

Faculty in Action

- **Bart Allen** (psychology), and **Dick Major** (theatre) were presented with the "Innovative Idea of the Year" award by *Sprint Yellow Pages* for their tobacco education play, *Harriet the Rabbit Kicks the Habit*. The play has been performed by the theatre department before 3,000 elementary school children in Northeast Tennessee since it was introduced in 1997.
- A new exhibition of **Nick Blosser's** (fine arts) work opened in Portland, Oregon.
- **Melinda Collins** (nursing) and **Mary Fabick** (nursing) created study tutorials for Meds Publishing, Inc.
- **Jim Dahlman** (communications) published an article in *Boundless*, served as publishing consultant to World Relief Corporation, and published a book review in the *Christian Standard*.
- **Carlene Eastridge** (music) and **David Runner** (music) performed at an area concert sponsored by the American Guild of Organists. Runner was the guest artist with the Johnson City Symphony in November.
- **Bill Greer** (economics) presented "The Impact of Tax Reform on Tennessee" at an educational forum sponsored by the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.
- **Greer, Vikki Sitter** (business) and **Bob Wehan** (accounting) attended the Business Education Symposium in Knoxville.
- **Chris Heard** (Bible) and **Mark Matson** (academic dean) presented papers at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature in Boston. Heard also presided at the Semiotics and Exegesis section.
- **Julia Holmes** (education) and **Carol Reese** (education) presented papers at the annual meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children in New Orleans.
- **Patrick Karljald** (education) and three M.Ed. students presented papers at the Mid-South Educational Research Association conference.
- **Phil Kammason** (Theology and philosophy) published an essay in *Grace Light Grace: Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Langford*.
- **Rhylene King** (nursing) and her NURS 302 students held a health fair for the rural mountain community of Mendota, Virginia, where King is a clinical and research consultant.
- **Nancy McKee** (reference librarian) was inducted into the Gamma Sigma chapter of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International.
- **Sue Rasmussen** (nursing) was spotlighted by the "Friends in Need" health clinic in Kingsport for her exemplary volunteer service.
- **Tom Stampfl** (music) conducted two demonstration workshops at the World Piano Pedagogy Conference in St. Louis.
- **Deann Walker** (HPXS), **Linda Doin** (HPXS), and three students attended a meeting of the Tennessee Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.
- Several Milligan faculty attended the ACA Technology Summit in Knoxville in October. **Charlene Kiser** (humanities) led a workshop and **Dick Lara** (chemistry) made a virtual center presentation.

Freedom to think

The importance of the liberal arts

by Mark Matson

Milligan College calls herself a Christian liberal arts college. But what exactly does that mean? What are the liberal arts, and why do they constitute the core of Milligan's educational program? The answers to these questions are, I think, central to understanding the unique contribution Milligan makes to Christian education. They are also important for our current efforts to evaluate our success as an institution, and our constant efforts to define our mission.

The term liberal arts is often understood to encompass a body of knowledge, especially the humanities. This is the classic definition, and it is based on the medieval term, which embraced the traditional seven areas of essential education. Today most of those areas of knowledge we call either the humanities (which usually embrace the fields of language, literature, history, and fine arts) or science and mathematics. Certainly the humanities and sciences are an important part of the liberal arts. Others often use liberal arts to refer to the importance of a breadth of knowledge, as evidenced by a variety of courses and disciplines. And breadth of knowledge is also an important element in the liberal arts. But I would like to suggest that both of these understandings are insufficient and understate the real value of the liberal arts education.



"We must understand the inter-relatedness of various areas of knowledge, especially since they are all reflections of God."

I would argue that the liberal arts primarily focus on the way the student, as an individual, learns to think. This is why the term "liberal" is used—which is based on the word to be free, referring to the freedom and ability to think for oneself. The highest aim of a liberal arts program is to enable students to think for themselves and to be open to the world in a posture of lifetime learning. This means that the primary focus of the liberal arts education must not be content *per se*, but the attainment of a habit of critical thinking and analysis. Of course, if we want to engage the world in an open way, we must know something of the world in which we live. For this reason, the humanities and sciences are important. And simply a breadth of knowledge is not sufficient to truly appreciate our world. We must also understand the *inter-relatedness* of various areas of knowledge, especially since they are all reflections of the one God who created the cosmos, and all its peoples, and the variety of cultures they live in.

Education of students in such a liberal arts model should produce some significant results. First, students educated liberally are prepared to engage creatively with an ever-changing world. As the rate of change of the world around us seems to increase exponentially, this is a crucial issue. Most individuals no longer stay in the same careers for their working life; new careers and organizations seem to be created at a dizzying speed. Only a person who is open to the world can face such change confidently. Secondly, I believe that people who are educated in this way will be more ready to take their place as leaders in church and society, to put into practice the integration of thought and understanding that will dynamically and creatively demonstrate God's role in our society. And thirdly, these students will have a sense of wholeness and appreciation for our world which will make them happier people.

I am proud of the liberal arts tradition of Milligan College. We stand in the oldest traditions of education, and yet it is a tradition which will, above all others, prepare our students for the rapidly changing future.

Matson returned to Milligan this fall as academic dean after 10 years as an administrator at Duke University. He previously served as business manager and taught Greek and New Testament at Milligan from 1985-89. He holds an M.Div. from Emmanuel School of Religion and a Ph.D. in New Testament from Duke University.

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