

Liberal arts colleges and universities offer broad training, challenge and encouragement

Students learn skills that prepare them for the future careers, presidents say

Feb. 23, 2018

Presidents of two ACI-affiliated institutions said a liberal arts education challenges and encourages students to be creative and confident people, possessing critical-thinking and analytical skills, and prepared for future careers which may not yet exist. These qualities are what makes liberal arts graduates desirable employees, they argued.

Dr. Teresa L. Amott, president of [Knox College](#), Galesburg, and Dr. Patrick E. White, president of [Millikin University](#), Decatur, presented "[What Employers Want, We Do: Liberal Arts and Workforce Development](#)," Feb. 21 at the City Club of Chicago. More than 225 business and political leaders, educators and alumni attended.

Both presidents pointed out that liberal arts education involves broad training in a variety of subject areas, but the colleges do more. For example, liberal arts students learn how to apply their skills through internships, study-abroad programs, research and community-based learning, Amott said.



President Teresa Amott, left, of Knox College, and President Patrick White of Millikin University, were speakers at a Feb. 21 program hosted by ACI and the City Club of Chicago.



North Park University's Tierra Whetstone sang the national anthem at the City Club event.

She also argued that liberal arts institutions teach skills that help students fit into future careers, some of which do not exist yet. For example, she said just 10 years ago, careers such as app developers, social media managers or sustainability managers were unknown. "Faculty nurture and mentor young people and help them find a future we cannot chart," she said. "Sometimes those students graduate and go on and create a new world ... Our graduates are sought after by employers because they bring the skills of the future into the workforce."

Liberal arts education builds students into lifelong learners and valuable employees by challenging and encouraging them, White said. He also said that small colleges should not be viewed as "refuges" from other environments. Instead, liberal arts colleges are "human-sized arenas in which every student is important," he said.

"At ACI institutions, we want our students to leave our colleges with the self-knowledge that they can be successful, to have the ambition to take on more and the habits of exercising these various virtues," he said. Liberal arts students "gain the largeness of mind and heart that comes from confronting large issues, complex problems and the ambiguities of human experience in an environment where what they think about these things matters to everybody around them."

The City Club program also included the signing of the national anthem by Tierra Whetstone, a junior opera major at North Park University, an ACI-affiliated university in Chicago.