

Future-Proofing Careers Through the Liberal Arts

Kate Guy, Gettysburg College, PA, USA

Dr. Anna Wise, Hamilton College, NY, USA

Sujith Sajan, College of Wooster, OH, USA



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Acknowledgement

AI is Evolving- we don't claim to know exactly the level of impact, but we are operating on the assumption that it will impact the hiring processes of the future.

- Luis Von Ahn, Spring '22: "I don't know that humans will find the same level of meaning in their work in 3 years' time"
- David Solomon, January '25: AI can now write 95% of an IPO Prospectus in minutes, something that used to take a team of 6 two weeks.
- Fall 25': Perspective from a parent of senior Canadian International School of Hong Kong and current JP Morgan executive
- Daily Episode Sept '22: in the US in 2025, Computer Science graduates had double the unemployment rate as a Biology graduate
 - This issue of education being behind the needs of the economy is not new

No one has all the answers, but for the purposes of this presentation, we assume a change in what jobs will be needed 10 years from now



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Then:

“Safe” careers:

- Accounting, Law, Computer Science, Engineering

Career Competencies curricula:

- Science/Commerce Stream, microcredentials, MBA, Silicon Valley’s promise of coding = jobs

How does my academic preparation connect to my major connect to my job and connect to my retirement?



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Now- Responding to the Preparedness Gap

The American Association of Colleges & Universities asked employers to identify the skills and aptitudes that are most valuable to them in the workplace.

Here's what stands out: The surveyed employers stressed that while college graduates are prepared to succeed in entry-level positions, only half view today's college graduates as having the necessary skills to advance or be promoted. In other words, they identified a preparedness gap—a significant divide between the importance employers are placing on specific skills and their assessment of a college graduate's readiness to perform these skills effectively.

There is a difference between getting your first job, and getting promoted. LACs have always been strong in 10 year out metrics, but with fewer entry level jobs, these durable skills might be more needed than ever to get your first job



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Bell curve of education in the US

- 1700's-1800's universities educated leaders in philosophy and religion/intellectualism
- Early 1900's A. Lawrence Lowell coming out of WWI and creating residential communities and majors in preparation for second industrial revolution
- 1967 Ronald Reagan: "The state could no longer afford "intellectual luxuries," and that taxpayers should not have to subsidize "intellectual curiosity."
- 2023: Duolingo panel on AI: Education will change from technical to mechanical or questioning: prompt engineering vs. Socratic Method

What does this tell us about the trajectory of the pursuit of knowledge?



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Future-Proofing

We have always believed that the “safe degrees” prepare you for your first job, but a Liberal Arts Degree prepares you for a lifetime of growth and leadership.

Your degree title might not be your destiny

- Hamilton '62- US Ambassador to Egypt, Israel and United Arab Emirates, majored in Philosophy
- Hamilton '81- Co-founder of Netflix, majored in Geo-sciences
- Hamilton '84- CEO of Goldman Sachs, majored in Government
- Hamilton '72- US Secretary of Agriculture, majored in History

Forbes Article from April 2025- quotes Bill Winters, CEO of Standard Chartered:

“My Wharton MBA was a waste of time. Colgate University taught me how to think.”



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How do LACs Future-Proof?

- **Integrated curriculum**

Spanning humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, arts, math, and computing- getting outside of a “stream” that might become automated

- **Emphasis on inquiry**

Fostering critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills- from Socratic Method towards Prompt Engineering

- **Argumentation and writing**

Developing communication and persuasion abilities

- **Intercultural fluency**

Cultivating global perspectives and cross-cultural understanding

- **Research methods**

Equipping students with tools for systematic investigation and exploration including quantitative and qualitative analysis

- **Interpersonal skills**

Residential communities emphasize collaboration, communication, leadership and consensus

- **Civic and ethical reasoning**

Developing a sense of social responsibility and moral judgment



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Ability to Work on a Team

Gettysburg Graduates

71%

50%

Graduates in General

Problem Solving Skills

Gettysburg Graduates

67%

45%

Graduates in General

Written Communication Skills

Gettysburg Graduates

67%

45%

Graduates in General

Creativity

Gettysburg Graduates

65%

45%

Graduates in General

Leadership

Gettysburg Graduates

55%

32%

Graduates in General

Verbal Communication Skills

Gettysburg Graduates

71%

45%

Graduates in General

Strong Work Ethic

Gettysburg Graduates

76%

50%

Graduates in General

Willingness to Learn

Gettysburg Graduates

82%

69%

Graduates in General

Initiative

Gettysburg Graduates

67%

41%

Graduates in General

Analytical and Quantitative Skills

Gettysburg Graduates

61%

42%

Graduates in General

Flexibility and Adaptability

Gettysburg Graduates

71%

50%

Graduates in General

How Gettysburg is Future-Proofing

One of higher education's greatest pressure points is the need for colleges to innovate in ways that effectively prepare students to succeed as professionals and citizens, while also being authentic to their institutional mission. - Bob Iuliano, Gettysburg College President, March 2023

- Our faculty have been talking about the use of AI in the classroom since 2022 and how we [integrate it to the curriculum](#)
- The Gettysburg Approach and reframing effective advising
 - Every Guided Pathway intersects with a four-year Career Development Pathway that provides students with direct career-related experiences and guidance.
 - Pathways: Creativity, Entrepreneurship & Innovation | Global Citizenship and Intercultural Fluency | Justice and Community Change | Leadership and Collaboration
- Guaranteed career ready experiences
- Introduction of a new curriculum for a new age



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How Hamilton is Future-Proofing:

- From Leadership down: What If- and a focus on creativity
- Facilities: Innovation Center “Every Piece of Technology a Hamilton Student Could Need for 100 years
- ALEX Advisors- your own personal librarian and the license to make mistakes
- “What I Did with My Major” and alumni support
- Internship semesters in NYC, Boston and Washington, DC
- Digital Humanities Initiative
- Common Ground: Importance of Civil Discourse



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How Wooster is Future-Proofing

- Independent Study
 - Ranked #9 in the country for Senior Capstone
 - Annual Research Symposium
- AMRE Consulting
- APEX
- STEM Success Initiative
- STEM Pipeline to Graduate School
 - 95% of Wooster students get into their top-choice graduate school



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How do We Communicate This?

When families ask...

- Isn't STEM safer? Liberal arts degrees cost too much for unclear outcomes.
 - Acknowledge and be transparent in the unknowns. We as colleges are making educated guesses about the future and no can predict with certainty and these are legitimate family concerns. Choosing a path that keeps doors open will give students resiliency in turbulent and changing labor markets. We can promise rigorous critical thinking skills, communication, and the ability to be intellectually flexible. The age of the life long student is here.
- Financial aid and ROI -> By 40 years after enrollment, the median ROI at liberal arts colleges reaches \$918,000, more than 25 percent above the median ROI of all colleges, which is \$723,000 (Figure 1). ([CEW Georgetown Study](#))
- Additionally, many Liberal Arts Colleges provide generous financial aid for students



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Thoughts from an AI-powered entity

- **The future of work is coordination between humans and machines**
 - Machines handle narrow, formalizable tasks; humans excel at framing, context, and values.
- **Liberal arts train model-builders of meaning**
 - People who can translate across domains, detect bias, design questions worth answering, and persuade diverse audiences.
- **In a world of abundant information, judgment becomes scarce and valuable**
 - Liberal arts cultivate judgment through argument, critique, and exposure to ambiguity.
- **When the half-life of tools shrinks, the half-life of wisdom matters more**
 - Liberal arts are a durable repository of heuristics for thinking, deciding, and cooperating.
- **Liberal arts don't fight technology; they aim it.**



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Thoughts from our Human Colleagues

- **What did we miss?**
- **Do you have stories or experiences related to share?**
- **When you came to this session, what did you hope to gain or contribute?**
- **Questions?**



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Thank you!

- Kate Guy, Gettysburg College, kguy@gettysburg.edu
- Dr. Anna Wise, Hamilton College, awise@hamilton.edu
- Sujith Sajan, College of Wooster, ssajan@wooster.edu



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