her interactions with other students. "There tend to be pre-defined groups in my engineering classes since they have all had the same classes together ever since freshman year. In the College of Arts & Sciences, I'm in classes with people that I've never met before. It's refreshing to get to know other people," she says. "I also think I benefit from having classes with liberal arts students because they tend to respond to challenges, questions, and situations with a different mentality. Generally, engineering majors just like to get things done, but liberal arts majors really care about the why."

*"I don't want to live in a world that's made by computer scientists. We want all these other people with all their other viewpoints to be contributing to the new tools we use." – Rob Bryant*

"People participate more in the liberal arts classes because it's more of an open group chat in class," echoes Gibson. "And an obvious difference is the ratio of guys to girls in my classes. I know it's an engineering class when there are three other girls in the class, but in my liberal arts classes, it's typically mostly female. It can be weird to be the only girl in your class or only have a couple other people you can relate to."

Recognizing the necessity of including female perspectives in tech solutions and aspiring to foster a welcoming and supportive ethos in an environment that can be difficult for women, Bryant acknowledges another goal of the B.A. is to attract women to the field of computer science. "We are in really bad shape in terms of male to female ratio, and the tech industry has a poor image right now based on real statistics that women are not finding this an attractive field in which to work."

Woodburn believes there is a strong community for women in computer science at Gonzaga, with both the Society of Women Engineers and Women in Computing clubs available to support female SEAS students.

Gibson, sitting president of the Women in Computing group, agrees. "Here it seems like teachers are really trying to push women to stay in the field, and all the teachers have been very encouraging of their female students to join the club." But, she says, "One thing I think leads women to leave the program is the fear of failure. With computer science you're going to fail hundreds of times a day, and women, who I feel like have always been told to be perfect, get so scared to fail. That's such an integral part of the computer science and every STEM degree; it can be really hard to overcome that fear."

Ultimately, all CSCT and Computer Science students are obliged to overcome those fears as they work as teams on their year-long senior design projects. This year, teams made up of students from both degrees are combined for the first time, replicating real-world scenarios where people with diverse personalities and backgrounds interact together to solve problems.

"It's really a culmination of all the courses they've taken, because it involves everything they may have touched on. Not only is it a lot of documentation, but they also write code. It's fairly big, and pretty incredible," says Bryant. "That's where they really learn that when you're working on a team, things don't go as smoothly as working alone; you have to deal with these personnel issues in addition to writing code. You may be really focused on getting this thing working, but what really happens is when you start putting code together with your partners and it doesn't work, then you have to figure out how to get past those issues."

Woodburn is excited to finish her senior project and move on to the next phase of her life in Hillsboro, Oregon, where she has already secured a position as a Technical Program Manager at Intel. "I've had two internships at Intel and each time I told people about my major, they had a lot of follow-up questions. Even though I'll graduate with a B.A. and enter a technical field, no one has ever viewed my degree as 'less.' If anything, people were more intrigued and saw more value in my degree than the traditional B.S. in computer science."



# STUDENT PERSPECTIVES: How the Core Helped Me Find Success in My Major

The Liberal Arts education manifests itself most saliently in the University Core Curriculum, offering a breadth of knowledge as well as transferrable skills that serve students well. It provides students with a variety of tools to help them flourish in both their majors and in their lives after Gonzaga.

Here you can get a glimpse into how students in majors from the natural and formal sciences to the arts and humanities perceive how the core has led to their academic success.



**Emily Arnesen ('20)**  
**Major: Economics**  
**Minors: Mathematics,**  
**Sports Management**

The preparation for my major through the core has built a strong foundation in writing, analytical thinking, reflecting, communicating, and

ethical reasoning. In addition to these skills, I have gained a greater understanding of the world around me in social justice and global studies classes. From learning about the injustice that coffee farmers face in many developing countries in my First-Year Seminar to learning to form sound arguments in my Reasoning, Communication and Speech, and Writing classes, the core has given me a greater understanding of the world I live in and how to use my major to go out into the world and make it a better place.

**Jared Brown ('19)**  
**Major: Journalism**  
**Minors: Promotion,**  
**Writing**

Core courses in philosophy and communication have enhanced my discernment in real-world situations. As editor of *The Gonzaga Bulletin*, that knowledge helped guide me through tough editorial decisions. During that time as a student leader, it also prepared me to communicate effectively with my peers. Additionally, the Arts & Sciences core challenged me to expand my viewpoint in areas like psychology, sociology, and some extra history, which I might not have explored otherwise. As far as my aspirations after graduation, I recognize how my well-rounded and socially-minded education has groomed me to serve my community as a journalist.





**Alea Chatman ('20)**  
**Majors: Environmental Studies, Religious Studies**  
**Minor: Leadership Studies**

Coming to Gonzaga, I had little exposure to many of the subjects included within the core curriculum, including religious studies, philosophy, and communications. The core courses I have taken thus far have created a

foundation on which the classes within my major build. Yes, Gonzaga's core taught me the details of Vatican II, Socrates' thoughts on society, and the structure of an effective presentation. But, more importantly, these courses challenged me to cultivate a personal, critical understanding of the dynamic nature and existence of the world and society through the development of an empathetic mind and heart. I feel more equipped and able to handle the content of the classes within my major because of the skills I have acquired through the core curriculum.



**Kate Gibson ('20)**  
**Major: Computer Science & Computational Thinking (Biology Concentration)**  
**Minor: Mathematics**

I've enjoyed and learned things from my core classes that have really shaped me as a person in a way that pursuing the B.S. program in computer science wouldn't have. I've

learned a lot from my sociology classes, and I've taken a women's and gender studies class. Philosophy has given me a much broader perspective than just the narrow-minded perspective of computer science—that we should [create something] just because it's cool. Philosophy addresses the impact of the technology and why we're coming from where we are. It creates a pretty interesting combination, especially now that there are more philosophical debates of whether this is ethical and how we can better society through computer science.



**Konner Sauve ('20)**  
**Majors: Psychology, English**  
**Minor: Leadership Studies**

As I reflect over the past four years, the core classes Gonzaga University offers have influenced the way I think and act. These courses that span communication,

religion, philosophy, and more have given me a breadth of knowledge that I have built upon in my psychology major. Philosophical concepts from my Ethics and Human Nature courses impact how I think about my psychology coursework. This knowledge has given me the confidence to engage more critically in my major and present me with the ability to interact with the breadth and depth of information, which I utilize outside the classroom in extracurricular activities, leadership positions, and jobs.



**Tori Shaw ('19)**  
**Majors: Biology, Environmental Studies**

The core classes that I have taken while at Gonzaga have enhanced my ability to engage with environmental topics that I am most passionate about, like sustainability and conservation. I have

learned how to think, how to interact with my peers, and how to engage with the ever-changing world around me. Courses like Ethics of Climate Change and Philosophy of Human Nature have encouraged me to think about my major through a different lens. The perspective that I have gained through a wide range of classes will help to further my career as an environmentalist well into the future.



# Embracing the Breadth of a Liberal Arts Education: Molly Foster's Story

by Emma Morris ('19)

You may have seen her around campus. A girl with curly hair and two backpacks holding her dance bag dashing from class to class. Molly Foster ('19) is a student-athlete transfer on track to graduate this spring with Bachelor of Arts degrees in history and English, plus a trio of minors—Spanish, classical civilizations, and dance—representing well the College's commitment to developing “women and men for others, ready to face the intellectual, vocational and spiritual challenges of today and tomorrow.”

Originally a student at the University of Washington, it was the liberal arts focus that attracted Foster to Gonzaga's smaller campus east of the Cascades. “The class size, accessibility of professors, and variety of academic resources drew me to Gonzaga,” Foster explains. “I knew Gonzaga would have more opportunities that related to my majors and minors.”

Though diverse in scope, the distinct way in which each discipline integrates critical thinking and creative analysis is what attracted Foster to them. Learning through these unique lenses has helped her to think and process more effectively, more critically, and the challenge of mastering each of her passions appeals to her as an academic, a competitor, and a life-long learner. Taking advantage of these many opportunities has proved to be a rewarding, albeit sometimes daunting, undertaking.

Foster recognizes the timeless benefits of a liberal arts education for lifelong learners. “A liberal arts education

allows for creativity, critical thinking, and curiosity about things that do not have a single answer,” Foster explains. She is drawn to the subjectivity of discussion-based classes that seek thoughtful answers to questions with no clear yes or no answer. As the world becomes more technology-based, she believes that a liberal arts education provides an important ground for the expansion of one's mental capacity as well as the development of written and verbal communication skills.

Pursuing multiple undergraduate degrees is challenging for any student, but doing so while also competing year-round as a Division I athlete on the track and cross-country teams speaks highly to Foster's determination. Because she must work her classes around practice times and occasionally miss class for competition, Foster cites scheduling as one of her greatest challenges. She is grateful for the support of the professors and mentors who have helped her balance her academic ambitions with her athletic aspirations.

Two of her greatest mentors, Suzanne Ostersmith and Dave Oosterhuis have been integral to her academic success. Ostersmith helped guide her through one of her toughest courses, Interdisciplinary Arts, and helped her come to love the challenge and solidify her passion for dance. “I have learned so much about leadership, creativity, education, dance, and passion from Suzanne,” Foster reflects. “I am eternally grateful for the lessons she has taught me.”

*Our new core animates our Catholic, Jesuit, humanistic heritage and enriches students' education through interdisciplinary learning as well as through the breadth of the traditional liberal arts. Our new First-Year Seminar, in particular, engages students' imaginations around particular topics approached from multi-disciplinary perspectives. We expect that these courses will renew students' interests in the arts and humanities and may lead them to consider second majors or minors within the College of Arts & Sciences.*

– Molly Kretchmar-Hendricks, Director of the University Core Curriculum

And Oosterhuis contributed to Foster's decision to add a classical civilizations minor to her repertoire. "Dr. O made Greek more than just a language class. It was history and classics and linguistics and English and Greek all wrapped in one," she explains. As she crafts her thesis, she still calls upon lessons and information she learned from Oosterhuis.

Foster is just as driven in everyday life as she is in the classroom and plans to put her education to work following graduation. An academic at heart, her ideal future would mean moving to Spain, France, or Italy to earn a master's degree in history while becoming fluent in another language. Eventually, she would like to pursue a career as a travel writer, a perfect marriage of her historical knowledge and writing skills.

Inspired by her liberal arts education, Foster credits Gonzaga for her academic drive, claiming it "has given me

an amazing perspective on our world, and has given me a great deal of curiosity about parts of the world I know little about."

As Foster approaches graduation, she looks back fondly on her experience as a Zag. One of her favorite moments was the Student Choreography Concert of Spring 2018. A requirement for dance minors, the course includes a semester of choreographing and teaching a three-to four-minute dance performed at the concert. "As I watched my dancers beautifully execute the dance I had choreographed, I was overwhelmed with a sense of fulfillment and gratitude. I was so grateful that I had this opportunity, and if I ever want to choreograph in the future, I have the experience to support me."

Gonzaga's College of Arts & Sciences has proved to be a home of growth and learning for Molly Foster these past four years, and she relates well to the transformative aspect of the College of Arts & Sciences mission statement. "Having transferred from a massive school focused on research, the College of Arts & Sciences and its mission were welcome changes for me. Every class I have taken at Gonzaga so far has changed my perspective on something, and many have changed how I view the world altogether." She is grateful to Gonzaga for the holistic education of her mind, body, and spirit and looks forward to setting the world on fire after graduation with her critical thinking skills and passion for learning.





# THE LIBERAL ARTS 101:

You Don't Have to be Liberal (or Artsy) to Study the Liberal Arts

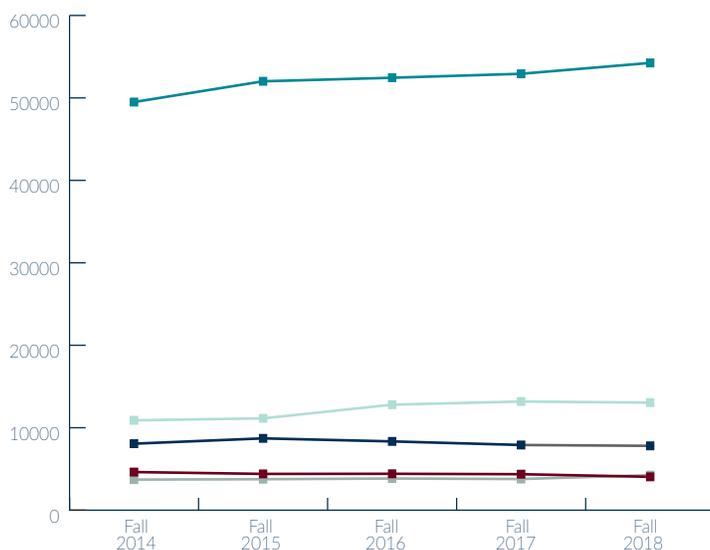
Yes, the liberal arts include disciplines from the humanities, the area of study that helps us understand the human experience and that provides the foundation of humanism. Language, literature, history, religion, plus the fine arts—music and art, theater and dance—those are the subjects most people think of when they think of the liberal arts.

But the liberal arts also include the social sciences, the natural sciences, and mathematics (half of the components of the STEM acronym), and studied together, they create a comprehensive education that fosters critical analysis, problem solving, scientific inquiry, and creativity.

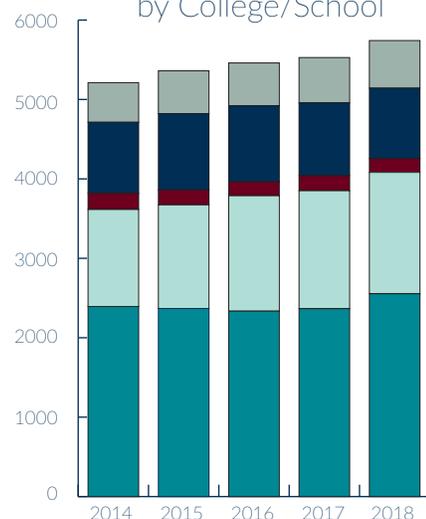
And the “liberal” part, deriving from the Latin *liberalis*? In classical antiquity, it translated to “appropriate for free men,” men who were “free” to think independently—able to come to their own terms with the world around them.

In order to fulfill University core requirements, every undergraduate student at Gonzaga interacts with faculty from and takes courses in the College of Arts & Sciences; because of this exposure, many who may not already be committed to liberal arts degrees choose to also declare majors or minors through the College.

Credits by School/College



Undergraduate Enrollment by College/School



- College of Arts & Sciences
- Business
- Education
- Engineering & Applied Sciences
- Nursing & Human Physiology

Research isn't restricted to science.

Science isn't just about research.



The summer Morris Undergraduate Research Fellowship offers students in the arts, humanities, and social sciences a unique opportunity to work on original research with a faculty mentor—and to present that research alongside their peers in the natural sciences during the Fall Undergraduate Research Expo.

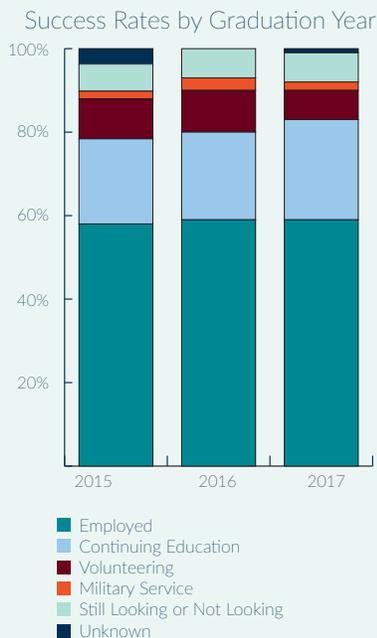


In the *Science in Action!* program, undergraduates combine service to the community with their interest in science while also using the communication and problem-solving skills fostered by the University Core Curriculum. Developing and tackling scientific research projects also requires a degree of creativity some might not expect.

## You can't get a job with a liberal arts degree.

On the contrary. College of Arts & Sciences grads have a consistent post-graduation success rate of 93-94%.

Alumni from across the disciplines go on to pursue graduate and professional degrees, overseas and domestic volunteering, and jobs in industries across the non-profit and private sectors.



“When people ask me about a liberal arts degree and how it sets them up for success in their career, I tell them that I think that having the foundations of history, English, math, science—those are fundamental pieces of knowledge that you'll never get in the working world.

In the working world, you're going to be offered opportunities to go to training classes about a certain domain ... and those companies will train you in their science. They're not going to train you in how to solve problems and interact with people and how to develop your own interpersonal confidence. And those are things that are really important that a liberal arts education is able to give you.”

– Meghan Levin, Salesforce  
Vice-President of Corporate Development,  
M&A Integration

For more insights into how a liberal arts education prepares students for the workforce, visit:  
[youtu.be/JUvOtq3hces](https://youtu.be/JUvOtq3hces)



# INTRODUCING LAURA SIMS: DIRECTOR of the MYRTLE WOLDSON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Not everyone is cut out for creating something from nothing, but the director of the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center (MWPAC), Laura Sims, most definitely is. And while Sims came into her new role after construction began, she is literally building the facility from the ground up.

With the opening performance of the ambitious *A New Season* scheduled for April 25th, Gonzaga is fortunate to have landed a director who has experience opening a new facility. On top of her previous position as production manager at the Clarence Brown Theatre in Knoxville, Tennessee, Sims' decade as founding director of the 61,000 square-foot Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center provided her with expertise in the structural and technical needs required for such a facility, as well as embedding the university-based performing arts center in the community.

The finished MWPAC will be similar in size to the FMU Performing Arts Center, coming in at 58,000 square feet and boasting three performance areas including the outdoor plaza. The mainstage area will hold 759 people and feature a counterweight system to fly in scenery, lighting, and soft goods; a flexible orchestra shell to yield exceptional acoustics; and an orchestra pit that will accommodate various stage configurations. The second, smaller, Martin and Edwidge



Woldson Recital Hall will have a capacity of 168, providing a more intimate performance space.

Gonzaga's commitment to providing service to the Spokane community surrounding us is one of the aspects of the director position that attracted Sims, and she's excited to combine community involvement with Gonzaga's tradition of accessible educational opportunities.

"The new Performing Arts Center opens up so many possibilities for Gonzaga performances, local events, and national productions," says Sims. "It won't be long before audiences have a full menu of shows to enjoy in our beautiful new performance spaces."

In addition to serving as a venue for Gonzaga events, the space will also be available to community organizations wishing to hold events.

On top of that, the calendar will include nationally recognized acts, and Sims is currently working on the 2019-2020 schedule.

What's in store for the short term? *A New Season* will feature the Gonzaga Repertory Dance Company, Acting & Dance Ensembles, Concert Choir, and Chamber Orchestra performing the choral cantata, "A Time to Dance" by Alec Roth, along with works by regional poets—a truly collaborative celebration of the grand opening! For more information, visit [gonzaga.edu/mwpac](http://gonzaga.edu/mwpac).