Graham Review
Exploring the Future of Lifelong Learning
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A Message from Dean Nemec

Welcome to the Graham School’s inaugural newsletter. As the center of lifelong learning for the University of Chicago, we are pleased to share with you how we support the University’s heritage of inquiry as well as extend its impact in new and innovative ways. As Dean, I am honored to serve at a time of evolution in higher education, an evolution I discussed as part of the most recent University of Chicago Magazine’s broader exploration of what the next quarter century will bring to the University.

Higher Education

BY MARK R. NEMEC
Dean of the Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies

The beauty of higher education institutions in the United States is found in their ability to adapt and remain relevant while staying true to their long-standing values. We are now in a period of redefinition—perhaps the largest since the emergence of the research university 125 years ago. The forces at play today are the same ones that drove these universities’ emergence in the 1890s: demographics, urbanization, globalization, and the advent of technology.

Alumni are increasingly going to expect an experience based not just on nostalgia but also on continued learning. Technology will be critical in facilitating this, and in supporting effective delivery of genuine lifelong learning. The median age of people engaging with education will continue to rise, both because we will continue to live longer and because we will continue to demand higher education throughout our lives. At the Graham School, we have PhDs and MBAs coming back to do professional master’s degrees in newly emerging interdisciplinary fields. As in years past, institutions of higher learning will need to adapt to these new realities.

Higher education always reflects its society while also trying to advance that society. The University of Chicago is uniquely positioned to help shape what the next 25 years will look like. You could argue that UChicago defined the last 125 years, in part by establishing the first extension unit in this country (and arguably the first in the world). Today we are very much focused on defining the future.

The next 25 years are going to bring a rapid acceleration of these trends. But it’s going to enhance what we do, not disrupt it—because of our ability to lead. The strength of our greatest universities will be seen in their capacity to adapt and advance society in the face of those forces of change that are at once new and familiar.
The Master of Science in Biomedical Informatics (MScBMI), starting this spring at the Graham School, marks a new development further crystallizing the 125 year mission of the University of Chicago’s Extension Program. In line with the idea that education is a lifelong pursuit optimally carried out in small classroom settings, a key strength to the Graham School’s MScBMI will be its ability to bring together a broad spectrum of professionals as they learn and work alongside leaders currently shaping the field of biomedical informatics.

Biomedical Informatics is the science underlying the collection, management, and analysis of biomedical information to improve patient care, medical education, and health sciences research. This rapidly growing field, in which demand for workers is projected to grow at twice the rate of employment overall in upcoming years, finds an ideal setting at the University of Chicago, whose expertise spans the continuum of biomedical informatics applications. The deep roots the University has across the domains of biomedical informatics includes the University of Chicago Medical Center, the Pritzker School of Medicine, the Institute for Translational Medicine, the Center for Research Informatics and the Computation Institute. These partners will offer participants in the Graham School’s MScBMI program firsthand exposure to a world of tremendous growth and high-speed innovation.

Dr. Sam Volchenboum and Dr. David McClintock, BSD faculty and experts in biomedical informatics, serve as faculty directors for the program. Other UChicago faulty will also be teaching in the program, including Dr. Cheng-Kai Kao, Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Chicago and MScBMI lecturer.

“Biomedical informatics is a fascinating interdisciplinary field and real game changer in modern medicine. The collegial environment, state-of-the-art medical research, and dedicated clinical leaders at the University of Chicago make it the best place to cultivate top-notch informatics leaders” says Dr. Kao.

Students in the program—ranging across physicians, pharmacists, researchers, and IT professionals—will take nine courses and complete a capstone project as they learn and work alongside professors from the University of Chicago and select industry leaders. Coursework, paced at the students’ own schedule, encompasses the full breadth of biomedical informatics, bringing together core classes in computer programming, ethics and policy, and leadership and

“BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS IS A FASCINATING INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD AND REAL GAME CHANGER IN MODERN MEDICINE.”

Dr. Cheng-Kai Kao, Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Chicago and MScBMI lecturer
management, while also securing subspecialty knowledge through intensive instruction in select areas.

Central to the program’s distinction is the caliber of its lecturers and the resources and experience these individuals will bring to their small classroom settings. Already set to begin teaching this spring are Dr. David McClintock, Medical Director of Pathology Informatics, and Dr. Stasia Kahn, independent physician and board-certified in clinical informatics, who will be co-teaching the Introduction to Clinical and Research Informatics. Dr. Michael Baltasi, Executive Administrator for the Center for Research Informatics at University of Chicago, will teach Leadership and Management for Informaticians.

According to MScBMI Program Director Suzanne Cox, PhD, MPH, “the final capstone project is an opportunity for students to synthesize the knowledge and skills they have gained throughout the program. The level of engagement and enthusiasm of our industry and academic partners is a real strength for our program. It offers the students amazing professional experience and mentorship opportunities while helping them build their local network.”

An Industry Advisory Group (IAG) has already been established to provide feedback on the curriculum and to ensure that students are learning critical skills that employers need. The IAG includes members across relevant industries with representation from companies such as Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, Blue Health Intelligence, Deloitte Consulting LLP, MPA Healthcare Consulting, NORC at the University of Chicago, and NorthShore University HealthSystem.

The program is presently accepting applications on a rolling basis for Spring and Autumn quarters. Two boot camp courses providing fast-paced and rigorous introductions to biostatistics and clinical care systems are being offered to students seeking additional preparation prior to entering MScBMI. Prospective applicants interested in more information can visit grahamschool.uchicago.edu/biomedical-informatics.
The University of Chicago's Summer Session at the Graham School is the time for high school and college students to explore areas of knowledge often unavailable during the regular school year. From classes in paleontology to a study abroad program in Greece, Summer Session offers the invaluable experience of learning in an environment curated by one of the world's great universities.

For Summer Session 2016, the Graham School is launching a host of new pilot programs and scholarships for both high school and undergraduate students. One new scholarship initiative is aimed at increasing opportunities and access for Chicago Public School high school students. All CPS students admitted to Summer Session programs will receive the half-tuition Chicago Summer Scholarship. Summer Session will also become the first local scholarship partner for the Noble Street Charter Schools' Summer of a Lifetime program, offering half-tuition scholarships to a select number of Noble Street Charter School nominated students.

Taking advantage of the resources of the University of Chicago, Summer Session has developed several new programs to highlight faculty centers of excellence. The new UChicago Arts & Sciences program offers a unique opportunity for high school students to experience UChicago’s tradition of interdisciplinary education during intensive programming cultivated to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Classes will take place at the UChicago campus, as well as in Asia, taught by teams of UChicago faculty and graduate student instructors in Bangalore and the UChicago Center in Beijing. Participants will engage in wide-ranging conversations as they hone their critical thinking and discussion skills with instructors conducting research at the forefront of their fields.

In addition to UChicago Arts and Sciences, Graham will continue to offer programs that immerse high school students in specialized subjects. These college-level courses include Chicago Theater, Stones and Bones, Research in the Biological Sciences, and Traveling Academy. In these programs, students take both seminar-style classes and participate in field-based experiences, such as creating performance pieces under the guidance of professional theater artists in Chicago, digging for fossils in Wyoming, studying classical drama in Greece, and learning laboratory techniques used in cutting edge biological research.

“We’re focused on developing courses for high school students that are more than your typical academic experience,” said Mary Daniels, Associate Dean of Bridge and Partnership Programs.

Also new for Summer Session 2016, Graham has developed the Urban Studies Program. Open to undergraduates from the University of Chicago and students visiting from other colleges and universities, this four-week, two-course program aims to expand students' educational horizons beyond their regular degree requirements. Working alongside University of

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**SCENES OF SUMMER:**
(Top) Summer Session Students scale the Great Wall of China; (Middle) 'Stones and Bones' students work intently in a lab; (Bottom) Summer Session students enjoy an outdoor movie on the Midway Plaisance.
Chicago faculty, the courses introduce students to both the theory and practice of urban studies. In addition, students will take part in externships with local organizations throughout Chicago and engage in observational learning across Chicago’s neighborhoods. These experiences will help students formulate ideas of their own while conducting and presenting their own research.

“It’s the equivalent of an American study abroad,” said Daniels. “Despite the exciting growth that US cities are experiencing for the first time in decades, many young adults grow up in suburban or exurban spaces, so immersion into a densely populated urban environment like Chicago—the third largest city in the US—is radically different. By placing our Urban Studies students into externships and connecting them with key stakeholders through observational learning, the program aims to expose them firsthand to critical issues affecting urban residents.”

To learn more about the Summer Session, visit summer.uchicago.edu.
Could you tell me a little bit about the value of a liberal arts education in 2016? There’s really no succinct answer to that question because the virtues of a liberal arts education are many. But my favorite partial answer comes from ideas championed by UChicago President Robert Maynard Hutchins in the 1930s that the value of a liberal education has to be seen in the context of a democratic culture—it is to make free people capable of self-government, both individually and as a community. As one of his colleagues in the College phrased it, “We are born free, but we are not born wise.” So it is the function of liberal education in a democracy to make free people wise.

Is there still a place for wisdom in our culture? Absolutely. Advances in technology and specialized knowledge do not make the need for wisdom obsolete or irrelevant. Take all the new data that’s being generated. Google has given us an almost infinite amount of data, but as T.S. Eliot once asked, “Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” and “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?” This new knowledge needs to be incorporated into a large synthetic wisdom, which allows us to see ourselves as more than a mere function of data. One could say that the analytics program the Graham School offers is an update of the Quadrivium, of seeing numbers in space and time. But there is now so much information that it often crowds out the larger questions, especially if we do not properly discipline ourselves to ask them. Part of wisdom is being able to see through all the noise to find out what really matters, and then make connections between seemingly disparate data points, to relate areas that a narrowly-focused specialist might otherwise miss. Modern life requires specialization, of course, but it is wisdom, especially practical wisdom, which enables one to discover how to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right reason. Our culture is deeply fragmented, and big data is segmenting us even more into micro-demographics. A renewed wisdom grounded in the liberal arts will enable us to develop, as Hutchins reminded us, “a common language, a common stock of ideas, and common human standards,” to develop a broader community.

What do you say to the idea that we no longer have time to study what doesn’t pertain directly to what we do professionally? Well, first, a liberal education does directly pertain to what people do professionally. It sharpens our critical thinking skills, teaching us not what to think, but how. For instance, a working professional who completes the Masters of Liberal...
Arts (MLA) program at the Graham School returns to one’s office equipped with new methods of deep analysis and intensive inquiry. These skills can be applied to a broad range of professions and careers, and even prepare one for opportunities that are unimagined now. An MLA graduate is able to tackle a work-related question or problem in a very particular way. A liberal education forces you to place a problem in its proper context, to gather and intensely interrogate data, see patterns and connections his or her colleagues may miss, and leverage the right evidence to reach a solution. I can’t imagine any profession in which these skills wouldn’t be highly valued.

Graham also offers a certificate program that makes a liberal arts education accessible, at a reasonable cost. For instance, our Basic Program of Liberal Education is centered around an intensive discussion of classic texts in the Western tradition, not just “great books,” but rather the “great conversation” about ideas and virtues that truly enhance our lives.

**When’s the best time for a person to get their liberal education?**

Yes, that’s the big question. The liberal arts, historically, have been seen as the foundation for education and life. These provide the grounding in one’s early education, and then one moves into a profession. A lot of our educational thinking in this country has been based on that view too. Unfortunately, the liberal arts are being squeezed out of much of high school and college education these days. Many colleges have moved away from close readings of classic texts, and are now merely preparing students for specific professions. So even if the liberal arts are great to learn when you’re young, it’s not what’s happening at many places anymore.

**So, you’re saying it’s now something for later in life?**

Exactly. Now the liberal education is the capstone. It’s not so much the foundation as what you’re finally ready for once you’ve somewhat established yourself—which in fact accords with what thinkers like Plato and Aristotle thought. It’s difficult to ask questions about wisdom, about virtue, about what the good life is, until you have some experience under your belt. You have to live first; you have to have fought some battles. Maybe it takes raising a family and paying the mortgage. It’s not until you’re thirty or forty and you can really voluntarily—because that’s key: voluntarily—feel the need inside yourself to ask these questions. And that’s what the Master of Liberal Arts and the Basic Program at the Graham School offer. As the first professor of the Graham School, Richard G. Moulton said back in 1890, the essence of a liberal education, “is that it is education for adults; it is voluntary, it is unlimited in scope, unlimited in age; it applies to one’s whole life.”

“**ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY AND SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE DO NOT MAKE THE NEED FOR WISDOM OBSOLETE OR IRRELEVANT.**”

Fred Beuttler, Associate Dean for Liberal Arts Programs, Graham School
A n exclusive online learning community was launched in January through a partnership between the Graham School and the University’s Office of Alumni Relations and Development (ARD). Named UChicago Continuum, the program offers free, online courses and learning opportunities as part of a broader effort towards sustained digital engagement.

UChicago Continuum stretches beyond the standard ways alumni are invited to engage with the University by creating an online environment that fosters community and includes faculty and alumni across the globe.

“As the center, but not owner of lifelong learning at the University, we started by focusing on building a community around content as opposed to nostalgia,” said Dean Mark Nemec. “It’s a new kind of alumni resource; an innovative blend of Graham’s expertise in digital outreach and online learning, and ARD’s expertise in alumni engagement.”

“UChicago Continuum occupies a distinct position as both a learning and engagement tool,” said Nikki Yagoda, Assistant Director of External Engagement at Graham. “It utilizes a social platform in order to encourage users to engage with rigorous academic content, while simultaneously fostering connections between faculty, mentors and peers.” Alumni are invited to participate in exclusive courses, enter curated discussions with faculty experts, engage with other alumni around exclusive UChicago content, and share professional expertise and resources.

A pilot course, launched over the summer of 2015, had over 1,000 alumni participants and over 9,000 students worldwide. “But,” said Emily Joy Bembeneck, Associate Director of Pedagogical Innovation at Graham and organizer of the course, “when the course was over, the community didn’t go away.”

The approach not only encourages lifelong learning, it also includes a primer on social media. “For many alumni, this is their first online course,” said Bembeneck. “That gives us an opportunity to teach some aspects of digital literacy—such as how to navigate a community platform and engage in online conversations—in clear, progressive steps. Our hope is that alumni find themselves learning more than they expected and enjoy themselves while doing so.”

Not all participants need an education in social media, however. While a graduate of the class of 1947 was enrolled in the summer course, the majority of the students graduated after 2001. “The class composition spanned the breadth of senior to recent alumni” Bembeneck said, “because we’re primarily targeting interest groups rather than age groups.”

For Damon Cates, Executive Director of the Alumni Association and Senior Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations and Development, one interesting outcome of the summer pilot was that more than 200 participants made contributions to the University after taking the course. “There is no donate button on the website or solicitation involved,” said Cates. “This is really about alumni finding a place they belong, having a good time, and learning something.”

So far that model has been successful. UChicago Continuum launched in January to a beta group of alumni enrolled in a seven-week course in “Neuroethics: Controversies Surrounding Modern Advances in Neuroscience” taught by Peggy Mason, Professor in Neurobiology. In addition to the class, Continuum also hosts curated content activities, known as “Guests,” focusing on technological developments on campus and new methodologies across fields. Alumni are also able to access a career resources space, discussion groups to connect over shared interests, and curated content from across the University.

To find out about upcoming programming on UChicago Continuum email continuum@uchicago.edu.

BADGE OF HONOR: Alumni may earn participation badges when using UChicago Continuum.
Learn more about the Graham School, visit us at
grahamschool.uchicago.edu