

Liberal Education: Closing the Gap and Broadening Horizons

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Having the access to a liberal education is what gives students from the University of Lethbridge a competitive edge in the classroom, workplace and in everyday life. A liberal education is not a list of requirements that you need to take to get a degree, but rather the opportunity to explore your interests and experience growth. A liberal education unifies students across a wide range of studies, as it brings people together under a common explorative interest and allows them to expand their knowledge regardless of their backgrounds. It allows students from the sciences to the humanities to the arts to come together and each bring their own unique approaches and experiences and contribute to a conversation bigger than themselves. It paves the way for students to study something they otherwise would never have had the access to, as well as to have an appreciation for other disciplines. It is a way to connect with students, professors and other professionals who are like minded and growth orientated.

Liberal education also diversifies students, as it gives way to multiple roads that can be taken, each carrying unique experiences and perspectives that give students an edge and allows them to stand out. As the world is changing and many jobs and roles become obsolete, it is now more important than ever for students to be equipped with the skills necessary to engage in critical thinking and problem solving, and to draw knowledge from a variety of different areas. Schools and workplaces no longer look for people solely based on GPAs, but instead focus on candidates who combine knowledge with the social skills necessary to succeed in a diverse and fast-paced world. A person who is compassionate, informed and aware of the various issues and disciplines in the world around them is invaluable.

A liberal education gives rise to opportunities in the world of volunteering. As it promotes self-growth and exploration, that can lead to the ability to use the diversified knowledge in the field of service before self. Volunteering is a critical component in any community, and

the people that give their time to serve need to be versatile, creative and in many cases work cooperatively with others. In a liberal education setting, you often need to showcase creativity in order to think outside the world that you have been accustomed to. A science major, for example, is both challenged and encouraged to think in a different way to solve problems in a sociology class. This type of versatile thinking is what leads to volunteer and leadership in any field of interest, many of such interests stemming from the explorative education a liberal education allows.

Flexibility and freedom are other beneficial components of a liberal education. Instead of having the time to only focus on your major studies and being told which courses you need to take, liberal education gives you the freedom to choose and explore, as well as the ability to go at your own pace. You can take classes across a variety of disciplines or narrow down to only a few you enjoy, as well as go at your own pace and take courses that complement and help to improve your other classes both through the material learned and the resulting flexibility in your time management. For a busy student, liberal education gives you the power to both slow down or get ahead by choosing classes that can be both interesting as well as less time-consuming.

Liberal education is empowering and important, and it should be something that post-secondary institutions everywhere offer. Education is an invaluable tool and should not be taken lightly. It is something that is gained through fiscal means, through time and effort and through struggle and hardship, and for these reasons it is something that should be all-encompassing, enlightening and geared towards the broad variety of backgrounds, interests and opportunities that exist among students. It should both unify and diversify students, give them access to a variety of success and opportunities and allow them freedom and choice, all of which a liberal education does. It prepares students for life and for success in the most basic of ways-by making them well-rounded and able to tackle any challenge that they face, and to do it uniquely and allow who they are to shine through.