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What does it mean to be a student in the 21st century, with globalization, automation, and constantly evolving skillsets systematically disrupting many traditional indicators of education? To attend the Graham School’s 2016 Convocation and Professional and Liberal Arts Certificate Ceremonies was to receive snapshots of the current state of higher education and its healthy resistance to simple categorization. At its broadest, it seems a situation in which a desire to learn intermines in endlessly new and evolving ways with a desire to live and grow personally and professionally.

During this year’s convocation, the 96 newly conferred graduates in Master of Liberal Arts, Master of Science, and Master of Arts in Teaching, listened intently as the featured speaker, Ian H. Solomon, Vice President of Global Engagement at the University of Chicago, encapsulated this lifelong adventure of learning in a speech that exhorted them “to let life be their ultimate teacher.” Drawing on personal experience, Solomon shared that for him an important lesson learned is the ability to pave one’s own path into the future. “Enough with the set-up!” he said to the room. “Be the artist of your own life—your masterpiece is waiting for you.”

If it was a lesson unquestionably inspiring to hear, it was perhaps also one that at least some of those graduating were already putting in place. Boris Levin, graduating with his Master of Science in Threat and Response Management, called convocation a welcome moment to reflect and step back from what has become his very busy life. He’s otherwise committed full-time to growing the company that has emerged from his capstone project, which focuses on providing emergency trauma care training. “Learning leads into life and life leads back into learning,” he says. “I brought the professional skills I’d developed in life to the Graham School and the program focused them allowing them to grow in unexpected and amazing ways.”

Founded on the radical experiment that education and learning is a lifelong journey, the University of Chicago is primed to steer the direction of higher learning in the 21st century much as it did throughout the 20th. With the needs of students at its center, William Rainey Harper, the University’s founder and first president, saw adult education as an organic part of higher learning, instituting the University Extension—today’s Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies—as one of the original divisions of the University of Chicago.

In an era before MOOCs, SPOCs, and other online learning initiatives, the University of Chicago Graham School pioneered the use of...
technology in the form of the post office and railroad to extend the reach of higher learning as far and to as wide an audience as possible. Beginning with correspondence courses in Hebrew, history, and mathematics, the Graham School was the first to use the rigorous syllabi and examinations employed in classrooms for its correspondence courses, and the first to offer full university credit upon completion.

“It was already present at the very beginning of the University,” says Fred Beuttler, Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at the Graham School. “William Rainey Harper’s vision for the University of Chicago was not just for eighteen-year-olds, but for lifelong learners. For him, the essence of higher education rested in the fact that it was voluntary and unlimited in scope—in the sense that you did it because you wanted to do it and it could be applied to the entirety of your life.”

Today, over 4,500 students are enrolled in Graham School classes, ranging in age from fourteen to one-hundred. They engage in degree and certificate programs in subjects ranging widely across professional and intellectual disciplines, with classes being offered in Chicago, online, and worldwide.

Rachel Milton, a filmmaker and producer who has made documentaries on terrorism in Egypt and Syria, is in her fourth year of Arabic study at the Graham School. She enrolled during an opening she had in between projects knowing she wanted to return to that part of the world and also knowing that proficiency in Arabic would enrich her experience both individually and as a filmmaker. “Little did I know,” she says, “that the deeper I’d go into Arabic the more I’d find to learn. I’m presently studying the Levantine dialect, which is spoken along the Eastern Mediterranean coastal strip.”

It is something that seems to happen with Graham School students. One hears it again and again while speaking with this year’s graduates. They enroll expecting to supplement their lives with a moment of study, only to discover in the University of Chicago an intellectual destination and academic home they hope to remain a part of for many years to come. Whether they enrolled to advance in their careers or to make themselves more competitive in the marketplace, or even just because they’d always had an itch to read Plato, what they discover while a student is a likeminded community in which to grow for a lifetime.
In early June, at the University of Chicago Gleacher Center, students completing degrees in the Graham School's Master of Science in Analytics (MScA) program took part in the Capstone Showcase, with eight teams presenting their research to an audience of industry partners, current and former students, and a community of data enthusiasts from across the Chicagoland area.

Moderated by Sema Barlas, Director of the MScA, Yuri Balasanov, MScA Lecturer and President of Research Software International, and Pan Chen, MScA Industry Partner and head of Analytics at HAVI Global Solutions, the students' presentations encompassed the entire spectrum of the rapidly evolving field of analytics, including projects employing housing data to form a predictive model of future vacancy events in Chicago and a risk stratification model used to identify patients at high risk for developing sepsis.

"It was an exciting day," says Julie The, whose project on sepsis received the Best-in-Showcase prize for 2016. "And it was also something we could all be very proud of. We've worked hard and it felt like a wonderful culmination to our time in the MScA. I wouldn't say its goodbye though," she adds. "I'm sure most of us are looking forward to returning to continue honing our skills."

The Graham School's Program in Analytics, established in 2014, has proven successful beyond the expectations set out in its original plan. After one and a half years of operation, the program has 165 students and 62 alumni, with over 700 new students applying this year alone. Barlas, who is also an MScA Lecturer, says that the program has achieved exceptional outcomes for the students in particular.

"Their levels of engagement, academic achievement, and the career opportunities that have emerged for them have made us all very happy," she says. "Half the graduates so far have accepted new positions and the other half have been promoted for higher level positions in their organization, with an average 40% increase in salary. The program emphasizes data analysis and in this regard is very technical, but what's critical for students is to learn how to generate impactful insight from the data. That's where the real value lies, and with the resources offered by the University of Chicago and the instructors and partners we have here, this is where the program truly excels."

With the stated goal of providing students with state-of-the-art analytics training to develop their ability to draw insight from data, the program emphasizes hands-on, practical applications for Big Data and data analysis through the use of emerging and established technologies. Through the capstone project, which all students complete as part of their requirement...
for graduation, the program facilitates relationships with corporate partners, who provide students with real data sets and current business problems to solve.

“The level of corporate engagement is really phenomenal,” says Rob Schnieders, Associate Dean of Professional Studies at the Graham School. “When the students make their final presentation to the corporate partners, it’s not just goodwill or kindness bringing the partners in to listen. In most cases, the

students have already delivered real business value to the sponsoring organizations and the companies are already thinking about what the next project should be.”

An example of such added insight is exemplified by a project like Michael Cavato and Julie The’s on sepsis. With data provided by a major healthcare system in Illinois, Mr. Cavato and Ms. The were tasked with determining whether a risk stratification model capable of identifying patients at high risk for developing sepsis was possible. With the number of cases increasing each year, sepsis is a dangerous condition whose mortality and morbidity rates can be greatly reduced through early detection, yet very little preventative analysis had been undertaken before.

“It was a real challenge,” admits Ms. The, who is graduating this year and has accepted an offer to work as a Senior Analytic Consultant for CVS. “At first Michael and I had serious concerns about the consistency and quality of the data. Also, there were just so many variables we had to sift through to determine the key indicators. But by working hard and using all the resources the program had given us, we were finally able to make progress and develop a model that predicted sepsis incidences with a reasonable level of accuracy. It was really a wonderful surprise! In the end we

used a really advanced technique called Hierarchical Bayesian Logistic Regression that would allow the healthcare system to predict sepsis cases more precisely for different segments of the population.”

Although Barlas will point out that analytics as an approach to understanding the world goes back to Aristotle, nobody disagrees with the idea that the rate of change the field has experienced in recent years has been truly amazing. With more data being collected from a constantly growing and interlocking network of sources, and as machines continue dramatically to increase in processing power, the human ability to quantify and analyze is being pushed to the utmost limits of its resourcefulness.

Analytics, as a discipline, is evolving so rapidly that MScA graduates are returning to take new advanced electives being offered in machine learning and Big Data. Alumni can take advantage of an innovative program feature by taking the first additional course post-graduation for free and enrolling at additional courses and advanced certificates for a reduced cost. This is a new model for continuous growth and learning where alumni stay involved after having completed the program and form a learning community of alumni and current students.

When asked whether she foresees herself returning to take more classes, Julie The doesn’t bat an eye. “There’s no question I’m interested in that. I know I’m going to encounter new situations in the coming years, and I’ll need the tools they teach here in the MScA program to handle them.”

“IT [THE CAPSTONE SHOWCASE] WAS AN EXCITING DAY, IT WAS SOMETHING WE COULD ALL BE VERY PROUD OF.”

Julie The, MScA degree recipient
Received the Best-in-Showcase prize for 2016
Building on the University’s century-long relationship with China, the Graham School’s 2016 calendar highlights a series of programs and courses whose deep basis in the liberal arts strives to inspire an engaged mode of thinking across its exchanges with Beijing and beyond. Whether organizing a conference on sustainability for a delegation of civic leaders from the megacity of Tianjin, or investigating Western ideas of happiness with high school students in Beijing, the Graham School’s Bridge and Partnership Program seeks to create connections in which the rigorous learning environment of the University of Chicago is shared.

“At the University of Chicago, the liberal arts are pursued on a scale and with a dedication that is unique,” says Mary Daniels, Associate Dean of Bridge and Partnership Programs. “Receiving scholars and leaders from China and sending our own scholars and students to the UChicago Center in Beijing, all of that is part of the Graham School’s mission to connect the University through innovative and evolving ways to nontraditional learners of the outside world.”

In April, the Graham School hosted a delegation of seven scholars from China’s Renmin University and provided them with an intensive three-week itinerary that introduced them to the fundamental components of a liberal arts education at the University of Chicago. The seven professors from the Department of Marxism Studies, ranging from senior leaders in the department to assistant professors, came to see and learn firsthand about American pedagogy and classroom dynamics. In particular, they sought to understand the sort of environment in which American culture and values take root.

“In planning the curriculum,” says Timothy Gaherty, Associate Director of Bridge Programs, “we looked closely at the way pedagogy takes place in China today and we hoped that by exposing our guests to the sort of critical thinking and collaborative learning that takes place in UChicago seminar classrooms we’d be able to give them some eye-opening experiences.”

The delegation attended core classes in the College and spent time discussing the cultural differences in education between China and the United States with UChicago faculty and students. Five workshops oriented around didactics were prepared by Bill Rando, director of UChicago’s Center for Teaching. Interested as well in American approaches to early-stage learning, the Renmin scholars visited the University of Chicago’s Laboratory Schools in Hyde Park and the Ancona School in Kenwood, spending time during both of these trips speaking with educators and observing classrooms.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Graham School, together with the Paulson Institute, spearheaded a leadership program for the Chinese Association of Mayors (CAM). Taking place in Chicago and Los
Angeles, the program focused on urban sustainability as it pertains to the particular issues and problems facing this year’s group of civic leaders, who hail from the Tianjin Municipality, a region of over 15 million located thirty minutes southeast of Beijing by high-speed train.

“Each year is slightly different,” says Daniels, who helps develop the curriculum for the Mayors’ Initiative on Urban Sustainability. “It’s always necessary to tailor the various panels and discussions to the particular regional development issues that the mayors and other leaders are grappling with. Mark Nemec, Dean of the Graham School, and I sat down with CAM officials, Tianjin leaders, and the Paulson Institute to work out a curriculum that would speak to the particular needs facing this group.”

The primary concern of the Tianjin delegation was how to attract investment to their region while spurring development in livable ways. Coping with the effects of mass urban migration, workers, a large part of the initiative’s focus was on urban sustainable development and public-private partnerships for the creation of efficient education, social, and health services.

“The task, on one level, is tremendously challenging,” says Daniels, “but we hope we’re exposed them to enough that they’ll be able to take what they’ve seen here, adapt it, and have a real impact on their cities when they return home. Past programs have shown us some exciting results. CAM works with other universities in the United States as well and we’ve been very happy to receive their highest ranking in past years.”

As part of the Graham School’s efforts to broaden the reach of its summer programming, Summer Session 2016 has launched three new programs designed to give high school students in Beijing, Bangalore, and Chicago the experience of the discussion-based style liberal arts education at the University of Chicago. Also part of Summer Session, and now in its sixth year, Chicago in Beijing is an immersion program in Mandarin Chinese taught by University of Chicago faculty at the UChicago Center in Beijing. Additionally, the Summer Session has seen an increase in students from China coming to Hyde Park, growing from 19 during Summer 2012 to 105 in Summer 2016 with plans to continue this growth.

To learn more about the Graham School’s global programming, visit our website at: grahamglobal.uchicago.edu
Currently celebrating its 70th year at the Graham School, the Basic Program of Liberal Education for Adults continues to innovate and expand while holding true to its founding mission of bringing adults together in small classroom settings for rigorous discussion and debate around the Great Books of Western political and social thought.

Pioneered at the University of Chicago by Mortimer J. Adler and Robert Maynard Hutchins, President of the University from 1929-1945, the Great Books program was devised as a challenge to the “service station” model of the University then and still largely in place. Instead of students being offered a larger and increasingly fragmented menu of courses, Adler and Hutchins promoted a form of learning based on closely reading and vigorously debating canonical texts. Such an approach was meant not only to familiarize students with the great minds of the Western world, but also to engage students in what Hutchins called the “great conversation,” his way of referring to the fabric of knowledge underpinning the primary ways we order and make sense of our world.

The Basic Program emerged from a course conducted by Hutchins beginning in 1943 to men and women of Chicago’s high society called the Fat Men’s Great Books Course. The enterprise was conceived by Hutchins with profound savvy. By keeping the list of elite members private and strictly forbidding photographs of their bi-weekly Friday meetings, he guaranteed fantastic publicity for the Fat Men’s course. With the city’s wealthiest public figures now clamoring for the privilege of reading Aristotle and Locke with Adler and Hutchins, the University of Chicago convened a committee to study liberal education for adults and to develop a program to cater to what was now a growing need.

On August 4th, 1946, the Basic Program of Liberal Education for Adults was publicly announced and the first courses began that fall. Four years later, the first alumni course was offered (updated in 2015 with the Alumni Sequence), and two years after that the Basic Program Lecture Series began, a tradition that continues to this day in the First Friday Lectures and Works of the Mind Lectures. By 1949, with the Great Books Foundation established as a way for all adults to form discussion groups of their own, an estimated 50,000 individuals in groups nationwide met regularly at libraries, homes, churches, and synagogues.

Today, Basic Program students continue the tradition of the Great Conversation, engaging in dialogue both with the great texts of...
the Western canon as well as with their fellow students. Over the four years of the sequence, in which no writing is required and no grades are given, students grow intellectually as well as individually as they interact in their cohort, which remains together throughout. Even more than the satisfaction of reading and understanding Descartes or Kant, students regularly speak of the rewards of group involvement. As they listen and engage in conversation, they feel the courage and excitement to share more and listen with greater care. Not only does the text open up for them, but the various viewpoints of others begin to reveal their deeper sense as well. Of the nearly 400 students currently enrolled in the Basic Program and its related courses, 39% have been taking classes for more than ten years, and 25% of them for over fifteen years.

“You can go to the Lyric Opera or to a Cubs game,” says Zoë Eisenman, Chair of the Basic Program with over twenty years of instructing experience, “but the opera and the Cubs will go on without you. What makes taking part in the Basic Program so powerful is that you are more than just a spectator. Your voice is missed when you’re not there. As a cohort evolves, you feel yourself becoming an integral part of the vigorous debate surrounding a text. You really start saying, ‘I’m a part of this, I need to be there to bring out that shade of Sophocles, or this part to Aristotle’s argument.’ So it’s more than just reading Plato and knowing what he says, it’s the movement and growth you feel while connecting with others.”

Responding to calls for additional cohort-based sequences in the model of the Basic Program, the Graham School introduced the Alumni Sequence on the Romans in the Autumn of 2015, a two-year curriculum open to students who have already completed two years of the Basic Program. In the Autumn of 2016, a second two-year curriculum will be introduced on the Modern Tradition, which will explore 19th and 20th century texts building on the foundational literature of the Basic Program.

Also new to the Basic Program and beginning this summer is the Summer Intensive Sessions. Designed specifically for teachers who might not have time during the school year, the Summer Intensive Sessions will cover one year of the Basic Program in six weeks, with classes meeting daily for three hours. Like all Basic Program classes, the Summer Intensive Sessions will carry a professional credit for educators.

To learn more about the Basic Program, its upcoming lecture events, and its recent additions, including a spring trip to Greece and online classes starting this fall, visit basicprogram.uchicago.edu

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Liberal Arts Open House
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When discussing Graham School’s approach to online learning, Mark Nemec, Dean of the school, likes to begin with a simple question. “If one were to build a higher learning institution from scratch today, would one really not consider using the Internet?” His question, not solely directed at digital naysayers, holds the larger suggestion that the debate around online learning has gotten off to a false start. “I think originally a lot of people were trying to figure out how to take the classroom and export it online,” Dean Nemec says. “It’s only now that we’re beginning to take a step back and see the broader and richer applications technology can have. At the Graham School, for instance, we see it not only as a tool to strengthen and extend already existing programs, we see it fundamentally as a strategy to deepen the founding mission and impact of the University of Chicago.”

“With an ever-expanding number of students worldwide seeking educational opportunity, never before has the major experiment of the University of Chicago seemed so timely. Rooted in a conception of learning that is lifelong, research-based, and outwardly-focused, the University’s plan is exemplified by founding president William Rainey Harper’s desire to “reach those who lived beyond campus and did not fall into established categories of students.” Intrinsic to the mission of the University of Chicago, therefore, and the University Extension in particular—today’s Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies—is the idea that the University’s eminence and impact is realized through reaching broader audiences in always evolving and innovative ways.

“It’s what’s unique about the Graham School’s engagement with online learning,” Dean Nemec says. “We’re reaching back to the most traditional roots we have, while at the same time pushing ourselves to the cutting edge of pedagogical experimentation in the 21st century. The advances we’re making in online pedagogy constantly tie into and resonate with the core values of the University.”

“Our hope is that the Graham School can serve as an incubator of innovation for the broader University of Chicago community. Online learning is just one example of how we believe technology can enhance the educational experience and reach of the institution” says J. Michael Locke who is Chairman of the recently created Technology & Innovation Committee of the Graham Council.

In addition to digital engagement, new programs seek greater nimbleness and flexibility as they strive to keep curriculum adaptable to a constantly changing business and technological climate, as well as to the schedules of working professionals. Recent data reflects a massive growth in online learning across higher education, showing that more than 35 million people
have enrolled in online courses over the past four years, with enrollment doubling from 2014 to 2015 alone.

Prior to joining the Graham School, Rob Schnieders, Associate Dean of Professional Studies at the Graham School, worked with over forty universities to develop blended and online graduate programs. Amidst a higher education environment already experiencing tremendous flux, Schnieders emphasizes that approaches to learning online are undergoing their own reorientation.

“The earlier models of online pedagogy are beginning to age out,” he says, comparing the experience of watching pre-taped lectures on your computer screen to driving your father’s Oldsmobile. “A lot of the older approaches were limited not only by the technology, but also by the conception of what learning online could be and imitated inefficient lecture and test models of instruction. Next generation online experiences being developed at Graham today focus on using the unique capabilities of the medium to promote student engagement and learning communities.”

In large part, the shift involves deeper engagement with students and the ways knowledge and skills developed. Renewed focus on the roles that narratives, games, and storytelling have in capturing students’ attention has generated insight into how understanding is built. Together, with various partners who emphasize social learning, the Graham School is integrating these lessons into online teaching environments that combine rich application-oriented workspaces with social learning experiences.

Emily Joy Bembeneck, Associate Director of Pedagogical Innovation at the Graham School, notes that some early developments in online learning pushed a very individualized approach to learning. “This was a learning experience taking place without any human contact at all,” she says. “While that might work in some cases and for some people, it would be amiss to overlook the formative and influential effect contact with one’s peers has in the learning process. Graham’s new, online Business Analytics certificate, for example, combines small group interaction with pre-developed video and reading coursework, allowing students to bring questions and insights they’ve generated on their own to their cohort and then work through problems together—all of it taking place online.”

Bembeneck points to the success of UChicago Continuum as another example of social learning. Introduced this year in partnership with the University’s Office of Alumni Relations and Development, the pilot program offers free online courses and learning opportunities as a way for alumni to stay connected with the University. Courses such as “Internet Giants: The Law and Economics of Media Platforms” and “Neuroethics: Controversies Surrounding Modern Advances in Neuroscience” use prerecorded and live video instruction as well as social platforms that encourage engagement with rigorous academic content, while fostering connections between faculty and students.

“ONLINE LEARNING IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW WE BELIEVE TECHNOLOGY CAN ENHANCE THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND REACH OF THE INSTITUTION”

J. Michael Locke, Chairman of Technology & Innovation Committee, Graham Advisory Council
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