

The Willamette Community

An Address to the W.U. Institute for Continued Learning

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- **Overview of Willamette University:**

- History:
 - Established 1842, prior to statehood and major cities, by Methodist missionaries interested in educating Native American children
 - First session of the legislature to meet in Salem met at Willamette; sheltered the first court in the territory under United States auspices
 - Among the earliest coeducational institutions in the United States
- Current Organization and Identity:
 - Comprised of four schools: AGSM, Law, SOE, and CLA
 - Emphasis on service and breadth
 - Approximately 1,800 students, and close to 50 academic programs
 - Degree comprised of three areas of focus: GE, Major, Electives
 - TIUA: 100 Japanese students fully integrated

- **Current Events:**

- Administrative Transitions:
 - Retirement of Campus Life Dean Bob Hawkinson
 - Departure of CLA Dean Carol Long
 - Recent departure of Jeff Eisenbarth from VP of Finance; arrival this summer of Arnie Yasinski
 - President Pelton on sabbatical in spring
- Faculty Transitions:
 - Moving to 3-2 teaching load, adding 25 new TT lines
 - Retirements yield many replacement hires
 - In last 5 years, 57 new TT arrivals, well over 1/3 of total CLA faculty

- Spontaneous confluences:
 - China (IDEA, new hire in Chinese language and culture, German scholar, 25 year old law school exchange, funding from OSI and, hopefully, Luce foundation.
 - Africa: New hires in French, Anthropology, funding from NSF on Diaspora networks, increasing interest from students
 - Interdisciplinarity: Early programs include Latin American Studies, International Studies; recently added AES, Archaeology

- **Mission of Liberal Arts College: Building Complex Character**
 - Possible outcomes sought in education, and the necessity of contrasts and context:
 - Happiness, but also sadness, poignancy of loss
 - Financial security, but also value and thrift, the experience of loss, want, and need
 - Morality, ethics, and tradition, but not shrill, sanctimonious, or rigid in nature

 - How to inculcate this sense of complexity or opposition into a young person? Through active engagement in the contest of ideas:
 - Originated in classical Greek tradition, 2,500 years ago—need for educated citizens, for leaders and decision makers
 - “Agon,” classical Greek term meaning contest, which is the root for English terms “against,” and “agony.” In education, agon was manifest in debate, in spirited argument about ideas, in which the strengths and weaknesses of these ideas could be seen most clearly
 - Good decisions require educated people, effective process. Contest made for both: contest in education, rigorous challenges among ideas, and among people in the assembly, made for the best outcomes
 - Forms: Syllogism, Enthymeme, Dialectic
 - Fundamental underlying principal. Truth and beauty are stronger than their counterparts

 - Manifestations in the modern CLA:
 - Small classes, discussion oriented structure, participatory learning
 - Facts in context
 - Problematize their thinking, establish process of contest in their thoughts.
 - A great deal of knowledge, and marketability, but more importantly, processes of thought, habits of mind, and a taste for wisdom that will last a lifetime.