

Virtual Humanities Center (VHC) at Great Basin College



A community-oriented college serving rural Nevada may seem an odd place to consider the humanities, but in reality the needs of our service area increasingly are requiring our students to have skills more rounded than in the past to be successful leaders and community members. GBC wants to prepare students for the jobs they will hold in 5, 10, or 15 years, as well as the first one after graduation.

Consider the experiences of some recent GBC students:

- The nurse working with rural senior citizens who finds her job includes addressing patients' social and psychological needs as isolated rural residents as well as their medical concerns.
- The veteran coming to GBC to complete a degree while simultaneously publicly engaged as a citizen in the major debates of veterans' issues and foreign policy.
- The minority education major learning to integrate modern pedagogical approaches with his own cultural background with a goal of better opportunities for his community.

All of these students, and dozens of others, are training for and entering a world where technical skills are merely part of what is needed for success. They are having to wed professional skills to broader understandings of human nature and societies in order to tackle the problems they are confronting—and will continue to confront across their careers.

At the heart of the VHC are the core skills which the humanities encourage and which GBC students will need to succeed in their careers and lives: critical and creative thinking, communicating complex ideas through a range of media, technological understanding, and personal and cultural awareness. These are not only college skills, but those actively sought by employers and necessary for democratic society. The VHC enriches and stimulates the development of these skills across all GBC programs.

Mission: Great Basin College, through its Virtual Humanities Center, seeks to collect, curate, and cultivate the humanities for rural Nevada.

Vision: Through the humanities, we seek greater cultural and historical understanding to demystify human difference, celebrate diversity, and build an engaged citizenry to enhance the well-being of rural Nevada.

In August 2013, GBC was awarded a \$500,000 Challenge Grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), one of the few colleges of its size to win such an award. The Grant provides the foundation of the Virtual Humanities Center and its mission.

By leveraging GBC's distance education experience and technology, the VHC is providing humanities programming throughout our service area. Examples of such programming already available include:

- Nationally-renowned speakers such as Temple Grandin, Gary Nabhan, and Dan Flores speaking to remote Nevada communities on topics ranging from autism to resolving land-use controversies.
- Faculty collaborating to improve the teaching of humanities skills through techniques such as real-world-based case studies and working with the Department of Labor's TAACCCT project.
- Archiving public roundtables on issues of concern for Nevadans, such as a recent panel on the spread of the Zika virus, veterans' issues, and our annual Constitution Day event.
- High school counselors and principals accessing materials to help rural dual-enrollment students better succeed in college classes, providing opportunities and increasing degree-completion.
- Partnering with the Great Basin Indian Archives, Barrick Gold, and the University of Utah, VHC is compiling a searchable public database of Western Shoshone oral histories and documents to re-vitalize the Western Shoshone language and supporting the new Shoshone Community Language Initiative (SCLI) for Shoshone high school students in Summer 2017.
- Publishing student research and writing in a variety of fields, from biology (*Tortoise Talk*, the student journal of the GBC Nature Club) to *Argentum*, GBC's own literary and arts magazine.
- Rural Nevada's communities sharing their diverse cultures and customs, from Basque shepherders to Western Shoshone Elders to GBC's 50th anniversary.



These and future projects magnify both GBC's mission and its connections to the rich, diverse cultural communities which it serves.

Endowment: The VHC is working with corporate and community partners to complete a \$1 million endowment for sustainable, long-term financing.