

# INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS



COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

## FALL 2017 I-LA BROADSIDE

### NEWS, STUDENT STORIES, INSTRUCTOR GREETINGS & CURRICULUM UPDATES

#### I-LA DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It is not at all a coincidence that so often these days the word Interdisciplinarity is forever cropping up in conversations involving research, education, academia, and, not so surprisingly, even the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. The term even has a place of honor in the Colorado State University Strategic Plan 2016-2018. Goal 4: Research and Discovery states the university is committed to 'continue developing interdisciplinary models' that facilitate knowledge, creative artistry, and innovation.

Since everyone is talking about it, it might be useful here if we look a little closer at what this term actually means.

Interdisciplinarity is an intellectual and academic approach to knowledge that is situated outside—or in-between—the existing academic disciplines. Equally, it is a specific critical approach and methodology that aims to integrate different disciplinary perspectives in a problem-based practice we call *Integrative Thinking*. Interdisciplinarity strives for an enlarged, multi-disciplinary understanding. And we see *Successful Intelligence* as having three modes: creative, analytical, and practical.

Looking a bit closer at what models are might help us gain a better understanding of Interdisciplinarity. Models are curiously fascinating objects in that they are constructed simulations of existing or potentially existing human realities, be these conceptual, scientific, social or imaginary. For example, in the field of Architecture, models are used to visualize buildings or the use of space in specific ways. In literature, say Science Fiction, models help us to visualize objects and things that exist only in our imaginary worlds. In Economics and Sociology models are employed to explain—or sometimes even predict—complex human realities difficult to grasp otherwise. Models are equally useful as a tool for representing and visualizing complex scientific theories or concepts. Models also increasingly serve the role that experimentation plays in the scientific laboratory since more and more of the work we do nowadays is done on computers. Models often act as the middle stage between something that isn't and something that eventually is.

Interdisciplinarity can be conceived as a structure for utilizing different disciplinary knowledge and insights in ways that can rarely be achieved within a disciplinary boundary. Janina Misiewicz, in her article, *The Benefits and Challenges of Interdisciplinarity*, writes, "By giving students the opportunity to bridge disciplines, new connections are forged and important contributions are made to the world of higher education and beyond. Students are able to combine multiple disciplines and pursue different ways of thinking about the same problem or subject." I-LA takes this approach by focusing on human situations that transcend any one disciplinary explanation or solution and by working with problem-based models, we strive to better understand these human situations.

Yes, just as architects build model bridges, we learn how to build bridges between knowledge formations, disciplinary perspectives, critical practices, and the expressive/artistic modalities.

#### I-LA ASC CORNER, Jessie Stewart

Finding a fulfilling career is part of the reason we pursue more education. This semester I have been engaged in a lot of talk about how the liberal arts connects to employment. I attended lectures where professors showcased research about workforce trends and how creativity is more desired than ever. I have talked with our new Career Center liaison for Liberal Arts, Greg Head, about the dynamic students we have in this major. He said the center is receiving more requests from businesses for liberal arts students. I visited a local community college to discuss our major and saw the excitement

students had when they heard that the ideas they have for customizing their scholarship can be actualized here: Russian with History, Anthropology with Sociology, and English with Women's Studies. I visited with high school juniors and seniors and their families who toured Colorado State University to see if we live up to our reputation (spoiler alert: we do.). And of course, I have the privilege of seeing current Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts majors on a daily basis about their changing interests, education abroad options, and projects they are working on. The takeaway again and again is this: students are drawn to our major and employers are drawn to our students. CSU is committed to helping prepare you for life outside of your major and now has two new platforms to engage you in job searches:

Colostate.traitsify.com is a personality assessment tool. It uses images and a series of questions to help you articulate your strengths and interests areas and connect with employment fields. It is fun, easy, eye-opening, and connects to O\*Net databases with career clusters.

Colostate.biginterview.com is an incredible interviewing and coaching site. You can get interview tips, practice recording interviews, and get feedback on your performance by career experts. It is mock interview skills 2.0!

There is so much to celebrate about the opportunities this major provides. Show off your strengths and practice your skills with these tools and visit the Career Center for all their services at career.colostate.edu or in the basement of the Lory Student Center.

#### I-LA ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT, Magdeline Golnar

Time and time again, it has been proven that the bounds of appreciation surrounding a possession are stretched once an item goes missing. Perhaps it is a curse- to only feel immense gratitude in hindsight, but, if found- the process of rediscovery can be exciting!

I was recently able to newly appreciate something I wasn't expecting to have in my possession for a second time. I had created a print in my first printmaking class at CSU through the intaglio method: etching and scratching a metal plate. Our assignment was to depict a tree, so I referenced a photo I took of a lone aspen tree in the mountains south of Denver near a friend's cabin.

Fast forward 2 weeks later. I was pleased with the result of the print; I can remember the excitement I experienced when pulling the paper from the metal plate. My professor, whom I deeply respect, also saw quality in the print- I felt validated as an artist. I was honored when he requested to hold onto the original print I had pulled, to use as reference for future students.

Through the years, I thought about the original print- pleased it was being used as a tool for inspiration, and proud that other aspiring artists were able to view it. I love giving my creations to good homes- to those who see value and/or emotion in my art. As time crept along, I gifted my remaining high-quality prints to friends and family. Eventually, I was left to appreciate the sample print I had pulled on inexpensive paper. The image on this paper was warped and muted, not displaying the full spectrum of detail or contrast.

Fast forward 6 years later. September of this year- the original work still on my mind, I reached out to my past professor and asked if I could reclaim my long-lost work. I showed up at my former studio, and nothing appeared to have changed. The sight, smell, and vibe of inspiration were intact, and the conversation with the professor was anything but stale. After a brief catch-up, I was reunited with my tree print.

I am appreciative for the second unveiling of this tree. It allowed me to re-experience the piece and myself in a fresh way. I rediscovered the marks all over again as I was reminded that I had generated this through physicality, and emotion traced back to the year 2011. This piece seemed to defy time as I grew better familiarized with the person I was then, and am now.



## INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS STORIES

### SIERRA PANDY, class of '17



I'm not sure I've ever taken the "traditional" path in life. Actually, I'm not really sure what it would even look like. While I started at CSU with a business major, I quickly realized that it was both too intense and too restrictive. I didn't want to have just one goal, or learn about one career; I wanted to learn how to be proficient in everything that interested me. Which is how, after a year and a half of wandering through various majors and course offerings, including a stint in Animal Science I try to forget about, I found my perfect fit in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts. Now, as a recent graduate, I only continue to realize how important my foundational degree was - teaching me the ability to accept change and embody diversity within the larger context of life and career planning.

A few months ago, after failed attempts at trying to make a half-hearted living as an editor, an artist, and a writer, I stumbled into the now rather obvious realization that I was always meant to be a librarian. A position that requires a master's degree. Naturally, this was six months after I graduated. Here it was again – my propensity towards foregoing the traditional path. But now that I've submitted applications for graduate school, working part time in a job I enjoy, and waiting for the next chapter in my life to start, I think that there might just not be a traditional path for anyone. Maybe that's the point – you don't learn anything without making mistakes or seeing what doesn't work. Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts didn't just prepare me for a future career in my interests, it solidified my ability to apply myself towards whatever unexpected changes showed up in the future.

When you graduate, you should expect the unexpected. Whether that's unplanned life events, falling in love with a job you only took to offset expenses, or moving to a place you've never heard of. You don't have to have all the answers, you just have to trust in the answers you learn along the way. Life will change, and while that can seem like a terrible, uncontrollable thing, you have the ability to make it the best blessing offered to you.

### JAKAYLA MAHER, class of '17

After graduating CSU with my degree in Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts, I have been eagerly applying to accelerated nursing programs. These programs will hopefully prepare me to pursue my masters in nursing as well, allowing me to work as a nurse practitioner and one day open my own office. CSU's Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts program set me up to have a multitude of options available. I also hope to combine my undergrad work, which focused on vulnerable populations in healthcare systems with my future degree in nursing which is something extremely unique and one reason why I love the Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts programs so much. My idea of the two programs combined would be to either work with an NGO that trains nurses in developing countries with complex issues such as high maternal mortality rates or to start my own NGO because of my background! I also feel that I have an advantage as I am applying to these accelerated nursing programs because of my diverse background of classes as well as the opportunities the program gave me to study abroad and apply different lenses to every situation I am in! I mean, there are not a lot of degrees that would allow me to take all my pre-requisites for nursing school while following classes that peak my interests! Life after graduation has been interesting because of the huge changes that are coming my way, but I know that my undergraduate work has set me up for a bright future that is unique to how I hope to spend my life!



### I-LA STAFF, Julie Pinkston

When I graduated from CSU in 1989, I really never thought I'd return, but here I am! You just truly can't ever know the exact path your life will take even with good planning and strong family support.

I graduated with a B.S. in Landscape Horticulture, worked a few years in the industry to gain experience and then started my own Landscape Contracting business in 1993. The front range of Northern Colorado was a good place to be a business owner of a service-based business until 2007. When the economy basically "stops", so do the needs for service based businesses. Believe me, I was not the only one in this situation from 2007-20015 in Northern Colorado. What's the saying? Life goes on? Yes, it certainly does! Life will also try to chew you up and spit you out unless you conform to the local economic demands or move somewhere that has the demands of the talents you provide.

Luckily I've always had excellent Customer Service skills and strong Administrative Support skills so I began looking for work in the non-service-based sector in Fort Collins. This took me into new career directions of Office Management and eventually Supply Chain Management and Inventory Management at a local Food Manufacturing facility. With service-based jobs declining and people cooking at home much more to "stay within budget", food manufacturing was stable! For the roughest part of the economy swing, I used my secondary talents over the next 12 years.

There is also another saying I strongly agree with... Life is too short. It is very important to me to be happy in my work. After leaving Food Manufacturing, I really wanted to end my working career in a company that has good culture. I decided on CSU and last fall, I returned to CSU, here in the College of Liberal Arts.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY LIBERAL ARTS INSTRUCTORS' CORNER

### INSTRUCTOR Marizza Plaza, BA. Psychology, MA. in Education, JD. Law

Greetings, My name is Marizza Plaza and I have recently been offered the opportunity to teach two courses of Contemporary Legal Studies for the College of Liberal Arts Interdisciplinary Liberal Arts program. I am delighted to join the team. I am originally from Texas but have lived in Colorado since 2012. I have been an affiliate professor for Colorado State University in the College of Business since 2015, and continue teaching Ethics in Contemporary Organizations .



My Bachelor's Degree is in Psychology with a Minor in Legal Reasoning. I received my Juris Doctorate at J. Reuben Clark in Provo, Utah, after which I completed my Master's Degree in Education. While I love the law in general, I love teaching about the law more. I look forward to continuing my development as a professor. My hope is to instill in students not only the encouragement to pursue a law degree but to help students understand that they can use their legal education in a number of productive and fulfilling ways. Finally, I am the mother of three sons and three daughters, and enjoy spending time with my three grandsons. My husband and I currently live in Castle Rock.



INTERDISCIPLINARY  
LIBERAL ARTS  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY