

# Call for Proposals

## *Healing What Ails Us: The Liberal Arts in a Post-Pandemic World*

The Twentieth Annual *Conversation on the Liberal Arts*

February 24–26, 2022

Westmont College

Santa Barbara, California

Sponsored by the Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts in partnership with The Liberating Arts

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### **How can liberal arts education contribute to healing the deep problems in our society? Is liberal arts education itself seriously ailing? How can we effectively communicate its value and relevance to key audiences?**

The Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts, in partnership with The Liberating Arts, is pleased to announce the twentieth annual *Conversation on the Liberal Arts*, “Healing What Ails Us: The Liberal Arts in a Post-Pandemic World,” February 24–26, 2022.

As hope emerges for coming out the other side of the COVID 19 pandemic, one thing seems clear in the midst of many uncertainties: the promise of liberal arts education could be greater than ever. Liberal arts education excels at providing just the creative, flexible, and interdisciplinary thinking that the pandemic response has required. The liberal arts, though at times certainly contributing to the racial inequity and injustice with which American society is wrestling, have nevertheless long been home to searching analysis and critique of those inequities and injustices. And liberal arts disciplines—history, sociology, economics, political science, religion, to name but a few—are essential to navigating the deep political polarization on such stark display over the last year. Perhaps at no time in the past half century has liberal arts education held more promise for healing what ails us.

But the future of liberal arts education is itself uncertain. Simmering questions have been given new force—curricular, pedagogical, institutional. Indeed, the very survival of many liberal arts programs and colleges is in question. Why, at the very moment when liberal arts education offers such promise, is its future so uncertain?

One answer is surely deep and widespread misunderstanding of the purpose and value of liberal arts education. We readily invest in those things whose value we understand. But too few grasp just how vitally important—both collectively and individually—liberal arts education is.

How do we get this message across? “Healing What Ails Us: The Liberal Arts in a Post-Pandemic World” will be an opportunity to explore the many ways that liberal arts education is essential to our individual and collective well-being, and to develop ways to communicate its value to an uncertain public.

### **Themes for conversation**

- How is liberal arts education relevant to the pressing challenges of American society? How might it have exacerbated those challenges? How might it help address them? Are there particular ways that religious communities interact with liberal arts education that might deepen or alleviate these challenges?
- What is the place of liberal arts education amidst increasing demand for professional preparation?
- What messages about liberal arts education does the American public hear? Do those messages engender confidence or skepticism?
- How can advocates for liberal arts education communicate its value effectively to sometimes uncertain publics?

## Who should attend?

- Academic administrators and faculty members who wish to explore how best to communicate liberal education's purpose, value, and relevance in our social context, both within their own institutions and with key external audiences (for example, prospective students and their parents, employers, donors, and, for faith-based institutions, pastors and denominational leaders).
- College and university administrators and staff from departments beyond the academic division, whose role requires them to communicate their institutions' liberal arts mission to internal and external audiences, for example: marketing; admissions; career services; development; student life; and, for faith-based institutions, the office of spiritual life or its analog.

## Submissions

Participants can contribute to the conversation in a variety of ways, including:

- leading discussion of an individually- or jointly-authored paper (papers will be distributed in advance, not read verbatim in the room);
- offering a panel discussion that gives a variety of perspectives on a topic;
- leading a workshop that equips participants with tools for addressing challenges they face in their institutional contexts.

If proposing a paper, please submit a 350-word abstract. If we accept your paper, we will ask for a completed manuscript by no later than two weeks prior to the conference (February 10). All standard academic citation and formatting styles will be accepted, but Chicago is preferred.

If proposing a panel discussion or workshop, please submit a 350-word prospectus that describes your session's purpose, content, and format.

In every case, please include the full names, titles, and institutions of all authors or presenters, as well as a title for your paper or session. Student work should be clearly identified as such. **The deadline for all proposals is January 7, 2022.**